



The Rules of Celebrity Etiquette

BY J.R. LUPOLI

You walk into a North Salem deli and David Letterman is standing in line. Your mind starts racing and you immediately think, "I'd LOVE to tell him how much I enjoyed the show last night." *Should you?* You're at your child's soccer game in Bedford and the too-beautiful-to-be-true, towheaded offspring of William Baldwin and Chynna Phillips kicks a goal with famous parents cheering on. Do you ask William about his next project and grill Chynna about the possibilities of a Wilson Phillips reunion?

If you haven't encountered one of our area's "local" celebs, chances are, you will. Just a short drive from Manhattan and with green grass and white picket fences galore, subtle suburbs draw the stars who want to kick back and live a quiet, "normal" life . . . but can they? But should stars expect us to ignore

Dos and Don'ts of Celebrity Etiquette...



Respect private moments.

Approach quietly and inconspicuously, if at all.

Be friendly and warm.

Bring a pen and paper if you are requesting an autograph at an appropriate time and place.

Keep your comments brief.

them? Fans watch them on the big screen—or the little one. When a celebrity encounter occurs, what is the appropriate course of action?

"Celebrities are the same as everyone else in the sense that they are members of a community, have families, and have a job. The only difference is *that* job is often seen by all of us," says Harrison-based etiquette coach Melissa Leonard. "So before you start hounding them, stop and think before you act. Remember, they are there for the same reasons you are—to grocery-shop or watch their child try to score a goal—not to walk the red carpet and promote their celebrity status," she says.

That brings me back to one winter morning while I was a producer for News 12 in Yonkers. The buzzer to the newsroom door rang, and there she was—none other than Bedford resident Phylicia Rashad, Mrs. Cosby herself! In hindsight, I probably shouldn't have blurted out, "I'm a huge fan. I loved you on the Cosby Show!" while she was waiting to go on-air for an interview. Her noticeable discomfort at my approach could not be denied. I wondered, "Why doesn't she want to talk to me? Isn't she flattered?" Granted, it was 5:00 a.m.—and it's been about 20 years since the show was taped, but I grew up with her. She was one of America's most famous TV moms and she was in my living room every Thursday night for as long as I can remember. She was *my* TV mom, and there she was, in the flesh—in *my* workspace, *my* territory.

World-renowned etiquette expert Peggy Post says that fans can get overly excited around stars, and that can make the celebrity uneasy. "I don't recommend even acknowledging your excitement. They're 'off duty,' so it's best to not make a scene," says Post. Leonard says that there is simply a time and place for everything. "With the five seconds you have to make that decision before your opportunity passes, use your common sense," she says. "If Glenn Close is walking into the ladies' room stall, certainly now is not the time to tell her how much you admired her last role and what you felt was the hidden meaning of the film."

So what is appropriate? According to Post, keep your eyes to yourself. "Don't stare and don't make a fuss. You can give a brief, low-key compliment such as 'I really enjoyed your last movie,' but leave it at that," she says. Bronxville resident Kevin Byrne recalls a chance encounter with "Sopranos" star and Mount Vernon native Michael Imperioli at the Fleetwood train station: "I saw him standing there smoking a cigarette wearing a gray suit and sunglasses, and he looked like he walked right off the ["Sopranos"] set. I knew who he was right away. I said, 'I love you on the "Sopranos,'" and he said, 'Thanks, man' and continued on his way." Byrne followed the rules of celebrity etiquette and, in turn, his brush with stardom was a pleasant one. But what if it's an unpleasant one?

Sometimes we expect celebrities to be just like the characters they play, and that's unrealistic. According to Leonard, "We all have bad days, and celebrities are no different. Just because David Letterman won't stop to give you the top