

A black and white photograph of Dick Van Dyke in a dynamic, mid-air pose. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, a dark tie, and a fedora. His mouth is wide open in a shout or laugh, and his right leg is kicked high into the air. He is holding a thin object, possibly a cane or a pen, in his right hand.

DICK VAN DYKE

MY LUCKY LIFE
IN AND OUT OF
SHOW BUSINESS

A MEMOIR

Foreword by Carl Reiner

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THE YAWN PATROL

Just before I started ninth grade, my father was transferred to Indiana and we spent a year in Crawfordsville. We took an apartment there. I came into my own. It was not a personality change as much as it was the realization that I *had* a personality. I also found out that I could run and jump pretty well, and I got on the freshman track team. Success on the track added to my self-confidence, including one particular day that still stands out as the most exciting of my life.

We lived across the street from Wabash College, a beautiful little school that gave the town a youthful feel. On Saturdays they hosted collegiate track meets, which our high-school coach helped officiate. I watched all the competitions. This one particular day, Wabash was running against Purdue University and I was in the stands when my coach came up to me and said that the

anchorman on the Wabash team had turned his ankle and was unable to run in the race.

"Do you want to run anchor?" he said.

"Are you kidding?" I replied.

"They need a man," he said.

What an offer! I was only fifteen years old, but heck, the chance to compete against college boys was one I did not want to pass up. Even though I didn't have track shoes, which were considered essential to running a good race, since in those days the tracks were layered with cinders, I jumped to my feet. Yes, I told my coach, I was ready to fill in for the Wabash team—and as anchor no less.

When I took the baton, Purdue's anchor was slightly ahead of me. I was not intimidated. We had one hundred yards ahead of us and he did not look that fast to me. I ran hard, gained ground every few steps, and passed him on the outside, with about twenty yards to go.

I heard the crowd roar and held on to the lead, crossing the tape before all the other college boys.

I won.

A high-school freshman.

Amazing.

They gave me a blue ribbon, which I took home and showed my father. He didn't believe me when I said I beat a college boy from Purdue. He thought I was lying. It was, I agreed, pretty far-fetched. The kid I beat was older and could really run. But I was faster—at least that day.

I was voted the most popular boy in the freshman class, but we ended up leaving Crawfordsville and returning to Danville.