

LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE

Regis Philbin was shy ... really

High-energy TV host addresses Econ Club

By **LOUISE WREGE**
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BENTON TOWNSHIP — How can someone go from being shy and inhibited to holding the world record for having spent the most hours before a television camera?

Lots of hard work and a U.S. Marine yelling at you, Regis Philbin told a packed house Thursday at the Mendel Center at Lake Michigan College.

The University of Notre Dame graduate said the

Marine told him — loudly — that he could be whatever he wanted to be.

“I would never have done it if that guy hadn’t said it to me then,” Philbin, 82, said.

Philbin said that growing up in the days before television, he fell in love with the voice of Bing Crosby on the radio. He decided that when he grew up, he wanted to be Bing Crosby.

But he said he thought he wasn’t good enough, so he didn’t tell anyone, not even his parents.

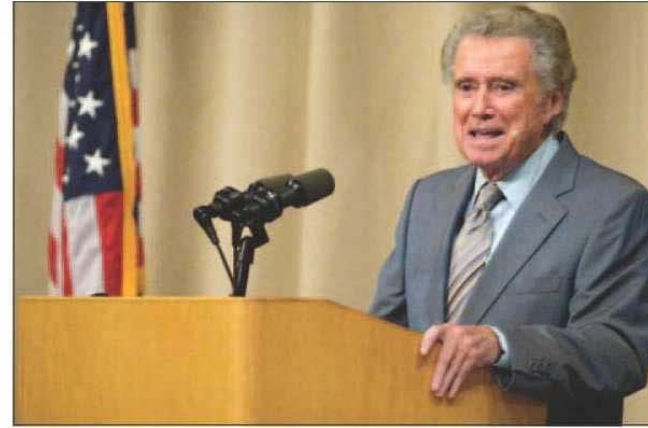
“I never had the guts to get on stage in high school,” he said.

He graduated with a de-

gree in sociology from Notre Dame, which had nothing to do with television. And still, he said he felt he wasn’t good enough to be in show business. But that was what he wanted to do.

After college, he served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. After he got out was when he said he met the Marine who changed his life.

Even after he decided to make his dream come true, he said it didn’t happen right away. He said the first time he was on television he was holding an elevator door open for singer Eddie Fisher as he exited the stage



Longtime television personality Regis Philbin closed out the season Thursday for the Economics Club of Southwestern Michigan. He addressed a packed Lake Michigan College Mendel Center.

Jody Warner / HP correspondent

at the end of his show.

Philbin said he worked with other talented people like Joey Bishop and Don Rickles and never thought he could be as good as

them.

During one of the shows he was working on, he said he was told to pick a young person in the audience and ask him what he wanted to

be when he grew up. Philbin said the person he picked just stared at him.

“He reminded me of me,”

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he said.

About 35 years later, Philbin said he again met that person, who told him that he had inspired him to go after his dreams.

“That young kid’s name was Steven Spielberg,” he said.

During the question-

and-answer session after his speech, he said the greatest person he met during his career was Ronald Reagan.

“He just had an outgoing feeling of success,” he said. “I was astounded that he then ran for governor and became governor.”

Philbin said his greatest regret was leaving his first Saturday night talk show in San Diego, where he had

no writing staff and no producer.

“That’s when I feel I was at my best,” he said.

After he left the show, he said he always had people telling him what to do.

“As soon as I left and went to Hollywood, it was never the same,” he said. “Doing it my way was the best way for me. ... I regret not telling them I want to do it my way.”

Philbin is known as the former talk show host of “Live with Regis and Kathie Lee” and then “Live with Regis and Kelly.” He hosted prime time game show “Who Wants to be a Millionaire,” and “Million Dollar Password,” “Super Millionaire” and “America’s Got Talent.”

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