



PHONE HOME Bob Newhart returns to his Chicago roots for one night only.

Talk Therapy

Bob Newhart heads home for an evening of storytelling. | *By Jessica Radloff* |

Chicago has produced hundreds of talented performers, comedians and entertainers, but perhaps none is more proud to call Chicago home than the legendary Bob Newhart. This month, the Oak Park native returns to the Midwest for a one-night-only show at the Chicago Theatre. We sat down with the current California resident to talk bitter cold, stupid psychologists and his best friend, Don.

(NEWHART'S CHICAGO FAVORITES)

RESTAURANTS? We enjoy The Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons, and their restaurants. If there's one place that we always go to when we get to Chicago, it's the Cape Cod Room at The Drake. The waiters are characters and the food is just great. **ANYTHING ELSE?** The people are wonderful. When I come back, it's like, 'You've come a long way, baby.' The Chicago Theatre brings back a lot of wonderful memories.

What kind of hilariousness can we expect during your show on the 22nd?

I'm sure some local Chicago stuff, and then I'll probably do one or two of the classic album routines because that's why a lot of people show up, and then the rest is some kind of observational 'what a strange place this is we all inhabit' and how you gotta laugh to get through it.

You come back to Chicago a few times a year. Are you ever tempted to retrace your steps from the opening sequence of *The Bob Newhart Show*?

Well, if you're a native Chicagoan, you know how dumb he [Dr. Robert Hartley] is. He gets on the Ravenswood El, he goes past his stop on Sheridan Road, he gets off in Evanston, where the El is on the ground, and then he walks back 55 blocks to his apartment. Now, would you want to have that man as a psychologist? A man who misses his stop every day?

Meanwhile, you've said Chicagoans are the toughest people out there—between the brutally cold winters and hot and humid summers. So when are you moving back?

I spent 22 years in Chicago. Then I was drafted to the West Coast and said, 'How long has this been going on? Why have they kept this away from me that you don't have to freeze to death in the winter and die of heat stroke in the summer?'

Let's talk about Don Rickles.

Oh, do we have to? [laughs] This was going so well, Jessica, and then you had to go ruin it.

Well, he is your best friend! How did that friendship start?

My wife and Don's wife knew each other. Don was performing at the Sahara in Las Vegas and I was at the Desert Inn, and Ginny said, 'Oh, I'm going to call Barbara, we have to get together.' We went to the Sahara and sat and talked. Afterwards, Ginny says, 'He's just the nicest man. He loves his family and is just such a sweet man.' I said, 'Well, honey, his act is a little different than the guy you just met.' So, they put us in the front row and Don comes out and the first thing he says is, 'The stammering idiot from Chicago is in the audience with his hooker wife from Bayonne, New Jersey.' Ginny's jaw dropped and I said, 'I tried to tell ya!' That was our first meeting. ■