



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Sports and Games:  
Richard Simmons**

## Your On the Street Reporter Richard Simmons<sup>1</sup>

**June 30, 2013**

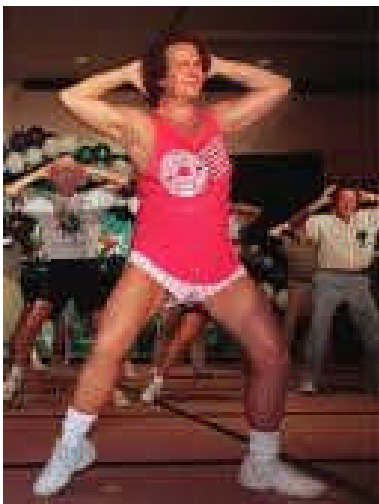
Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Recently, I took a trip to Southern California to visit with our son Tommy. We had dinner at the House of Blues, on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. Tommy had performed at this place last month with Scott Weiland's band.

Before telling you the main part of my story, a brief diversion on what I had for my meal. I asked the waitress what the locals were eating.

- "Mac and cheese, with lobster."
- "Sorry, I'm hard of hearing."
- "Macaroni and cheese, with lobster."
- "That's what I thought you said," as I said to myself: *Two of my cholesterol favorites in one meal. "Nothing exceeds like excess," Well, you are in Hollywood.*
- I asked, "Do you put the macaroni in a shell along with the lobster?"
- We mix pieces of lobster along with the macaroni and cheese. Try it, it's very popular."

I did and it was. I am determined *not* to have on my tombstone, "He died a healthy man," and at this rate, I won't.

While eating, we noticed that Richard Simmons, the famous fitness instructor, had come into the club, accompanied by an attractive woman. (One reward of fame in Hollywood is gaining access, as the tabloids amply advertise.) The two were seated a couple booths from us. Other customers noticed their arrival, but in deference to Mr. Simmons (I'll call him Richard as I am (now) acquainted with the man), no one approached their table.



The club manager, an acquaintance of Tommy's, told us Richard was going to be part of the entertainment at the club for this evening. He's not only a fitness personality but an actor, as the two photos on the left demonstrate. (Notice the people in the photos are smiling and happy.)

<sup>1</sup> Photos are sourced from <https://www.google.com/#q=photos+of+richard+simmons>, and those I took during this encounter.

I first became aware of Richard when he appeared on television with his fitness program. He was not only a fitness personality but a personality unto himself. He was flamboyant, energetic, and at times, effeminate. He made no pretense of being anything but what he was. The information on the Web states he does not discuss his sexual orientation.

I've been around the block enough to know that there are gay men who give-off no effeminate persona (Rock Hudson), and there are supposedly "Marlboro-type" men who are gay (some NFL football players and some Marlboro dudes as well).

It is no one's business what a person does with his/her sex life. I am straight, but I have a great empathy toward gays and lesbians. Let's show some tolerance for and understanding of our fellow humans' DNA compositions, straight, gay, or lesbian. Let's judge our fellow humans by how we treat one another on the street, not on what we do in bed. Our street behavior affects the public. Our bed behavior does not.

To insult a person, not for their lack of character or worth, but for a trait that is beyond his or her control, is to insult one's self. There is no better example of this sick singling-out mentality than Howard Stern's bullying of Mr. Simmons on Stern's show.

My first impression of Richard Simmons was over the top. But I liked Simmons. He came across as genuinely friendly and dedicated to fitness. He also was one of the leaders who promoted fitness programs for non-athletes. I like to think Richard Simmons as an ambulatory Title IX.

I also admired the fact that he was once a white man's Chubby Checkers but morphed himself down to "Slim" Simmons. He was fat during his adolescence. By the time he graduated from high school in New Orleans, he weighed 268 pounds. He has since gone on to fame, and has become the mentor and/or founder of several programs to promote health. As examples:

- He lobbied for support of the passage of a part of the No Child Left Behind, legislation that mandated (for public schools) there be non-competitive physical education programs.
- He aided those affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- He lobbied for The Strengthening Physical Education Act of 2007 (Bill HR 1224).



He continues to promote fitness for gray panthers as seen in the photo on the left.

Again, there is no modesty about the public Richard Simmons. But when I watched his public personality, I sometimes wondered what the man was like in the real world. I suspect most of us non-stars have this same curiosity about the stars of the world.

Shortly after Richard and his friend arrived, Tommy and I left the club. Tommy preceded me to the exit by a few steps as I more slowly raised myself and my reluctant back from our table. By the time I had caught up with Tommy, he was talking with Richard. Upon my arrival, Tommy said, "And this is my dad."

Later, Tommy told me that as he passed by Richard’s table, he looked over to him, and gave a hello wave but did not stop. Richard’s response was, “Don’t I know you? You look familiar.”

Tommy said no, but announced me as I walked up. I said hello to Richard and his companion, and mentioned I had followed his career through his television appearances. He responded, “Sit down, young man!” Young? I sat down. Tommy was asked to sit alongside Richard’s friend.



We did not stay long at their table. I spent a brief time telling Richard he had been a leader in encouraging females to exercise. I did not include men in my proclamation. From my macho perspective, I did not see my buddies and me following Richard in a dancing conga line of tutu-adorned dancers. We had to be kicking ass and such to feel sufficiently “exercised.”

He took-in my comments charitably, as seen in the figure to the left. Check it out my fine macho friends: Uyless and Richard holding hands. (And don’t send back Stern-like nonsense, else I’ll kick your ass the next time I see you.)

Unlike Stern, Richard has the capacity to smile and actually treat a person with respect. He had amiably taken-in my son and me, two strangers being invited to his dinner table. I said to Tommy, “We must go, we are interrupting these peoples’ evening.”

But not before Tommy and I exchanged places for Tommy and Richard to talk a short while. During this time, I spoke briefly with Richard’s dining mate. They have been together for many years. She was as affable as he.

We departed with my salutation of, “Thank you for your graciousness.” We left the House of Blues.



I left thinking my first impressions of Richard Simmons were partially correct, that of being a pleasant and dedicated person. He is also a fine, caring man. Small wonder he is so successful, not just in show business, but in people business as well.

Here is a photo of Richard and Tommy, both stars to their respective public.

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