

LARRY KING R.I.P.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the death of Larry King:

Larry King was perhaps the greatest interviewer of all time. Unlike today's cable news hosts, Larry came to the table without cue cards. There were no canned questions prepared by a producer, no teleprompter to lean on for support. Most of all, Larry listened.

Larry asked a question and the guest answered. The next question was based on what the guest said. It was a conversation. He would listen attentively to what was said and would then dig deeper. And so on.

Sounds fairly simple. But it isn't. Larry's gift was to make his guests feel relaxed, getting them to open up about matters they would usually be reluctant to reveal. He was never confrontational. This explains why he could secure guests who would never go on with any other host.

The rap on Larry was that he was a "soft ball" interviewer. That is grossly unfair. It would be more accurate to say he didn't insult his guests the way so many commentators do today. His job was to draw his guests out—not to put them in their place.

Beginning in the late 1980s, I had the pleasure of being his guest for many years. Indeed, it was those appearances, including interviews I did on "Crossfire" and the "Phil Donahue Show," that eventually brought me to the attention of the Catholic League; clips of my segments were previewed by the search committee charged with selecting a new president and CEO in 1993.

Larry and I often spent time together after the show, and I got to know a man who did not seem to have a bad bone in his

body. He once told me that of all the great people in the world whom he would like to interview, his number-one choice would be the pope (meaning Pope John Paul II).

Larry King was one of a kind. May he rest in peace.