



- JIM RYDBOM/jrydbom@greeleytribune.com

Chautauqua: It doesn't take a genius

[MIKE PETERS,](#)

For Frank X. Mullen, Albert Einstein was puzzling, intriguing, funny.

Einstein didn't want the widespread publicity that followed him, but many times he played along with the “genius” and “absent-minded professor” generalizations the public pinned on him. And, he became one of the most famous people of the 20th century.

Mullen, 56, is a newspaper reporter in real life, living in Reno, Nev., and he treats Chautauqua roles like a hobby. He's played nine characters – from Henry VIII to Edward R. Murrow to Babe Ruth – and takes vacation days from his job to play roles at Chautauqua events around the country. Mullen performed the Einstein role Wednesday night during the High Plains Chautauqua in Greeley.

“When they call and ask me to take a role I've never played, I study the character for a year,” Mullen said. “Read every story, every book, watch every news clip about him.” He said he enjoys learning about the characters almost as much as playing them.

It takes Mullen three hours to get into his Einstein makeup, especially creating the frizzled white-hair look that was Einstein's signature.

Mullen also discovered the most famous scientist in history was sometimes shy, many times funny and had flaws. But Mullen found the man to be fascinating.

And, as Albert Einstein, he answered questions:

TRIBUNE: “Can you explain time and the theory of relativity in simple words?”

EINSTEIN: “Of course. If you hold your hand on a hot stove for a minute, it seems like an hour; if you sit next to a pretty girl for an hour, it seems like a minute. That's relativity.”

TRIBUNE: “How do you feel about all the publicity? About how you became an icon in the mid-20th century?”

EINSTEIN: “I don't like the publicity, but I have to go along with it. Reporters and photographers are everywhere I go. They are the last vestiges of cannibalism. I can't agree with the cult of personality that people follow today.”

TRIBUNE: “The most famous photo ever taken of you is with your tongue sticking out. There are posters and T-shirts with that photo on them. How did that happen?”

EINSTEIN: “It was another photographer who I told could take a few pictures of me. After a while, I got tired of it and told him so. And as I got in my car to drive away, I stuck my tongue out at him. That was the photo that was on the front page of the New York Times.”

TRIBUNE: “You had a difficult childhood in Germany?”

Today at Chautauqua

» Adult Programs

Where: Ed Beaty Hall Black Box Theatre, Aims Community College, 5401 20th St., Greeley

Details: Eleanor Roosevelt's Friendships, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; The Power of Story IS the Story of Power! 10:45-11:45 a.m.; American Art and Genius: Benton and Pollock, 1-2 p.m. Redrafting the Code of the West, 2:15-3:15 p.m.

» Youth Programs

Where: Jesus Rodarte Cultural Center, 920 A St., Greeley

Details: Changing the Way You See, 1-2 p.m.; Changing the Face of Baseball, 2:15-3:15 p.m.; Relativity for Kids, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

» Evening Programs

Where: The Big Tent, Aims Community College, 5401 20th St., Greeley

When: 7-9 p.m.

Details: Ernest Hemingway (played by Brian Gordon Sinclair) and Gen. Douglas MacArthur (played by Bill Young)

For more information, visit

www.highplainschautauqua.org

EINSTEIN: "I didn't think I was free to learn. Children should be allowed to imagine things, and they wouldn't allow that. They called me 'dummkopf' and 'lazy dog.' But I don't agree with teaching the standard mode of education. Education is what you have left over after you've forgotten everything else."

TRIBUNE: "Any regrets?"

EINSTEIN: "I have very human flaws like everyone else. I deserted my first wife and had my daughter adopted out. I never talked about that. The FBI investigated me for years because J. Edgar Hoover thought I was a communist. There are 1,800 pages of FBI surveillance of me, but they never found anything to send me back to Germany."

Einstein left Germany for a speaking tour in 1933, and after arriving in America and knowing Hitler was coming to power in his home country, he never went back. Hitler took his home and made it into a Nazi youth camp. Einstein became an American citizen in 1941.

He died in 1955 at the age of 76.

<http://www.greeleytribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090806/NEWS/908059970&parentprofile=search&template=printart>