

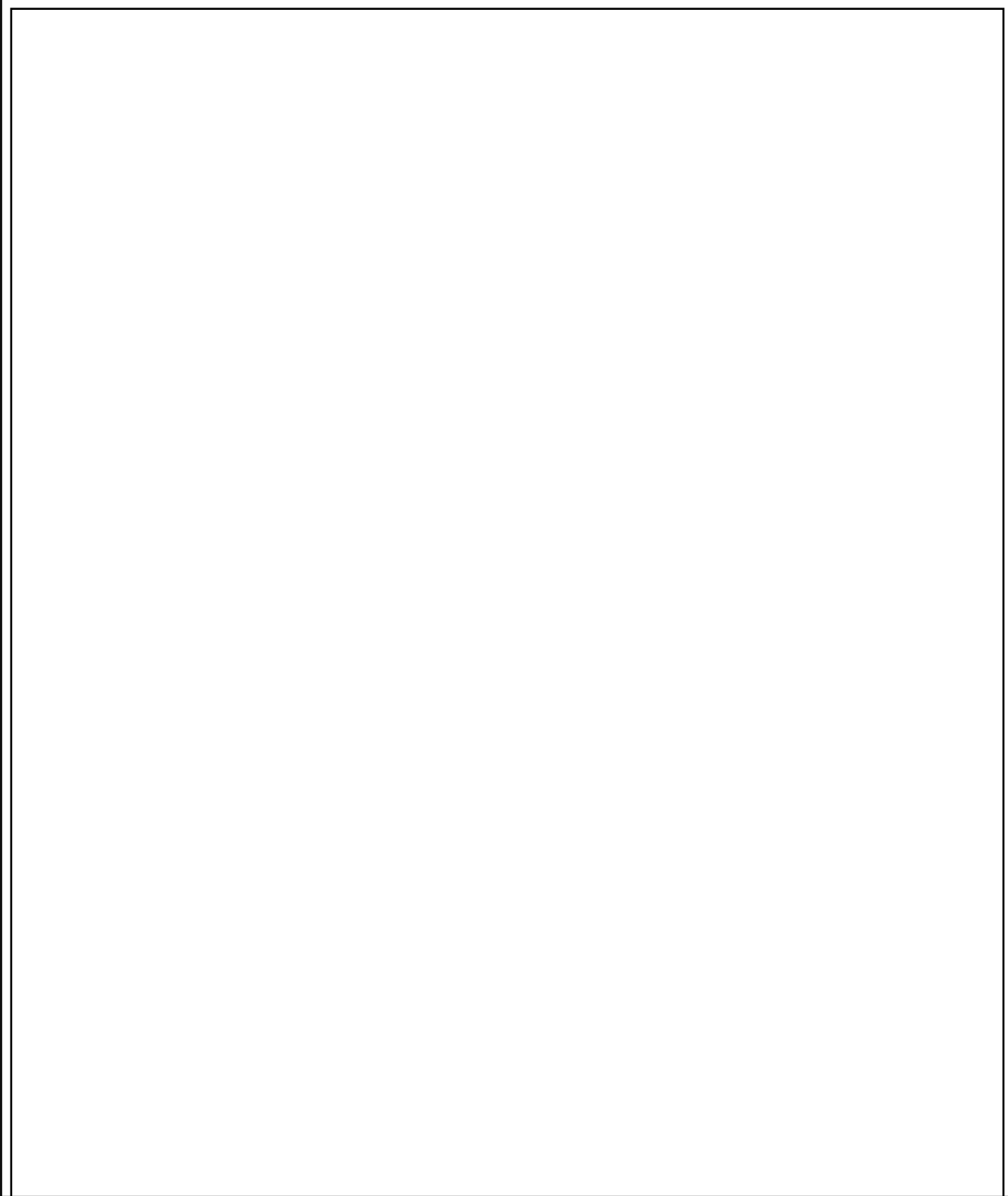
Interview: Judy Belushi to Honor John by Hosting ‘Animal House’ in Chicagoland

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 14, 2013 - 8:02pm

- [Animal House](#) [2]
- [Bluto](#) [3]
- [Flounder](#) [4]
- [Hollywood Blvd](#) [5]
- [Hollywood Palms](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Interview](#) [8]
- [John Belushi](#) [9]
- [Judy Belushi](#) [10]
- [Karen Allen](#) [11]
- [Mark Metcalfe](#) [12]
- [Martha Smith](#) [13]
- [Matty Simmons](#) [14]
- [Otis Day & the Knights](#) [15]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [16]
- [Stephen Furst](#) [17]

CHICAGO – She wrote a book called “Samurai Widow,” and was married to John Belushi from 1976 to his death in 1982. She is Judy Belushi, and she will be part of a cast reunion of the classic film “Animal House,” to be presented at the theaters Hollywood Palms in Naperville (Illinois) and Hollywood Blvd in Woodridge, on November 15th-17th, 2013.

Judy Belushi was with John before the beginning of his superstardom, having met him in high school at Wheaton, Illinois, where they both grew up. She followed him through his early years at The Second City in Chicago in 1971, and moved to New York City in 1973 when Belushi got a job with “The National Lampoon Radio Hour.” Many of his radio colleagues became original cast members with Belushi on a new late night TV show in 1975, “Saturday Night Live.” From there, John Belushi became a sensation with the 1978 release of “Animal House” – with wife Judy having a role – and sealed his legend with the release of “The Blues Brothers” in 1980.





Judy and John Belushi Back in the Day
Photo credit: Hollywood Palms

Judy Belushi has been the keeper of the flame for John, even as she remarried and had children after his passing. She has just announced a new movie biography of the comic icon that she is producing, to feature hot actor Emile Hirsch as her former husband. She joins other cast members and the producer of "Animal House" at the Hollywood Palms and Hollywood Blvd, including Martha Smith (Babs), Karen Allen (Katy), Stephen Furst (Flounder), Mark Metcalfe (Niedermeyer), DeWayne Jessie (Otis Day) and Matty Simmons (Founder of National Lampoon, Producer of "Animal House"). Otis Day will perform before each of the ten showings of the film from November 15th-17th ([link to details below](#)).

HollywoodChicago.com had the honor to talk to Judy Belushi on the phone, in anticipation of the wild weekend reunion.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you were on the set of Animal House, what was the overriding discussion amongst cast and crew – did they believe they had a comedy classic hit or a small film that would probably be at the second bill of a drive-in double feature, or somewhere in between that spectrum?

Judy Belushi: Of course, there was certainly a desire for it to be big, but everybody on the set thought it was funny. John had a taste of success with 'Saturday Night Live,' but hadn't hit with his first film - 'Goin' South' - so when 'Animal House' took off, it was unbelievable.

HollywoodChicago.com: The film has almost a religious following. When you do intros or Q&As, or even when people recognize you in public, what is the strangest question they ask about the film?

Belushi: What is the meaning of God? [laughs] I don't know why they're asking that. Seriously, most people are curious about what went on during the shoot, what kind of underwear John wore, that kind of thing.

HollywoodChicago.com: I happen to think 'What is the meaning of God?' is explained in 'Animal House' if you watch it enough. Even though John was a national figure through 'SNL,' when the film exploded into a cultural phenomenon at the time, and John appeared on the cover of Newsweek, what kind of impact did it have on your marriage and John's immediate family?

Belushi: His mother got a color television, and I got a new car. [laughs] This has been talked about before - he had the number one movie,

the number one album [‘Briefcase Full of Blues’] and the number one late night show all at the same time. It was a heady time, although he didn’t need success to be heady, he was heady anyway. He was on a trajectory of fame that was difficult and yet expected, in a strange way.

HollywoodChicago.com: If I can go back from the beginning in Wheaton. From what you know about John’s father, what traits did John pick up directly from his Dad’s Albanian immigrant roots?

Belushi: He could do a deep sigh, just like his father. That, and brooding, he picked up both those things very well.



Toga! John Belushi as Bluto in ‘Animal House’
Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment

HollywoodChicago.com: After John landed at The Second City, which was and is a high point for a Chicago area comic actor, what ambition fueled him to keep going, and that allowed for both of you to move to New York City from there?

Belushi: John’s first goal was to get into The Second City as a main stage performer. When he was a Senior in high school, the drama teacher took us to a performance. As we walked out of the theater on Wells Street, he turned to me and said, ‘this is what I want to do.’ And after he made it there, the stepping stone for him was New York City. He didn’t see a future in television, he just wanted to go to New York and do films and comedy. But he wouldn’t go to New York without a job. National Lampoon came calling after seeing him at The Second City, so that was the opportunity.

HollywoodChicago.com: In the New York City in the early 1970s – that gritty almost bankrupt metropolis – was was the most adventurous thing you could run into there, and how did that play into the influence of John’s comedy?

Belushi: We ran into a lot of transvestites tripping on acid. [laughs] Just moving to New York from a Chicago suburb was pretty scary, and an adventure in itself. But we did find out that you couldn’t get a milk shake in New York City at any time of night, as John Lennon once said. [laughs] New York City was great, since John had a good job and we had somewhere to go.

HollywoodChicago.com: Speaking of John Lennon, did you ever run into him while you were lived there?

Belushi: Not in the city. But here’s a funny story. John and I were doing a tropical vacation, during one the weeks that he had off from ‘Saturday Night Live.’ While we were there, I told John I noticed another couple - a guy who I thought was American, playing the guitar, and his Asian wife, who was playing with their kid. I thought he and his wife were very cosmopolitan. I actually saw the guy’s butt when I went past him at the showers. [laughs] Finally around the third day we were having breakfast, and another guy walked up to us and said, ‘Hey, John Belushi, how are doing? Did you get a chance to meet John Lennon?’ John looked and me and said, ‘interesting cosmopolitan couple, eh?’

HollywoodChicago.com: When I watch John in ‘The Blues Brothers,’ I remain so impressed with his instinct for character and comedy. What did you love about his and Danny Akyroyd’s creation of his character Jake Blues, that only an intimate companion could pick up?

Belushi: I don’t know about that. What I do know is that the brother instincts between Danny and John was from their heart - it beat as one. Their ability to watch out for each other and to carry on through anything was the soul of that film.

HollywoodChicago.com: You watched a love one gain unprecedented fame. Besides the surface problems with John’s appetite for temptations, what type of insanity did the lover that you knew fall into, regarding a shift in his perspective?

Belushi: That’s a great question, and probably in about three days I’ll have a great answer. [laughs] We both grew a lot. I can equate it to immigrants moving from a foreign country to America. It was whole new world, and we had to learn about people - what to believe and who to trust. Hopefully, we could still trust each other, and that our instincts and sensibilities could stay in sync.

HollywoodChicago.com: What do your children think about your show business history past? When they came of age were they curious about it, or did it just seem like ancient history not worth talking about?



Judy Belushi in ‘Animal House’
Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment

Belushi: Neither. In some ways it was like my secret life, my double life. It’s known in my family, because my work overlaps with John so much. When my son was about three years old, I went and picked up a car from a repair garage. John’s picture was on the wall. My son exclaimed, ‘That’s my mommy’s husband.’ The guy in the garage said, ‘your son has a great imagination.’ [laughs] I also remember that John’s nephew had to get an autograph from him, because his classmates didn’t believe that John Belushi was his uncle. It’s unique when you’re one of those kids behind that fame.

HollywoodChicago.com: What do your kids think now?

Belushi: Well, involving the new movie, I was talking to my daughter about Emile Hirsch being cast as John. We were talking about some of the other people up for it, and she told me, ‘well, they’re not sexy, and John is sexy!’ Oh, I felt a bit uncomfortable. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: I’m running out of questions, but here is what I hope is an interesting one...

Belushi: What, did you buy these questions at the corner store? Where did you get all these questions?

HollywoodChicago.com: Okay, if you could go back in time back to high school in Wheaton, what would you tell the young Judy Jacklin to watch out for regarding John. And what would you tell John to watch out for regarding Judy?

Belushi: Well, he already watched out for me, so I wouldn’t have to go that way. I don’t know about young Judy, maybe tell her to watch out for his propensity for illicit substances?

HollywoodChicago.com: You are delightfully funny, you must have given John and all those comic legends he hung out with a run for their money, and welcome back to your hometown area.

Belushi: I want to have fun with everyone this weekend. Toga!

Judy Belushi, former cast members and the producer will appear for “Animal House” at the Hollywood Palms (Naperville, Ill.) on November 16th and the Hollywood Blvd. Cinema (Woodridge) on November 15th and 17th. [Click here](#) [18] for more information and to purchase tickets.



[19]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

© 2013 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 7:49am):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/22848/interview-judy-belushi-to-honor-john-by-hosting-animal-house-in-chicagoland>

- Links:**
- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
 - [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/animal-house>
 - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/bluto>
 - [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/flounder>
 - [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywood-blvd>
 - [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywood-palms>
 - [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
 - [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
 - [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/john-belushi>

- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/judy-belushi>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/karen-allen>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mark-metcalf>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/martha-smith>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matty-simmons>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/otis-day-the-knights>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/stephen-furst>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodpalmscinema.com/index.php?src=events&srctype=detail&refno=211&category=Special%20Events>
- [19] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>