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Maggie Paine
UNH Media Relations

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T.V. Producer Marcy Carsey Garners UNH Alumni Honor

By [Maggie Paine](#)
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM -- The University of New Hampshire Alumni Association will award its highest honor -- the Pettee Medal -- to television producer Marcy Carsey, Edwinna C. Vanderzanden, president of the Alumni Association, announced today. Carsey, who graduated cum laude from UNH in 1966 with a degree in English, is the producer of such hits as *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanne* and *Third Rock from the Sun*. She will receive the award at a ceremony on Oct. 1.

"Marcy's accomplishments as a television producer, businesswoman, role model for other women in business, and philanthropist are legion," says Paul Caswell, first vice president of the Alumni Association and chair of the Pettee Medal selection committee. "She exemplifies the kind of outstanding achievement and distinguished service represented by the late Dean Pettee, for whom the medal is named, and we are proud to award it to her."

Carsey's talents are familiar to anyone who has watched television in the last two decades. Together with partner Tom Werner, Carsey has built the world's most successful independent production company. "In doing so," Caswell notes, "she has brought a sense of quality, substance, and integrity to network television."

Carsey says she strives to make every show "worthy of its airtime. We have found that if you want to produce good T.V., you have to do it in a unique way, ignoring the trends and trusting your instincts," she explains. "That means bringing together the finest writers, casting directors, producers, and directors, and allowing those talented people to grow and flourish."

Viewers have responded; Carsey-Werner has had a string of hits since its first, *The Cosby Show*, in 1984. During the 1988-89 season, the company became the first independent or studio to sweep the top three rankings with *The Cosby Show* at number one, *Roseanne* at number two, and *A Different World* at number three. Since then Carsey-Werner has produced many successful comedies, including *Grace Under Fire*, *Cybill*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, *That '70s Show*, and *Cosby*.

Following her graduation from UNH, Carsey moved to New York to work as a tour guide at NBC, then as a gopher on *The Tonight Show*. After a stint in the programming department of a New York advertising agency, she moved to Los Angeles in 1969. There she acted in commercials and worked as a script reader and story analyst.

In 1974, Carsey went to ABC -- then the third-place network -- in a similar capacity. She rose rapidly through the ranks, first to vice president of prime time comedy and variety programs, then to senior vice president of prime time series, responsible for the creation, development, and supervision of all prime-time series on the network. Along the way, Carsey oversaw the shows that put ABC on top of the ratings by the late '70s: *Mork and Mindy*, *Soap*, *Barney Miller*, and *Taxi*.

In November, 1980, Carsey left to form her own production company. A colleague at ABC, Tom Werner, joined her a year later, and the two formed Carsey-Werner. The company now employs more than 100 people. That same year both Carsey and Werner were inducted into the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame.

Carsey has consistently championed the rights of minorities. Ignoring the executives who told her that a sitcom about a black professional and his family would never appeal to a mass audience, she talked NBC into committing to six episodes of *The Cosby Show*. For six years, Carsey funded a program that brought talented minority high school students to UNH for instruction in music and English. The program was designed to offer the advantages of the university's strong English and music departments, as well as to enrich the university with the

diversity of students enrolling in the program. Many participants subsequently went on to attend UNH.

Carsey-Werner has won The Emmy, the People's Choice Award, The Golden Globe, The NAACP Image Award, The Humanitas Prize, The Peabody, and humanitarian awards for Carsey and Werner's efforts to produce responsible television.

In 1993, Carsey was named one of the top 50 women business owners in the nation. She has helped create opportunities for women in broadcasting and, along with partners Tom Werner and Caryn Mandabach, has joined forces with former Nickelodeon executive Geraldine Laybourne and Oprah Winfrey to create a new venture called Oxygen. This multimedia company

will fuse a new cable channel with an Internet base,
directed to serve women.

A founding member of the University of New
Hampshire Foundation Board of Directors, Carsey has
worked tirelessly to ensure its success. She received an
honorary doctorate from UNH in 1988.

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