

## LAUGH OUT LOUD

presents

Jay  
Leno

former Tonight Show host in Mississauga

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch photography Steve Uhraney

Jay Leno certainly knows how to make an entrance. The former host of *The Tonight Show* and host of CNBC's *Jay Leno's Garage* hopped onto a 2018 Fat Bob Harley-Davidson and rode it into the ballroom at the Toronto Congress Centre at the recent *Laugh Out Loud (LOL), A Night With a Legend* in support of Trillium Health Partners. It's one of 210 entrances Jay makes a year as a comedian in high demand.

Emcee Ben Mulroney, anchor of *etalk* and co-host of CTV's *Your Morning* introduced Jay Leno this way: "You know him as the long time host of *The Tonight Show*. but I know him as 'Dad,'" referring to Ben's real dad, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Jay Leno having distinctive, look-a-like chins.

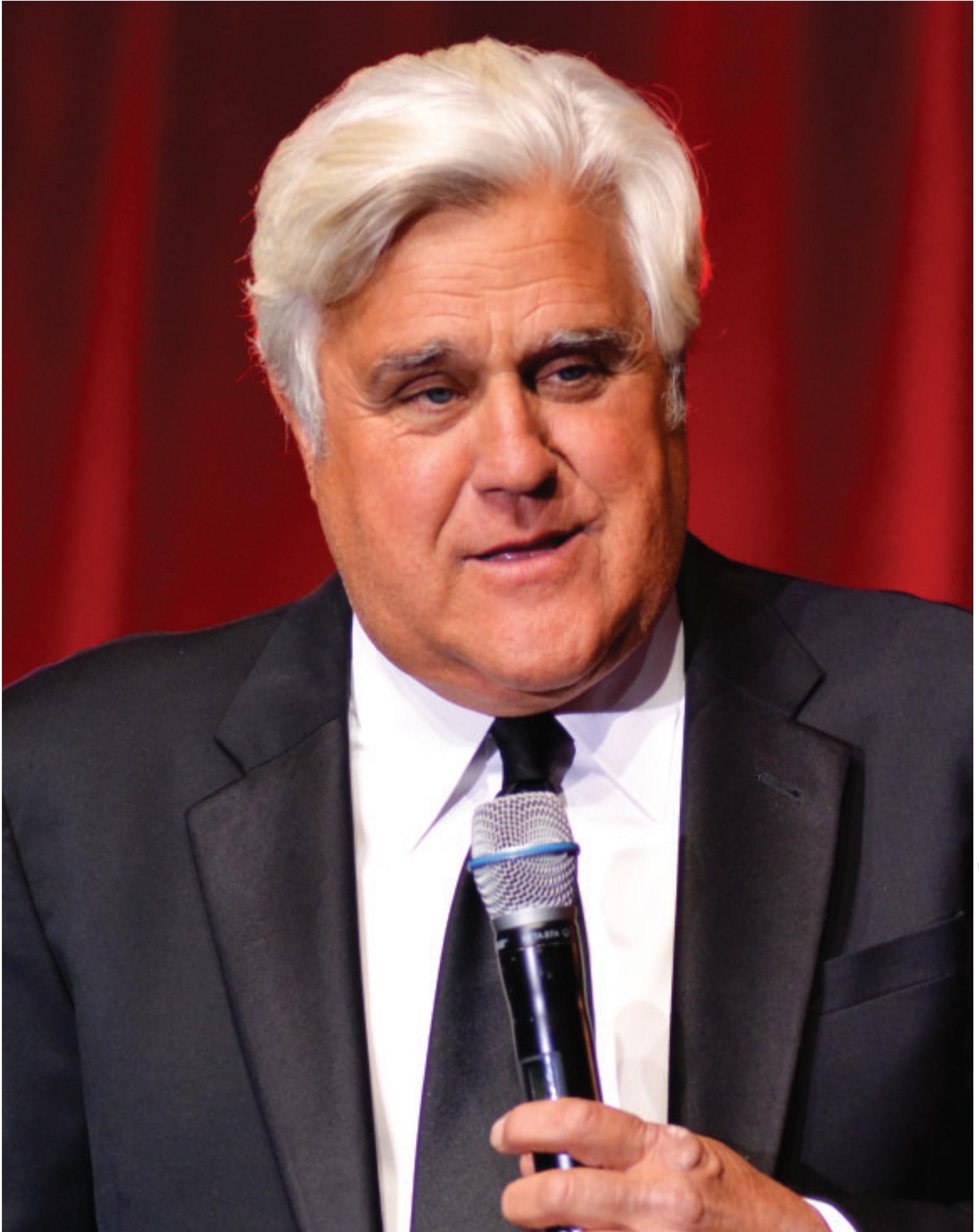
Leno's first task at hand was to help auction off an exclusive trip for two to Los Angeles for a rare chance to visit Jay's custom built *Big Dog Garage* and tour his car

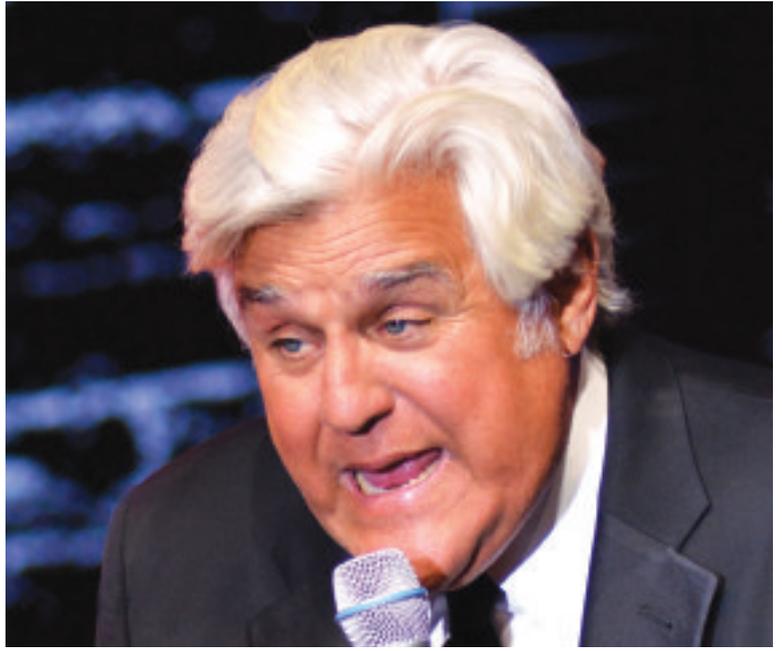
and motorcycle collection—one of the greatest collections in America. The trip included airfare via Delta Air Lines and two-night accommodations at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills.

*Big Dog Garage* is also where Leno films Jay Leno's *Garage* which airs on CNBC. Jay, a pioneering car builder and mechanic, is joined by a team of mechanical wizards who can fix, restore and customize just about anything on wheels. Each week the comedian takes viewers on a unique automotive adventure. He talked about his show with me backstage prior to the event: "I wanted to do something different after so many years of interviewing dopey celebrities," he laughs. "Everyone knows I love cars and motorcycles so this is my chance to talk about them with others."

Jay bought his first car before he even had a driver's licence. "We lived in a rural area at a time when people

Jay Leno hosts the 6th Annual  
Laugh Out Loud Gala to support  
Trillium Health Partners' My Hospital Fund





bought cars and fixed them up themselves,” explains Jay. “I was about 14 years old and my friends and I found an old car in a field and we learned how to fix it up and make it run. It was a great feeling of freedom to have a car. We would drive it around the field and my mother would watch us out the kitchen window. Today people would freak out about that and someone would call child services!”

When a TV reporter asked Jay if he had a favourite car, Jay shook his head no, and asked; “Do you have a favourite pair of shoes? It’s sort of the same thing. It depends on the day.”

When I asked if there was a car he wanted to buy when he first became successful, Jay answered: “I don’t buy a car, I buy a story. A while ago I got a call from this woman and I’m not sure about her age, but she told me that she was Marilyn Monroe’s roommate before Marilyn became famous. She said she had a red ‘66 Mustang convertible and asked if I wanted to buy it. I went out to see it and it looked brand new. She was this rich older lady who only drove it on special occasions. I bought it, because THAT’S a story!”

Jay has a heart as large as his car collection and has given away many cars to be auctioned to raise money for a charitable cause. “I try to do something every year, and auction a car for charity, and I’ve done it for first responders, the *Make-A-Wish Foundation* and others,” says Jay.

Jay was born in New Rochelle, New York. His family later moved to Andover, Massachusetts where Jay spent most of his childhood and teenage years. He began his stand-up career while in college in Boston and then moved to L.A. and wrote for the TV show *Good Times*. In the mid ‘80s Leno made many successful appearances on late-night TV. He became the Guest Host of *The Tonight Show* in 1987, and Host in 1992 when Johnny Carson retired.

Throughout his career, Jay has been inspired by many comedians, “Johnny Carson, Robert Kline, Richard Pryor, Jerry Seinfeld.”

After 17 years, the Emmy-award winning host decided to call it quits in 2010. Conan O’Brien took over, but after a few months, Leno was called back as host, causing quite a stir. Leno left *The Tonight Show* in 2014 when his contract ended. He’s won countless awards and has a star on Hollywood’s Walk of Fame.

On stage, Leno throws in the occasional tidbit about his personal life. He and his wife (Mavis Nicholson) live in L.A. and have been married 38 years. The couple has

no children. Ironically, he’s a best-selling children’s book author. Anyone, anywhere can relate to his jokes about TV bingeing, fast food, the bacon-flavoured condoms he saw recently in Las Vegas (he jokes—“don’t try them if there’s a dog in the room!”), and aging. “I don’t mind being 67,” says Jay. “Thirty years ago when I was doing *The Tonight Show*, I was going 100 miles an hour on my motorcycle and had a crash. Three days later I was back at work. Last Thursday I was sitting on the couch and I yawned and turned my head at the same time and couldn’t get up off the couch. I was hurting for days!”

He recounts another incident which happened recently in L.A. “Two months ago I was driving my ‘61 Chrysler in Burbank and this attractive woman in her 30s was waving at me. I rolled down the window and asked ‘can I help you?’ She gave me her phone number. I am married and have been out of the dating game a long time, but I thought, well, I still have it. Then she said, ‘I’m a private nurse, just in case you ever need one.’ I guess she was driving around looking for old guys with grey hair. I guess she saw my white hair and thought I was about to die anytime.”

Jay may have arrived on a Harley, but he exited on foot amidst the roaring sound of thunderous applause and a standing ovation. On his way out he no doubt had a chance to check out the stunning collection of 13 vintage cars valued at \$5 million dollars in a display/photo op sponsored by PFAFF.

The 6th annual LOL event sponsored by Square One, raised over \$1.5 million, exceeding the fundraising goal. Proceeds from the event will support the purchase of a new MRI machine for Trillium Health Partners.

“MRI images account for many of the nearly 650,000 diagnostic scans performed each year at Trillium Health Partners and are the most effective means for obtaining rapid diagnoses,” states Steve Hoscheit, President & CEO of Trillium Health Partners Foundation. “I have been a huge fan of Jay Leno’s for many years and having him here gives a big boost to the work we are doing. Trillium Health Partners Foundation is dedicated to raising the critical funds needed to address the highest priority needs of Trillium Health Partners, one of the largest community-based acute care facilities in Canada.”

Trillium Health Partners is comprised of The Credit Valley Hospital, Mississauga Hospital and Queensway Health Centre. [www.trilliumgiving.ca](http://www.trilliumgiving.ca) 

Jay Leno has a heart as large as his car collection and has given away many vehicles to be auctioned to raise money for charitable causes. He began his stand-up career while in college in Boston and then moved to L.A. In the mid ‘80s he made many successful appearances on late-night TV. He became guest host of *The Tonight Show* in 1987 and host in 1992 when Johnny Carson retired. After 17 years, the Emmy-award winning host decided to call it quits in 2010.