

## SEGUE

## M\*A\*S\*H's Farrell discusses acting, activism, upcoming visit to SIUE

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For the Intelligencer

EDWARDSVILLE — Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is proud to welcome noted actor and activist Mike Farrell for his upcoming performance of Dr. Keeling's Curve at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 1 in the Dunham Hall Theater.

On this week's episode of Segue, SIUE's radio show that discusses the lives and work of the people on campus and beyond, host Greg Budzban, PhD, College of Arts and Science dean, interviews the star about his upcoming performance. This Segue episode airs at 9 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 24 on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound and [siue.edu/wsie](http://siue.edu/wsie).

Sponsored by the SIUE Graduate School and the Madison County Regional Office of Education, the M\*A\*S\*H and Providence actor will perform in the one-man show as Dr. Charles David Keeling, the scientist whose research on carbon dioxide (CO2) gave the world its first

early warnings of global warming.

"Thank you so much for taking time to be on our show!" Budzban exclaims. "Everyone knows you as Dr. B.J. Hunnicutt on M\*A\*S\*H, your iconic role on TV, but your distinguished and long career captures a variety of experiences."

Farrell chronicles in his autobiography, "Just Call Me Mike: A Journey to Actor and Activist," that his dreams of becoming an actor extend back to his childhood. When he was two-years-old, his family moved from St. Paul, Minn. to Hollywood where his father worked as a movie studio carpenter. Upon graduation, he joined the United States Marine Corps and served in Okinawa, Japan.

As a Marine, Farrell developed close friendships with his fellow service members regardless of ethnicity. Since segregation was not prevalent on the West Coast when he was growing up, the animos-



Farrell

ity white members displayed toward African American members deeply saddened him.

This influenced his involvement in the civil rights movement upon his discharge from the Corps.

"After I got out of the Marines, I still wondered what it would be like to have a career in acting," Farrell says. "I knew I lived in the center of the action. I was just scared and didn't know what to do."

Through a friend's suggestion, Farrell joined an actor's workshop to learn the tricks of the trade. From there, he began taking more acting classes, hired an agent and had the opportunity to audition for roles in theater, commercials, television and film.

Farrell starred in guest roles on several TV shows like Lassie, I Dream of Jeannie and Combat! before landing his iconic role of B.J. Hunnicutt on M\*A\*S\*H in 1975.

"The show was about

the Korean War, but the backdrop was political commentary about Vietnam," Budzban says. "I appreciated that the show took risks that others didn't want to take at the time."

"I thought the show was phenomenal," Farrell exclaims. "The show got laughs, it entertained people, but it also talked about something very important."

During and after his role in the show, Farrell's passion for activism continued. He joined the California Human Rights Watch and publicly spoke out against potential legislation that discriminated against LGBTQ public school teachers. The law did not pass. He supported the women's revolution and the continuing civil rights movement. In the 1980s, he joined a doctor and delivered medical supplies to Central America with Amnesty International.

"Activism has been a very important part of my life for the past 40 years," Farrell says.

"With that in mind,

it's no surprise that you would get involved with something so dire as global warming," Budzban says. "How did Dr. Keeling's Curve actually get created?"

"With all of my involvement in other areas, there was also a growing awareness in the environmental catastrophe developing," Farrell recalls. "A man from my neighborhood, George Shea, approached me and said he was thinking of writing a one-man show about global warming featuring Dr. David Keeling."

"He told me he was the guy who made the fundamental connection between the rise of CO2 in our atmosphere and the warming of the globe, and I said, 'that'd be an interesting thing to do!'"

Dr. Keeling's Curve combines the scientist's personal journey with insights of atmospheric scientists, who hundreds of years earlier, made discoveries that laid the foundations for Keeling's own extraordinary work.

"Since things in our climate are changing so rapidly, we've had to update the show from just five years ago. The differences in the atmosphere were not as severe," Farrell says. "It's coming now to the point that the most ardent deniers have the most difficult time justifying their disbelief."

"I'm seeing data that indicates that 2018 was the fourth highest on record in terms of global temperature," Budzban exclaims.

"Intercontinental Panel on Climate Change has updated its reports to say that we are in a much more dangerous situation than they have originally stated," Farrell says. "They said if we do not do something serious in the next dozen years, the damage that we have done will be irreversible. People around the globe truly will be in dire conditions." Tune into the entire conversation at 9 a.m. this Sunday on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound and [siue.edu/wsie](http://siue.edu/wsie).