

Oldie, but a Goodie

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was little, I played little league baseball. I was not a great ballplayer, so I had to do whatever I could to get on base. I was one of the few left-handed batters in the league, and I crowded the plate. I set a record by being hit by a pitch 14 times, and I'm proud to say that 3 of the pitchers that hit me went on to pitch in college. "Any way on," as Brewers manager Ron Roenicke would say.

My skills were so lacking, they probably would have let me play against the little leaguers when I got to high school. Unlike Danny Almonte, I wouldn't have had to lie about my age – I was so bad, they would have let me play even though they knew I was too old. In case you don't remember, Almonte was the mustachioed pitching phenom who led his Bronx team to a third-place finish in the 2001 Little League World Series. Two weeks later, however, officials discovered he was two years too old to be eligible.

Almonte is not alone in lying about his age. It is often said that a woman never forgets her age once she decides what it is. And so it is true in Hollywood, where many an actress has fibbed about her birth date to get a part. One actress, however, has taken the lie to the extreme – she's actually going to court.

The actress, identified as "Jane Doe" in the court filings to maintain her anonymity, has sued the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), and its parent company, Amazon.com, for revealing her actual age. The complaint describes Ms. Doe as an actress of Asian descent who "scrupulously hid both her real name and age" as she tried to break into the acting industry.

According to the suit, she worked so hard to hide her true age and difficult to pronounce Asian name because they hurt her chances of landing parts because in Hollywood, "youth is king." The lawsuit further stated that "if one is perceived to be over-the-hill i.e. approaching 40, it is nearly impossible for an up and coming actress, such as the Plaintiff, to get work."

One of the ways Ms. Doe tried to get work was by subscribing to an "industry insider" version of IMDb called IMDbPro. IMDb is an unbelievably comprehensive, searchable website where you can find listings about every movie or television appearance an actor, director or producer ever worked on. To subscribe to the Pro version, Jane Doe had to use a credit card to pay the monthly fee. Shortly after signing up, her IMDb page reflected her actual age, exposing her secret to directors and casting agents.

Jane alleges in her suit that IMDbPro used her credit card information, along with public records, to ascertain her real age without her consent. When she asked the website to remove her real age, IMDb refused. Ms. Doe accuses IMDbPro of intercepting "credit card information obtained during the subscription process for the purposes of gathering information about its subscribers" and further claims that "both defendants are fully aware of the information-gathering, storing and usage process and have done nothing to stop the unlawful and wrong practices."

Jane Doe is seeking \$1 million in punitive damages in the suit for IMDb's "unfair, immoral and unscrupulous" practices. IMDbPro has a privacy policy on its website regarding the posting of personal information. It states, "We receive and store any information you enter on our Web site or give us in any other way," and that the company reserves the right to gather information "like your name and age" when users register.

Many actresses will be following the lawsuit closely. I feel she won't win, however, because lying about your age is getting old.