

= John Carpenter (game show contestant) =

John Carpenter (born c . 1968) is an American game show contestant and IRS agent . He is best known for becoming the first top prize winner on the United States version of Who Wants to Be a Millionaire . He held the record for the largest single win in United States game show history , until it was broken by Rahim Oberholtzer who won \$ 12 million on another U.S. quiz show , Twenty One . Carpenter was also the first top prize winner among all international versions of the Who Wants to Be a Millionaire ? series .

On the November 19 , 1999 , episode , Carpenter proceeded to advance to the million dollar question without using any lifelines . He then used his Phone A Friend to call his father not for help , but rather to tell him he was going to win the game . Carpenter answered the question correctly and became the show 's first millionaire . His win gave him national recognition and led to multiple talk show appearances , as well as reappearances on Millionaire itself .

= = Career and family = =

Carpenter is from Northampton , Massachusetts . His father , Tom , worked as a computer program analyst for the Department of Veterans Affairs , while his mother , Gail , served as an administrative assistant for the Massachusetts Audubon Society . In 1986 , he enrolled at Rutgers University and graduated in 1990 with a degree in economics . In January 1991 , he joined the Internal Revenue Service after completing government exams and tests . In November 1996 , Carpenter met his future wife , Deborah , who was studying for a Master 's degree at Southern Connecticut State University and worked as a manager of a Fleet Bank branch in New Haven . They married in August 1998 . At the time of his appearance on Millionaire , he was 31 years old . When he revealed his profession as an IRS officer on Millionaire , Carpenter was playfully booed by the audience .

= = Who Wants to Be a Millionaire = =

Carpenter was originally uninterested in Millionaire but eventually tuned in one night after dinner while having friends over at his house . When he found the show 's higher tier questions to not be , in his words , " any more difficult " than the lower tier ones , he decided to call in to the show 's hotline for a chance to become a contestant . Carpenter answered all of the hotline questions correctly and was on the show within two days .

Host Regis Philbin described Carpenter as having " cruised right through those first fourteen questions , " he had proceeded to reach the final question without using any of his lifelines . The \$ 1 million question was , " Which of these U.S. Presidents appeared on the television series ' Laugh In ' ? " , with the choices being A) Lyndon Johnson , B) Richard Nixon , C) Jimmy Carter , and D) Gerald Ford . Carpenter used his Phone A Friend lifeline to call his father not for help , but rather to inform him that he knew the answer . Carpenter later explained , " I thought I 'd look so cocky if I didn 't use any lifelines , so I faked it . "

With his win , Carpenter became the first contestant in the worldwide Millionaire franchise to win the show 's top prize . He said that the only question that had flustered him was one which asked for the location of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral . Carpenter eventually remembered that the film Tombstone included the gunfight , and he replied correctly with the answer ' Tombstone , Arizona ' . While taking a vacation after his win , Carpenter considered quitting his job with the IRS , but eventually decided against it . He explained to Kiplinger 's Personal Finance that " after the taxes , it 's not change your life kind of money if you want to eat every day . " Carpenter also described the fame as having a bigger impact on his life than the money , later stating : " The money doesn 't change your life . What happens afterwards might . "

= = Later work = =

Shortly after winning on Millionaire , Carpenter played himself in a Saturday Night Live skit . Donald

Trump , played by Darrell Hammond , announced that Carpenter would be his running @-@ mate in the presidential election . Afterward , Carpenter pretended to call his father , then shouted , " Live from New York , it 's Saturday Night ! " Carpenter also appeared on Good Morning America , Oprah Winfrey Show , Live with Regis and Kathie Lee , and Late Show with David Letterman .

Carpenter appeared as himself in the second half of the fourth season of Oz . He plays a contestant in a fictional TV game show called Up Your Ante that the prisoners in Em City are watching . The show within the show is hosted by Gordon Elliott , with Eartha Kitt and Didi Conn appearing as celebrity participants .

With Rod L. Evans , Carpenter co @-@ authored a trivia book entitled Matching Wits With the Million @-@ Dollar Mind : The World 's Hardest Trivia Quizzes From America 's First Quiz Show Millionaire . The book was published by Berkley Books in 2002 .

= = = Other game show appearances = = =

In 2000 , Carpenter appeared in the Who Wants to Be a Millionaire Champions Edition , in which previous contestants who won \$ 250 @,@ 000 ? \$ 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 played again , with half of their additional winnings from the Champions Edition going to a charity of their choice . Carpenter won \$ 250 @,@ 000 , bringing his total Millionaire winnings \$ 1 @,@ 250 @,@ 000 . In 2004 , Carpenter participated in Super Millionaire , as one of the " Three Wise Men " on the episode during which Robert " Bob @-@ O " Essig won \$ 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 .

He later participated as part of the Mob on NBC 's 1 vs. 100 on October 27 , 2006 @.@ and as a contestant on the Game Show Network game show Grand Slam . Carpenter appeared on the August 16 , 2009 episode of Millionaire in prime time for its tenth anniversary . In the audience with him was his dad , his wife , and his son . Additionally , he was also the first expert in the " Ask the Expert " lifeline for the eighth season of the syndicated series .