

Dirty old man



Dick Van Dyke learns to curse for Mary Tyler Moore reunion

By MICHAEL GILTZ

DICK Van Dyke is ready to call it quits. Really. "Ever since 'Diagnosis: Murder' got cancelled two years ago, I've been trying to retire," says the 77-year-old actor. "But I'm finding this business harder to get out of than it was to get into." His long-running mystery show — which aired on CBS for about 10 years — is a staple of the PAX weblet and is playing all over Europe. Van Dyke just hosted on "Scrubs." "The Dick Van Dyke Show" — co-starring Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore as Rob and Laura

Petrie — was just honored by TV Land, sparking Carl Reiner to develop a one-hour special that will reunite the remaining cast for CBS. His classic movie "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" is a smash musical on the London stage. ("Mary Poppins" is in the works, too.) And he and Moore reunite on the TV movie "The Gin Game" (Sunday at 9 p.m. on PBS) for the first time since their show left the air in 1966. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning play made legendary by Hume Cronin and Jessica Tandy, it features two lonely old

people at a rest home who battle each other in cards while feeling out the possibility for one last chance at companionship if not love. Moore is heavily made up to look older for the part, while Van Dyke looks much as he has playing Dr. Mark Sloan for the past decade. "They had to do a lot of work on her," laughs Van Dyke, "but they didn't have to touch me." If he watches the special, it will be a rare thing for the actor. "I don't watch any episodic television anymore," confesses Van Dyke, who had never seen "Scrubs" until he



Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore are together in tomorrow night's "The Gin Game" on PBS (above) for the first time since their classic sitcom in the '60s (left).

was asked to appear. And what he does watch seems too coarse. "It's strange to do a show like 'Scrubs' because times really have changed. Everything is set-up, punchline, set-up, punchline. Much, much faster. Not as much character stuff. And you know the one thing I noticed? Characters are really kind of mean to each other compared to the way we used to do it." That old-fashioned decency explains why Van Dyke had to learn how to cuss for "The Gin Game"

— he simply doesn't do it in real life and had to practice to make it sound convincing. It also explains why a career that began on stage with the classic "Bye Bye Birdie" and exploded with "The Dick Van Dyke Show" never quite translated to film. "I turned down a lot of movies. I didn't have much of a movie career because I simply didn't want to do that stuff." Now Van Dyke sings in a quartet that is recording a CD and tears hospitals performing children's songs. But mostly he can be found indulging his hobby: Animation he whips up on computers. "I just got a program that will grow hair," says Van Dyke. "I've been sitting here putting hair on billiard balls and anything I can think of."