

Erika's World

August 2022

Erika Slezak
Official Fan Club
erikaslezakfc@yahoo.com

Website
www.erikaslezak.com

Erika's World Staff

Honorary President
Erika Slezak

President & Publisher
Walter Miller, Jr.

Editor
AJ

Assistant Editor
Kathryn [Kit] Williams

Founded
October, 1971

© 2022 Erika's World

All rights reserved. No text
may be reproduced without
written permission.

Thank goodness for speakerphones, as Erika was in the middle of preparing Stuffed Peppers for dinner on Thursday evening, August 18th, when Walter and Erika recently spoke.

So, last time we heard from you was though your Holiday letter in December, and Brian was in rehab after his fall. How is he doing now?

He's doing brilliantly. He came home the 24th of March and since then he has been in rehab at a wonderful facility that belongs to Norwalk hospital. He is walking very comfortably with a walker, and is quite independent. He dresses himself and needs help with just a few things, but basically he is doing so well, and I am just thrilled. Initially, he was told that he might not recover at all or that he might recover partially, and the way it looks now, he is going to recover completely.

How has his mind-set been? It's been hard on him, but he's been as accommodating as he can possibly be because he understands what we have been doing for him, as it has been a 24-hour a day job looking after him. He is feeling a lot better about himself now. For quite a while we wondered if he would ever be mobile again, and now he's walking around this house with a walker. He can do stairs. We gave him a pool table for Christmas, and he's able to go up to the second floor now to get

to it. The first time he saw it was three weeks ago (chuckle) which is how long it has taken him to go up a whole flight of stairs.

It's really a miracle. It is, it's a wonderful miracle. I have to give credit where it is due. It's his own hard work and it's prayers. I have prayed and prayed and prayed. In this case, I prayed overtime.

I am absolutely thrilled for all of you, and I know it had to be hard for the whole family. Well, it has been difficult, but I also want to say that your Aunt Barbara and her prayer group have been partially responsible for all this. We're all praying but having other people pray helps a lot!

You sold the house in Vermont last year? Yes, we left the house on the 15th of November with movers and U-Hauls. As much as I loved it, I'm very glad that we sold it because it was getting to be nothing but work. It was an old house that we completely redid and revamped and added onto. A lot of it had to be rebuilt because half of it was falling down. It was well worth it but it's an old house built in 1810. It was a wooden house and wood, under those Vermont

conditions, needs constant attention. A lot of it had to be replaced over the years, as the weather is another factor. In the winter, where we were, it goes easily down to 20 below zero. At my age, and at Brian's age, who the heck wants to go out in 20 below zero? The other thing is that being in the Snow Belt, it would snow, then it would rain and then it would freeze so a lot of it was ice. A year ago January we went out for a walk, and I had to go down a slight grade in the back yard, and I slipped and hit my head on the ice. I went to the ER and had a CT scan, and fortunately there was nothing wrong. The people we sold it to are much younger, they have kids, and they're going to love it. They had a place not too far away and they wanted a bigger place, and to build a barn for their horses. The whole thing worked out to our benefit and their benefit, as it truly is a beautiful place.

You had wonderful memories at that home. How many years were you there? We bought it in 2002 and we sold it in 2021, so 19 years.

How is the family doing? You said Michael is a huge help. Michael is just a genius. I couldn't turn on the television without Michael because he has set everything up in a way that is very sophisticated and technical. He hands me a remote and I say, "Now what do I do?" I grew up having to get up to change the channel! My father used to make one of us stand and hold the rabbit ear antennas while he watched whatever program was on, so that we had reception (chuckling). It was funny. All of this is very new to me, and I try to learn it but it doesn't want to stick in my head. If Michael is not here, I have to call him and that's embarrassing for him and for me! "Michael, what do I do now?" is a common refrain.

How is Amanda doing? Amanda is well. She rented a cute little cottage on Lake Rescue for the summer, and together, Brian and I have purchased a sweet little condo for her in

Killington, Vermont. She loves it there. So, she'll stay in the cottage until the end of the Summer and then move into the condo.

How are the animals? The animals are fine. Little Harry died suddenly on Ash Wednesday. He was only ten years old, and that totally broke my heart. I'm looking to get another dog, but I'm not sure when or where as this isn't time to get a new dog. When Brian completes his rehab, I will get another dog - perhaps a Maltese or maybe a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

What are the other animals and their names? Lucy is twelve (tabby cat which we adopted from the Northshore Animal League), then we have Emily who is 10 years old. She is black cat with only one white spot. She is much more independent, and she is Brian's cat. She loves him and he loves her. When we go to sleep at night, she tries to push me off the bed! Then, we have Archie, our 10-year-old bearded collie, and we have Alfie who is the English Cocker Spaniel. Alfie is eight. I'm hoping to have a dog that is compatible with Archie and Alfie.

What about Amanda's dog? Well, Emma (age fourteen) is just hanging on forever. She has no eyes now because one eye had an infection, and then ultimately the other as well, and both had to be removed. She cannot walk on a leash, but Amanda takes her outside and she wanders around and then she comes back inside and sleeps. Other than that, she is healthy.

What are you watching? Do you stream your shows? On Paramount + we watched The Offer, which was about the making of The Godfather, and we thought it was brilliant. Right now, we're watching a show with Chris Pratt. We're also watching Only Murders in the Building, which is an adorable show with Steve Martin, Martin Short, and Selena Gomez, on Hulu. Steve Martin and John Hoffman created it, and it's just adorable and we're already into the second

season. It's so funny, and just a terrific show. Hacks, with Jean Smart, is a show I just LOVE! She is unbelievably good!

Did you guys watch The Crown? Yes, we're waiting for the next season, which starts in November.

Who has been your favorite actress playing the Queen in this series? They were all different. Olivia Coleman was brilliant. Claire Foy was fabulous. They have all been so good. Every night we watch Jeopardy after dinner, and then Brian always asks, "What are we going to watch?" Then I respond, "What do you want to watch?" Then Brian asks, "What are the choices?" "Well, there are about 600,000 things you can watch...what do you want to watch?"

Do you watch Bridgerton? Yes, I love Bridgerton. I'm such a sucker for stuff like that. For my birthday, Michael gave me two fabulous books. One of them was called A Lady's Guide to Fortune Hunting by Sophie Irwin. In our local bookshop, one of the associates said, "If you liked Bridgerton, you would adore this!" It's a beach read but it's terrific! Then, the other book is a very interesting book called, Josephine The Spy about a remarkable singer, actress, and dancer, Josephine Baker, who was born in abject poverty in the United States and when she turned seventeen or eighteen she decided to get out of the United States. She moved to Paris, and she became the absolute sensation of Paris. She ultimately became a spy for the British during World War II. I'm reading that now and it's so interesting.

Do you watch Succession and The Gilded Age? We did watch Succession a couple of years ago, but we just didn't follow through on it. Again, there is so much to watch. We haven't watched The Gilded Age.

Do you garden? No, gardening has always been Brian's thing. He has always loved going out and

spending time there. He has not been able to do that this year. A lot of it just got left.

Are you still active with the St. Jude's Charity? Yes, very much!

Any other charities? I donate as much as I can to our local church parish, St. Aloysius...and in case anyone doesn't know, I'm Catholic. We have a wonderful bunch of priests there. And of course, we support the local fire department and the local police forces and I support St. Jude and then also The Actors Fund.

Any specific animal charities? The Humane Society. Years ago, I got a request from a Donkey Association, and I just love donkeys. So, every year they send me a calendar full of little donkeys and I send them a little bit of money.

I understand you are going to be participating in the Daytime Stars and Strikes Online Fundraiser to fight Autism (18th Annual Daytime Stars and Strikes Virtual Event for Autism – October 9, 2022 from 2-6pm EDT) Note: Alan Locher of the Locher Room and Wendy, who worked with Jerry verDorn, informed Erika there would be a virtual call in and asked if she would participate in this year's annual fundraiser. I said, "You bet I would because Jerry verDorn was one of the great human beings on this earth. I loved him dearly. He was such a pleasure, everything about him was fantastic. I was very, very sad that he died so young. I was devastated when I got the news that he passed away because this was a great man.

Jerry seemed to be such a kind person. He was beyond that. He was kind and sweet and funny and SMART, and everything about him was so warm. We could tease each other and when you work with someone that special, you can wake up in the morning and say, "YIPPEE, I get to work with Jerry today!" Even when we went online and he became "Clint the Horrible," he was always wonderful. I was very lucky that all

the men I worked with, were terrific. They all had their little quirks, but they were terrific, and it was a pleasure for me - an absolute pleasure to work with all of them. I had a handful of great guys!

What are your thoughts about Days of Our Lives streaming on Peacock? I think that's fantastic! I emailed Ron (Carlivati, head writer) when I heard it because he was our head writer. I was delighted for him, and I asked him if he was staying? He said, "Yes, as far as I know I'm staying!" I think it's wonderful. The whole point of us going online was such a good idea. Unfortunately, it was so mishandled by the producers at Prospect Park. They knew nothing about what our audience was looking for, what THEY wanted. It was about stories and relationships and a lot of our audience was extremely offended by some of the things they were doing. We went through four head writers in three months because they kept saying, "We can't write this stuff, or we don't want to write this stuff." The idea behind it, Rich Frank and Jeff Kwatinetz who put it together, was a wonderful idea and we would have been the first to go online (Hulu). It was just five minutes ahead of its time and it was run by people that didn't know what they were doing. They didn't know how to produce a daytime drama and they pushed the envelope too far, too quickly, and then they spent too much money and then they ran out of money.

Would it have been a different story if Frank Valentini had been involved with the reboot? Probably not - because he wouldn't have been the producer. Rich and Jeff were the producers. Now, Frank has done an incredible job at General Hospital! It's terrific.

Why can't they revive One Life to Live since ABC has the rights again?? It would be too difficult. People have scattered all over the place and you would have to recast just about everybody. To get everyone together again on one set would be extremely difficult...it's been ten

years...I think that it, unfortunately, has had its best days.

A lot of your work as Viki is on YouTube. Do you ever watch your own work? No (chuckles).

There are a number of vintage, classic episodes. Some of those episodes included what were called "beauty shots." Can you describe those and what it was like to be in them? The beauty shot was the end under the credits so that you didn't just have credits, but you had people doing something and we were told to continue talking to each other but without sound. I'll tell you we had a lot of fun with that because we used to talk about everything under the sun and still try to keep in character. (Erika laughs). Lee Patterson and I were supposed to be in the beauty shot one day. We started and he looked at me and he said, "I'm sorry I have to go in the other room," and he walked off the stage, leaving me alone with a minute's worth of time to fill. So, the next time we had to do it, I did it right back to him and said, "I'm sorry, I have to go!"

Did Doris Quinlan (producer) read you both the riot act? No, she laughed! As long as there was something going on, she laughed!

Now that One Life to Live has been off the air for 10 years, did you ever watch the last week of episodes? I ask only because for a long time, you hadn't watched them. No, I don't think I ever have. I did see the episode where I did the whole voiceover about everyone in town (second to last episode). The way Ron wrote that was just brilliant. I did see that. When I recorded that, they didn't tell me what it was for. They just said, "Just read all of this," and they recorded it. Had I known, I might have done a few things differently, but they were happy with it. I didn't realize what it was for because I had recorded it weeks earlier.

That's interesting because that worked very well. People still talk about that. Are you in touch with anyone from the show?

Occasionally, yes, via Christmas cards...Tuc (Watkins), who has two adorable children, and (Bob) Woods (Bo Buchanan) who has moved down South. I had sent him a Christmas card and it got returned exactly three months later as undeliverable. When I called him to ask where they were living, he said that they were looking for a warmer climate to get away from the cold winters. I am in touch with (Mark) Derwin. He always sends me a Happy Anniversary on March 17 (Note: The anniversary of Erika's debut on OLT) and a Happy Birthday on my birthday, and I send him a Happy Birthday on his. We did a Locher Room (with Alan Locher), which was so funny because he was talking about a storyline where Ben and Viki were on the run on a motorcycle, and I had absolutely no recollection of it. I thought he was making it up! Even after I saw an episode of it, I still hadn't any memory of recording it but thought it was REALLY good stuff!

You were dressed in leather and a very short haircut. You looked great! Yes, it was right after the cancer story.

Because of Brian taking that fall, I'm sure you've had to put your career on hold. Can we expect to see you in anything? Not so far. I've been asked to do some auditions, but can't be available now.

Well, maybe the new year will bring work. We'll see...we'll see. It would be nice.

What's up for the rest of the year? Getting Brian healthy is what we are focused on. Other than that, we go out to dinner once a week and other than that, we cook

Did you go out or stay in for your anniversary and birthday? (August 4th and 5th respectively) Yes, for our 44th anniversary we

went out to a wonderful restaurant in Ridgefield called Bernards. Then, we went out the next night because it was my birthday. It was lovely. It couldn't have been nicer.

A fan asks "Miss Erika" to share her memories about the various actresses who have played Dorian over the years. They were all different, obviously. As far as I'm concerned, Robin (Strasser) WAS Dorian. Nancy Pinkerton was wonderful in the beginning, but then she left, and thank God we got Robin because she was the absolute ultimate Dorian. The wonderful thing about Robin is that she played Dorian with all the conniving and scheming, but she always had some warmth about her. Even when she was being just horrible, there was warmth there. She was just perfect! There could not have been a better Dorian, although Nancy was very good in the beginning because she had to establish the character and what they were looking for was a villain, and she was. The other ladies, I certainly remember them all: Dixie Carter, Claire Malis, Elaine Princi...they were all slightly different but, as I say, there was one Dorian and that was Robin. Dixie, Claire, and Elaine were all very good in what they were asked to do, but they never had a chance to establish a character because they were never there long enough. Robin is an actress who is so talented and who is so clever, and I have always said that she brings a Thanksgiving Day feast to every performance. She wasn't "performing"...from the moment she walked on set, she WAS Dorian.

That's a nice way to conclude our interview. Thank you, Erika! Thank you, Walter!

Post Script

After the phone interview, Walter got word that the daytime community and One Life to Live in particular lost both Headwriter Michael Malone (1991-94) & (2003-04) and actress Robyn Griggs (Stephanie, Carlo Hesser's niece) (1991-92).

From Erika:

"I am so deeply saddened by the news of Michael Malone's passing. He was a charming talented and wonderful man who created such great stories for One Life to Live and Another World, including the development of Viki's other personalities. He challenged me in the best possible way; what fun we had together. But he was also the author of so many novels, all of which I have read and loved. I send sincerest sympathies to his family and friends."

"I am so sorry to hear the news of Robyn Griggs passing. She was a delightful woman and talented actress. How very difficult for her to have dealt with such a terrible illness. I am glad that she is finally at peace. God bless you Robyn!"