

Erika's World

Phone Interview

March 22, 2007

Erika Slezak

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Founded

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Dear Friends and Fans...Old and New,

Welcome to the very first edition of "Erika's World" online! I am thrilled that Walter has made the decision to take our club into the world of cyberspace, as our news will be more current, and it will now be available to more people – and for free. As our fan club members know, our format, in the past, has been for me to tell Walter about my life and the show in the section "Dateline Erika," and then I have answered questions in the "Ask Erika" section. It seems to make more sense for us to combine all of the same information into a Question and Answer format so that you can just follow our conversation as Walter and I catch up on everything, and then he asks the questions that all of you have submitted.

Walter Miller has been my friend, and the President of the fan club, since 1972 (for those of you who are new to all of this), in other words, we go back a long way; so as time goes on, we shall intersperse old fan club stories with the current information.

Thanks for visiting, and I certainly hope you enjoy the next generation of "Erika's World."

Erika Slezak

Welcome to our very first online edition of "Erika's World" newsletter!

I've been Erika's fan club president for the past 35 years, and I'm proud to say that our club has the distinction of being the longest running active fan club for any actor or actress in daytime. But now, I wanted to touch a broader spectrum of fans, so what better way than to go to the universal format of...Online! So, if you are new to the world of Erika and our club...welcome! And to our long-time members...welcome to the next generation of your familiar club!

I can tell you this - there is no other performer that I have such enthusiasm for, as Erika. Along with our staff, AJ and Kit, it is my goal to bring you an enjoyable and informative forum that celebrates the talents of Erika Slezak! We can all watch Erika bring life and vitality to Viki, but here, you can get a peek into Erika's life when she is NOT in front of the camera. Unlike most of us, she has tremendous talent...but like most of us, she has a family and children, and animals, and a rich life beyond that which we see...and she is kind enough to share some of that with us. So, without further ado, we hope that you will enjoy reading all about Erika, as she answers your questions.

Drop us a line and let us know how we are doing! erikaslezakfc@yahoo.com

Walter Miller, Jr.

How are things at work, are you working much?

A little bit more - next week I tape 4 shows.

Good! On the air today are some nice scenes with Nora, and now Viki is at The Palace with Clint and Dorian. Have I spoken to them yet?

No, you are just about to. Yesterday you told Clint that you wanted to date him exclusively, and today's show picks up with that. I've noticed that the dialog with Nora and Viki was decent and interesting. Yes it was.

Since we last talked, they announced that Ron Carlivati was promoted to Co-Head Writer. Do you know him well, and is there anything you can tell us about him?

Oh yes, Ron has been connected with the show for many, many years, and I think he is going to be very good for the show. He was a breakdown writer before, he is a very good writer, and he knows the show. He's been connected here for ages.

So this is a good thing then?! I don't know if you remember, but years ago when Lindsay's gallery first opened, they had an exhibition of "Carlivati's from Italy."

Yes, I remember that. That is he! They used his name. But yes, he's been with the show for a long time.

I don't know if you have seen these scenes with Starr and Cole, but as a mother, how do you feel about Starr's bedroom scenes? I think that they went too far with that. Starr is only meant to be a freshman in high school, and yet they are talking about a prom now, in what is coming up. But she's a freshman in high school and that is too young. I know they actually didn't do anything, (at the ski lodge) but they intended to. They were alone together in a bedroom and it's wrong because it sends a message that it is ok to do that. Even if you decide not to do that in the end "it's ok to go and do it" - it's wrong. I think it's very wrong.

I'm sure they are going to get some letters from parents out there. I was taken aback a little by

it. But you know what it is too, she has such a young face. Obviously, she is maturing and all, but she still looks like a young girl - and she IS a young girl. Kristen is a young girl. She's only 14 or 15. She's just too young. And she was very nervous about it too.

In the scenes she seemed very relaxed (laughs), let me tell you that. She's a good actress. But, it's just wrong. I hate to say this but Dena will push the envelope in any direction. She needs to realize that she is not writing for a movie - a one time thing - but for a character that has to live with the actions for a long time.

a viki moment to remember



Finding MoJo

I don't see it as much now, but a few months ago the show was very dark - baby killing and so on.... It is just so unpleasant to watch. I really don't get to see the show that much.

Dena may be a fan of yours, but she's not a Viki fan. No she is not. Dena makes noises of, "Oh yes you are wonderful, this and that" and then she writes nothing. She wants to write for her own characters and she wants to write stories

that she thinks are interesting but nobody else does. She doesn't write stories, she writes events. It's like one event - let's have a bomb, let's have a plane crash - but there is no story.

Ok, Mark La Mura (ex Mark Dalton on AMC) - has he joined the show? No. He was just there two days, and it hasn't aired yet.

So it was nothing really. It was just a cameo that's all - as far as I know. I don't know if they are going to bring him back.

People were speculating that he was for Viki. Well, yes... they brought the character in as a new board member and he asks her to dinner, but the dinner was a disaster - it's like a joke.

I don't know what Mark looks like now, as I haven't seen him in years. How does he look?

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Mark looks great!! He's a nice man and we had fun when he was here.

Linda Thorson (ex Julia Medina), dear Ben (Mark Derwin), and Roy Thinnes are THREE PEOPLE that I really enjoyed on the show. Do you know what they are doing now, and are you in contact with any of them?

I do not know where Linda is – I have not been in contact with her. Linda and I were in RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) together but she was in a term below me. And then Roy - I hear from Roy periodically. We stay in touch, but I haven't seen him in awhile. I know he was very ill, and I think he had a kidney taken out like two years ago, but he's fine now! I saw him a year ago actually, and he looked well...which was great.

That was your anniversary party for OLTL (35th) that you last saw Roy? Yes. And I keep in touch with Mark sporadically through email. And he's fine! He's in California and he's working and busy and as cheeky as ever!

Erika, do you see the ABC Soaps' focus (OLTL specifically) on a youth movement as big part of the problem that has disenfranchised so many long-time viewers and caused them to give up watching?

Oh, I'm sure that you are right, because I know that personally, as a viewer of certain shows, once they turn into stories that I'm not interested in – and I'm not interested in kids and their little teenage problems – I don't watch. I get bored.

Yep, that's most of the people – the long-time viewers. And I don't know that it attracts that many young viewers. Because young viewers watch, not to see what their counterparts are doing, but to see what happens when you get older - how you behave as you mature.

Have you spoken to Dan Gauthier (ex-Kevin) after he received his well-deserved Emmy nomination? Yes, I called Dan as soon as I heard about the nomination. I was THRILLED!!! I feel vindicated!! And I called Heather (Heather Tom – ex Kelly). I didn't have a chance to speak to her, so I left her a message. I left Danny a message and he called me back. And I'm so excited for him. I want him to win in the worst possible way because he is a

wonderful actor, and he got the rotten end of the shaft. He was the best Kevin that we have ever had – a mature, grown up Kevin. He just was terrific!

There was no reason to, well...obviously because of salaries and stuff like that...but it was such a dumb move on their part. It was a dumb move period. It had nothing to do with salary.

It was said that focus groups thought his character was boring and that's why they got rid of him. Apparently, that's what I heard.

Give me a break!!!! Do we even know who these focus groups are? No, we don't know exactly who these people are. They are people that they pick in cities in groups of 20, 30 or 40 people and they talk to them.

Were you shocked when General Hospital decided to kill off Stuart Damon's Alan? Yes I was. He's a long, long, long term family member – a Quartermaine. I can see why they did it though – because losing a character who is not front and center now, but who is part of that core family, has repercussions throughout the whole family, and storyline. But even so, I was shocked.

Stuart is a great actor too. Yes, and a lovely friend of ours, too.

Robin Strasser has worked steadily for a year, and has had airtime and storyline as Dorian. Even this triangle seems to be all about Dorian and Clint, with Viki as a plot point thrown in. Do you think Viki will ever really have a storyline, love life, or airtime again? I am seeing airtime, but I haven't a clue as to the future. Right now they are talking about a story coming up; however, they've been saying that for three years now. I don't know. Dena doesn't seem to want to write for Viki. I don't think she is interested in who Viki is, or anything about her. She has to write for her every once in awhile because Viki has all of these kids and relationships with people in town. But she does not want to write for any of the long-term characters on the show – she doesn't write for Bo, for instance.

Clint's personality seems to have changed lately. Yes, I don't think they associate this Clint

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

with the old Clint. I really don't. He has the same character name but he's a different actor – a different person. And poor Jerry knows they've made him dumb beyond belief. But that's another thing that's too bad.

For Clint to be involved with Dorian is ridiculous. It's not a bad thing if he's doing it for his own reasons – just for the sex or just to piss Viki off. But that he actually cares about her and listens to her and believes her...hello?!

Especially with the history that they have, the history with Dorian... It's all out the window. But Dena doesn't care about the rich history of the show, which is evident in what she writes.

She says she does. When I interviewed her she said she DOES believe in history of the show. But that was probably before she had a chance to invent her own characters and re-write some of the history! No she doesn't care about the history.

Have you ever given any thought to directing? Oh, yes, lots of times. The thing is, it is a long process. Directing is not about telling an actor to move here and go there and have a bit more emotion. Television is extremely technical, and even though I have been here 36 years, I don't really pay attention. Because my job is on this side of the camera, I don't pay close attention to the other side of the camera. And it would take me a long time - probably a year of observing and watching and working it out - to learn the technical aspects. And it is VERY technical. You can't just say, "Point this camera at her." You can't do that - there is an awful lot to be learned. Maybe it wouldn't take me a year, but it would take some time, and I don't have the time for that right now. I'm not willing to give up all of my free days in order to learn and observe somebody else. But I do think I would be a good actor's director.

Any upcoming projects at all – other than One Life? No.

Do you have a favorite mystery or suspense film? Oh, I love North by Northwest. I just love that movie. I could watch that over and over again,

with all of the twists and the turns – Cary Grant is soooo wonderful.

Is there an actor/actress (Daytime or in Hollywood) that you would like to work with? I would love to work with Hugh Laurie from "House." He's a wonderful, wonderful actor. He is soooo creative. It is my total favorite show. I would drop anything to watch that show. He's brilliant. He's beyond brilliant. I'm just so stunned at how good he is. And he's like that all of the time. (laughs) Michael came home on Saturday and said, "Here, I bought the whole first season of "House." I didn't start watching until the second season, (laughs) so I stayed up with him and we watched each episode! It's just...he's just so wonderful. Everyone on that show is so good...every single person!!

You got me hooked on "Boston Legal," which I absolutely love. I haven't been watching recently, as it is on too late.

Have you watched "Grey's Anatomy?" I hadn't and I started watching – you know it gets to the point where there are too many shows you have to watch. But I love Grey's Anatomy! I've only seen 3 or 4 episodes but I love it.

And "Ugly Betty" has Judith Light on it now. Oh yes, and isn't she good in it?

If you had a choice, which character would you bring back to the show? Me personally? I'd bring Ben back. (laughs!)...just to work with Mark again! But in terms of the whole show, I would bring Victor Lord back, but not as old and decrepit, (and before they made him a child molester), but as a real strong rival for Asa.

On the 10/24 show, you went to get coffee and ran into Adriana. You had on gold earrings with a little pearl on the end. On that show, your left earring was missing the pearl, but by the next show (10/25, but the same day in Llanview as the previous show), where you and Nat ended up removing your rings, both pearls were there. Do you recall what happened on the 10/24 show that no one caught that the pearl was missing? How did it happen? No, I

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

don't recall, but it probably fell off and nobody noticed it --- except Debi. Thank you for noticing Debi! (Asst Ed. Note: They might have taped the scenes in reverse order and no one noticed the missing pearl by the end of shooting. But when they aired, it looked like lack of "continuity.")

You have been missed with NOT having story this year. Is there anything good coming up? Will Viki have any romance? I've been told that there is story coming up. I know that Tuc Watkins (David) is coming back for 20 shows, and I am going to be working with him. But that is only 20 shows, and not a story. But I can't wait. I LOVE him!!! He's just wonderful.

On average, how many days a week do you work? Well, they shoot the show quite differently than in the early days. So essentially I work 3 shows a week. But they shoot it in 2 days or 5 days, but it works out to be between 2 to 3 shows a week. It might be one week is 4 shows and another week not -- but it's an average of 2-3 shows.....but I'm not doing anything!

No you don't...well, you have the past couple of days. But that's what they do with Viki -- they tease us. They give us 2 or 3 days and it looks like they are building up, gaining momentum and then we don't see her for two weeks or she'll have these stupid scenes with her kids. You are right!

A "Showfax" script for casting was placed for the role of Peter -- where Peter runs into Viki, Viki is upset but knows Peter, and Peter offers to make her tea at home. Have you been screen testing with anyone? No. That show is taping next Monday or Tuesday. Let me look... it is taping next Tuesday. And as far as I can see it is a one-shot deal.

Oh. And he does not make me tea.

What has been your favorite storyline on "One Life To Live"? Oh, I think the multiples.

I am sure you remember me from Long Island. I have been watching OLTL since the early 70's, and it is killing me what the writers, etc. are doing to the whole show -- but more so -- to your

role. Now, they are making this strong, vibrant woman into a wimp around Clint. I realize that as an actress, you must play what is written, but, how do you handle this? Or, is it like in this world that women of our age are "seen but not heard?" Um...I can only refer her to question "number one," and that's Dena. This is not a thing across all daytime shows. Look at the nominees for Best Actress - Jeanne Cooper, who has been there forever, Michelle Stafford who has been there 10 years and is younger but she's not a baby, Kim Zimmer, Maura West, and Crystal. All of these women are mature women -- they are not babies. Especially not Jeanne, and I'm praying she wins. I love Michelle as an actress and I love Kim, but I don't think Jeanne has ever won. (Asst Ed. Note: I don't think the "seen but not heard" applies to baby-boomers!)

I think she's been in the supporting category before. Exactly, but it would be wonderful if she wins. I kind of think she's definitely paid her dues.

The two shows that I watch regularly are Y&R and B&B, and Y&R especially, uses ALL of their characters over 40, 50, and 60. And it is why that show is number one all of the time! Yes. I think it is just a problem with our head writer, who doesn't want to write for anybody that she doesn't want to write for. I don't know that it has to do with age, although I suspect that is part of it.

Is there any chance that Viki and Clint will have a real romance? Who knows? Right now I'm so very bored with the way they are writing it, that I cannot even begin to tell you. You know, let Clint have Dorian, let him go off -- it would be much more fun to see him marry her and then regret it beyond belief. That would be a good story.

Today, for the first time in YEARS they showed scenes with Viki and Nora. I know. Hillary said that she didn't think we had taped scenes together in 6 years!

I'll tell you Erika, they really worked. They were really good and we enjoyed doing them.

And you looked great! Thank you...and Hillary is a wonderful actor. She listens and it is all very real

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

and very natural. It's very, very, very easy to work with Hillary, and a lot of fun. We had a really good time doing them.

It showed! The scenes were written well. Well, we rewrote a lot of it. The idea was there and that was good.

How is Phil Carey doing? Phil is doing all right. You know, he's not 100%. He comes to work and he's pleasant (laughs), as much as Phil can be pleasant. And he looks GOOD. And I'm delighted for him.

I agree that he looks good – his face is fuller, he looks healthier. Yes. He did get quite thin for a while - he's put some weight back on. But he looks terrific.

I'm hopeful that he continues to do well. I hope so too!

Nathan Fillion (ex-Joey) has a movie coming out in theatres. It is so exciting to see OLTL alumni show up. Have you kept in touch with Nathan? No. I think the last time he was here was 3 - 4 years ago and he stopped by to say hello, and I wasn't here. Although, many years ago, after he left the show, he came in one day and we had a nice reunion. But I'm delighted for his success - absolutely delighted.

He's so talented. Yes, and he is on this TV show called "Drive."

Have you watched "Brothers and Sisters" with Sally Field? She plays a major character that just celebrated her 60th birthday and they actually write for her. No I haven't seen it – but there you go!!

If you could have more scenes with any character currently on the show – who would you like to work with more? I love working with Woodsie (Bo). I kind of wish they would write some stuff there. And I very much like working with Tuc, and apparently I'm going to be able to, but for a brief time.

I tell you, Bob Woods is not really recognized like he should be by the Academy. He gives

such good performances. It's not the Academy, it's the other actors that have to nominate him. They don't write story for him and people that don't get story don't get nominated. When you don't have much story, some of the other actors on your show don't think about you, but do think – "Oh, they just show up once a week so they aren't important." The pre-nominations that we do for our individual shows come from us. I'm not saying that I vote like everyone else, but Michael Easton and Trevor St. John got pre-nominated by us because they had all the story. And yet in the wider scope, neither one of them got a nomination overall.

How far in advance are you taping? 6-7 weeks ahead. We're taping for the first of May.

How do you like working with Jerry Ver Dorn (Clint)? Oh, Jerry is a pussycat. He's just a doll. He's a delightful, intelligent, very funny, lovely man.

Does Frank Valentini (Exec. Producer) have the power to force Dena Higley to write for you? No, he doesn't.

Does he care about the character any more? Yes, I think he does care about the character, but no, he does not have the power to force Dena. I mean, he can suggest things, but no human being can force another human being to do anything, you know, in a perfect world – unless they are at gun point. No, so he cannot and unfortunately, as long as the numbers are up, Brian Frons (Head of ABC Daytime) doesn't mix in. Brian is the only one who could tell Dena to write for this person or that person, because he pays her salary. Not Frank, I mean, Frank ostensibly does but, Brian Frons is the final word, so no, Frank can't help.

Who are you rooting for in the Best Actress category? Jeanne Cooper. Michelle is a wonderful actress, and Kim is a wonderful actress, as is Jeanne. Jeanne has never won, and I would love to see her win. Kim has to pay for lunch this year!

Are you and/or Brian judging this year? I've offered to, and they will let us know later. The Emmys are so late this year that the judging won't be until sometime in April.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Will you be attending or be a presenter? It's on CBS. They allow each network to pick a number of people to present, and I'm sure that Brian Frons is going to send the kids to do that.

There are rumors that Natalie will get Lupus. Have you heard that? That Natalie gets Lupus?

Yes and that the doctor they bring in will be a love interest for you. (Laughs - at the love interest part) No, I have not heard that. If they bring lupus back into the storyline, I'm not sure how much creativity that shows on the part of the writers, as I've already had one daughter die of that. It is a serious disease, but I'm not sure that they would revisit the same disease twice for my storyline.

What is your favorite movie/book, and why? Oh Lord. I have lots of favorite movies, but none is current. But I have lots of favorites. "Bringing up Baby" with Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant is one. I love the "Three Amigos"...hello...silly movies. And "An Affair to Remember" is a great movie!

How about a favorite book? No, I can't pick out a favorite, as I read so much and I get something out of every book. Some books I just can't bear and I put them away. But I've enjoyed so many books.

What is the most adventurous thing you've ever done in your life? (Laughs) I'm not a very adventurous person, so I don't really do adventures. My family convinced me to go parasailing in the Caribbean many years ago. They put you in a chair with a parachute and then the chair lifts up. I got about 10 feet up and started yelling, "Put me down, put me down!"

So you didn't sail? Well, I went up a little higher. And then I said, "That's it." That was enough. I'm really not that adventurous at all. I'm petrified of being hurt.

What is your cell phone ring tone? Do you have one? Yes, I do actually. And it used to be the Habanera, an aria from the opera, Carmen, but it's not anymore because I now have a new cell phone, and I don't know how to download the ring tones. In my old phone, the Habanera was a pre-programmed ring tone. This new one has a weird

sound, and I don't know what it is. It's like a melody and it is really irritating, but at least I can hear it. I have to wait for Michael to come home to change it.

What is your favorite comfort food? Potato chips.

It's your downfall because you can't eat just one? It's not my downfall because I don't eat them a lot, but I LOVE them.

What influenced you to pursue acting as a career? My father.

What is your greatest accomplishment? My children.

Which TV Shows are programmed in your TiVo that you love right now? OK, "House", "Lost", "Grey's Anatomy," although I don't watch it all of the time...I have "American Idol" but I'm getting so bored with that show, and "Dancing with the Stars" which I used to enjoy, but I don't know that I'm going to enjoy as much this time. I mean, it's kind of fun to watch. Oh, and "Boston Legal" is TiVo'd also.

Did you see "Lost" last night? No, not yet. Don't tell me anything!! I went to sleep, but I have it to watch yet, so don't tell me what happened.

Do you have any recordings of your mother singing? Grandfather? No for my mother, but yes for my grandfather.

What is happening in Amanda's life right now? Poor baby broke her foot. She slipped on the ice. She was completely laid up and was going insane because she literally could not put any weight on it, couldn't walk. She's better now. They did an air cast, but she had to stay off of it for 2-3 weeks and she still wears the air cast. She stepped on some ice. It was a weird winter, there was ice and she tried to step over some ice and didn't realize there was ice on the other side - black ice. She flipped and went down.

Michael is still doing well? Michael is doing terrifically. Thank you very much.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

How is the new house? Is it feeling more like home now? We like it! We REALLY, really like it. It is a great house for us. It is smaller than our other house – not much, but a little smaller. It's cozier.

Been to the theatre or seen any movies? I've gone NOWHERE. I go home and I worry about the house. We have been nowhere...literally.

You still have the 2 dogs and the cat? Everybody is terrific. Oh, except that Gracie (the cat) died. She was 19, her liver was failing, and her kidneys were failing, and we had her put down...on Valentine's Day actually.

That was Amanda's cat? It was the cat for the family. I had a mean old cat that I had adopted from the ASPCA here in New York – Kate. And she was always so mean, and so when the kids were little we got Gracie. And we had her over 19 years. She had a very good life. She really wasn't sick, though she had started to get sick over the past year, but not to the point where we had to say, "That's it." But then I got up on Valentine's Day and I saw that she had been terribly sick, and she was like an old washrag. So Brian took her to the vet and they said that they could put her on IV's and keep her in the hospital – and we both said, "No she would HATE that." So we feel we did the right thing and said goodbye!

But you still have the 2 doggies. Yes we have Teddy and Molly.

How is Brian doing? Brian is fine.

How did you spend the holidays? Which Holiday?

Christmas (laughs) We were in Vermont. Amanda came up with her boyfriend, and Michael was there, and we had a very nice time. We had no snow though, so it was kind of disappointing. And then we came back in early January.

Do you like Amanda's boyfriend? He's a very nice young man. Yes.

Any special gifts at Christmas? No – (laughs).

How was your January trip to the Caribbean? Where did you go, what did you do, and did the kids join you? Oh, we had a WONDERFUL time. We went to Virgin Gorda to Little Dix Bay, which is just the very best place in the world for us. The four of us went and it was an absolutely lovely trip for us. And we had glorious weather the whole time.

What is the weather like now? I forget that you are down where the weather is nice! (Ed. Note: Walter is in Florida!) The weather here has actually been kind of miserable. We had a terrible snow and ice storm last Friday and the back yard is still covered with this crust of ice, which is awful. But today it is going up to 60 degrees. So spring may finally be arriving. It's going to hover in the 50-60's. But at least this snow and ice will go away. It was horrible. For the most part we have had a pretty good winter. We had 2 big snowfalls in Connecticut, which were kind of a pain in the neck. And a couple of little ones, which were nothing. But this last one was nasty because we got 8 inches of snow, and then ice on top of that, and it was horrible.

Your best holiday spot? (Laughs) I don't know....far away from anyone! I think right now, Little Dix Bay – get away, ignore the holidays, and enjoy the sun. It's very quiet – it's exactly what I need.

Christmas Gift Thank You

A heartfelt thank you to those of you who graciously and generously donated to the St. Jukes Children's Hospital this past Christmas season. They have always been special to me and they do many wonderful and critical things for children and families around the world.

Thank you so very much,
Erika