

Erika's World

Off the Cuff

February 16, 2009

Erika Slezak
Official Fan Club

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Founded

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Dear Friends,

Our fan club celebrated 37 years last month, making it the longest running active fan club in daytime history! I'm very proud of this accomplishment too. Thanks so much to our wonderful staff, AJ and Kit, and of course to Erika, who has kept my interest all these years – even when the stories haven't been there.

We've lost two giants in daytime recently – Clint Ritchie and Phil Carey. Both were wonderful actors, who truly made their characters come to life. I always believed that Clint Ritchie was Clint Buchanan. And his scenes with Erika always worked. I was especially impressed with Clint when he showed his tender side. All those shows when Clint was trying to get Viki back from her breakdown are so memorable. I remember when the club was doing a 20th Anniversary Tribute Book for Erika. I had not received anything from Clint, however, right before our deadline, my phone rang and it was Clint, who proceeded to read me the nicest tribute to Erika that you could ever imagine. He said he had been working on it, and wanted it to be perfect. That's the man I remember. Clint, please know that your contribution to One Life to Live will be forever with us. And while I never had any encounters with Phil Carey, everyone knew who Phil was. He was larger than life, and I suppose much like Asa. We can't forget that Phil had a very successful career as a film actor before joining OLTL. I remember enjoying him in Calamity Jane with one of my all time favorites, Doris Day. And I'm a huge Lucille Ball fan, so I remember when Phil guest starred in an episode of Lucy's second series, "The Lucy Show." I had seen Phil at the studio many times, but never had the opportunity to introduce myself. I now wish I had.

Many fans have emailed regarding their disappointment with the lack of story for Erika, and I'm certainly in agreement with all of you. It seems that all Viki has been doing lately has been dispensing advice. Erika seems optimistic however, so let's hope things change fast.

Take care,

Walter

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Telephone interview February 13

Last time we spoke was right before Super Soap – how was that? I tell you what, it was fun. I'm sad that it was the last one. People enjoy it so much. It is a really nice break for the actors that go down there. It is fun, you are in the warm weather – and meeting all of the people is terrific. It's humbling – people are so sweet and so nice. I'm sorry that it is the last one.

What is this new thing that they are talking about, Soap Nation? They are talking about doing this sort of wandering Super Soap, where they are going to have people travel to various cities, rather than ask that everyone come to Florida.

Why are they doing this? I don't know – I really don't know. It was a successful event but I think cost wise, it probably wasn't very good. You know, everything comes down to money.

Right, and with the economy the way it is... Yes. Though I don't even think the economy was the reason, because they had decided last year that this was going to be the last one.

Well, the attendance was large! Yes.

The fans were great. Yes, they were just wonderful.

Now, your whole family came with you. Yes, I dragged my whole family down there – kicking and screaming – no, they had a wonderful time – what's not to like – you get to spend three or four days in Disneyworld – it's fantastic.

Did you spend extra time there? Yes, we did. It ended on Sunday but we stayed until Tuesday, so we had an extra day at the park.

The weather was cold. It was cooler than last year, but it was nice and comfortable.

And how is Brian doing? Brian is terrific, thank you. He's absolutely fine, and everything is going well. Obviously, we were all knocked for a

loop with the death of Clint Ritchie [ex-Clint] and Phil Carey [Asa] within a week of each other. Phil's memorial is tonight in New York, so we are all going. His wife asked me to say a few words, which I am honored to do. I'm sure it will be a funny memorial because Phil was nothing if not funny. If they told all of the Philly stories collected in the world, we would be there until next year. I think it will be fine, and then there is a reception afterwards at O'Neils, which will be fun too.



a viki moment to remember



Paris, TX Llanview style
(before "Llanview 90210")

Whom does he leave behind? He had two families – obviously, Colleen his wife, and Sean and Shannon, his children. Shannon will be 29, or actually I think she turns 30 in June – and I'm not sure how old Sean is. I think he's his mid 20's. And then Phil had 3 children by his first wife. I don't know if they are going to be there. Colleen is the one who was with him for 38 years.

Even though he had lung cancer and had been ill, was it a surprise? It was a surprise because he seemed to be doing well. I mean he was in the studio a little over a month ago taping that last thing. I had a long talk with Colleen on Saturday morning and she said he seemed to be doing fine and it was just the last two days that he went downhill. She said they had obviously been expecting it for three years because of the lung cancer. Last Thanksgiving, I think they told him the chemo wasn't working anymore. And so they were expecting it but when it happened – it happened so suddenly.

Did he know that Clint had passed by the time he died? I don't know the details. Woodsy [Bob Woods – Bo] went to see him a lot – Bob was very close to Phil. He did visit and I think he did

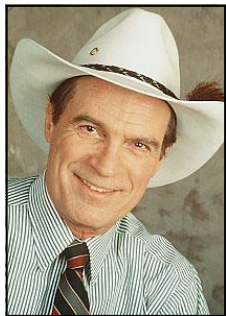
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tell him but we don't know how much he remembered because he was a little out of it the last days – that's what I heard.

My goodness, and with Clint, that was a surprise.

That was a shock – because he hadn't been ill, although they said he had pneumonia I think. He was in the hospital and they discovered his heart beat was very irregular and low. They said he had to have a pacemaker. So they put in the pacemaker but he had a blood clot and apparently the blood clot was pushed to the brain by the pacemaker. But he was in a coma and unconscious – they operated on him I believe but he never woke up – he died very peacefully.



How sad though. Stunning. He was only 70.

When was the last time you had contact with Clint? Well, I always send him Christmas cards. But the last time I saw him was the last he was back.

I think that was when Viki had the heart transplant. I think that was the last time he worked on the show.

What memories of Clint come to mind?

You know at this point, you only remember funny and good things. We had a good time – we worked for 20 years and he was a very funny guy. We laughed a lot. He could be rude, he could be delightful, he could be obnoxious – you know, all of the things that all of us are. But I remember him being funny, and he was very warm. He was so good with the kids (Joey and Kevin). We started with John Paul Learn, and Ryan Janis – and he used to call them his little cowboys. And I had a lovely



email from Erin Torpey [ex-Jessica] where she said he was a very warm and loving man – that's what she remembers very fondly.

Very sad. Very. I talked to his niece and his sister yesterday.

How are they doing? Well, I guess ok. I didn't know them. I had sent a funeral wreath to the viewing and they called to thank me. It was very nice to talk to them – to say how sorry I am.

I think some of the best scenes with you and Clint are the tender scenes with Viki. It is what stands out in my mind. He could be incredibly good and touching.

Exactly that's the word I was looking for. Really touching – it was a gift.

Clint will be missed and Phil – my goodness, both within a week. Yes.



Obviously the show can't do any tributes because Asa is dead and Clint is now played by Jerry Ver Dorn. What they do, at least what they have done in the past, is that they dedicate a show to the person who has passed away. At the end of that show they put up the card, and they take 15-20 seconds from the show time, and they do a tribute that way.

That's what I'm sure they will do. Oh, absolutely.

So, tell us how your children are doing. Our kids are ok, thank you.

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Any movies or theatre lately? We went to see The Encores version of "Music in the Air" last Saturday. "Music in the Air" is a musical by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, and my father starred in the original back in the 1930's. It was a lot fun to see.

In what theater are those "Encores" productions? At the City Center.

Did you enjoy it? Oh, yes.

And how are your animals doing? Well, Molly's actually been very sick. We're not sure if it was tick-born disease or autoimmune but she was very sick and she was in the hospital for four days. But she is getting better. She takes a ton of medicine.

How old is she now? Molly is only 7.

When you guys travel to Vermont do you bring them with you? Of course!

There is so much change going on in the country with the economy. We see a lot of reports from New York --- do you see a difference in your everyday life in the city? There has certainly been a change at OLTL. They are cutting salaries across the board, and they are trying to save money and not spend so much on sets and things like that. But there hasn't been much of a difference in day to day operations.

Have you noticed cut backs on sets and costumes and such? I haven't really noticed a huge difference. Whatever they are doing, it is behind the scenes.

Were you in the city when the plane landed in the Hudson? No, I was home. I was absolutely astonished. Amanda actually saw it towed down to the Battery because she lives downtown near the river in the village.

Someone sent me a picture – it was amazing! It was a huge plane! We were not there but we were glued to the television set.

Oh my goodness, that pilot is certainly a hero. Unbelievable – a true hero!

In the soap industry, we were so surprised with the letting go of Deidre Hall. It sent a shudder through the soap world – do you know Deidre? I do.

You probably haven't spoken with her. No, we don't communicate like that – you know, we see each other at events – she's very warm and very friendly. I think I was more stunned than anyone that they would let her and Drake Hogestyn go. They have been the staple of that show for so long. And I was just astonished. It's very unfortunate.

Does that add stress to your job or to other actors? Sure, you all start worrying – if they can let her go they can let anyone go.

Well, she'll get work again. Yes, and she's been on the show a long time so I hope she's saved her pennies.

Oh I'm sure she has.

Did you go to Clint's funeral? I don't know if Clint had a funeral; there was a viewing in Grass Valley, California, where he lived, but I didn't attend.

Have you heard about Nathan Fillion's new TV Show that is coming out in March – it's called Castle. (ABC Monday March 9th 10pm) Yes, I just saw the ad! He looks absolutely gorgeous. I emailed him and told him he is as gorgeous as ever. He's a handsome man – and he's so charming and I just wish him such success. I hope it is a huge hit!

What are the current shows you watch on TV? We never miss House – I love House. We watch Lost, American Idol and when Michael is here we watch certain shows that I have never watched before if I am awake – 24 and a couple of other things. We watch Two and Half Men which is hysterical. And that's about it.

House is so good. It's wonderful – best stuff on television.

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They don't seem to use the original team that much, but they are still on the show. They do – off and on.

Was your name submitted for an Emmy pre-nomination? It was submitted, yes. The actors on the show cast votes on who they want to send to the Emmys and I was not picked. But then I didn't have that much of a storyline last year.

Have you been watching little Eddie Alderson in his new storyline for Matthew? He's doing pretty well. I have not seen much of it but Eddie has always been a very interesting young actor. And I hope he's doing well.

Tuc Watkins has been great to see – though the Buddhism stuff is a little over the top. Have you been able to talk with him much? Yes. I worked with him when he came back and I love that man. I always enjoy working with him – I think he's such fun. The Buddhism is not going last that long.

I know a lot of people were disappointed with Andrea Evans' [Tina] return – it was great to have her back but she didn't interact with the characters that made sense. Do you think they'll bring her back and maybe do it right? Yes, I think they will. They certainly left it wide open for her to come back.

Any truth that Roscoe Born [Mitch] will return? Don't know – I heard that rumor too. I asked and I was given no answer – which means it is probably a possibility.

Same thing with Barbara Garrick (Allison Perkins) – you would think they would somehow draw those two together. Why Allison Perkins?

She supposedly had information on Rex's parentage and people are assuming it is Mitch. Oh, well I don't know, I hadn't heard that. You know I don't know any more really than anybody else – I can ask and I'm given the same kinds of answers. And it's good – they shouldn't tell people – you should have to wait to see it on

television. If you know what is going to happen why would you watch?

Well, to see how it is played out. People still would watch but I agree with what you are saying.

In your holiday letter you mentioned a big story coming up this winter for Viki and Charlie. That was what I was told. I don't know when it is going to happen because right now they are very busy with a lot of other stuff. But I am sure there will be something coming up.

So right now you aren't taping anything? No. Right now I am not working much at all – at least for the last few weeks. The way they tape things now is I'll go in on one day a week but I'll tape four shows worth.

So you'll still basically be on the air. Yes – not as much though. That always is cyclical – it changes.

We haven't seen Charlie very much. Are they phasing him out? He finally made the opening after a year and now he has disappeared. No they are not phasing Charlie out. They are just focusing on other stories right now.

He's obviously still taping and is still part of the show. Yes, completely. It's just that we are not working very much right now.

Why does it seem to this viewer that most of your scenes – especially the ones that feature Charlie/BK – are highly edited down to just a few short seconds, while just about every other character seems to be getting more airtime? I find this highly insulting. Ok, the answer to that is that they are focusing on other stories right now. And that's all I can really say. I agree that there is not enough of Viki and Charlie right now but hopefully there will be in the future.

Is Ron Carlivati the right person to write to when people want to see more of Viki and Charlie, or should it go to Frank? I guess yes – Ron and Frank and Brian Frons. You know,

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essentially it's Brian Frons who approves and disapproves of stories. Any story that is done has to be green lighted by him. It's Ron's responsibility to come up with the stories but Brian has to green light them. So if you want something, you write to Brian, or you write to Ron and request.

Do you know if we will see Viki working at the Banner? (Laughs) I doubt it. I don't even know where that set is.

Do you know that Alice Hirson (Eileen Siegel) is on Mark Derwin's new series "The Secret Life of the American Teenager"? Yes, I do. Alice and I email each other and she is just delightful. It's so nice to be in touch with her, and she did tell me that she is playing the character of Mark's crazy mother in law.



Finally, what do you say to fans that feel beaten down supporting OLTL and you, and feel like we don't count anymore? Is it just a lost cause trying to watch and support this show anymore? [Walter's comment: "Obviously this person is unhappy."] You know everything is cyclical – everything goes and comes around. I'm sorry if you are unhappy with the show now but hopefully that will change and you know, stick with us. If you don't stick with us, there won't be a One Life to Live.

Hey there Ms. Slezak! New fan of yours here! I crossed over when Farah Fath came to play Gigi and I immediately loved the friendship between Viki and Gigi. I love that girl (Farah Fath)! She's a wonderful actress and a delightful person, and she brings a whole different energy to the show – and I'm crazy about her.

This fan has been hooked ever since, and you are one of the reasons!

With that being said, I (the fan) thought I would post some random and hopefully new & fun questions: Feel free to answer one or none...either way, you rock! Thank you.

1. Who on the cast of "OLTL" would you just love to work with more? Michael Easton. I don't work with Michael much and he's a wonderful actor.

2. What would you like to see Viki doing in the future on the show (running a newspaper, working at BE, traveling, etc.)? Not traveling – because if you are traveling you aren't working. I don't know – I think a story of her own would be nice – rather than sitting around being wise for other people.

3. Is it true that Viki and Charlie were slated to be in the 1968 storyline along with Bo (Asa), Rex (Bo), and Gigi (Emma)? No, not that I know of.

4. What can we tease your fans to look forward to in the near future from Viki and Charlie? I don't know – I wish I could help you out. I don't know the answer to that.

Favorite soda: I don't drink soda – if I do it's when I'm sick and that's because my mother used to give me ginger ale when I was sick – I like ginger ale, but I rarely drink soda.

Favorite fruit: I love pears.

Favorite season: I'd have to say fall. I love the fall.

Favorite dessert: Oh God – ice cream.

Favorite actor and actress: My favorite actress for years and years has been Judi Dench. My favorite actor...I have several, I love Alan Rickman – a British actor – he's just brilliant. I think Johnny Depp is so clever and so good. Robert Downey Jr...I like actors who are interesting and play all kinds of wonderful characters.

Favorite movie: No, I like so many.

Fast fun facts (Ask/answer as quick as possible):

Go skydiving or go scuba diving? Oh God – neither. I don't like to be above the ground or under the water.

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Run two miles straight or walk eight miles?
Walk eight miles.

Not take a bath for a week or take a bath in a lake? What? I don't get it. I wouldn't NOT take a bath or shower for week – that's absurd, and you can't bathe in a lake.

Be able to rewind time or see the future?
Rewind time I think.

Die the day after the best day of your life or live to be 100? Like neither? I'd like to live to be 100 I think.

Be loved by one person or have ten people who like you? Both.

Be fat and pretty or skinny and ugly? Oh, I'd much rather be fat and pretty.

Love and lose or, never love at all? Love.

Soap opera ratings are down and there are rumors of pay cuts. Has OLTL been affected? Yes.

Every show has been – every person in America has been. Yes, they are trying to save money wherever they can so they are renegotiating – reducing salaries.

How do you like your new home? Are you happy in it and adjusted? Love it, love it, love it – love the town, love the house, love everything about this area.

How does it compare to Long Island? In terms of what?

In terms of things like restaurants. Oh, God, it is fabulous. There were no decent restaurants anywhere on Long Island that we ever found. You'd have to drive for hours. There are brilliant restaurants within 5 minutes of our house. And we actually eat out quite a lot now because the restaurants are there and it is wonderful. Everything about this area I love. I don't even mind the commute. It is a pretty drive.

How long does it take you? A little under an

hour.

Recently, I went through our record collection and came across the Original Broadway Cast of "The Sound Of Music." Mary Martin played "Maria" and the album cover has Brian Davies listed in the credits – is that your husband? Did you see that when you were younger? Yes, that is my husband, but no I did not see it. I wish I had. I know that my mother and father saw it. And I asked my mother once what she thought when she saw Brian – and she said "I just remember thinking he could have been one of my children because he was so fair and a red head."

Do you have an all-time favorite Broadway show? No – I have lots and lots of them.

Do you prefer musical, comedy or drama?

Oh, comedy I think. I want to go to be entertained. Although, I've seen some fantastic, serious productions.

How far in advance is OLTL currently taping?
We are about 3 weeks ahead.

How are you and the other actors on the big screen directed to act/react when the Jess/Bess/Tess characters are interacting with each other in the cage? Does the director "still pause" the frame or are the actors standing still themselves? They shoot those scenes separately - no one else is there and when they edit them into other scenes, we are supposed to ignore them.

I was hoping they would keep Janet Zarish [Lee Halprin] on the show and interact with Viki. Do you know if Catherine Hickland [Lindsey] will return to the show? I have no knowledge of that.

Do the ratings cause immediate concern for any of you as far as the show's (and other daytime shows') viability? The ratings seem to have stabilized somewhat and not falling further. We always want the show to be number one- yes-it does concern us.

I was so glad to finally get to meet you at the

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Super Soap week end!! I have watched you for 37 years!! You are so gracious and hospitable to everyone. Thank you! I was the lady with my daughter and two blonde granddaughters from Texas. You let us take pictures with all of us and you! Wow! That

was special! Oh how nice! That's very sweet, thank you!

Erika Autograph Event

When: Tuesday, March 10th, 9 to 11am and 11am to 1pm.

Where: 320 West 66th St. ("The View" set), New York, NY

How: Show up! It's a \$10 minimum donation, with all proceeds benefiting Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS - an organization dedicated to raising funds for AIDS-related charities.

Attendees: *(Subject to change.)*

Thorsten Kaye (Zach, "All My Children")
Cameron Mathison (Ryan, "All My Children")
Debbi Morgan (Angie, "All My Children")
Darnell Williams (Jesse, "All My Children")

Kristen Alderson (Starr, "One Life to Live")
Farah Fath (Gigi, "One Life to Live")
John-Paul Lavoisier (Rex, "One Life to Live")
Erika Slezak (Viki, "One Life to Live")
Trevor St. John (Todd, "One Life to Live")
Bree Williamson (Jessica, "One Life to Live")

Bradford Anderson (Spinelli, "General Hospital")
Brandon Barash (Johnny, "General Hospital")
Anthony Geary (Luke, "General Hospital")

This autograph day is Part Two of the Broadway Cares event, which begins in NYC on March 9th with a evening concert featuring "AMC," "OLTL," and "GH" stars singing, dancing, and sometimes both. You can find out how to order tickets for this performance, and learn about special deals, here http://soapnet.go.com/soapnet/feature/path-pn_soapnation/category_shows?lid=HomeFlash&lpos=module2.

Like the autograph event, all ticket proceeds go towards Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

Broadway Cares is just one piece of a larger pie that is the 2009 Soap Nation tour -- a series of events dedicated to bringing ABC Daytime and SOAPnet stars to you! Another event on the tour, Rock the Soap, is based out of California. Learn more about it at www.soapnet.go.com.