

Erika's World

Off the Cuff

July 29, 2010

**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
January 1972

© 2010 Erika's World
All rights reserved. No text
may be reproduced without
written permission.

Dear Friends:

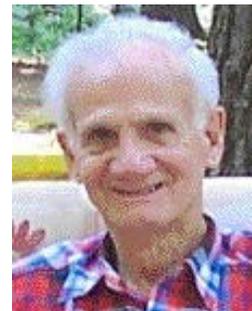
Our hearts, thoughts and prayers go out to Walter and his family as his father, Walter Miller, Sr., passed away this July 5th. We dedicate this issue in his memory.

Erika shares, "I knew Walter's father and Barbara for years. Walter senior was a very kind and gentle man with a delightful sense of humor. He was a thoughtful, hard working and talented man and a loving father. He loved Walter so much and was so proud of him. When Brian and I moved into our apartment on East 51st St, after Michael was born, our sofas were in serious need of help and Walter's father made me beautiful slipcovers which I kept for years. I know that Walter will miss him but fortunately he was with him until the end and always had a wonderful relationship with him."

Many of you may remember meeting Walter's father at any one of the past fan club gatherings held over the years. I've spoken with Walter — he is doing well and takes great comfort in the memories of happy times with his father.

Until next time,

AJ



Walter Miller, Sr.



1975 first fan club gathering
Walter (Sr.) with Erika



1984 gathering
Walter (Jr.), Barbara Miller, Erika, Walter (Sr.), & family friend Ruth Shaw



1986 gathering
Walter (Jr.), Walter (Sr.), Erika, Barbara Miller,
& long time fan Bonny J. Schroeder

The last time Walter interviewed you, it was March – the show had moved into the new studios, you had just returned from back surgery, Viki had gone to London, and on the screen right now Viki is just leaving for a trip somewhere in the Caribbean. Oh, Charlie and I are just leaving – we didn't know where we were going actually – Brian Kerwin said to me when we came back, "Where did we go?" And I said that I thought it was someplace warm but I was not sure.

You are somewhere with a beach and a bungalow where a passport is needed.

OK, yes, the reason we went away on a trip onscreen is that my husband, daughter, and I went to England to see Michael graduate from Oxford with his MBA. He did his Master's Degree at Oxford University and his official graduation was on June 12th. So we went to London, and we had a wonderful time. And tying a bunch of things together, my back surgery was so successful that I walked all over London for a week and all over Paris for a week after that, with NO pain. I am eternally grateful to my surgeon and The Hospital for Special Surgery in New York for that, because it was just so magnificent. In January, before the surgery, I literally couldn't walk half a block in New York without pain. Now I am in just great shape, and it's wonderful. I still have little twinges, but other than that, I am just in such great shape. I am very grateful to the surgeon and the hospital.

That's great to hear – we received a lot of questions about how you were recovering. So how was London? In London, it was chilly. I had packed all of these wonderful warm-weather clothes, and the day before we left, I thought I should check what the weather was like over there, so I ran to the internet and I looked and I went, "Holy Cow! It's only 55-60 degrees!" So I threw out all of my packed clothes and

packed sweaters and long-sleeved shirts and things. It was chilly, but it was lovely. We had a wonderful time!

What is a graduation ceremony like at Oxford? Is it long and stuffy? It is unbelievably awesome! It's held in a theatre called the Sheldonian Theatre. It was built in the 1660's, was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, and is a university building in Oxford, England. It is a beautiful old building. Apparently they are going to do some renovations so they will not have any more graduations there for the next 2-3

years, so we were lucky that this one was still able to be fit in.

The ceremony was wonderful because it is very full of pomp and circumstance and they have the masters and the deans – but most of it was in Latin, so God knows what they were saying. They left me at gaudeamus, you know – hello!?! You sit and you watch, and they graduate a lot of different degrees at the same time.

Everything from the simplest regular degree to the masters to the doctors of philosophy – they graduate everything – but in stages. They start with the candidates in gowns – for those that have no degrees it is a plain black gown. Because Michael had no degree yet, except for his Bachelors of Science, his was a plain black gown. Anyone that has a higher degree and is getting an even higher degree starts in their gown that is of that degree that they already have. They are then presented in groups of 5 to someone, the proctor I guess, and there are 4-5 people sitting in the center. There is a great deal of bowing and dosing of caps – literally they call it that. They bow and they doss caps, a whole bunch of stuff is said in Latin, and then they leave to put on their new robes and return at a certain part of the ceremony. Michael's was this wonderful, resplendent black hooded gown, with

a viki moment to remember



Strange Bedfellows

"This is the most asinine, imbecilic plot ever conceived!"
Dorian Lord 7/20/10

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

embroidered sleeves and front – and with silks draped around his neck and down his back – his silks colors for the Masters of Business Administration were cranberry and ash. There were around 200 people who graduated in varying degrees, with 12-14 in Michael's group, and the ceremony lasted approximately 2 hours. It was inside, and it was just marvelous to watch. They handed the graduates an envelope afterwards and Michael started to shove it in his backpack and I went, "No, no, no, no, no – give that to me!" So, I very carefully packed it, brought it home, and took it immediately to the framer where I had it framed with the colors of his silks surrounding it. It looks very pretty – so that's his degree. The whole ceremony was massively impressive – I mean, seriously massively impressive! I've been to Amanda and Michael's 4 year bachelor degree graduations, you know where you cry and they toss their hats in the air, but this, with robes and the colors and the fanfare, was fabulous, and so very exciting!

There is a luncheon afterwards, in the various colleges – see you graduate with your college – you get your degree with everyone, but you graduate in groups with your college. So there was a luncheon afterwards with Michael's college, which is Brasenose College. It's not the oldest college – the oldest college at Oxford was founded in the 1200's, but Brasenose was founded in 1509. So it's pretty old and has magnificently beautiful buildings. The luncheon was held in the big dining hall which could really double for a Harry Potter set. It's so beautiful there. So we are at the luncheon and we sat at the head table with the Principal, Dr. Roger Cashmore, who sat at one end, and his wife, Dr. Ann Lindsay-Cashmore, who sat at the other end. Curiously enough, and it really is a funny coincidence, we had met these people before because Bree Williamson, who plays Jessica on OLTL, is married to man named Michael Roberts, whose uncle happens to be Dr. Roger Cashmore – who is the Principal of Brasenose College at Oxford!

You are kidding, what a small world! No, it's a very funny coincidence, and he is a rocket scientist and so is his wife. I mean really rocket scientists. He was the Director of Research and Deputy Director General of CERN, a physics laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland. They do important work like investigations into black holes, and they blow up things. It is an incredible science center, and he was the head of it for a long time. But he is this wonderful English professor and scientist that just happens to be the Principal of Brasenose College now. We sat with him and his wife at the head table, and just had the most wonderful lunch. We laughed and we told stories – it was wonderful. They were both very fond of Michael because he got very involved with the social events in the college, and he organized things for her. Everyone gets very involved with the college when they are there, and Michael was very active. It was lovely.

So then we all took the train back and I asked, "Well, where will we go to celebrate?" And Michael said, "No, no, no we are NOT going out. We are going to watch England vs USA in the soccer match." And I said, "Michael, sweetheart, you just graduated from Oxford – we're going to celebrate!" And he said, "No, mother you don't understand – England is playing the USA in soccer!" So, we went back to our hotel, and sat in our very nice hotel room and watched England play USA, which unfortunately was a 1-1 tie, although, apparently The Post had a headline the next day that said, "USA wins over England 1-1."

Well, you know where ever you would have gone to celebrate – everybody in the restaurant would have been watching that game anyway. Everyone in ALL of England was watching every single soccer game. We spent a week watching soccer. It was wonderful.

I work with a group over in London and during the world cup it was like NO meetings – nothing! That's right – nobody talked for the

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

week - the whole time the world cup was on.

So, has Michael found any work? No, he's looking for work, looking for a job – if anybody has a job to offer him – he has an MBA and he wants to do consulting, finance, anything. He needs a JOB!

Would he go for his Doctorate? Not right now, though he has talked about it. He had such a wonderful time at Oxford but it is a 4 year or so program and right now he would like to go back to work for awhile. There was a person in the group that was graduating who was getting a Doctorate of Philosophy, who was probably in his mid 50's. So you can go back at any time and get whatever you want. There were people getting all kinds of degrees. But right now, he doesn't want to do it.

How have you been spending your summer? Do you have any other trips besides London and Paris? No, London and Paris was our nice vacation for the year. We are enjoying our home here in Connecticut. We are enjoying ourselves. Michael came home for a little bit, and he's here now. He might go back to England, or he might not. We're just having a good time taking it easy here. What kind of weather you have had down there?

HOT, it's in the upper 90's to 100 this week in North Carolina! Today we have a blessed 80 degrees but for the last 2-3 weeks we had temperatures that have just been unbearably hot. We were actually in our house in Vermont for a few days, and we came back here where we have a sprinkler system, but everything was shriveled up. It had been watered every day, but the heat was so intense and awful. So we are going to have to stay around here and take care of everything.

But that's good – being able to have time for you is really important. Oh, it is lovely – getting to sleep past 5:30 in the morning is nice too!

And when does your annual August

vacation start? It just started today – the first day! I worked yesterday and am now off until the middle of August. My annual August vacation has been pushed up to sort of the end of July and into August. Because I had to take 4 weeks for my surgery, my August vacation is slightly shorter.

We were excited to hear about your taping of a webisode for Soapnet and ABC - the "What If" with Tony Geary! Frank approached me probably 4 months ago and shared that he had been asked to direct a number of these webisodes - these promos - and asked if I would be interested. And I said, "Absolutely!" And he said, "I'll tell you right now you would be paired with Tony Geary." I told him, "In that case, I'm doubly interested – triply interested!" I love Tony Geary. I didn't hear much about it and then he said that it would be shot around the end of May or something. I flew out to Los Angeles, and we shot it in around 4-5 hours. Tony was totally, completely delightful! He is most charming and I've known Tony on and off for years – just briefly. You know we never really worked together, but we just see each other at Emmy awards and things like that. I had never had a chance to spend any time with him. He is the most charming, the most delightful, the most intelligent, and the nicest, calmest, best human being. He was delightful. We had such a wonderful time doing this. Frank Valentini, our producer, did a brilliant job – apparently with all of them. I am not the only one saying it – the head of ABC said he did a brilliant job. And I actually had an email yesterday from Sue Johnson, who is Vice President of Daytime, saying she had just seen the rough cut of our "What If" and she said "It's fabulous!!! I can't wait for you to see it!" It's not funny. It's very touching, it's very sweet. And Tony is wonderful and apparently they love it. I can't wait to see it. I don't even know when it will be released.

I believe it was announced to be August 9th. When we hear about it, we'll send you a note to let you know it is out there. They are 3-4 minutes and are little vignettes; little stories that

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

take place in one of 2 or 3 locations. There is an elevator set, an airplane set and maybe one other set. Tony's and mine is in the elevator set, along with Susan



Luke meets Viki (ABC photos)

Lucci's and Maurice Bernard's. So, Tony and I are stuck in an elevator and it's a few minutes of 2 characters interacting. And it is the 2 characters - not 2 actors, but characters - and it is really well written. I just totally loved it.

Oh good - I'm looking forward to seeing it! I have a funny story to tell you. I had a real problem getting out to Los Angeles. I arrived at the airport and somehow the travel agency had totally screwed up my reservation and when I arrived at the airport in New York they said, "No, you are booked for tomorrow." And I said, "I can't be booked for tomorrow - I have to come back (to New York) tomorrow." But they said my reservation was for tomorrow and not today. I called Laurie Hogan, our press person, and asked what I should do. And she said "Oh my God - let me see what I can do." So she called the travel people and they pulled some strings and eventually got me on the flight. They had told me at the airport that the flight was totally full. So I get on the flight, get to LA, and I'm kind of tired, so the car picks me up and takes me to the hotel. In the meantime, the story has gone around that I almost didn't get on the flight - I don't know, somebody got concerned. I get to the hotel, a very nice hotel, I check in at the desk and they said there was a gift for me. And ABC had sent over a very, very nice bottle of wine, in a box, and said, here please enjoy this on us. I kind of opened the box a little and saw that it was a bottle of wine and thought, "That's lovely - isn't that nice?!" I didn't really open it - I just saw that it was a bottle of wine and I went upstairs to my room. I was really very tired and I ordered some dinner and considered opening the bottle of wine, but decided to keep a clear head, and decided to just take it home. The next morning I had an early call, so I packed up

- got to the 8 am shoot, and then I was picked up at 2 pm to go to the airport for a 4 pm flight. They had a greeter to meet me at the airport in Los Angeles to help me get on the flight. So, everything is going smoothly, the car arrives on time, we make it to the airport in good speed, I meet the greeter and I am all set. My bag goes through security and everything stops. And they said, "I'm sorry they flagged your bag." And I said, "Why, there's nothing in there?" And they went, "Well, yes there is - what - you have a bottle of wine in there?" And I went, "Well, yes I do." And they said, "OK - but it is OVER the limit!" I said, "My suitcase is over the limit?" And they said, "For a bottle of WINE, it's over the limit - the 3 ounce liquid limit!" And then it dawned on me - "Oh my God! I'm so stupid! I'm so sorry!" So, they opened my bag and took out the box with the bottle of wine. And I said, "Oh, I'm so sorry! Somebody gave that to me!" And of course the second I said that, I thought Oops - don't say that! They were like "What do you mean somebody GAVE that to you?" I said, "No, no, no - at the hotel last night - it was a gift from someone and I think it is a very nice bottle of wine." The greeter, who was with me said, "Oh, she's ok, she's ok - it's fine." So, I offered, "I'll give it to you, do you want to take it?" The security person said, "No, I can cradle it for awhile, but I can't take it." I said, "But I think it is a REALLY nice bottle of wine." So, she opened the box and took out the bottle of wine to look at it. And I said, "I think that is a really expensive bottle of wine." And she looked at it and said, "Yes, I think it is too. But I can't take it - we have to throw it away." And then she looked down at the bottom of the box and she reached down and at the bottom was a bottle opener with a KNIFE in it! Oh my God. I didn't even know it was there. But it was one of those all-in-one bottle openers with the knife to cut the top. And I said, "I'm sorry, I had NO IDEA that was in there." Well, it's a good thing that I wasn't arrested and thrown in jail, but fortunately they let me go - so there is a very nice bottle of wine in somebody's trash can right now. (Asst. Ed. Note - Too bad the greeter couldn't have taken it back to ABC and had them ship it to you!!)

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

I've gone through that too – I've spent the last year or so commuting to Los Angeles weekly and after a trip through wine country I learned that you can't carry it with you even though you need an act of God to try to uncork the thing. I ended up just mailing it to myself. But you are lucky we didn't see you on TMZ! Oh yes....Erika Slezak, caught smuggling wine on plane!

And with a knife! Yes!

The Emmys were on CBS this year – did you go to the show or watch the show? I watched and I was massively disappointed that Bree and Brian didn't win.



Just this week ABC released some new pictures of you. In one you are dressed in red sitting down, and the other, you are in green. They look great! They did?

Yes, they are with a white background. There is one where you are sitting in a chair with a nice red outfit on, and then one where you are in green outfit. It looks like they did the whole cast or most of the cast. Oh, I remember now, it was a promo we did in the spring someplace.

One of the changes the show has made, is they've started showing new bumpers -- mid way through each episode the show is airing new shots of different actors – not everyone though. Have you taped any or will you be taping one? They taped them actually last summer when I was on vacation. (Oh hang on one second - Lucy, my cat is outside and she has run into a bumble bee and she doesn't quite know what to do.) But, no, they taped them last summer when I was on vacation so, no, I did not do a bumper.

Well, I think they are going to hear some noise about that – because the last time they did them you were omitted also. The fans don't want you or your character to be slighted.

We've heard that Jean Passanante has joined the writing team. Yes, she has - she has already joined. Jean was with us many years ago – I think over 20 years ago, and she is a wonderful writer. She left and went to other shows and she is a very clever woman and she has joined as a breakdown writer, and I think she is going to assist in story meetings and things like that. And I like her very much. She a very nice woman and has a lot of good ideas – so hopefully it will all work out.

Cool – have you started to receive any of her work? I haven't. She joined in June so it is too early to see what she has done yet.

It sounds like she knows the characters, so that is a plus. She does. She's one of those kinds of writers who goes back to the core of the show, so I think that she will come up with stuff, hopefully, for the core characters - which will be nice.

Yes! That would be really nice! I think that's required at this point. I think there is a little too much for the 14 year olds.

Oh my word – just to prepare for this interview I watched about 4 weeks of shows on my DVR to catch up. I had stopped watching each day partly because I didn't know most of whom they were showing. I counted and there were like 12 characters – all young – all of the guys look alike, they need nametags, and I honestly don't give a rip about teenage angst – everything is so temporary at that age. I don't want to look back to high school – I want to be swept up in something with substance. And I'm so tired of the formula of every adult needing to have a child – it's become a repetition of – have a parent, have a child, parent counsel

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

child, and then parent you go stand in the background. It's too much. I agree. It's too much!

There have been rumors about one of the soaps ending and that it might be OLTL but it might be something else. Apparently there are rumors – I don't think it is us – I don't think ABC would have spent the money to move us and the show. Rumors are rumors and I think they are completely unfounded and I really mean that.

One thing that OLTL does well is that it meets its budget and it seems really efficient – so that has got to be a plus in their favor. Extremely efficient, yes. The reason we were not moved to California is because Frank is extremely good at managing his money.

Yes, someone submitted a question on that — In the effort to meet their budget they are reducing the guarantees of all of the long term actors to the point where there is no ability to tell a story on the core characters – the characters people care about – so it then impacts the ratings so it looks like they are shooting their left foot in the middle of the final leg of the race of their life.

Is that felt behind the scenes or is it just perception? I don't know how to answer that. I have no idea if they are reducing guarantees – everybody across the board in daytime has taken cut backs – it's necessary and I don't know that they are reducing guarantees – I have no idea. I can't answer that question because I'm not in the production end. I literally am not capable of answering that question.

A fan writes — I have been a fan of yours since One Life to Live began many years ago. Please tell me how you stay so young looking. You look fabulous. I hope you continue your role as Viki for many years to come. I appreciate that very much, thank you. I hope I continue in my role for many years to come as well. I get a lot of sleep. I'm ashamed to say – but not really – that I don't physically do

a lot of controlled exercise, but I never sit down. I'm always moving, always doing something – I lead the busiest life. And I guess that is part of it. I don't think I have ever been bored in my life and I think that is a big part of it. I have so many interests and things that I do that excite me and that keep me going, and I think that is a big part of it. I think when you have so many things on your plate it keeps you going. I don't know that it keeps you young, but it keeps you going. I kind of take care of myself. I'm very careful about what I eat – I don't drink too much, just a little – I don't do drugs at all – and I do not smoke. In fact today I was at the market and somebody was buying cigarettes and they handed over a ten dollar bill and I thought they were going to get a lot of change. I haven't bought cigarettes since I stopped smoking 40 years ago when cigarettes were 35 cents a pack. The cashier gave the customer back a couple of coins and after the person left I asked how much the cigarettes cost and she said that they were \$9 a pack.

Yes. They've tacked on so many fees and taxes to it. I was shocked. If you go through a pack a day, in ten days you can spend \$100 on cigarettes. That's just unbelievable! And people still smoke! How could you afford it?

There is a big black market for cheap cigarettes – just to bypass all of the taxes on it. You know, when they made the first announcement that said cigarette smoking will kill you – I went OK, I don't want to die like that so I stopped smoking and that was years ago. I stopped right away. And I don't drink a lot. You look after yourself. I don't overeat and I don't eat sweets a lot. I have a couple of weaknesses – I think people know what they are - potato chips...I love them. I don't eat dessert...I would if I could, but I can't because if I did it would show. So, I just have to look after myself. I have to take care of myself.

Well, you are doing a good job of it. Thank you.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

How did you like the story between David/Dorian/Charlie/Viki.

You know what, it was kind of silly but you know that I love Tuc Watkins - I love that



Four Musketeers

man, and I love Brian Kerwin and I love Robin. So working the 4 of us together – it's the Four Musketeers! And we'd come to work in the morning – and say here we go again! And it's just so fun – it's terrific fun. Working with Tuc is such a joy, such pleasure...and Brian and Robin as well. It's just terrific fun. I know it was kind of silly, but we had such fun doing it. I don't know where we are in the story just now. Has it been resolved yet?

Yes, Charlie was caught kissing Dorian. You were in bed with David – Dorian walks in and then you gave the gig up and told them to go off, get together because they loved each other. Oh good. Anyway, Tuc has gone back to California to do Desperate Housewives. And he will be back next spring or in the meantime hopefully again. You know, they parked him someplace nice or not so nice in the meantime and hopefully he will be back.

If anything, what would you change about your career? Would you have done Broadway or gone to CA to do movies? If I could change anything about my career – and I don't know that I would have because I cannot complain because I have had a brilliant time - I would have liked to sneak some Broadway in somewhere along the lines. But it's not too late, hopefully. You know if someone would hire an old broad like me and let me play the maid or something. (Asst. Ed. Note – I'm laughing!!! I can hear them calling, "Hazel...Alice...Mr. French...Uncle Charlie...")

Throughout Erika's history with "OLTL" what was her favorite Set to work on? Favorite set? I guess I would have to say the Lord Library. I love it! In all its incarnations, it has been terrific. There are a number of sets

that I like, but I think I love that set – it's home, because that was the set I worked on my very first day. That was the first place I ever worked on that show – it was the Lord Library. It looked slightly different, but it was home.

How will they write Viki out for your August vacation this year? Oh, they are not writing me out, I'm just sort of off in the distance someplace. They are not writing me out. In fact, because we are so crazily out of sequence, what I taped yesterday doesn't actually occur until 2 weeks from now.

How does your character's taste in romance differ from your own? Holy cow! My taste in romance is like my husband, one husband, and that is very nice and thank God they don't die on me the way Viki's do. They differ – that's a silly question – I can't answer that. Well, on second hand, they don't differ at all – she's looking for what I have. There you go!

If you were given the magical opportunity to take any fictional character from any book, or television/movies and bring that character onto earth for a week, who would you choose and why? That's a question for the next newsletter because I would have to give that some thought.

Is there any "classic literature" you've read that made you wonder why it's considered a classic? No.

If you could hop around in time, where and when would you want to visit? Oh, I'd like to go back to the roaring 20's. I'd like to be a flapper. I'd also like to go back to Tudor England but I'd like to be rich, I wouldn't want to be poor, I'd like to be rich.

What is the most obsessive compulsive thing you do? A number of things – but I have never gone to bed without taking my makeup off and brushing my teeth. I don't care how sick I am — how weird an evening I've had – I have never, ever gone without brushing my

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

teeth or taking my make up off. I could not possibly go to sleep without that. And I never get up in the morning without brushing my teeth.

The pre-wedding scenes for Bo/Nora came across as very cute and funny. Did everyone have as much fun taping those scenes as it came across on screen? Yes, I think so. They were kind of fun, they really were. You know, Hillary is a lot of fun to be around, and yes we had a good time.

Do you know if there are going to be any more super soap weekends? No I don't. I heard a rumor that they were going to start it up again and then I heard a rumor that they were not. So I don't know. It's a shame because we enjoyed them and I think people enjoyed them. But that is an ABC or Disney decision.

How did you keep a straight face having David/Tuc model swimsuits for Viki? OK, that's hard and I had a camera in front of my face which was my saving grace. He is so sweet and so funny that it is very hard, but you know that's what they pay me for.

We have a fan that was happy to see Kevin/Dan Gauthier back on the show but felt very let down that you didn't have any scenes with him. I didn't even get to see Dan the last time he was on the show. I mean, literally didn't even get to see him. And hopefully he will be back many times.

Where is the balance on the show? All the fan sees is teens, newbies and dayplayers getting story, but you are not getting story? Well, I've been told there will be a change in the fall and that there will be a story in the fall. That's what I have been told.

Hopefully you will actually be SEEN in your story this year unlike last year.

A fan writes that they and many others adore the Viki/Gigi's friendship. Do you

enjoy working with Farah Fath? I do very much - I like Farah as a person, I think she is a wonderful actress and she is a delight to work with. She is very different. She has a completely different energy from anyone else on the show, and I really enjoy her. And I have from the first minute I met her in the Bon Jour set. I've always enjoyed her. I think she is delightful.

Do you prefer comedic or dramatic storylines and why? Either one - I like to be there - that's my answer. Just give me something to say.

How are the pets doing? Everybody is doing fine. Teddy had a check up with his heart specialist today and he is as well as can be expected. He's not had a big change since the last one, he's about the same - he's doing fine. He's on a lot of medication but he is doing fine. And Molly, thank God, has resolved her auto immune disease so far. We have to keep tabs on her but she's doing OK. And she's eating like the house is on fire. She's doing fine - we're very lucky. And Lucy is awesome - the silliest, funniest, greatest cat in the world.

How is Brian doing? Brian is GREAT! He's sitting right now - half in and half out of the pool and enjoying himself.

What is Amanda up to? Amanda is working and taking acting classes and enjoying herself as well.

Have you seen any good movies? No! (Asks Brian - who says, no.) We actually, I must say, saw the most brilliant production I've almost ever seen in my life in London - a play called The War Horse. And I think it is coming to New York - and if anybody has the opportunity to see it they should. It is the most extraordinary production I have ever seen. And I don't want to say anymore about it because it is hard to describe what it is about, but it is brilliant. We don't go to the movies a lot. We rent and watch old movies a lot.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

We just saw Inception with Leonardo DiCaprio – that’s like your brain on drugs for whoever wrote it – it was interesting, we liked it. Good.

What are you reading now? Oh, I just finished reading the Stieg Larsson trilogy – "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo", "The Girl Who Played with Fire" and "The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest".

I’m reading that too – I’m on the third book. OK – it’s fascinating. And at some point you and I have to talk about the third one because if you haven’t finished it I don’t want to talk about it but I loved them, but I have my issues with the third one, that’s all.

I love them too. Columbia Pictures has bought the rights to make a Hollywood version of the books -- they are casting for that right now. Yes, I know – and Daniel Craig – hello? As Mikael Blomkvist? They need someone warm.

Really, I hadn’t heard that. The thing is, the

role of Lisbeth Salander is the role of a lifetime for some girl. I love those books. I went through them. I told my family – don’t talk to me, get away from me – these books are brilliant. Brian bought me the books. He had read about them and said, “You are going to enjoy them!” And I did – I couldn’t stop reading them.

They have filmed a Swedish version of the books. You can catch it where they show foreign films with subtitles. I’m stuck on them – and I’m so sad to hear that the author is dead. Yes, but apparently he has written two thirds of a 4th book. And the woman he lived with has the rights to something he has written on the 4th book, but we don’t know if it is still a part of the same series.

Are you using your Nook? Yes, I am, thank you very much – I’m definitely using my Nook.

I’ve got the Sony version of it and love it for travel. Yes, it’s cool!

Thanks Erika - have a great vacation! Thank you

in memory

It is with great sadness to learn that fan club member Maryann Raymond passed away on July 11th. Online fans may have known her as VTGrammy. Maryann was an avid Ben & Blondie fan — and took an interest in creating websites. Through contacts with other fans, she established a large electronic library of printed articles, pictures and various items featuring Erika, going back to her early years with the show. Maryann graciously donated her work to the fan club which you can view at erikaslezak.com.

Erika shared, “I am so sorry to hear of Maryann's passing. I certainly remember Maryann and all of her incredible work, which was very instrumental in our website content. I extend my condolences to her friends and family.” Maryann corresponded with Erika over the years and was such a joy to know. She will be missed by all who knew her.



Maryann and husband Henry