



# Observer Showbiz

# This Week In Hollywoodland

From our Showbiz correspondent Tommy Garrett

## LAURALEE BELL

A.K.A. SUPERWOMAN

### ■ BEVERLY HILLS -

Lauralee Bell is a name fans all over the world know. Bell was one of the most popular heroines ever on the CBS soap, "The Young & the Restless" which was created by her parents, Bill Bell, Sr. and his beautiful wife Lee Phillip Bell.

Lauralee Bell always preferred to create her own opportunities rather than have them handed to her so she left the cocoon of the show she grew up on, "The Young and the Restless," the #1 rated soap, in 2005 to try her luck in other areas.

She was the female lead in her first film, "Carpool Guy," the lead in the 2006 Lifetime movie, "Past Sins," and one of the leads in the upcoming feature that is a prequel to an iconic film.

In between, she's raising two very active kids and owning "On Sunset," a celebrity-friendly fashion boutique that refuses to disclose its well-heeled customer base for self-promotion. In her spare time, she's been writing a series or two to develop as well as a book. She also guested on "CSI: Miami," the #1 primetime show.

While "The Young and the Restless" has always been produced and taped in Hollywood since its start, the Bell family continued living in Chicago until 1986.

Their roots were there and Lauralee and her two older brothers, Bill Jr., now the president of Bell-Phillip Television and Bradley, now the executive producer of "The Bold and the Beautiful," all attended school in the Windy City.

Lee Phillip Bell hosted her own television show in Chicago on the CBS affiliate, WBBM-TV. A winner of some 15 Emmys for the program, she was one of the city's most recognised personalities.

"My mum got stopped every two seconds," recalls a proud Lauralee, "but it wasn't until I had kids of my own that I realised my mum is Superwoman, she was always there for us and we were unaware of her heavy workload."

Her parents, particularly William Sr., commuted regularly between Chicago and Los Angeles. On vacations and holidays, the children were delighted to be able to accompany them, especially Lauralee who at age nine asked to be allowed to be a non-speaking extra in an episode of "The Young and the Restless."

At 13, she was rewarded with a brief scene and a few lines to speak. Succeeding trips found her in four-day and six-day efforts in what was slowly becoming a recurring role. But now she wasn't asking -- she was being asked to do the show because of something that she had no idea she was creating: fan mail.

Viewers were charmed



● Lauralee Bell

y the guileless and natural actress -- someone they'd like their own daughters to be like. They were writing to the network to say that, at last, here was a teenager to whom their own children could relate, rather than to a slick, older actress playing the part of a teenager.

Most of the year was still spent in Chicago until the family moved to LA in 1986. Lauralee became a full-time cast member of "The Young and the Restless" as Christine "Cricket" Blair (Romalotti Williams Blair -- you know those soap marriages never last).

Her castmates accepted her and the audience embraced Lauralee Bell. She was voted "Favorite Soap Opera Actress" in "Teen magazine's national poll shortly after joining the cast and in 1999 she was nominated by fans and won the Outstanding Supporting Actress Award at the "Soap Opera Awards."

She was the hottest daytime star in France for many years as well as their most frequent TV Guide cover subject. She guest-starred on the season finale of "Walker, Texas Ranger," hosted television specials for E! Entertainment Television, PAX-TV and co-hosted a talk show pilot. On October 4, 1997, Lauralee married photographer Scott Martin in a storybook wedding in Santa Barbara. The couple had their first child, Christian, in January, 2001 and their second, Samantha, in October, 2002.

In 1999, during a three-month break from the show, Lauralee fulfilled a lifelong dream by opening her own clothing boutique, "On Beverly Blvd."

In Spring, 2004, Bell closed her first store and opened the even more suc-

cessful, "On Sunset." Bell's handpicked staff at "On Sunset" act as a customer's personal stylist and the boutique has attracted Hollywood's elite as regular customers.

Bell plans to spend this decade transforming her ideas into reality. Next project? Creating her own projects when she is not acting. And enjoying the free time now that her youngest entered kindergarten.

Lauralee Bell, like mother like daughter, is also a "Superwoman." So there is absolutely no doubt the beautiful star will achieve all of her dreams. With hard work and dedication that is part of her DNA, she's bound to succeed.

Bell's latest project is an amazing online series called "Family Dinner," which is created/produced by Lauralee Bell and her husband, Scott Martin and written and directed by Bell. Martin-Bell Productions shot two three-minute "Family Dinner" webisodes with Lauralee as the attention-starved mom of three, her former "Young and Restless" castmate, Aaron Lustig, as her husband, comedy legend Phyllis Diller as her mother-in-law, and Dan Cortese of MTV, "Veronica's Closet" and "Rock Me Baby," as the reality show producer.

Bell has tapped into the dysfunctional family dynamic that everyone thinks characterizes their own family so everyone can easily relate to this experience.

This is the most amazing show I've seen in decades. Phyllis Diller has been telling me for years that she's retired. Thankfully Phyllis has not kept her word. She's absolutely amazing in the series.

Turn To Page 35

## Television's Gold Standard

★The Gold Standard this week has girl power written all over it. Since my childhood I was impressed with the Peanuts series, Charlie Brown. Lucy was constantly using the mantra, "Girl Power." For good reason it seems. What makes women on Television who are powerful and smart so sexy, watchable and exciting? Lets look at the three ladies in question and figure out why. Susan Flannery, Constance Towers and Michelle Stafford each showcased this week what strength, beauty, smarts and power can do for women as well as powerful men.

Susan Flannery who portrays Stephanie Forrester on the most watched show in the world, "The Bold & the Beautiful" started out the week in a way we've not seen in over two decades. Stephanie has been outsmarted and in fact used by Bill Spencer. How did that happen? Stephanie is known as the smartest woman in Los Angeles, a brilliant businesswoman and a powerful player in the high end fashion industry. But her hatred for ex husband Eric and his nymph wife Donna clouded Queen Stephanie's mind when it came to trusting Bill Spencer, who runs a media and publishing empire. Stephanie who is always in control was told point blank that she would not be getting her way and that Spencer had indeed lied to her about their business partnership.

"This is no partnership, you work for me!" Were the words Bill Spencer asserted to a woman who packs a six shooter at times and has been known to slap her enemies around like flies. She had to regroup, go talk to her ex husband Eric and admit she had been wrong in working with Bill Spencer to bring Eric and his fashion house down. Stephanie's shock when she realized that she's helped Bill Spencer in his quest to take over her family's company and that he was in fact in charge and had no real feelings about working with her, only to use her to get his goal. One thing was for sure by week's end. Stephanie was more determined than ever to teach Bill Spencer not to cross her again. But Spencer is now played by Don Diamont, who is an amazing actor and it makes Stephanie even more exciting of a character, when she's slightly vulnerable.

Susan Flannery has played it all over the years. But the Stephanie Forrester who has been outwitted is something she has shown she's capable of playing as well. Susan is a force of nature as an actress. She is more surprising than a hurricane. You just don't know where she's going.

Michelle Stafford who portrays Phyllis Newman started the week off with shock and pain after learning from her husband Nick that he was no longer in love with her and wanted to go back to his first wife Sharon. Stafford has been here before. She worked opposite Michael Damian and amazing superpower actress Lauralee Bell in the nineties when Phyllis was trying to keep her marriage to Danny together, while he wanted to return to his true love and first wife Christine, played by Lauralee.

This time was different. Phyllis and Michelle are both a bit more mature and Michelle is a bit more powerful in her performance as surprising and unbelievable as that is to grasp. Michelle Stafford was a Bill Bell, Sr. find. He knew how to cast great actresses. He'd cast Jess Walton, Melody Thomas Scott and the ever ageless Jamie Lyn Bauer. But when Nick told Phyllis that it was not because of Sharon he wanted to leave her. You felt Phyllis's pain and despair knowing that her husband was either lying to her intentionally or unintentionally.

Michelle Stafford is nothing like her alter ego Phyllis. How does she manage to get inside the skin of her character with such grace and stunning ease? It's like watching Olivia de Havilland in "The Snake Pit" when Phyllis spent the week standing up for herself, fighting for her marriage while trying to control her innate urges to lash out and become even more dastardly than before. Phyllis finalized the week in the arms of the man she once loved, Jack.

Next week we know that Stafford will simply shock and awe us even more. Michelle Stafford proves that a girl can take care of herself. Phyllis proves that a woman scorned is not to be underestimated.

And how does "General Hospital" end a week? Bringing our beloved Helena Cassadine back in order to rid Port Charles and the world of her longtime nemesis Luke Spencer. With Luke out of the way, Helena will have her master plan prepared for the denizens of the city.

Constance Towers is so shockingly beautiful that we often forget that she's a classically trained actress who has worked opposite some of the best and most famous leading men of our time. John Wayne, William Holden, Glenn Ford, Yul Brynner, Michael Douglas, you name it.

Turn To Page 35

★ This week in Hollywoodland was a typical hot summer week. But lots of cool things occurred and some of them were even fun. A luncheon on Sunset Blvd. with longtime friend Lauralee Bell was entertaining and exciting. She has just completed a pilot for the Internet and her beautiful mum Lee managed to get her longtime friend Phyllis Diller to join the cast of "Family Dinner." Lauralee and her handsome husband Scott are excited about where this may all go.

★ Two big stars celebrated birthdays this week. **Clint Eastwood** turned 79. Can you believe it? The star of many westerns and the sometimes movie producer and director shows no signs of slowing down in his life or career. **Eastwood** is currently working on two projects for **Warner Bros Studios**. Actor **Zachary Quinto** turned 32. He's still beaming from the success of his hit film "Star Trek" and promoting it across the globe. Quinto looks forward to returning to the NBC hit series "Heroes" this fall.

★ While **Beverly Hills** celebrity reality couple **Spencer Pratt** and **Heidi Montag** return home from the jungles of **Costa Rica** and the set of "I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!" Actor **Daniel Baldwin** will be arriving in their place. He joins his brother **Stephen Baldwin** as well as **Lou Diamond Phillips** in the jungle where they try to survive the wilds of Mother Nature.

★ **Doris Day's** fourth husband **Barry Comden** died this week in his **Los Angeles** home. They divorced in 1981. But **Comden** was helpful in getting **Doris** a line of pet foods which bare her name. He often joked that **Doris Day** was better suited for friendships with dogs than being married.

★ Actor **Brian Austin Green** is the latest "**Beverly Hills 90210**" star to make a career change recently. **Brian** has signed a contract to join the hit teen soap "**One Tree Hill**" this coming season and is excited about the change. While "**90210**" co-star **Tori Spelling** remains in a battle with her mother **Candy Spelling**, who has recently told a reporter that **Tori** allegedly caused her father's death. She claims **Aaron Spelling** died of a broken heart when **Tori** decided to have no more to do with the family.

★ Actor **Robert Pattinson** of "**Twilight**" fame spent the week in Italy while filming the sequel "**New Moon**." Though **Pattinson** and his co-star and leading lady **Kristen Stewart** deny they are a couple. The two were inseparable all week. It's great publicity for the new film, which has just wrapped and the third film will begin shooting in eight weeks. **Pattinson** is in **Hollywood** now for some rest and relaxation.

★ Watching the **VH1** reality series, "**New York Goes To Work**" was painful this week. The Monday night episode had fans choosing yet another job for the star who is named **Tiffany Pollard**, AKA **New York**. Previous positions had her working at a hog farm and working as an insect exterminator. Those positions may have been funny, but this week's position was one of a trainer of exotic animals. How sad for the animals which included lions, hawks and tigers to be toyed with for reality TV. How appalling that beautiful animals are being used for entertainment. **Tiffany** more than once turned her back on the lion and was warned that doing so could put her life and the trainer's in jeopardy. However, out of fear and for the camera, **Tiffany** did turn her back several times on the majestic creature. What a tragedy it would have been had she and/or the trainer or her cameramen been injured because of her fear and the utter stupidity of the show's producers by placing these beautiful wild creatures in danger for the sake of "**Reality TV!**" No wonder **Susan Boyle** in the U.K. had a nervous breakdown after losing the top spot in "**Britain's Got Talent 2009**." These reality shows have done such a disservice to hardworking celebrities as well as animals who are being put in danger for the sake of higher ratings.

★ Word on the street in **Hollywood** is that **Oscar** winning actress **Kate Hudson** is hot for **A-Rod**, **Alex Rodriguez** is a star baseball player for the **NY Yankees**. **Kate** deserves some happiness and so does **Alex**. Good luck to them. And **Vanessa Minnillo** hints to friends and in the press that she and boyfriend **Nick Lachey** may be tying the knot in the near future.

Until next week, so long.

Your friend, Tommy

