

At 46, Loni Anderson says “yes” to motherhood — and winning the war against gravity.

SITTING PRETTY

By JUDY DiEDUARDO

Best known as Jennifer, the buxom, blonde, bombshell that rocked an imaginary Cincinnati-based radio station, Loni Anderson is more than another pretty face. Wife of Burt Reynolds and mother to adopted son, Quinton, she shares with Palm Beach Illustrated the image behind the image — beyond the bright lights and colorful costumes, where good health and life's greatest pleasures live.

Q. Apart from your marriage to Burt Reynolds, your long-standing career in the stage, television and film industries has made you one of this country's most visible personalities. The pressures of maintaining good health and staying beautiful must be tremendous. What's your secret?

A. The pressure is unbelievable. Just keeping my roots blond is a major undertaking! Staying healthy and glamorous is really a joint venture and life-long commitment — one doesn't happen without the other. Frankly, I was in my 30s before I recognized this.

Q. As an actress in Hollywood, so much emphasis is placed on your looks. How do you separate your appearance from who you really are?

A. Makeup and clothing cannot replace self-esteem — no matter how good you look. The distinction is vital. Without knowing this, life can be very hard. My parents taught me that. I am forever grateful to them for the self-esteem they instilled in me. Yes, I have bad hair days and get pimples. And when I do, I know that it's not about who I am. Fortunately, I like wearing hats!

Q. Beyond the staples of good nutrition, exercise is the number one vehicle for achieving and maintaining good health. What exercise regimen do you practice?

A. I exercise 15 to 30 minutes every day with my trainer, Mike Abrums, who takes me through a regimen that

hopefully I will be able to sustain for the rest of my life. Unless I'm doing something really specific, where I go on an exercise binge in order to look a certain way for a movie, I adhere to a set exercise program. Consistency is vital. If I slack off, it becomes difficult to resume my momentum.

Q. Do you have any "problem" areas? If so, what exercises would you recommend?

A. I'm very interested in keeping my rear up. I have a round one which, when I was younger, was very cute. But with age and gravity it has a tendency to sag. My trainer designed a special exercise just for that. It's sort of like a bump and grind that I can even do while washing the dishes.

Q. Between career, motherhood and traveling, it must be hard to maintain this program. Is it difficult?

A. I'm very dedicated. We have a huge gym in Florida where I can maintain my program when I'm not with Mike. If my routine is interrupted, I don't obsess about it. I just jump right in. It's the only way.

Q. Do you have a favorite exercise?

A. Yes! I love lifting weights with my legs and building up my calfs. The same with my arms. Because I am small boned, I am prone to having skinny, shapeless limbs. I really hate that. With my shape, toning is very important. I am broad shouldered and my hips are quite narrow. I had much more of a masculine figure before I got a bosom. I would have made a great guy!

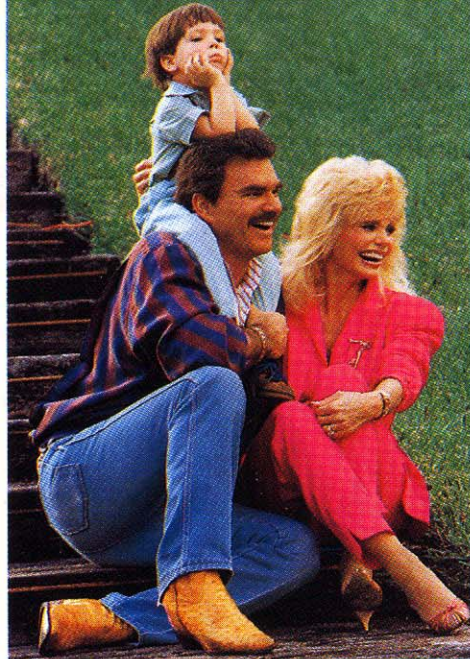
Q. What is your height and weight?

A. I'm 5'6" and my weight ranges between a work weight of 119 pounds and Burt's favorite weight, which is about 122 pounds. The camera adds weight, so I need to be a little lighter when I'm working. At 119, Burt thinks I look too skinny. When I finish a project he always says, 'Now you can go back to looking the way you look best.'

Q. Is it difficult to change your physical appearance for a movie?

A. I've never gone to any extremes weight wise. When I did the Jayne Mansfield story, I wore fat pads to make me look larger as she began deteriorating.

Q. Let's talk about skin care. Are you a sun



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worshipper? How do you nurture and protect your skin?

A. I used to lay out in the sun before I learned how damaging it was. Certainly skin cancer is a real threat, and I'm not fair contrary to my hair color. I'm a dark person with olive skin so I tan in about five minutes. Plus, it makes your skin age, and is very unattractive on camera. So my concerns are both professional and personal. When I want some color, I use self tanners. My favorite is Ban de Soleil; Lancôme has a really nice one, too.

Q. What kind of makeup do you use?

A. I use a lot of Lancôme, their moisturizers as well. To 'un-puff' around the eyes, I use a product made by Clarins.

Q. How have your views about makeup changed over the past 20 years?

A. Oh my goodness! When I was in college in the late '60s,

false eyelashes and that whole look was in. In retrospect, I probably looked ridiculous. I haven't worn lashes since the '60s! I wear a lot less makeup than when I was younger because of changing styles.

Q. What is your favorite feature?

A. My lips. Everybody loves something about their face and my lips are my favorite. I line them but fluctuate between the naked lip look and bright colors. For color, Lancôme has some beautiful lipsticks while Ultima II is my favorite for the natural look. I also like my cheek bones. When I was younger, square faces were not in, and my lips were too big. But since then, my face has come into style.

Q. What is your least favorite feature?

A. My nose — it's so cutesy. When I was younger, it was hard. People wouldn't take me seriously. Also, I would love it if my roots would grow in blond. I think I would like to be a little smaller breasted — perkier too! That would be lovely.

Q. Dieting is probably today's most talked about health-related subject — running the gamut from fads to no-nonsense nutrition. And there seem to be as many opinions on the subject as there are people engaged in losing weight or improving their health. Has dieting ever been a concern of yours?

A. *I really love raw vegetables. We have a wonderful cook, and he'll put out a raw vegetable platter for me during the day, which I love, along with fruit. Usually I eat fruit until about noon. Then I try and get my protein. I drink lots of water and nothing caffeinated. I haven't eaten red meat in a very long time, though I haven't given it up completely. As for sweets, I haven't totally given them up either.*

Q. What's your favorite?

A. *Glazed doughnuts. Yeah, if there is one within a mile of me, I'll find it! They call my name! So that's my downfall. I try not to keep any around the house or go anywhere where they are, except on the set; they're always there.*

Q. How do you discipline yourself?

A. *I think it's dangerous to swear off anything completely because that just makes you crave it more. Every once in a while I indulge. Since I maintain my weight so well, I can afford to have something sweet now and again. I'll have a candy bar or ice cream — or a glazed doughnut. Mmm! To say I can't have these things would be depressing.*

Q. Did your parents model the importance of good health?

A. *Yes and no. They were both four-pack-a-day-smokers. They didn't take care of themselves and both died of cancer in their 50s. It was tragic to watch them suffer. From their lives, I knew that I could be different — that health and well being is a personal choice, that each day is a gift.*

Q. Surprisingly, many extremely attractive celebrities confess that they don't consider themselves beautiful. What do you see when you look in the mirror?

A. *Some days I get up and think, 'Oh my gosh, what a creature,' and other days I get up and say, 'Not bad.' We all have bad days. Don't get me wrong. I'm not one for false modesty. When I look good, I don't pretend otherwise. I accept myself today. When I was younger, I wanted to look like Sophia Loren because I thought she was the most magnificent creature on earth. I never went for the picture pretty face — I liked the faces with character. Today, I don't want to look like or be anyone else.*

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PHOTO BY LISA SMITH

Q. Is having a positive self image a vital part of beauty?

A. *Oh absolutely. It comes from within. I've seen some lovely people who become unattractive in about five minutes because of what's inside. How you take care of the inside shows on the outside.*

Q. Is Burt in concert with your ideas about health and nutrition?

A. *Yes, but it's difficult for him because he works so hard. It's easier for Burt to grab a peanut butter sandwich than it is to be sensible. So I try and do as much as I can to make sure that he eats the right things. I've told everyone at work to grab the Snickers bar out of his hand! He loves that I care enough to be concerned. Of course, he regrets not having the time to exercise. He's lucky, though, that he has a great body anyway.*

Q. What kind of pampering do you allow yourself?

A. *I get a massage at least once a month; I wish it were once a week! I have a manicure and pedicure every other week. And let's not forget these roots of mine which need indulging every other week.*

Q. What about plastic surgery?

A. *I think that there comes a time in everyone's life — especially in my business — when plastic surgery has a place. But you have to do it for the right reasons. First, it's got to be for you — not someone else.*

Second, I think plastic surgery should be viewed as something to maintain your looks, not change them.

Q. So you're going to keep your nose?

A. *I'm going to keep my nose, yep!*

Q. Your adopted son, Quinton, is now four and a half years old. How has he changed your life?

A. *He's great. We couldn't have made a better kid! When I had my daughter at age 18, she gave me a lot of drive — in part because I wanted to accomplish so much for her. With Quinton, my life is different. Raising a child with a supportive companion like Burt is a luxury, after having been a single mom for so many years. After being independent for so long it's difficult at times to accept help.*

I've learned to accept the generosity of my husband and that I don't have anything to prove. It's been a tremendous growth process.

Q. Why did you choose adoption?

A. We both checked out fine. But because of our busy life-style, stress was an inhibiting factor. Our doctor suggested we go to a desert island for about a year! Since that wasn't an option, we decided to adopt. I don't think we could have made a better decision — or child — than Quinton. He even looks like us

Q. You seem to take life — and growing older — graciously. Has this been your intent?

A. Yes. Very much so. Some people don't and I feel sorry for them because aging is inevitable — and very much a part of the living process. My only disappointment with getting older is that, up until now anyway, my roots aren't growing in grey!

Q. Is Burt your definition of beautiful?

A. Yes. In every way. I have always thought that Burt is the most handsome man I've ever seen. When I got to Hollywood in 1975, and then joined WKRP in 1978, I was asked who I thought was the most handsome man. I immediately said, 'Burt Reynolds.' We met that year on the Merv Griffin show — the first talk show I had ever done. At the time, I was married and he was with Sally (Fields). We saw one other at various

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functions over the next few years. When I divorced, he asked me out. One year later we went on our first date. It was New Year's Eve of 1981. We went to the then-Burt Reynolds Dinner Theatre. We've been together ever since.

Q. Have you ever been uncomfortable with your looks — uncomfortable with the stereotype that often accompanies being a well-endowed blonde?

A. I changed my hair color gradually between 1975 and 1978. The lighter my hair got, the more work I got. It was hard to contend with the attitude that perhaps my brain had dissolved with the bleach! It was discouraging but I fought the image. This is why when helping develop the character of Jennifer, it was vital that she be the show's smartest person. The producers loved it. No one had been sexy, glamorous and smart all at the same time.

Q. Now that you've conquered that image, what role would you like to play?

A. It's funny, but I would love to play a dumb blonde! I can do it really well! I'm getting courageous in my old age!

Q. What else is there for Loni Anderson?

A. I honestly don't know how much better my life could be. I have a beautiful daughter, son and granddaughter, a wonderful husband, a great career and good health. What could be better?♦

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