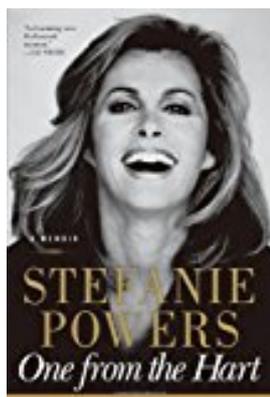


[PDF] One From The Hart

Stefanie Powers - pdf download free book



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Description:

About the Author A popular television star with dark, warm-yet-sultry looks and an internationally known wildlife activist, Stefanie Powers is probably best remembered as Jennifer Hart, the writer and distaff half of the sleuthing team, in "Hart to Hart" (ABC, 1979-84), a role she reprised in several successful TV-movies first on NBC and then on The Family Channel.

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ONEA *Hollywood Childhood*

I was not long into this life when I realized that while I had not been born into its upper echelons, I was indeed and most gratefully a product of the lucky sperm club. It was a matter of luck that my forefathers broke from Poland and joined the hopeful masses emigrating to the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. And it was by even greater luck that Julianna Dimitria Golan, third daughter of Zofja and Frederick Golan, broke from the family farm in New York State to venture, as an eighteen-year-old, with her big sister Helena, to the bright lights of New York City to pursue a life in the theater. She eventually found her way to Hollywood, where she married and produced two children, one of whom was me.

My mother was born on July 21, 1912, near Middletown, New York, at home on the family farm with the help of a midwife. Eventually, more of the family came to Middletown from Poland to seek their fortunes, including one person who was a great influence on her. Uncle Leo taught himself English by reading *National Geographic* magazines, which he passed on to young Julie. Adapting quickly to the New World, Uncle Leo brought with him a sense of adventure and style, resplendent in a photo of him wearing wingtip shoes, posing in front of his newly acquired Model A roadster. Uncle Leo had panache.

The countryside provided an idyllic childhood, but as Julie was growing up, the world around her was changing dramatically. Rural America was being introduced to the telephone, to the moving picture show, and to barnstorming aviators, who toured the country, putting on shows and taking young ladies for rides in their open-cockpit planes. Very exciting for the young Miss Golan. But it was the musical films that caught her attention, and the musical theater's traveling shows that caught her fancy and lured her to the big city.

When the time came for Julie and Helena to spread their wings, they found respectable housing at the home of an Italian lady by the name of Carmella on West 69th Street, one block from Central Park. While studying dance and going to all the auditions she could find, Julie and her sister both worked part-time as hostesses at the exclusive foreign film cinema on 57th Street called The Little Carnegie Theatre. It was an extremely glamorous art house cinema, serving cocktails, tea, and coffee in the foyer lounge, where speakers from the foreign film companies would address their audiences. The Little Carnegie was the only venue in New York City at the time where foreign films were shown, making it avant-garde and an attraction for interesting people, many of whom became lifelong friends, including some of the filmmakers themselves from England, France, and Germany.

Much later in life, while I was filming in England, Mom would introduce me to one of those gentlemen who had been a principal at British Gaumont Films.

In 1934, Mom made the giant step to move to Hollywood, following through on her dream to perform in films. Finding the most glamorous way to travel west, she went to Hollywood by boat, via the Panama Canal. She was quite an attractive package, with lots of shipboard admirers. The captain of the vessel even invited her to travel on to the Far East with him, but she gracefully declined. Instead she stepped off the boat and made her way to Hollywood, installing herself at the Lido Hotel just north of Hollywood Boulevard and very close to another landmark glamour spot called the Monticito.

Hollywood Boulevard in the 1930s was still synonymous with the allure of the industry that inspired its development. Stretching from Sunset Boulevard in the east to just west of Laurel Canyon, it switched its name from Prospect Avenue in 1910 when the town of Hollywood was annexed to the city of Los Angeles, and a couple of decades later it was very much the place to see and be seen. Deco-era moviegoers patronized such ornate and palatial establishments as the El Capitan Theatre, the Pantages Theatre, the Warner Brothers Theatre, and Grauman's Egyptian and Chinese Theatres. Visitors, celebrities, and wannabes rubbed shoulders at the Spanish-style Roosevelt Hotel and the landmark Hollywood Hotel. The town's elite actors, directors, producers, and writers dined, imbibed,

did deals, and held court at the already legendary Musso & Frank Grill. Not yet threatened by muggers, pimps, and drug dealers, Hollywood Boulevard was a street where couples could take a leisurely stroll, film stars could venture out in public, and aspiring actors might just get noticed.

Gravitating toward the daily parade of hopefuls was an eclectic assortment of eccentrics, including the “dress extras”—whose exaggerated demeanor and immaculate wardrobe ensured them a desirable place in the hierarchy of the background “performers,” giving them a natural sense of superiority—and the self-styled “character extras,” each with an attitude commensurate with their adopted persona.

“Nature Boy” wore sandals and white gossamer flowing linen robes, giving the impression of an aesthetic mountain-dwelling mystic who walked the boulevard with staff in hand. There was a lady “Robin Hood” in hunter green shoes, tights, dress, and cape, topped by a chapeau worthy of Sherwood Forest, complete with pheasant plume. She strode the boulevard with defiant purpose, going nowhere. “Goldilocks” was the personification of sweetness, sporting platinum ringlet curls in her hair that were completely inappropriate for her age and size, as well as a youthful costume with gold Mary Jane pumps and ankle socks with lace trim to match her lace gloves, gold bag, belt, and cream-colored dress. They were still in place, though somewhat older, when Mom began to take my brother and me to the movie palaces on Hollywood Boulevard and introduced us to these benign but colorful free spirits.

In the lobby of the Lido Hotel, a piano player accompanied tea service that folded into the cocktail hour. Accordingly it was a gathering place for most of the residents, including a young, aspiring photographer. Their relationship began in the romantic atmosphere of those intimate evenings, and slowly my mother became seduced by the lensman whose portraits of her reflected the affection he felt. He became her first husband, and their union resulted in what she considered her greatest joy, my brother, Jeff, and me.

IN SPITE OF the fact that marriage and motherhood inexorably altered the direction of her life and aborted the realization of her artistic dreams, I never, ever heard Mom express any feelings of frustration or incompleteness. While there are always people who have more, there are a hell of a lot of people who have less, was the thought with which she raised me. To her mind, the inevitable price for a happy state of affairs was to earn each privilege through work. The work ethic imbued in the children of immigrants and survivors of the Great Depression was the criteria for all praise or reward; and at the end of the day, no matter how much we complained at the time, I can now say that it did, in fact, make me a better person and undoubtedly more able to bear the weight of responsibilities to come.

My mother was the source of all stability and fun. One of my favorite childhood memories was when she would be going out of an evening wearing a particular black silk taffeta dress that rustled when she walked. As she would lean down to kiss me goodnight, I’d feel the softness of her silver fox stole on my cheek and smell the intoxicating, fragrances of Shalimar perfume on her neck and a gardenia on her purse, thus establishing my sensual criteria for glamour and excitement. I really don’t remember many unpleasant times, with the exception of the tension and unhappiness created by my father’s presence. Nevertheless, there are two things I can thank my father for: the role he played in my conception and the sister I gained as a result of his marriage to his second—but not his last—wife.

Mom always lifted our spirits and made a game of adversity. That’s how she got herself through the rough patches, and as best she could, she did the same for my brother and me. Perhaps that is why I always felt I wanted to do things for her: extravagant, adventurous, glamorous things to make her feel better about herself and about her life.

Both of my parents' relatives were in the East, so aside from occasional visits for weddings I did not grow up in the bosom of aunts, uncles, cousins, or grandparents. Our closest relative was Mom's sister Cioci (the Polish word for "aunt," pronounced "cho-chi") Helena, who followed my mother to California in the late thirties. After the war, Cioci Helena married Uncle Howard, whom I adored. A former vaudevillian song-and-dance man, tall and lithe, who did a mean soft-shoe and played straight man for various comedians, my uncle Howard was handsome and joyful. Following vaudeville, he made a successful career transition, first becoming a casting director at Ziv TV Studios and eventually an executive at Technicolor. However, my favorite memory of my uncle was when he taught me a soft-shoe dance to the song "On the Sunny Side of the Street." I loved him dearly, and I still remember every step.

Throughout those early years, Mom created an environment for us that reflected her active and rich fantasy life, keeping my brother and me constantly amused with stories about the nightly escapades of our teddy bears, Kitty and Tiger. . . . "Did you hear all that racket last night?" Mom would ask at the breakfast table. Wide-eyed, we would respond, "No," and she would embark on the most elaborate tale of how Kitty and Tiger had opened all the cupboards in the kitchen, taken out all the pots and pans, and somehow raced up and down the kitchen floor in vehicles fashioned out of cooking utensils. No matter how preposterous the stories were, we loved them, even when Kitty and Tiger, beate...

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