

Lorri Antosz Benson Biography

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When people ask me where I'm from, the answer doesn't come easily. I have lived in many places, all over the world. I was born in Furstenfeldbruck, Germany, on an Air Force base outside of Munich. My father headed up a spy organization, hidden in the quaint ski town of Berchtesgaden, where we lived for several years.

My childhood was spent in three year segments, moving at the close of each third year to some new and magical place (to me anyway.) I don't remember it being something I dreaded. Instead, each move was a new adventure for my two sisters and me. We had several assignments in Ohio, and one in Japan, which was a uniquely fascinating opportunity to experience a completely different culture, while remaining cocooned on the oasis of an American Air Force Base.

When my dad retired from the military, we ended up staying near his last assignment, Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. I went to Centerville High School in the suburbs of Dayton, and I remember watching a local talk show "The Phil Donahue Show," when I was home sick, or during the summer. Phil Donahue lived in our town. I went to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and after a false start in fine arts, I switched my major, and graduated in 1977 with a B.S. in Radio/TV/Film.

After a few short-lived career adventures, including a ski season in Vail, Colorado, I moved again- this time to Chicago, IL. I was hired as a director at a small television station, WCIU-TV. This lasted until I was happily asked to join the "DONAHUE" team in May of 1980. It felt just right, especially being from the same "home town" as Phil. This was the beginning of my 15 years with Donahue, who had moved to Chicago from Dayton in 1974. I began as an associate producer on segments he did three times a week on the "Today" show. For me, this was my dream job- I did not aspire for more.

During this time, in 1981, I found myself single and pregnant. My Donahue family helped me through a difficult time, and supported me when I relinquished my baby girl for adoption. I will never forget the love and kindness shown to me by Phil, his wife Marlo, and the Donahue staff. After returning to work, I took another assignment as associate producer on a late night project Donahue did with ABC's "Nightline," called "The Last Word." Eventually, I moved over to his hour show, and was promoted to producer in 1983.

The next year, “DONAHUE” moved to New York City, and I moved with it, but not alone. Five weeks before our move date, I renewed a friendship with a fellow Miamian, Steve Benson. By the time of the move, we were engaged, and we married the following May. The next ten years saw the births of our three daughters: Taryn in September 1986, Taylor in April 1989 and Halli in May 1993, and the loss of a son pre-birth in November 1991.

Donahue, a generous employer, celebrated each five-year anniversary of the show with a trip, each more magnificent than the last. During my tenure, I saw France from a hot air balloon, and on a Seine River barge. Steve and I reveled in a cruise exploring the French, Italian and Spanish Riviéras. For the 25th Anniversary, we were taken around the world in a custom-outfitted L-1011, and cruised on the Sea Goddess through Indonesia and parts of Asia. It was a trip of a lifetime. My children were thrilled when he took the staff and their families to see his induction into the Disney World Hall of Fame.

In 1988, I was promoted to Senior Producer of “DONAHUE.” By this time, I had been fortunate to win several honors and awards, including ten Emmy Award nominations, and two national Emmy Awards. Working with Phil Donahue had provided so many opportunities, both personally and professionally. My exciting television career, however, was marred by the difficulties of being a working, commuting mother of three. For the sake of our family, in 1994, we gave up our New York careers and moved to Naples, Florida to begin a more family-centered life. I transitioned my frenzied, high-power city job into a freelance writing/producing career from home. After taking on several production assignments, from producing talk show pilots in India to executive producing a local talk show, “Golden Lifestyles,” I began to focus on freelance writing.

In 1995, I started writing a newspaper column on the behind-the-scenes stories of talk shows. In 1996, “TalktheTalk” became nationally syndicated by Tribune Features. As my children grew, I was able to successfully sequence to working from home. This allowed me the flexibility to work my own hours, a luxury I didn’t take for granted.

1998 brought an answered prayer- my birth daughter Katie and her incredible adoptive parents Anne and Temple. Her desire to meet me resulted in a reunion which brought our two families together for a lifetime. All my questions of why this had happened to me were answered by this reunion. It definitely felt like fate at work.

Even with our very intentional shift to family focus, we were not to escape the perils of parenthood. In 2003, we discovered our oldest daughter Taryn, was struggling with an eating disorder. The next two and a half years were to be the toughest of our lives, as we fought to keep the disorder from destroying not only Taryn, but each member of our family. The experience, however, resulted in a burning desire on the part of Taryn and me to write a book to help others going through a similar situation. That book, “Distorted-How One Mother and Daughter Unraveled the Truth, the Lies and the Realities of an Eating Disorder,” will be published by Health Communications, Inc. in February 2008.

This book has been the catalyst for yet another transition in my life. After 11 years, I stopped writing “TalktheTalk” to concentrate on writing books, beginning with “Distorted.” As I wistfully watch another daughter go off to college, and welcome a brand-new grandson, Taryn's son Riley, I am looking forward to living life with Steve, watching our family grow, and spending my days in the creative world of writing. And by the way, when people ask where I’m from, I say Naples. After 13 years, I’ve lived here longer than anywhere else!