

# A CAREER or Breaking Barriers and Helping Others

JANE SEYMOUR, THE ACTRESS AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE OPEN HEARTS FOUNDATION, RECEIVES THE PRESS CLUB'S BILL ROSENDAHL PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD BY ALEX BEN BLOCK

In the winter of 2007, Emmy, SAG and Golden Globe Award winner Jane Seymour returned to her native England to visit her beloved 93-year-old mother Mieke van Tricht Frankenberg, who had suffered a stroke seven months earlier. She wore a necklace of intertwined hearts she designed to constantly remind her of her mother.

Seymour worried it might be the last time she'd see the woman she considered her most important role model, for the exemplary life she lived, always thinking of other people.

Her Dutch-born mother survived three-and-a-half years during World War II in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in Indonesia, helping other inmates despite a lack of food and medicine.

Seymour tried to hide her tears, fearing her

mother's passing was near. Although her mother couldn't speak, Seymour told her she had been invited to appear on the hit TV show "Dancing With The Stars," but wasn't sure if she should do it.

"The only word out of her mouth after seven months was, 'Yes,'" recalled Seymour with a laugh. "We went, 'Mieke, you just spoke.' She went, 'Mm-hmm.' It was her favorite show and she didn't care if she never saw me; she wanted me to do it. She died while I was doing it."

"I knew I wanted to wear a sort of talisman, on the show and after, as something to remind me of her and her wisdom."

Within two years those intertwined hearts became the symbol for the Open Hearts Foundation, a nonprofit Seymour co-founded that since 2009 has bestowed about \$2 million in grants to small charities, most serving vulnerable women, children, and those impacted by poverty or a lack of access to medical services, food, shelter and other basic needs. Since the pandemic it has expanded its reach worldwide.

Tonight, Seymour is being honored at the Southern California Journalism Awards with the Los Angeles Press Club's Bill Rosendahl Public Service Award. It recognized contributions made to civic life.

"She encourages kindness and helping others," said Press Club President Lisa Richwine, "and has inspired women by speaking up about ageism."

Seymour has donated not only money, but also helped the organization through sales of

The 1980 time-travel film, *Somewhere in Time*, starred Jane Seymour and Christopher Reeve.



Above left: Seymour and Open Hearts Foundation volunteers took part in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area eco-restoration project at Paramount Ranch in 2022, with the help of the National Park Service.

Above and left: Television series, "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman," became an unexpected hit for CBS; Seymour portrays a grandmother suffering from Alzheimer's who spends a day during a normal visit with her transgender grandson, both of whom are struggling to find their identities in a recently released short, *And You Are?*

her art, jewelry, books, music, fashion and more. Additionally, Seymour has been an active supporter of Childhelp, a nonprofit that aids victims of child abuse and neglect.

"Nobody gets through life without having enormous challenges," says Seymour. "When you form a community, when you are able to open up and help other people going through the same circumstances, you help yourself."

She was born Joyce Penelope Wilhelmina Frankenberg in 1951, to a mother who was a nurse and a doctor father. She started acting as a teenager, changing her name to Jane Seymour

(after King Henry VIII's third wife) because she felt it was more salable.

Her breakthrough came when she won the role of the psychic girl Solitaire in the 1973 James Bond movie *Live and Let Die*.

She had been in other films. In 1969 she appeared in Richard Attenborough's *Oh! What A Lovely War*. Her role was uncredited, but she married the director's son, the actor Michael Attenborough, in 1971. They divorced two years later.

She went on to marry three more times: to Geoffrey Planer (1977-78), and then to David Flynn in 1988. The couple had two children,





Top: In 2012, Seymour invited Glen Campbell to her studio to participate in a painting session as art therapy as he struggled with Alzheimer's.

Above right: In 1985, Seymour and Queen's Freddy Mercury took part in Fashion Aid, a charitable event held at the Royal Albert Hall, which ended in a faux wedding. Her wedding dress was part of the bridal collection made by the same designers as Princess Diana's dress, David and Elizabeth Emanuel.

Above: Seymour joined the second season of "The Kominsky Method," playing an old flame of Alan Arkin's character, Norman Newlander.

Katherine and Sean. They divorced in 1992. She married James Keach in 1993, and had two more children, twin sons John and Kristopher. They divorced in 2015.

The marriage to Planer was notable because he rescued Seymour from a career disaster. She had come to Hollywood to read for several major film roles. For one, she met a major producer at his home. He put his hand on her leg and told her if she didn't sleep with him, he would destroy her career. Long before the Me Too movement, she rushed back to England and said she would never act again.

Seeing her idle for a prolonged period, Planer called her agent and got her cast in a play. She has worked steadily on screen and the stage ever since.

Seymour overcame another near disaster when her marriage with Flynn broke up in 1993 after his poor real estate investments left her nearly bankrupt. She called her Hollywood agent in a panic and told him she needed work. He put in a call to CBS, which was having trouble in negotiations with another actress for the

lead in a new TV series. Seymour took the role, even though in those days a film actor would often look down on a TV role. But Seymour knew what she was doing: The show was "Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman."

"I kind of broke the barriers of this film versus theater versus television myth," says Seymour. "I was told you couldn't do all three."

To the surprise of her agent, the studio and critics, "Dr. Quinn" became a huge hit. It ran for 149 episodes before ending in 1998. It continues to show in reruns almost daily.

Seymour was honored by Queen Elizabeth II in 2000 as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. She is now also an American citizen.

In recent years, Seymour has made it a point to take roles about strong women, even if they are older, disabled or troubled. In 2020, she starred in the movie *Ruby's Choice*, an Australian comedy/drama about a woman with early dementia and its impact on her family. It won her an Australian screen industry award.

She also plays the title role in the Acorn TV series "Harry Wild." She also is a producer of the drama/mystery/comedy hybrid that has completed three seasons.

"I'm 73 years old," Seymour says with a laugh. "Who gets their own series at 73?"

She marvels at what she has accomplished, and continues.

"I can't think of any actresses that are the lead in a successful series that's shown globally at my age. So, I like breaking barriers. And I want to encourage women over 50 who feel life's over now—you are free to be the person you always wanted to be." 🍷

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