



Curtin (with John Belushi in 1978) was *SNL*'s first female "Weekend Update" anchor, taking on the role in 1976. "I got along with everyone [at *SNL*], but I did have problems with John—only because John was not really John. He was an addict."

JANE CURTIN

WHAT
I KNOW
NOW

ALMOST 50 YEARS AFTER MAKING HER TV DEBUT ON *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*, THE ACTRESS REVEALS HER SECRETS TO LONGEVITY—AND CONFESSES THAT SHE NEVER ACTUALLY WANTED TO BE FAMOUS

By **GILLIAN TELLING**



When Jane Curtin became famous as one of the original cast members on *Saturday Night Live* in 1975, it brought her a scary amount of attention. “People were almost afraid of us, like they’d start shaking when we walked into a room,” says Curtin, now 75. “It made [me] so uncomfortable.” Later, when she starred on the sitcoms *Kate & Allie*, which ran from 1984 to 1989, and *3rd Rock From the Sun* (1996 to 2001), fame became more manageable. “Fans seemed to want to take care of me—especially when I did *Kate & Allie*,” she recalls. “I’d have these old firemen come up to me and say, ‘Hey, how ya doing, Allie?’ I’d be like, ‘I’m great, thanks!’”

Despite the pull of low-key living, the Massachusetts native still loves acting. She’s currently onscreen in *Jules*, an endearingly quirky film about a group of senior citizens who befriend an alien who crash-lands in one of their backyards. “It’s such a wonderful movie,” Curtin says. “It’s one thing to see Indiana Jones cracking his whip on film at 80, but it’s rare to see a group of people just living their lives at 80.” Here, Curtin, who was interviewed July 7, shares her tips for nurturing a happy marriage (she and her husband, TV producer Patrick Lynch, celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary this year), aging gracefully and turning dreams into reality.



Family Values

“Don’t push them to do what you want,” Curtin (with husband John Lynch and daughter Tess in 1993) says of parenting. “It’s their life.”

Have fun, but don’t let the party destroy you.

“I had just gotten married the year I got *Saturday Night Live*, so I had a life—a dog, a husband, an apartment with a little garden. It was a life I really enjoyed,” says Curtin, who avoided the wild partying of some of her peers. “John Belushi [her fellow original *SNL* castmate, who died from a drug overdose in 1982], obviously he could party with the best of them, but the next day these guys were just so miserable. Plus, the 90 minutes on the show were so exciting and adrenaline-pumping, I felt all the other stuff was self-indulgent and seemed hard.”

Do what you want to do, not what anyone else wants you to do.

Curtin had dropped out of college to pursue comedy, much to the dismay of her parents. “I didn’t tell them for a long time,” she says. “But I hated school. It just wasn’t the way that I learned. So when I discovered this improv troupe and

dropped out to join them, it was amazing. I was just like, ‘My God, people can make a living doing this!’ Granted, we made \$80 a week, but that was enough. I could afford an apartment with roommates and a car. It was pretty spectacular. I’d found something that I just loved doing, and I was around people that I loved. And I didn’t have to work in an office! During summers I’d work the switchboard at my dad’s insurance agency, and even back then I would think, ‘Please, let me do anything but this.’ So find something that makes you happy—and just do it.”

Fame itself isn’t worth pursuing.

“I wanted my chosen job to be able to support me, and I thought maybe someday, if I moved out of the city, I could afford a house,” says Curtin, who has lived in a small town in Connecticut for 40 years. “That was it. Back then, it was a golden age of television, and we had a moment where we could actually support ourselves.” But, she

adds, she wasn’t looking for celebrity: “I never wanted that kind of attention. I wanted to be able to go to the grocery store looking the way I did without makeup on, as opposed to going to the grocery store and seeing my face on a magazine with all the makeup on.”

Getting older comes with a lot of perks.

“Turning 50 is especially awesome,” Curtin says. “First of all, you have the energy, and you still look good. You’re also smart as a whip. You’re just so on top of your game at 50, I swear to God. You’re an adult. You know what’s important. So your values are up there; your family is a priority; you’ve worked hard and are usually on top of the world when it comes to your career. When you

‘I’m not on social media. That’s why I’m in a good mood’

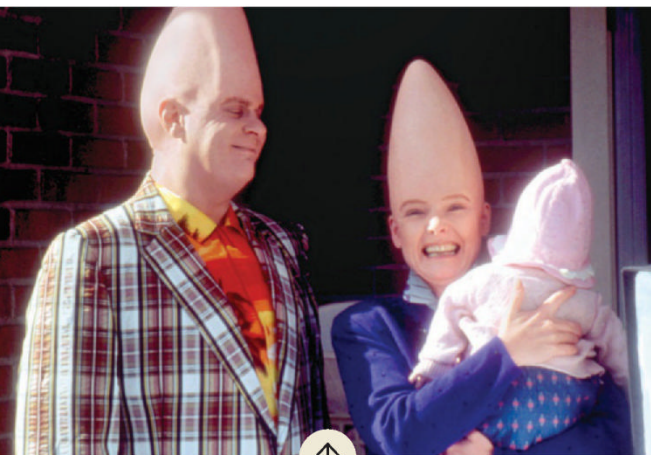


CURTIN’S OUT OF THIS WORLD CAREER



Kate & Allie (1984–89)

The sitcom, which also starred Susan Saint James (left), was about two divorced friends who decided to live and raise their kids together.



The Coneheads (1993)

Curtin starred opposite Dan Akroyd in the film that stemmed from the *SNL* sketch about aliens who had to assimilate to strange earthly ways.



3rd Rock From the Sun (1996–2001)

The sitcom about aliens featured (from left) Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Kristen Johnston, John Lithgow, French Stewart and Curtin.



REMEMBERING GILDA

“There’s a group of us from the old *SNL* days that get together in early June and go to Gilda’s grave and clean it up,” Curtin says of honoring her friend and fellow *SNL* original castmate Gilda Radner (with Curtin in 1979), who died of ovarian cancer in 1989. “It’s a nice reason to get together and find out what’s going on in everyone’s life.”

look around at your peer group at 50, you think, ‘Wow, these are some pretty awesome people.’” Now, 25 years later, she’s still feeling vibrant. “You have to keep moving,” she says. “I have a Pilates reformer and a rowing machine, and I use it maybe three or four times a week. And stay social. That keeps you young.”

Looking back is fun ... most of the time.

Curtin, who was *SNL*’s “Weekend Update” anchor from 1976 to 1980 and helped originate the famous Coneheads sketch in 1977, says she cringes a little watching some of her earlier work. “I was visiting my daughter, and they had a compilation video of the first five years of *SNL*, so we decided to watch it. I had that sort of anticipatory open-mouthed grin waiting for it, thinking something really great was going to happen. And it just never happened. It wasn’t funny. Zero utterance of a laugh or a giggle from any of us. It was just dated. I guess it was one of those ‘you had to be in the moment’ kind of things.” Still, she cherishes memories of her career that often pop into her mind as she gets older. “The other day I remembered how our improv troupe once opened for the Grateful Dead,” she says. “It’s so fun to remember things you’ve done that were just so amazing.”

Make sure you like your spouse.

“Of course you should love your spouse, but you have to like them,” says Curtin, who has a daughter, Tess, 40, with her husband, as well as three grandchildren. “And when you’re fighting, you have to remember, it’s all about rhythm. They’re in a heightened state, you’re in a heightened state, so maybe return to the conversation

later. You’re just out of sync—know that you’ll get back in sync.” She adds that it helps that Lynch, who works as a producer, studied drama early on. “We decided to jump into the unknowable life of show business. We both had to be willing to take this road together. And it’s been quite a trip.”

Nature is healing.

“Living in nature is a key to happiness, if you have the choice and the ability to do so,” she says. “My husband and I were just reflecting about how lucky we are to be in the place we live, to be surrounded by nature and be able to watch things go by, whether it’s bobcats or fisher cats and all these critters. It’s a joy. We’ve really had a lovely ride. But obviously it’s not over yet!” ●



Jules (2023)

“Ben is a lovely guy but hard to know socially because he’s so focused on what he’s doing,” Curtin says of working with Ben Kingsley (second from right, with Curtin, Harriet Sansom Harris and Jade Quon).