

May 2007



EDUCATION

# A quest from the rink to the big screen to the classroom

Lynn-Holly Johnson is following her passions.

BY TRACY DALY



**T**his busy mother of two was a world-renowned ice skater, held her own on screen with Bette Davis, Robbie Benson, and Roger Moore, and can tell stories about chatting with Dustin Hoffman, Prince Charles, Steven Spielberg, Jane Fonda and Axl Rose. She even “married” George Clooney in a television series. Although she’s been in the 007 movie “For Your Eyes Only”, she holds the illustrious “title” as the only Bond Girl who was turned down by James Bond. Love brought her to Orange County, a passion for learning brought her to Saddleback College, and a humanitarian spirit took her on medical missions to Guatemala and Mexico.

Lynn-Holly Johnson first came to America’s attention outside the skating world in the 1978 movie, “Ice Castles” with Robbie

Benson. Although she was approached for the starring role because she was a professional skater with the Ice Capades, she turned the part down because of nudity. Luckily, her roommates talked her into calling the movie’s director and she negotiated a contract with a no nudity clause. “So many people have said it was such a lovely family film. They had wanted to make an R movie. I’m glad I stood my ground, even at 19.” Lynn-Holly’s instincts proved right as she was nominated for a Golden Globe for the role.

In reflecting on acting, Lynn-Holly said, “The hardest part for me in this career is that it was so unlike a sport. In skating you get to show your stuff to the judges, and how hard you’ve worked over the years. Only the lowest form of athlete tries to butter up the judges. In acting, you do

have to butter them up. I wasn’t good at that aspect.”

She still had quite a career in the 1980s, appearing in 15 major movies, television and in theatre. Lynn-Holly even got to shake hands with Prince Charles who was accompanied by his then fiancée, Lady Diana Spencer, at the London premiere of “For Your Eyes Only”. So, why go to college?

Lynn-Holly started ice skating when she was five while growing up in Chicago. She followed her passion to southern California when she was just a junior in high school and maintained a daily schedule of skating from 6am to 2:30pm and then went to high school “class” at the rink for only two hours a day. “That was a pretty poor educational experience.”

(“Teachers Who Inspired Us” on the next page)

# "A quest from the rink to the big screen to the classroom."

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Lynn-Holly Johnson – continued



When love brought her to Orange County in the early 90s, it was time to make up for that. "It was nice to find Saddleback College. I had a lot to catch up. There were amazing teachers and everything I needed at the time." The most challenging course was chemistry. But she rose to

that challenge because of her own desire, and the inspiration of her physiology professor. "Dr. [Richard] McCullough had such a passion for what he was teaching. His classes were so demanding, he rarely smiled and I thought he was a blast to learn from." It also happens that her most influential professor ended up as the College's President.

She discovered an aptitude for science and math which grew into a passion for medicine. Still juggling an acting career, while on film locations Lynn-Holly began to work with Ligia, an affiliation of Doctors Without Borders, to assist the isolated communities that she was working in. "These people had no medical care. They looked to us as if angels had arrived."

Lynn-Holly went on to marry, have two children and live in Newport Beach. Last year, Saddleback named Lynn-Holly its Outstanding Alumnus of the Year and submitted her name for consideration of the state-wide honor. At the reception in Sacramento to pick up the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Community College League of California, she said "I accept this honor with much pride and much gratitude toward Saddleback for

being a choice, an opportunity, when I finally had the time to go after my quest for knowledge."

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When she's not volunteering at her children's school and making sure their homework is done, Lynn-Holly is directing behind the camera. Somehow she still finds time to be involved in the Saddleback College Foundation as well many Orange County organizations, and teaches acting classes in the Saddleback community education program. Audiences can again see her as Mary Bailey in the Newport Repertory's 15th annual staging of "It's A Wonderful Life" this holiday season and, she's often on the small screen when Nick At Night airs the 80s classic CHIPS.

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*For information about Saddleback College, go to [saddleback.edu](http://saddleback.edu) or call 949-582-4500. For more information on this article, please contact the author at [tdaly@socccd.org](mailto:tdaly@socccd.org).*