

JANE PAULY

Jane Pauly has been co-anchor of NBC's today Show for 12 years. Sharing news making interviews with co-anchor Bryant Gumbel, the two were jointly named 1986 Broadcasters of the Year by the International Radio and Television Society.

Pauley was born 38 years ago in Indianapolis, Ind. A graduate of Indiana University, she majored in political science. After graduation, she returned to Indianapolis and worked in state politics. Her broadcasting career began in 1972 when she was hired as reporter at WISH-TV in Indianapolis.

A year later she was co-anchoring the midday news report and anchoring the weekend news. Three years later, she moved to WMAQ-TV, the NBC affiliate station in Chicago where she became the first women to co-anchor a regularly scheduled weeknight news program in that city.

At the age of 25, Pauley was tapped to take Barbara Walters' place as co-host of NBC's morning show called Today. Always at the crossroads of where news is happening. Pauley has covered every U.S. political convention since 1976, the wedding of the Prince of Wales, the funeral of Princess Grace of Monaco and the 1988 summer Olympics in Seoul, among many other events. She has also been the chief writer and reporter on the Sunday edition of The NBC Nightly News and has hosted the NBC "White Paper" show called Women, Work and Babies: Can America Cope?

Pauley is married to Doonesbury cartoonist and playwright Garry Trudeau. They have three children and live in New York.

M.M. In a sense, we the viewers have watched you grow up on television. Arriving on the national scene as a somewhat inexperienced pony tailed young women, you are now, some 13 years later, a very respected mature journalist. I am wondering, in fact, if your journey in news is the same as that of women in general, in newsrooms.

J.P. Yes, very much so. I'm not nominating myself as a symbol, but that's when I arrived. Virtually my whole career has coincided with the evolution of the modern women's movement. I got in the door because of it, literally. In 1972, when I started in television, in Indianapolis, Ind. The job offering was described to me this way: they

were looking for a female-type person. It was FCC (U.S. federal Communications Commission) license renewal time, there were no women in the newsroom, and they needed one. They didn't care if she had experience, which I did not, and they didn't want to pay her a lot of money, which I didn't insist on. So, without the pressure of affirmative action, I'm not quite certain what I would be doing today. So affirmative action got me and some other women into the newsrooms, but it did not get us on the air. I was a general assignment reporter, not an anchorwomen. There was a certain social and political pressure in the early and mid-70's, when the women's movement really was cresting, to get women on the air. And this was against the conventional wisdom that said a women's voice didn't have credibility. Despite the fact and to prove it wrong women were finally being put into anchor positions, as I was. At that time, which is still the case, but to a lesser degree, they were putting a lot of very young and inexperienced women on air. As an anchorwomen I started when I was 22, and was co-hosting the Today program when I was 25. To be honest, that's stupid. I mean, it suggests, to me that there really was a lot of tokenism and window-dressing. That's less true now, because so many of those women, such as myself, were allowed to grow professionally and mature chronologically and now we are professionals. These days it would be unthinkable that a network newscaster, with the prestige of the Today program, would hire as a co-host someone who was only 25 years old. To that degree, that's real progress.

M.M. Today we see women co-anchoring most newscasts. Does that mean women have reached employment equity in the newsrooms?

J.P. Don't be fooled by that. We're very visible. But behind the scenes, I see personal evidence of the last-hired, first-fired syndrome. When you look at the percentage of women who are correspondents for a network and presumable at local levels too, there does seem to be a critical mass point that is reached long before you get any sense of parity. A women sitting next to a man on every newscast in North America belies a difficult situation: beneath the surface there is no longer the incentive to hire women. Because of the (U.S.) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in the past, there was a sense that one paid attention to affirmative action, one actively recruited women and minorities. But that's really

being soft-pedalled now. So when it comes time to paying attention to corporate head counts and budget-cutting, the women are going to be at the top of the list to go.

M.M. You have lasted longer than any other morning show host. That couldn't have been done without those two constant themes that run through your life – a strong sense of ambition and a strong sense of self. What do you attribute those qualities to?

J.P. My mid-western upbringing. I was raised to think that I was very special, that I was smart and that I should get A's in school. But on the other hand, I was raised to think that nobody is really special. My family instilled that sense of self in me. But by modern terms, they wouldn't have used the term of high self-esteem; they never thought about it, never heard of it. I simply grew up in a loving household where I was encouraged and rewarded, where my parents were clearly proud of both their daughters and their accomplishments. But on the other hand, I have a real democratic sense that nobody's better than the next guy, and so I never put on airs. There were two smart kids in our family but only one of them was brainy. My sister finished college in three years and was a Phi Beta Kappa math major. She was the academic star and if my self-esteem was cut back just a notch, every time I got an A on a paper, I always knew my sister would have an A plus. But we were never competitive because I carefully avoided trigonometry and calculus and physics. That was hers. And she very quickly figured out that she wasn't going to win a trophy or blue ribbon on the speech team, and that was certainly where I was stronger. But it was my dad, I suppose, who always felt that his work defined him. He was a salesman, and a good one, and a corporate man who identified very strongly with the company. And I was raised by that man, so I guess I just very strongly identify with the work I do. And the work I do is for NBC, and at home it's mommy.

M.M. Speaking of motherhood, isn't it ironic that the years our society talked most about revering motherhood, were the same years a pregnant woman was never allowed on the air, or was the word pregnancy ever mentioned? What turned that around? How could you as a newswoman suddenly go public with your pregnancy and not lose your job?

J.P. Oh, yes. Celebrate motherhood, but don't talk about it on television. You know, our generation assumed everything. We could do anything we wanted to. We came out of college in the late 60's and early 70's and naively thought that we could get whatever jobs we wanted and that we could be president, or chairman of the board and have three children. We could do it all. It was kind of naïve, but that's what we thought. And then when the time came to start families, it never occurred to us that we couldn't. I think there was a lot of bravery within our innocence. That was certainly my case; I didn't stop for a moment to think "my gosh, will America think less of ." I just continued to go to work and I got bigger and bigger.

M.M. Did your pregnancy help trigger the show into better ratings and as a result, give viewers a new perception of Jane Pauley?

J.P. Was the correlation between Joan London's pregnancy and Good Morning America's surge to first place in the ratings for the first time seven years or eight years ago a coincidence? I have always said that the ratings got bigger as Joan got bigger. The more obvious her pregnancy became, I would notice that week after week, the ratings grew and grew. Nobody else made that association, so when I did get pregnant, the news was not greeted with celebration here. It turned out fine, by that time the show was in pretty good shape, as my shape got worse and worse. I still had some value to the show and they couldn't ease me out the door and take that opportunity to replace me . The fact is ., I was in my early 30's and was growing into a mature woman and until that time, nobody seemed to notice. I've always said that I think I was 25 years old for about six years, and people just hadn't noticed Jane Pauley much. Now suddenly, not only was I pregnant, but with twins. The publicity was incredible. And it gave people the opportunity to say "Jane Pauley, give her a second look. My, she's different. Boy it must be progesterone." Whatever they thought, I don't care. As long as they say I'm different and better and wonderful.

M.M. Do you think that you're the ultimate baby boomer, that maybe that's why it all worked, because you're part of that whole mass that's growing up with you?

J.P. Yes, we've got demographics on our side. There are simply so many of us that if corporations who have come to depend on women

in the labor force suddenly said: "Having children is inappropriate for someone of your managerial level," who would they get to do the job? I mean, America has really come to depend on us, because there are so many of us, and because so much money was spent on public education, you can't turn us back into homemakers like our mother's were.

M.M. Because you are such a family-oriented person, did you have to make any compromises with your ambition and career?

J.P. I don't think of myself as terribly ambitious. What I sacrificed, for simplicity and sanity, is a really great social life. But something had to go: dinner parties, I don't do too often, and I don't have great executive lunches like I might. I do my job here, and I do my job at home. I love both of those roles, but there's not much time left for other things right now.

The most critical juncture for me was participating in NBC's Olympic coverage in South Korea. Did I really want to spend three weeks away from my small children? I agonized over this for nine months. I finally came to terms with it and went. I suppose if I hadn't been ambitious to a degree, I would have said, "thank you very much, but I can't go, I have a family. But I did go, and I did leave the family behind. It was very, very hard.

M.M. Were those decisions any easier on you because of what you've stated many times: "I picked the right man as a husband."

J.P. Yes, I was very, very clever. Not only did I pick someone who was a good man, and fair person of his time, to the degree that he expected to marry a woman who took her career as seriously as he took his. But when time came to have a family he was going to be as serious about his role as a father as I was about being a mother. I have a little impatience with some of the new fathers these days, but Garry's really good, and is also self-employed, which means he's around more.

M.M. Few women earn close to a million dollars a year. You do. What does it feel like?

J.P. I was raised in a middle-class home. I never really knew what my dad earned. He always said, "don't trust anybody who tells you what they make, and don't answer if somebody asks you what you make." There were some pretty difficult years for our family when I was in college. There wasn't much money in my family, so we were

extremely modest. What money my parents had, they invested in their daughters; we were educated, and had braces on our teeth, and were reasonably well dressed. So I was not deprived. I had everything I wanted but I didn't have many of the luxuries or extras. You can make \$10 million as a superstar athlete, and it doesn't matter how big your mansion is, or how big your staff is, most people still think of themselves as middle-class. I still have middle-class values, and I still have trouble spending money. I don't shop like a millionaire, I shop like the household I came from; it really doesn't change much. And I'm still a little amazed at what's become of me, what I've achieved. I hope I never lose that sense of, "Hey mom, look at me." I haven't gotten that jaded yet.