

NEWS

STEFANIE POWERS is probably best known for a couple of iconic television shows: "The Girl From U.N.C.L.E." (1966-67) and "Hart to Hart" (1979-84). But this isn't a woman who tends to rest on her laurels, or who even acknowledges she has laurels to rest on. The overwhelming majority of her time and energy these days goes to her work in animal preservation and conservation, primarily as co-founder and president of the William Holden Wildlife Foundation. Established in 1982 as a public charity and named for the late actor with whom Powers was involved romantically at the end of his life, the Kenya-based foundation continues to be her life's passion. Not that she doesn't still slip in a little bit of acting work here and there to help pay the bills. Powers surfaces in the new Hallmark Channel in HD Original Movie "Meet My Mom," which premieres Saturday, May 8 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C), co-starring as the mother of a character played by Lori Loughlin. The following piece is available for all press uses, with photos, from Crown Features Syndicate™.

STEFANIE POWERS: HER HEART BELONGS TO AFRICA

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It isn't merely that Stefanie Powers is modest about her impressive acting resume', one that began with her having been under contract at Columbia Pictures for five years beginning at age 16 and includes dozens of theatricals, more than 20 TV miniseries and 100 TV guest appearances and starring roles in "The Girl From U.N.C.L.E." in the 1960s and "Hart to Hart" opposite Robert Wagner in the 1980s.

No, it goes far deeper than that.

If you ask Powers about her accomplishments and to rank her greatest thrills, she is likely to say – as she did recently during an interview – "I don't feel like what I've done are 'accomplishments.' I never look back. Life is just an ongoing process. So much of what I'm involved with is ongoing, particularly with conservation. There is so much to do. So many vulnerable creatures that need protection."

Powers is speaking, of course, about her devotion to animal preservation and protection, conservation and the environment. It's a cause that is not only close to her heart; it's her heart, period. It's part of the woman's very DNA.

The philanthropic work at the core of Powers' life surrounds her running the William Holden Wildlife Foundation, a public charity that she co-founded in 1982 and for which she continues to serve as president. Started in the memory of the great actor Holden – a conservationist in his own right – it carries on the important works that were the passion of Holden (Powers' companion at the time of his death in 1981).

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To say that Powers is more than merely a figurehead for the foundation (www.whwf.org) would be one of the century's great understatements. At 67, she still spends several months a year at a game ranch in Kenya that she had built and finished in 1985. She has lived in Kenya on and off since 1973.

"We hold and preserve 37 species of East African wildlife," she announces with pride. "I handle all of the expenses for the foundation's operation out of my own pocket. When I tell every donor that 100 percent of what they give us goes directly to fund our works, I mean it."

It is to fund the foundation that Powers continues to work as an actress. The slew of "Hart to Hart" made-for-TV movies in the mid-1990s, in which Powers both starred and co-produced, certainly helped. So has her work over the past decade portraying Anna in several productions of the stage classic *The King and I*, first in England and then Los Angeles. That's not to mention her debut CD, "On the Same Page," and her one-woman show *One From the Hart*.

A more conventional role finds Powers co-starring at present in the Hallmark Channel in HD Original Movie "Meet My Mom," which premieres Saturday, May 8 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C). She portrays the mother of a woman (Lori Loughlin) who comes along with her 10-year-old son to live with her after getting divorced.

"What appealed to me most was the strong relationship between the mother and daughter," Powers says. "That, and it was all done in less than three weeks. Plus, it's Hallmark Channel, which does classy projects. I'd been asked to do several of their movies over the years, but it never worked out with the schedule. I'm glad it finally did. It was a lovely opportunity to get my feet wet with them."

It also pleased Powers that the Hallmark Channel mission is to "tell stories relevant of today, dramas we're encountering now. And they do them in a wholesome way. They're not trying to dig into the seamy underbelly of familial unhappiness. They look to the potential of relationships and try to mine what's good."

Besides the movie and her all-out commitment to the conservation movement, Powers is working on a memoir that's scheduled to be published in October by Simon & Schuster.

"I'm trying frantically to finish it now," she admits. "I had gone to New York to pitch it myself and wound up going back and forth between two publishers. I feel like it's going to be a good book. But they don't want me to talk about what's going to be in it. All I can say is, it won't be any kind of kiss-and-tell thing."

Not that Powers ever has been a tabloid queen, or anything close. She has been married and divorced twice (the first time to actor Gary Lockwood) and had relationships with Holden and with "Hart to Hart" co-star Wagner, with whom she remains good friends.

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But don't expect any thrilling anecdotes from Powers about her days on "H to H" – unless she's saving them for the book.

"We worked so many hours on that show that there really wasn't a lot of time to revel in the success and the fame," she recalls. "There was no Internet, so we never received much public feedback, certainly not like it is today. The world was different then. Paparazzi didn't camp out in front of your house. If you needed food at the supermarket, you went yourself. We had to live like real people."

The way that Powers lives now is something else again, of course. If she isn't physically in her beloved Kenya, she's there in spirit. Besides running the foundation, she is director of the Mount Kenya Game Ranch, which Holden co-founded. She also serves on the advisory board of three major zoos, created the Jaguar Conservation Trust for Jaguar Cars North America, and serves as an international speaker on wildlife preservation.

Powers has nine dogs – five at her Los Angeles home, four in Africa – and 21 horses at her North Kenyan ranch. Oh, and a Yellow-Naped Amazon Parrot, which she's had for 36 years.

What can we tell you, the lady digs animals.

"Animals, I find, are very easy to love and be friends with," Powers stresses. "I don't need to go onto Facebook and pretend to have friends I've never even met. To my mind, that kind of destroys the meaning of the word 'friend.' I take exception to that. Because I value and respect friendship."

Beyond that, Powers finds that it's her four-legged friends who need her the most.

"The wild horses of America continue to be slaughtered," Powers says. "We have plenty of meat without them. They don't need to be destroyed. These animals are as much an iconic image as the bald eagle, and yet we capture them from public land, remove them, sell them by the pound and slaughter them. It's the kind of unconscionable destruction that tells me our foundation's work will never be done."

"Meet My Mom" premieres Saturday, May 8 (9p.m. ET/PT, 8C)

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