



Jancee Dunn

But Enough About Me
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Q: Reading *But Enough About Me*, I took comfort in knowing that even a seasoned interviewer such as yourself still suffers from nervous hive outbreaks and sweaty palms. You mention that Madonna was the one who made your palms sweat the most. Has anyone else topped that, and why?

A: No one has caused my palms to flow with the sheer volume of flop sweat that Madonna has. I remember looking down at my palms as I sat in the waiting room of her office, and it was as if someone had poured water on them. It was horrible. I wished so much that it was wintertime and I could have just worn gloves. Maybe all-season gloves should be my signature look, like Michael Jackson's. My mother recently suggested that I should get Botox injected into my palms, but what if my hands become paralyzed?

In contrast, which celebrity did you feel the most comfortable to be around? I recently interviewed Ellen Barkin and she's a real New Yorker, very tough and frank and funny, and I love that sort of person in general, so I relaxed right away. There were a couple of cues that she would be great—she arrived alone to the interview with no hovering handler, she ordered a big plate of French fries and ate every one, and she was overly nice to the waiter because she had been a waitress in New York for years.

Q: The tabloids had a field day linking you to some of the hottest stars, who you were just interviewing for the magazine. But in truth, did you ever date any of the celebrities you interviewed? If not, was there one or two in particular you wished you had dated?

A: Honestly, I have never dated a celebrity. Sometimes a random bass player would ask for my number, but the hard truth is that most of my interview subjects did not seem to be that interested in me romantically. It may have been my approach—I never flirted, I assumed the prim demeanor of an English teacher in my efforts to be professional. Or it may be that I simply wasn't their type. I like to garden, and bake, and read Victorian novels, which is not exactly scintillating for a movie or a rock star. There is one celebrity who made me act like a giddy schoolgirl, and that was Bono. Oh, yes. He was charismatic, charming, intelligent—the whole package. Every woman on set was swooning.

Q: You come from a conservative family. Were they upset by any parts of your memoir, especially when you nearly OD'd on coke?

A: I dreaded showing my parents the chapter in which I did coke, 'Scarface'-style. They suspected that I had dabbled in drugs but certainly had no knowledge of that little episode. After they read the manuscript, I expected them to be upset, but they reacted with surprising equanimity. They told me that it was obvious that I had learned something from the whole experience, and trusted that I had moved on. I had always assumed that my parents would become a little more conservative as they got older, when in fact they have become much more open-minded.

Q: Your "Wow. Milk," comment with Johnny Rotten was a brilliant icebreaker. How did the rest of your interview go with him? Did having Johnny Rotten as your first assignment make your next assignment seem like a walk in the park?

A: The rest of the interview grew progressively easier, because he really was hilariously funny, and I was a good audience. I laughed at all of his jokes, and as he had a bit of a hammy streak, the more I laughed, the more jokes he made (at my expense, sometimes, which was okay.) He was actually the perfect indoctrination into celebrity journalism because he was so harsh that every subsequent interview felt like a cakewalk. I would be so grateful that my subject wasn't making fun of my hair or railing against 'Rolling Stone' and telling me what a useless rag it was.

What was the most surprising turn in your career? What was the most surprising turn in your personal life?

A: The most surprising turn in my career was that I was able to write this book. It has been my dream since I was a child to write a book—an odd dream for an eight-year-old to have, but it really was my most fervent wish. Now that I am able to do this for a living, I can hardly believe my luck. And in terms of my personal life, as I hit my mid-thirties, I had begun to despair of ever meeting a person who was kind, intelligent, well adjusted, and funny. Then I met Tom—the guy who makes an appearance at the end of the book. I married him five years ago and it was the smartest thing I've ever done. And he cooks dinner every night! He thinks it's 'fun.'