

## LAST WORD

## Donna Mills

The iconic TV star reflects on soap-opera stardom and gives us a glimpse into her happy life as a mom, winemaker and tennis buff  
By Franck Ragaine

She was one of prime-time television's most popular female villains in the '80s, but in real life, *Knots Landing* star Donna Mills is as sweet as can be. "Abby [Cunningham] is a character I loved playing," the actress says fondly of the role that shot her to fame. "It was such a nice time in my life."

Still, the Chicago native, 81, wouldn't trade it for the life she has now. Donna loves spending time with her daughter Chloe, 27, and partner of 21 years, actor Larry Gilman, 71. In fact, the couple run their own California vineyard.

Happily for fans, Donna will be appearing onscreen once again this summer, in Jordan Peele's new horror flick, *Nope*. Here, the TV legend chats about her former co-stars, her "sweetheart" daughter, and playing tennis with a princess.

## KNOT FOREVER

Abby is still so present in my life. [My co-stars] Michelle Lee, Joan Van Ark and I are together a lot. We do these "An Evening With" events, where people come and ask us all kinds of questions. Because of that, Abby stays in my mind. There are a lot of things I don't remember, though. It's funny, when we do those evenings, people come to us saying, "Do you remember that scene when you said this and did this?" Of course I don't recall every scene and moment! [Laughs]



## PROUD MAMA

My daughter is such a light for me. She spent a long time in New York City modelling, but I think it wasn't enough for her. So she came back here to the West Coast and now works for a company that transforms Mercedes-Benz vans into camper vans. She loves it. She has a great personality, and she knows how to deal with people. She is a sweetheart.



## MY SHOT WITH J.R.

Larry Hagman was the best. I was so lucky to have worked with him when I was first starting out.

Because I was sort of the new blond in town and I didn't know where to go, what to do. He took me under his wing. He and his wife Maj, they were wonderful to me. They invited me so many times to parties at their beach house. Larry really took care of me.

## BEING MADELINE REEVES

I won an Emmy for *General Hospital*. It was incredibly wonderful. But doing the show was a bit difficult for me because I'm an actress who likes to rehearse. There, if you were lucky, you could find your scene partner in their dressing room to run lines, but that was rare.



## DRIVING MISS DONNA

I hadn't done anything onstage for a long time. So when they called me [in 2017] and asked, "You wouldn't want to do *Driving Miss Daisy*?" I didn't know if I could do it. But I wanted to take a chance, and told myself, "If I fall on my face, then I fall on my face!" It ended up being an amazing experience.



## GET A MOVE ON

I'm not happy if I'm not moving. I know some friends who are very intellectual and can read books all day, I can't do that! I need to move. If I'm not gardening, I'm playing tennis.

## GRAPE-GROWER EXTRAORDINAIRE

One day [my partner] Larry expressed the idea to put a vineyard on the hill above our house. I thought he was being silly at first. But it was all him. He built it, he got a geologist, he talked to different winemakers – which is the big secret because it's not just the grapes you grow, it's what you do with them after. It's been quite a trip!

## ROYAL RUN-INS

The first tennis tournament I played, and the first person I beat, was Princess Grace during the Merv Griffin tournament in Monaco. After the game there was a dinner. I was seated close to Prince Rainier and I thought, "What am I going to talk about?" We ended up talking the whole evening about his zoo and his animals. They were both so lovely. **H**



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