

MODEL, ACTRESS, A TRUE CLASS ACT

Playing celebrity isn't the only thing that keeps Bittner's interest

"I was just shy of my 30th birthday," begins local celebrity Valerie Bittner, when asked when she first became involved in the world of modeling and acting, "which may seem really shocking."

It certainly is. With a portfolio that ranges from commercials to print advertisements, promotions and trade shows, television acting and theatre, it is hard to believe that Bittner has been in the game for only a little over a decade.

"Of course, every teenage girl dreams of being a model or an actress," continues Bittner. "My life took a very different turn, and I wound up getting married and having children really young. I was an at home mother for nine years." Years later, life would take yet another, very different turn for Bittner while getting her hair colored at a local salon.

"I was getting my gray touched up—yes, I went prematurely gray," she shares with her trademark laugh, "and this scout approached me and asked if I'd ever consider modeling, and I laughed at her! I thought she was joking, and she said 'no no no', and that she was serious, and I continued to laugh at this poor woman's face! So I called her and a week later I was doing a bridal show." At 30 years old, Bittner found herself to be a professional, full-time model, and finding work was not as difficult as she had originally thought.

"When I started, it was really a lark," says Bittner. "I thought I would do this for as long as they'd have me, because the girls that I was modeling with were ten years younger than me. I immediately started with bikini and lingerie work, and I was the ring girl at the boxing matches and things like that, which are all pretty, sexy, young stuff. Then you get to be 35 and I started transitioning as much as I could into commercial because I knew it would extend my career, and that led into acting."

After obtaining her SAG card, Bittner worked on such popular television shows as Medical Detectives, Forensic Files, Law and Order—Special Victims Unit, The Sopranos, and the Emmy Award Winning Special for Outstanding Children's Programming, "Dr. X and the Quest for Food Safety".

"It's a blast!" Bittner exclaims. "I get to play pretend every day, like a little girl's dream. I get to dress up every day. I've been a lawyer, a doctor, a murder victim. I was beaten on the head with a baseball bat and I was kidnapped out of a bathtub—its just amazing!" Playing celebrity isn't the only thing that keeps Bittner's interest.

"My very best friend Jeffrey wanted to marry his partner, Steven, and even though it wouldn't be legal in the state of Pennsylvania, I wanted to be legal, so I became ordained with the Church of Spiritual Humanity on the internet," shares Bittner with a beautiful smile. "I can actually marry people—so if you're in need, give me a buzz!" Bittner also enjoys staying at home, cooking with her husband and enjoying wine with friends.

"We've gotten addicted to the Food Network website and we'll google it and come up with a recipe," says Bittner of her love for staying indoors, "but if we do go out, I do really enjoy going to Blue. I can be pretty critical of food and service in general. You've gotta impress me. And Blue, with that wine list—oh, it's wonderful."

Despite celebrating her 44th birthday, Bittner is still as active as ever in the world of acting and modeling, having recently done work with Rachel Weiss in her new movie, "The Lovely Bones", as well as work in M. Night Shyamalan's "The Happening", featuring John Leguizamo.

"When I tell people I'm modeling at my age," Bittner begins, "they say 'but you're not 18, you're not a size 0', but I always say look at the Nacho



Nacho man, or that horrible, horrible Pepto Bismo commercial—they are models! They are actors that have a composite card and they have head shots and they're obviously working on a national campaign! I think the misconception is that you have to be 6-foot tall, gorgeous—and yes, you have to be for high fashion, but there's a whole other range of modeling that I've discovered and I'm having a blast with." Valerie Bittner will be in the game for a while to come—or at least, as she says, as long as they'll have her.

"Here's the thing—I'm on a job interview five days a week, and out of those five interviews, maybe one or two work out. Its never that you're not pretty enough. Its that they're looking for someone taller, shorter, blonder, brunette, blue eyes, green eyes—and if you look like the producer's ex wife," she laughs, "who he's paying thousands of dollars of alamoney to, then you're never getting the job! That's just the nature of the business. So I always say, 'Valerie—good while supplies last'."

Bittner's supplies will, undoubtedly, last for a good while yet.