

# Jeraldine Saunders, Whose Book Begat ‘The Love Boat,’ Dies at 95

A later reprint of Jeraldine Saunders’s memoir “The Love Boats,” which inspired the long-running television series “The Love Boat.”

By **Neil Genzlinger**

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Jeraldine Saunders, whose 1974 memoir of her time as a cruise director inspired the long-running television series “The Love Boat,” died on Monday at her home in Glendale, Calif. She was 95.

Edward Lozzi, her longtime spokesman, said the cause was complications of kidney stone surgery she had in December.

Ms. Saunders, who also wrote a widely syndicated astrology column for the Tribune Company as well as a book on hypoglycemia, had an eclectic résumé to say the least. She was a model as well as an author; a practitioner of numerology and palm reading as well as an astrologer. She liked dating younger men and at age 89 filmed [a segment](#) for the TLC series “Extreme Cougar Wives” (with a boyfriend, not a husband).

But her biggest claim to fame was her book “The Love Boats,” which inspired three television movies: “The Love Boat” in 1976 and “The Love Boat II” and “The New Love Boat,” both in early 1977. That fall, the concept was turned into an [Aaron Spelling](#) series, which ran for 250 episodes, making it one of the most successful shows of the period.

The show told humorous, romantic and occasionally dramatic stories of life aboard a cruise ship named Pacific Princess, whose crew was led by Capt. Merrill Stubing (played by Gavin MacLeod). It became a sort of cultural reference point, often mocked but also widely watched, both in the United States and abroad. It was seen on ABC from 1977 until 1986 and briefly revived as “Love Boat: The Next Wave” on UPN in 1998.

Ms. Saunders often said the show fueled a huge expansion in the cruise industry. Though that may have been only partly true, Kristoffer A. Garin, in his 2005 book, “Devils on the Deep Blue Sea,” said of the series, “Put it on the short list for the single greatest product placement of all time.” And in 2014, when Ms. Saunders and cast members turned out for a 50th-anniversary commemoration of Princess Cruises, she was introduced as “the patron saint of cruising.”

Ms. Saunders was born Geraldine Loretta Glynn on Sept. 3, 1923, in Los Angeles to Raymond and Marcella Glynn. Her father, who owned a service station and garage, died when she was 11, leaving her mother to raise her and four siblings during the Depression.

Ms. Saunders was with Bernie Kopell, who played Dr. Adam Bricker on “The Love Boat,” when the show’s cast and Princess Cruises received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2018. Mike Nelson/EPA, via Shutterstock

After graduating from Glendale High School in 1941, Ms. Saunders married Russell Phillips. Before their divorce eight years later they had a daughter, Gail, whose death in 1970 from hypoglycemia prompted Ms. Saunders to write “Hypoglycemia, the Disease Your Doctor Won’t Treat” with Harvey M. Ross, a doctor. It was published in 1980.

By then Ms. Saunders had already scored her “Love Boat” success. She had been modeling for about 20 years, she said, when she applied for a job as a cruise ship hostess.

“I thought I was getting too old to model,” she explained in an interview for the 2005 book “How to Become a Magnet to Hollywood Success,” by Michele Blood and Rock Riddle, “so I decided I’d better find something else to do.”

The cruise officials asked if she spoke Italian and Spanish; she said she did, even though she didn’t. They asked if she played bridge, a popular shipboard activity at the time; she said she did, even though she didn’t.

“I didn’t know one card from another,” she said in [a recent interview](#) on the BGE Network.

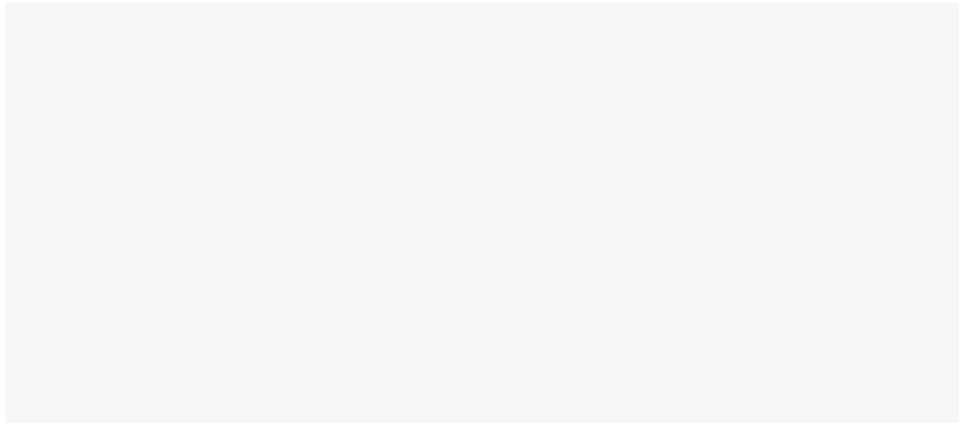
She thought she’d have some time to learn. But, to her surprise, she was asked to start immediately.

“I learned while I was earning,” she said.

After two years as a hostess, she received an unexpected promotion.

“It never entered my mind that I could become a cruise director,” she explained, “because they were always men.”

As cruise director, she was in charge of all activities in her ship’s public spaces. It gave her a close-up view of the customers.



The cast of “The Love Boat,” from left: Ted Lange, Lauren Tewes, Jill Whelan, Gavin MacLeod, Fred Grandy and Bernie Kopell. One of the most successful shows of the 1970s and ’80s, “The Love Boat” became a sort of cultural reference point, often mocked but also widely watched. ABC

“Something beautiful happens to people when they board a ship,” she was quoted as saying in the “Magnet to Hollywood Success” book. “They seem to let their protective walls down.”

As she told the story, “I’d write home to my family: ‘You’ll never believe what happened today.’” Her mother saved those letters, she said, sent them to an agent, and the next thing she knew she was being asked to submit some sample chapters for what became “The Love Boats.”

She credited a travel writer for The Los Angeles Times, Jerry Hulse, with mentioning in his column that the book would make a good TV series. The producer Douglas S. Cramer picked up on the suggestion, which led to the TV movies. Then Mr. Spelling took over.

“It was fun to go down to my mailbox every day and get those checks,” Ms. Saunders said of the resulting royalties.

In 1966 Ms. Saunders was married briefly to Sydney Omarr, who had a popular horoscope column. When he died in 2003 she took it over, and she was still writing it at her death. Mr. Lozzi said she had been in discussions for a stage musical based on her book.

Ms. Saunders was also married to Arthur Andrews, who died in 2003. She leaves no immediate survivors.

Her success with the book “The Love Boats,” she said, was not unrelated to her interests in matters like numerology and astrology. In the radio interview, she said she didn’t become successful until she changed the first letter of her first name from G to J, something she did for reasons explainable only by a numerologist. And when she was writing the sample chapters of the book, she took care in mailing them in.

“I did a lot of imagining of what I wanted to happen,” she said in the “Magnet to Hollywood Success” interview, “and I would send the mail only according to the days that were astrologically the right time. Then I would just imagine that it would lead to a book and imagine it was in print.

“Imagining is just like praying, you know.”

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