

CHICAGO
Sunday Show

JENNY FROM THE BLOCK



Jennifer Beals stars as the city's first female chief of police in "The Chicago Code," debuting in February on Fox. Says writer and executive producer Shawn Ryan, "You wanted someone who felt like they came from the city, and in that regard we got very lucky, because Jennifer was born and raised in Chicago and knew the city really well."

TELEVISION *After a South Side childhood, Jennifer Beals is back on the hometown beat in new cop drama*

BY MIKE THOMAS
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Jennifer Beals strolled into a Gold Coast bistro wearing large eyeglasses with light-colored frames that subtly obscured her famous face. It was late morning and the place had just opened; only one patron, drinking a Bombay Sapphire martini, sat by the windows up front.

Though a public personality who recently served as celebrity grand marshal of Chicago's annual State Street Thanksgiving Day Parade, Beals is an intensely private person who'd rather rap in semi-seclusion than amid a swirl of strangers.

And so she breezed past the host stand, heading straight for a tucked-away table in a far corner. Doffing her specs and stylish winter apparel, she settled in for an hourlong chat shortly after her 47th birthday in mid-December. She'd spend the upcoming Christmas holiday with family in Chicago before heading home to Vancouver, where she lives with her second husband, Canadian entrepreneur/film technician Ken Dixon, and their 5-year-old daughter. Beals has two older stepchildren, as well, from Dixon's previous marriage.

The Chicago-born-and-bred actress — whose profile has risen considerably in recent years thanks to six seasons as well-dressed lesbian art curator Bette Porter on Showtime's hit show "The L Word" — chose the meeting spot because she'd been there once before with an associate of hers on "The Chicago Code." Scripted and executive produced by Rockford native Shawn Ryan ("The Shield"), the political/cop drama premieres Feb. 7 on Fox and features Beals as Chicago's first female chief of police. It shot here for more than 100 days this past spring and summer.

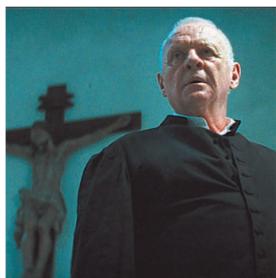
A 'different' kind of girl

About an hour before our scheduled rendezvous, Beals' publicist helpfully texted some interview topics and guidelines. Among them: "Stay away from anything real personal, just not her thing."

For instance, she prefers not to dwell on her spouses: ex-husband and film director Alexandre Rockwell, whom she wed in her early 20s, and Dixon, with whom she exchanged vows roughly 12 years ago in Chicago. She speaks glowingly of motherhood but never names her daughter. Even her pets' names are kept confidential. Queries about Beals' Chicago childhood, however, elicited some colorful memories — albeit several recycled ones.

Before rocketing to international renown as sexy welder/stripper Alex Owens in the 1983 film "Flashdance," Jenny Beals (as she is known more familiarly) was a smart girl from the South Side who liked to read and make daily to-do lists; who was fascinated by horses and dreamed of being a jockey; who was, she has said, "acutely aware that I was different."

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Anthony Hopkins, who plays an exorcist in "The Rite," says: "There are no spinning heads and no pea soup."

Hopkins gives devil his due

MOVIES | 'Dark, weird' exorcist role in 'Rite'

BY CINDY PEARLMAN

LOS ANGELES — The man voted the scariest movie villain of all time is really a softie. Ask Anthony Hopkins about a show business moment that summed it all up for him and the 73-year-old legend tells a story.

"I saw Bing Crosby as an old man," he says. "I was on a studio lot and snuck into an auditorium where Bing was alone doing a little warm-up with all these kids around him. The lights were in his eyes and I knew he couldn't see me. So I just sat in the back row and watched a master at work."

"It brought tears to my eyes. I thought, That's Crosby up there. The kids were in awe and I felt the same way. I saw the skill, the ease and the humor. That's how the pros did it. They knew that you didn't need a genius IQ to be an actor," he says. "You just need to know the text and show up."

When young actors ask him for advice, Hopkins offers few comments. "The truth is I never give advice," he says. "I do make jokes on a set and will go up to a younger actor and say, 'Is that the way you're going to play the part? Okay, it's your career.'"

SEE HOPKINS, PAGE 3

Jayhawks back in state of harmony



The Jayhawks, circa 1995, the year Mark Olson left the group: Karen Grotberg (from left), Gary Louris, Tim O'Reagan, Marc Perlman and Olson.

MUSIC | Louris, Olson find a way to make it work

BY MARY HOULIHAN
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When Gary Louris and Mark Olson reunited for a duo tour in 2005, hope began to grow among Jayhawks fans that a full band reunion might be in their future.

Well, the future is now, and the tour is a mini version, which launched in Toronto on Tuesday and ends in Minneapolis on Jan. 30. In between, the group hits New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, where it will play a two-night stand this week at the Vic Theatre.

Part of the reason for the tour is to

celebrate the re-release of the Jayhawks' two masterpieces — "Hollywood Town Hall" and "Tomorrow the Green Grass." In Chicago, Louris says the band will play one album through each night in addition to other tunes from the band's songbook. Also expect the debut of new songs penned by the duo for a new Jayhawks album due out in the spring, which will be followed by a more city-inclusive tour.

The Jayhawks' current lineup features Louris, Olson, keyboardist Karen Grotberg, drummer Tim O'Reagan and bassist Marc Perlman.

SEE JAYHAWKS, PAGE 5

ACTRESS HAS OWN PERSONAL CODE

BEALS, FROM THE COVER | New chief in 'Chicago' polices her privacy carefully

As the light-skinned daughter of a black father, grocery store owner/businessman Alfred, and a Caucasian mother, public school teacher Jeanne, Beals endured taunts of "whitey" in her predominantly African-American neighborhood at the corner of 82nd and Indiana in working-class Chatham.

"It was very odd to have somebody who was white coming into the South Side neighborhood," Beals said of growing up there in the '60s and early '70s, when so-called "white flight" was escalating.

She expounded on the evolution of her racial identity during a 2004 award acceptance speech in Los Angeles.

"As I got a little older, and I was more aware of television and magazines, I searched for images of girls that looked like me. As a biracial girl growing up in Chicago, there wasn't a lot there, positive or otherwise. I mean, I had Spock. And that was kind of it. And I think my theme song was Cher's 'Half-Breed.'"

Worldly upbringing

Those bumps aside, she had a rich upbringing. Dad, who had migrated to Chicago from Orange, Texas, and kept a gun in the house for protection, loved athletics and traveling. Mom adored literature and language. Both were strong proponents of hard work and education.

"My family traveled when I was really young," Beals said of an immediate clan that includes brothers Greg (older) and Bobby (younger). As noted in a 1990 issue of *Ebony* magazine, she also has a number of Chicago-born half-siblings fathered by Alfred.

"We went to Turkey, we went to Greece," she went on. "We went back to Europe. My father took us all over the world. I don't think it was like, 'Let's broaden the kids' horizons.' It was like, 'Boy, Istanbul would be interesting. Let's go there.' And we had a big globe in the house. Sometimes we'd spin the globe and put our finger on it to see where we would go for vacation."

The owner of several businesses, including a large grocery store near the sprawling Altgeld Gardens projects, Alfred reportedly earned a solid living. Nonetheless, Beals has "no idea if we had any money. I don't know how we did it. He talked people into things, quite often, like getting us a bigger room. He was very charming."

A man for whom dining room tables held little allure, Alfred took his supper in bed where, as erstwhile *Newsweek* journalist Greg Beals recounted in a 2009 essay on theroot.com, "he called his three children to gather around for a night of blackjack or baccarat. We used food stamps collected from customers as chips and ate black-eyed peas, steak or pork chops on paper plates. He dealt the cards and told us of how he grew up with two pairs of pants — one for today and one for tomorrow; how the family traveled from Texas to Chicago to escape a lynching; the first time he lived in a house with electric lights; his first knife fight; Nat King Cole."

On Dec. 6, 1974, a couple of weeks before Beals' 11th birthday, 61-year-old Alfred suffered what Greg described as "a stroke induced by overwork." He died before reaching Roseland Community Hospital. According to his death certificate, the official cause was coronary thrombosis. He was buried at Burr Oak cemetery in Alsip.

A model student

Thereafter Jeanne and her progeny moved from their four-story apartment building at 203 E. 82nd St. to Evanston ("for a split second"), and then to Sandburg Village on the Near North Side. Just up the street, in Lincoln Park, Beals continued her scholarship-facilitated education at the elite and progressive Francis W. Parker School, to which she'd been commuting since pre-kindergarten. As before, her learning continued at home. But Jeanne Beals, whom Jennifer has characterized as "very strong and very, very smart," was less didactic educator than passionate enthusiast when it came to sparking her daughter's interest in various subjects.

"She was taking an adult education course at the University of Chicago," Beals recalled. "And she came home and she had been reading [Virgil's] 'The Aeneid.' And she said, 'You're never gonna believe what that bastard, Aeneas, did to Dido!' and she'd start telling the story. And I thought, 'Wow, that sounds really good.'"

In the late 1970s, encouraged by her friends and Francis Parker schoolmates Page and Daryl Hannah (the latter of future big-screen fame),



Jennifer Beals (left) shoots a scene for her new TV series "The Chicago Code" with Warren Cole (center) and Jason Clarke at Miller's Pub in the Loop.



Beals as a teenager at Francis W. Parker School (left) and last November as celebrity grand marshal of Chicago's Thanksgiving Day parade on State Street. | BRIAN JACKSON-SUN-TIMES



BEALS' CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

1983: "Flashdance" (with Michael Nouri, directed by Adrian Lyne)

1992: "In the Soup" (with Stanley Tucci, Steve Buscemi)

1995: "Four Rooms" (directed by Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino)

1995: "Devil in a Blue Dress" (with Denzel Washington, Tom Sizemore, Don Cheadle)

2002: "Roger Dodger" (with Elizabeth Berkley, Jesse Eisenberg)

2003: "Runaway Jury" (with John Cusack, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman)

2004-09: "The L Word" (as Bette Porter, on Showtime)

2010: "The Book of Eli" (with Denzel Washington, Gary Oldman, Mila Kunis)



Beals began cashing in on her exotic looks and megawatt smile by entering the world of modeling. If nothing else, posing for pictures paid more than her gig at an Oak Street ice cream shop.

"She didn't know what to do, so she did anything we wanted, which was wonderful," says celebrated Chicago photographer Victor Skrebneski, who first snapped Beals. Before long, his subject was gracing the cover of *Chicago* magazine, appearing in the *Sun-Times* and jetting to New York and Paris during summers off.

"It's not as if I wanted to be an actor or I wanted to be a model," Beals said. "I never really imagined, literally, that someone would pay me to do it. But I knew that I had to find a way to make enough money to go to school."

Despite early success with modeling and the much-needed funds it

brought in, Beals continued to make education a top priority. During her senior year of high school she applied to Yale without her mother's knowledge — and was accepted. She'd soon have more than enough scratch to pay her way.

From Yale to 'Flashdance'

Following several auditions for the film that would launch her career, "Flashdance," she was chosen as one of three finalists. Her competition included Demi Moore and a model named Leslie Wing.

There are two vastly different versions of how Beals ultimately snared the role. In one, then-Paramount president Michael Eisner gathered some female secretaries on his floor and asked them to pick their favorite actress after viewing screen tests.

"Flashdance" screenwriter Joe Eszterhas, the outspoken author of "Basic Instinct" and "Showgirls," was far cruder in his 2004 memoir, *Hollywood Animal*. Eisner, he blustered, "gathered together two hundred of the most macho men on the [Paramount] lot, Teamsters and gaffers and grips, and sat them down in a screening room." "I want to know," Eisner allegedly said, "which of these three young women you'd most want to f---." Beals got the part — and the \$500,000 salary that went with it.

Still, she was hesitant. She'd just begun at Yale. Accepting the job meant suspending her studies for a semester while cameras rolled in Pittsburgh and L.A. Initially, Beals said no, at least according to one former associate.

"I was absolutely shocked when she didn't want to do the movie," says Beals' former modeling agent Susanne Johnson, of whose "Flashdance" involvement Beals is highly dubious since by then their partnership had ended. "I thought, 'Hello.' We did not know that it was going to be so off the chart, but I thought it was a chance for her to get into Los Angeles, into the movie industry."

After some deep soul searching over a weekend, Beals accepted.

Only after she was chosen, insiders have said, did Beals reveal her mixed heritage. Paramount honchos, as one of those insiders put it at the time, were "in a tizzy" over how to promote an interracial love story and whether to make the news pub-

lic. *New York* magazine did that for them in November 1982.

After "Flashdance" hit theaters in the spring of 1983, and despite the slamming of critics, its popularity crescendoed toward a worldwide gross of more than \$100 million (approximately double that in today's dollars). Nearly overnight, Beals was thrust into a searing spotlight. Post-premiere, she told the *New York Times* in 2004, "I remember going into the bathroom and crying because I knew people thought the character was really me."

The flesh-and-music-filled flick remains by far her best-known — the one by which she is frequently identified and the mention of which can make her bristle. Although she dropped the F-bomb first during our conversation and all was rosy, other inquirers have annoyed her by dwelling on ancient history at length or doing so at inopportune moments. For example, when she has limited time to promote another project.

A 'very exacting' actress

She brooks no guff at work, either — for better and worse. Almost from the start, rumors have circulated and colleagues have intimated that Beals can sometimes be difficult to deal with professionally.

"She considers herself very intelligent," "The Bride" director Franc Roddam told *People* magazine in 1985. "I instructed my department heads that she doesn't want a lot of noise or to be hassled on the set. That could be considered prima donna or just modus operandi. She takes herself seriously. Warren Beatty told me, 'If she hadn't chosen to be an actress, she could be president.'"

Late last year, during the first of my two visits to the "Chicago Code" set, Beals blew off a couple of Fox staffers who approached her to see if she could do a brief on-site interview — as the show's three other principals already had done. (We talked that evening by phone.)

"The L Word" creator and executive producer Ilene Chaiken has commented on the subject, too. "Jennifer can be very exacting," Chaiken recently told *More* magazine. "She's constantly attuned to whether the words and the ideas are worthy of the character, worthy of her. It's a lovely thing and a very challenging thing."

Ryan and "Chicago Code" techni-

cal advisor John Folino, a local homicide detective who has squired cast members on sporadically bloody research expeditions ("ride-alongs") to the West and Northwest sides, say Beals is a pleasure: highly prepared, thoughtful, flexible. She's a stickler for accuracy, too. Even if that means delaying production.

"She's just so open, receptive," Folino says. "She wants to do it right. They'll hold everything. I'm not doing it till I talk to John. That's it.' Many, many times." He laughs. "It's very interesting that everything's stalled. You've got 200 people waiting around for John to get there to make sure things are right. It's a little crazy, but I respect it."

Reacquainted with Chicago

Prior to landing "The Chicago Code," Beals had been mostly absent from Chicago. By her own recollection, she returned a decade or so ago for the Chicago International Film Festival, and once (very briefly) for a charity event in late 2007. Aside from her wedding in 1998, that's about it. She didn't say why, and a follow-up query to that effect garnered no reply.

"I was very close to her through those couple of years I had with her," Johnson says, "and then when the movie came out and she was going to college, she — how do I say this — she just dropped all of the people who were in Chicago. I felt that maybe we were not important enough."

That isn't the case anymore, if it ever was. According to Ryan, Beals was "very, very excited about the possibility of moving back."

Of course, the chance to star in a big-budget network program penned by one of television's most celebrated talents is enticement aplenty.

And while Beals' Chicago roots were incidental to the casting process, Ryan says, they certainly enhance her suitability for the show.

"I would say intelligence was huge on the list," he says. "You wanted someone who felt like they came from the city, and in that regard we got very lucky, because Jennifer was born and raised in Chicago and knew the city really well."

Parts of it, anyway. "I get lost going down to the South Side to go to location all the time," Beals said. "Because I left there when I was 10, so I'm not familiar at all, really. So being able to explore different aspects of the city and kind of get to know this place that I grew up in a more intimate way ..."

She stopped talking and answered her ringing cell phone. It was Beals' publicist, reminding her to wrap things up so she could be off to "my thing." So we confabbed a bit more — about the pleasure and pain of running, the joy of occasionally being alone, her Turkey Day carriage ride down a spectator-thronged street.

"It was fun, but I don't take it personally," she said of an honor that has previously gone to such homegrown luminaries as Dennis Franz, Jeremy Piven, Bonnie Hunt and Suze Orman. "Do you know what I mean? It's not like, 'Aren't I so wonderful? Look, here I am, the homecoming queen.' I don't feel that way at all." A corner table will do just fine.