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Amy Taylor Finds Happiness in Threes

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Broadcasting Happiness

Amy Taylor Embraces Work & Motherhood Times Three

BY MELISSA RIGNEY BAXTER

Three just may be Amy Taylor's lucky number. She's the third co-host of the award-winning WKTI morning radio show, Reitman, Mueller and Amy Taylor Too, and two years ago, she became the mother to three precious little girls. As she enjoys both motherhood and her career, she has reached a point in her life she has always wanted. "All those years up to this moment were striving, working and I would even say straining to get it right, to try and find happiness, and I found it. I couldn't be happier doing what I'm doing right now, raising my girls and doing my radio show," Taylor says.

From California Actress to Midwestern Journalist

Taylor, 39, grew up in suburban Chicago and traveled to UCLA for college – earning a degree in English literature. She was involved with an improvisational group, the Plastic Silverware, and the theater while at UCLA, and she remained in Los Angeles for a year after graduation auditioning and working on a few soap operas. She soon knew, however, the life of an actress was not for her. "I just decided I couldn't live every day of my life auditioning for a job. You're always looking for work. To me, that was just the most anxiety-producing state I could imagine," she says. The Midwest was also calling her home. "I loved the weather (in California). I loved waking up to birds chirping and the sunshine," she says. "But, I really missed the Midwestern people and the work ethic and just the hon-

esty and the humanity. I love the Midwest, and I'm proud to be raising my girls here, too."

She set her sights on broadcast journalism and went home to pursue that goal. "A lot of students I was competing against at the time were broadcast journalism students, and I had this liberal arts degree. But, I felt very prepared in terms of my knowledge of the world and just my general education, because I understood politics and history. And, I had a really good writing background, so that was really helpful," Taylor says. She started making tapes with her father, Jack Taylor, who has been on the air for 50 years in Chicago. He was the 10 o'clock anchor man at Chicago's WGN-TV for many years, and now Taylor's parents, Jack and Virginia, do a radio show in suburban Waukegan. "It's really good," she says, "very funny."

While her dad coached her in broadcast journalism, her mom may be the source of Taylor's sense of humor. "My mom is very much

the raconteur. She's incredibly funny and witty. She can just own the room. She's hilarious, but she's always kind, which I always keep in mind that sometimes humor is biting, but I don't ever want to be nasty."

Amy landed her first job, at a small radio station in Indiana, driving three hours each way from her family's Illinois home. After working there for six months, she had enough air time to move on to her next challenge. "I was able to get a serious reporting job at WKRS radio station in Waukegan," Taylor says. "It was all news, drive-time radio news reporting, so I covered police, fire, city council, everything and did it all myself, and I think it was the best start in the world because I had the hands-on experience reporting the news and anchoring."

In those early years, her ultimate goal was to work in television, partially because of the volatility of radio. Her next challenge was to make that leap. "I had to convince someone that being on the radio gave me enough experience to now go on television," Taylor says. "Somehow, I was able to pull it off. That was a big, big move for me to go from behind the microphone and not on a camera to being in front of a camera." She got an anchor job with the ABC-affiliate at KCRG-TV in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "I stayed there for three years, and that was also a fantastic experience because I was writing, reporting, editing all my own stuff. That was just a fantastic training ground."

Milwaukee, Marriage and Motherhood

After her stint in Cedar Rapids, Taylor came to TMJ-4, Milwaukee's NBC-affiliate, owned by Journal Broadcast Group, a division of Journal Communications. She loved the work, despite the 2:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. schedule, and in addition to her duties as a morning anchor, she was often a guest on the Reitman and Mueller morning show on WKTl, also a part of Journal Communications. "I was a guest on Reitman and Mueller for six years while I was anchoring Daybreak," she says. "That was just really a fun, successful relationship."

After moving to Milwaukee, she also started another successful relationship – she met Jason Diamond, an investment banker with Capstone Investments, through friends of her parents. "He was waiting



Amy Taylor, Bob Reitman, Gene Mueller of WKTl.

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twice. There's a lot of personal searching that comes in the process of saying I need this kind of care. I was really kind of wrapped up in the emotional stigma of infertility. And, I wouldn't want anyone to know what I was going through. I couldn't share it. I couldn't really discuss it with anybody but the most close people in my life. Nobody at work knew."

Before the couple's last try with in vitro treatments, Taylor came to a decision. "I decided that I needed to talk to my bosses about this and let them know that I'm going to need to take two weeks off," she says. "I took some unpaid time and just said 'I need to be able to focus; I need to relax; I need to sleep. I need to just be calm.'" Taylor scaled down her hours and started splitting her time between TMJ-4's morning show, Daybreak, and the Reitman and Mueller show. "I was only with them on a part-time basis, but then my day was done at 9 versus noon or 1 or 2. That really helped immediately with just shortening up the hours, and then I was beginning to relax and feel better," she says. "Embryo transfer – the idea of having a human life at the end of a needle. That is the most fragile moment of your life. You just want everything to go perfectly, so I had hoped that I had given myself the best shot with scaling back my hours."

The treatment was successful – times three. At five weeks of pregnancy, Taylor and Diamond learned they were to be the parents of triplets. "I thought how am I possibly, possibly going to continue with my schedule," she says. At that point, she started talking with WKTl about joining their morning team and letting go of her television anchor job. "It was kind of like dating in a way," she says. "We were mutually seeking one another. They were happy to say yes, and I'm so pleased that the company was able to see me in a different light and gave me that flexibility and was so totally amazing to me during the time of my pregnancy."



Taylor was on bed rest at 18 weeks and continued to be a part of the morning show for a few weeks. "Finally, my doctor said, 'Are you going to make this phone call and tell them you can't keep working or am I? That was really hard. There were a lot of tears that day,'" she says. "It was very hard to say okay, I give, I surrender. I'm going to lie here and gestate. That's what I did from 20 weeks of pregnancy to 30 weeks." Tess, Jillian and Chloe were born, ten weeks early, on Jan. 10.

On this day, the two-year-olds had kept Taylor up the night before. "They're kind of getting in that mischievous stage right now," she says. "They're trying to crawl out of the crib and everything's 'I can do it myself' but they're just so precious. They're the absolute joy of my life. The total joy of my life."

The switch to a radio broadcast career has fit well with Taylor, too. "I found something, an aspect of myself that I didn't even know was there," she says, "this feeling of relating to the listeners and feeling their feedback and feeling their support, feeling their laughs and their sorrows and their humor. They contact you in ways that are very different than the news because in the news business you're an antagonist, always confronting people for what they're doing most of the time. I just realize that I really



Amy Taylor's husband Jason Diamond with one of their daughters.

love not being in a totally adversarial position. I love being in a humorous adversarial position. I like to spar and joke, but I really like being in this position where I'm able to reach people."

Bob Reitman and Gene Mueller had been co-hosting WTKI's morning show together since 1982 when Taylor joined the show in 2003. "I've watched them – how smooth they are and how great with people

they are. They're the real deal," she says. "They're totally authentic people and they're wonderful to work with. It's just a great environment." The trio will be changing soon as Reitman announced in February he is retiring later this year.

Radio has other benefits, too, Taylor says with a laugh, "I can age gracefully; nobody has to see my high-definition television wrinkles. And if I have a bag under my eye, it doesn't matter. I think our society's obsession with that is really tiring. I think it's a lot of pressure on women that we put on ourselves to try and live up to these standards that are just insane. What's important is loving those people around you and enjoying your life and being good to the world. It's not about your flawless figure."

Making it all Work

Taylor and Diamond have an au pair from South Africa who takes care of the girls when Taylor is working. "She's just phenomenal. It's a great program because you have consistent child care, someone living in your house, and it's dependable in that regard," she says. "For me, it's been absolutely a great option. It comes with its stresses because you're living with someone else that you don't know. You become instant family, and it's kind of a weird thing, but it works."

Another key component in making motherhood and a career work together is having a good partner, Taylor says of husband, Diamond. "We don't even question our support for each other," she says. "It just is. It's a natural state of being. It's unfailing. Jason came to the St. Patrick's Day parade in the cold and the rain. He brought all the girls, and that is no small feat for anybody to mobilize triplets and get them in the car all dressed. He came and made sure I got to wave at them in the parade, which to me was such a thrill. We're in this thing together, and it's just awesome. My life is so much better now than it was when I came here, and that is such a great testament to this community."

She's truly embraced Milwaukee and the people here. "People say to me all the time, 'I know you're from Chicago, but it doesn't bug me,'" she says with a laugh. "I came here, and I planted roots, and I was able to make a sincere effort of building a life here. The people are welcoming, and if you're not a jerk, you have a shot at doing well here. I'm from Milwaukee now." ■

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