

Nearly 20 Questions

Joan Rivers Speaks to *New York Resident* About Parenting, Home Shopping & Liz

By Bob Johnson
New York Resident Contributing Writer

On July 23, Joan Rivers opens a summer-long run of Wednesday performances at Fez to workshop new material before taking it on the road.

In a recent phone interview, Rivers took the time to answer 19 questions (some are two-parters) from a group of this interviewer's friends and one lame question from the interviewer.

Here are the questions in which Joan talks about Fez, Liz Taylor, and, yes, parenting.

Why Fez? (Shannon, Manhattan)

Because at Fez, I can say anything. It's wonderful. I use it as a real workshop. The most fun that I have working is at Fez.

Boxers or briefs? And are you looking for a personal assistant? (David, Manhattan)

a. Boxers. I'm from the generation that likes boxers.

b. I have an amazing personal assistant now. But you never know ... He could turn on a dime. Send the résumé to the attention of Matt. That should shut him up for a year.

Have you ever met Elizabeth Taylor and, if so, what happened? (Mario, San Diego)

I met Elizabeth and nothing happened. We kissed each other hello. We're both super nice to each other — overly nice. We always meet at AIDS benefits, so we're there for the greater good.

How does one get invited to one of your fabulous dinner parties? (Sara, Williamsburg)

If you turn into a single rich Jewish man, you'll be invited immediately.

I was very sorry to hear about Spike. Do you have another little dog now? I believe you took little Spike everywhere — if you can recommend any chic dog-friendly spots, the advice would be welcome. (Miss Betta, Manhattan)

a. I have three dogs now. I always did. No dog can replace Spike. I have a new dog named Max, a rescued dog that I adore.

b. The chicest dog-friendly spot is my apartment.

How did you get hooked up with the shopping network? Did somebody ask, or was it your idea? (Sue, Carroll Gardens)

Somebody asked me. It was at a time when it wasn't chic to sell stuff on television. But I just knew it would be wonderful.

Would you advise mothers and daughters to work together in such a high-profile industry? (Jenny, Lafayette, IN)

I think it's wonderful to work with your child. You trust them. And it makes you become altruistic. I'm very altruistic with Melissa. I let her get the better hairdresser and let her get the better makeup artist.

How do you raise an amazing fashionista like your daughter, Melissa? (Marcia, Brooklyn)

It's all natural. Melissa can put on anything and it looks good. She puts together combinations that leave me in shock when I see them on the bed. And then I see them on her and say, "Oh, that works."

Has Melissa ever called you with a fashion emergency for fashion advice? (Peter, Astoria)

Never. Melissa has a great eye. I wouldn't know what to tell her to wear.

My teenage daughter is wearing (or attempting to wear) some outfits that I consider inappropriate for a 14-year-old, like halter tops and micro-mini-skirts. Of course, she tells me, "This is the style, Mom. Do you want me to dress like an old woman?" Is



Mommy 'Dearest': Melissa Rivers and Joan hamming it up

she right? Or do I stand vigilant at the door waiting to evaluate her outfits? Help me, Joan. (Jessica, Lafayette)

I think you let her wear what all the other kids are wearing. If you let kids rebel in a small way, they won't rebel in a big way.

What is your advice for kids who won't listen to their parents, who think they know all the answers? ("Darla," Manhattan)

Stricter rules. They live in your house, they have to listen to you. It's the old cliché: While you live in my house, you obey my rules. What I used to say to Melissa was: "If you were a

parent and your daughter asked you to stay out until 6 a.m., what advice would you give to your daughter?" And that's the advice that you give.

How did you manage to spend quality time with your daughter while you were so busy? (John, Atlanta)

I always managed. I'd cut off business every day at 6 o'clock. And every single night we sat down to dinner together (although sometimes my husband and I went out to another dinner at 8). I was also a Girl Scout mom. (I didn't wear the uniform. It was hideous.) I was a class mother. You should decide to have a child only if you take on the responsibility of being a parent.

What's your favorite punishment? (Tony, Garden City Park, L.I.)

With Melissa, it was taking away privileges. She loved going horseback riding. All I had to say is "You don't ride this Saturday."

How do you handle tantrums (from kids or adults)? ("Golda," Lafayette)

Kids — they all have them — and we know that. Melissa's handling Cooper's tantrums by giving him a spanking when it gets too bad or ignoring them. My mother ignored mine. And with adults, you just ignore them.

How did you get the job doing voice-overs for "The Adventures of Letterman" on *The Electric Company* and how long should you breast-feed? (Tim, Forest Hills)

a. They called me.
b. I think you should breast-feed until he gets his permanent teeth.

Is it really bad to leave your baby in the playpen all day? (Claudia, Manhattan)

Not if you're in there with him!

I have one more question: Can I take a photo with you after your show? (Bob, New York Resident)

Oh, that one was easy. Sure. ■

Joan Rivers will perform at Fez Under Time Café (380 Lafayette St., 212-533-2680, feznyc.com) at 8 p.m. every Wednesday night through Aug. 27.