



## Candice Bergen on Dog Costume Parties, Kale, And Murphy Brown

The TV legend, 68, opens up about everything in her new memoir, *A Fine Romance*, which chronicles the past 35 years. —ISABELLA BIEDENHARN

CANDICE BERGEN  
A FINE ROMANCE

**Your first memoir, *Knock Wood*, was a huge success. Why did you want to write a second book?**

I didn't want to write a second book. But I didn't really have much to do, and Simon & Schuster said, "You

know, we've already paid you this advance." I thought, "Well, I could just give it back to them." But then a few people said, "You know, you enjoy writing—sometimes." But obviously there were many things that I was dreading writing about. I took four years to write it.

**What's a typical writing day for you?**

Well, I put it off until 11:30 or midnight.



Candice Bergen with her daughter, Chloe Malle, in 1999

**The mark of a real writer.**

Yeah. [Laughs] And then I watch animal videos on YouTube. And then I watch TED talks, and then finally I just get to the end of my rope. I actually watched an animal video that I couldn't find again, of a man ironing his cat. It was the most hysterical animal video. The cat was just on his back on the ironing board, just zoned out. It was so happy—this guy's ironing his tail and his stomach. And then I write until two or three in the morning.

**How do you remember everything in such detail?**

Well, one of the few intelligent things I did was I kept sporadic journals, and I kept letters and notes from people who were important to me. So I had those to refer to. And that helps. Because I have no memory at all, in fact.

**Did you borrow your daughter Chloe's?**

Yes! Chloe was very helpful to me. She read the book just to read it, and then she read it again as an editor. And she's been nothing but supportive. She said that she was grateful to have a book about her childhood, so that there'd be a record of that.

**You talk about weight a lot in the book—how much you gained when you were pregnant, how you feel you're heavy today.**

Well, didn't that come back to bite me on the ass! Obviously I erred on the side of frankness and should have pulled back. When I read that [those passages] went viral, I just thought, "What?" May I just say this? I don't even know how to follow social media. I'm such a primitive person. And I frankly think that people who do follow social media need to get more of a life. But look, I feel that if you're going to commit to doing a book like this, then the least you can do to salvage some kind of self-respect is to be honest about things. Otherwise you just sink into a slough of self-narcissism.

**But do you think your focus on feeling bad about your own body is at odds with your *Murphy Brown* persona?**

I don't see my comments about loving food as negative. Obviously, it's not something you shoot for if you're working toward optimal health. But I just feel that some women go too far in the other direction, in terms of never eating out of enjoyment. I don't enjoy eating with women who only eat kale.

**I'm about Chloe's age, and now, as a woman with a job, I can appreciate how groundbreaking *Murphy Brown* was.** That's interesting, because of course, under a certain age, young women haven't heard of *Murphy Brown*. I don't remember if I put it in the book, but Marissa Mayer, who is the head of Yahoo, came up to my daughter at an event in San Francisco and said, "You know, without your mother, I wouldn't have become CEO."

**You did put it in! What was it like to be part of such an amazing show?**

It was thrilling. Every script, almost, that came across the table just caught your breath. It was so smart, and so wry, and subversive in a way. To be a writer on *Murphy*, you had to be beyond talented as a comedy writer. You had to be extremely well-informed. But for me, the gold standard for scripts was Diane English's scripts. Those had a special music to them that was great.

**Did you know there's nowhere to watch *Murphy Brown* online? Even if you're willing to pay? It's not on Netflix or anything.**

The show, for reasons unknown, is just irretrievable. On DVD, there's only the first season—the rest of it is not available to buy. It's just weird to me that a character that was so iconic to women during a number of years would have just disappeared.

**Who do you think is the closest character we have to *Murphy Brown* today?**

Well, you know, I don't think people have to be *Murphy Brown* anymore today. Because that path has been trod. Trodden. Who do you think? **Maybe Viola Davis on *How to Get Away With Murder*.**

Oh, you mean as a TV character? I don't really watch network TV.

**What do you watch?**

Well, I watch what the rest of us watch. *House of Cards*, *Downton Abbey*, *Homeland*, *Foyle's War*, all the BBC mysteries.

**I can't finish this interview without asking about your dog's costume parties.**

When I started dressing my dog up, dog costumes did not exist. So I used Chloe's ballet tutus. But since then, dog costumes are a billion-dollar industry! There are whole catalogs devoted to dog costumes! By the end of 10 years of dog parties, dogs were coming in striped prison uniforms, duck suits... People went to great lengths. Yes, our dog costume parties were legendary. ■

### Character Study

After her most famous role, *Murphy Brown*, came to an end, playing the shrew—or, as she says, "the imperious shrike"—became Bergen's niche



**MURPHY BROWN** (1988–98)

"Well, Murphy. Murphy was just the most fun to play. The character that I just loved. She came to [series creator] Diane English when she was driving on the freeway in her car."



**MISS CONGENIALITY** (2000)

"I was old for movies...when I was offered the role as a conniving beauty-pageant director in *Miss Congeniality* with Sandra Bullock."



**SWEET HOME ALABAMA** (2002)

"I played an elitist New York City mayor dead set on breaking up the marriage of her promising son."



**SEX AND THE CITY** (2002–08)

"My character, Enid, might have been queen of the magazine world, but she was also a desperate single woman."



**BOSTON LEGAL** (2005–08)

"[My character] Shirley did not suffer fools, she was highly intelligent, tops in her field, had a caustic wit, and was a workaholic."

BERGEN: JOHN HUBA; WITH DAUGHTER: COURTESY OF CANDICE BERGEN

MURPHY BROWN: TONY ESPARAZA/CBS; MISS CONGENIALITY: RON BATZDORFF; SWEET HOME ALABAMA: PETER IOVINO; SEX AND THE CITY: THE MOVIE; CRAIG BLANKENHORN; BOSTON LEGAL: CRAIG S. JODIN/ABC