

Julie Andrews: What I Know Now

The beloved actress-singer riffs on humor, whistling and new beginnings

Always be prepared

Discipline, for me, is very important. In other words, if I've done my home-work, if I know what I'm doing, then I can launch rather than just flail around. I was trained that way all my life by Madame Lilian Stiles-Allen. From when I was age 9 until the day she died in 1982, she was my singing teacher and taught me good diction, placement, everything. A wonderful lady and a huge mentor. How lucky can a girl get?

A spoonful of sugar

Well, God help me if I wasn't nice. My mum used to say, "Don't you dare pull rank. There's always someone who can do the same thing you do and much better than you." And I was young and knew I had a lot to learn.

Regrets, she's had a few

Everybody thinks I come from Windsor Castle or something. But I was so busy working as a kid. The only thing I had time for was to read on trains and planes. When I didn't go to college because I was working, I said to my mum, "Are you sure I'm not going to miss college?" She said, "Oh, you'll have a much better education from life." But I always wished I'd had a real education.

How Mary Poppins' creator viewed Andrews as the nanny

I don't know what P.L. Travers thought. She said to me, "You're very pretty, and you've got the nose for it." I'm sure she laughed all the way to the bank. She was very tough and canny.

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- Julie Andrews

Having a voice ...

I would have been quite a sad lady if I hadn't had the voice to hold on to. The singing was the most important thing of all, and I don't mean to be Pollyanna about how incredibly lost I'd have been without that.

... And losing her voice, in 1997

When I woke up from an operation to remove a cyst on my vocal cord, my singing voice was gone. I went into a depression. It felt like I'd lost my identity. But by good fortune, that's when my daughter Emma and I had been asked to write books for kids. So along came a brand-new career in my mid-60s. Boy, was that a lovely surprise. But do I miss singing? Yes, I really do.

Laughing together

I can't imagine a good marriage without a good sense of humor. We laughed a lot. Blake [Edwards, the late director, to whom she was married for 41 years] said to me, "The minute I saw you laughing at the outtakes I showed you, I thought, *That's the girl for me.*"

Whistle a happy tune

I'd love to be able to paint. I'd love to be a good cook, but I'm rotten. I don't have the patience for it. But I have to say, I'm a very good whistler. A lot of singers are. —*As told to Margy Rochlin*

Julie Andrews, 84, is an actress and the author of Home Work: A Memoir of My Hollywood Years.