

Celebrities share show-business careers

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

JIMMY AND Brigitte Launce may be a glamorous couple, but these local celebrities have worked hard to build their success and a happy marriage.

The West Bloomfield residents have been married for 14 years and have pursued separate and overlapping careers since they first met. As a matter of fact, they met on the job — at an auto show in New York where he was talking about cars of tomorrow while she, in a silky, silver pants outfit with matching boots, demonstrated features of a futuristic prototype.

"After 14 years we still like to do good things together," she said last week, in an interview at their multi-level subdivision home that overlooks a small stream.

He commented, "We really are good friends, in addition to everything else."

HIS A RADIO star, heard weekdays on "The Jimmy Launce Show" and on a Sunday morning entertainment-personality interview show, both on WJR. She's a fashion model and fashion-show producer.

Sometimes the two of them get together for speaking engagements, where she may give the women fashion and beauty tips and he may be the after-dinner feature with a humorous talk.

Jimmy Launce at 48 is curly-haired and boyish, with a friendly grin and easy-going manner. Brigitte Launce, who says she doesn't mind admitting she's 39, is a German-born blonde with pretty, fine-boned features and a warm, gracious personality. In turn, the Launces do early-morning aerobic exercises together at Vic Tanny's Executive Club, at her insistence on maintaining good health and nutrition.

As they talked about their busy lives, both pitched in to serve the af-

TWOgether

ternoon coffee and dessert that is a German custom.

A FEW YEARS ago, Launce began a dinner-theater operation, Jimmy Launce Productions, which puts on shows at Somerset Dinner Theatre in Troy's Somerset Mall. The production company recently opened its second dinner theater at the old dv's club at the Hyatt-Regency in Dearborn.

About once a year, he appears in one of the company's dinner theater productions. Currently, he's rehearsing for the role of the dangerous, older playwright in "Deathtrap," which will open Jan. 14 at the Hyatt.

His wife, who doesn't mind stepping before the cameras to do commercials, doesn't consider herself a stage performer. But she has become increasingly involved behind-the-scenes with the dinner-theater company.

"I have a business degree, from Germany, and I never used it," she said. She's happy to be handling the business end of the operation and producing shows in which he stars. Otherwise, he handles the producer's reins.

"It's something different, and it's good for me here, too," she said, pointing to the top of her head.

"I GOT FORCED into doing the bookwork," she said, recalling her introduction to the dinner-theater's finances. "To be honest, I really liked it."

He declared, "She knows what I want to do. I know what she wants to do. We don't even have to verbalize it."

For the dinner theater, he writes the press releases and the biographies for the programs. She designs the

newspaper ads and did the program front for the Hyatt.

Her only regret is that, having grown up in Europe, "I'm not perfect in English." "But I spell better," she said, comparing her skills to her husband's.

"I'm a lousy speller," he admitted. Aside from the dinner-theater, they both work as performers booked through their separate agents at Gail & Rice. Motion picture work, narrations and commercials, as well as speaking engagements, fill their schedules.

SHE ALSO books herself for fashion shows. Having worked for 19 years in metropolitan Detroit, she has done all the big shows for area stores. She still models for Janet Varner of Rochester and Chuck's of Birmingham. "They're very loyal," she said.

She's gotten into producing fashion shows and has done several for Dittich Furs where she previously modeled. "I never want to be told you're not on top anymore" is how she described her willingness to switch from modeling to producing, as she grows older.

Launce has done acting as long as he has been in broadcasting — for 28 years, he said. He started as an entertainer at age 8, playing accordion on stage with other youngsters.

As a teen-ager, the performer worked on the air for five local radio stations in Fort Wayne, Ind., where he was raised. "I didn't earn a dime," he said of his volunteer efforts.

After working at two Michigan radio stations, in Sturgis and Battle Creek, for a total of four years, he came to WJR as staff announcer in 1958.



JOHN STAND/staff photographer

Radio star Jimmy Launce and his wife, fashion model Brigitte Launce, both consider themselves performers. The West Bloomfield couple also works together on Jimmy Launce Produc-

tions' two dinner theaters, where he is sometimes on stage while she works behind the scenes.

AS A POPULAR radio personality, he considers that work as his livelihood and the dinner theater as his fun job. "Whenever I feel any fits of depression, the best thing for me is to take on a show. It shakes you out of your lethargy," he said.

selves, now that the children are all away from home.

This year she decorated a Christmas tree for herself instead of the family. The big tree in the living room glitters with gold-colored and glass ornaments.


She's a gourmet cook, too. He's handy around the house, having constructed and paneled the lower-level recreation area. He also built himself

a heated work shed for tools and projects.

Of their congenial marriage, she explained, "People say it looks like a pretty picture and ask us how we do it. We have to work at it."

"I cater to Jim quite a bit and he knows it. I never felt I had to worry about emancipation. I always have been emancipated. He gets breakfast in bed every morning. If company comes, he helps serve."

The Launces have raised his three children from a previous marriage and have their big house to them-



WOMC
FM 104

presents

This is Christmas

Listen on
December 17th, Noon to 12 A.M.
And again on
December 25th, Noon to 12 A.M.

Brought to you in part by:

- Betty's Grocery Store
- Birmingham/Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce
- Bricker Tunis Furs
- Buddy's Pizza

- Greensleeves Collectibles
- La-Z-Boy Showcase Shoppes
- Martin Schaefer Greenhouses
- Morley Candy Makers
- Ram's Horn Restaurants
- Town and Country Interiors

WOMC
FM 104
METROMEDIA STEREO