

MOLLY SHANNON

A FUN MOM

For years Molly Shannon, 48, made us roll with laughter with an array of wacky characters on *Saturday Night Live* and in multiple movie and TV appearances. In real life, her road has been sometimes tragic. When she was just four, she was in a car accident that killed her mother, younger sister, and cousin.

She always knew she wanted to have a family of her own one day, but the right man always seemed to allude her. That was until she met married artist Fritz Chesnut on May 29, 2004. Now she tells *Toy Box* that being the mother to daughter Stella, 5, and son Nolan, 3, is the real fulfillment of her greatest dreams.

BY LISA ARCELLA

Toy Box: You have made so many people laugh; do you think someone can learn to be funny?

Molly Shannon: I do. I have kids now and I try to encourage it in them. I will say 'that's so silly!' I see, being a mother now, that you can bring that out in your kids and teach it. I think you can naturally have it, but if you also point out what's funny and get them thinking about it I think you can develop it.

TB: So, is motherhood everything you dreamed it would be?

MS: I love it. It has been the greatest thing for me. I just feel so fulfilled. I always knew I wanted to be a mom but I thought: 'Oh God, I hope it works out' and 'Oh, I hope I meet the guy.' I didn't take that for granted because I always struggled in relationships and came in on the latter end of it all, so I feel really lucky. I feel like I just got going in the nick of time. Doing *Saturday Night Live* before motherhood, I got to have so much career fulfillment that I was ready for this, too. Now I stay in all the time. I would much rather stay with them and read stories at night. I think it makes show business seem more secondary. It's because you have bigger things on your mind. It's not that I still don't love my job, but I don't feel like it's the be all and end all for me.

TB: You lost your own mom when you were just four, was the thought of becoming a mom a little bit frightening too?

MS: No, I didn't feel scared. I was more excited and curious about it. I always wanted to be a mother. After my mother died, I always wanted

to play the mother and be the mother in any game. I wanted to have lots of kids and be a good mother, so it was a theme for me. I guess because of the loss. Motherhood is very rewarding for me because I only had my mom for such a short time and now I get to be a mom and give that very good feeling back.

TB: Do your kids understand that you are famous?

MS: No, they don't. I showed my daughter the trailer for "*Year of the Dog*" and she wanted to know what I was doing and I said I was pretending. I asked her, 'Do you know what mommy does for a job?' And she said I make phone calls, which was cute.

TB: How would you feel about them going into show business?

MS: It would be fine if it was something they really wanted to do. I would never have them do anything professional until they were over 18. I don't think that's good. But if they wanted to be in little plays I'd be for it and I would understand it if they wanted to do it as an adult. I love it.

TB: How did you meet your husband?

MS: We got fixed up on a blind date. I was getting fixed up with someone else and at that dinner a friend of his was there; told him about me, and he asked if he could get fixed up with me, too. So it was that kind of thing.

TB: You are doing some charity work with *Operation Smile*. Why did you choose that charity?

MS: Operation smile is this great organization that gives surgery to little kids with cleft palates and cleft lips and it changes their lives. It's very minor surgery often and it can put their faces back to normal and it was started by a plastic surgeon and his wife who is a social worker. It tugged at my heartstrings. When I was growing up one of my friends whose father was a plastic surgeon would do a similar thing in foreign countries and people would walk for miles to get these little surgeries and he would photograph them when they had their bandages taken off and looking at themselves in the mirror and it was so touching. It was so beautiful to see the 'before' and 'after' pictures. And *Cetaphil* approached me because they are partnering with Operation Smile and for every person that signs up for the healthy skin care club, they donate a dollar to operation smile - up to \$25,000. It was very appealing that they would donate money to that charity. It can completely change someone's self-esteem.

TB: Have you always been a confident person?

MS: I think it comes from self-love and feeling good about yourself and having a loving and supportive family. Feeling supported in your home first before you go out in the world, I had that foundation. I think you have to have that to audition and be rejected and you need a lot of confidence and energy to fuel yourself forward because it can hurt your feelings and sometimes you do take things personally.

TB: What's your most prized possession?

MS: I guess it would be pictures and letters. Mostly pictures of my family.



TB: What's the best thing you learned recently?

MS: I think having kids you just get so busy and you can't get as much done, and I think I have learned to see what's in front of me and not stress myself out too much and if I can only get a few things done... so what... you have to let things be more unraveled... I used to be like 'the house has to be clean, and I have to do this and that...' but you have to just let things go... and not be as controlling about stuff maybe... just relax and enjoy life because it passes by so quickly. ■