

and baby makes six!

Laura Leighton—remember Sydney from *Melrose Place*?—has a new TV gig, another baby on the way, and a hubby in the biz (Doug Savant of *Desperate Housewives*). And she's loving every crazy second of it—just don't ask her to help with math homework.

by Jennifer Graham Kizer



“Nothing compares to being a mom.”

A funny thing happened to me several years back: Strangers started giving me weird looks in public. At first, I didn't understand why, but then I realized: *Aha*, they recognize me from *Melrose Place*! And I knew they must be remembering crazy things they'd seen me do—like brawling in a pool while wearing a wedding dress. Or scheming to steal my sister's husband. Or trying to poison her. Of course, it was actually my kooky character, Sydney, who did all these things (and much worse). But you can't blame people for making the association.

After I left the show, I got engaged to Doug Savant, who played Matt—*Melrose's* gay character. Fans *really* did a double take when we were out together. In fact, one time Doug was in the hospital for ankle surgery, and I stayed in the room with him. The next morning, a nurse walked in and stopped dead in her tracks. Later, she explained why: Her first thought was that I was there to hurt him! Truth is, Sydney probably *would* have unplugged some vital machine.

Doug and I got to know each other as friends first, so our relationship had time to develop gradually. Our first date was during a blackout; we ate dinner by candlelight. Even before

we started dating, I was drawn to his sense of humor and compassion. But I also admired what a great dad he was to Arianna and Maddy—his two daughters from a previous marriage. I was 29 when we got married, in May of 1998; it was an extremely special day because I was also joining together with Arianna and Maddy—they were about 4 and 3 years old at the time, and I'd fallen in love with them, too.

● Instant family

Going from single girl to married mom of two sounds challenging, but it was actually the easiest transition in the world. That's because Doug and I are both kid people. We knew we wanted a large family, and two years after we got married, we had our son, Jack. We're now expecting our fourth: I'm in my third trimester [as REDBOOK went to press]—pregnant with a baby girl.

Arianna and Maddy are 13 and 11 now, and Jack is 5. I love that our kids' ages are widely spaced, so we get to stay in kid mode. Last night we realized that when our oldest starts college, our youngest will be entering grammar school. It's wild! ▶

MY LIFE AS A WIFE

After I had Jack, I devoted a couple of years to just my family. I know I'm very lucky—a lot of women can't forgo work to be a full-time mom. But I couldn't imagine not doing it. The feelings I have for my children are indescribable; there's nothing else like it. I've loved being around for them—whether it's to talk about their day at school or help with homework. (Granted, if it's math, they usually have to give me a second to refresh. And the word problems are getting harder every year, so pretty soon they'll be on their own!) I think it makes a big difference in kids' lives when they know they can count on you.

We're one of those families that really try to have dinner together every night. Plus we all go to everyone's sports games—and there are *a lot* of those. Right now, Arianna's in softball, Maddy's in soccer, and Jack is in T-ball. Doug coaches their teams whenever he can. Doug has such a passion for sports—he's one of those dads who calls out words of encouragement to his kids from the sidelines. You know that loud guy at your child's sporting events? That's Doug. He gets *so* into it.

Doug and I want our kids to have a lot of fun, but we don't believe in giving them everything they want. We're actually fairly strict. Arianna was the last kid in her class to get a cell phone. She had to wait until she was 13—an interminably long time, in her view. And we don't allow swearing in our house. In fact, there are lots of words not permit-

“I loved Doug's sense of humor and what a great dad he was.”



ted in the Savant household. As Jack has grudgingly pointed out, the word “stupid” pops up in his Disney movies, yet he's still not allowed to say it. That's another part I've loved about being home with my kids—the opportunity to reinforce that kind of message.

But last year, when Jack was old enough to go to school, I found myself really itching to work again. As luck (and a good audition) would have it, I got a great part in a new

series called *Skin*. I was so excited about being back on TV! Then it didn't work out; the show got canceled. And frankly, I was devastated. I thought, But I'm ready! So why isn't the world ready?

Fortunately, this year turned out to be a lucky one for our family, career-wise. First of all, Doug got a role on *Desperate Housewives* as Tom Scavo, the husband of Felicity Huffman's character, Lynette. (She's a character I really relate to!) Landing the role was a great triumph for Doug. And, of course, there's been another bonus: His job has reconnected us with Marcia Cross, our old *Melrose* castmate.

Meanwhile, I was cast in a show called *Eyes*—a fun and glitzy private-eye drama. I got a terrific part: Leslie Town, a buttoned-up lawyer and foil for Tim Daly, who plays the smart-alecky top sleuth. It was a fantastic opportunity. And then, just when my dream of being back on TV was coming true...I got pregnant.

The show's producers were fine with it, thankfully. Since it didn't make sense for my character to conceive, they didn't write it into the show. But hiding my belly isn't hard to do. It's just a matter of good wardrobe choices and sneaky camera tricks.

● New role, new rewards

I knew combining new motherhood with a career would require some juggling. But I didn't want to put my career

on hold this time. So I'll take off eight weeks after the baby is born. And then we'll hire a babysitter to help out so I can go back to the set. I don't know how I'm going to feel about the separation, or how I'll deal with keeping lots of balls in the air. But I'm looking forward to being *both* a new mom and an actress. (And who knows—maybe Doug and I will still occasionally find time to sneak out together for our favorite date night: a nice adult dinner and a movie.)

Sure, some days are crazy, but it helps that pregnancy doesn't feel like such a precarious condition the second time around. I'm more confident and relaxed. I don't fret over every little health and nutrition decision. I let myself drink a little coffee each day; I don't exercise if I don't feel like it; and if I have the urge for ice cream, then ice cream it is.

Most of all, I'm just not as impressed with myself! I don't count the weeks obsessively—I'm not even sure exactly what week I'm in right now. And we haven't even fixed up the nursery yet. Basically, I just want the pregnancy to be over with so the real fun can begin.

Doug and I are still considering names for our new daughter. Jack, of course, has his own opinion. He's already renamed *himself*—he's instructed his teachers to call him Dash, after the character in *The Incredibles*. For his baby sister, he floated the name Tarzan. I told him I'd take it under advisement. I would never tell him it's a stupid suggestion—we don't allow that word in our house. □