

Episode 27: Hail to the First Lady of Star Trek

Majel Barrett quote: My first involvement, well, had to be, of course, with Gene and through Gene. He wrote the part of Number One first, and then he said, "There, are you happy?" He wrote the description of Number One and then he wrote the character. So, the part was always mine right from the beginning.

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as our crew of four-women *Star Trek* fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with us, sadly, Andi is sick, but we have Grace.

Grace: Hey, everybody.

Jarrah: And we have Sue.

Sue: Hi.

Jarrah: Just before we start, I want to remind you about our Women at Warp Patreon. You can Support us at patreon.com/womenatwarp. And it just helps us basically spread the word about the podcast. We've so far printed some business cards. We've upgraded some equipment and also get out to conventions so that we can do convention reporting and talk to other folks about our podcast and the issues we talk about there. And one of the things that we're working towards is getting us all to Star Trek Las Vegas in August for the 50th. And it's going to be super, super exciting. So, thanks to everyone who's supported us so far. If you'd like to support us on Patreon again, it's P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/womenatwarp.

So today, we have a really fun, interesting topic, I think, which was suggested by one of our patrons, Nick. So, thanks Nick. We are going to talk about the first lady of *Star Trek*, Majel Barrett-Roddenberry. Majel was the only performer to have a role on all the *Star Trek* series. Her first role was Number One, the female first officer in *The Original Series* pilot, *The Cage*. She was also obviously Gene Roddenberry's wife. She significantly influenced the direction of *Trek* from on screen and behind the scenes for more than four decades. So, look forward to talking a bit about her.

We're going to try to focus a little bit more on her bio and a little less on going super deep into all the roles she played, because we could spend an entire episode, certainly on Lwaxana, but we will touch on all of them and hopefully have a good discussion. So, I think, and I'm probably this might even be the same for you two, I don't know, but I first became aware of who she was through *TNG*, through her role as Lwaxana Troi.

Grace: Yep, same here. Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: I actually think I became more aware of her through voicing the computer, because just so many episodes where a special guest, Majel Barrett, and I'm like "Who is that? Why does she keep showing up?" And then I looked into her, it was like, "Oh."

Jarrah: Yes, so important. The computer voice thing is huge.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, Majel Leigh Hudec was born on February 23, 1932, in Cleveland. She had originally intended to become a legal clerk but changed her mind and moved to New York to try acting. And she acted in several stage plays before moving to California in the 1950s.

She earned small parts during the late 1950s and 1960s in movies and TV series like *Leave it to Beaver* and *Bonanza*. And there is a really awesome YouTube clip of her and James Doohan on *Bonanza* that I recommend checking out.

In 1962, she met Lucille Ball at an acting class. So, first *Star Trek* connection there. And she was signed to a contract with Desilu Studios, which of course eventually produced *Star Trek*.

And then, she met Gene Roddenberry in 1964 during a guest role for a Marine Corp drama called *The Lieutenant*, which also featured Gary Lockwood and some other folks. I think Nichelle Nichols was on it as well. So, they didn't marry until 1969, after *Star Trek* was cancelled and he divorced his first wife. When I started looking into *Star Trek* in more depth a few years ago, that was the more surprising thing for me because I had no idea that it was like a scandalous sort of relationship.

Grace: Yeah. That just makes it more interesting.

Sue: Yeah. No, I agree, because nobody ever-- at least when not specifically discussing it, nobody ever really talks about it.

Grace: It's amazing how it's still kind of considered scandalous to that degree.

Sue: Right?

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. Because apparently, they became lovers in 1964. And at that point, he was with his first wife. But he apparently felt, according to *These Are the Voyages*, that his wife didn't really understand his passion for writing. And Majel was someone who firmly, for the rest of his life, stood behind his passion and his vision and even carried it on after his death.

So, *The Cage* was obviously the first pilot of *The Original Series*. And in this, she played a character named Number One, described in the show bible as a mysterious female, slim and dark, expressionless, cool, one of those women who will always look the same between years 20 and...And to be more specific, actress Majel Barrett, Roddenberry's lover," is what Marc Cushman adds. And, well, let's maybe talk about the episode and how we feel about Number One before we get into the whole behind the scenes stuff.

Sue: I love Number One.

Grace: I love that we get a lady whose kind of doing the Spock role early on, just being the super, "Really, really?" person. She is wearing the pants, and she is firing the laser.

Sue: And it's kind of implied that she might not be human, but she's definitely not from earth. Because Pike is like, "Well, maybe that's how it is on your planet."

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: She's the proto-Spock. I love it.

Sue: She really is.

Jarrah: In this episode at the end, we learn that she's sort of harboring feelings secretly for the captain, but she won't let it compromise her duty. But I think it would have been interesting to see where it went. And there were a lot of people pushing for a Number One character to be introduced in the JJ-verse.

Grace: Yeah, that would have been cool.

Jarrah: Yeah, well, I mean, there weren't a lot of great, awesome women in charge, so probably could have used another woman in any kind of role, but for more on that, listen to our JJ-verse episode. So, before we got into researching this, do you remember what the first thing you heard about what ended up happening and why we didn't get Number One in the series?

Grace: Well, the general apocrypha of it is that they were told he could keep the girl or he could keep the alien. So, he kept the alien and married the girl. At least that's generally the story that people like to tell, but there are also sources that say that the producers just didn't like her acting very much. So, the character was written out and Spock was given her role essentially.

Sue: I think the first time that I heard any real details about it might have actually been from Shatner's book, *Star Trek Memories*, which I read, I think in high school, probably soon after it came out. And he actually references focus groups noting that women viewers felt that she was pushy and annoying and thought that Number One shouldn't be trying so hard to fit in with the men. So, I think my impression for as long as I was aware of what happened here was that she didn't test well.

Jarrah: Yeah, I remember reading that in his book as well, actually. But it's interesting because that-- I haven't seen that really referenced a lot of other places. I definitely had heard the "Kept the Vulcan and married the woman" quote. There's an amazing YouTube video that was a little special that Majel did for Entertainment Tonight around the time of, I think, it was like mid-- Around the 30th anniversary, and she talks about how women in the series had advanced. And she repeats that about-- Basically that NBC was upset that Number One was a strong woman character and they couldn't stomach having a woman in command. They also weren't really sure about the Spock character. And so, Gene had to choose. So, that's definitely what they were going out saying, it's not really what most of the other people around at the time say.

Herb Solow said he remembered them saying looks, and then Stanley saying, "Christ, Herb, this is madness. She's his girlfriend. I remember her hanging around Gene's office at MGM when he was doing *The Lieutenant* for us." So, Herb Solow believed the NBC execs resented being put in an awkward position. So basically, NBC, they felt that Roddenberry was kind of pushing the envelope and trying to do things behind their backs or over their heads or without being totally upfront with them.

Grace: Won't be the last time he does that either.

Jarrah: No, certainly. And so, in *These Are the Voyages*, they talk about how casting her in this key role was strike four in their tally of things he had done to kind of piss them off going back to *The Lieutenant*. There's a quote from Herb Solow saying, "Roddenberry had conveniently forgotten that NBC execs, for both financial and moral reasons, had always favored a strong woman as series star. They just didn't want Majel. They resented having her forced upon them." So, I think that it's important to look at that a tiny bit because I think—certainly, the view that they were--

So, Gene and Majel were basically going around saying that like the network was sexist, and that's why they couldn't cast her. And certainly, there's evidence that the network in other episodes demanded some things that were debatably sexist or alternately kind of prudish in a way that ended up being sexist, like in *Wolf in the Fold*.

Grace: Not the first time we'd see that either.

Jarrah: I mean, *These Are the Voyages* is really interesting for all of these kinds of contradictions in ways in which so many different people were responsible for things that were both really progressive at times, and then really unfortunately, not progressive at times. But this idea that they resented her because she was Roddenberry's mistress is also kind of unfortunate. It showed that she really wasn't seen to have an identity of her own. And her acting ability therefore was never really even the main focus.

Sue: Right. The testing, the only place I've ever seen it referenced is by Shatner or somebody referencing Shatner.

Jarrah: But when she was interviewed in 1993. Majel Barrett said that, "Gene never got around to fleshing Number One out. So, I made up her backstory. I saw her as a genetically bred human from another planet, a place never disclosed. Although she was cloned, I decided that she had grown up in a normal human family kind of atmosphere. She was totally by the book, never smiled, and had most of Mr. Spock's characteristics." So, I think that comes through in what we were talking about before. Mr. Spock in *The Cage* is like smiling and laughing, and Number One is none of that and then the Spock that we got later was kind of a combination of the two.

Grace: [chanting] Proto-Spock. Proto-Spock.

Jarrah: All right, so moving on. The next time we saw her was as Nurse Chapel, which we've talked a little bit about previously on the podcast.

Grace: Oh, she's come up once or twice.

[laughter]

Sue: She's almost the opposite of Number One-

Grace: Yeah, definitely.

Sue: -in a lot of ways.

Grace: And from the sound of it, Majell Barrett seemed to think so, anyway.

Jarrah: Originally, the character was called Nurse Christine Ducheaux. And in *These Are the Voyages*, says that Majel Barrett had been eyeing this role for some time. And she said, "I can do this. I know I can do this. So, I went home and immediately bleached my hair. Next morning, I came into Gene's outer office and waited for him. When he got in, he walked by me, sort of half-smiled and grunted a hello. But when he took a second look at me, he said, 'Majel, is that you?' I said, 'Look, Gene, if I can fool you, I can surely fool NBC.' He said, 'Yeah, you're right.' Roddenberry saw the character of the ship's nurse as being so selfless, kind and virtuous that she was quite nearly saintly. And he opted for a name change to Christine Chapel, a name-play on the Sistine Chapel."

Grace: I never got that. Oh, now I feel like a dork for only just realizing that.

Sue: Why would you bleach your hair and not just buy a wig?

Jarrah: Well, I feel like they used wigs in some of the episodes. Like, it doesn't look like it's possibly all her hair, but maybe it is.

Grace: Also, wasn't there a big complaint about limiting the amount of usage of women in the show because it would take up so much of the makeup people's time to do their hair and wigs and stuff?

Sue: Oh, no.

Jarrah: Oh, I didn't know about that.

Grace: So, she probably knew about that, I would think. And also, it's level of commitment, I guess.

Jarrah: We've talked in previous episodes about how she didn't really like the character, but I don't know, what were your thoughts when you originally saw her? Like, her first episode is *What Are Little Girls Made Of?*, which is the one with the androids and her ex-fiancé.

Grace: I actually really like *What Are Little Girls Made Of?* because just off the bat we get this idea of, yeah, this is a girl who went into space to look for the guy she was in love with and things just kind of went pear shaped there, and you kind of are left with that idea of her for the rest of the time you see her on the show, which is funny because she doesn't end up being quite as straightforward, as risk taking as you would like to expect from an initial introduction like that. But the idea that's kind of what got her into this does resonate and make her at least an interesting dimension to her. And also, it's just a really fun, campy episode.

Jarrah: It also involves Kirk and the giant penis rock.

Grace: Like I said, fun and campy.

Jarrah: This is actually one of Chapel's stronger episodes, even though the whole premise of her character is basically that she was a doctor but then decided to go become a nurse so that she could go into space and track down her ex-fiancé, and then she spends most of the rest of the time pining after Spock. So, I wouldn't necessarily call her a feminist character, but I think in this episode it's supposed to be portraying her in a positive light as she's this capable nurse who is devoted to her job and when it comes down to it, she isn't going to compromise her principles or her loyalty to Captain Kirk for this man that she used to love.

Grace: Just realized I've often heard-- well, a few times heard the original *Star Trek* referred to as kind of an early workplace drama, but in the future in space. And I just realized if *Star Trek* is *The Office*, that makes Nurse Chapel, the Mindy Kaling who just kind of hangs around to obsess creepily over the guy.

Sue: Oh, awesome.

Jarrah: Oh man. Yes.

Sue: But I have appreciated that at least in the movies she's referenced as Dr. Chapel. So, we at least here-- even if we don't really get a whole lot more, we at least learn that she went back and like finished her training as a doctor and is now Dr. Chapel.

Jarrah: Yeah, and in *Star Trek IV*, I think she's referenced as Commander Chapel. But it is cool that they paid some respect to those characters.

Grace: Commander Sistine Chapel.

Jarrah: Bob Justman, who is the producer and assistant director of *The Original Series* in *Inside Star Trek: The Real Story*, him and Herb Solow wrote this book together and it's another really interesting reference book. It kind of-- I remember the first time I read it, I was like, "Wow. *Star Trek* behind the scenes was like *Mad Men*."

Grace: Pretty much. Yeah.

Jarrah: All these discussions sort of like sex-related pranks that people played on each other, putting sex dolls in the shower and like Nichelle Nichols popping out from under Gene Roddenberry's desk wearing only a sweater and a smile.

Grace: Oh, my God.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's really-- like, it's fascinating. At times, a little disturbing, but I think it's really necessary to read and realize that all this stuff was really-- The dynamics were complicated. So, Bob Justman says that he really didn't like Majel at the time. And I think he blamed her for some of the problems that Roddenberry had with the network. But he said later he realized it wasn't her he disliked, it was the role.

"Nurse Chapel was a wimpy, badly written and ill-conceived character. In *The Naked Time*, all she did was stand around and pine for Mr. Spock, much the same as Yeoman Rand did for Captain Kirk. And in *Little Girls*, Nurse Chapel pined for her fiancé, mad scientist, Dr. Korby. And later he says that when he saw *Haven*," the *TNG* episode where she played Lwaxana Troi, said "It was a bold and lusty, irreverent and energetic female alien and she played the part to the hilt. This new character became popular with viewers and with me too. I took pains to tell her of my changed opinion."

So, we have anything else to say on Nurse Chapel?

Grace: That girl could rock the helmet hair.

Jarrah: There's also the episode, *For the World Is Hollow and I Have Touched the Sky* where she's really firm about how-- She has a quote, I think and it's like, "I'm a nurse first and a Starfleet officer second. My first duty is to medicine." So, she has some nice moments. And there's the episode where she teaches Uhura to read, which is a little bit of a-

Grace: That's messed up.

Jarrah: Messed up thing but it's cool that they showed that they had a friendship and it would have been neat to see that explored in a less bizarre situation.

Sue: Isn't she also teaching her to read Swahili?

Jarrah: I don't remember.

Grace: Swahili is definitely part of that scene. And it's like, "Okay."

Jarrah: Yeah, well, Uhura is supposed to speak it, but apparently not Klingon.

[laughter]

All right, well, one of the things I really appreciate is there's so much amazing fan art of Chapel. And I think even though her character, there were a lot of missed opportunities and she did often come across as a really, I guess, maybe not an independent, self-actualized, fully rounded character, it's cool to see how fans have recognized her strong values as like a

loyal nurse and officer and someone who is really caring and empathetic and sensitive about the people around her. So, I think that's cool.

All right, but regardless of your feelings on Chapel, the computer voice is the most fun thing ever. Luckily, we have Sue here as our resident computer voice.

Sue: Accurate.

Grace: Oh, Lord. Sorry.

[laughter]

Sue: I'm nowhere near up to Majel Barrett caliber.

Grace: Well, who can be really?

Jarrah: Oh, so she ended up doing the computer voice through *TOS*, except for midway through season three for the episode, *Wink of an Eye*. The new producer, Fred Freiberger, replaced her with an uncredited actress, feeling that it was problematic for her to be both the computer voice and Nurse Chapel.

Grace: Because, as you can see, so many people noticed and were weirded out by it.

Sue: Right. And it definitely wasn't a problem a few years later when she was half of the female characters on the animated series.

Jarrah: Yes. And then, he just--

Sue: Oh, we'll get there.

Jarrah: If you're paying attention, you really can notice it feels like the actress who replaced her was just, I don't know, kind of lacking that feeling that it's automated. I was reading through forums about her voice work and people were saying that they thought it was like a computerized voice. They thought that they actually made a computer, like it was like Siri. They didn't know that it was a woman pretending to be a computer.

Grace: Precious 1960s viewers.

Jarrah: But I think it actually is cool also that it's a woman-

Grace: Yeah, definitely.

Jarrah: -because oftentimes in our culture, we associate femininity with emotion and irrationality and masculinity is associated with logic and science. And so, for a woman to be a computer, it kind of turns that a bit on its head and it gets to a bit of what we saw with the logical Number One that got missed out.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Her last stint as the computer voice was for *Star Trek* 2009, and a few weeks, I think after recording that, she passed away. But I actually didn't realize that it went that late, so that's really cool. And she did the *Star Trek Online* and videogames and CD-ROMs and all that kind of stuff.

Sue: One thing I love, I was unable to find an actual source for this, but I'm still going to throw it out there anyway. Apparently, her voice as a computer voice has become so iconic that when Google started developing what is now known as Google Now, that personal assistant you can speak to, they had initially codenamed it Google Majel.

Jarrah: That's so cool.

Grace: Isn't that awesome?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: And, I mean, she was a computer voice in *Family Guy* for Stewie one of his spaceships,

Jarrah: His sperm ship.

Sue: Yeah. She's done computer games, and I think even a railroad.

Jarrah: Yeah. She provided the voice of automated railroad defect detectors for Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and other railroads starting in the 1980s. Her voice can apparently still be heard on Union Pacific detectors and some other small regional railroads. And this was one of the forums I was reading was people who were like "Union Pacific railroad aficionados" and they were remembering her. And then, people were being like, "Oh, my gosh, I had no idea that was her. I've totally heard her voice." So, that was super cool. I had no idea about that. Of course, she did quite a bit of voiceover and acting work outside of *Star Trek* throughout her life. But that was definitely one of the more interesting fun facts.

So around between season 2 and season 3, obviously crap was going down in *TOS* land, and there had been an issue where a lot of fans were requesting merchandise like autographed photos. And the studio, both NBC and Desilu then became Paramount, weren't really set up to deal with it. And they were kind of just like leaving it hanging. So, Gene started a company called Lincoln Enterprises to basically do *Star Trek* merchandising. And he basically handed it over to John and Bjo Trimble to run and partly they were doing this hand in hand with the campaign to save *Star Trek*. So, they ran the campaign to save *Star Trek* between seasons 1 and 2, and they succeeded, and then he had them working on this.

But there were some issues because the Trimble at least say, and so does Harlan Ellison in *These Are the Voyages* that really he set up the company for Majel. And so, Bjo is actually quite critical of Majel's attempts to run the company, saying that she wanted everything her way. She wanted to completely reorganize everything. For instance, Tribbles would have been a good idea, but she wanted to add Spock ears to them and give them long eyelashes and make them chirp. And he said, "No, they won't sell. Well, she ordered them anyway and I don't know what happened to the poor little things, but they didn't sell." And she would get things like a *Star Trek* insignia in brilliant rhinestones. And so apparently, she requested they be fired and Gene fired them, but that's what they say in this story, and it sounds like there was some friction going on.

Also, she apparently invented Furbys decades before their time. But Roddenberry characterizes it obviously very differently that when he was asked about this, he said that she was doing stuff ahead of her time. She was coming up with ideas that were ahead of their time and just people didn't appreciate it.

Grace: So again, we've got a lot of take every opinion with a grain of salt going on.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. So, yeah, Bjo Trimble and John Trimble, they basically, because of this friction, they quit the campaign to save *Star Trek*. So, there was like a muted attempt to save *Star Trek* after the third season cancellation, but they couldn't even bring themselves to do it because they were so kind of disillusioned with Gene and how they felt kind of used by him, so that's unfortunate. They were all kind of tied up in this, but I guess again, stuff was complicated and a lot of stuff was going down at that time.

During this time, obviously, Roddenberry and Barrett's relationship continued. And there's some kind of quotes in different books from Bob Justman and Herb Solow and other people who kind of felt like it should have been more secret that Roddenberry wasn't hiding it very well, and he was inviting them over to her apartment for drinks and he was basically paying for her apartment. And Bob Justman said, "I don't want to know about it. I was afraid that someone would find out."

Roddenberry separated from his wife in August 1968, and on August 9th, Roddenberry moved out of the family house and officially separated from his wife. And he had two daughters with his wife. And in *These Are the Voyages*, it says he checked into the Century Plaza Hotel, calling wife Eileen from the lobby and telling her he wasn't coming back. Majel Barrett joined Roddenberry that night and stayed with him for the next 23 years until his passing. They were married after the cancellation of *Star Trek* in a Shinto Buddhist wedding in Japan, partly because neither of them really had a religion and they just happened to be in Japan. Their son, Eugene Roddenberry Jr., aka Rod Roddenberry, was born five years later. Have either of you seen *Trek Nation*?

Grace: No.

Sue: Yes.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's the documentary that Rod Roddenberry made about trying to come to grips with his father's legacy. And there's definitely a part in that that he talks about how he had really complicated feelings about his dad, that his dad bragged about how he was cheating on Majel within weeks of their marriage. And clearly, he liked, I don't know, I guess, salacious-- He liked women.

Sue: He liked having a reputation too-

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: -as Captain Kirk. Actually, in *Chaos on the Bridge*, where they're talking about the early seasons of *TNG* and how much stuff there was going on behind the scenes, they're talking about Gene. And when he was making *The Original Series*, he saw himself as Captain Kirk, this swashbuckling ladies' man. And when he was making *TNG*, he saw himself as Captain Picard, this older, wiser man who's imparting his wisdom to the rest of the universe.

Grace: God, imagine if he'd been involved with *Voyager*.

Sue: But you can see in those characters that are leading the ship how Gene saw himself. But *Trek Nation* is definitely worth a watch. It's definitely obviously more about Gene than it is about Majel, but it's a lot about how Rod is dealing with how he knows his dad as somebody who was not always great to him and wasn't necessarily around, and his feelings about how he treated him and his mother, and hearing from fans all the time, like how great and influential and wonderful his father was and trying to reconcile those two things. So, it's definitely an emotional watch. And something that as fans, sometimes we don't always think about the people who are behind this.

Jarrah: Absolutely. That's really interesting about him modeling the captains on himself. I mean, I guess that makes total sense, but I never actually heard that before. This is one of the issues we have with this is Majel, throughout her whole life was very, very publicly loyal to Gene. And in *Trek Nation*, Rod doesn't press her to say a lot. And I think that there was even-- One of our Facebook commenters said that in that movie, because she doesn't say a lot about the fans and she's kind of reticent to say really anything, that some people saw that as negative, that she was negative about the fans, but she never said anything publicly other than total support. So, it's hard to say how exactly she felt because no one has really tried to talk to, I don't know, maybe like girlfriends or people she might have confided in. So, as far as we know, she was just totally content supporting Gene's ideas and legacy. So, we have no way to say differently, if it was different or not.

Yeah, it's just interesting. I kind of wish we had more-- Maybe she had written a memoir or something, that would have been really cool. But we don't know if she felt really upset by this or if she was just like totally, "This is how stuff goes because I was Gene's mistress, and so I'm—"

Sue: Yeah, she obviously knew that he'd done it before.

Grace: Yeah, definitely.

Jarrah: So, we don't know.

Grace: Definitely in the way they describe for Number One, she is a woman of mystery to a certain degree.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. You know who's not mysterious? [purrs] M'Ress.

[laughter]

Grace: I don't know. I think M'Ress is pretty mysterious.

Jarrah: I just was trying to segue there. I couldn't think of a good segue. So, the animated series in which Majel voiced half the women characters, everyone who wasn't voiced by Nichelle Nichols--

Sue: Who voiced the other half.

Jarrah: I mean, of course, we've got Chapel and we got M'Ress who, I'm going to have to keep practicing that [purrs]. Does that even sound like her at all?

Sue: I don't know, but I think you should keep doing it.

[everyone purrs]

Grace: All right.

Jarrah: All right.

Grace: We're taking crazy cat women to a new level.

Jarrah: Yes. If you can do a good impression of M'Ress, you should record it and send it to us, and then we can use that as like our new-- If we accidentally swear on the episode, we can use that to bleep it out.

M'Ress is obviously my all-time favorite because, yeah, she's a cat-woman. She's a Caitian, I guess. And she is hilarious and amazing, and you can't even say more than that. She's just amazing. Isn't there the episode where they all kind of-- It's sort of like naked timey of the animated series, and she's really into someone? I can't remember.

Grace: Naked timey is a description.

Sue: I just love that she's always purring.

Jarrah: Oh, right. It's in *Mudd's Passion*, where they have the drug released. We've talked about this in the Mudd episode, and M'Ress is hitting on Sulu or something. Anyway, I have to rewatch all of these. And you should listen to Saturday Morning Trek, which is the new Trek.fm podcast about the animated series because it's also great. She also voiced the computer and several other notable characters, including Amanda Grayson in *Yesteryear*. And in our Matriarchies episode, we talked about *The Lorelei Signal* in which Majel voices the main woman praying mantis character, Theela. She also did the Queen of Hearts in *Once Upon a Planet*.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: So, as you can see, she was given a tremendous range of roles.

Jarrah: [purrs] Yes, captain.

Sue: How do you like make a purr into a yes?

Grace: It's an art. It's an art, I guess.

Jarrah: Clearly voice acting is an actual skill that I do not.

[laughter]

Oh, no. All right, and next we have Lwaxana Troi. And I love talking about Lwaxana. And as we stated in our last episode, I think we are going to do a whole episode on her at some point.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: Yes, please.

Jarrah: Rachel from Facebook wrote us a comment saying, "I love her. I think Lwaxana is fabulous. And I roll my eyes at people who accuse her of being annoying or unnecessary. She's always fun and she's got so much more depth to her. The whole point of her flamboyantness is that she's trying to hide all the pain inside her. And I think that's brilliant."

Grace: Pretty good summation.

Sue: This might be weird, right? A weird connection I'm about to draw, but I feel like other than *Golden Girls*, Lwaxana gives us one of the first "older" women on TV who is not just there to be somebody's mother. She has her own motivations, and she is interested in having relationships and not afraid to hide it. And she has a libido and she knows what she wants and goes after it.

Grace: It's true. After a certain age, we're kind of socially taught that women become irrelevant. Once they stop being sexy, they just aren't interesting as characters anymore, and

that's part of why I love Lwaxana. We get this great anti- [unintelligible 00:34:16] space character rather than someone who's just little old lady.

Jarrah: Right.

Grace: We get a loud old lady. It's great.

Sue: Not that she stopped being sexy.

Grace: Hell no.

Jarrah: No. And now, I want her to just be in the *Golden Girls*. That would be so, so great.

Sue: We need the *Star Trek* parody of *Golden Girls* with Lwaxana and maybe Admiral Nechayev [crosstalk] I need a fourth one.

Grace: Get Moogie in there.

Jarrah: Admiral Janeway. [crosstalk] I was like, "Who else would you even get?" We don't get a lot of older women. You're totally right about that, not even on *Trek*. And Majel is among a few *Trek* stars. Barbara March, who played Lursa, has also talked a lot about the ageism she experienced in Hollywood over 40 and Majel has as well. She said that, later in life she really experienced ageism trying for roles and her agents were basically like, "Just give up." And in *Starlog* in 1995, though that she's become a role model for older women, she said, "I get yelled at from across parking lot at parking lots and markets. 'You've done more for women over 40 than anything that has ever happened in the United States.'" And she says, "I wasn't aware of that, but I guess that's the way women over 40 feel. Lwaxana is a woman who's just beginning to live and goes out and proves it with wild abandon. She enjoys a no holds barred attitude, which I admire tremendously. I love her for it."

She also said in the same *Starlog* interview, "I see Lwaxana as totally off the wall with a total disregard for everything, but she does have memories. She's a whole person and things do get through to her. She's an extremely sensitive person. It's just that it takes something to get through to that sensitivity. Then, she lets loose with all of that too. She can't hold anything back, even the tragedy, the tears, the warmth." I think that is accurate.

Sue: Absolutely.

Grace: And it's pretty true to life. The most flamboyant people are usually the ones who've got the most to celebrate and the most to mourn.

Jarrah: I know there's a bit of a divide about Lwaxana and some people wish that she had just stayed like a purely comic character like she is in *Haven*, her first appearance, but--

Grace: To do that would be to waste the character entirely though, to keep the character one note would be both a disservice to the character that she had the potential to be and to the actress.

Jarrah: And I think like Bob Justman was saying, Lwaxana really showcases her acting ability more than any of her other *Trek* roles. She says that in *Ménage à Troi*, "I got to do a little more, but Lwaxana was still a very one-dimensional character. Still, it started the character branching out. I mean, I liked her as one-dimensional, but it was just off the top of my head. It wasn't until the next four episodes that the character really took root to me." And her favorite episode was *Half a Life* for *TNG*.

Grace: Which is a very a good episode.

Jarrah: Which I just watched. And all the feels.

Grace: Aw, man. Yes.

Sue: I mean, she is wonderful in that. And that is exploring some themes in *Star Trek* that we saw a little bit in *TOS*, but definitely how people treat the elderly is a little bit of a new thing for *Star Trek*. But the one that makes me think of Lwaxana and her vulnerability and her emotion is *Dark Page*.

Grace: Oh, definitely. Yeah.

Sue: And she's going through--

Grace: There are points where it's a very hard to watch episode.

Sue: Yeah. And she's going through something like in the Betazoid lifecycle, where she just is having a problem controlling the emotions and the memories that come up. And we're learning brand new things about this character and it's just heartbreaking.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolute. And it's also obviously a moment of strong female bonding with her and Troi. I kind of liked though in *Half a Life* that Troi is kind of peripheral and she comes in to support her mother. And it's really interesting because basically Lwaxana is like, "Well, this isn't your prime directive. I'm not going to stand by and let this man, who I'm in love with, but also who's a brilliant man who could save his planet from catastrophe, I'm not going to let him kill himself." And there's some amazingly touching moments between her and David Ogden Stiers.

Grace: It's a fantastic performance.

Jarrah: I think the moment where I get the tears is when basically he comes and he's like basically, "Do you believe I love you?" And she's like, "Yes, but it isn't enough, is it?" And he's like, "It's almost enough." And she hugs him and they're crying, and I'm just so moved. She comes in her usual brash, steamrolling over everything, just like throwing herself into this situation and forcing him to interact and to go outside his comfort zone. And she ends up basically realizing she has to respect his wishes and his culture, even though she really fundamentally disagrees with it. And Troi respects how she's feeling and isn't like, "You were wrong." She wasn't wrong. She was just taking a stronger stance than anyone else was.

Anyway, I really love that episode. I love *Dark Page* as well, but *Half a Life* was also really, I think, the first one where we started to see that she could play that more serious role. In *Deep Space Nine*, we got some more Lwaxana. Yay.

Grace: And we get to see her after we've gotten this level of dimensionality added to her, which is fun because then we get to revisit the character in another setting, but with all of this backstory and all of this, again, dimension that we didn't get to see her with before when we first saw her on *TNG*.

Jarrah: Yeah. In the official Star Trek Fan Club of Canada magazine in 1993, Majel said, "Lwaxana has the unlikely position of being roaming ambassador of protocol for the Federation, which is the worst possible job for her because she's a Betazoid. She reads minds. Therefore, she cannot lie. Back on Betazoid, there's no such thing as lying because everybody reads minds. There's no diplomacy in this woman whatsoever. She starts out playing shallow, but she's smart and she knows right from wrong. Gradually, she's gaining

warmth and dimension. I love the *Deep Space Nine* episode called *The Forsaken* about her affair with Odo, which ran the full gamut of emotions. You laughed and cried with both of them.”

Sue: And remember, she loves diplomacy because everyone dresses so well.

Jarrah: Oh, right, that's in *Half a Life* too. And she's also going to press the photon launchers and stuff.

Grace: Well, like you would.

Sue: Which in a few episodes earlier, because I also watched *Data's Day* today, Riker sits on and it's not a problem.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yes, I was looking at screencasts of that thing about how Riker is flirting with someone and just like sitting on the photon launchers.

Grace: We'd like to think if they've come up with a prevention for butt dialing, they have a prevention for butt launching of torpedoes.

Jarrah: Well, I'm assuming it's like today's touchscreens where if you're wearing gloves, it wouldn't work. So, if you're wearing pants, it wouldn't work. You couldn't just launch it with your butt. But even still, it'd feel like you have to do--

Grace: You know that someone has tried and you have to imagine the situations that led to the testing out of that kind of technology.

Jarrah: But I still feel like it should at minimum be like, your photon torpedo should be more locked than my iPhone. At minimum, it should require Worf's fingerprint or forehead print if Klingons don't have fingerprints.

Grace: Can you imagine him just having to rub his head on the screen though, just to turn it on?

Jarrah: Amazing. Mr. Worf.

Grace: It's Worf, madam.

Jarrah: Also, I love *Ménage à Troi*, where she makes Picard recite Shakespearean stuff to her. Maybe not Sue's favorite episode, but it's hilarious.

Sue: I love it so much.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: He's so great when he's forcefully overacting it.

Jarrah: I know.

Sue: It's so amazing.

Jarrah: But yeah, *The Forsaken* is her first appearance on *Deep Space Nine* and that's the one where she's really down. And Kira and Dax come out of the holodeck, and they've been

playing *Camelot*, and Lwaxana ends up depressing everyone. But it is a really nice episode, and I think that Odo kind of suffered from a bit of the one dimensionality that Lwaxana did until Lwaxana came in and then you get to see sort of his vulnerable side and how he's putting up this tough side because he doesn't understand how to relate to people and it's like basically a performance.

Grace: And then we get to see her kind of connect with him on that level of a lot of what people do as a performance. A lot of what I do is a performance because that's who I want to be.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's really nice. And how feels really insecure about having to go into his liquid state and so she takes off her wig and shows him like, "I'm not presenting who I actually am too. We're all putting on a performance." Yeah, it's cool.

Sue: Even without her telepathy, she can see that from miles away, that character. And if she decides she's going to break down your wall, you really don't have a choice.

Grace: Yep.

Jarrah: So, she did two more episodes of *Deep Space Nine*. The last one was *The Muse*, and she actually cowrote the story. She got a story credit on it because she pitched to Ira Steven Behr that Lwaxana should come back pregnant and claim the baby is Odo's. That isn't exactly what ended up happening.

Grace: We do get to see Odo in a shotgun wedding though, which is worth the price of admission.

Jarrah: It's a little odd, like I'm glad-- I actually-- I don't know, I'm not really a fan of *The Muse* because I feel like at the end of *Fascination*, she basically is like, "Okay, Odo, you're in love with Kira. Good luck with that." That's the one where she comes on and they're having the Gratitude Festival and she goes into Betazoid menopause and like the whole station goes madly in love with each other.

Grace: Like you do.

Jarrah: But then in *The Muse*, she comes back and she's asking for Odo's protection because she's pregnant. And if the child is-- Is it if the child's a boy or just the child is going to be taken away?

Grace: Well, she knows it's a boy, so it's going to be taken away from her.

Jarrah: Oh, right. Yeah, so she knows the child is a boy and her husband's people have a belief that the boy should be raised exclusively by the father's people. So, she will basically not see her son once it's born. And so, she asks for Odo's help. Unfortunately, I feel like this is the least resourceful we've seen her, and I don't like the fact that her last episode is an episode where she really is relying on Odo to rescue her. And she really is playing a role that is about telling us more about Odo.

Grace: It seems out of character for Lwaxana too.

Jarrah: Yeah, I definitely have no issues with Majel's acting or anything. It's also like a plot of this episode with Jake and the sex writing goddess-

Grace: Man, that is so creepy on so many levels.

Jarrah: -succubus, is very weird, so it's a little bit of a weird episode all around.

Grace: That episode puts the suck in Succubus.

Jarrah: Odo basically has to fake that he's in love with her, but it's not really faking. But he has to marry her and he has to connect convince her husband that he is in love with her. So, he makes this big statement about how important she is to him and it really is more about him than it is about her. Except for that it does show she's made a strong impact on someone's life. So, I liked seeing her in *Deep Space Nine* separate from Troi, but I wish that it had ended on a note where she had a bit more command of the situation versus being like fleeing someone and having to rely on Odo's help.

So, post *Deep Space Nine*, like we mentioned, she continues to do the computer voice work. She also continued to co-operate the Roddenberry production company, Lincoln Enterprises. And then once her son, Rod, got older, he took that on jointly with her. She was also just really loved by the fans. She attended at least one major convention every year until her death. And like I said, she really took on-- Saw herself as like the steward of Gene's legacy. She developed the shows, *Earth: Final Conflict* and *Andromeda*, two Canadian produced sci-fi series using his ideas and materials from his archives. And she was the executive producer of both of those, I believe.

And she continued other acting throughout *Trek* and beyond. So, including she guest starred as the widow of the Centauri ambassador in the *Babylon 5* episode *Point of No Return*. And we mentioned the sperm ship on *Family Guy*. There's a huge list of acting credits if you look on Memory Alpha or IMDb. A lot of voice work, a lot of small parts in TV movies and TV shows. And she basically-- Yeah, she had a lot to do. And like I said, she was really loved by the fans.

Grace: That's what makes her the first lady, I guess.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, she sadly died of leukemia fairly suddenly on December 18th, 2008. She had been the one with the idea to launch Gene's ashes into space and had planned to have a portion of their ashes, because only a vial of his ashes were sent into space. The plan to have a vial of both of their ashes together launched after her death. So, the last that I was able to find out was that the space flight was delayed, and it's set to happen this year. So hopefully, that's still the case because I think it's a lovely gesture.

And I just have a couple quotes from Rod Roddenberry about his mother. The first one is from a video blog that he made for the fans after his mother's death. And you can tell he's really heartbroken and grappling with the loss of both parents. So maybe, Sue, do you want to read that one?

Sue: Absolutely. So, he said, "When my mother was at a convention, she would sit there and sign for two, three, four hours. She would look up at each individual and communicate. And it was a genuine kind of interest. She was just a real person."

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. And another quote that I found from him on Wikipedia, I'm not sure exactly when he said it, but he said, "My mother truly acknowledged and appreciated the fact that *Star Trek* fans played a vital role in keeping the Roddenberry dream alive for the past 42 years. It was her love for the fans and their love in return that kept her going for so long after my father passed away." [sighs] So, any final thoughts on Majel Barrett, the first lady of *Star Trek*?

Sue: Well, one thing I read today, and we actually sort of zoomed right by it, or I would have mentioned it earlier, is that she didn't only meet Lucille Ball in an acting class. She actually

got comedic training from Lucille Ball. And I think that's not necessarily as evident in *TOS*, but when you watch Lwaxana Troi, knowing that, you can see it's maybe not like, "Oh, that's Lucille Ball," if you didn't know it in advance, but once you do, you definitely get it.

Grace: Yeah, most definitely.

Jarrah: Yeah, I didn't know that. Another thing I actually forgot to mention is there's evidence, even though it isn't as well documented yet, because we don't have a *These Are the Voyages* equivalent for *TNG* yet. We do have the great *Star Trek: TNG Community Companion* by Larry Nemecek, but not like quite that same level of detail, although I understand it is in the works that Majel was influencing things behind the scenes in also subtler ways. Marina Sirtis was interviewed on Mission Log podcast and at Star Trek Las Vegas last year, she again repeated the story about how she said she was going to be fired from *TNG* and it was only the fact that Denise Crosby left that meant that she didn't lose her job.

And she said that it was Majel who told her that, "You better start going to conventions and building up a fan following," really early on, like maybe even before the series had started being like, "How many conventions are you going to? You need to be going to more conventions." And told her that basically there was a thought that there were too many women on the show, and they aren't doing enough, so we're going to have to get rid of one of them. And that it was probably going to be her because all she was doing was sitting around and being like, "I feel pain."

So, she started on Majel's advice to start to go to conventions. And her view was that if Denise Crosby had not left, she still would have been cut. So, it just goes to show that Majel was shaping the direction of things in informal ways throughout at least early *TNG*. I'm assuming that once Gene passed away, it would have been harder, but it'll be interesting once we get that kind of behind-the-scenes look at *TNG* to see what kind of influence she maintained beyond his death.

Sue: Well, we do know that Lwaxana remained around beyond his death. And honestly, that's sort of around the time that we learned more about Lwaxana and saw that character really start to grow. So, I think that-- Obviously, she at least started in *Star Trek* because of this relationship with Gene Roddenberry, but she remained in it, I think, for her own merits, as it should be.

Jarrah: Absolutely.

Grace: I think that's what separates her from just being the showrunner and the franchise creator's wife to being the first lady of Trek.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. She really-- I mean, in some ways, like a first lady, she took it on as a ceremonial role as well as just, "I'm this guy's wife," and the fact that she was running Lincoln Enterprises and doing this merchandising work. She was trying to steer the casting. She was attending all of these conventions and speaking over and over again about Gene's legacy and ideas and how visionary they were. Yeah, it speaks to how she saw this as something bigger than just an acting job.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Awesome. Well, thanks for joining us today to talk about Majel Barrett, but this is just one of the topics being discussed on the Trek.fm network recently. So, here's a quick look at some of the other things you may have missed elsewhere on Trek.fm.

Jarrah: We also wanted to let you know about the Trek.fm Patreon. Trek.fm is a listener-supported network. You can help us keep the *Star Trek* discussion coming by pledging a donation at patreon.com/trekfm. Every little bit helps keep this Trek.fm podcast up and running. So, once you're done with the show again, please consider hopping over to patreon.com/trekfm.

[Trek.fm ad]

Jarrah: Grace, where can people find you on the internet?

Grace: People can find me on Twitter, [@bonecrusherjenk](https://twitter.com/bonecrusherjenk). Or they can read my writing on the Mythcreants blog or listen to my previous podcast, All Things Trek.

Jarrah: And, Sue, how about you?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter, [@spaltor](https://twitter.com/spaltor), that's S-P-A-L-T-O-R. Or podcasting and blogging over at anomalypodcast.com.

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah and you can find me at trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com. If you'd like to contact our show, you can find us on Facebook, [@womenatwarp](https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp). On Twitter, [@womenatwarp](https://twitter.com/womenatwarp). You can email us at crew@womenatwarp.com. Or you can go on iTunes and leave us a review. Or you can go to our website, womenatwarp.com. We would love to hear from you. We love getting listener mail and comments on our Facebook and our Twitter. Let us know what you think about the show.

Grace: Let us feel the love.

Jarrah: Yes. And live long and prosper.

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