

March 21-March 22, 2015

This is it. The moment I have waited 29 years for. I get to meet Genie Francis!!! There is nooooo way she can live up to the hype in my 11 year old heart. Or can she?

March 21-Saturday

Set 3 alarms for today and quadruple checked the day. I have tickets for BOTH events today. The Q&A/ Meet and Greet in the afternoon and the Private dinner. I'm nervous and my heart is pounding. I brought 5-6 different things for her to sign but only to have options. I want to make sure I'm respectful of other people's time with her so I am picking 2. One is my 8th grade project where I wrote that one of my 3 wishes was to meet Genie Francis, the other is the McCall magazine Genie was on when pregnant with "Jamo" (as she calls him.)



My cell is charged, my digital camera is charged. I'm ready. I leave plenty early to allow for the scenic route and to find parking. I got there SUPER early so grabbed a Starbucks. I'm thinking I will be the first one there because it started at 1 and it was 1135ish. Nope. I was like the 9th or 10th person. A really nice lady sitting at the bar welcomed and greeted me and I got in line. I came by myself cuz none of my friends are Genie freaks like me. I am UBER shy but I am also a big girl and sometimes my shyness gets misread as meanness and people get offended or intimidated. So, I made a conscious effort to introduce myself to the other fans there. I mean, we all have something in common already right? GENIE! I met some really nice people in line (if I remember, her name was Ann?) and she invited me to sit

with her and her friends. They were regular event goers and knew how it worked. I appreciated the gesture. We sat down to eat. Now, because of Genie I started Nutrisystem on Feb 1 and lost 20 lbs so far. I actually REALLY like the food! The chicken and bacon ranch pizza is my fave. Anyhoo, I didn't eat breakfast because of my nervous stomach so I was super hungry but still trying to be nutrisystem-y. So, I ordered the club. I ate the stuff out of half of it without the bread and ate the salad. Genie is announced!!!! Sh*t, I just ate onions. Not smart. Genie...is...GORGEOUS!! And tiny. I am at a table in the back away from where she will be sitting doing her Q&A. It's ok tho, I can see and hear and I have 2 cameras. I'm ready. She sits and thanks us all for being there. She says "I am here for YOU! I'm here to answer your questions and share stories. Ask me anything you want" Then she says, "How do you want to do this? I can go table by table or we can raise hands." My hand SHOT up (I'm a teacher, I see the effectiveness of this tactic everyday) and so she says "OK, I guess we'll do hands. Yours was up first, what is your question." ::crickets:: is she talking to me? is she looking at me? She is looking at me. is my hand up? it is up. SPEAK!!! So I asked her the story behind the little FB clip of her kicking Jonathan (Frakes, her husband) in the butt. She laughed and shared the story of her doing self-defense / kickboxing kind of training and using her husband as a demo. Other people started asking questions too but I kind of went into a haze for a minute. Did that just happen? Did I just SPEAK to Genie Francis? What did she say? Was I speaking English? It was all a blur for a moment. Genie was very candid about why she left GH, her relationships with various cast members off screen, when/if/how she might make a GH return. She said she DOES still want to act!! She just wants some meat to her parts (her acting parts, not body parts. She IS the spokesperson for Nutrisystem.) She spent about an hour just answering questions.



My favorite moment was when time was winding down, she addressed a lady sitting in the veeeeery back wearing an orange shirt that hadn't spoken yet and Genie said, "Lady in the very back in the orange shirt, you haven't asked anything yet, do you have a question for me?" Heart. Melt. To be so considerate and aware of the whole room to do that just made my heart go 'awwwwww.' Genie then got up for a break to eat. I wonder what she ate? The reason I wonder is I learned later that one of her Nutrisystem meals exploded in her suitcase!! She had macaroni noodles and powdered cheese all over her

clothes and suitcase!

Ok, so Genie comes back out and they set a table up in the front of the room. Tables got called up (about 30 of us, 4 to a table) for a one-on-one with her. ::Pulse check:: I'm trying not to pay attention to when our turn is because my stomach is in knots. I asked the ladies at my table if they cared if I went last. Ann, Melissa and Kerry allowed me to. THANKS LADIES! I didn't know if I was gonna sob uncontrollably, pass out, freeze up, babble. It's finally my turn! Genie stood up and put out her hand and said "Hi, I'm Genie." I'm a hugger so that didn't work for me so I went in for the hug. I am literally probably TWICE her size. She was probably thinking 'Bigfoot lives.' Naw, she was super sweet. She sat down and I showed her my 8th grade project. She said 'You asked good questions' I told her my 11 year old self was FREAKING OUT inside and she hugged me and said "don't freak out, it's ok. you're ok" Awwwwwww. I told her I used to write her a letter a week when she was on DAYS and that this moment was 29 years in the making. I showed her the page in my project that said I wished to meet her and asked her to sign that page. My voice starting choking up and tears got in my eyes. Then she looked at me and said "you're making me cry" and she had a little water in her eyes (I think, maybe it was a glare.) We both laughed. She signed my page and then I had her sign the magazine. On NEITHER signature did she put my name. That comes up later. But I showed her the very first autographed picture I got from her in the mail when I was 11-12. She just said "wow." She mentioned how fun it is for her to see old stuff that fans show her because some of it she never saw, other things she had forgotten about. She is SO genuinely nice and interested in her fans. FLOVE. I was very aware that people were waiting behind me so I started wrapping it up. I asked for a selfie instead of the typical picture. She was game! She said "Just make sure you hold it up and get a good angle". Then I got another picture doing a Charlie's Angels pose. She can be Jill Munroe, I will be Kelly Garrett. I'm taller. That picture is now the wallpaper on my phone and ipad. I will relive that moment several times a day every day.



I told her I didn't want to seem like a stalker but I would be at all 3 events. She said "I don't think you're a stalker" Whew (she doesn't really know how obsessed I was for 20 of those 29 years. Thankfully, I grew out of it. Sort of.) I said good-bye and let the others have their time. I was packing up to go when she was walking out and as she passed by my table, she blew me a kiss!! ::dead:: I didn't even know how to respond. Blow one back? Weird. Catch it? Weirder. Smile? Only option left.

I had about 4 hours to kill before the private dinner so I stopped at a place where I could sit and write Genie a letter. I hadn't written one since she was on Y&R. I didn't know where I could send one when the events were over. So, I thought, better do it now. I kept it short. You can't write 29 years of emotion and wishes coming true into a short letter, but I just had to say something. From ages 11-16 she was EVERYTHING to me. It sounds soooooo lame to say that as an adult, but I used to write to her like she was my big sister. I think when I was 12 or 13 I might have even sent her a copy of my report card. STOP LAUGHING AND ROLLING YOUR EYES!!! I was 12!!!! I got straight A's and I wanted her to be proud of me. The things we do when we are kids lol. Anyway, I head over to the private dinner. Food was excellent and restaurant was very nice. When I arrived I saw a few familiar faces from earlier in the day. I asked if there was assigned seating but nope. I asked where Genie was gonna sit and they said she would move around the table to be able to talk with everyone. There were less than 20 of us!!! SCORE!!!

I went and sat at the end of the table by myself. Because I'm shy and because I'm a big girl and wanted elbow & leg room. More and more people started to arrive. Then GENIE arrived! Her first place to sit was right in the middle. She went around the table and asked everyone their names. When she got to me, she said "I just realized I didn't actually sign your name, I just signed my own. We need to sign something else for you" O_O How does she remember that?

Did Genie Francis just ASK me to let her sign something else for me?? Best. Day. Ever.

So I was conversing with the people sitting around me, especially Tom and Paul, the two guys at the dinner. They were awesome and so much fun. Helen sat next to me (sweet Italian lady who helped me order my food since I didn't know what the fancy words meant for anything. I'm a Mexican food girl) I tried to not engage with Genie and the people she was speaking with because it was their time. BUT, she mentioned being on Oprah and I jumped in and let her know I was in the audience!! On Oprah's website you could submit an essay about your favorite daytime star and why. They picked some responders and invited us to the taping. We talked about how what was ACTUALLY said, done, shown in the studio was NOT the final product on TV. It was an edited version. I then asked her about being on Joan Rivers' talk show and what Joan was like between shots and she said she would look over and over her notes and grab Genie's hand and say "You say what you want. You can take this as far as you want" (For those that never saw that, it's on YouTube.) Then I jumped back out of the convo. It wasn't my turn and I didn't want to be rude. I apologize to the fans sitting in the middle for jumping in at all. Food started coming to the table; bread, then meat and fresh parmesan cheese, shrimp/clams/mushrooms and a stuffed shell / manicotti thingy. After about 40-45 minutes they moved Genie to the other end of the table. She was there about 40-45 minutes. I was SO happy to have such cool, nice people to talk to while we waited for our turn. Poor Genie. Was she eating anything? They could have plated her Nutrisystem for her! Anyway...dun dun dun. It's finally our turn!!!

We had two empty chairs next to us so when she came to sit down I told her she could kick her feet up on one of them. She laughed. That was when she shared the exploding pasta story and jokingly said, "I think I have a macaroni noodle in my shoe!" I am SO thankful I went to the earlier event and got the nervousness out of the way. The next 40-45 minutes was just casual, fun conversation. It wasn't weird or awkward or stagnant. She didn't have to drive the conversation but I don't think we overwhelmed her either. Gosh I hope not!! I had mentioned how much I loved her scenes with Arleen Sorkin on DAYS. So funny! She was talking about how Arleen was off camera coaching her to do different voices and...at the EXACT SAME TIME we both did a small moment of the scene where Diana holds her nose to sound nasally. OMG. Having just about every scene she did from 1987 to 1989 memorized paid off in that moment (Just FYI, in 10 years when I re-tell that story, it will be that we got up and acted the whole scene together. Creative license :) Another thing she mentioned was how when she was like 19 and sitting in her PJs in her apartment, people were climbing outside her windows and trying to look in. WHAAA??!!!! CREE. PY. Can you imagine being 19 years old, home by yourself and people trying to look inside at you? What an abnormal existence. I asked her if it's ever weird for her, the way fans respond (yours truly included) and she said no. She shared she freaked out one time when Dustin Hoffman was on the GH set when she was a kid and the way he responded to her freak out (patient and understanding) made her decide that if she were ever famous, that is how she would treat her fans. Awwwwwww. I told her I was excited for her 'stand-up act'

tomorrow at the comedy club and her eyes got big. I said, with a completely straight face, 'That's what I paid for' then I let her off the hook and laughed and she said "Oh no pressure. I can tell stories but I don't know about stand up"

Two ladies were super late cuz they got lost and Linda (the organizer, who is AWESOME by the way) came over to Genie and asked if they could sit in those chairs and have some time with her. She graciously and happily said yes. The night started to wind down and Genie took some individual and group pictures. I asked her if I could Plank her (if you didn't watch Pretty The Series...[click here](#) . Genie is HILARIOUS on that webseries) I wasn't serious cuz I would squish her.

The night ended with another round of individual pics and autographs. I didn't get in the line this time because I had gotten 2 pics and 2 autographs earlier and I was trying to not overwhelm her. I had the letter to give her tho. I chickened out. Maybe tomorrow. I headed outside to get my car and get back to the hotel. Genie was outside talking to Jen (who is the FABULOUS woman who runs her geniefrancis.com fansite along with Becky) and they were talking about the trivia question. I KNOW I got it right! I asked Genie if she knew the answer...she did. LOL My heart was so full from the events of that day. After keeping my sh*t together all day, I quietly cried a little on the way back to the hotel. Did that day just happen? I texted all my friends the pics from the day. They were so happy for me. Even tho they don't give a rip who she is, they know I do and how big this day was for me. ::sigh:: Goodnight Moon.

March 22- Sunday

Luckily my blood-shot eyes go well with my outfit for today. If I'm this tired, I can't even imagine how exhausted Genie must be. She has been SO present for each and every one of her fans at these events. It's got to be emotionally exhausting...not to mention hand cramps. Imagine signing your name 150x in 2 hours.

Today is an early day because the autograph/photo meet and greet is BEFORE the 1230 event. Again, I got there what I thought was super early and there were already about 40 people there. Genie fans are quick!!! They are mostly local I think so probably didn't get stuck on any round-about (what is the point of those things anyway??) So, once again I took my shy self to a back table and sat with Rich. He was super nice and had never met her. Genie arrived and decided to make her way to each table to meet everyone, sign and take photos. AND...she started in the back!! WHAT LUCK!!! I get to be one of the first tables. Jesus loves me. She heads over to our table from across the way and there was only Rich and I there. I pulled a chair out for her and she sat down and introduced herself to Rich. She signed pictures for Rich and talked with him for minute. The first picture she signed was of her as Brett Maine from North and South. I told her when I was a kid my grandpa turned on the series and I was grumpy and bored because I'm not a fan of "period" shows. Then, she popped on the screen and I got so excited. I sat and watched the whole series with my grandpa just because she was in it. She just smiled and said "awww, that's so sweet"

One of the other pics she signed was the cleavage pic from when she was 19. She told us a story of how her shirt had opened more than it was supposed to on one shot but nobody told her. The producer of that shoot KEPT that picture and HUNG IT IN HIS OFFICE!!!! I was ready to put on a ski mask, find the dudes office, break in and steal it. HOW RUDE!! She was clearly upset by it but just said "some people in this business are sleezy"

I got her to sign a photo WITH my name this time which was awesome. Then, I gave her the letter. I told her I had chickened out yesterday. She leaned in and said 'are you gonna make me cry?' and I said "probably" and she said "I will read it today". (I dont know if she remembered to take it with her or if she read it...a part of me feels dumb for doing it and kinda hopes she did forget it LOL)

As she leaves the table I see her boots!! They were so cute! Dang it. My turn is over but I gotta ask about the boots!! I had Rich take a picture of them for me. As she was wrapping up at the table next to me, I quickly asked her where she got them and I think she said 'Freeport, Maine. christmas clearance. kenneth Cole' ::crickets:: That doesn't help me at all Genie but thanks for answering the question.



She makes it thru the whole room. I watched her every once in a while with other fans. She was so genuinely interested and attentive to them. It was beautiful to watch. When she was done she took a quick lunch break then did the Q&A. I asked the first question again. "You're in your house alone, dancing as hard as you can singing at the top of your lungs...what is playing on the radio?" she said "Motown" There were some great questions from the audience and she shared some great stories. She is CLEARLY a proud MAMA!! Her daughter Liiza will graduate summa cum laude and won a young artist award for a play (I believe it was.)



She then made her way to the back for photo ops. I got in line to hug her and say goodbye. No more pictures...just wanted one last eye-to-eye moment with the woman who meant everything to me for so many years. She thanked me for sharing with her and said how great it was for her to meet so many wonderful people and hear how she had touched their lives. That it was REALLY important and meaningful to her.

She seemed to REALLY enjoy meeting all of us and was so appreciative. I looked my favorite actress in the eye one more time and said "Thank you for making this wish come true" She gave me one more hug and I left.

The drive back to my hotel was bittersweet. I was still gushing from the weekend but also slightly saddened that it was over. I think and hope Genie will do more events, so hopefully that won't be the only time I get to see/ talk to her but IF it is...it was unforgettable and worth every toll I paid driving back and forth from JERSEY (helpful tip for any west coast travelers, THEIR tolls are like \$14 EACH TIME!)

When this weekend started I wondered if Genie could live up the hype and pedestal I had put her on so long ago. I can say, without question, yes. YES. But now, there is no more pedestal. Just a really nice, funny woman that I would have lunch with, do a mud run with, hike the Bridge to Nowhere with and perhaps even get in the ring and spar with :)

As a fan of Genie's incredible talent, I want to see her act. I don't care if it's on soaps, sit-coms, TV movies, night time dramas, stage. I don't care. She is TOO gifted to not act anymore. If tweets, letter writing, phone calling or any other method will work, I will be all over it. Whatever would make her happy is what I want for her...as long as it's acting, cuz that's what I want for ME!! HAHAAHAHA. #KiddingNotKidding #HashTagsInAJournalAreLame She is crazy passionate about designing/ antiquing and lit up every time she talked about it. She has given so much to us through her art for so many years...wherever she lands that makes her happy...God speed.

Random other questions I asked during the weekend:

Have you ever thought about teaching acting classes?

Genie: Yes

Was the actress who played Mary Mae Ward anything like the wise, grounded character?

Genie: Yes she was very wise but we weren't close. Rosalyn was hiding a secret of her poor health and would retreat to her dressing room after scenes.

Would she consider Dancing with the Stars? (another fan asked this the following day)

Genie: I don't know, that scares me. (I asked if she had rhythm) Yes and I took dance classes as a kid but I worry about remembering all the choreography.

What is your process as an actress when you have a heavily dramatic scene? How do you prep? How do you recover?

Genie: I hate having to do them at 8 am. I like to have them later in the day and work up to it. I don't like having to break in the middle, like for lunch or something, because you never get the same energy back. It feels like therapy tho. You get all your crying out and go home. (She mentioned the Lucky dying storyline was the hardest thing she has done. The actor who played Sonny's dad gave her advice on how to approach it step by step. It was advice she took.)

None of these are necessarily direct quotes from her. I'm operating from memory and there was no videotaping.