

Behind the scenes of her acting career, Daryl Hannah, 48, was living her green values in her everyday life. "I thought the most potent thing I could do was speak up."

Daryl Hannah MAKES ASPLASH

It's easy to feel cynical about stars who declare green credentials and a social conscience, but, writes Sharon Krum, Daryl Hannah is one celebrity whose actions speak louder than words.

IN HOLLYWOOD, it is widely understood there are rules to being a movie star. A star must stay glamorous, mysterious. Unlike mortals, they are never to do the dishes or get their hands dirty. Yet there was Daryl Hannah on board the Steve Irwin, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's anti-whaling ship that sailed through the Antarctic ocean over the summer, working in the galley, on the deck, like ordinary crew. Doesn't she know the rules? Tall, blonde and, at 48, still bombshell material, the star of *Splash*, *Roxanne*, *Blade Runner*, *Steel Magnolias* and *Kill Bill* – not to mention the former girlfriend of musician Jackson Browne and the late JFK Jr – shoots you a look. It tells you Daryl Hannah was happier on the Steve Irwin (she never met the ship's namesake, but has spoken with his wife, Terri) than at a glitzy premiere. >>>



Captain Paul Watson and Daryl with the anti-whaling ship Steve Irwin in Brisbane.

"The first day, I worked in the galley, did dishes and helped make dinner. The second day, I painted and worked on the deck, helped move tarps and sawed pipes. I was a deck rat," she says, grinning.

"After that, I got assigned to the job of bridge crew. I had two shifts, 12 to 4am and 12 to 4pm. I learned how to read the radar, maritime charts, steer the boat. It was kind of a brutal shift in the middle of the night, but also wonderful because it was quiet and I loved my bridge team."

A passionate environmentalist, definitely more nature girl than celebrity, Daryl was keen to volunteer with Sea Shepherd, which had made news for its dogged pursuit of Japanese whaling ships in Antarctic waters. The Japanese call them eco-terrorists. Sea Shepherd claims the killing of an estimated 1000 whales a year by Japanese ships for "research" is nothing but commercial whaling.

"I went to support Sea Shepherd because they're the only ones out there trying to fight against illegal fishing, poaching and hunting," Daryl says. "I think we're at such a desperate time, you have to lay your body down and say no."

Due to work commitments, Daryl was only able to sail with the ship from Brisbane to Hobart, but it was still enough time to develop a taste for Vegemite and butter on toast. "Peanut butter and Vegemite on toast, too. It's so good."

"We were escorted along the entire coast to Tasmania by dolphins. One group would come in and swim with us, they would leave and another would take their place. It was so beautiful." Her voice drifts off, dreamlike. Daryl has

that way about her, an ethereal demeanour which can, at times, sound sweet and girlish. At others, she is completely earthy, bold and fired up. Ask her, say, about the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea, and she becomes quite emotional.

"I've heard reports they're bleaching out a lot [coral bleaching caused by climate change] and I'm really worried. It's not like we're protecting something pretty. Yes, it's one of the underwater wonders of the world, but it's essential to our survival. The oceans are on more than a tipping point right now. We need to be in crisis mode and stop abusing them."

Daryl feels a real affection for Australia, having visited, she guesses, "at least 30 times". (Her ex, Jackson Browne, has a son in Australia and she also toured with him here.) "People have no idea how exquisite Australia is, how beautiful the beaches are. It's like Hawaii times bazillion."

After Daryl left the Steve Irwin, there were moments of high drama – vessel collisions, bottles of rancid butter thrown at the Japanese whalers, while the Steve Irwin crew were blasted with water cannon, metal objects and long-range acoustic weapons. Yet her brief time on board helped make a point.

"Celebrity is a double-edged sword," Daryl says, "but the ability to have any kind of light that shines on you and take that light and shine it on something more important is a really great gift."

Doing duty on the Steve Irwin was hardly Daryl's first outing as an activist. In fact, she has been vocal and passionate about a number of environmental and human rights' issues. The one-eyed

assassin from the *Kill Bill* films and the adorable mermaid from *Splash* has been arrested after climbing into a walnut tree to prevent the razing of an urban farm on the mean streets of South Central Los Angeles. She went undercover in a Cambodian brothel to make a documentary about child sex slaves and faced down conservative pundits on US television to talk up bio-fuels. Incredibly, she confesses she suffers from shyness, so none of this comes easily to her.

"I struggle on a daily basis with it," Daryl says. "I'd still rather stay home than put myself out there, but I reached the point in my life where I realised it's not about me. Though I might be uncomfortable, I feel compelled to push through it."

She then says something that sums up her principles perfectly. "I believe it's essential to live lightly on the earth because everything is interconnected."

Today, she has homes in Southern California and the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, living "off the grid" using solar power, recycled materials and grey water systems. "My house in California is a one-room stone cabin and I have a yurt near the garden. In the Rockies, my house is a barn that was torn down to put up a post office."

Daryl's car runs on bio-fuel, she wears non-toxic make-up, has been vegetarian since the age of 11 and eats organic food. (During our conversation, she drinks a bottle of nut milk, part of a 14-day blended food/juice detox she was on.) When she flies, she buys carbon offsets. At her homes, her beloved menagerie of horses, alpacas, cats, chickens, a pig and dog are all rescued animals.

"I was born in the year of the rat, so I'm a pack rat and trying to shed all unnecessary items is a challenge," Daryl says. "Gandhi had eight possessions when he died. Ultimately, that's my goal, to get things down to their bare essence."

Born in Chicago, Daryl was raised by her mother and stepfather, a wealthy property developer. "As a kid, I was always out of place in the city, like an alien on the planet. I was skinny, shy and I lived in an imaginary world."

"From the age of seven until 17, my dad sent me to summer camp in the Rockies, where you live in a covered wagon, and that's when things started making sense to me. Then I realised my church was really the natural world."

Daryl moved to Los Angeles at 17 >>>

"PEOPLE HAVE NO IDEA HOW EXQUISITE AUSTRALIA IS, HOW BEAUTIFUL THE BEACHES ARE. IT'S LIKE HAWAII TIMES BAZILLION."



JEFF LIPSKY/GETTY IMAGES; ERIC CHENG/SEA SHEPHERD CONSERVATION SOCIETY