

SHERRY LANSING, PHOTOGRAPHED BY PEDEN+MUNK, LOS ANGELES, 2010.



By Michael J. Herman

Sherry Lansing

Paramount experienced its most robust and profitable 20-year run in the company's 99-year history. Why is this? Because Lansing has a broad vision of what is possible. Hers is a world in which everyone is creatively satisfied; a world in which cancer is an abomination of the past. Is it utopian? Not really. She's on her way. Lansing starts with her world and then moves outward.

Lansing's life, once dominated by glitzy movie stars, is now keenly focused on running The Sherry Lansing Foundation, a privately-funded brain trust of Lansing's with initiatives in cancer research, hospital support, the arts, and education. It's no surprise there, either. As a young leader in the Women's Movement, Sherry Lansing started her career as a public school teacher. It is in quality education that her true passion lies. She sits on more than 36 boards, including chairing the California Regents.

Lansing's survival instinct can be traced by this writer to Lansing's parents who survived the threat of extermination by the Nazis, becoming successful American entrepreneurs. Lansing's own mother survived and flourished when Lansing's father past away at age nine, leaving mom with two children to raise.

She insists, "You have to love what you do. You have to crave it and desire it and breathe it, feeling it like it is blood pumping through your veins. It's only in this way, by being passionate about your pursuit of greatness and creative expression, that you can tap your true purpose in life."

Lansing's success secret stems from surrounding herself with successful and

Proving that one can be nice and also powerful while rising to the highest levels of industry, media, and finance, Sherry Lansing, former CEO and chairperson of Paramount Pictures (and famed Hollywood studio mogul/icon) demonstrates in every way that ethics, courtesy, keen insight, and creativity can take you further than ever imagined. It's not just that she is a nice person... it's that Lansing cares deeply about everything she undertakes. Lansing is a nurturing and compassionate leader with the kind of magnetism that radiates through her entire being.

Unlike most corporate honchos, Sherry Lansing truly leads by example. Inclusion and collaboration are her trademarks. She takes into account all perspectives and brings together every participant on a team in ways that work for everyone, then makes her decision. While she manages by consensus and persuasion, Lansing is the boss.

"Look, you only get this one life to live. You spend a lot of time in your life, do something that makes you happy. If it's making art, then do art. Do what makes your soul light up with joy. For me, that's the only way to live."

"If people feel heard," offers Lansing by phone from her Bel Air estate, "they produce. If they feel ignored, their creativity drops and their passion dies."

It must work. Under Lansing,



The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded Lansing the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award at the 79th Academy Awards, February 25, 2007. She was honored for her work in supporting the fight against cancer and for the numerous charitable organizations and causes she has served over the years.

THE SHERRY LANSING FOUNDATION

Finding the Answers by Asking All the Right Questions

By Michael J. Herman

In her unending desire to give back, Sherry Lansing founded and chairs the privately funded Sherry Lansing Foundation (TSLF). The work of passion is privately financed and accepts no donations or grants of any kind. The Foundation's many initiatives provide a wide variety of resources, funding, and accountability for a plethora of creative and scientific endeavors. In many ways, Lansing stands alone, or at least in the extremely modest company of moguls actually doing the work of altruism, charity, and outreach. Lansing makes the decisions and writes the checks, her singular vision fueling the work and the results of the Foundation.

Initiatives include:

- » Cancer research, establishing critical alliances, and directly funding needed labs throughout the cancer research community
- » StandUp2Cancer a multi-initiative, which funds collaborative, multi-institutional cancer research "dream teams"
- » The Encorps Teachers Program, which places retirees from the technology sector into volunteer teaching positions throughout the public school system
- » Start On Success, an initiative to train disabled high school students particular job skills
- » Big Sisters of L.A.
- » Future Fund, which provides scholarships to deserving Little Sisters
- » Chair of The California Regents, overseeing the development and delivery of quality higher education in California
- » The Lasker Foundation and the American Association for Cancer Research as well as a member of the executive committee of the Friends of Cancer Research board.

And with all this, there is still more on the way. Lansing's thirst for contribution and breakthroughs is matched only by her unwillingness to relent until these ideals have been realized. *~*

talented individuals. Whether it was partnering with producer Stanley R. Jaffe on films she produced, or working under the leadership of Jonathan Dolgen or Sumner Redstone (chairman of Viacom, Paramount's parent company), Lansing leaves in her wake luminaries such as Tom Cruise, Dustin Hoffman, John Travolta, Barbara Streisand, and Michael Douglas. How does she determine the next right decision? Just as she's done her entire career – it comes from her heart. Malcolm Gladwell's "Blink" clarified for her the intuition in harnessing the decision-making process. "In philanthropy, just as in movies, it's about consensus. Find new sources of revenue and sell your point of view."

But what's most important to the star CEO is human intimacy, as seen in some of her decisions.

Some shoot from the hip; Lansing shoots from the heart. Does a script or initiative move her? Does she connect with the characters, actors, or players? Is this personally fulfilling and can we do it together? Is it about love or is it a plebeian instinct? These are the values upon which she makes decisions.

Lansing inspires by crafting atmospheres of openness, where ideas are collaboratively shared; a place where ideas, "good ones and stupid ones, can flow freely."

Obviously, her style works. As she moves forward, she leaves behind a trail of mega-successes that include *Titanic*, *Forrest Gump*, and *Braveheart*. *~*

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For more information, please visit www.sherrylansingfoundation.org