

RENO

M A G A Z I N E

MATCH POINT

Jennifer Bushman and Laura Longero collaborate on perfect food/wine pairings

STYLE STATEMENT

The season's starring accessories

POSITIVELY JENNIFER BURTON

The *award-winning journalist* reveals the power of positive thinking through life, career, and family



ACCENTUATE THE *Positive*

Jennifer Burton reveals the power of positive thinking through life, career, and family

SHE IS AN AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST, successful businesswoman, happy wife, and mom. She spends her time juggling car pool, writing and producing content for her blog — Positively Northern Nevada — and anchoring the weekend news for KTVN Channel 2.

Yet, with such evident accomplishments, it may be hard to believe Jennifer Burton is a loser. Literally.

And guess what: She's proud of it.

"The title goes back to her early days in the Channel 2 newsroom, it persists today, and it will no doubt stay with Jennifer in the years to come," explains Nancy Bostdorff, Burton's longtime friend and first boss in Reno, tongue firmly planted in cheek. Bostdorff describes the time when Burton first moved to Reno in 1994, when many of her co-workers also were transplants from around the country.

"As is typical in the news business, they didn't have family ties in Northern Nevada," Bostdorff says. "So, they formed their own extended family. The family name was 'Loser,' and it was quite common to hear Jennifer and the others yell across the newsroom things like, 'Hey Loser! I need that script for the 5 o'clock show. Today, not tomorrow!' Or, 'You are such a Loser! Do you really think anyone is going to watch that poor excuse of a story of yours?'"

RANCH STYLE

Jennifer Burton adopted her horse, Bandit, from the prison program in Carson City. He was rounded up from the Virginia City herd of wild horses about five years ago.

Clearly, it was a term of endearment, a symbol of a deep connection that transcended bloodlines and branches on family trees. And to hear Bostdorff explain it, the title was an honor to receive from a woman who holds family near and dear.

Home means Nevada

Jennifer Burton's ranch-style home, located near Windy Hill in southwest Reno, is surrounded by acres of land, grazing horses, and the wafting scents of sage and earth. It is the kind of idyllic setting reminiscent of scenes from Northern Nevada's storied heritage, yet for Burton, it wasn't always home.

She has traveled the world and lived in many states, but she always finds her way back to Reno.

"I love to come home here," Burton says, sipping a cup of tea on a comfortably worn sofa, surrounded by unread newspapers, while 15-year-old pound "puppy," Agent 99, sleeps nearby. "I love the people here. I brag about Reno all the time — there's just something that feels right here."

It was an instant affinity for Burton, who moved here after following a convoluted trail that took her from Portland, Ore., as a child, to Colorado State University where she threw javelin in college ("I still hold a Top-10 record from 30 years ago," she proudly asserts), to destinations like Texas, Michigan, and eventually, Nevada.

The daughter of parents who divorced when she was in the sixth grade, she points to a conscious choice she

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—Jennifer

made as a child as the driving force behind her ability to adapt to change.

“I learned to roll with the punches,” Burton says. “I learned to be grateful every day and look at the opportunities that life presented. Sometimes, you just have to decide that this will be a positive experience, even when it’s difficult.”

“I grew up with people who loved adventure,” Burton continues. “They all taught me to look out and see the opportunities.”

So, it was an opportunity that knocked when Bostdorff was seeking an anchor to join Brent Boynton in 1994. Burton submitted her tape, and Bostdorff recalls sifting through the stacks of submissions and finding a standout.

“I knew I wanted someone with good experience, but also someone who would make a commitment here and really get involved with this community,” Bostdorff says. “When I met Jennifer in person, I believed she would bring a passion to, and form a connection with, Northern Nevada.”

Burton quickly acclimated, proving Bostdorff more than right; her first day on the job, in fact, she was assigned to ride in the Reno Rodeo cattle drive. And only a few months later, she was sent to an air show in Fallon that fundamentally changed her life.

“The public information officer asked if I wanted to see a TOPGUN Navy jet,” she recalls. “I thought, ‘Sure, I guess, why not?’” She soon was introduced to Executive Officer Gerry Gallop, who was second in command at the prestigious Navy fighter school, then based out of Miramar near San Diego. “He took one look, and I was wearing my Channel 2 shirt, and he said, ‘Hello, nice to meet you,’ — then took off. He doesn’t like to talk to media.”

But he called her within a few weeks, subsequently

spending his first date eating dinner with Bostdorff instead of Burton.

“My news director had to take him out to dinner because I had to do the news,” she laughs at the memory. “And then, after the news was over, I met them. We went dancing and had a wonderful time.”

News anchor turns Navy wife

The couple’s dynamic is clearly about willing sacrifice like that first date delay. After eight months of dating, they married when Gallop was in Reno for a single day. He was then deployed, and their first wedding anniversary was his first day home.

Then began a series of deployments and relocations that tested Burton’s chops as Navy wife. They spent years in Fallon, where Gallop was head of TOPGUN, then later tried a commuter marriage between Reno and San Francisco after he retired and became a pilot for United Airlines.

“His next step in the military was the Pentagon,” she says. “But he made a choice to be with his family, which I appreciate every day.”

Gallop has two daughters from his first marriage, who were pre-teens when he met Burton. The couple’s daughter, Amanda, now 13, was raised primarily in Fallon.

“She grew up around sticks and rocks and mud and horses,” Burton says. “She learned how to make things work.”

Her analysis of her daughter sounds a bit like self-reflection, as Burton has constantly adapted to change to address the needs in her personal and professional lives.

“I think I’ve been reinventing all along the way,” Burton says. I got a job out of college in the oil business, then transitioned to nonprofit work. ... Then I thought about it, and I really wanted to write, so that morphed into journalism.

“Then came Navy wife and mother — those were the biggest reinventions of all, because you don’t have the framework you had before,” she continues. “You just learn how to fit it all together so that you can do what you love but also be there for your family — that’s the challenge I think, especially for women.”

IDYLLIC SETTING

Burton has lived in many states and has traveled extensively, but says she always finds her way back to Reno.





ON AIR

Burton, who returned to KTVN Channel 2 in September as weekend anchor, sits at the same desk she occupied nearly 20 years ago.

Blazer, skirt and top; Ann Taylor at the Summit. Giani Bini "Brittany" pump and Ralph Lauren earrings; Dillard's at the Summit.

The power of the positive

To answer the challenge personally, Burton decided to start her own business after her successful anchoring spots on Channels 2 and 8. She chose to follow her passion for telling meaningful stories with words and video, launching a blog called Positively Northern Nevada.

"Even when I wasn't working in TV, I'd hear about these amazing local stories, and I kept calling my friends at the stations, telling them, 'I just heard the best story,'" she says. "Then I thought to myself, 'What if I just covered it? What if I just wrote it?'"

So, with the help of her husband, who set up her website, she launched Positively Northern Nevada,

a destination for stories, videos, and photos highlighting the best of local news.

"I started taking my camera around, and when I found out about things that were so great and inspiring, I would just write the story myself and put it on the website. It was an outlet. Our community has so many inspirational stories."

Husband Gerry Gallop sees each challenge tackled by Burton as another step toward fulfilling a legacy, one that takes fundamental change and transforms it into success.

"More than anyone I have ever known, Jennifer has been able to proactively rewrite her personal narrative as she goes," he says. "From college athlete to professional businesswoman to successful nonprofit director to news anchor to mother — she chose the points in her life to make a change and made them brilliantly."

Family first

But throughout it all, her focus has remained singularly centered on one aspect of her life: family.

"Gerry has been TOPGUN commander, and Jennifer is a successful news anchor — both rather impressive credentials," Bostdorff says. "But the star of their family is their daughter. ... Amanda is clearly at the top of Jennifer's long list of accomplishments."

And her daughter sees Burton as role model, friend, and inspiration.

"If I had to choose her best trait, it would be her awareness," Amanda Gallop says. "She can always sense what's going on, and knows exactly what to say when she senses something wrong. It's great to be able to have someone like that in my life that I can always depend on."

The self-proclaimed "Loser" family matriarch recently returned to Channel 2 to anchor weekend news, finding comfort in the familiar faces that made her feel at home almost two decades ago.

"I sit right next to my old desk," Burton says. "I love it. There are people still at Channel 2 that were there when I worked here before — like Mike Alger — who truly is family."

"It's like coming home. I feel privileged to be able to do this again — in a community I adore, with people I adore."

Mikalee Byerman lives in Reno and is a full-time freelance writer, editor, and blogger. ■