

## Dee Dee Hanson's career is something to laugh at

By Barbara Glasone  
North County News

**C**an we talk?  
I mean re-e-e-ally talk. Dish the dirt. Schmooze. Gossip, gossip, gossip.

Then it's time we schlepp over to Dee Dee and Jack Hanson's gated home in east Orange where it's Joan Rivers time 24 hours around the clock.

Yakking it up. Batting the eyelashes. Spilling the guts in a New Yorkese that would drive Seinfeld to his Webster's.

And would you look in that closet. I mean, shop, shop, shop — enough drop-dead designer duds for any comedy roast or boast from here to Dallas.

Duffy and Dixie, those attentive apricot poodles, are only three paws behind, snipping for Rivers' — ahem — Hanson's undivided attention.

Dee Dee Hanson, 40, may be an impersonator extraordinaire, but her Rivers is non-stop.

Always a frustrated comedian, Hanson was peddling real estate and pushing bank loans until 1988 when her husband, Jack, clipped an ad for a comedy class. Once the stage bug bit and agents took notice, she was hopping from the Laff Stop in Newport Beach to the Improv, Ice House and Comedy Store.

An agent asked her to do a corporate event, she recalled. "I was asked for an autograph after doing the Joan Rivers' schtick, and Jack decided I had a permanent hook."

The amateur impersonations that once entertained clients scouting new homes were honed into Riverese for corporate parties, mall openings and voice-over commercials.

Last year, a producer on the "Vicki Lawrence Show" introduced Hanson to the real Rivers. "She wished me luck and it was like I got her blessing," Hanson remembered. "And then I was recently on her show. She said I did very well."

The look is similar, the demeanor exacting. But in real life, the Hanson-Rivers differences are marked.

Hanson has hazel eyes, Joan brown. Hanson stands 4½ inches taller, but sports unbelievably similar facial features.

"People want the essence of Joan, and of course I have to keep up with the image by buying designer clothing," said Hanson, winking at her attentive husband.

That image extends to the vehicle. For local, quick appearances, Hanson zips around in her Honda, but the glamorous glitzy showstopping tours call for limos and Cadillacs.

Hanson's early acting was limited to garage-front talent shows. Her mother, who entertained in her native Peru, was the center of attention, amusing her husband and three children with a variety of dialects.

# Ragin' Rivers



Mike Pilgrim/North County News

Dee Dee Hanson, aka the county's busiest Joan Rivers look-alike, displays her drop-dead wardrobe that lines her walk-in closet in Orange. Appearances at conventions, malls, TV studios and comedy clubs keep the 40-year-old impersonator hopping.

"Crazy Dee Dee" as she was known at Edison High School in Huntington Beach is remembered for her ability to make people laugh. She studied theater at Orange Coast College and California State University, Fullerton, often performing in musical comedies, children's and experimental theater productions.

After school, she worked in the Chevron lube bay, mopping up gas and oil while warbling, "I like to squeeze in the morning," to the tune, "I'm Getting Married in the Morning."

She reinvented lyrics for her renditions of "Pelvis Lesley," Bette Midler and Carol Burnett.

In later years, her real estate appointments were always augmented with a parody of "Chattanooga Choo Choo." "Pardon me, Mam, are you thinking about buying?"

The look-alike slots came fast and curious as local advertisers plugged into the celebrity chit-chat. And when Hanson made a return appearance at the Ice House in Pasadena, 60 friends from Ridgeline Country Club in Orange journeyed to support their favorite mimic.

Without the hype and hilarity, what's this Dee Dee really like?

"She has to be the center of attention, has a

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heart of gold, is genuine and real, loves to make people laugh and is heavy into charity work," said Jack, her agent and a teacher at Lake High School in Garden Grove.

With the accolades over, Hanson slips back into character with gossip, gossip, gossip.

"Tony Danza's a poop, Cher likes to be left alone and Oprah is one sweet woman," Hanson admonished.

Someday, somewhere, someone will grant Hanson her wish and spotlight her talent in a sitcom.

Pu-u-u-lease!