

# PROFILE:

PERFECTIONISM from herself and from her girls is what she continually strives for and it is this which has made her Limerick's most successful model with a top class agency under her helm—the lady of course is Celia Holman Lee.

Modelling came naturally to Celia but it was a career she always wanted to pursue. "I suppose every young girl dreams of a career on the stage or on the ramp. It was always my dream".

Celia was only 15 when she first began to model and she trained with Ann Moloney here in Limerick and the Shannon Airport modelling agency.

"I was very involved in Irish dancing then and I believe when it came to modelling, it was my greatest asset", said Celia who was a member of the Dalton School of Dancing for 10 years.

"I had a good background in stage work and in dealing with audiences—it was all a great help to me".

Celia modelled freelance for some time and whenever Dublin Agencies came to Limerick I was always asked to join them. "I was continually being urged by local shops to open up my own agency".

"It was something I had never thought about".

## 12 years with agency

"They felt that I had the ability and if I could get that across to others they felt that we would have a successful

agency in Limerick". Celia's agency celebrates its 12th birthday this year and the lady with the stunning good looks has never looked back.

Her driving force and her sheer determination has seen the Agency grow from eight girls at the start to 40. And it is now placed high on the list of leading agencies throughout the country.

"I'm proud of this agency—it's my baby and its opened so many doors for me".

Celia was only 21 when she opened her agency and looking back now she believes that because of her youth, she just didn't see any pitfalls. "If I was doing it now, I would be much more cautious".

Celia has now developed a strong rapport between the Dublin Agencies. And two of her models are currently working with agencies in Dublin.

And if things are not working out for them in Dublin they can come back here.

Celia is now providing opportunities for the girls which didn't exist when she was starting off "Dublin was like America then", she claimed.

"It's never difficult to get girls to model but it can be difficult to get the right ones—a successful model must have height, a good bone structure and good skin—if she is fabulous looking then it's all the better but all that is required is a pleasing face—but height is a girl's top trump", said the 5'8" model.

"And a willingness to work

**By MARY HEENAN**



Celia Holman Lee with children Ivan and Cecelia at home.

hard willingness to work hard will get you anywhere but you must have the right attitude—not only must you be good at ramp work but you must also be able to do photographic and commercial work as well".

Celia compares a model to an actress—she has to be adaptable and she has to be able to sell the garment she is modelling. Her moods must change with clothes she is wearing.

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Succeeding in the business and making it a full-time career is the privilege of very few. "If you are ranked in the top 12 in Dublin, then certain-

ly there is money to be made". "But I always tell the girls to keep their options open—you can still hit the ramp at 35 but forget about photographic work after your early twenties".

When people go to a fashion show, they expect a high standard but few realise the time what goes into preparing just one show.

## Music for shows

And not only is Celia's work confined to the Limerick area but she also travels extensively throughout the country, travelling up West as far as Castlebar and south as far as Mallow. "I'm glad the shows are only seasonal—travelling alone can be very demanding on the models".

Celia selects all the sets for the shows herself and arranges all the choreography herself. "The music for the shows is worked out between Mike Corry, Dave Gaynor and myself. And of course Dorothy Cantrell has been a great help to the growth of the agency".

Often accused of being a perfectionist, Celia is willing to stand by this accusation—"I push myself so hard and I always look for perfection. Sometimes I think I push my girls over their limits and I wonder how they take it but they are a great bunch and no matter what kind of conditions or pressures they are working under they just get on with their job".

"I have great pride in my models and I know that their standards are high—they wouldn't be accepted by the Dublin agencies if they weren't top class".

Celia is now also running a successful department school where she regularly runs courses. "There is a demand for these classes and it's not just from young people but from all age groups".

When a girl comes in to train as a model, usually after the course and after a few shows I know if she has what it takes to be a successful model.

# CELIA HOLMAN LEE

"She must then get her portfolio together but this can be done for less than £100 and she can continually add to this".

"Accessories would then be the next major outlay—each girl must have her own collection of accessories but again she builds up these from season to season".

Sometimes Celia selects her girls from her department classes but often girls come in with that natural ability.

Celia herself has modelled in Dublin, has done many T.V. commercials and has appeared in all the top glossy fashion magazines.

## Did not work abroad

And her one regret if she was to start again was that she did not spend some time working abroad—"otherwise I'd like things such as they are", said Celia who admits to being a homebody".

"I'm from the city and I'm must say that the people of Limerick have been very good to me—they have given me encouragement in every way—the amount of letters I received following the successful Access Community tv prog., and the subsequent appearance on the panel of the Irish fashion awards on the Late Late Show were just unbelievable".

Celia travels regularly to fashion shows in London and there she gets ideas for her shows. "I don't steal ideas but a good idea anywhere is meant to be copied".

One thing Celia would like to see is the fashion photographers and the advertising agencies coming down to the Mid-West region to do their recruiting—"the talent is here—look at our models who have been successful in Dublin".

Celia's first model to make it big on the Dublin scene was Sheila Eustace—Sheila has made it happen herself—she is off to Japan shortly to do some fashion work with Eddie Shanahan Model Management—her success is a great encouragement to all the other girls.

Gail McGuane—another former model with Celia is now with the Geraldine Brand Agency, Dublin and there are three more being interviewed by the Dublin agencies at present.

And Eddie Shanahan hopes to also do some recruiting next month when he comes to Limerick for the School of Art Fashion Show.

Being a successful model is tough work and it is demanding but having a good agent is half the battle it is they who will help you to get the top assignments and once you get there it's up to you to be asked back again.

Since her early years of organising shows Celia believes that standards of shows have gone up "but the public expect a high standard".

Celia also runs a successful fashion shop at 45 Thomas Street for the past 12 years but

admits that she would have been unable to look after it without the help of her husband Ger. "It just couldn't have been done without him", said Celia.

But now that I have moved to my new premises I hope to devote more time and I intend to travel more on buying expeditions for the shop.

Celia has one son Ivan (10) and one daughter Cecilia (8)—both pupils at the Model School.

And Cecilia has certainly inherited her mother's love of the fashion world.

"It's all she wants to do and even though she is only eight she is no stranger to the ramp. I encourage her of course but I wouldn't over do it. I know the knocks in the business".

"Ivan is the direct opposite, he is a rugby fanatic and has no interest at all in the fashion world but he does get a thrill at seeing either of us on the paper".

With little time for relaxation, Celia likes to get away from it all and spend some time with her children.

Celia has a number of male models on her books but she says that committees here usually like to have some of their members to do the modelling—I like this, it is much more homey and generally goes down well with the audiences.

## Wish them best

Asked how she felt about the increasing number of Agencies which are now in the city, Celia—"They have done nothing to affect my business. I guess they felt that there was a need here and I wish them all the best".

But Celia's agency is certainly well-known throughout the country. Her ongoing dedication for the success of the Agency and the success of the girls is always evident.

"A Model in the Making"—the Access Community T.V. programme which was produced here in Limerick with the help of the Celia Holman Lee Model Agency has ensured that the agency is now a household name—a record number of viewers tuned into see the show and Celia received many accolades following its huge success.

Celia hopes to develop further the strong rapport she has formed with the Dublin agencies—not only are her girls going to Dublin but recently a Dublin-based model spent some time working with Celia here in Limerick.

"Much of a model's work in Dublin is devoted to photographic sessions and little opportunity is available for ramp work. And as we do all ramp work here is the ideal place for experience in this field".

Again Celia says that she would like to see the fashion photographers coming to Limerick—at least once in a while.

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