

MICHAEL LEARNED

Bio in Brief

Born in Washington D.C., at the age of six, Michael's family moved from NJ to a farm in CT. A 21-acre, glorious paradise for kids. When she was 10, she stole some money from her dad, by sneaking into her parent's bedroom while they slept, and lifted change from his pockets, to buy candy. Her punishment was a chart her father made, upon which were listed chores that she could perform to earn the money required to pay him back. She would get a quarter of a penny per egg she collected, as well as a penny or two for feeding and watering the chickens. She milked three goats, carried pig slops up to the barn, morning and night, cleaned out stalls, and eventually paid her father back . . . with money to spare. She has never stolen so much as matchbook from a hotel since that time. However, the experience would prove to be the perfect training for the role that would define a lifetime as Olivia Walton on the hit series "The Waltons."



As the oldest of six girls, she was eleven when they moved to Austria, where her father worked for the OSS (later known as the CIA), to live in a tiny village called St. Gilgen. Their home was located on a lake surrounded by mountains, where they wore dirndls, went to the local school, learned to speak German, and basically lived on the first set of SOUND OF MUSIC. Life in the village even included puppet shows and singing harmony with friends while making daisy chains. She loved it.

From there she went to boarding school at The Arts Educational School in Hertfordshire, England. Primarily a ballet school, her 11-year old dream was to become a prima ballerina. However, to everyone's surprise, she won the drama cup and at her teachers suggestions she focused on "special drama" instead of ballet. Michael was miserably homesick and cried night and day for the two and a half years she was there. One of the teachers, during a history class actually asked her to "please cry a bit more quietly." At the age of 16, she went to the London School and completed her dramatic training. Upon her return to the states, at 17 years of age, she married Peter Donat and had 3 children by the time she was 24. As her marriage to Peter was breaking up, fifteen years later, she moved to Los Angeles and landed the part of Olivia Walton in The Waltons. It changed her life.



Since then, Michael has become a four-time Emmy award-winning actress (three for *The Waltons* and one for *Nurse*). She has received a People's Choice Award and has been a three-time Golden Globe nominee. On stage, she starred in *Steel Magnolias* at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, in the national tour of *On Golden Pond* and in Lewis Black's *One Slight Hitch*. Other theatre credits include *Elizabeth the Queen* at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Edward Albee's *All Over* at the Gramercy and McCarter Theatres. She starred in the West Coast premieres of *Woman in Mind* and *Hapgood*, both for the American Conservatory Theatre Co, for whom she was the leading lady for three years. Her Broadway appearances include Gore Vidal's *The Best Man* and Wendy Wasserstein's *The Sisters Rosenweig* and recently completed a production of *The Out Going Tide*.

In Los Angeles she performed in *Mary Stuart*, *Picnic*, *A Month in the Country* at the Music Center and *Looking for Normal* at the Geffen. She has toured in A.R. Gurney's *Love Letters* and Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*. Michael premiered in Arthur Miller's *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* at Williamstown Theatre Festival. Her films include *For the Love of Mary*, *Life During Wartime*, *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* and *Power*, directed by Sidney Lumet. Her television credits include everything from *Gunsmoke*, *Police Story*, and *Murder, She Wrote*, to *Cold Case*, *Scrubs*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *Profiler*, *A Father for Brittany*, *Murder in New Hampshire*, *Roots: The Gift*, *All My Sons*, as well as *All My Children*, *General Hospital*, *The Waltons* and *Nurse* to name a few.



Michael is now married to John Doherty, and has five beautiful grandchildren.