

FASHION & STYLE | NYT NOW

Hilaria Baldwin Holds Her Center

By DOUGLAS QUENQUA MAY 30, 2014

Even for a yogi, maintaining peace can be hard when you're married to New York's most popular enfant terrible.

Case in point: Hilaria Baldwin not only stood still, but she posed graciously for two female paparazzi who emerged, seemingly out of nowhere, from a crowd that formed on Broadway and 53rd Street in early May to watch the striking brunette tape a segment for the TV show "Extra." She even thanked them, flashing a smile sweeter than Fun Dip.

"I never would have done that before," said Ms. Baldwin, 30, in the back of a cab to Lincoln Center moments later. "I am trying to make my peace with the paparazzi." They are, after all, a fact of life for anyone orbiting Alec Baldwin, the 56-year-old actor and controversy magnet whom she married in 2012. (It all began in 2011, when she winked at him in a downtown vegetarian restaurant.)

But fast-forward six days, and Ms. Baldwin is trying to get a posse going. Hours after her husband made news with his arrest for riding his bike the wrong way down Fifth Avenue, she tweeted several photos of an aggressive photographer who confronted her and her 9-month-old daughter, Carmen, outside their East Village apartment.

Ms. Baldwin said in one of her tweets, "This man almost hit my child and ran when the cops arrived. Anyone know him?" Shortly after, she posted a short video of the swarming photographers on her sidewalk with the caption: "Wanna be a celebrity? Enjoy."

Peace, as they say, is a process.

That one of the city's most sought-after yoga instructors, a lifelong vegetarian who talks a lot about things like "spirit" and "being present," has come to be known for such public disharmony may be a cosmic joke, or evidence of how a combination of fame and New York City can wear on even the nicest person. But such is life on the fault line of celebrity and opportunity.

In the three years she has been linked to Mr. Baldwin, the former competitive dancer has had her profile rise exponentially as her husband has made it clear he wants to recede from public view.

"I just can't live in New York anymore," he wrote in the Feb. 24 issue of New York magazine. Los Angeles, he said, with its gated homes and minimal interaction with the public, may be a better fit. "I used to hate that," he said. "But New York has changed."

Though Ms. Baldwin shares her husband's dim estimation of the paparazzi — she calls them "paps" — she is not shy about reaping the benefits of celebrity life. After all, she considers it her professional duty to spread the word about fitness, health and yoga (starting with her husband, who has lost 30 pounds on her watch, give or take).

"I could go back to teaching the yoga and not doing the TV for the rest of my life and be perfectly happy," she said over sparkling water in an outdoor cafe across from Lincoln Center shortly after the "Extra" shoot. Her voice betrays a slight Spanish accent, remains of a childhood split between Boston and Spain.

"I'm doing it because life has presented an opportunity, and I love the people I work with and I like what I'm doing," she said.

Who wouldn't? In 2012, Ms. Baldwin, a graduate of New York University, became a lifestyle correspondent for "Extra," in part because of her husband's friendship with Steve Sunshine, a producer of the show. Lately she has spent time in Los Angeles pitching a talk show that focuses on health, and in May she was named a contributor to the second season of the Hamptons' Beach Magazine. She has teamed up with the Lexington Clothing Co. to produce a small line of clothing and beach accessories (the

Alec Shirdress is \$179). Ms. Baldwin can't spend as much time as she once did teaching at Yoga Vida, the downtown studio she helped start in 2010. (She is preparing to open a third studio.) But when she does, you're about as likely to secure a good mat as you are a Sunday night table at Rao's.

"It's been an opportunity for us to share some really good quality yoga," Mike Patton, the co-owner of Yoga Vida, said of his star instructor's celebrity status. But it's required some adjustments, like when her hectic schedule began to cut into her teaching time.

"As she started to become less involved with teaching at the studio, it affected business," he said. "People were used to seeing Hilaria" (pronounced ee-LAH-ree-ah).

On the other hand, articles about her newfound romance often mentioned the studio at a time when it needed the publicity. "That kind of press you can't really find any other way," he said.

Luckily for her students, one no longer has to be in Ms. Baldwin's presence to replicate her poses. Through the clever use of social media, she is bringing yoga to far more people than she once thought possible.

"I was shooting for 'Extra' with Jenny McCarthy and Ryan Seacrest at the Times Square ball drop, and we were talking about New Year's resolutions, and I realized I didn't have one," she recalled. So she came up with the idea of posting a picture of herself striking a yoga pose — no matter where she was or what she was doing — to post on Instagram every day in 2014. She calls it Yoga Posture of the Day (sorry: #yogapostureoftheday).

"I committed to it on the spot without thinking about it," she said while laughing. "And now I'm stuck. It's a challenge to come up with a new pose every day." Minutes before, she had finished taking a photo in the plaza at Lincoln Center, one of many she is keeping in her phone for a day when she is too busy or lacking inspiration.

The eminently shareable and sometimes controversial pictures show yoga as Ms. Baldwin likes it: fun, athletic and unapologetically sexual. Here she is striking a camel pose in Washington Square Park, there a

handstand in a bathtub, wearing only a bikini and gripping the shower head with her foot. In January, she drew criticism for appearing to annoy her fellow first-class passengers with a pilot pose on an airplane. On Valentine's Day, a photo of Ms. Baldwin doing a handstand above her reposing husband, the two locked in an upside-down kiss, went viral. The quirky shots have garnered Ms. Baldwin an enthusiastic following among people who enjoy pictures of fit, funny mothers doing yoga in stilettos. But do they not interfere with Mr. Baldwin's attempts to make his private life less public?

"Hilaria must have her own relationship with the press," Mr. Baldwin said in an email. Asked whether her emphasis on peace and balance have rubbed off on him, he replied: "I still bring a good deal of cynicism to my day. Hilaria is wiser, and therefore more positive, than me. Positivity is a sign of health."

(Not to be outdone, Mr. Baldwin will sometimes post #Alecpostructureoftheday pictures to his own Instagram account, usually of him pretending to sleep.)

As for his threats to leave New York, Ms. Baldwin shrugs them off. "I'm not leaving New York," she said.

"I understand that article," she continued. "I understand what it can feel like when people are bullying you, and you can't just seem to catch a break, and people don't see who you are. And people completely paint their own picture. And you're supposed to zip it and just go along with whatever they say."

But "where we want to raise our child, and where both of us are working, is primary," she continued. So New York, for now, is it.

If they have another child, she said, they may move to Brooklyn.

Correction: May 31, 2014

An earlier version of this article misstated the garment Ms. Baldwin wore in the bathtub handstand photo she posted on Instagram. It was a bikini, not underwear.

A version of this article appears in print on June 1, 2014, on page ST1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Baldwin Holds Her Center.

© 2014 The New York Times Company