

# SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## It's been a wild ride for publicist since leaving state capitol

### The scoop on Kassy Perry

#### WHO IS SHE?

President and chief executive officer, Perry Communications Group

#### THE ESSENTIALS

##### Age: 46

• Born in Fukuoka, Japan, where her father, an Air Force physician, was stationed. She lives now in Sacramento with daughters Morgan, 16, and Kaitlin, 13.

**Education:** B.A., English literature, University of California Davis; spent her junior year at the University of London.

#### HER FAVORITE THINGS

• **Movie:** "Thank You for Smoking"

• **Book:** "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell

• **Restaurant:** Mikuni

• **Vacation spot:** Moose, Wyo.

• **Music:** Contemporary country

#### Quote:

"Character is doing what is right when nobody's looking," former U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts Jr.

**K**assy Perry is doing very well. Her Perry Communications Group handled \$2.3 million in business last year, and expects the business to continue to expand with her base of health-care clients.

But that's not nearly as important as walking.

Two years ago, she couldn't after she broke her back when she was thrown from her jumping horse when it tripped. Perry was told she might not walk again.

"Medical science did wonderful things," she said. "A brand new procedure was used that, in effect, created new vertebrae. I walk just fine and I'm back show jumping, although after I fell a second time and saw my 13-year-old daughter crying, I decided to cut it back a notch. I jump at lower heights now."

She also remembers the phone call she got in 2003 when she and her daughters were having dinner.

"I almost didn't answer it," she recalled. But she did, and the voice on the other end said, "Hello, this is Katie Couric."

#### Why did Katie Couric call?

I had done some work with a philanthropic organization in Hollywood with Lisa Paulsen, the president of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, and she was having

lunch with Katie (Couric, then NBC's "Today" morning show co-anchor and now CBS evening news anchor) who told her about the initiative she wanted to promote. Lisa suggested she call me, and she did. Subsequently, I went to New York to meet with her and develop the campaign.

When she called, I thought it was someone pulling a joke, but it was her, and she told me about the initiative she wanted to promote to increase the public's awareness about colon cancer and she asked me to help. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to help create and launch Katie's colon cancer initiative (Couric's husband, Jay Monahan, died from colon cancer in 1998). It was a national campaign, and in three months I raised \$20 million.

#### How did you get in the business you're in, and how did you come to specialize in healthcare issues?

I grew up at a lab bench. My father is a doctor, my mother is a nurse. My summer jobs were not like other kids' summer jobs. One year I had to take the spleens out of 6,000 mice. My brother had to haul placentas from hospitals for original stem-cell research.

I went to UC Davis as pre-med and pre-law, trying to decide, and at the last minute I heard about an apprenticeship in the newsroom at KCRA, Channel 3. I was accepted and loved it. I assumed when I was a kid that I would have a career in medicine. I thought about it as a job, but it was never a passion. I saw television news as being immediate, informing people. ... I worked eight years in television and radio until I was recruited away from Channel 3 by the (Gov. George) Deukmejian administration for the press office.

After serving in the Deukmejian administration, I was one of

the holdovers that Pete Wilson kept on, helping implement one of his first big programs, the restructuring of the mental health programs. I was chief of the press office for the Department of Health Services and then with the Department of Mental Health, and then in the governor's office as deputy communications officer.

#### When did you transition to the private sector?

I was with Gov. Wilson from 1990 to '94, and then the birth of my second daughter convinced me that working in the vortex 24/7 probably wasn't conducive to raising small children. One time, at 2 o'clock in the morning, my 3-year-old was sleeping in a little sleeping bag on the floor next to the computer in my office while I was grinding out press releases during the budget frenzy, and I looked down and she was gone. I looked up and across the courtyard there was the governor and Bill Hauck, his deputy chief of staff, holding my daughter and asking if I was missing anybody.

Then, when my younger daughter was born, I was on maternity leave and had no intention of not going back to the governor's office but got a great offer from a local public relations guy who asked me if I wanted to work part time. I said no, I wanted to work full time, but normal full time, eight hours a day.

I did that for a while then had an opportunity to go out on my own with a significant client, PhRMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America). I worked out of my home at the start, but I discovered that I was an office person. I eventually opened an office in the building I'm still in, 925 L St.

— Interview by Bob Schmidt

