

# The Life & Times of Savanna Storm

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## READ ALL ABOUT HER!

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WHO IS SHE?



For sure, she didn't always make jewellery. She spent her first 25 professional years as a photojournalist, working the international circuit. She sailed to England at 19, where she bagged a 10 week trip on a tourist bus around Europe, on condition she cooked for the group of 30 twenty-somethings..

## ANY PORT IN A STORM

### EARLY DAYS - PRAGUE TO AFRICA & BEYOND

Catch her if you can! Traveller, collector, photographer, writer, jewellery artist, peripatetic, cook, manifester, unashamed opportunist, rule breaker, and occasional belly dancer, she's been on the road since she could sit. She was born as Susan Storm Bloom to politically dissident parents who eventually fled to Switzerland. Baby Susan was dazzled by the shop windows, the clothing, the jewellery and the movement of wheels.

Her parents then took her to London, and to Africa for a complex but fascinating childhood during the Apartheid regime where her parents were active in the civil rights movement and luminaries like Nelson Mandela, Bishop Tutu, jazz musicians, poets, artists and playwrights were regular visitors to her parent's home. She was brought up by an African nanny she loved with all her heart and soul, and will forever grateful that she experienced the African culture as deeply as she did. She'd spend days in the shanty towns, listening to music, learning to cook African food, dancing barefoot, or making lace with tiny beads.

Take every knock as a boost, and every stumbling block as a stepping stone.

### SHE LEADS A COLOURFUL LIFE

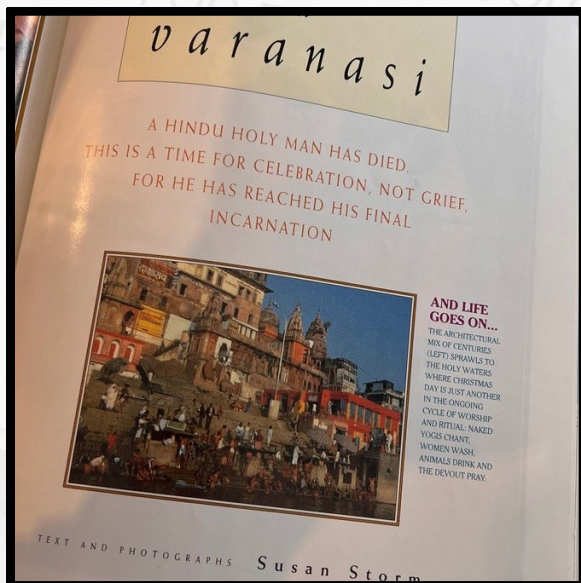
Covered in colours for Holi, or chasing dragons, Savanna got the gigs because she took the chances.



# Special Edition

## AS IT HAPPENED

### SAVANNA BECOMES NEWSWORTHY



Savanna - who was still Susan at that stage, landed her first journo job as a news rookie on ITV in London in the 70's. The world was her oyster, but she made a too-rash decision to return to Cape Town to marry a boy who dumped her on return. She married a nice doctor, instead, but found herself emigrated to Australia, with a baby she loved and a husband she realised she didn't, when he revealed he didn't really like travelling. She left him and travelled alone to India to lick her wounds and contemplate the rest of her life.

As luck would have it, she was in an old wooden boat on the Ganges in Varanasi, clapped out camera in hand, when a dead holy man was being dumped in that holy river, along with turtles and rotting saris. A lotilla of Japanese tourists paddled past her viewfinder. She shooed them away by shouting the lie that she worked for National Geographic magazine. They bowed and let her have her shots, which she sent to Nat Geo. An editor called from Washington asking if she'd like to work for this illustrious magazine. Within the hour, Savanna had enrolled in a university media degree because brave as she was, heading into the world of journalism without some training, was, well ... risky.

Then life took many magical turns. All expenses paid trips for exciting assignments came thick and fast. Armed - and definitely dangerous - she'd be in the Lesser Sundas, or Taiwan, or Dubai, or Shanghai, or Rio Gallegos or Mauritius at a moment's notice. There was a lot of glamour and glitterati, but it was very hard work.

#### FLY ALL NIGHT, WORK ALL DAY - WRITE TO MIDNIGHT, REPEAT.

Little time for rinsing, that's for sure. Savanna had to look fabulous for the early mornings she was collected from a private jet, and into the plush leather of a limousine purring on the tarmac. Other assignments meant hanging around a leaking dinghy (and drinking rum on deck) with the crew from the Discovery Channel photographing Komodo dragons. Or lurching around on a helicopter that was trying to land on a tanker to rescue an injured seaman. Dining with Nelson Mandela, or sharing a bubble bath and Dom Perignon with Baroness du Rothchild in the iconic Blue Train on the way to dine and dance with President Robert Mugabe.

"The most important items of luggage," advises Savanna, "besides my passport, are a spare set of decent Italian undies, two tubes of Chanel lipstick, a new toothbrush, a smart shawl that serves every purpose from a change tent in India, head gear in Dubai, a sieve in Kathmandu, a baby sling in Zanzibar, a papaya carrier in Bali, a blanket in Borobudur, or bandages in Bangkok."

"My office was anywhere and everywhere. Waiting for a post office to open in Patagonia, being betrothed to a Samburu warrior, filing stories in the Masai Mara, or confronting a buffalo on a Himalayan bridge was all in a day's work." Savanna photographed, dignitaries, artists, scientists, surgeries, cataract operations, a giraffe giving birth, helicoptering over Igaussi falls and elephant sanctuaries. No assignment was too risky, too hard, too long or too far away. She won awards for her writing, and her photography. "My camera was my shield," smiles Savanna. "Behind it, I felt - no, I was, invincible."



Act like you're already famous, and you soon will be.

# A day in the life of a storyteller

## IN HER OWN WORDS...



I travelled every two weeks, on planes, helicopters, trains, boats, ferries, ships, hot air balloons, micro lites, Rolls Royce's, bicycles, tuk tuks, African taxis, camels, donkeys, lorries, tractors, elephants, and even an ostrich. I wrote hundreds of articles. I travelled first class and I travelled rough. I slept in palaces, suites, penthouses, mirrored tents, yurts, mud huts, villas, caravans, reed mats, tree houses, schooners, and I even slept in an empty swimming pool when the campsite was full. I've eaten buffalo bladder, rattle snake, dog, jellyfish, scorpions, grasshoppers, ants - none of these willingly when I had trouble understanding the menu. I've enjoyed Peking duck, lobster, fine champagnes, Vietnamese street food, goat's blood and Balinese spices. I've been the guest of honour in a remote Moroccan village where I was served flies in tagine. In the outback, I had a kangaroo killed for my lunch even though I protested I was a vegetarian.



I've broken toes, wrists, my nose and my back. I've missed planes and slept through stations. I've suffered encephalitis, dysentery, witnessed a knife attack, a baby born on a bus, a goat slaying, cock fighting, cremation ceremonies. I've heard stories that made me weep, and others that turned my own life around in the best of ways. I heard stories that made me laugh till I cried, and always left something behind as a gift.

*You'll never never know if you never never go. Just DO IT.*

## HOW DID SHE DO IT?

Take A Risk A Day is what Savanna's mother advised her on her 21st birthday. And she does.

She's written about Komodo dragons, Pushkar camels, heart transplants, female circumcision, the effect of seismic testing on whales, the Singaporean economy, pearl harvests, car rallies, artists, musicians, famous chefs and fabulous hotels, jungles, gardens, volcanoes, clothing designers and potters. She's traipsed through Patagonia, Mauritius, Nepal, India, Zanzibar, Morocco, Italy, Java, Himalaya, Outback, deserts and jungles.

She's interviewed politicians, doctors, scientists, refugees and millionaires, the tattooed and the amputated, prostitutes, consul generals, a prince, a few queens, a drag queen, a countess and a professional forger.

She spent time with the Samburus in Kenya, watching blood letting and accidentally becoming engaged to a warrior because she fancied his orange beaded bangle. She travelled with Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Naomi Campbell, Mia Farrow, Imran & Jemima Kahn & Quincy Jones. She photographed bronzed men on tropical islands, and rode a donkey to see dawn over Mount Bromo. She survived a light plane crash, altitude sickness, and being lost in translation.

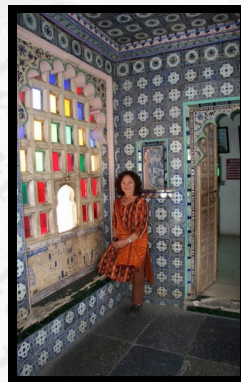
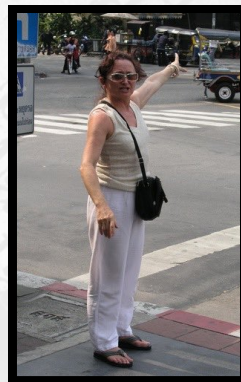


# Another day in the life of a storyteller

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN ... AND AGAIN ... AND AGAIN ...



Savanna tottered on fragile bridges across rivers and ravines, hiked through jungles to get to Igauzu falls while listening to the music from "The Mission" on her headphones. She's cuddled lions, stalked dragons, slithered down a volcano in a mud slide, been eaten by mosquitoes as big as dragon flies and sucked dry by leeches. Language was never a problem. A smile, a wave, an acknowledgement and a shared meal covers everything. As a woman, she was admitted to their inner sanctums to hear their stories and sometimes left with a treasure they'd been gracious and generous enough to give her in return for a shawl, or some money, or a battery. Or even a shared acknowledgement of what it was like to be a woman. To have to be brave, and independent, to be a protector, a feeder, to be a sister.



### YES YES ENOUGH ALREADY - SHOW ME THE JEWELS

Along came 9/11 and turned the world upside down. Savanna was stuck in Africa when it unfolded, with a bag of cash she'd received as an assignment payment. A woman approached, clutching her stomach, saying she was hungry, mama, hungry. She carried a cloth bag, that looked heavy. "What's in your bag?" Savanna asked. "Silver", said the woman, opening her bag. "From my village in Ethiopia. I want to go home." Savanna had been working for Lonely Planet, photographing women in their tribal finery. She knew the significance of that silver when it gleamed from the bottom of a grubby cloth bag. She exchanged her money for the bag of silver, enough to get the woman home and fed for a year. And life turned in the way it should, yet again.



What's she up to Next?

# NOW FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT



SAVANNA BREAKS ONTO THE JEWELLERY STAGE



JEWELLERY ADORNS EVERY WOMAN OF EVERY AGE AND STAGE



## A jewellery star is born

When Savanna finally returned to Australia, people wanted to buy her silver - as she even wore her treasures to the supermarket. Photography had also just become digital so she was seldom surprised to see someone had pinched her images and her stories were given other people's bylines. She was done with journalism as she knew it. She wasn't done with travelling though. She continued her journeys with her camera, but now she was interested in ethnic jewellery and the stories behind each piece.

Stories of dowry, economics, geography, history. Female stories. Women's stories. She listened and learned, and acquired. She became a different kind of storyteller. Telling stories in the jewels that women had gained, loved, lost, traded or abandoned. She travelled to South and West Africa. To India, Nepal, China, Thailand, Hong Kong. She owned three galleries in Sydney, which became meccas, souks for people to visit, and learn about silver and trade beads. To listen, enjoy, and begin their own collections.

Soon the rich and famous started visiting for their unique pieces. "I'm lunching with the Aga Kahn - have a black piece ready for me at 2.20 on Thursday - no budget", happened often, or a desperate midnight call "It's an emergency, I'm at your gallery, I forgot our anniversary - please open up for me." Or a security officer would crackle into the phone "Pssst - so and so film star is arriving. Pull down the blinds, she wants a private viewing."



Savanna never wanted to become a sweet little older lady. She wanted to be the woman about whom people said "Oh, heck, what's she up to now?" and rush into her older age on a speeding yellow Vespa.

## Extra Late Edition

### AN EVEN WILDER RIDE

# LADY LUCK STRIKES AGAIN



Ten years, five galleries, hundreds of new custodians, and a coterie of archaeologists, historians, designers, collectors and dealers made a perfect decade. Savanna needed a break. She closed the galleries and traipsed off to Kathmandu to breathe some high air and commune with holy men. In Morocco, while travelling with close friends and an identity crisis, she changed her name to Savanna. "My new name liberated me to be whoever I wanted" says Savanna. "Europe is in my head and skin, but Africa is in my bones, my blood, my heart and my soul. Savanna is a better name for me."



Her inspiration for whatever she's currently working on comes from that fascinating, complex, creative and colourful continent. In Turkey she first laid eyes and hands on beads from antiquity. In Venice she was offered a job with a trade beads dealer - see left - and his lovely wife. They put her in language school, and gave her an apartment on a canal. Later in the year, Savanna returned briefly to Sydney. A handsome Sicilian man saw her from his car in the street, and followed her into a coffee shop. "Life is a daring adventure, or nothing at all," he said, quoting Anais Nin.

They married two years later on Lake Como, and honeymooned in Venice. They travelled to Morocco, India, Turkey, Prague and Croatia, England, Paris and Italy, he learning, she collecting.

### LIFE IS A DARING ADVENTURE

Savanna's specialises in making unique, individual pieces that tell the stories of previous owners. She's had over twenty solo exhibitions. She's sold thousands of her unique creations world wide. Her pieces are for brave, adventurous, confident women who, in the process of becoming a custodian of a wearable treasure, are prepared to take their own chances and stand out from the predictable. In so doing, they are preserving culturally valuable elements that would have been melted down to a disappeared history.

