

I'm not proud of my affair, but it was good for my career, says Leith

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IT IS not the traditional careers advice, but it appears having an affair could be an unexpected asset in building a business.

Prue Leith, the chef, has spoken of how being a mistress inadvertently helped her form her successful career, giving her enough time to indulge her romantic side while working all hours.

Leith, one of Britain's most successful businesswomen, said her long-term affair as a young woman had given her the freedom to work after her lover went home to his family.

Speaking at the Henley Literary Festival yesterday, Leith told an audience



Leith and Rayne Kruger, pictured in 1989

that she was not necessarily "proud" of her background, but could now see the positive side when it came to building her career.

She has previously spoken frankly about her personal life, which saw her conduct a 13-year affair with the writer Rayne Kruger, the husband of her mother's best friend. So close was the relationship between their families, Leith once told the *Telegraph*, that the affair was "practically incest".

The couple went on to marry and have a family.

Yesterday Leith, 75, said the relationship had in fact given her much-needed time to build her catering business, dedicating many hours to her work.

"He was invisible and he went home at night, so I could work every hour," she said. "I worked very, very hard. I'm

not saying I'm proud of the fact I had a long affair with a married man, but it did help my business. By the time I married and had children I had the business under my belt."

Once she became a wife and mother, she threw herself into family life and worked during the school day.

One of her proudest moments, she said, was when her young son refused to believe she was one of the UK's most successful businesswomen after she appeared in a *Daily Telegraph* feature after winning an award. "He said, 'You can't be, Mum, you're always here'. And I thought bingo, I've fooled him."

"I wasn't always there. He was at school five days a week, all day, and I could take weekends off because I was the boss."

"It does help when you run the business - you can make the rules."

Speaking of how she began her long career in food, Leith - whose new book is called *Food of Love* - said she had been inspired after living in Paris.

"You can't live in Paris for two years and not fall in love with food," she said. "Now honestly food in France has become so boring."

"I always go with high hopes and to get the kinds of food I remember. You can certainly get it in expensive restaurants, which are brilliant because there are still good skills there."

"But if you go to a routier, in the old days you could get absolutely brilliant food."

"When did you last get a decent frankfurter? Now they get those awful frankfurters that come out of a plastic packet, potatoes come out of a tin."

The writer also told an audience of her earlier years as a novelist, after she was warned not to write about 60-something women because nobody would want to read it.

"I kept telling people 'you're crazy!'" said Leith. "Who's got the time and the money and the inclination to read?" She later took the book to another publisher, where it became an instant best-seller.

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West End girl Theatre-goers have been given the first sight of pop star Pixie Lott as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* as she uses her *Strictly Come Dancing* success to launch her stage career, stepping into Audrey Hepburn's shoes for her debut in March next year.

Hunt on for TV's young DCI Tennison

SHE was the hard-bitten, no-nonsense detective chief inspector brought to life for millions of fans by the award-winning Dame Helen Mirren.

Now the mysterious background of *Prime Suspect's* Jane Tennison has been revealed and her creator is scouring drama schools to bring the DCI as a young woman to life on screen.

More than 20 years after the character first appeared on television, Lynda La Plante has portrayed Tennison as a naive young officer in a new novel.

It shows how she endured flagrant sexism - having her bottom pinched, washing up, and being forced to fetch her superior officer's lunch.

And it will reveal how she learnt a "hard lesson" after mixing her personal and professional life.

La Plante is looking for an actress to play the 22-year-old Tennison for an ITV series to be screened next year.

She told the Henley Literary Festival: "I'm going to find an unknown and make her a star."

Mirren spoke of her own acting career this week, saying she began in an era where nude scenes were expected.

On a US chat show, she said: "That's the good thing about getting older - you don't have to do that sort of thing any more. My pleasure pillows are purely for my husband."

Why give animals rights? They don't vote, says Princess

PRINCESS Michael of Kent has provoked the wrath of animal campaign groups by saying creatures do not have "rights" because they do not pay taxes.

The Princess, a novelist and historian, said that although people have an "obligation" towards animals, the idea they have entitlements is incorrect.

Appearing at the Henley Literary Festival to discuss her new novel, *Agnes Sorrell: Mistress of Beauty*, she said: "Today we're always hearing about animal rights. Well, I'm a great animal lover and involved in a lot of conservation, but animals don't have rights. They don't have bank accounts, they don't vote. You only have rights if you pay your taxes. You earn your rights."

Elisa Allen, a director at animal rights group Peta, said: "Her daft assessment would mean that children and certain classes of human beings are also are not entitled to rights."