

A rooftop studio set in New York City. In the foreground, there are studio lights and equipment on a wooden deck. In the background, a dense city skyline is visible under a clear sky. A sign for 'NEW YORKER' is visible on one of the buildings. The title 'Big Apple Babe' is overlaid on the image in large, stylized letters. 'Big' and 'Apple' are in white, and 'Babe' is in a vibrant pink color.

Big Apple Babe

She redefined the independent Manhattan woman for Carrie Bradshaw wannabes. So who better to celebrate *Page Six Magazine's* anniversary issue than Candace Bushnell? The author, whose new book hits stores this week, talks about love (with her ballet dancer husband), her legacy and life in New York City post-*Sex and the City*. By Patty Adams

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIKI FORSHEE



This page and on the cover: Bill Blass dress, \$5,500; Saks Fifth Avenue, 212-940-2542. Michael Kors shoes, price upon request; michaelkors.com for locations. Kimberly McDonald brown diamond and geode pendant, \$6,800; Bergdorf Goodman, 212-753-7300. Kimberly McDonald brown diamond briolette necklace, \$46,000; Bergdorf Goodman, 212-753-7300. Ring, Candace's own.

STYLING: KELLEY CULP

oney blond highlights? Check. Sample-size physique? Check. Closet full of designer duds to wrap around said physique? Check. But Candace Bushnell, the creative genius behind *Sex and the City* and the NBC TV hit *Lipstick Jungle*, doesn't just look like a character from one of her best-selling novels. (Take your pick: *Sex and the City*, *Lipstick Jungle*, *Trading Up* or *Four Blondes*.) By the way she lives (a feminist, she eventually married a much younger man) and who she writes about (most famously, of course, Carrie Bradshaw), Candace, 49, embodies a modern breed of New York woman that is as ambitious about love as her career. She is also as much a part of the fabric of New York City as the landmarks she helped popularize: Magnolia Bakery, Pastis and her beloved Greenwich Village. Candace insists, though, that while she relates to her characters and their experiences, her books don't comprise a de facto autobiography. "People think because of the way I write and who I write about, I'm going to be a diva," she laughs.

Candace is most decidedly un-diva-like—but still perfectly polished—in her Village apartment, dressed casually in white Ralph Lauren jeans and a boho-style tunic paired with orange flip-flops and retro black-framed glasses. The explanation for her low-key look? "I'm not a morning person," she shrugs. Yet at 10:30 a.m., she's been up for hours writing and doing interviews. Lounging in her shabby chic living room, Candace notes that her rise to fame wasn't overnight. The daughter of Calvin, a rocket scientist (yes, really), and Camille, a travel agent turned real estate agent (she died of breast cancer in 2006), she grew up in upper middle class Glastonbury, Conn. Or as her school friends liked to call it, "Glastonboring," since everyone wore the same Lacoste polos and started playing tennis at age 4. At times she couldn't wait to get out of the sleepy town, but Candace still has fond memories of her competitive horse riding days there. "I think for young women it's important to be involved in sports," she says, crossing her legs while balancing on a small ottoman in front of the marble fireplace. "You learn that there are days when you win, days you lose, days when you're competing on a team with your friends, and days

In New York City, who you know is almost more important than who you are."



From top: Candace and husband Charles Askegard on their wedding day; Kim Raver and Brooke Shields on the *Lipstick Jungle* set.

when you have to compete against them. I think it gives a girl some perspective on giving things her all."

And Candace has put those lessons into practice. After three semesters at Rice University in Houston, she dropped out to "run away to New York City." Her goal was to become a writer, but when she first moved to Manhattan in 1978 at age 19 she lived in a two-bedroom apartment on 11th and Broadway with three other girls. She had to scrape to pay her \$150-a-month rent, often eating \$1 hot dogs or a can of soup for meals. Dating was a way to score free meals and meet the city's glitterati.

"New York has always been a city of insecure overachievers," says Candace, who earned a writing degree from NYU in 1981. "People feel their second job is going out at night and making connections. Who you know is almost more important than who you are." So she spent nights partying at places like Studio 54 and meeting men, which included high-profilers such as millionaire publishers Ron Galotti and Bob Guccione Jr. (the former was her inspiration for *Sex and the City*'s Mr. Big).

While interviewing for writing and assistant positions at magazines and newspapers, Candace tried her hand at modeling and acting. "But I was too short to do runways [she's 5'6"], and I sucked at acting," she confesses with a slight chuckle. She wanted to be taken seriously as a journalist but says dryly, "Sexism was blatant in the 1980s. Most women had to write for women's magazines and at the time women's magazines were considered a ghetto. If you wrote for them, you would never get a chance to write for *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*. There wasn't a lot of encouragement." After early jobs with *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Self*, she launched a freelance career, writing sexy stories for *Cosmopolitan* and *Esquire*. But there were lean times. In 1991, when she turned 33, she made only \$8,000, and was sleeping on a block of foam because she couldn't afford a mattress. It was becoming painfully obvious that she might have to crawl back to Glastonbury with only a collection of bargain bin designer shoes to show for it.

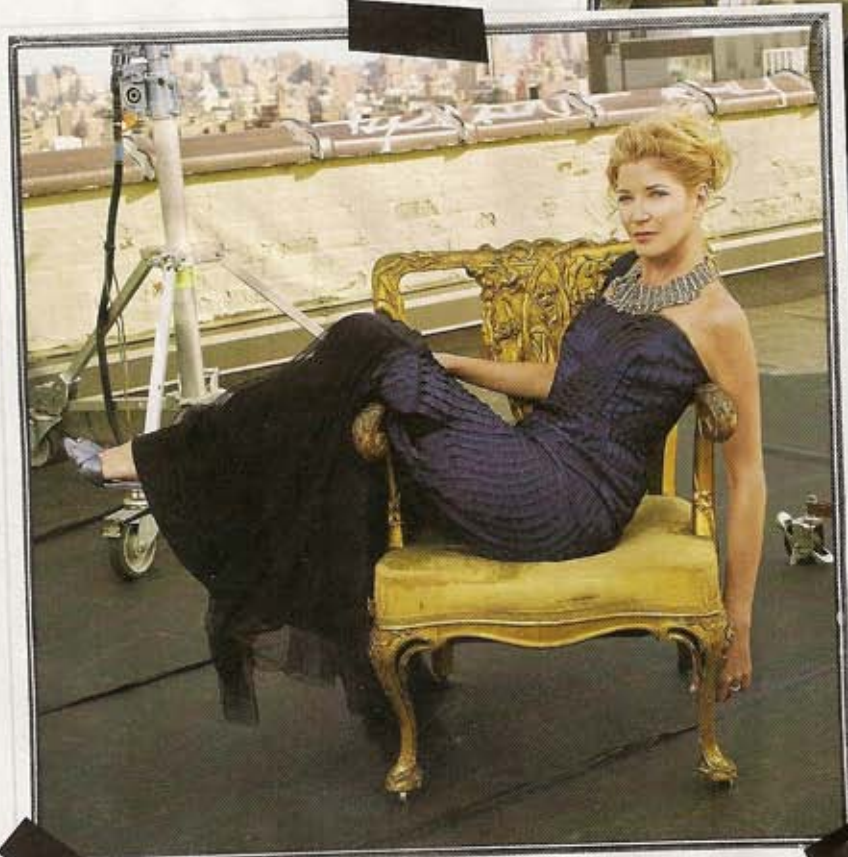
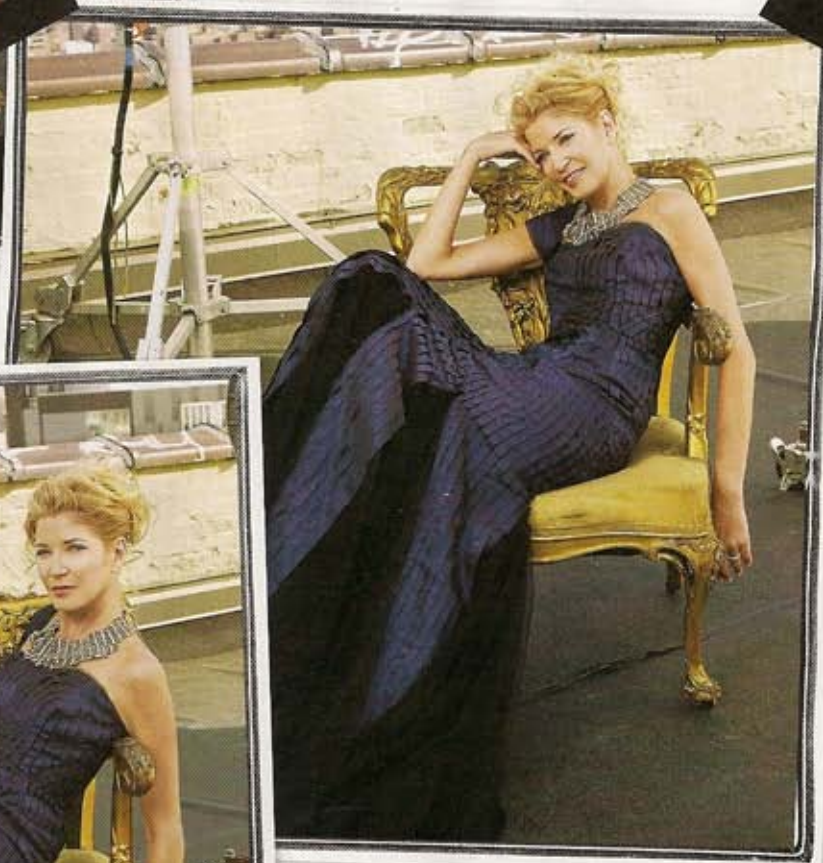
But then the call came that changed her life. "I was asked to write a column for the *New York Observer* called 'Sex and the



HAIR: CREIGHTON FOR SELL MANNEQUIN; MAKEUP: TIMORIA MCQUEEN FOR SALLY; STYLING: COLE RIVELLI; NBC UNIVERSAL, INC.

Monique Lhuillier dress, \$4,200; Monique Lhuillier, 323-655-1088.
Manolo Blahnik shoes, \$685; Neiman Marcus, 800-937-9146. David
Yurman green onyx ring, \$4,900; David Yurman, 212-752-4255.
Ring, Candace's own, as before.

“There’s nothing harder than being single. And things are even harder for women today.”



Alberta Ferretti dress, \$11,915;
special order at 212-632-9300.
Manolo Blahnik shoes, as
before. Vera Wang necklace,
\$850; Vera Wang, 212-628-3400.
Ring, Candace’s own, as before.

City.' My first assignment was to go to the sex club Le Trapeze, and the second was to write about a man who was a womanizer, and then interview all of his girlfriends about him," she says. "I'd write about personal experiences, as well as observations of other people's lives." The column was an instant hit, and by the fifth installment, Candace had a book deal. The resulting 1996 novel, *Sex and the City*, and the television show, which debuted on HBO in 1998, led to a worldwide phenomenon, bringing Blahniks as well as blow jobs into the pop culture vernacular. "I think it caused so much of a buzz because women were talking about sex like men," explains Candace, who now hosts *Candace Bushnell's Sex, Success and Sensibility* on Sirius Satellite Radio. "People hadn't seen that perspective from a woman before."

When she started writing *Sex and the City*, Candace says, "I was single and in my mid-thirties, and single women in their thirties were considered desperate. But I saw them as less traditional and more adventurous. [My friends and I] quickly realized that men would come and go and that we had to be there for each other." She says she was engaged "a few times" in her thirties, but at the time the thought of marriage made her feel like she was drowning. "I was not ready to be married," reveals Candace, waving her hands like a frantic air traffic controller to emphasize the point. "I never thought I'd be the marrying type, really." But that changed when, in 2002, Candace met Charles Askegard, a 6'4" principal dancer for the New York City Ballet (aged 33 at the time, he is 10 years her junior).

The two were introduced by friends at a \$3,000-a-plate spring benefit for his ballet company. They instantly hit it off and spent a long night dancing at Bungalow 8. "We fell in love the night we met," gushes Candace. Within five weeks, they were talking marriage, and three weeks later, they tied the knot in a low-key, July 4 beach wedding in Nantucket. They both walked down the aisle barefoot—she in a Ralph Lauren dress with pink roses in her hair, he in a white Prada suit. "I waited for the right person, and I encourage other women to do the same," says Candace. She couldn't care less about being branded a cougar. "[It's] a derogatory term used to make a

woman feel uncomfortable because she's not keeping up the status quo. When have I kept up the status quo?" asks Candace.

Though Candace has never felt a desire to have kids, she's still eager to fight, through shows like *Lipstick Jungle*, for other women's ability to strive for a true career-family balance. "I saw so many New York women in their forties, with high-powered careers, who loved their jobs," says Candace, executive producer of *Lipstick Jungle*. "Some were married, some weren't. Some had kids, others didn't. And it didn't seem to matter. So I wanted to spread the word to women in other parts of the country that you *can* have it all."

"Candace has tapped into the complexity of the modern woman," Brooke Shields, 43, who stars on the show, tells *Page Six Magazine*. "She creates characters who are strong and unafraid to fail or show their flaws, while still being glamorous." Co-star Kim Raver, 39, believes women are drawn to Candace's creations because, "She's a true New Yorker with her finger on the pulse of the times. I feel lucky to have her intelligence, humor and insight." When *Lipstick Jungle* returns on September 24, Candace says the lead characters "lives [will be] turned upside down." Something that, for the first time in her life, she *can't* relate to.

Now, both married and a successful novelist, Candace is content to stay in and cook, or walk her Ibiza hound, Tuco, with her husband in Washington Square Park. And she is relieved to be out of the dating pool. "There's nothing harder than being single. And things are even harder for young women these days," says Candace. (For more on this topic, visit our debate of the week on page 12.) "When I was growing up in the 1970s, you didn't have to shave your legs, let alone have a Brazilian wax." And in case you're wondering: yes, she's had Botox, but no, she hasn't had any plastic surgery—mostly out of fear that she'll end up looking like a freak.

Happy in love and in her career, this former party girl is finally at peace with herself. "I don't think you really figure things out until you're in your forties," says Candace. "And when I turn 50 in December, I'll probably say the same thing about your fifties. After all, 50 is the new 30, right?"

FIFTH AVE

Fact & Fiction

Candace gives shout-outs to her favorite city spots in her new novel, *One Fifth Avenue*.



ONE FIFTH AVENUE

Location: Obviously, 1 Fifth Avenue

In the book:

The apartment building is the central character, where wealthy players live and collide. "[When I first moved to New York] I would pass it and wonder what fabulous lives the residents must have," says Candace. "Just thinking that one day you might be able to live in a place like that sustains you when you're young and struggling." In real life, the building's tenants include doctors, lawyers and boldfaceders like Jessica Lange and Tim Burton.

ABC CARPET & HOME

Location: 888 Broadway

In the book: Beetelle and Cem Fabrikant, a wealthy couple from Atlanta, bring their fashion-obsessed daughter Lola, 22, to New York to find her an apartment. She buys everything she needs for her new home-to-be at this design mecca in the East Village, one of Candace's favorites. "It's close to One Fifth and has fabulous furniture. My husband and I have bought a lot from there: a Persian rug, our red velvet couch, chandeliers and pillows."



BABBO

Location: 110 Waverly Place

In the book: *One Fifth Avenue* character James Gooch, a novelist

with a controlling businesswoman wife (Mindy) and a penchant for the finer things (even when he can't afford them), has lunch at chi-chi Babbo—though the restaurant isn't actually open for lunch. "It was a little creative license," says Candace. "I'm a big fan of Mario Batali's and he is a quintessential New York chef. So it was a natural fit to put Babbo in the book—it has a great Village location and is expensive, which fits James' lifestyle."

JEFFREY NEW YORK

Location: 449 W. 14th Street

In the book: Southern shopaholic Lola is always looking for the most expensive fashion she can find, so it makes sense that she frequents this glamorous Gotham store that Candace also fancies. "Lola is staying at the Soho House hotel temporarily, and Jeffrey is just around the corner. They have a great shoe selection. I run in there every six months and buy about four pairs, mostly Valentino, Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik."