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just the facts.

Birthday: June 18

Provenance: "I grew up all over the place. I was born in Salisbury, North Carolina. We moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, when I was 5, then to Richmond, VA, when I was 12. I still have family in both states."

Relationship Status: He is single — and semi-ready to mingle. "It's weird; sometimes I'm like, 'I'm not ready for a relationship at all.' But there are definitely moments where I'm like, 'Man, everybody's dating somebody....'"

Split Decision: His parents divorced when Watkins was 21. "It was really weird the first Christmas because my dad was not in the house and I was like, 'What is going on?' It was rough for a couple of years, but everything is fine now."

The Feminine Mystique: Watkins has two older sisters and one younger sister. "They definitely spoiled me. I'm not gonna lie. They loved me to death! I think growing up with girls definitely made me more sensitive and it's probably made me a better actor, too. Now, my older sisters are married and I have two amazing brothers-in-law."

Back To The Drawing Board?

When he was younger, Watkins says, "art and drawing were a huge part of my life, every day, just hours spent drawing in a sketchbook. I think I'm going to start again because it was really relaxing. It definitely helped my anxiety."

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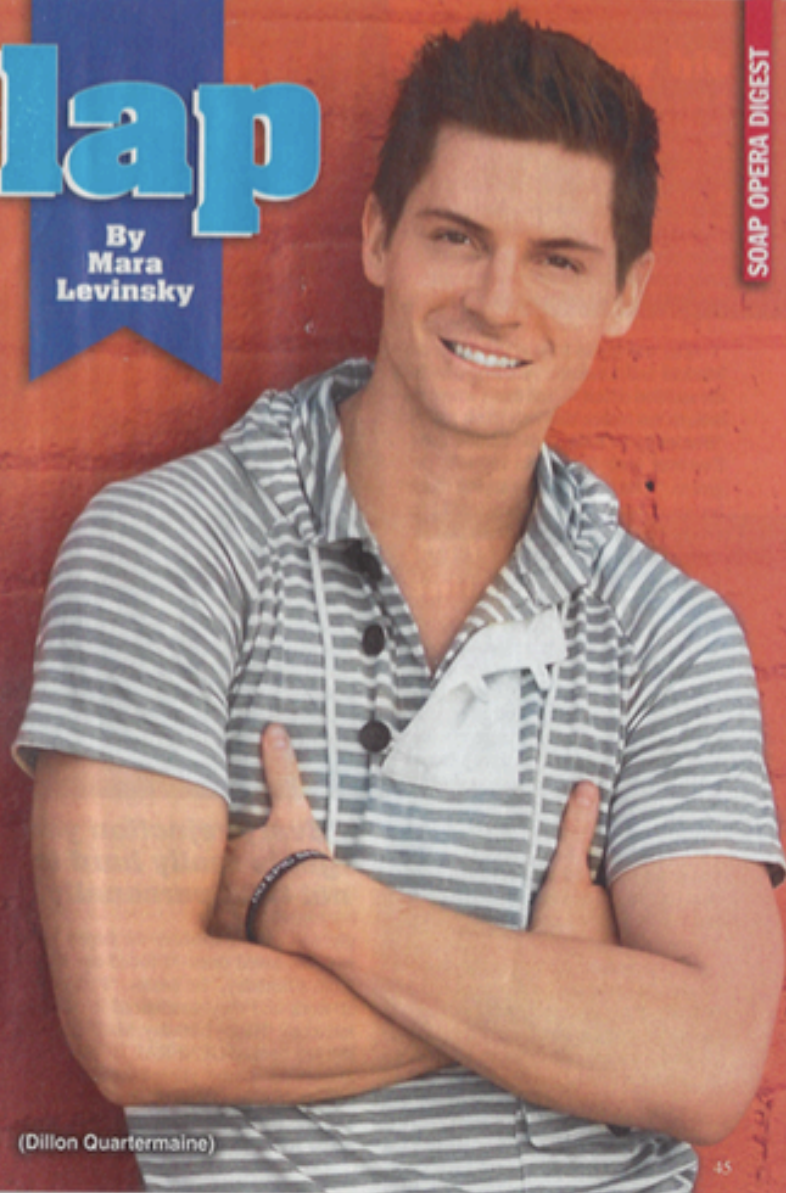
His Show Biz Struggles Behind Him For Now, Robert Palmer Watkins Is Savoring His GH Success

There is something charming about someone who doesn't take their success for granted — and something *extremely* charming listening to Robert Palmer Watkins talk about what it means to him to have found a home on GENERAL HOSPITAL.

The only son of an interior designer/crafts enthusiast mom and an ice cream franchise owner/amateur musician father, the North Carolina native showed his own penchant for the arts at an early age. "I was the kid in the neighborhood that was like, 'Let's put on a play!' or, 'I've got a video camera, let's film something!'" he recalls. "Even if we were playing tag, somehow I would make it into, like, 'Instead of tag, let's play *Scream* and the person who's 'it' is the killer and instead of tagging them, you have to fake stabbing them.'" Back then, he harbored dreams of becoming a Disney animator, but on something of a whim, he chose to enter his high school's theater program instead of its visual arts track. One play (Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*) later, "I was just hooked, and since then," with the unwavering support of his parents, "I've just been geared toward acting."

lap

By
Mara
Levinsky



(Dillon Quartermaine)

did you know?

- Before landing Dillon, he tried out for several small parts on B&B, and in 2013, he auditioned for the GH role of Morgan, which went to Bryan Craig.
- He has a wild small-world connection to on-screen father Richard Burgi (Paul). "My mom's fiancé grew up down the street from him in New Jersey and they were on the swim team together!"

After training in L.A. at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, he hit the audition circuit — and that's where his dreams ran smack dab into harsh reality. "Becoming an actor is the hardest thing I've ever gone through in my life," he groans. "That might not be saying much because I did live a pretty privileged life; I come from a really good family and we always had food on the table and all that." But the struggle to get noticed in a sea of hopefuls, and to book actual jobs, "is hard as s---!" he exclaims. "I really had to grind hard. It's emotionally, physically, and mentally draining, and every rejection you get is really hard to not take personally. I screen-tested for really big jobs, thinking, 'This is gonna change my life. I'm not gonna have to work three jobs and barely be able to afford ramen noodles for dinner, finally! My car's not gonna break down on the side of the road because I can't afford to fill it up with gas!' Then you don't get it and it just crushes you. And your whole family is excited for you and you have to tell them the bad news. It's rough."

It's no wonder, then, that he describes the day he found out he'd booked GH "the best day of my life. And even though I was miserable trying to survive out here, I'm so grateful for all of that because I don't take this job for granted. On a day where I'm feeling tired on set, I pinch myself and go, 'Shut up, dude! You're a working actor!'"

One of the sweetest parts of landing the



So Happy Together: "I've never met a family as close as mine," says Watkins, pictured with (from l.) sisters Kate, Ellen and Emily and his niece Kai. "We have such a fun time together. We would choose to hang out with each other over anyone else!"

COURTESY OF ROBERT PALMER WATKINS



Family First: "It's amazing to be a Quartermaine!" says Watkins, with GH mom Jane Elliot (Tracy).

"Every rejection you get is really hard to not take personally."

gig was getting to share the happy news with his loved ones. "I found out on my mom's birthday," he beams. "I called her at work and they announced it over the intercom: 'Happy birthday, Maribeth, your son just booked GENERAL HOSPITAL!'" She came to the phone screaming and crying. It was so great to tell my family because they'd been on the whole emotional roller coaster with me, talking me



Weekend Warriors: Watkins had a blast at his first GH fan club weekend in July. "I always have a good time with Brytni [Sarpy, Valerie, L.] and Emme [Rylan, Lulu]!"

ALL JOHNSON

off the ledge, saying, "No, don't come home. You're meant to do this." To finally have some payoff was beautiful, for lack of a better word."

Also pretty awesome? Quitting his day jobs, including his gig as a valet at the Carlyle, a high-rise condo complex. "I actually loved that job and the people I worked with are family to me, but I'm not gonna lie: It felt good to get out of there." (His buds there still have his back, and watch him on GH from the break room.)

He hasn't done much splurging with his elevated paycheck ("I did move into a new apartment, which is great, because in my old place, I didn't have a kitchen sink or a stove or a dishwasher or A/C or a parking spot, and those items make a big difference"), choosing to be more practical ("I've been broke for so long, I want to just put some money in savings"), but is discovering the many little luxuries that come with having a paid acting job. "I have free time. I want to start doing the other things that I enjoy in life — singing, going to the beach. I can breathe a little bit, because I'm not always worrying about the next audition, or tired from working two jobs."

"I think this year, I'm going to find myself again outside of acting, which

is nice," he muses. "I've been so one-track-mind on making it as an actor, and now I feel like I can find out who Robert is again."

As for finding out who Dillon is, well, the little boy who once enlisted neighborhood kids to be in his amateur movies can certainly relate to his filmmaker alter ego, and his castmates have helped him feel at ease from day one. "Emme Rylan [Lulu] has been amazing; I am so freakin' lucky to come on to this show and be paired up with her. And to have Jane Elliot [Tracy] playing my mom is such a gift. She came right to my room my first day here to start building a relationship off camera that helps give us that mother/son chemistry. Everyone here has so much to teach me and I'm just trying to soak it all up." □

funny you should notice...

■ Robert Palmer Watkins will always remember the first time he was recognized as a GH star. "I'm in a softball league, and at our last game of the season, I was up to bat," he sets up. "My friends love to call me out in public, and one of my teammates was yelling, 'Come on, Dillon Quartermaine, don't f---k it up, hit the ball!' I'm literally about to swing and the umpire who was standing behind home plate was like, 'Wait, you're Dillon Quartermaine on GENERAL HOSPITAL?' I was like 'Yeah, man.' He was like, 'Wait, you're like the Dillon Quartermaine that's on now? You're Tracy's son?' 'Yeah, dude.' I'm trying to be polite, but I'm like, 'Uh, the ball is in the air coming at me.' It was pretty funny and of course, all my friends were on the side, just dying with laughter. Needless to say, I struck out — and then he continued to talk to me for like 30 minutes about GENERAL HOSPITAL!"