
INTRODUCING...

duncan regehr

giving it his best shot

There they are, these two young children, Matt and Jenny, lost and alone in the Canadian wilderness. Just around a bend in the path is a rattlesnake. The children wander heedlessly towards it. The snake, poised to strike, hisses — the children still unaware... the snake tense, straining... then, KABOOM! Its head is blown away.

Slowly, this tall stranger dressed in buckskin, with a hat as wide as his grin, and a long rifle still smoking, ambles out of the woods. What a grand entrance for "Kit," the intrepid woodsman and mentor of the two children on their quest in **Matt and Jenny**, Global's new hit series.

In real life, Duncan Regehr's entrances attract as much attention. People have always noticed his clear blue eyes, boyish smile and physical stature. Now, with the success of **Matt and Jenny**, he finds the attention almost embarrassing at times. "I can't ride the subways anymore without people calling me Kit!"

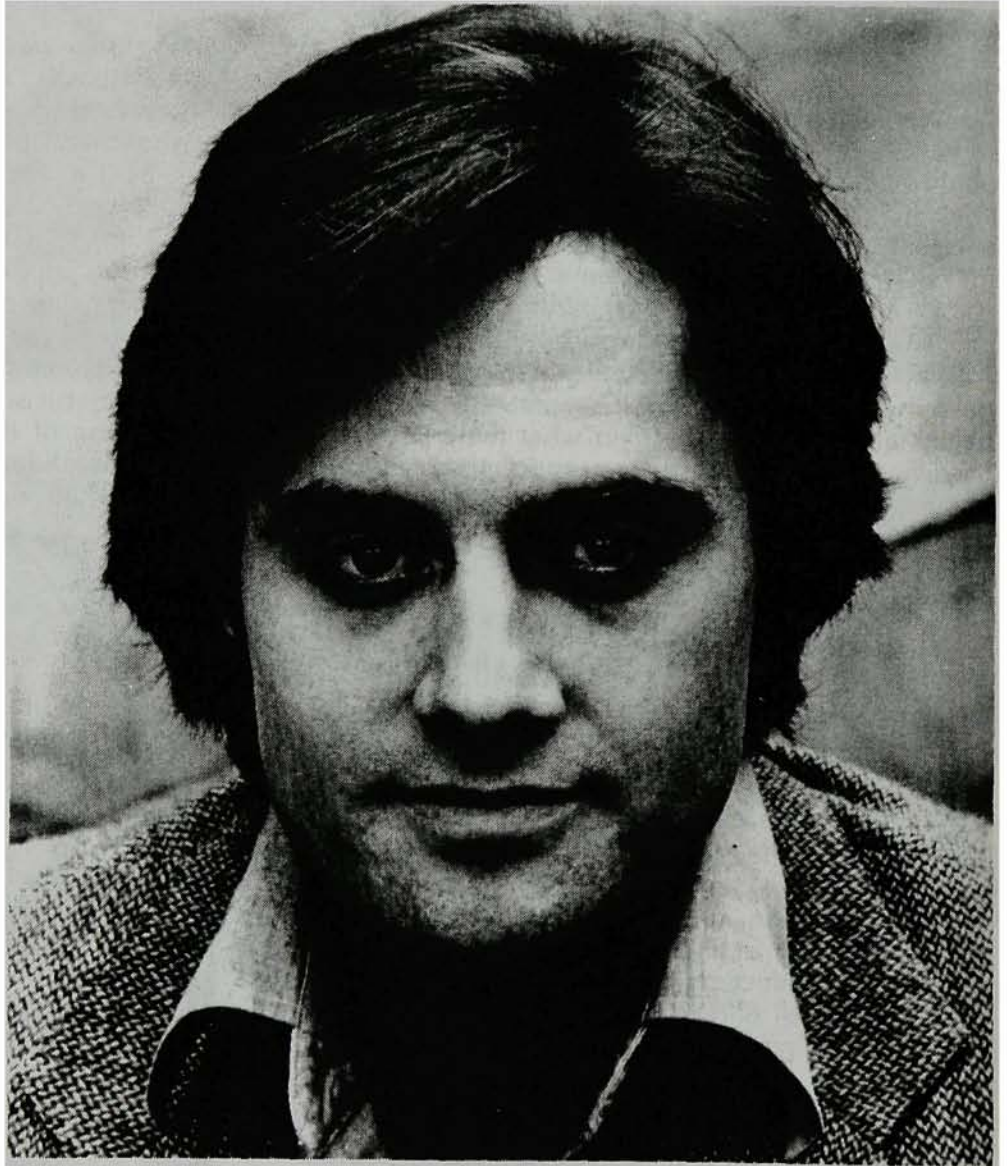
Bill Davidson, **Matt and Jenny's** producer, had Duncan's attractiveness impressed upon him very early in their relationship. "We had just met Duncan and talked to him. Physically, he seemed just right — great! But after he'd left the office — by this time we'd seen twenty-five or thirty men — all the women in the office told us 'He's the guy you want!'"

Duncan Regehr entered television twelve years ago in the Kootenay Mountains of British Columbia. It was a different kind of wilderness. If Creston, B.C. is known for anything, it is its gritty style — "Even the art director claimed to be a great knife fighter."

Duncan was only fourteen, but he was big enough to pass for eighteen, and consequently got to host a teen talk show — where he once interviewed an entire midget hockey team, one player at a time. He was a producer's dream, and not just because of his size and good looks.

"They didn't pay me anything in those days, and I was happy to do it for nothing.

"Once in a while they'd let me read the news. I was dreadful. I read the news three times over, if you counted the



Actor Duncan Regehr — but they call him "Kit" in the subways

stumbles I made. But I had a big audience. It was the 'Ted Baxter phenomenon' — people would tune in to watch the big goofball read the news."

It's no wonder that he soon left Creston for Victoria's Bastion Theatre. Since then he has played in most of Canada's regional theatres, including Stratford, as well as in radio and television dramas and commercials.

Duncan's wife, Catherine, an actress in her own right, manages his career. But acting is only one of his many interests. He is also a serious painter, and boxer. An odd combination, but he explains that "Painting is the one place where I can be in complete command. I'm the director, the actor, everything. That's very fulfilling. I can express very deep inner feelings that I can't really express by speaking.

"With acting, I like communicating with a large group of people, whether it's live and you get an immediate response, or on television where you wait for months.

"Acting means concentrating on absolutely everything at the same time and seeing everything for the first time. If there's no truth in your eyes, those guys sitting in the front row will see it."

He is a serious actor, and since **Matt and Jenny** finished shooting this year he has turned down parts in feature films because they were "big money and stupid parts. I want to do something very challenging."

"I think the best thing I ever did was a René Bonnière film, **The War Is Over**, for the National Film Board. I played a shell-shocked sergeant coming home from the First World War. The part was there, the writing was there, and René's direction was there. It all came together, and was very fulfilling."

The two of them have formed a mutual admiration society. "I think Duncan's a marvellous actor with great potential," says Bonnière. Since he first chose Duncan to be in the CBC television drama, **The Day My Grandfather Died**, they have worked together often — **The War Is Over**, **The Newcomers**, and now, **Matt and Jenny**.

In fact, it was René Bonnière who first brought Duncan to Bill Davidson's attention. "We were seeing quite a few people," says Davidson. "René was high on Duncan, and showed us the **Newcomers** tape. Physically he was perfect, and he was a new personality. We wanted fresh faces in the ongoing parts.

"Then we just met and talked to him. He's a fascinating guy. He's very real, and he has the imagination to put himself into the part and the period. When Martin Lager (executive story editor) and I put Duncan on tape to improvise, he just cleaned up. It was all there in his head! He was Kit!"

Although he has compared the rigours of the **Matt and Jenny** shooting schedule to combat, Duncan is already looking forward to next season. He enjoys working with all three of the series' directors: Bonnière, Joe Scanlan and Francis Chapman.

"I don't have any trouble working with anyone. I like a director to be very clear on his concept. I take people's suggestions, but I like to be involved in the directing. I think about everything that's done. The series taught me that. Every night I'd stay up working on scenes, and my part in them."

But now there is the fame. "Anything that happened before was from working in the regional theatres... Somebody tells you that they enjoyed your performance

in the play last night. That, you can deal with. But when they start calling me "Kit" on the subway!

"I love to ride the subway, and I love the streetcars. But all kinds of people have started to ask 'Shot any rattlesnakes, Kit? You're really a good shot!' It's embarrassing. But I'm learning. I guess."

As an actor, he continues to grow, develop and change, and Bill Davidson is more than pleased. "He has the quality to

surprise you. He's very secure in the character of Kit and this allows him the freedom to take chances. Sometimes we're not quite sure how Duncan is going to read a certain line, and often it's different from how we, the writers, imagined it. But he's very successful."

And he's still a producer's dream. Davidson's only complaint is that he won't work for free any more!

Charles Lazer

betty anne tutching

from props to production

It seems like a long time ago — a time when Montreal was getting its first taste of Hollywood. The city was to be the site for a major shoot: that of Mordecai Richler's **Duddy Kravitz**. Now, entering the eighties, Montreal residents might feel a little more blasé about such a project. But, back then, a young woman named Betty Anne Tutching applied for a job working props on the film. She drove the antique cars for the film back and forth where they were needed. She also appeared as an extra in the film. Fascinated by the workings of such a major undertaking, she returned to the set everyday and asked a lot of questions. Far from star struck, she was preoccupied with the production aspects of filmmaking: a preoccupation that was to stay with her long after Richard Dreyfuss and crew had gone back to Hollywood

and the antique cars had been returned. The ambitious Betty Anne had taken her first step.

Her next job was a production assistant on the set of **The Execution of Private Slovak**, a Universal Studios production. Set in wartime, much of the footage was shot in California, but Montreal and Quebec City were chosen to approximate the European locations for the film. Soon, if there was a production job available within reasonable proximity, one could expect to find Betty Anne Tutching there.

Following **Slovak** she was a production co-ordinator involved in the making of commercials; among them, "Tide," "Spic & Span," and, she adds, "a lot of beer commercials."

The rugged coast of Newfoundland



Betty Anne Tutching looking more like a ballerina than a producer of the Six O'Clock News

photo: Massé-Connolly

then found her working props again, on the set of *Orca*. She says that leading man Richard Harris was warm and sympathetic, usually ready to offer support to cast and crew alike. (But she prefers that her remarks about Charlotte Rampling be kept off the record.)

Most of the *Orca* crew was Italian. Betty Anne recognized an unparalleled professionalism among the Europeans that she had never experienced with North American crews. The sixty-five-year-old boom man had been a boom man all his life. There was no peaking through the lens to decipher where the

boom should be. In a single glance he knew how much room he had in which to move his boom. Once, during a lunch break, Betty Anne entered the cafeteria and sat with the art director and his colleagues. When she asked what they were discussing he replied, "Oh, we were just talking about the time we rebuilt the Sistine Chapel for the *Agony And The Ecstasy!*"

The rigid, and sometimes frigid expertise of the European filmmakers was a sharp contrast to the pleasant camaraderie of Canada's neophyte film industry, with its somewhat *laissez-faire* attitude. "You

never spoke to the director," Betty Anne recalls. "You spoke to his first assistant, who in turn spoke to the director. The director then answered his assistant, and he in turn would get back to the crew. You did not exist as far as the director was concerned."

But her experience served her well. By the summer of 1979, Betty Anne was producing *The City At Six*, Montreal's local, CBC news program. she is quick to point out that the newsroom bears no resemblance to what the nation has been watching on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. On a not untypical Saturday morning, she is called in to work at 10 a.m. A story has broken. A bus full of handicapped people has drowned in the Eastern Townships. The mood in the newsroom may be a little bleak but the team functions with "a lot of black humour, sick jokes and that self-imposed cynicism necessary to the job. If we didn't laugh we would cry. In the news business, you have to have a certain callousness because there is a deadline and the job must get done. There is no time for sentimental indulgence."

She describes what happens when a story like this breaks. NBC and ABC correspondents are told there is a plane waiting for them. Roused out of bed to cover the story, they fly to Montreal, often with nothing but the clothes on their back — or, if there has been time, an overnight bag. The job ceases to be glamorous when, after a sleepless night in a strange town, there is another call: the familiar refrain of another plane waiting to fly them to Rome. The Pope is dead. But, says Betty Anne, "That's the news!"...

Assigned to cover the opening of the Mirabel Airport, she found that tourists and the curious had made the highway to the airport inaccessible. Confronting the police barricade set up to control the mess, Betty Anne smiled, flashed her press card, and with charm and authority informed the officer that the Prime Minister was waiting to be interviewed by her. The officer was quick to agree that it would be the height of rudeness to keep the P.M. waiting. With a police escort, she and her crew arrived at the airport right on time!

Then, eager for footage of the Concorde, after being denied access to the runway, an undaunted Betty Anne walked out onto that runway, ignoring every airport regulation. No small feat, she confesses, because that day security was tight.

"But, it's all in a day's work — or, in putting together "the Six O'Clock Supertime Show," as the evening news is referred to in the business."

P.M. Massé Connolly

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