

People

Susan Hawk

MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2000

Susan Hawk riding a wave after 'Survivor'

By TERRY MORROW
Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel

Eagle — These are the words you never expected former "Survivor" castaway Susan Hawk to say about herself: "I'm such a wuss."

She's looking out the window of her home in Wisconsin, and she dreads what's coming. It's about to snow. Temperatures are dropping, and Hawk, a 38-year-old ready-mix concrete truck driver who still lives in the area where she was born, has gotten used to warmer climates in recent months.



Hawk

For almost 39 days last spring, the tough-talking, self-professed "redneck" lived on the tropical Survivor Island in the South Sea. The days were humid. The nights were rainy. There were bugs pestering her all the time, and whining fellow castaways trying to make alliances.

Hawk was there to win \$1 million by lasting the longest. She was voted off the island during the final 48 hours, and she wasn't a happy camper. Close to 40 million TV viewers last summer witnessed her anger at castaway Kelly Wiglesworth, whose vote ousted her.

"If I should ever pass you along in life again, and you were laying there, dying of thirst, I would not give you a drink of water," Hawk fumed at Wiglesworth. "I would let the vultures take you and do whatever they want with you, with no ill regrets."

It was an unforgettable television moment from the summer of 2000, the kind of flash that has made Hawk a celebrity even months after "Survivor" ended.

She discovered how much she's entrenched in pop culture while visiting the University of Utah recently.

"I was informed at the university that... when people tell people how they feel, when someone tells someone how wrong they are, the kids (refer to it as) 'Pulling a Sue,'" Hawk said.

These days, Hawk is busy on the lecture circuit, mainly hitting colleges and talking about her "Survivor" experience. She also is appearing on talk shows such as "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" and as a co-host on "Live With Regis."

When she isn't making appearances, Hawk, who has been married to a real estate agent for 19 years, returns to driving her truck, more as an obligation to her boss than for the money.

"I owe him a lot," she says, but she also likes the benefits: "At my age, I need the insurance. One good (accident), and everything I have is gone."

As this year's construction season ends in Wisconsin, she thinks her days as a truck driver will as well. She has retained an agent and has landed acting roles:

■ She's playing a redneck waitress in an upcoming Disney feature film called "Bubble Boy." The movie is scheduled to come out next summer.

■ On the NBC White House comedy "DAG" with David Alan Grier and Delta Burke, Hawk plays a drill sergeant, a role for which she auditioned. The episode is scheduled to air at 8:30 p.m. Dec. 19 on Channel 4 in Milwaukee.

"At first, I was like 'Oh, my gosh.' I mean, Delta Burke is a totally trained actress, and David Alan Grier is such a genius. I was watching them on the set and I thought, 'Oh, man. They're so great, and here I am.' But then I thought, 'Ah, it doesn't matter. They put on their pants the same way I do,' and I got over it."

■ In the TNN action series "18 Wheels of Justice" at 9 p.m. Jan. 31, Hawk will play a role closer to her heart and one she would not mind reprising.

"I play this truck driver that keeps meeting Lucky (the lead character) every year at a truck stop. He told me: 'If they don't kill you in this episode, there's always a chance you will come back,'" Hawk said.

"I got this chance to drive this really cool truck. It's this thing with hot yellow flames on it. It's a hot-looking truck. It doesn't even touch the plain old white freight liner I used to drive."

■ A possible World Wrestling Federation televised match between Hawk and Wiglesworth has been mulled, though no firm plans have been made.

"I would do it," Hawk said. "Survivor" winner Richard

Hatch has said he would face Hawk in a match if the opportunity arises, Hawk said. She isn't sure if Wiglesworth would be interested. Hawk, who has reconciled with Wiglesworth since the show ended, said there are still hard feelings between the two.

"I'm over it," Hawk said, "but Kelly is young. She's 22, and my vote helped cost her the money." Hawk was part of a seven-person jury of ousted castaways who voted between the final two contestants, Hatch and Wiglesworth, to determine the \$1 million winner. Hawk voted for Hatch, who won 4-3. Wiglesworth won the \$100,000 consolation prize.

With all her TV opportunities, Hawk says she has never had an interest in acting before "Survivor." So why do it now?

"I never thought about this when I went on that island," she said. "I thought, 'Oh, this is a game show. It might mean a vacation and some extra cash.'... Now that the (acting) door is open, and I have had a peek behind it, I've seen that it's fun. It's exciting. It's something to explore."

"This is the way I look at it: Anything I have ever done, I have worked hard at it. I don't have any fear of (acting), but on the other hand, I don't have a lot of

hopes for it, either. I don't think I'll be this famous actress. I'll have fun at it while I can."

A self-help book about staying positive may be in the offing, too. Not bad for a woman who admits she can't spell, hated English classes in high school and never had an interest in writing before.

Months after "Survivor" has ended, Hawk says the realization of her TV fame still will hit her when she is lost in her thoughts and driving her truck.

"I'm thinking, 'Oh, wow. Here I am. A TV person now, but I'm still driving my truck. It's pretty cool.'"