

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2001



Susan Hawk, now a part-time celebrity trucker, has a guest shot on TBS's "18 Wheels of Justice."

Susan Hawk stays afloat on 'Survivor' celebrity

By TIM CUPRISIN
of the Journal Sentinel staff

Only one of the 16 cast members of "Survivor: The Australian Outback" will win \$1 million. And as for the 15 losers, they couldn't find a better case study for their post-"Survivor" careers than Wisconsin's own Susan Hawk.

Five months after the first season of "Survivor," she's still trading on her time on the island of Pulau Tiga.



That doesn't sound like much, but when was the last time you saw Rick Rockwell or Darva Conger?

The expiration date on "reality" TV stars is often measured in weeks. But Hawk and fellow "Survivor" Rudy Boesch have found success at the career that seems to be the pinnacle of American culture: being a celebrity.

WHERE IS HE NOW?

Dirk Been, the Bible-reading substitute teacher from Spring Green, got cut in episode five of the first "Survivor." But he resurfaced in TV Guide earlier this month with news that the self-professed non-drinking virgin would end up on the syndicated "Change of Heart" dating show next month (6:30 p.m. weekdays, Channel 58). Still, he tells TV Guide that he's ready to let "the fame thing" die.

Yes, cute little Colleen Haskell is doing commercials and a movie with Rob Schneider. And neurologist Sean Kenniff, the most clueless of the original castaways, is tussling in the

New York tabloids with Billy Joel over the same woman.

But Boesch, the septuagenarian Navy SEAL who didn't have a nice word to say about anybody, and Hawk, the cement truck driver who royally ripped competitor Kelly Wiglesworth in the finale, are part of our pop culture.

Hawk's cut-throat gamesmanship and her strong America's Dairyland persona have helped keep the 39-year-old alive in a crowded celebrity landscape. The show has helped spawn a new career and has finally put her truck-driving career on hold.

She took a voluntary layoff from Sonag Ready Mix in Menomonee Falls on Dec. 18 as the cement-driving season slowed down.

"I did it so the guys under me who need the 40 hours can get it," she says. "I'm still going to stay

Hawk still flying high on 'Survivor' celebrity

HAWK, From 1E

driving a truck, but I'm going to be a relief driver."

So her full-time gig goes part-time as she concentrates on a host of other things that come with being a celeb. Right now, she can't say a single solitary word about the new "Survivor" because of an exclusive deal she has with TV Guide to analyze the show for the weekly magazine.

There are personal appearances, like one last weekend with Rudy during an Admirals hockey game at the Bradley Center.

And she's been doing a bit of television, like an upcoming guest shot on "18 Wheels of Justice," an action series on cable's TNN which, as the name says, has a strong trucking flavor. That's scheduled to air at 10 p.m. next Tuesday.

There are other things on the horizon.

"I did shoot a pilot a week ago out in California," she says. "I can't even say anything about it."

All you can drag out of her is that it would be a regular role in a weekly series. And she says there would be a Wisconsin feel to the show.

There's a genuine Wisconsin feel to Susan — it's easy to call her by her first name, since that's how millions of Americans came to know her last year. For the record, "Susan" was the name given to her by "Survivor" producer Mark Burnett.

"He's English, you know, and he called me Susan, and I thought that's what I'd use on the show."

Her husband, Tim, calls her "Suzie." Her family calls her "Suze."

Her accent is pure and unadulterated Wisconsin — and "unadulterated" is the best way to describe her personality. As for the personality she showed on TV, she says:

"It was me, but was the strongest parts of me. I'm pretty, like, generous with people."

It was that strong character that made Hawk stand out among the "Survivor" 16 — even though she ended up in fourth place. This is a working woman, not somebody just sitting around dreaming of being a star.

She says she always has had a part-time job in addition to full-

time work. She used to work every other weekend as a waitress-bartender in addition to driving. Work is second nature to her. That new house she and her husband built in Eagle isn't painting itself, you know.

And she views all the celebrity stuff as work, too: "It's just like a different job."

Believe it or not, this isn't her first stab at acting. That came at Waukesha South High School, when she learned a drama class could get her the English credit she needed: "I got tired of reading the books and all."

In between all the personal appearances, she says she wouldn't mind doing some legitimate theater somewhere in the Milwaukee area. It would give her a chance to hone her skills, help her learn to memorize lines and keep that new job alive.

And as the second series of "Survivor" is set to debut Sunday night, she's still not tired of the people who come up to her in places like grocery stores and movie theaters and say "you should have won."

In a lot of ways, she did win. Her victory came with that speech blasting competitor (and former island buddy) Wiglesworth, saying that if she found Wiglesworth "laying there dying of thirst, I would not give you a drink of water. I would let the vultures take you and do whatever they want with you."

Hawk is still adamant that her monologue was the right thing to say.

"Dammit, I meant everything I said," she says firmly.

And she says the folks she meets still give her the thumbs-up for her performance, like the businessman she ran into in the airport in Providence, R.I.

"He grabbed my hand and shook it and said, 'Thank you, what you had to say at the end was the best.'"

Her spiel — the climactic scene for the strong character she portrayed as "Susan" on "Survivor" — has helped keep her a recognizable media figure after five months.

That's no mean feat. Just ask Brittany Petros from CBS' other stab at reality programming, "Big Brother."

Brittany? Who's Brittany?