



**Paul Block**

Yesterday at 9:21am · 👤

It was 1981, and I was Producing The Alan Hamel Show, a talk/variety show styled after the Carson show, in Vancouver, BC. I was happier than the proverbial pig in shit. But Alan's wife, Suzanne Somers had become a huge TV star on Three's Company, and Alan didn't want to fly into the bouncing air of the northwest any more, so he told us he was quitting. Alan graciously gave us back 30 shows in that last season so we could try guest hosts to find his replacement. The laws required that the host be Canadian. Alan Thicke was a creative and experienced writer/producer, and, I knew him from LA, so I decided to give him a few of those days in Hamel's chair, to see how he could do. It was one minute into his first desk piece, that I turned to my people, who had gathered to see if he was any good, and I said "He's the one...the guy's a natural".

Alan had such incredible poise, and a natural talent for the job. He had the seasoning, the look, the voice, the curiosity, the broad general knowledge, endless energy, unlimited ambition, several different performing talents, and the perfect instincts for the camera and for the punchline and for the subtleties of how to play talk vs quiet. But most of all, he listened.

Three years, 450 shows later, and about 50 prime time shows later, he wanted to go to the States. He offered me the job producing the US show, but I really, really, liked the simplicity, and the creative, programming, and business freedom of doing the Canadian show, so I wished him well, and passed.

Alan was replaced by the network with a nice man. The show still was succeeding, but wasn't nearly as much fun. I was always surprised by Alan. I missed that.

I know I'm going to offend many people's sensibilities now, but, before he started doing the American show, I would have quite favorably compared Alan to Johnny, for whom I worked for 6 years. It didn't come through on Thicke of the Night.

Alan and I were very different people. He was a workaholic, day and night. I used to keep up for as long as I could, but then I'd go to sleep and leave Alan in the hotel bar with ten or fifteen of our weekend's guests.

Alan was never satisfied with a written piece until the time we hit the air. I have the remembrance and the vision of Alan on the floor with a marker and cue cards as the theme was playing. He made the cue cards guy's life insane, just making it when the tape started to roll. I worked hard, but was not a workaholic. I think our different personalities meshed well. Alan's brother, Todd, came to work for us, and was a hugely moderating and settling influence on the shows we did there.

At this point, I might add that, day after day, we did the highest rated daytime show in Canadian history to that point, excepting some one of a kinds, like breaking news.

Having worked for Johnny for the time I did, I styled the show after Johnny's, and the gears fit so well...celebrities, comedians, music, and straight talk...lots of interviews. We did lots of innovative things on the show and "discovered" incredible new talents. I made many life-long relationships while doing that show. Alan and Todd among them.

It was a time of my life I will treasure and never forget. The people, stories, and the memories of those years bounce around in my head like a ricocheting pinball. They are virtually unending.

And for those years, I, my wife, Gila, and my children, Kiva and Shana, were Canadians. I think I'm still partly Canadian.

Adios, Alan. Off to the the great rink in the sky.

My unending condolences to your family.