



Blue Moon's Emotional Barometer

Our **EXCLUSIVE** interview with **Allyce Beasley**
By Diana Maiocco, Joy Chodan, Christie Taylor & Pam Hardin

The four of us, Joy, Christie, Pam and I had a great time chatting with Allyce in this phone interview. When we heard her distinctive voice, it made us all smile. I mean, we were talking to Miss Dipesto! Allyce spent over an hour and a half with us and it was as though we were catching up with an old friend. Of course, during this interview, we had no idea that just a few short months later we'd get to meet her in person over dinner. By then we really were like old friends!

DM: You did a number of guest spots on TV before *Moonlighting* like *Taxi* and *Cheers*, and I understand that Glenn wrote the part of Agnes Dipesto with you in mind. What did you think when you first saw the script of the pilot?

AB: Well, I thought the poems were kind of a challenge. There wasn't really much for me to do in the pilot except for the poems. I don't mean it wasn't enough in terms of lines but in terms of movement, where something has to really happen between the characters for the story to move on. That scene in the pilot, for me was the evening that when David and I thought that Blue Moon was going to close. I knew what that scene was about and I was very excited about that. I thought the phone thingies were going to be a challenge, but that also helped me become who Miss Dipesto was.

He (Glenn) summed it by saying that Agnes was kind of an "emotional geiger counter" for Maddie and David. You could really tell how their relationship was going through Agnes' eyes.



DM: Another memorable scene in the pilot that involved your character was when the pail fell on your head.

AB: Obviously I just forgot about that one! (Everyone laughs) But I do! Of course, I remember. I do. We didn't do too many takes. Thank God! I got hit in the head with a basketball first and then the pail.

DM: It was written like that in the script, right?

AB: Yeah. I don't know what I thought about it. I remember somebody saying "Try not to flinch!" Again, I was just so thrilled, you know? My original feeling was that I was just so thrilled to be a part of it and just so thrilled to be a part of creating something. I was very gung-ho about anything that we were going to do. I think I reminded the AD (Assistant Director) about "gravity" and to please drop it from just out of frame. There was some physical stuff that came about in the first Miss Dipesto episode that I needed to do that was kind of a challenge that way, but I was very gung-ho and excited to do it.

DM: The episode I believe you're talking about is *North By North Dipesto*.

AB: Uh huh. Miss Dipesto gets to do an Eliza Doolittle. Maddie doesn't want to go to the detective ball and tries to lift Agnes' spirits (she was suffering from a little burnout) by dressing her up and sending her instead.

DM: Yes, it's that one, when you get involved in intrigue with the FBI agent.

AB: That scene at the end was actually done in an industrial laundry here in Hollywood and really involved getting dipped in and out of a laundry tub full of soap. I got soaked. Talk about reality television. (Everyone laughs) I loved it! I thought it was a gas.

DM: Now, even though your character seemed a bit daffy, she seemed to understand what was going on between Maddie and David more than anyone did. Did you see her as the audience's voice as well as a relationship counselor for David and Maddie?

AB: Well, yes. Glenn put it in a certain way. He summed it by saying that Agnes was kind of an "emotional geiger counter" for Maddie and David. You could really tell how their relationship was going through Agnes' eyes. For me, I think all acting, all drama, is pretty much about love. There are a few stories about power, like in a (David) Mamet script that might be written originally about male power struggles. But whatever the relationships are, they're really about love. In

the pilot, I knew that Agnes had always been loyal to David, and then grew to love Maddie too, especially after she saved the agency. It was kind of like being the kid in a "blended" family and I just wanted them to be happy. After the first season, I remember I invited Glenn out to lunch. This was my big, bad moment of talking to the producer, because I didn't know him that well and I had all these ideas. I said, "Well, I wanted to take you out to lunch because I wanted to ask you what you thought Miss Dipesto wanted to be when she grew up?" And he said, "Oh, let me think about that! Well, she doesn't want to be anything. She just wants to be happy." So that's how he saw Miss Dipesto. I mean, what I was hoping he would say, and where I wanted to lead the conversation was, "Well, of course she's going to grow up to be a detective like Maddie and David." Then I thought that at least I would get to be in on the cases and get off the lot and eat greasy catering food. But he pretty much saw her that way and that's how the character kind of stayed. She was a kind of stabilizer for everybody in the office, I guess. Maybe in the production office, too.

DM: Agnes was very sweet for the most part, but she also had a "take no bull" side.

AB: Yep!

DM: For example, when she chewed out David in *Brother, Can You Spare a Blonde?* Do you remember that episode?

AB: I will never forget that. (Everyone laughs) But I also remember the very, very last episode where she got to chew both of them out.

DM: In *Lunar Eclipse*.

AB: And that was definitely a "no bullshit" kind of chewing out also. I mean, that was about as direct as you could possibly get, and I really couldn't believe that they both stood there while I said it. That was pretty amazing. That was the thing about Miss Dipesto. Her sweetness was not covering a lack of anything else. The depth of her affection for people she really cared about didn't hide the truth from her about who those people really were and that gave her strength and the ability to say what's what.

DM: Did you enjoy those kinds of scenes other than doing the rhymes and being sweet and daffy? I mean, you also did have some range in this role in the respect of being aggressive with Bert, by tackling him when you were making out with him on the desk in *Yours, Very Deadly*.

AB: Yes, I remember.

DM: The passionate side of Agnes.

AB: Yeah, absolutely. And that's what kept her from being "the secretary." I mean, otherwise she just would have been dismissible or silly, and because of the way it was written she wasn't. I mean, how many ditsy secretaries have there

been, right? On so many shows forever, and I think that's how Miss Dipesto got to be maybe a little bit more memorable. She was just very, very human, and I got to have that. You know, being very human also means having a sex drive so... (Everyone laughs) That was really great fun. I mean, when they added Curtis everything got really, really great for me. Once Curtis came on the show... Oh, first of all, because he's Curtis, and second of all, because Miss Dipesto got to explore that side of herself. Bert made her "feel like a natural woman!"

DM: Can you get into what it was like working with Curtis? He told us in our interview that when you first met him you requested to have coffee in the dressing room because the first thing that you guys were going to do was make out on a desk and you wanted to feel comfortable.

AB: Oh absolutely! I mean, that was the funny thing. Neither of us had done that many kissing scenes before, you know? It's not like you want to make sure that you look good while you're kissing, or you're going to practice in the mirror or anything. But we didn't very often get to explore that side of ourselves through a character, so I think we were both pretty shy about it. And he was married at the time and so was I, and I think I was especially uptight about it, having just found out about Bert's addition the night before. You know how

wonderful and what a gentleman and a professional he is. I think that he was really happy about joining the show, but I mean, he was probably pretty nervous, too. There wasn't enough time. I mean, basically they said, "Here. Have your 15 minutes. Have coffee. Now, you know, go get on top of each other!" (Everyone laughs) But at least we sat down for a few minutes and talked, and I loved him from the first moment that I got to work with him. I've always loved his work. He's a wonderful person and we're good friends. I think we were so disappointed the way the series ended and stuff, everybody had to just settle down and kind of process that for awhile. But we never were not friends. We just weren't in touch for quite awhile. But we are now.

JC: You guys played off each other wonderfully. You did!

AB: Thanks. Well, you know, I'd love to have that opportunity again! I would love to do something without all the pressure that we had on *Moonlighting*, even though that was part of the wonderful animal that it was.

CT: Did you like the fact that Agnes had a love interest with Bert that contrasted so well with Maddie and David's relationship?

DM: Theirs was more dysfunctional whereas yours was calmer. It was a very interesting contrast to see Agnes and Bert having a more normal relationship.

AB: I loved that. It really was a nice contrast. As exciting as their relationship was, maybe it was nice for the audience to just breathe and laugh and watch Bert and Agnes work it out a different way. I'm sure that really worked.

CT: What I liked about Agnes is that she did what Maddie didn't do, she spoke out. She told Bert what she wanted, whereas Maddie really couldn't express her feelings with David, so I thought that was good.

She was just very, very human, and I got to have that. You know, being very human also means having a sex drive so... That was really great fun. I mean, when they added Curtis everything got really, really great for me.

DM: Because she was more fearful. She was very guarded and scared.

JC: She was afraid of life.

AB: I mean, Maddie couldn't because of her own history, and hey, it's also hard to ask a guy like David Addison for what you want. As much as she knew somewhere inside that he loved her, he would be a scary person to ask

the truth from. He was such an adventurer, such a wise guy. You didn't know if you'd ever get a straight answer from him. You'd say "Do you love me?" and he would go, "Do bears bear?" You know what I'm saying? Their communication definitely was on a different level.

JC: How about the element of adding Jack Blessing into the mix as MacGillicuddy?

AB: Jack was just a delight! He was so charming and funny! He and Curtis really got along great! Boy, they were great! You know, MacGillicuddy was kind of a wise guy in his own way, and at last we had another member of the office that we could verbally interact with. Especially in the last episode, he was just such the perfect foil for Curtis and so touching. I mean, I think he had more to do with Curtis than with me in a way. I loved working with him, but they were the perfect foils for each other.

JC: Yeah, they were.

AB: Remember when MacGillicuddy was dead because he had no more lines?

Everyone: Yeah, yeah!

AB: And Curtis was just sobbing his eyes out! I mean, that was just wonderful, and Jack's a lovely man. You know, lovely is an underrated word especially in our business, but he's a fantastic guy and a wonderful actor. I just haven't been in touch with him for a long time.

CT: Now, let's focus on some of the episodes that

centered on you and Curtis like the first one, *Yours, Very Deadly*. Are there any scenes or anything that comes out to you with this episode?

DM: Or if not this one, how about *Here's Living with You, Kid* or *Poltergeist III-Dipesto Nothing*.

AB: Those two I remember. You know, the first full episode that we did together was probably the ghostly one.

CT: *Poltergeist III-Dipesto Nothing*.

AB: Yeah. I think that was the first one that we really got to do together. To tell you the truth, the network only started giving Miss Dipesto, and this was before Curtis got there and then it was the two of us... But the network considered it a two-person show. During the first years, it was just me without Curtis and the only reason that there got to be a show about Dipesto and then Bert and Dipesto was because, in all truth, Bruce and Cybill worked very, very hard. An hour show is like making half of a movie every ten days to two weeks. So anyway, Cybill and Bruce wanted Christmas off (like other TV casts) and they pretty much said they were not coming in. We were always so behind schedule, shooting all the time and that's how I got to have the first episode we were talking about *North by North Dipesto*. By the time Curtis came, well, that was when Curtis and I got to do one of our main episodes together. It was always during Christmas. It was really hard because we loved the crew so much and it would feel like "Don't do another take!

We want to go home." On Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, we were always working during all the holidays and when Cybill was out during her pregnancy leave and Bruce was doing features. Anyway, we were in a spooky old house in LA here, and I remember us just being happy! Oh, you know what, too? I know what happened in that episode... I think it was something that you had in Curtis' interview. Remember he told you guys that I had told him that I was pregnant?

Everyone: Yes!

AB: It was during that episode, because they wanted me to roll down some stairs. I did a lot of stunt things, you know? I never minded. I mean, I loved to do physical stuff, and this was the first time they had asked me to do something that I didn't want to do because I thought that I was pregnant and they wanted me to roll down a few stairs. So I told Curtis because our relationship was new and I didn't want him to think that I had an attitude or was kind of this stuck up actress that didn't want to do anything. I told him why I didn't want to roll down the stairs. That's when I told him I thought I was pregnant. I'm pretty sure that's how it went down. So that was during that episode and I was so happy! I was so happy working with him and, you know, as far as I knew, we had many years ahead of us and we just got along so great and everybody on the set was happy, because we were so content with each other. It was pretty great.

JC: How about the Christmas episode?

DM: *Twas the Episode*

Before Christmas. Curtis wasn't in that one, but that was an episode that kind of centered on Agnes because she wanted to take care of the baby.

AB: That episode was really special to me because I think that's when Glenn and I first really, really connected. When I auditioned, he had seen *Taxi* and *Cheers* and all the other things, and when I passed the network test and got the part, he said, "I couldn't believe that we got you! I couldn't believe that you were available." And so he was always very nice to me and I knew that he really liked my work a lot. But that was the first episode that he really talked to me about it. I mean, he loved the scene under the Christmas tree! He thought it was like the cat's pajamas! He just loved how it played out, and I felt very close to him because he appreciated it so much. That was a really nice feeling.

JC: And when you sang *The First Noel* at the end. The whole cast and crew.

AB: Yes, when the set went away and everybody sang. That was fun! You guys know we did a lot of stuff like that way before anybody else did.

CT: Yes, absolutely!

AB: You know, not before George Burns broke the fourth wall with the camera, but people hadn't really done too much stuff like that up until that point. It was great fun. A lot of good people there in every aspect of production. I mean, how could I not be happy? That's the thing that was so hard. Such great people, such a great situation, a hit show with great writing! That's

why it was so hard to see it close, because there were a lot of reasons to really care. What more could you want, you know?

PH: That's right.

AB: So there were a lot of great people so that was really fun. I don't know if you have anything specific you want to know about that one, but no, it was not real snow. (Everyone laughs) I know you know that, but I don't know if there's anything more specific that you wanted to know about it.

JC: No, we just wanted to hear your memories, that's all.

CT: One of my most favorite episodes that you and Curtis did was *Here's Living with You, Kid*, especially with the *Casablanca* parody and all. What were your favorite moments on that episode?

AB: Oh, wow! I was loving that so much, but I tell you guys, I think my son was only a couple of months old at the time. I went back to work when he was two weeks old. I was supposed to have at least a month off, and then Glenn or Jay called up and said, "We have nothing to shoot." Cybill was out then with her pregnancy and Bruce was off doing something, and they said, "If you don't come back to work now, we have nothing to shoot." And so I came back to work and we shot that during Christmas, I'm pretty sure. It must have been, because I said we always shot around that time. I came back a little bit earlier

than that. My son was born in September and that was December, so he was about two months old. I was breast feeding him, so I was a little bit out of my mind. I got to tell you, I mean, as I said, every second with Curtis and every great opportunity on that show I enjoyed immensely, but I had kind of a fog through that. I loved doing costumes. I would love to go back and do that again because I was so tired that I don't remember a lot of it. Honestly I don't, but I loved what you guys asked me about before which had to do with the combination of all of that, which was for Herbert and I to be straight with each other. And I loved the writing on that. I loved what they developed during the whole story, but what a great opportunity! Wasn't Curtis the greatest Bogart?

CT: Oh yes!

JC: Yes! So funny!

AB: Wasn't he? And do you know what was frustrating to me about it, and this always happened with Miss Dipesto. Curtis was kind of doing his Bogie, right? And I said to Glenn and, of course, I thought of the movie, that I was going to do Ingrid Bergman. He said, "No, you can't do that." I said, "What?" He said, "You just have to be Miss Dipesto!" This is what I always got. I mean, not that it was necessarily bad, but it's amazing. Also, it was,

(all men) except for Karen Hall during that time, and Debra Frank and Kerry Ehrin. But in terms of it being Glenn's show and Jay Daniel's show and all the guys, they all needed Miss Dipesto to always be Miss Dipesto. (Everyone laughs) The woman that was there to forgive. The woman that was there to be stable. The woman that was there to love, you know? The woman that was there to always be counted on. I had asked Glenn and I said, "So, of course, I'm going to do Ingrid Bergman and can I do something else in another scene?" And he said, "No, you can't. You just have to be Miss Dipesto." Ok, so I get to wear clothes that fit me! I mean, people had no idea whether I was fat, whether I was skinny, whether I was short, whether I was



Photo courtesy of Curtis Armstrong