

## ANNE MARTIN – 1812 AND ALL THAT

Anne Martin is a veteran broadcaster and producer and president of World Life Video Productions. Originally from Kent, England, she came to Canada in 1965 and with a background in insurance from Lloyd's of London, ventured into investment, public relations and theatre before starting her own personnel company. After a number of television and radio guest spots as the “expert” on employment, she decided she had found her true niche: broadcasting.



While her [website biography](#) details the path she has followed in television programming, and her many awards, there is another story behind her War of 1812 series. How did she come to develop the vignettes now available on the internet? Her response will give you greater insight into the passion behind the production.

*As you may have gathered I love to find out something different and something that other people are not doing. So I'm always on the lookout for interesting stories. I have never wanted to do the destination bit – pretty beach, good food, comfy bed – unless I can find an interesting angle. So most of my work has been to find something unusual and then tell the story through the medium of TV/video. One of those stories led me to cover a re-enactment on the War of 1812 about 6 years ago and the passion of the people participating and the regions in which these events occurred got me thinking about a series. I also quickly realized that the Bi-Centennial would be on the radar screen and in TV terms 6 years isn't a lot – so I started to cover different locations each year. In the summer I would go to one area, e.g. Erie and the re-enactment at Fort Erie – film the story, chat with the people there and in the surrounding area, then edit in the winter and make the finished product available to the TV stations. My primary TV relationship at the time was PBS and after realizing that times were still somewhat sensitive where US/Canada relations were concerned, I opted not to get bogged down in the military strategy of the War and “who won” and decided to produce short vignettes ranging from 5-7 minutes in length which could be broadcast on PBS on the border stations and in prime time in the time following a major production such as Masterpiece or Mystery Theatre. The stories were primarily human interest focused on a particular region and the aim was to encourage people to want to go and visit those locations for themselves, experience a re-enactment or visit a fort or museum and generally learn about the history of Canada, the people of the time and explore the country. I did the Aftermath with stories on the Rideau Canal (a major and fascinating project) just as they were being nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site so the timing was perfect. But can you imagine trying to build the canal today with all the committees and the political correctness and the environmental studies and wildlife activists, and unions and aboriginal peoples. Heavens we can't even get a fast link between downtown Toronto and the Airport. But I digress.... As usual!!*

*So back to the passion. The passion of the re-enactors was infectious. Many of them had completely transformed themselves and were playing an excellent part as Fred Smith a*

*farmer from Kentucky or Upper Canada, caught up in the war because they were Militia and facing the fact that they would have to return home to help with the harvest. I soon got swept up in the side bars (as we say) with the stories of the women having to remarry in the space of 4 days if their husband was killed, the challenges of wearing wool in the hot weather, the dyeing of fabrics, the surgeon on the field, the drummer boy, the origin of expressions “hot shot” “bearing/baring arms”, the architecture and strategy of fort building, and so on. So the initial idea of a story, evolved and evolved to present day with 11 vignettes completed for TV, all available to schools with teacher’s guides, and now being re-cut to fit the attention span of an average populace on YouTube and websites. Once they are up on YouTube they can be embedded on anyone’s site and I encourage this – so if you have a website, feel free to use.*

*When I was filming the area between Amherstburg and London, interviews that I did with some historians really made me think about the impact on the locals, the farmers and townsfolk – we tend to think of refugees as in the developing countries – I can’t imagine what it must have been like to be running from the Americans after the Battle of Lake Erie. That’s when I started to get a sense of what it would have been like to be a United Empire Loyalist or a Coloured person – who had found sanctuary in Canada and was now facing the possibility of having to fight their own families, lose their possessions yet again, or risk being taken back into slavery.*

*To a certain extent this led me briefly to divert from the 1812 concept into Toronto 175 and I produced a 90-minute special (also for PBS) which went to air several times during the period 2009-2010. I think the knowledge I had gained from 1812 gave me some insight into those early days of settling York and facing the Americans during the related battles. People know so little of the history in their own backyard and sadly so little is taught.*

*I realize I have barely skimmed the surface of these 1812 stories but I also know that the attention span of most people is limited, so hopefully I have done my job in getting people to think about what it was like to settle this land and the decisions made by absentee landlords (the British government) that resulted in the country we call Canada today. Hopefully with the Bi-Centennial on the horizon I will have helped to tweak the interest of families to go out and explore those graveyards, investigate their genealogy, visit the museums, get involved in the re-enactments, travel the back roads and view the villages with a different eye, and understand why we have special days to celebrate our history.*

*FHH/LT.2011*