

Suzanne Pleshette—

SUZANNE PLESHETTE, who in some seven years has won starring roles in television, on Broadway, and in Hollywood, reflects on her driving motivation and says:

"When I was born, they thought I was dead. The doctors shot some adrenalin into me to get my heart pumping. So I've always figured I must have been brought back for a purpose."

Once you've heard Suzanne's dramatic account of her basic debut, you will wait a long time before hearing anything else that isn't salty humor or acid cynicism. Inevitably, for example, somebody will mention her friendship with Troy Donahue and ask: "What about it?"

Long lashes will veil green eyes and Suzanne's husky voice will drop to conspiratorial tone. "You want the truth, unvarnished? Well, we..." Then she will launch into a totally implausible account of the "romance," recited in the breathless fashion of Hollywood fan magazines. Her report will run down only when the last of her audience catches on to the practical joke.

Suzanne has two top films coming up, Warner Bros.' "Wall of Noise" and "Youngblood Hawke"; her most notable past performances have been as Anne Bancroft's replacement in "The Miracle Worker" on Broadway and in Hitchcock's recent shocker, "The Birds." She is a volatile personal-

ity who counteracts the boredom of answering questions by making up new answers and enlivens dull proceedings by introducing strangers and then setting up an antagonism.

For instance, while I was interviewing Suzanne for FAMILY WEEKLY, one of her girl friends joined us and began pillorying the "dirty journalism" of a sex-and-scandal publication. "Before you go on," Suzanne said seriously, "I want you to know that Mr. Ryan is editor of that magazine." Then, as the girl writhed in embarrassment, the joke was given a few more deft squeezes before the victim was let off the hook.

As for the Troy-Suzanne link, she will admit only that they became friends while making a film in Rome: "It was one of my first pictures, and Troy helped me over some bad spots. We went sight-seeing and got some real kicks being together, and still do, and that's about it."

ABOUT ONE SUBJECT, marriage, Suzanne is not flippant. "My parents had a good marriage, the kind I want. I guess that's why I haven't rushed things. I used to live with roommates when I first went to Hollywood, but now I have my own apartment. One reason is that when I get married, I want to know how to run my own house."

At 26, Suzanne gives the appearance of a worldly-wise woman, completely in control of herself and her environment. With her background, that's not surprising. Her father Eugene Plesh-



Beauty with a Bite

She's fast with wisecrack and salty rejoinder—but cautious when it comes to love and career

ette, now a broadcasting-company executive, formerly managed the biggest theater in Brooklyn. "Vaudeville performers were always turning up at our house—Jack E. Leonard, Milton Berle, the Andrews Sisters," she says. "Show business and repartee were just part of everyday life."

"I remember when I first arrived in Hollywood, and Danny Kaye spotted me. He picked me up and squeezed me as he used to when I was a kid. Suddenly he looked shocked and pushed me away. 'Good heavens,' he said, 'I can't do that any more—you're a woman!'"

Although her father ran a top-run movie palace, Suzanne just caught glimpses of films since she used the theater as a sort of playground. She was about five when her mother took her to a formal preview. "As soon as the titles came on, I burst into tears—until then I never realized how beautiful movies were."

THE ACTING BUG had bitten, but her parents and Suzanne played it down during childhood and adolescence. "I kept thinking, how many happy actresses do you know? And the answer was—none. So I went off to school (Syracuse University) for a while. I got a crush on a sociology professor and decided to be a social worker. When the crush ended, so did my interest in sociology. I figured, what the devil, I'd rather be an unhappy actress than just plain unhappy."

She now lives in a richly furnished apartment



Suzanne admits "friendship" with Troy Donahue.

By JACK RYAN

in Los Angeles where she frequently entertains "beaus" with her cooking. She is inordinately proud of her "natural knack" with foods, although during this interview she ordered a "basted egg," and when waiters in a renowned restaurant said they didn't know how an egg was basted, Suzanne confessed she didn't, either.

Suzanne picked her apartment because of its commanding view of the entrance. She explains: "In the house I used to share with some other girls, we couldn't watch the entrance. One day I was having a hard time learning a scene in which I had to give out a blood-curdling scream. I'm a happy person who never has had much reason to scream. All I could do was yipe. Well, suddenly I heard a noise behind me and somebody said: 'Stick 'em up!'"

She turned to see a young man holding a gun on her. For a moment, everybody was immobilized. Then Suzanne let loose a prolonged, piercing scream. A look of terror crossed the gunman's face. He wheeled, fled the house, and was still running when last seen. "I repeated the scream for my director the next day, and he blanched," Suzanne concludes.

"After that, I figured that it would be completely safe for me to live alone."

But few people ever doubted Suzanne Pleshette couldn't handle anything that came along—a career, a moment of tedium, or a male, whether it is nice Troy Donahue or a menacing gunman.

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