

RACQUETBALL
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ILLUSTRATED

SPECIAL 1981 YEARBOOK
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STATE OF THE SPORT
What Is the Outlook for Racquetball In 1982?

THE SECRETS BEHIND MARTY HOGAN'S SERVE

HOW TO COPE WITH SLUMPS AND PLATEAUS

DONNA MILLS
of Knots Landing



1981 PLAYERS OF THE YEAR NAMED





No Dancing in the Big City



Photos by David M. King

By Beau Alain Max

Donna Mills spent most of her young life training to be a dancer. Then she went to the University of Illinois to study drama. Later she enrolled in private acting classes and was cast in *Come Blow Your Horn* and *The Reluctant Debutante* at Chicago's Drury Lane Theatre in her first amateur efforts. The applause and accolades kept coming. So much for her dance career.

"I wanted to be a ballerina," said Mills, now the co-star of CBS' *Knots Landing*. "I feel like I spent my entire childhood with my foot on a ballet barre.

"After my first endeavor on stage, my dance teachers told me that I wouldn't pursue dancing after acting. I remember saying, 'No, no. I'm just going to do one more play.' But they were right. After I heard the laughter... the emotion of the audience, I decided this is for me. Once you get bitten by the bug, that's it."

Mills left Chicago and followed the road of many would-be serious actors and actresses by traveling to New York City. After numerous

casting calls and auditions, she wound up with several parts in off-Broadway productions before she made it to Broadway to perform with Lauren Bacall in *Don't Drink the Water*.

That is when a CBS casting director offered her a part in the daytime soap opera, *The Secret Storm*. Although they decided to "kill off" her character after three months, CBS then recast her as the lead of another soap, *Love Is A Many Splendored Thing*. Her character in that one managed to last three years.

"I got bored with soaps. After three years it was enough. It is a good training ground and a wonderful experience. But who needs a 52 week-a-year grind?"

She then left for Hollywood and almost immediately landed a role in an episode of

Burt Reynolds' long-gone television series, *Dan August*. From there it was a big role—probably her best known—as Clint Eastwood's girl friend in *Play Misty For Me*. "I left *Dan August* on Friday and started *Misty* on Monday."

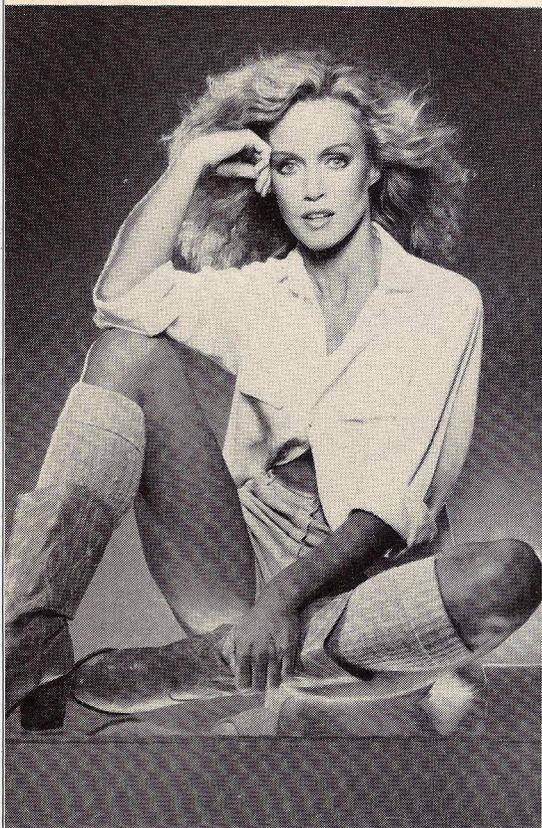
If all this sounds easy, you don't know the business. It took a lot of hard work and at times it was even frustrating.

Off the screen, Donna is as beautiful as she is on. With blazing blue eyes and a humble smile, Mills could be right up there with the rest of the poster pinups. But that's not her style. She projects herself as a serious actress. The craft is more important than the sexy image.

"I'm happy about acting. I really love it," she says. "I even like to rehearse. I know that success comes and goes and if you don't like the work, you are in big trouble. This is not my hobby... something I am doing until I grow up."

But even with the success of *Knots Landing* and *Play Misty For Me*, some people don't recognize Mills. In fact, at the *Racquetball Illustrated* photo session, one onlooker said,

No Dancing in the Big City



Photos by Harry Langdon

Donna Mills: "When you do a lot of different parts, people don't seem to identify with you. They know you but they can't think of your name."

"She's not as tall as Donna Mills... she can't be that short (5-foot-4)."

"When you do a lot of different parts, people don't seem to identify with you," says Mills. "They know you but they can't think of your name."

Most people don't know that between *Misty* and *Knots Landing*, Mills played in 21 made-for-television movies, portraying everything from a nun to a lawless fugitive. And most people don't remember that she co-starred with Larry Hagman (now J.R. on CBS' *Dallas*) in a short-lived NBC series called *The Good Life*.

"Larry and I may be television's scoundrels now but we were once a sweet, young, innocent couple working as the maid and butler of a wealthy household," recalls Mills. "We only lasted for one season. *All In The Family* was opposite us. It was their first season. Needless to say, no one watched us."

But that's not the case these days. A lot of people are watching *Knots Landing* in which Mills plays Abbey Cunningham, the resident divorcee of a small community. Her character has become a rival to J.R. as one of the most scheming, unscrupulous, manipulative and nasty characters on the tube. With a stable of free baby sitters, a whole collection of handsome husbands to be stolen away and people's careers to be devastated, Mills has one of the juicier roles on television.

And even though the series is aimed at the



Photo courtesy of CBS

Two of television's best-known "scoundrels" are Larry Hagman (standing) and Donna Mills (seated at rear). Since *Knots Landing* was a spinoff from *Dallas*, Hagman made an occasional appearance on that show last season. Mills and Hagman once worked together several years ago on another television series.