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OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN BIOCHEMISTRY - UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Department of Biochemistry of the University of Alberta (20 academic staff members) is recruiting suitable candidates interested in research in the following fields; biochemical virology and viral oncology; membrane biology; cell surface receptors; the structure and function of proteins including enzymes; x-ray crystallography and NMR spectroscopy; DNA structure, replication, and interaction with proteins; DNA mediated gene transfer; biochemistry and molecular genetics of immune responses; metabolic control mechanisms; and molecular biology of bacterial surface structures. Stipends for graduate students may be available through a major granting agency such as the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (\$12,450. + \$2,500. research allowance per annum). Interested applicants should contact:

Dr. John S. Colter, Chairman
Department of Biochemistry
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H7



Stan and his fans.

Photo by Heather Hueston/Dal Photo

Switchback behind the scenes

Is Stan really like that?
(Yes. And so is Rufus)

By HEATHER HUESTON

Television is bad for kids. It makes them fat and pacifies their young minds. But once you're over eighteen, like most of us Dal students, TV is okay. In fact, TV is vital relaxation for our poor overtaxed brains, etc., etc. No wonder *Switchback* draws over forty per cent of its audience from the eighteen-and-over group (including two Dal engineers who won the fog calling contest last year).

Host Stan Johnson has that godforsaken Sunday morning time slot but he has people crawling at least halfway out of bed to watch a show that's like David Letterman for kids, with Letterman's snarkiness replaced by plain goofiness.

Freebies, games, going out to schools and filming whatever ideas happen plus the weekly fix of *Get Smart* — all make this Actra-award-winning show one of the region's most popular.

Stan himself has a knack for splitting his voice from his facial expression. A man who talks in italics as much as Stan would be expected to have a body language like Wacky Wheatley's. But while Stan is *telling* you to "get your ENTRIES IN NOW!" his face never changes its quizzically earnest expression. When does Stan ever smile? No one expects to see a smile from Rufus, Stan's hand-operated dog, but then Rufus has survived marriage, kidnapping and his own soap opera.

I visited *Switchback* behind the scenes. Compared to the free movement on the set, the control booth is a relaxed command centre. Over producer Alice Foster's quiet camera tracking ("Ready

one... and, one") you see the two sound engineers lobbing paper into garbage cans and eyeing the teen models as they sway past the booth's window practising their hauteur. Outside in the hallway two staffers are plowing through phone lines clogged with kids calling to win concert tickets. "Got 'em all," they congratulate each other. They are thorough; during post-show callbacks they catch some P.E.I. kid who fudged about getting to Moncton for the show. The staffer gets tough. "Okay, you *knew* you couldn't make it to the concert but you took the ticket *anyway*?" Ouch. The kid is persuaded to give up the tickets.

Meanwhile, on the monitors, Stan is talking to two guys from the band Brighton Rock. They're both moussed and costumed and they relax in their chairs dodging flying objects headed for Stan and eating peanuts from the gorilla. One of them has a little trouble with the alphabet but he manages to find the "A" in *Switchback* for Tammy from Cape Breton. Even when she doesn't technically win *Beat the Box*, Stan usually lets kids play till they get something.

On my way to the set I talk to one of the Group's teen models, Tracey, who's dressed in Esprit and clutching her prop, a pastel blaster. "It's pretty good being here. I'm usually in church anyway."

The striking thing about the crew is that there aren't any young wise guys running around, they're all middle aged men, even the gorilla (always referred to as "the gorilla", even off camera). Prowling the set is John Martin, the floor director, performing his duties as sort of obnoxious cheerleader. A skinny

man in a huge headset, he bellows insults to the audience, ("I wish you were a statue and I was a bird" to a girl who said "No" to his "Are you having fun?!"), he cues the applause, and has a running sign language with Stan. A slap to the head means a phone call. Stan mimics this by smacking himself half sideways over the desk. Martin says his secret to successful floor bossing is to take a nasty pill.

Throughout the show two cops have been on the sidelines drinking coffee, not saying much. I thought they were there to do a safety spot but the cop hardly answers me. Well, what are they doing here, it isn't Tim Horton's. "So, are you, ah, allowed to be here?" I ask. "What do you mean, 'allowed to be here'?" says the cop, looking at me for the first time. Um, just curious. Forget it.

For the finale, and after the fashion show, everybody unravels the famous 39,534 meter scarf knit by Mrs. DiMattia, mother of Dante DeMattia, of the trendy Casa Dante. Dante had to interpret for his mother who doesn't speak much English. She was bored so she just kept knitting, aiming for the 1988 Guinness World Records.

After the show people milled all over the set getting autographs from Stan and just talking. Stan mentions his upgraded wardrobe (points out the Bay tag on his sweater) a change from the style Basil Deakin called "studied informality". "Now when my wife says I dress like a bum, I say No, I'm studying informality," explains Johnson. He already has a degree in that course with a minor in zoology and that's why some people don't snooze on Sunday mornings.