

# 'Confederate Widow' airs as a CBS two-part miniseries

BY JOHN CROOK  
"The Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All," Allan Gurganus' best seller that traverses nearly nine decades in the life of its title character, comes to the small screen as a lavish two-part CBS miniseries on Sunday and Tuesday, May 1 and 3.

Diane Lane ("Lonesome Dove") and Anne Bancroft share the role of Lucy Marsden. The large cast also includes plum performances by Cicely Tyson, Donald Sutherland, Blythe Danner, E.G. Marshall, Gwen Verdon and Wil Horneff (CBS' recent "The Yearling").

Admirers of the Gurganus novel, which runs 875 pages in its paperback edition, may be skeptical that it could be translated into a TV movie running "only" four hours, including commercials. Leading lady Lane acknowledges that some material fell by the wayside.

"I read the novel after I had read the screenplay and began to sort of understand (that) it was difficult to

shave down to something you could film for television," she says, laughing. "because there's a lot of types of encounters that might not necessarily grace network television. So it's a spicier novel... than we could get all into... four hours."

Lane is quick to add that Gurganus fans will not feel short-changed.

"They got the meat of the emotional transactions in there," she emphasizes. "I was relieved to see what they did get (in). We all want to commend Joyce (supervising producer and teleplay author Joyce Ellason), because she did such a wonderful job of getting the heart of the characters right where they should be."

Lane, who is 30 but has been acting since she was 6, plays Lucy from age 14, when she meets and marries 50-year-old Civil War veteran Capt. William Marsden (Sutherland), to 58, when the captain's death leads her to put their loving but rocky relationship behind her. The consistency at the core of the character gave the actress something to hold onto, she says.

"It was the same woman (at 14 and 58)," she explains. "She had just been through the things that we

didn't get to show all of, necessarily — but at that point I knew what she'd been through, and she's the same girl in her heart."

Lucy's longevity takes the character through a daunting span of life experiences, including childbirth (six times), infant mortality, a deep and abiding friendship with housekeeper Castalia (Tyson) and the recurring wartime flashbacks her tormented and eccentric husband endures (re-created by Horneff in flashback). The film opens with, and frequently returns to, Bancroft as the still-felicitous 100-year-old Lucy, relating her story to family and friends.

Evidence of the style and pedigree of "Widow" is the presence of Tyson and Sutherland, both of whom are notoriously picky about their projects.

"I think that what has happened now... is that I have made my point in terms of what I wanted to say in the last 20 years with my career," Tyson says. "Now I am perfectly willing to just enjoy my career by choosing roles simply because I consider them to be a challenge, and doing the best possible job I can."

Sutherland, who almost never accepts television roles, is especially lavish in his praise of Ellason's script and his own character of the addled captain. "I don't think I have loved anybody as much as (the captain) in this picture," he says. "He was — he was so totally — his energy is so unlike anything that I have ever experienced, or want to experience again. But he was just a terrific fellow. I mean, I loved him. I loved his gusto and his zest, and I had a terrific time."

One of the actor's best scenes with Lane comes near the end as Lucy gently tries to coax him through a bedside press conference with a roomful of reporters. Near senility, he doesn't even recognize his wife until she identifies herself.

Grinning madly, as if he is bestowing a lavish compliment, the captain responds, "Lucille. Yes! You never have been enough. But thank you."

Lane makes Lucy's quiet mortification an almost unbearable thing.

We've Got  
What Your  
Looking  
For!



## Counter Tops Reglazed

BATHTUBS • TILE • SINKS

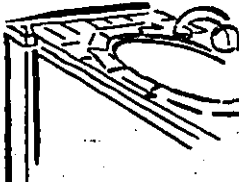
**\$89.95**

Standard  
Bathroom  
Counter Top

Written 5 Year Warranty



Residential  
Commercial  
&  
**INSURED!**



**427-3838**