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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER

Charles MacDonald began thinking about television as a “cool job” when he was 12 or 13. His father would take him to the Montreal Forum to watch the Canadians play, and he couldn’t help but watch the man with the TV camera.

“Our seats were behind a CBC cameraman operating one of those big Ikegami Studio cameras. He would sometimes punch up the replays on his return monitor and let us watch,” remembers MacDonald, now an award-winning editor, producer and videographer. “That was it for me. I was hooked.”

Raised in Arnprior, Ontario, Canada, MacDonald graduated from North Bay Ontario’s Canadore College’s Television Broadcast program in the early 1980s. He started working with CFCF Montreal Television’s news department in 1983. He moved to Independent Satellite News in Ottawa for a brief period, then on to CTV National News.

He worked as a shooter/editor for the CTV Ottawa and Halifax bureaus before being sent to Washington, D.C., in 1995. It was a life-changing move for MacDonald and his wife, Lisa, and their son, Jesse, then 2. Their visa didn’t allow Lisa to work outside the home and they decided she would be a stay-at-home mom. “It was tough for the first year, but she found her way and I believe our family is stronger because of it,” MacDonald says. “I could not have done any of this without Lisa. I’d be nothing without her.”

A three-year gig with CTV Washington turned into six years. Among his assignments was the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. At one point the Yugoslavian army took journalists to a small village where a bridge had been destroyed and civilians had been killed. “The townsfolk created a makeshift morgue in the basement of the church,” he says. “I was the first in, did my thing and then left. I was sitting on a picnic table trying to make sense of what I just saw when my reporter walked up and said, ‘Holy shit man, look at your boots.’ They were covered in blood. I literally walked into the river.” Once Lisa learned what had happened, she found it upsetting and so I threw them out...my favorite pair.



In 2001 MacDonald joined the National Geographic Channel as supervising editor/videographer. “They thought I was a good fit,” he says. “This move allowed me to change my visa status and apply for a green card. Over the next 10 years, my family and I were able to become citizens of our newly adopted country.” He covered the aftermath of the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2002, rode a camel in the Australian

outback, and traveled by dog sled in the Canadian Arctic. In his career he has traveled to every continent except for Antarctica.

“I was fortunate to be able to travel this planet and meet folks from all corners of the world. If there is one thing that has impressed me, it is that people are more or less the same. From the Innu family on the northern shores of Labrador to the father and his two children in the bombed-out building in Kabul, all they want is a safe, happy life and a better one for their children,” he says.

“We are so fortunate to be living where we do. I truly believe that if more people on this continent realized how good we have it, we would all get along just a bit better.”

After 16 years with the National Geographic Channel, MacDonald founded his own company, CMacFido Productions. As a freelancer, he has worked on a wide range of projects _ long form to educational and news and promotional. Clients have included Pearson Education, Discovery Channel, Smithsonian Channel, ITN and “PBS NewsHour.”

“Going out on my own was a great move for me. I don’t shoot that much anymore and am now primarily a video editor. It never rains in an edit suite,” he says.

“I am one of the luckiest guys around. I feel like a kid again, and I have discovered new ways to keep doing what I do. They pay me to tell stories, and I still like to remind my father that they do indeed pay me to watch TV.”

MacDonald’s advice to an up-and-coming videographer? “No job is too small, and work your ass off. Do it right, go the extra mile and don’t take shortcuts. Grab opportunities when they present themselves and don’t be afraid to take chances. Fortune favors the bold.”