

# QuickBrownFox

A film by Ann Hedreen  
and Rustin Thompson



Nominee for Regional Emmy Award

"An important film - for our parents,  
for ourselves and for all those who stand  
in the path of this terrible disease."

*-Ron Reagan*



A WOMEN MAKE MOVIES RELEASE

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## Quick Brown Fox

# Synopsis

*Who are you if you can't remember who you are? **QUICK BROWN FOX** explores the notion of how memories define us and how Alzheimer's can indiscriminately steal one's identity and family history.*

Ann Hedreen's documentary is a gripping personal investigation into her mother's battle with Alzheimer's disease. This powerful and poetic film combines a moving family journey with an insightful look at the science and politics of Alzheimer's—a disease that now affects more than 18 million people worldwide. Hedreen's uncompromising pursuit of possible causes and potential cures takes her from the copper mines of her mother's childhood home in Butte, Montana to an Alzheimer's research center in Washington where she volunteers as a research subject—with humorous and humbling results. And her fascinating interviews with prominent doctors and researchers offer insight into the fickle politics of funding and recent controversies surrounding stem-cell research. Interweaving super-8 home movies, 1950s medical films and heartbreaking interviews with her family, Hedreen's timely film bravely confronts the disease that has mangled the mind of her once beautiful and brainy mom, and raises profound questions about just how important our memories are.

The title of the film comes from the old typist's test line, "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog." As we see those words repeated over and over, we are introduced to the unnerving pattern of Alzheimer's Disease, which often begins with symptoms like repeating the same story or phrase over and over again.



*"Quick Brown Fox masterfully interweaves a moving personal story of a daughter coming to terms with her mother's advancing Alzheimer's disease, and the latest scientific knowledge about the malady. Imaginatively and beautifully filmed, [it] is alternately sad, frightening, humorous and hopeful."*

*--Greg Olson, Seattle Art Museum Film Curator*

*"A wonderful blend of wide-ranging and deeply personal emotions, insightful philosophical inquiry, and appropriate political commentary. Simultaneously delicate and striking."*

*--Matt Kraybill, University of Washington Alzheimer's Disease Research Center*

*"An important resource for all who are affected by Alzheimer's disease."*

*--Maria Shriver, Award winning journalist and First Lady of the State of California*



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# Festivals & Screenings

Through Women's Eyes Film Festival

Frye Art Museum

## Credits

US • 2003 • 63 Minutes • Color

Directors

**Ann Hedreen**  
**Rustin Thompson**

Producer

**Ann Hedreen**

Director of Photography

**Rustin Thompson**

Editor

**Rustin Thompson**

Writer

**Ann Hedreen**

Original Music

**Carmen Ficarra**

Additional Music

**Loituma**

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High-resolution photos are available to download at  
[www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com)



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## About the Filmmakers

**Ann Hedreen** is a writer, filmmaker and public affairs advisor specializing in social and environmental issues. Rustin Thompson is a producer, director, writer, editor and cameraman. Married, with two children, Ann and Rustin own Seattle-based White Noise Productions, known for its documentary and fundraising films for non-profit organizations, as well as films for broadcast and theatrical release. Over their 20-year careers, they have won many Emmys, Tellys, festival awards and other recognitions for their work.

Some of their most recent productions include: WILD AMERICA: PROTECTING THE LANDS EXPLORED by Lewis & Clark, narrated by Sissy Spacek and which screened at Sierra Club and Lewis & Clark Bicentennial events around the country; FALSE PROMISES: THE LOST LAND OF THE WENATCHI, which aired on western PBS stations in 2002 and is distributed by Filmmakers Library in New York; GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS, the story of how tiny loans are changing lives in Central America, which was a finalist for the national Telly Awards; and 30 FRAMES A SECOND: THE WTO IN SEATTLE, voted one of the top ten films of 2001 by the American Library Association and winner, Best Documentary, Chicago and Seattle Underground Film Festivals (2000), Portland, Maine Festival of World Cinema (2001), Chris Award, Columbus Film and Video Festival (2001), and Most Inspirational Documentary, Vancouver, BC, Reel to Real International Youth Film Festival (2002).

Ann's career has spanned print journalism, television news and documentary production, and public affairs assignments for dozens of clients ranging from the National Wildlife Federation to the Seattle Art Museum. She is also a writer of fiction and essays. She is a graduate of Wellesley College, and began her career at the City News Bureau of Chicago.

**Rustin Thompson** has more than 20 years of broadcast experience as a cameraman, producer and editor with CBS, PBS, ABC, NBC, ESPN, CNN, the Learning Channel and several local stations. Rus has shot and co-produced documentaries in locations ranging from Haiti to Bangladesh to Moscow to Central America. He is also an on-air programmer and film critic for KBCS radio. Rus graduated from the University of Washington.

Ann and Rus are both Northwest natives with deep family roots in Seattle and Montana (Ann) and Tacoma and rural Washington (Rus). In 1987, they began their married life by quitting their jobs in local television and traveling around the world for a year. They live in Seattle with their two children, Claire and Nick.



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## Behind the Film

Filmmakers Ann Hedreen and Rustin Thompson have told many people's stories. But it was quite a different experience to tell one of their own. It was anger that finally got them going on QUICK BROWN FOX: Ann's anger at an illness she's grown to hate, at a President who could thwart potentially life-saving research without batting an eyelash, at having to stand by and watch her Mom's life crumble into a long descent into Alzheimer's Disease that began around the barely-old age of 60. So Ann started learning everything she could and trying to comprehend the astounding breadth of the coming epidemic, which will claim tens of millions of people worldwide by mid-century. But the more she read and learned, the more she realized that less was more: that QUICK BROWN FOX would be more powerful as a small story, a love story, than it would be as a big angry rant. QUICK BROWN FOX is about Ann's beautiful, brainy mom and what it's been like to watch her lose herself bit by bit. It's about how making a film turned Ann and her mom into research participants. It's about how making a film led her back to her mom's hometown--Butte, Montana--and back to her Finnish roots. It's about how memory defines a person, or doesn't--about where a person's soul is, or isn't. It's about the most old-fashioned kind of love, the kind that starts the moment you're born.



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October 18, 2004  
by Liz Taylor

## A Woman's Life Through the Lens of Alzheimer's

It's a cosmic question: Who are you if you lose your mind?

Where does the unique "you" — your memories, humor and dreams — go when your body's still here but your brain stops working? This fundamental and heartbreaking question is at the core of a compelling film that will be presented at 8 p.m. Thursday on KCTS-TV. Part of the "About Us" series showcasing the works of Northwest filmmakers, **"Quick Brown Fox"** was produced by Seattle filmmaker Ann Hedreen and directed by her and her husband, Rustin Thompson. It's an intensely personal story that follows the shattered life of Hedreen's mother, Arlene, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at 66.

She had been brilliant, the smartest kid in her class growing up in Butte, Mont., which is now so polluted from copper mines that it's a major Superfund site.

She went to college for a year but dropped out, married and had her first baby by the time she was 20. Life was hard. She married twice, divorced twice, bore six children, married again in her 40s and gained three stepchildren, then almost immediately lost her husband to cancer, then lost her father four months later.

"As we were putting this film together," says Hedreen in the film, "the question people asked us most often was: When did it start? When and why and how? You can drive yourself crazy trying to guess. Was it all those toxic mud pies she made as a girl ... or was it the emotional steeplechase of her first two failed marriages? Of divorcing at 25? Or was it that fateful year, 1977, when everything bad that can happen, did?"

Alzheimer's is more common in women than men. "I sometimes wonder if having less control over the events of your life stresses your brain in special ways. Or was it none of the above and just rotten luck?"

The film is rich with old Super-8 home movies and still photos, showing Arlene's bright eyes and happy smile for much of her life. The contrast with a year ago when the film was made — when she was 72, her eyes dull and vacant, unable to talk — demonstrates the true horror of this disease. Nobody's home anymore. It reminds me of my mother who died of the disease three years ago. That vacant look will haunt me forever.

As most families do, Hedreen and her siblings noticed their mother's memory lapses long before the diagnosis and dismissed them because she seemed so healthy. In her 50s, teaching became a nightmare; she took early retirement. By the time the diagnosis was made a few years later, she'd declined enough not to comprehend the full horror of what she had, the daughters believe. At the same time, she was relieved to know she had a disease, and it wasn't her fault.

One of the things the family regrets most is that, when they moved her out of her home, they chose a retirement community that did not specialize in Alzheimer's.

At the time, she said, they couldn't imagine a future in which she'd need more intensive care. Two years later, the unimaginable became reality. The family had to move her again and she became so disoriented and violent, she landed in the locked gero-psychiatric unit of a local hospital. Today she lives in an adult family home that specializes in people like her.

**"Quick Brown Fox"** isn't tragic. It's intelligently, articulately put together, with irony and laughter and love. You can find more information at [www.QuickBrownFoxFilm.com](http://www.QuickBrownFoxFilm.com).



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