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Besides “King of the Hill” she has had regular voice roles on a host of animated shows, including “Squirrel Boy,” “The Oblongs” and “Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks” (as Hector MacBadger). Only in the last few years has she aggressively pursued on-camera parts again.

Her breakthrough came in 2006 when she was cast opposite the comedian Louis C. K. in the verbally graphic [HBO](#) series “Lucky Louie.” Broadcast live in front of a studio audience and canceled after one controversial season, it gave her a chance to play a working-class wife with a sharp tongue and a real sex life, precursors to her role on “Californication.”

“Before ‘Lucky Louie’ nobody would ever cast me to play a mom or a wife, nobody ever saw me in that role, which is weird since that’s who I really am,” she said. “And then Louis called and said, ‘You have to be my Edith Bunker.’”

Tom Kapinos, the creator of “Californication,” saw Ms. Adlon on “Lucky Louie” and also remembered her from a small part in an otherwise forgettable 1996 feature film, “Bed of Roses.” He pursued her, first with the idea that she would play the show’s female lead and then, after that role was taken by Natasha McElhone, writing the part of Marcy Runkle just for her.

“She really has ended up being the show’s secret weapon,” Mr. Kapinos said. “I feel like I can write anything for her, and she’ll knock it out of the park. There’s always a special joy when you write some filthy speech for her and know she’s going to turn it into magic. It’s like gutter poetry.”

In Ms. Adlon’s “Californication” scenes, she has snorted copious amounts of cocaine (actually powdered milk and sugar), her makeup has been smeared from sweat and exertion, and she has been photographed from some less than flattering bedroom angles. “I think about the repercussions sometimes, but I like to be extreme,” she said. “If people have a strong reaction, I like that.”

... people have a strong reason, I like that.

In addition to raising her two daughters, acting and doing voice-overs, Ms. Adlon would like to start her own production company. She is already working on a pilot with Louis C. K. for CBS. "We want to make it a social comedy," she said, "about the middle class that is hanging on to the toilet seat, about to go down the drain."

She said she wanted to do "as many different things as possible," adding, "I get some of that from my dad" — Don Segall, who wrote comic books, television shows and science fiction pulp novels, and who died in 1994. "He said you've got to try something new every day," she said. "Irons in the fire, that was his thing. You got to have a lot of irons in the fire."

A version of this article appeared in print on November 23, 2008, on page AR22 of the New York edition.

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TODAY'S NEWS: OUR TAKE

### Californication Star Scores CBS Pilot



Apr 27, 2009 04:11 PM ET  
by Joyce Eng



Pamela Adlon

Pamela Adlon may leave Evan Handler for Adam Carolla. The *Californication* star, who plays Handler's wife on the Showtime series, has landed the female lead in Carolla's CBS comedy pilot *Ace in the Hole*, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Adlon will depart *Californication*, on which she has starred for the past two seasons and its upcoming third run, if *Ace* is ordered to series.

Described as a family comedy, *Ace* will star Carolla as a driving instructor, husband and father. Adlon will portray his wife, a nurse.

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