

From Melissa Renaldi to Melissa Agretti: DOLORES CANTÚ Originated the Vineyard Heiress

Interview by

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It took more than half a year until I heard back from Dolores Cantú after I sent her an interview request. But I was fortunate the actress, who originated the character of Melissa Agretti, finally was available for a few questions in October 2008.

Being Cast as Melissa

"Ms. Cantú, thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview. You originated one of the most popular characters and probably the sexiest femme fatale on *Falcon Crest* — Melissa Agretti. You played her for approximately two or three minutes in *For Love or Money* (episode 11) when the character was introduced. I would like to start with how you landed the rôle on *Lorimar's* wine drama. Was there an audition?"

"Yes," the actress replied.



Dolores between Lorenzo Lamas and Billy Moses while shooting episode 11.

"Were there many competitors?"

"Yes, but I don't remember how many," Ms. Cantú said and also pointed out she did not recall the names of any other actresses who also tried to get the part.

The Spelling Problem

"You were given credit as 'Dolores Cantu' on both *Falcon Crest* and some other shows, including *Dallas*, which was also produced by *Lorimar*. But there are other productions

where you were referred to as '*Dolores*'. What is the reason for the difference in the spelling of your first name?" I wanted to know.

"Sometimes companies misspell people's names," the actress explained. Her first name is actually Dolores, and it was apparently a false spelling that *Lorimar Productions* used. Ms. Cantú also remembered that she sometimes was given a credit under a different last name: "I was also Primo — that was when I was married."

Leaving *Falcon Crest*

"You only played Melissa in one single episode. Was it your decision to leave the show?"

"No," Ms. Cantú said and referred to the producers of the series: "They decided they wanted someone that had more credits than I did."



"Did you ever regret that decision of the show's regime, especially considering how immensely famous and popular Ana - Alicia, the actress who later portrayed that rôle, became — from being a guest star in season 1, she climbed up to the ensemble of main cast members only within a few episodes."

"I continued to work and had a career much longer than she has and a lot of others from that show," Ms. Cantú answered, "so as hard as it was at that time, I'm still a working actor and now a manager for talent."

Ana - Alicia during the filming of her first show next to her trailer on the set (episode 14).

"Have you ever met Ana - Alicia and did you talk about the character you both played?" I curiously wanted to know.

"Yes I met her. But no, we never talked about it," Ms. Cantú said.

The Development of Melissa

"In earlier script drafts of episode 11, the writer, Kathleen Hite, referred to the character you played as 'Melissa Renaldi', a tentative character name. Do you know why the writing and producing staff changed the last name to Agretti shortly before the episode was filmed?"

"If I remember that was her family name," Ms. Cantú said about Agretti and made it very clear she did not know anything about the previous ideas the writers had in mind.

Watching the Show

"Did you watch the series before you guest-starred?" I wanted to know.

"Yes," she said.

"And did you watch the show after you left?"

"I watched it, but felt bad that I was not a part of it. But I went on to do other stuff."

Working with the Cast and Crew

"Who were your favorite cast members to work with?" I wanted to know.

"Lorenzo [Lamas], Jane [Wyman] and my father on the show," Ms. Cantú fondly said about Carlos Romero, who portrayed Carlo Agretti.

"And how about your favorite staff and crew members?"

"Don't remember," she said.

She also explained did not stay in touch with anyone from the cast or crew.

Memorable Moments

"What was your most memorable moment?"

"Being on the set and shooting the showing," she answered.

"Do you have any memorabilia from the show?"

"No," the actress said.

Current Projects

"Finally, Ms. Cantú, I would like to know what your current projects are."

"I have a commercial for AAA in Texas and California," Ms. Cantú pointed out. "Had one for *Time Warner Cable* last year and some print ads. Also own *Candu Management*. I represent Carlos Santos for *MTV Tr3s*, Yvette Gonzales - Nacer from the new show *Beatkinz*. For Nick Jr., Nathan Carpenter from the *U rock Disney* campaign, Arlene Santana — *SITV*; Sonita Henry appearing on *Star Trek* [the 2009 movie]; Viviana Vigil, host for *LXTV*. And others."



Dolores Cantú nowadays.