

## Questions for FATHER BOB CURTIS

March 28, 2000

Thomas J. Pucher asked Father Robert P. Curtis, C.S.P., who played himself (1982 – 1990) questions about his work on the *Falcon Crest* set.

Father Bob's answers are in bold print.

Father Bob Curtis at the first wedding of Lance Cumson (Lorenzo Lamas) and Melissa Agretti (Ana-Alicia) in season 1.



What holy order do you belong to, Father Bob?

**I belong to the *Paulist Fathers*, the only order of *Roman Catholic* priests founded in America. A lot of our work has always been in communications.**

How did you enjoy playing yourself?

**It was interesting "playing myself", but not easy. I often had to change the dialogue. We had very good writers, but few writers ever know how to write a priest character. I've done other shows where the same was true.**

What elements of your own character have you contributed to the character of Father Bob on the show?

**It was easy to bring all the elements of my own personal character onto the set because, off the set, I had a friendly & ministerial relationship to all the actors and most of the crew as well. I've done more counseling on movie sets than in the rectory.**

Is it true that you got the rôle on *Falcon Crest* through Jane Wyman?

**No. Jane Wyman and I have been friends for many years, but it was a casting agent who asked me to appear on *Falcon Crest*. She knew me from my roles in *Fatso* with Anne Bancroft, and other shows.**

**Before entering the priesthood, I was an actor, having graduated from the *American Academy of Dramatic Arts* in New York. I toured for some time in an play with Gloria Swanson, who became a second mother to me, remaining my best friend until she died. So, my background was theater, film & TV. I decided to give it all up, and became a producer of television commercials for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in New York. Then I decided to give I all up, and become a priest. I did so. But my contacts were in the world of theater, and all during my priesthood my counseling work has been among people who work in the various entertainment industries.**

**A long answer to your question, but while Jane Wyman was happy I played the part, she was not the person, who suggested it.**

Are you still in contact with Ms. Wyman? If so, how is she doing today?

**Ms. Wyman is fine; I told her about your letter. We talk often.**

Are you still in contact with any other cast members?

**I am in touch with many of the cast members. As well as crew.**

Who were your favorite cast members to work with?

**I enjoyed working with many of the cast members. Abby Dalton was a special favorite, and she sends her regards to you. Among the guest stars, Kim Novak was one of many I found to be of generous spirit. It was especially interesting to be on the set with Mariska Hargitay (Jayne Mansfield's daughter), since she had been a student of mine while she attended our parish school.**

Who were your favorite producers and directors?

**Earl Hamner was a favorite producer. We had many directors but my favorite was an English gentleman who has died. Can't recall his name.**

Is there any truth in the rumor that you advised Ana - Alicia during the first season how to play the evil features of Melissa's character because she was too shy to act? — You are said to have told her: "The better you play evil, the better it makes the good think look."

**Yes. Ana - Alicia was worried about playing the bad girl. We had a little drama lesson about the necessity of conflict in any play. Without the bad, the good is hidden. It seemed to help her. I have now baptized both of her children.**

Did you write your scenes yourself?

**I didn't write my scenes, but I consulted on all the scripts. And I felt free to alter the dialogue on the spur of the moment.**

Did you advise the producers and directors on certain matters concerning the church, e.g. annulling Melissa's and Lance's marriage?

**Yes, I was script consultant on all matters about religion.**

Was the "Father Christopher" (Ken Olin) storyline your idea?

**"Father Christopher" was not my idea, but I approved it ... and, when Ken Olin was hired, went to his house to explain his character, since he is not Catholic and had no idea about the motivations of a priest's life.**

Was it a problem for you to get permission from the archbishop to play a rôle on a prime time soap opera?

**Since I belong to a religious order, it was not necessary for me to obtain any permissions. Also, since much of my priestly work is among the film world, working alongside its people made sense.**

Did you watch the episodes regularly? How did you like the series in general?

**I liked the series. But, believe it or not, I did not watch it regularly. I have always had work to do than times to do it in, so I watch very little TV.**

How did you feel about the dramatic changes *Lorimar* and *Falcon Crest* underwent during season 8 and 9?

**I didn't like some of the changes, but I understood them.**

Would you like to reprise your rôle if there was a *Falcon Crest* reunion?

**It would be fun to have a *Falcon Crest* reunion. Doubt it will happen.**

Thank you so much for your help and cooperation.

**I hope this is of some help, Thomas.**