

## Questions for SIMON MacCORKINDALE

April 14, 2005

Thomas J. Pucher asked British actor and director Simon MacCorkindale, who played Greg Reardon on *Falcon Crest* during seasons 4 and 5, questions about his work on the set.

Simon MacCorkindale's answers are in bold print.

[The parts in brackets were edited for publication purposes.]

Simon, first of all, I would like to thank you for your outstanding portrayal of Greg Reardon. We really enjoyed your being on the show. There a couple of things the fans would like to know from you...

**I would be very happy to do an interview.**

Okay, let's start with some general questions about *Falcon Crest*...

How did you like filming on location in the Napa Valley?

**I enjoyed the Napa Valley very much indeed. My first visit in 84 was particularly enjoyable as it was all new. My second in 85 led to a holiday with my wife that took in San Francisco and then Lake Tahoe. Loving wine as I do, it was a great opportunity to be introduced first hand to the whole region and the burgeoning industry. The restaurants were also extremely good. It was also nice to be working out of L.A.**

Are you still in contact with anyone from the cast & crew?

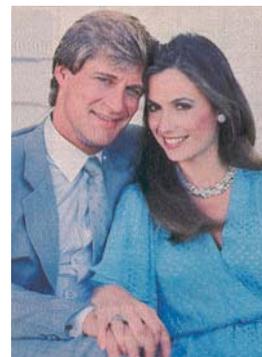
**No, apart from the occasional sighting or message between mutual friends.**

Who were your favorite cast members to work with?

**Jane, naturally. I learnt a great deal and loved the fact that she liked the early shift, so I had often finished my day by lunch having played 3 or 4 scenes! Selby was always challenging as was Foxworth. Ana - Alicia was also a joy to play with!**



Jane Wyman and Ana - Alicia are some of Simon's favorite cast mates.



Who were your favorite crew members to work with?

**Dreadful to say, but I have really forgotten so many. I really liked Raymond the DOP [Frank Raymond, director of photography] and had very good relationships with Reza Badiyi and Don Chaffey, the directors.**

I can imagine how wonderful it must have been to work with Reza. I met him last year on Sunset Boulevard in L.A., and we had a wonderful chat about his work on *Falcon*. He is a very creative and most talented director and told me many interesting stories from the set. My partners and I will also publish that interview in the near future.

What was your most memorable scene on the show?

**Again hard to remember. I had fun with a fight scene with Billy Moses. I remember that one because my parents came to visit that day. I think I need to refresh my memory. Either I'm getting senile or I've been too busy since then. I hope it is the latter!**

Oh yes, I remember that scene. It must have been the fight in *Recriminations* (# 89 <4.21>) — at Melissa's house after Cole had walked out on Melissa on their wedding day. That was fun, indeed.

What was your favorite storyline — not necessarily connected with your character?

**I liked the Morgan Fairchild story — incest. This had a social value to it and didn't just live in the soap world. Again I don't recall so many of the details.**



Greg helping his girlfriend, Jordan, deal with her difficult past — being sexually abused as a child — was one of the core storylines of the 1985-86 season.

That's absolutely right. I also liked it when the show dealt with topics like that. I once did a research on social criticism in soap operas and that storyline about Jordan Roberts and her father was on top of my list. I also thought Maggie's battle with alcoholism in season 7 was a good idea from a social standpoint.

Well, let's have a closer look on you and your character on the show now... How did you get the rôle?

**As I recall, I was simply asked if I'd like to be on the show. I didn't test or even read.**

How amazing! This did not happen too often on the set of *Crest* as far as I know.

How did you enjoy playing Greg Reardon?

**I had a ball. On the first day, I hadn't really decided who Greg was, as can happen in the soap opera world, particularly the early sketches for him were as an American which I just didn't want to play. I decided on that first day that Greg was someone who found everything slightly amusing. This was fine until Angela had him doing every evil deal under the sun and suddenly he became as evil as she was!**

We know from early script drafts of season 4 that the original name of your character was *Brad* Reardon. Was it your idea to change the name to *Gregory Andrew* ("Greg") Reardon?

**Yes, it was my request.**

Was there a specific reason for that?

**Rightly or wrongly, I felt *Brad* (short for *Bradley*) was a very American name and that *Greg* had a similar North American ring to it while its long form, *Gregory*, was more English.**

What elements of your own personality have you contributed to the character of Greg?

**Being a bastard!!**

Did you advise the producers and writers on certain aspects of your character?

**Not really. We just discussed language and allowed his British roots to be reflected more than his adopted American ones. This allowed him to be different from so many of the other similar characters on this and other shows.**

Were you happy with the storylines the producers created for your character? Or did you even create some of them yourself?

**I was never unhappy with my storylines as I recall. I certainly didn't influence any, directly. With this kind of show, I have always been happy to go along with the producers' vision. These are, after all, manufactured characters and do not need to reflect one's true personality. Audiences should be allowed to love you or hate you according to their own taste and reactions. Actors influence can so often be about protecting their own perceived image and frequently they are wrong.**

We talked a lot about your acting on the show. But you also served as a director on *Falcon Crest*. You directed *Checkmate* (# 113 <5.15>), a very thrilling episode. Was it your idea to direct the episode, or did any of the producers suggest it to you?

**It was part of my contract going in that I would direct one episode in my second year.**

What was it like to direct an episode of a series you have been working on as an actor for quite some time? Did you enjoy it?

**I love directing, though I hate directing myself. Whenever I do it I try to be in the episode as little as possible — if at all.**

Was it an odd situation for some of the cast members to have a fellow actor as a director? Or were all the people used to that since other regulars (Bob Foxworth and Mel Ferrer) and a guest star (Gwen Arner) also had both acting and directing duties before?

**No, it wasn't odd for those very reasons. They also all knew it was coming up and were actually very supportive.**

Was it your first experience as a director?

**On film, yes. I had done lots of theatre before that. It also earned me my *Directors Guild* card.**

What were your major aims when you directed that episode?

**To prove to myself that I could do it. To earn the respect of my fellow cast members that I could do it. To add another string to my bow and Guild to my cv [curriculum vitae]. I think I achieved all 4.**

You left after the end of season 5. I was always wondering what the reason was. Was it your decision, and was it in any way connected with the fact that Earl Hamner and a few of the other producers, including Rod & Claire Peterson, were about to leave the crew at the end of the season?

**I had a third year option on my side. They asked me back. I had reservations because of three main issues.**

**One, I thought the show might not survive for more than one more season. I don't now recall on what that perception was based but I certainly felt I didn't want to be in the "last" cast. Two, my wife was getting anxious to spend more time with her family at home in England. Three, I was going through what I call my "arch" phase when I felt that the work I was doing was fun and lucrative but not as stretching as I felt I wanted or needed. I also was finding fault with much of the work — bitching about script quality, editorial choices etc. Not only *Falcon Crest* but everything — certainly everything I had been in. I was actually ready to quit acting and try producing so I could put myself on the line. I hate bitching. If it isn't right, do something about it. Be proactive, put yourself on the line. I was therefore happy not to come back but to move on taking the biggest risk of my career. I said I would love to come back but that I had to have more episodes to direct to make it worth-while. They couldn't give me that deal because the slate was full. I walked and the rest is history.**

Is there any truth in the rumor your leaving the series was also caused by other producers trying to lure you into the cast of the 1987 *James Bond* movie?

**No one was trying to lure me into *Bond*. It was thought many times that I might be the one after Roger [Moore], indeed he himself thought it was going to be me. My *Falcon Crest* decision had no relation to *Bond*. That is a whole other story!**

How did you feel about the way your and Morgan Fairchild's characters were written off in the first few episodes of season 6 — with the sheriff's explanation that Wainwright kidnapped Greg and Jordan and just a phone conversation between Greg and Angela without an on-screen appearance of Greg?

**I'm afraid I didn't watch *Falcon Crest* again, partly because I returned to the UK, which was well behind with the episodes it was screening. It was not a prime time show in England. I heard about the way the two characters demised and wasn't particularly put out by it nor even disappointed. After all, I had no expectation of anything spectacular as neither of us had been involved at all. It just seemed a shame that when these situations arise, the producers don't think to ask you back for an episode or two, to tie up characters for the audiences satisfaction and interest. As a direct result of this treatment, when I was producing in Canada and a character had to go at the end of a season I encouraged them to hire him for a special goodbye episode and gave him a great send off.**

I guess you already covered my next question if you liked season 6 in general...

**Didn't see any.**

I am not sure if you heard that, in the last two years (seasons 8 and 9), the show was drifting away from the original concept — apparently caused by a completely new crew taking over the series. Since you did not watch it any more, I guess you can't say anything on those two final seasons...

**I wouldn't have liked them but, as I said earlier I was fearful of it happening. It just happened later than I expected.**

Believe me, we were disappointed, too.

Let's come to a more intriguing topic, the "secret" *Falcon Crest* storylines. Were there any concrete plans for a new storyline for your character if you had stayed in season 6?

**Not that I know of as it never formed part of my negotiations.**

Earl [Hamner] told me the Riebmann storyline was not received well with the audience during the show's original run. CBS demanded the Nazi treasure / cartel story be terminated very soon. So the mid-season finale of that storyline seemed a bit hectic, indeed. What was your personal opinion about that decision?

**I was disappointed they axed it. I liked it very much as I thought it was different, brave and more worldly — appropriate for a region whose industry (wine) was truly international. Unfortunately, we certainly felt the audience's negative reaction to it. Perhaps the termination could have been a little better executed, but they were right to do quick surgery once the doctor had identified the disease.**

Sarah Douglas, who played Pamela, once mentioned to me she regretted that storyline ended earlier because the writers originally had concrete plans for the whole 4<sup>th</sup> season to continue with it. So what could have happened if CBS had not axed it? Do you remember any of these early script drafts?

**I never saw any advance storylines so had no idea how it was being developed.**

It is astonishing to me that the audience's interest in that particular storyline seems to have changed over the years because we received quite an amount of fan mail from people asking why that interesting plotline came to that sudden end.

**You're right about change of attitudes — but that has a lot to do with international politics. My perception of the "Mid West" American audiences that these shows targeted was of pretty unworldly people. By 1989 things were changing so fast in Europe with The Wall; Romania; the collapse of the USSR; Croatia/Serbia; Iraq; Bosnia etc., etc. — Americans suddenly learnt about the world outside America and began to understand other issues than their own. Nazis in their midst would naturally have more resonance. It was perhaps before its time.**

That might have been the case. I also talked to David [Selby] about that issue a couple of years ago, and he also thinks the success of shows like *Falcon Crest* can only be understood with that special zeitgeist of the 1980s in mind.

Well, back to the "secrets" of the writers... It is rumored that two special guest appearances were originally planned in connection with new storylines for your

character in season 5. Those plans, however, did not materialize in the end. First, your wife, Susan, is said to have been considered to play Greg's secret wife. Is this true?

**I don't recall Susan ever being approached to be on the show, but it wouldn't be rocket science for producers to have thought about it — even if it never reached my ears.**

Secondly, Brooke Shields is said to have been considered as Greg's sister and a love interest for Lance. Is that true?

**I believe this was true.**

Were there any other interesting storylines that were discussed, but never materialized?

**Not that I'm aware of.**

We talked a lot about the show. But you are a most versatile artist. After *Falcon Crest*, you did not only act, but also have worked as a director (both TV and stage productions), producer, writer and even a composer. You and your wife also have your own production company. Which form of art you are performing do you like most?

**Just a detail, it is my wife who is the composer. Not I, alas. I'm very blessed to have tasted the fruit of many trees. I really don't have a preference since I can move reasonably freely between them all. I find that which ever one I am doing feeds a desire to do the others and certainly enriches the others when I return to them. It's a progressive learning curve and one feeds the other and the other feeds the one. If I *had* to choose, I think I would choose directing as you are the centre of the whole exercise and can influence the whole rather than just parts. Your vision can be put on the line and you can be responsible — carry the can, come what may. I also love working with actors, being their safety net, encouraging them to go places they might not go to out of fear or insecurity. So often we are left on our own — and crave to be inspired and supported. I love the opportunity to do that for people. I love talent and relish any chance to nourish it. I really don't have enough of my own.**



Simon MacCorkindale nowadays.

What are your current projects?

**I am currently starring in the BBC's top rated drama *Casualty*. This is the longest running medical drama in the history of television — now about to start its 20<sup>th</sup> year. I am just starting my fourth year. I also have several other projects that I am working on with my production company.**

Thank you so very much for sharing your memories and your work of art with us.