

## Interview with JEFF FREILICH

September 2003

DFCF member Marc Bradley interviewed Jeff Freilich.



Jeff Freilich's answers are in bold print.

As the creative head, Jeff Freilich was executive producer, writer and director on *Falcon Crest's* seasons 6 and 7 from 1986 until 1988.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview this extraordinarily talented and eclectic man, who gave us so many hours of wonderful television entertainment.

Jeff, first, I'd like to talk to you about your career and your personal development. I read that you were graduated in Fine Arts from the *High School of Music and Art*, graduated in psychology from *Antioch College* and attended the *University of Southern California School of Medicine*. These are very different things. Why did you decide to become a writer/producer/director? Was it by accident or was that something you always wanted?

**I am asked this question quite often. All my life I have been motivated in two directions: the first is a need to express myself creatively, whether it be through words, pictures or music; the second is to make people happy, to somehow, in my small way, make the world a better place. This may sound overly grand and self-important. But, I think each of us as citizens of the earth have a responsibility to improve our civilization. We need to find our own individual ways of contributing.**

**As a high school student, I was fascinated by great paintings. I grew up in New York City where some of the best art collections are on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum. I was exposed to great beauty that had survived for centuries and still had the ability to inspire and bring pleasure. I wanted to learn more and explore my own talent. At the same time, I was a realist. I knew how difficult it would be to make a living as a painter and how rare it is for a painter to succeed. I chose to study science at the same time and prepared for a future as a doctor.**

**I attended Antioch College, a politically radical school in the mid-western United States, during the Viet Nam War. I got involved in the anti-war movement, the civil rights demonstrations and became more interested in how people behaved with one another. I chose to concentrate in psychology, while at the same time study the necessary sciences to apply to medical school. While at Antioch, I wrote and directed three student films. Film, I began to realize, is an art form that incorporates both images and a linear narrative — a story. It is a painting brought to life. And, I enjoyed the collaboration of others who work together to make a film. I prefer to be around people than to work alone.**

**Film was a natural creative outlet for me.**

**I moved to Los Angeles to attend the *University of Southern California (USC) School of Medicine*. Los Angeles is the capitol of America's film industry (Hollywood is a small section of Los Angeles). I was exposed to the business through friends I made while living in LA and I became more and more interested. Medicine, I quickly realized, is a more restrictive, more disciplined and more demanding career than I wanted. It takes great dedication and concentration and my mind needed more freedom. I realized that if I continued with medical school and became a doctor, I would make a good doctor but would never be happy because my passion for expression would be suppressed. I chose to leave medical school and attend the *American Film Institute* as a producer.**

**My closest friend from high school, Tim Hunter (*Tex, River's Edge*), was directing a picture at the *AFI* and he wanted me to work on it with him. My experience on his movie (*Devil's Bargain*) got me interested in pursuing a career in film. Because it is difficult to get a job as a producer or director without a "portfolio" I chose to write. As a writer, your ideas on paper speak for themselves. Nobody can take them away from you. They are original and tangible. I wrote several low-budget movie scripts, magazine articles, research papers, comic strips and advertisements. I wrote the same way a body-builder goes to the gym. The more you write, the better you get, the stronger your "writing muscle" becomes. Eventually, I got a job on a television series and haven't stopped working since.**

Did your parents, your family support you in your plans or did they have other plans for you?

**My parents were a bit shocked when I decided to leave medical school. As do most parents, they wanted their son's future to be secure and as a medical student I had seemingly satisfied that goal. However, to their credit, they supported me in my efforts to pursue a more tenuous career as a writer and eventually to make movies and television shows. My father's only concern was that I would become happy in what I did for a living. When I told him I was content, it made him proud.**

You told me you went to High School with Mark Snow. I've heard that Mark was in a band called *New York Rock and Roll Ensemble* while studying. As you are a musician yourself (so I believe as you composed the *Dark Justice* theme together with Mark) have you ever been a member of a band or did you ever have ambitions of becoming a composer?

**Mark was an oboe player in high school. After graduating from the *High School of Music and Art*, he attended the *Julliard School of Music*, a celebrated conservatory in New York City. He joined together with other students (including Michael Kamen, now a very successful film composer) to form the *New York Rock and Roll Ensemble*. It was a quartet of classical musicians, playing classical instruments to perform rock and roll songs. They wore tuxedos and appeared on television and on stage. I dabbled in music and played trumpet, guitar, piano and saxophone but I never considered myself a musician. I played for my own pleasure and formed a Dixieland band in high school. We played for John F. Kennedy in New York when he was running for President in 1960. But we never became professional because we simply weren't good enough. In college, I played with a rock band (on guitar) and made a little money, which**

**helped get me through school. I have always enjoyed music, especially jazz and classical, and have a distinct idea of what I like in my films and television shows. I hired Mark to write for many shows before *Falcon Crest*, and then to create the main title theme for *Dark Justice* because I always found his compositions innovative and exciting. In addition, it's always fun and rewarding to work with old friends. My son, I am proud to say, is a wonderful musician (timpani) and composer. But, of course, he is studying to become a lawyer.**

What was your first work for television? Was it *Baretta*? What do you think when you look back to the beginning of your career and you watch your work?

**My first writing job in television was on a series called *Doctor's Hospital* in which George Peppard played a neurosurgeon at *Los Angeles County Hospital*. I had been writing original motion picture screenplays, but had little luck selling them to studios. I needed money to help pay off loans I had taken to go to medical school. It seemed natural for me to sell stories to a medical television show. Two years later, I was offered the opportunity to write a script for *Baretta*. I was twenty-eight years old and it was becoming fashionable to hire young writers in television. My script was well received and *Universal* offered me a job writing on the staff of *Baretta*. My responsibilities included re-writing other writers' scripts. It gave me great insight into how television is produced and was my first job on a studio lot.**

Have you ever worked in the theater?

**Although I love theater and enjoy going to as many plays as possible, I have never been involved in a theatrical production. Except, of course, in high school.**

You were one of the producers of the series *The Incredible Hulk*. Did you watch the movie that was released in June this year? If so, what's your opinion about it? These days, there are many movies released based upon television series like *Charlie's Angels*, *Hulk*, etc. What do you think of such movies? Do you think they destroy the spirit of the original series or are they chances for younger people to get in touch with a show their parents grew up with?

**I had absolutely no interest in seeing the feature version of *The Hulk*. I was disappointed that a talented director like Ang Lee took on the project and was even more disappointed to learn that the character of the Hulk was computer-generated. What I liked so much about the television show was that both the man and the monster were portrayed by actors. Although Lou Ferrigno had no dialogue, he was able to evoke emotion because he looked like a troubled human being trapped in a grotesque body. A cartoon does not transmit that feeling. Certainly remaking old television shows can be rationalized as a chance for younger people to gain insight into their parents' former favorite shows. But I am certain that is not the studios' motivation for producing these pictures. Many of us believe that there is simply a dearth of new ideas and that with production costs as high as they are, the studios feel there is less of a gamble with a "household" name. A familiar name attracts an audience, if only out of curiosity.**

On *The Incredible Hulk*, you worked with many talented directors, first of all Reza Badiyi who is truly a great director. He also directed many episodes of *Falcon Crest* (mostly the important episodes like cliffhangers and season openers) in a very special way. Was it your wish to work with him again or wasn't that your decision?

**It is interesting that you single out Reza Badiyi.**

**I first met Reza on *Baretta* when he directed my very first script on the show. We did not become friends at the time because my job required that I spend more time at a typewriter (before computers) than on the set. However, I had the opportunity to meet Reza again when he was hired (not by me) to direct *The Incredible Hulk*. It was at that time that we developed a friendship that has lasted ever since. When I**



Reza Badiyi.

**I took over *Falcon Crest* and learned he had already directed several episodes, I hired him as often as possible — because I enjoy his company and his work. I**

**hired him many times on *Dark Justice*. His calm, confident manner is a pleasure. As a former cinematographer (in Iran during the reign of the Shah) his eye is impeccable. And his ability to communicate with actors and his sense of humor make every episode of his special.**



Earl Hamner.

Well, let's talk about *Falcon Crest*, a series you worked on as executive producer for two years. How did you get involved in the show and how old were you? The series had already been on the air for five years at that time and after you took over, a lot of things changed. The creator, Earl Hamner, left the series. Did he want you to take his job?

**My involvement with *Falcon Crest* is an unusual Hollywood story. I had been working at *Lorimar* (the production company later bought by *Warner Bros.*) for five years. I had written *Flamingo Road*, developed several new series (only one went on the air), rewritten a movie (*Club Med*) and worked as**

**supervising producer on a series called *Boone*. *Boone* was a fictional series about a young musician living in Tennessee in the early 1950's who merges the sounds of gospel, rhythm and blues and country to create rock and roll — like**

**Elvis Presley. *Boone* had been created by Earl Hamner. Earl and I got along well. I learned a lot from him and have deep respect for his talent. I knew he was also working on a series called *Falcon Crest*, but I never took the time to watch it.**

**In 1985 my three-year-old son had chickenpox and, as a result, I got sick as well. I was home in bed when I got a call from Lee Rich, the president of *Lorimar*. He told me Earl Hamner was leaving *Falcon Crest* and Lee wanted me to take over. The show was dropping in the ratings and was in jeopardy of being cancelled. He said, "it needs a goose" (an American expression for a pinch in the ass). I told him I had never seen the show and wouldn't know where to begin. In one hour, a deliveryman was at my door with a huge box of videotapes. I put the last episode of season 5 in my machine (the earthquake) and the next thing I knew, the phone was ringing again. It was Lee Rich asking me what I thought. Two hours had passed since his first call, and I told him I had**

**fallen asleep during the opening credits of the cliffhanger (medication made me drowsy). He said, "See what I mean? The show is dull!" He promised that I**

**could make whatever changes I wanted in the show, hire or fire anybody I please, that he would protect me from CBS (the television network), and that I could spend whatever it took to get the series back on its feet. It was too generous an offer to refuse. So, I made lots of changes and turned *Falcon Crest* into a show that I would want to watch.**

Was it difficult to come into a creative team that was very close and to take over control of things? Were you a bit afraid of having such a big responsibility? I mean, it was an established show, very expensive, and the audience expected a high standard of stories.

**This is a very insightful question. When I first took over *Falcon Crest* — two months before we started filming season 6 — all the same writers, composers and camera crew were expecting to return to their jobs. I was reluctant to change personnel because I knew so little about the show and because I didn't want to change the series so radically that the audience would lose interest.**

**So, I tried to make things work with the same people who had been writing and producing the series since it first went on the air. I discovered they were tired and at a loss for new ideas. In addition, I found out that they worked a very short day and were accustomed to going home early. When I work on a television series, I like to work long hours. Television is a very stressful, very exhausting business because you only have seven days to film a one-hour show and only a week or two to write it. Short days are impossible if you are attempting to make something of value. Ideas need to be challenged, then changed and change takes time. I kept two of the previous season's writers —**

**their title was supervising producer — Ernie Wallengren and Greg Strangis.**

**They were flexible and would help me to not repeat storylines used in prior years. I hired a few new writers. I brought in almost all new directors (except, of course, Reza). I immediately called Mark Snow who had just purchased a synthesizer — one of the early, high-tech synthesizers — and asked him to score almost the entire season. Then, I went to Hawaii with my family to try to conceive of the entire season's worth of stories on my own. I assumed that if I could improve the show, the audience would not desert us and hopefully we would attract many new viewers at the same time.**

**Other changes evolved over the course of the first few episodes. I replaced the director of photography with a younger, more stylized cinematographer. I decided to drop several actors and bring on new faces. But, most importantly, I decided to make *Falcon Crest* less of a tedious soap opera and more of a twisty, dramatic mystery. Life in California's wine country is filled with intrigue and violence. *Falcon Crest* needed more of both of those qualities.**

When you were told to produce *Falcon Crest*, what was your first thought?

**My first thought was "what is *Falcon Crest* about?"**

Did you watch the first 127 episodes to get into the storyline and the history?

**As it turns out, to this day I have never seen a single episode of *Falcon Crest* that preceded the 56 episodes I produced.**

You initiated many very good changes that worked out and greatly improved the show: Mark Snow started composing a thrilling soundtrack on his synthesizer; the storylines were faster, more thrilling; Dana Sparks and Brett Cullen joined the cast; the main title changed. Was it difficult to bring in those changes? Did you have to fight for your ideas with *Lorimar*?

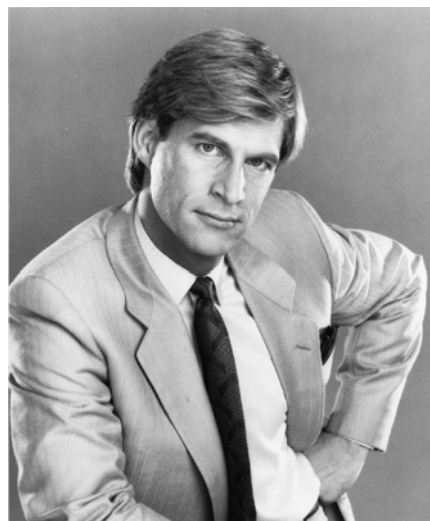
**Lorimar agreed to virtually everything I decided to do with the show. Their cooperation increased, as did CBS's, after the first episode aired and got the highest ratings the series had received since its first season.**



Dana Sparks and Brett Cullen as Vickie Gioberti and Dan Fixx (1986).

But some cast members also left the series: Simon MacCorkindale (I think he wanted to leave to have the chance to direct more) and Laura Johnson. Do you know why Laura Johnson's Terry was canceled?

**I'm afraid I have to take responsibility for the loss of any actor who left the show. *Falcon Crest* already had too many characters, and my plan to "reinvent" the series involved hiring even more. I simply had to make room. In addition, I wanted to completely change storylines. Peripheral characters had no meaning in the stories I had planned for season 6. And, of course, budget had something to do with it. Although I was told I could spend a great deal of money, there is**



**always a limit. The new actors I brought onto the series were expensive.**

Both Laura Johnson (Terry Hartford Ranson Channing) and Simon MacCorkindale (Greg Reardon) left *Falcon Crest* after episode 127.

Could you describe how you planned a season? Who was involved in such a long and creative process? When you started a season did you know how it would end? I mean, for example when you started with season 7 (Chase's death) did you already know that Angela would lose *Falcon Crest* to Melissa at the end of the season?

**Each of my two seasons on *Falcon Crest* was planned differently. Season 6 (as I will describe later) was completely built around my ability to convince Kim Novak to return to the screen. We planned the season around a single storyline and added subplots as we went along. We did not know how the season would end until halfway through the year (while we were filming episode 14). Season 7 was very different. We knew exactly what would happen at the end of episode 28 before we exposed a single frame of film. We planned the whole season for Melissa to take control of *Falcon Crest*. But, each season involved**



**the same creative process. I would independently conceive of a “shape” for the season, a general beginning, middle and end, as if I were writing a novel. Then, I would meet with the other writers for several hours a day for several weeks. We would share our ideas and argue over twists and new characters. It was like plotting a 28-hour movie and took an enormous amount of time. But, it was crucial we had a specific direction. *Falcon Crest* suffered in the past from plotting that was done with no preparation, at the last minute. A tight thriller has to be carefully conceived. Elements are introduced, and then paid off much later. Characters have to have secrets that surface at the right moments. This kind of storytelling must be well thought out. Ultimately, I would make the final decision. But, I was fortunate to have a very talented and**



Kim Novak appeared as a special guest star in season 6.

**imaginative group of writers (Howard Lakin, Richard Gollance, Lisa Seidman) and a wonderful co-executive producer, Joanne Brough, who had been a *Lorimar* executive for many years and had the *Falcon Crest* encyclopedia in her own mind.**

Season 6 had a very, very special guest star with a wonderful storyline: Kim Novak as Kit Marlowe. She once swore never to return to the screen and lived with her husband in Carmel. How did you get her out of retirement? Was it easy? And whose choice was it to hire Kim Novak? Was the part of Kit especially written for Kim after you knew she would do it or was the storyline already finished when she agreed?

**I wanted to start my first season of *Falcon Crest* in the most spectacular way possible. I wanted to attract as much publicity and attention as we could. I had made a creative decision to bring lots of big names to *Falcon Crest* and create interesting, “campy” roles for them. Joanne Brough began calling agents to see who was available or who might be interested. *Vertigo* was always one of my favorites of Hitchcock. We researched Kim Novak’s whereabouts and Joanne discovered that Kim might be interested in returning to the screen — but only on certain terms. I had to fly up to her home near Monterey and present my ideas. Kim lived in idyllic surroundings and was married to a veterinarian. She had moved as far away from Hollywood as you can imagine. Kim was once the biggest motion picture star in the world, but her experiences with dishonest and greedy studio personnel had soured her taste for show business. She was at first very cautious and suspicious when we proposed that she join *Falcon Crest*. As it turned out, *Vertigo* was one of her favorite experiences. She adored Jimmy Stewart and liked working with Hitchcock and agreed her character(s) in the film were her most challenging and intriguing. I suggested we “remake” *Vertigo* on *Falcon Crest*. She could play three roles this time instead of two and cause trouble for every other character in the cast. We promised she would be treated better than ever before and would be well protected from the media if she so desired. The part of Kit Marlowe could only have been written for Kim Novak. She loved the idea and within a week we had a deal.**

I really love the Kit Marlowe story; I think it's the best guest star story *Falcon Crest* ever had. And there were so many little inside jokes (the name Kim never wanted to use, Kit Marlowe, her aliases Madeleine (from *Vertigo*), Susan Cameron (her agent, I think), the scene from *Vertigo* at the Golden Gate Bridge, Kit hiding in Carmel... So I think someone really liked Kim and honored her and her work in such a special way, no other television ever did that with a guest star. Who created those little inside jokes and who created the Kit Marlowe story?

**I compliment you on your research as well as your convoluted question and thank you for your appreciation of Kim's storyline. The answer is equally convoluted. As I said before, I wanted to recreate *Vertigo*, both to service Kim Novak (and to please her many fans) and to pay homage to Hitchcock. In creating a parody of Hitchcock I intended to make a statement: *Falcon Crest* would become more of a thriller — and *Falcon Crest* would have a sense of humor. Bringing Kim Novak to *Falcon Crest* also announced that there would be many surprises on the show and that we would attract actors that would appeal to the audience. It was my idea to develop a storyline for Kim that paralleled *Vertigo*, but it was with many people's help that the story succeeded, not the least of all Kim's.**

**Kim suggested all of her characters' names. I had never heard that her original screen name was supposed to be Kit Marlowe — that was her input. Sue Cameron was indeed her agent (and a tip of the hat from Kim). She would come up with ideas for her characters' traits and we used many of them. The writing staff and I did the plotting. It was, in every respect, a truly collaborative effort. It's a shame it isn't done more frequently on television.**



Jane Wyman's welcome party for Kim Novak:  
(back row) David Selby, Marjoe Gortner, Jeff Kober;  
(front row) John Saxon, Cesar Romero, John Callahan, Robert Foxworth, Kim Novak, Jane Wyman,  
Susan Sullivan, Chao-Li Chi, Father Robert P. Curtis;  
(seated) Abby Dalton, Margaret Ladd, Ana - Alicia, Dana Sparks.



Jane Wyman hosted a welcome party for Kim Novak and I read many articles they both loved working together. Have you been at that party? How was it, working with a Hollywood legend? Did you feel a bit reverence in the beginning or was it like working with every other actor or actress?

**This again is a multi-part question. First, yes I was at Jane's party for Kim. The party was as much a celebration of a "new beginning" for the series as it was to welcome Kim — as a principle component of that "new beginning". Jane is a magnificent hostess and wanted all the new faces on the show to feel welcome. She was very much like her character, Angela Channing, without the maliciousness and intrigue. Jane is one of the last grand women of show business and is true to the old Hollywood traditions. Jane and Kim got along as well as any two huge stars on the same set could be expected. The creative staff tried very hard not to diminish Jane's role on the show while, at the same time, we made Kim the central character that had ramifications on everybody else. It was a tricky tightrope to walk. *Falcon Crest* was truly Jane's show. Kim was a guest. And we had to make certain the guest didn't take over the house. As for working with Jane: in retrospect I loved every minute. Nobody in my 30-year career has any actor worked harder with as much dedication as Jane. What made it almost unbelievable was Jane's age. She had been in the business for over 40 years when we worked together and still had a passion when most with her experience would have lost interest long ago. There was still a lot of "little girl" in Jane. She had a great sense of humor, a mischievous streak, a strong sense of drama and story, and a real love for her show. She wanted it to last forever. As a result, other actors on the series had to follow suit. When Jane got angry, the set became silent. And Jane only got angry when people weren't doing their jobs right — and that went for actors as well as crewmembers. If Jane agreed to work long hours, nobody could complain. If Jane liked a script, the script was good. It was that simple. But, when Jane had a creative problem she would always bring it to me in private, with respect, along with a thoughtful suggestion of how to improve it. I often agreed. When I didn't, she found a way to compromise and make things work. One night, while I was directing *Stormy Weather* and the rain machines weren't working correctly and everybody was getting tired and irritable, Jane and I were sitting alone together in a corner on the set. We heard grumbling from other (unnamed) actors who were complaining about the late hour and plans they had for the evening. Jane excused herself from me, stood up and walked to the middle of the sound stage. She quickly got everybody's attention. She pointed to me and said to everybody who could hear her, "I have worked with the best: Hitchcock, Sirk, Wise, Capra, Curtiz... but none of them worked harder than this man," indicating me. "He's killing himself to make this show better, make it a hit again. And if I can be standing her at this hour, you can be standing here, too!" That sums up Jane Wyman. It's a moment I will never forget.**

Well, another question that the audience really is interested in, how was it behind the scenes? Was it familiar? Rumors say that Robert Foxworth and Susan Sullivan did not like each other very much. Can you tell us something from behind the scenes, how the actors worked together?

**I will answer this question delicately. I am not a fan of gossip and I cannot speak for other people. First, I want to assert that I was amazed at how well**

**the entire cast got along, considering the large number of leading actors. My experience on other shows — smaller shows — put me in the position of referee many more times. The cast of *Falcon Crest* shared the enjoyment of the show's success. They wanted it to last. They knew it wouldn't end soon, so logic would dictate they would have to find a way to all get along. That is not to say there weren't "factions". The younger actors hung out together. Dana and Brett were good friends. Jane and Cesar spent time together — two veterans who could share similar experiences. Ana - Alicia and Lorenzo got along well. David Selby got along with almost everybody. Susan was a consummate professional. She takes acting very seriously but at the same time loves her work. She, like many of us, doesn't have much patience for people who make our work confrontational or unpleasant. Bob Foxworth was going through a difficult time in his personal life. His wife, Elizabeth Montgomery, was suffering from a life-threatening illness and his work on *Falcon Crest* took second place. His pain was often impossible for him to hide. I became friends with Bob — after I suggested that he leave the show (I will get to that later). Despite any rumor to the contrary, the other members of the cast liked Bob, but he was often misunderstood.**

And the question you will be asked a thousand times, I suppose, how was working with the unique Jane Wyman? I read in an article that she had good ideas with the character of Angela and she developed storylines with you. I also read that Susan Sullivan had the idea for the Maggie & Richard relationship and Maggie's alcoholism. So the cast members gave you creative input?

**Once again, a multi-part question. Without repeating what I have already said about Ms. Wyman, I will definitely agree that Jane's input was reflected in her character. When an actor has played a role as long as she had played Angela, only an idiot would not listen to her suggestions. She knew the character better than anybody. A good writer learns to listen to that input and create a direction that is consistent with the character. In my two years, Jane never came to me with a plot. Instead, she would come in with a simple idea and let me play with it. The best example: One day at the beginning of season 7 she came up to my office and told me, with her best, girlish expression, "I think I should have a boyfriend." She left and let me consider it. It was a marvelous idea, but to create the character of a love interest for Angela Channing is a tall order.**

**She is the main character and her "boyfriend" had to play a significant role and be played by a serious star. I thought about it and realized that nobody would be better to cast that part than Jane herself. She had worked with *everybody* in her long career. Surely there must be an actor she had never gotten the chance to work with and always wanted the opportunity to meet.**

**I called her dressing room. "How about Bob Mitchum?" I asked. "Bob's great," she said, "but you need toothpicks to keep his eyes open these days."**

**I mentioned a few other names, but she had good reasons to veto them. Suddenly she said, "Get me *what's-his-name*."**

**"*What's-his-name*?" I asked. "Who is *what's-his-name*?" "You know," she said, "that wonderful, handsome guy in that Liz Taylor movie about the airplane."**



"OK," I said, not knowing to whom she referred. "I'll get you *what's-his-name*." Then I realized she was referring to the film *The VIPs* and she meant Rod Taylor. "Rod Taylor?" I said. "Yeah... Rod Taylor! He's a doll," Jane replied. A few days later, Rod Taylor came to my office, excited by the chance to work with Jane Wyman and eager to play the role we had created for him. Rod is a big man, full of energy, with kind eyes and a great spirit. Suddenly, Jane appeared in my doorway and Rod stood straight up. "Janie," Rod said. "I'm *what's-his-name*." They hugged and — in a professional sense, of course — they fell madly in love.

I don't remember specifically how the idea of Maggie's alcoholism came about. If memory serves me, I think it evolved from a conversation between Susan and Howard Lakin, one of the writers. Susan felt that her character had been dull and too good too long. Maggie needed a dark side. And, given her marital problems with Chase and her numerous ordeals, it made sense that she should join the ranks of millions of housewives who disguise their pain by drinking. It gave Susan the opportunity to display more of her acting talent, and gave the audience something more tangible to relate to. In general, whenever an actor had an idea for their character we listened with interest. If an actor is asked to play a role that he/she really likes and feels a part of, the performance is certain to reflect it.



I always wondered why there are no outtakes available. I think there must be tons of material with funny scenes, actors forgetting their lines, making fun, etc. Can you tell us some stories you really enjoyed while working on *Falcon Crest*?

**I could take up 50 pages answering this question. First, there were many outtakes that we shared among ourselves, at parties and special lunches. That is true on every television series (*Dark Justice* had the best outtakes ever). But, this footage is never shared with the audience. Performers don't want to break that "wall" and expose themselves as anybody other than the characters they play within the confines of the series.**

**As far as "stories" I can share:**

**My favorite story is rather personal. At the end of the sixth season, my first on *Falcon Crest*, I hired myself to direct episode 27, *Chain Reaction*. I wanted the opportunity to work with Kim Novak on stage before she left the series the following week. Howard Lakin and I wrote a very campy script which involved a long courtroom sequence involving lots of flashbacks in which Kim describes her relationship with Roland Saunders (Robert Stack). In the flashbacks was a scene — a spoof of Bogart bidding farewell to Bergman in *Casablanca* — that took place on a runway. Through the tiny window of a small airplane in the background we can see a young boy — Kit and Saunders' five year-old son. I cast my own son, Nicholas, to play the role. I was away from home so frequent-**

ly that I thought it would be fun to have Nick come to work with me. Nick arrived on the set early, while I was still directing a bedroom scene in which Kim is making love to a man when, suddenly, the doors burst open and Saunders and his henchman appear in silhouette. Kim crawls to Saunders to beg for her lover's life while the henchmen move off screen to beat him to a pulp. My son Nick appears at my side just as I am giving Kim and Bob Stack their last set of directions. The actors take their places. The assistant director yells, "Quiet on the set!" The cameras roll. I call, "Action!" Then I say, "OK, Kim... move around on the bed. Bob, open the door!" And my son calls out, "Hey! How come he's allowed to talk?" (meaning me). The set bursts into laughter. Bob Stack comes through the door and trips over the light stand. Kim sits up and clutches her negligee to her bosom. The assistant director explains to Nick: "Your daddy can talk because he's the director." Nick nods his head. "Okay. I get it." The set settles down again and I call "Action!" As the scene progresses, I call out a few directions, the actors speak their lines, the shot goes perfectly. I yell, "Cut!" Before I can utter another word, my five-year-old son walks onto the set, right to Ms. Novak and says, "Kim... that was beautiful. Just beautiful!" Kim, on her knees, looks up at me and says, "Who the hell is this kid?" Everybody burst into laughter again. Almost magically, it all was captured on film.

Later, the same night out on the runway, I go over directions with Stack, Kim and Nick (who is to stare out the airplane window with a tear in his eye). Kim and Bob take their positions in the foreground while Nick climbs up into the airplane. In the middle of the first take, which served more as a rehearsal than a final shot, Nick got impatient. As Kim was searching in her mind for a line, Nick called out, "Hurry up, Kim. I'm taking this plane to China!" One day my son will run Hollywood.

On a show like *Falcon Crest*, with a large professional ensemble cast, it is often the case that an actor will intentionally blow a line, make a joke, trip over equipment, kiss another actor just to liven things up. People get tired on the set and there is nothing better to recharge everybody's energy than a good laugh.

Jane Wyman would always reserve her jokes for the end of a take. She was too professional to mess up a shot while it was in progress, but at the end of the scene you could almost always count on her to turn to the camera and make a funny face or say something rude (in good spirit). *Falcon Crest* fans can picture Jane's facial expressions without my having to describe them.

David Selby and Susan Sullivan had great personal chemistry. They truly liked each other and loved working together. There were scenes in which Richard Channing would sweep Maggie into his arms (as scripted) but on at least one occasion I remember him carrying her off the set, behind a wall out of sight, and then we'd hear screeches and moans as if they were really making love. Of course they weren't, but it kept the crew on its toes.

Lorenzo Lamas is a very good-natured, truly funny guy. He loves working as an actor and loves to entertain the crew while he's acting. Many times, when Lorenzo knew that a shot wasn't going right, he would purposely do something to crack everybody up. I can't remember anything specific, but I remember Lorenzo made me laugh quite often.

**The most fun I had as a director was on the set of *The Uncertainty Principle* — the episode in which Richard and Maggie get married. It had the atmosphere of a wedding and had I not known better, I would have sworn the entire cast had drunk too much champagne. It was a warm day. And when the crew and some of the cast witnessed the fight around the pool involving Melissa, as soon as I yelled “Cut!” at least a dozen people dived into the water. As I said, I could go on for many pages, but I can’t for fear of embarrassing a few very professional people. Take my word, working on *Falcon Crest* was fun more often than not.**

Also, I always asked myself why there was never a soundtrack released with the wonderful score Mark Snow composed. Nobody had that idea at that time?

**This is a copyright issue. Mark Snow has released various collections of his work and they are available online (just search for “Mark Snow” on Google). However, Lorimar (now Warner Bros.) owns all the music from *Falcon Crest* and must have decided that it was not a smart business investment to produce an actual soundtrack.**

Another question regarding the music: You also brought in Jesse Frederick and Bennett Salvay as composers. They had their own style, different from Mark’s but good, too. Why did the composers take turns? Was it because Mark was involved in other projects or did you want to have diverse styles on the show?

**In many ways you already answered your own question. Mark Snow composed the vast majority of episodes of *Falcon Crest* while I was at the helm. However, there were times when he was busy on a movie or other television series and was incapable of spreading his creativity too thin. Jesse and Bennett were friends who had composed most of the music for *Better Days*, a comedy I was producing at the same time. I asked them to watch a couple of episodes and tell me if they could emulate Mark’s style — in their own way, of course.**

I think Mark Snow and Jesse Frederick & Bennett Salvay had shared ideas because they used Mark’s famous *Maggie’s Theme* several times.

**Their use of common themes that Mark had composed (*Maggie’s Theme* being one) was by my request. The audience had grown accustomed to Mark’s music and I didn’t want an episode to sound completely different from the others. Jesse and Bennett did a wonderful job.**

In season 7, there were some other composers added. In one episode, Jeannette Acosta created the score, which was very thrilling, I think. Why wasn’t she hired for more episodes?

**Jeanette was Mark’s suggestion. If I remember correctly, she was a protégé of Mark’s and knew his music well. She filled in for Mark at a time that he was unavailable and did a terrific job.**

Season 7 had many guest stars with limited appearances. Rod Taylor, Eddie Albert, Buck Henry... I remember there was a directors strike threatening at that time and you wanted to film as many episodes as possible before the strike began. Leslie Caron had a great part as mysterious Nicole Sauguet. She was very devious and played her character very well. I always felt her story could be a bit longer. How did you develop the Nicole Sauguet story?

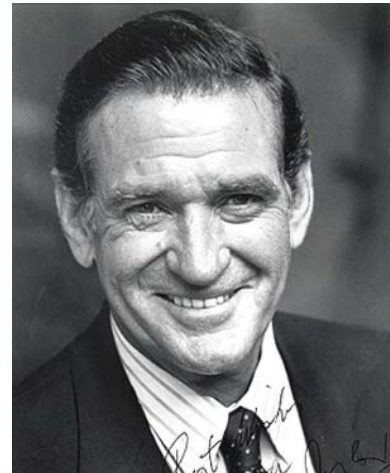
**After the success of season 6 in which *Falcon Crest* once again rose to the top of the ratings, we made a decision to introduce the concept of short-term, high profile guest stars to attract an even larger audience. Many notable actors approached us requesting to be on the show. I made a list of all the actors with whom I had never had the pleasure of working and asked them to join us. Most of them agreed. As a child, I was a fan of the film *Gigi* and was eager to work with Leslie Caron. The writers and I created the character of Nicole Sauguet. She served two very important purposes: first, she helped shroud the disappearance of Chase in mystery, giving him a past that Maggie was never aware of. Second, she helped introduce the key component of the entire season, the conspiracy of *The Thirteen*. Leslie exceeded my expectations and was a delight to have on the set.**

**Rod Taylor was initially supposed to play a limited role on the series, but his chemistry with Jane Wyman was so strong and his character was so well-received by the audience, that he was invited to stay on the series even after I left.**

**Eddie Albert was one of my favorite character actors, ever since seeing him in *Roman Holiday*. I was fortunate he was available and interested.**



Eddie Albert, a special guest star portraying Carlton Travis a.k.a. Carl Brock.



Rod Taylor, a special guest star in seasons 7 and 8 and a regular in season 9.

**I was always a fan of Lauren Hutton. We wanted to create a tense love interest for Richard Channing and Lauren is as powerful a woman in real life as David Selby's character was in the series. She seemed a perfect match. It was Lauren who, thumbing through her personal phone book, suggested I ask Buck Henry to join us. They were friends and she was enjoying her time on the show. She helped convince him to come aboard.**

**Ed Marinaro is a personal friend of mine, we play golf together. I enjoy his company and he seemed a great addition to the cast because he was so different than any other character. He has a rough, unpolished edge and presented an interesting contrast to Susan's character, Maggie.**

**As for your question regarding the pending *Directors Guild* strike: at the end of season 6 we were told that there might be a strike and that *Lorimar* wanted to continue in production without the traditional 3 month break between seasons. They wanted to produce as many episodes as possible before the strike so the show could go on the air in September as scheduled. While I was directing the courtroom show (Kim Novak testifying in Tony Cumson's murder trial),**



**the other writers would sit with me while the set was being lit and we would plan season 7 together. It was a difficult job, but once we decided that Angela would lose *Falcon Crest* to Melissa things got easier. It was exhausting. At the end of a 28-episode season, even the most imaginative writers run out of ideas. But, somehow we created an interesting season 7 despite our fatigue. As it turned out, there was no strike at all. And, finally, we took four weeks off to recharge our brains.**

I think there must have been many ideas and storylines that were developed but not used in the end. Can you mention some of them?

**Certainly there were ideas tossed around that eventually got thrown out. Most of them have been long forgotten.**

What was your favorite storyline on *Falcon Crest*?

**My favorite storyline was definitely the Kit Marlowe adventure. Characters that change identities to protect themselves or others have always intrigued me. I like characters with mysterious pasts that bring danger to the innocent people with whom they interact. Truffaut's *La Sirene du Mississippi* (*Mississippi Mermaid*) is a perfect example (based on Cornell Woolrich's *Waltz Into Darkness*). And, Kim Novak had a knack for playing a character with a secret.**



Your favorite episode?

**My favorite episode was *Stormy Weather*. It was the most challenging as a director — being confined to one location. It was the only way we could keep all the characters together and force them to deal with each other. It was a joy to have them all on the set at the same time — like a big party.**

Richard (David Selby) and Angela (Jane Wyman) playing chess in episode 172.

And some people you liked to work with most?

**Although this might sound too "safe," I truly enjoyed working with each of the cast members.**

**Jane Wyman was somebody I learned from and could joke with, but our age difference always made me feel more like her son than her boss. Her lifetime of experience intimidated me at first, but she was very accommodating and respectful and made it as easy as possible for me to oversee her series.**

**David Selby and I knew each other from a prior series, *Flamingo Road*, and I always found his intelligence and easy-going manner a pleasure.**

**Robert Foxworth and I butted heads all the time, as if we were testing each other. I sensed he was tired of his character and wanted to spend more time at home, so I decided to remove Chase from the series. We became friends immediately and I offered him the opportunity to leave the show in the most heroic way possible. He actually helped construct his own departure. Of course, we left the door open for his return (the end of *Last Dance*), but when the show changed hands Chase was forgotten.**

**I became social friends with Brett Cullen, Dana Sparks and John Callahan. We all play golf and have enjoyed many hours in the sun together, away from show business.**

**Ana - Alicia is a special woman. Very smart. Very honest. Very strong. We argued with each other constantly, and loved every minute.**

**Susan Sullivan is very complicated. She is extremely intelligent and very analytical. She needs to understand everything about her character and in many ways became Maggie. We were both native New Yorkers and shared many similarities. I found her a person I would most likely be friends with had we met socially instead of on the show.**

**As for guest stars: Dick O'Neill and I have worked together on three different series. In fact, at the same time he was on *Falcon Crest* he was also starring in my comedy series, *Better Days*. I asked him later to join the cast of *Dark Justice* not only because he was a terrific actor, but because he made me laugh and went out of his way to help move things along. I spoke at his memorial service and miss him very much.**

**Robert Stack, who also passed away recently, was — of all the actors I have ever worked with — the funniest to ever walk on a sound stage. He kept the crew amused until late in the night. He was always prepared and filled with energy — such a contrast to the surly characters he was known for playing.**

Did you watch the finished episodes together with the *Falcon Crest* crew or with your family when it aired?

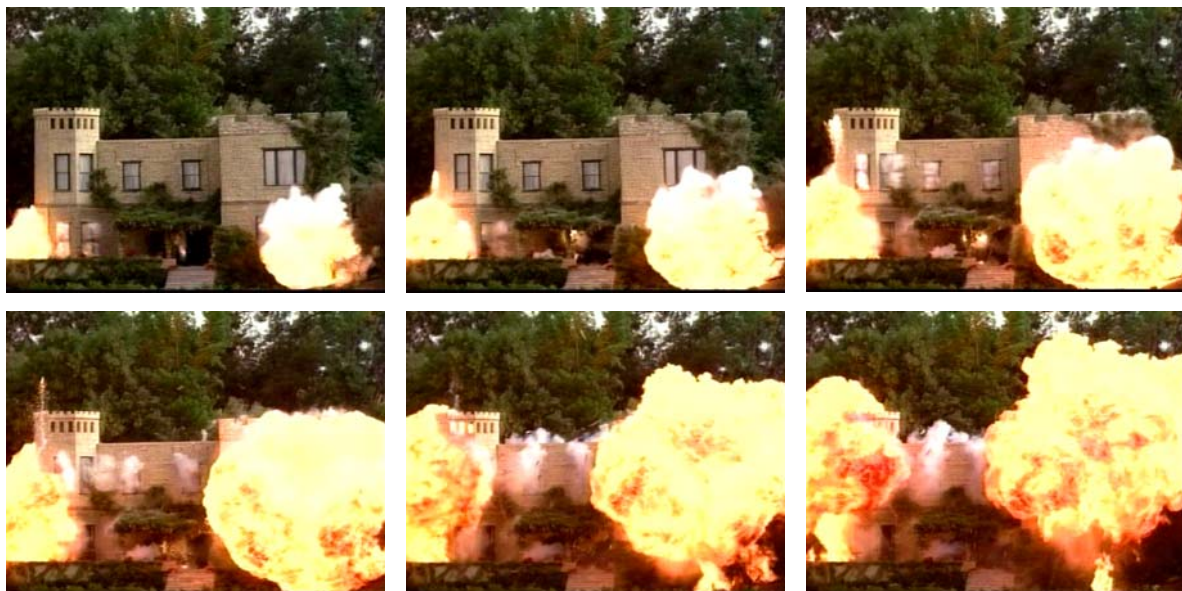
**I had watched the finished episodes so many times in my office, during each stage of post-production (editing, sound mixing, music scoring, and looping) that I rarely watched an episode on the air after the middle of season 6. When my wife hadn't seen an episode on tape (I would bring them home weeks before the air date), we would watch it together on TV. My children were only 5 and 2 years old and had no interest in the show. My sister, however, was a big fan and would call me after every episode.**

Let's talk about *Stormy Weather*. What an episode. So funny, full of atmosphere, thrilling... all staged in one location. No other television series had ever done something like that before. That episode is a treasure; it plays with the characters and the audience. Even the *Victorian Mansion* was shown in ways we never saw before with some very good camera angles. Angela sneaking around, Richard and Maggie making love in Angie's sun room... How long did you work on that episode and what does it mean to you?

**Howard Lakin, writer/supervising producer, and I thought it would be fun to trap everybody in *Falcon Crest*. We were both fans of *Inspector Perot* stories and Angela's house was the perfect location. In addition, you asked before whether or not I had ever been involved in theater and a "closed door" episode of television was as close to theater as I had ever come. Once Howard and I had developed the story, he wrote the script in less than a week. Howard was always very fast and had a wonderful sense of the characters (he wrote Angela better than anybody), but *Stormy Weather* was a labor of love for him. As a director, I was interested in creating parts of the mansion where the audience had never been. I worked with the art department to design new sets and movable walls for existing sets to allow me more camera movement and different angles. Preparation for the episode took only 7 days. Things move very quickly**

**in American television production. Actual filming also took only 7 (long) days. I edited the show in a week, Mark Snow took 10 days to compose all the music, and it took 2 days to mix the sound. In total, the production of *Stormy Weather* — from original idea to completion — took about a month. What I remember most about the episode is standing in the *Falcon Crest* living room, the entire cast around me (plus a few guest stars), describing a sequence in detail. The room was silent as I spoke. Then, when I was finished, as if magically, each cast and crewmember went about his or her jobs perfectly. It was like coaching a football team, planning strategy on the field, then watching the players execute the play exactly as planned. It was the definition of a team effort — only, on a television stage. The actors were having so much fun, that they would improvise every once in a while to improve the scene. These came as pleasant surprises and encouraged other to do the same. More than ever before, everybody seemed to be inspired by the energy derived from working together.**

A question someone wanted me to ask you: Why was the *Gioberti Estate* written off the series? Were you satisfied with the result of the explosion? I mean the model that was used looked different from the real house.



The end of Chase Gioberti's dream. The Gioberti house is destroyed in a gas explosion.

**As you might know, *Falcon Crest* was filmed on sound stages in Studio City, California — part of Los Angeles. All the interiors were sets based on actual locations in Northern California's wine region, the Napa Valley. We spent several weeks each year shooting exteriors up in Napa at great expense. The mansion owners up there would rent their homes to us, but it was a great inconvenience to them. We were fortunate to maintain a good relationship with most of the winemakers, but it didn't always last. The actual *Gioberti Estate* was becoming more difficult for us to use as a location. We had to make a change and the best way to do it was to blow up the house (certainly the most visual way to force Chase and Maggie to move). Of course, we couldn't blow up the real house. And, we were forced to shoot the explosion in Los Angeles. We built a mock-up and set it out in a field. We sacrificed dramatic impact for reality, and although none of us was satisfied with the look of the house or the**

**explosion, the dramatic impact and the repercussions on the series were strong.**

*Falcon Crest* had its best cliffhangers in season 6 and 7. *Last Dance* is still the most thrilling, romantic and the most exciting cliffhanger ever. I receive many mails from people all over the world who love *Last Dance*. Can you tell us something about its development? I think it needs very much preparation to create such a season ending, especially as you directed the last two episodes of season 7. I'd love to hear all of your memories about it.

**I always considered the last two episodes of season 7 (both of which I directed) as a two-hour movie. I had no intention of leaving the series at that time and wanted to lay the groundwork for an exciting and very different season 8. I wanted to leave the audience guessing whether Angela was talking to Chase or Richard in the chapel. I wanted the audience to root for Angela to reclaim *Falcon Crest*. I wanted to maintain the level of suspense and the potential threat to Maggie from *The Thirteen* after the death of Rosemont. I wanted to pit Richard against Melissa and Lance (who we were hoping to reunite). These two episodes were written, even as we were shooting. Howard, Lisa and I kept coming up with new and exciting ideas. Ana - Alicia and Jane had lots of input. Rod Taylor, we decided, would stay with the show. The three weeks of filming were strenuous, but probably the most exciting time I ever had on the show.**

**As you probably can guess from their production value — the multiple locations and huge excavation scene at the mine cave-in — these two episodes were very expensive, and that became a problem. CBS and *Lorimar* saw no value to spending money on a show in its seventh season. Even though *Falcon Crest* had returned to the top of the charts, they believed it had only one, maybe two seasons left. It was the first time I felt deserted by the studio and the network. *Lorimar's* ownership changed hands. Lee Rich and Merv Adelson sold the company to a low-budget television company named *Telepictures*. The new owners were more interested in creating new series than they were in keeping alive those already on the air. And, CBS was looking for a younger audience and felt that *Falcon Crest* was primarily viewed by older people. I ignored warnings to keep expenses low. I was too far into production to start cutting back. Had I been asked to conceive of a cheap cliffhanger, I would have done so, but I needed to know sooner than when I was already filming.**

Sadly *Last Dance* was your own last dance on *Falcon Crest*, too. After two years you left the series and everything changed again, in a very bad way. I never really understood what happened at that time. The new producers replaced Mark Snow's score with orchestral music (which was boring because we were used to the synthesizer music), the stories were very slow and they destroyed the peace between Angela and Richard you had developed the previous season. Ana - Alicia was fired and Dana Sparks and Brett Cullen left the show. Can you tell us what happened? Why all those changes? Did you want to leave or did *Lorimar* fire you? And regarding to the episode's title: Did you know at that time that this would be your last episode and you choose that title because of that or was that by accident?

**I had no idea I would not be returning to *Falcon Crest* until two weeks before the development season was scheduled to start. I had worked at *Lorimar* for seven years and had two offices there. It was *Lorimar's* choice to ask me to**

**produce any series they had and, since I had a three-year contract, they couldn't "fire" me but could ask me to take over another show. As I mentioned before, they wanted to cut costs on the show and felt that they could keep the series alive without me. I thought at the time they were making a terrible mistake, but I also was ready to move on to other things. *Falcon Crest* was an exhausting experience for me and I knew that after one more season I, too, might run out of interesting new ideas. There was another name on the executive producer credit: Michael Filerman. Michael and Earl Hamner had originally developed the show together seven years before. But they did not get along. Michael was removed from the show, but his contract demanded that he get paid anyway. *Lorimar* thought that as long as they had to pay Filerman, why not take me off the budget and let him do his job? The difference in his approach to the series from mine is evident in the kind of series *Falcon Crest* became. He thought the pacing was too fast and the music was too stylized. He changed the show and it dropped like an anchor to the bottom of the ratings.**

I know a lot of people who say: "In my opinion, *Falcon Crest* ended after season 7", and many, many fans and I always wondered how *Falcon Crest* would have been continued after season 7 if you had continued working on season 8. Did you have any plans for a next season? If you had been allowed to supervise the following season, how would the story have progressed, what would have happened to the characters? Did you have any plans for guest stars, Angela fighting against Melissa, etc.?

**Part of this question was already answered. I always saw the relationship between Angela and Melissa as Bette Davis to Ann Baxter in *All About Eve*. *Eve* was a film, made in 1950, about a young actress (Eve, played by Ann Baxter) totally enamored of stage veteran and big star (Davis). Soon, she is taken into Davis' confidence and, when the time comes, Eve replaces her causing Davis great pain. But, certain that her talent and honesty will eventually win out, Davis fights to regain what is hers.**

**I thought Melissa believed that she'd learned everything there was to know from Angela and could step right into her shoes. She had always played Angela's victim. I thought it was time for them to trade places. With Angela now the victim, she could rally the support and sympathy of the audience who we hoped would want to see her win back *Falcon Crest*. Angela would conspire with Richard (who would return in the middle of season 8) and Richard would seduce Melissa, perhaps meet secretly with her before he revealed himself to Maggie. We thought Maggie might move away with the children and lead a separate life not knowing her husband was still alive. Richard, at the same time, would have to eliminate the remaining members of *The Thirteen*. We even considered bringing back Bob Foxworth (if he were willing to return). But, needless to say, none of our plans got very far because we were never given the chance to meet and discuss them. An entire new writing staff was brought in and changed both the direction and the tone of the show.**

Did you watch the show after you left *Falcon Crest*? Did you ever watch the last episode with Jane Wyman's soliloquy and if so what do you think about the end?

**No and no.**

Are you still in touch with some of the *Falcon Crest* crew?

**I have seen Brett Cullen, Dana Sparks, Ed Marinaro and Ana - Alicia on rare occasion. Since *Falcon Crest* I have spent lots of time outside the US (in Canada, France, Spain and Germany) and as much time as possible with my children (now quite grown up).**

This year E.F. Wallengren died, a very tragic loss, not only for *Falcon Crest* fans. Earl Hamner and David Selby attended Ernie's funeral. David said some words. Did you attend? Were you still in touch with Ernie after he quit *Falcon Crest* in 1987?

**I was saddened to learn of Ernie's death and sorry for his wife and many children. I had not seen Ernie since the early '90's and hadn't heard much about him. I learned of his death from Greg Strangis, who is still a close friend of mine, and unfortunately it was long after his memorial service.**

After you left *Falcon Crest* you developed *Freddy's Nightmares*, a totally different show. You wrote and directed some episodes and were an executive producer. How was it working on something totally different?

***Freddy's Nightmares* was one of the reasons I left *Falcon Crest*. Lorimar had made a deal with Robert Shaye, owner of *New Line Cinema*, to develop his *Nightmare on Elm Street* film series into a television show. They wanted me to supervise the series and knew I had to be taken off *Falcon Crest* to do it. Bob Shaye and I got along well and having never done anything in the horror genre before, the idea was challenging and appealing to me. A young *New Line* executive, Michael DeLuca, (now President of *Dreamworks*) was assigned to the show as the *New Line* liaison. He and I and a writer named Jonathan Betuel created the concept for *Freddy's Nightmares*.**

**What intrigued me about the concept of Freddy Krueger was that he was an imaginary monster who attacked you in your dreams, yet the manifestations of his attacks were evidenced when you awoke. If you got stabbed in your dreams, you would find blood on your sheets. This seemed to me to be everybody's biggest fear. When we have a nightmare, is it real or just a dream? How many times have we awakened, frightened that what we were dreaming was actually happening? The series became a study of people's deepest, scariest thoughts.**

**Freddy would exploit those fears.**

**However, after a single season, I must admit that spending so much time inventing horror stories left me in a very strange mood. I was spending way too much time imagining macabre methods of killing people. Horror is not a story genre you want to allow to consume your daily thoughts. I was glad to leave the show after 22 episodes.**



In 1991, you developed the thrilling series *Dark Justice* about judge Nicholas Marshall fighting for justice on his own. It lasted three seasons. *Falcon Crest* fans directly recognized the familiar Jeff Freilich style and I was happy to hear Mark Snow's score again in a series produced by you. Also there was a good cast and Dick O'Neill (Wilkinson from *Falcon Crest*) starred as Moon. It was a good combination of humor and suspense like you brought to *Falcon Crest*. You told me the making of *Dark Justice* was very interesting. I'd love to hear some stories about it, some of your memories about filming, developing.

**In 1990 I was offered the opportunity to create a series for late Friday night on CBS. It could be a little more adult and a little more violent and less moral than standard television. The trick, however, was that it had to cost very little. I love action (I even brought some to *Falcon Crest*), and decided to develop an action-series that took place in a major metropolitan American city (New York was the model). I believe any film or television show must have a point of view (political or social). *Falcon Crest*, for example, in season 7 dealt with the concept that a small group of very powerful men conspired to dictate economic and political policies. *Dark Justice* was a reflection of my own dissatisfaction with America's legal system. Criminals with enough money or the right connections would escape unpunished, while incompetent or understaffed attorneys defended poorer people. I created the character of Nick Marshall — a policeman, then a prosecutor, and finally a judge — to search for ways to correct the justice system.**

**I also believe that television, particularly, is not a platform from which to preach. It is entertainment and can never be taken too seriously. There is a way to make a point and be amusing at the same time. So, rather than write true-to-life stories, we wrote dark parodies.**

**I believe in enjoying your job (if you are so lucky) and I try to hire as many friends as possible to ensure a good time. Mark Snow was at the top of my list. As was Dick O'Neill (for whom I wrote the character Moon Willis — a character very close to Dick's personality). I brought on writers James Cappe, Duke Sandefur and Chris Trumbo — all friends, all very talented. I hired directors like Tim Hunter (my high school best friend), Tom DeSimone, and Reza Badiyi.**

**But, the biggest problem left was how do you produce a series for American television at half the price of all the other shows? After a few months of generating budgets for various locations within the United States, Canada and Australia (before it was popular to film outside the States), we were approached by TV3 — *Televisió de Catalunya* — in Barcelona, Spain. TV3 was interested in becoming the first European television network to co-produce an American series. Barcelona was to be the site of the 1992 Olympics and was interested in developing its image as an international city. Having never been to Barcelona, I was impressed by its architecture (not unlike parts of New York or any other older big city) and by the spirit of its film crews. The biggest benefit, of course, was that they were willing to put up half the budget.**

**I could spend hours writing about how difficult and often humorous it was to try to produce an American series in Barcelona where few people speak English and work days are shorter and slower, but somehow — in an enormous joint effort — we made 22 very good shows. Spanish television crews were used to spending a month filming a one-hour drama. I only wanted to spend 7 days. They worked 10-hour days; I asked them to work 14. They dubbed in all the**

dialogue *after* a show was filmed, I wanted to record synchronous sound. Combining my poor ability to speak Spanish or Catalan with their inability to speak English, I would ask for a “couch” and they would bring a “car.” There were times I thought I was filming on Mars. But, the Catalan crew worked even harder than could be expected and had a great deal of pride invested and the end result showed it.

It was difficult to find local actors who could speak English. I often walked the streets and the beaches listening for people speaking English, then asking them if they had ever acted before. It was in Barcelona where I found Carrie-Anne Moss (star of *The Matrix*). Carrie-Anne was a fashion model, a Canadian by birth, who was making a living in Europe. She had no acting experience, but she had a wonderful look and a strong, intelligent personality. She became a regular on *Dark Justice*, and then returned with the show to the US where we filmed the last two seasons. After *Dark Justice*, Carrie-Anne carved out a very successful acting career.

It was in Barcelona — living outside the United States for the first time (I had been to Europe on vacation, but had never worked there) — where I began to get a sense of how Americans are perceived by others. I was never aware of how difficult it is for some Americans to accept the way of life in other countries, to adapt to different cultures, to be flexible. The Spanish often told me that their perception was that “Americans live to work. Europeans work to live.” Americans are driven by the need to make money, to succeed, to produce — often at the expense of the more important things in life. Europeans see work, more often, as a way to enjoy their time off. You don’t see many Americans sitting outside at a café sipping a coffee for hours on end. They can’t find that kind of peace, the necessary patience.

*Dark Justice* became the most successful late-night show on CBS. But, after one year of filming in Barcelona, the Catalan government could no longer fund us. The Olympics would make locations very expensive and housing would be at a premium. They simply could not afford to share the financing with *Lorimar* anymore, so we had to look for a new location for the series.

I suppose it wasn’t easy for the show and for you when Ramy Zada (Nicholas Marshall) left the series and you had to replace him with Bruce Abbott.

CBS had ordered 22 more shows — an entire second season — but there was no place we could afford to make the series. On a budget of only \$ 500 k, it was almost impossible to film in the States (most one-hour shows cost three times that much) and no other country was willing to match the generous offer *TV3* made for the first season. Months went by and Ramy lost faith in the future of the show. I developed a way to film in Los Angeles, but it would mean that everybody — actors, writers and producers — would have to take a large pay cut.

Ramy refused. So, I searched for his replacement. CBS and *Lorimar* believed that it was the *concept* of *Dark Justice*, not the cast, which drew the audience.

They were right. I cast Bruce Abbott and the ratings stayed the same. In Los Angeles I formed a company called *Magnum Productions*. It was the first “cooperative” television production company ever organized in the States. *Lorimar* gave us enough money to produce a whole year’s worth of shows, and we determined how the money got spent. At the end of the year, if there was any surplus, each and every crewmember got a bonus. I guaranteed each crewmember health insurance (we have no national health insurance in the US)

**and in two years only fired one worker. There was the chance for advancement on every level (production assistants became special effects technicians and camera assistants; secretaries were given acting roles). It was like a television conservatory. Most of the crew were very young and working, for the first time as professionals in the business. It wasn't easy. We only allowed 5 days to shoot each episode. They had to be very carefully written and directed (James Cappe wrote a manual on how to write a producible script for the show). The actors had to be totally prepared. It still amazes me that we made 44 additional episodes under those conditions. My memories of *Dark Justice* are some of the fondest of my entire career.**

After that you've produced and written many TV movies, and in 2000 we also could see you as an actor on "*Code Name Phoenix*", a TV movie you also wrote and directed. How was it to be both behind and in front of the camera? Did you like it? Or was it awkward?

**After *Dark Justice*, I was executive producer of an unsuccessful series called *Against the Grain*. Most notable was that it starred Ben Affleck in one of his first roles. I then was executive producer of a television movie, *Frogmen*, which starred O.J. Simpson and was completed just before the notorious murder of his ex-wife and her friend. After that, I lost my interest in television series and network production. I was looking for something different. At the same time, cable television was becoming popular in the US. "Pay cable" as we call it, are premium stations for which the viewer has to pay extra, but the movies and shows are of much higher quality. Many independent feature films are produced for "pay cable" (*HBO* and *Showtime*). I was offered the opportunity to work in partnership with the great director Norman Jewison to develop a series of short films in which renowned directors could dramatically bring to life their favorite paintings (*Picture Windows*). I was partnered with Barbra Streisand on a series of films about courageous acts of sacrifice and kindness on the part of Christians saving Jews during the Holocaust. I got the rights to the classic motion picture *Naked City* and made two films — directed by me and Peter Bogdanovich, respectively. I had already performed on television — small parts in *Freddy's Nightmares* and *Dark Justice*. I am not an actor, and don't pretend to be, but I have fun and I don't embarrass myself. During the filming of *Code Name Phoenix*, in Toronto, the part of a television talk show host had been cast. But, the day we were shooting the scene, the actor didn't show up. Unable to make a last minute selection, I put myself in the role. It was not difficult for me — the part entailed speaking one line of dialogue and kissing two very beautiful women in bikinis.**

What are you working on right now, Jeff? Any plans for a new movie or series?

**During the past year, Peter Bogdanovich and I have worked in partnership developing movies. We have worked together four times in the past (the last time, in Berlin on his film *The Cat's Meow*) and always have fun. We are hoping to begin production on a feature entitled *SinatraLand* in New York City in the spring of 2004.**

You're playing golf. I think that must be your compensation for your creative and exhausting job.

**I was taught to play golf by my father when I was eleven years old. As I get older, I find it provides a wonderful way for me to spend four hours outside on fresh grass with no telephones. It is my cathedral.**

Did you ever think of doing a reunion of one of your shows? Maybe *Dark Justice* or *Falcon Crest*? I know for sure that there won't be an *FC* reunion as nobody could replace Jane Wyman but maybe as an idea in your head... would you like to be a part of such a reunion?

**I often think about a "reunion" show — both for *Falcon Crest* and *Dark Justice* — as a way to revisit some wonderful memories. But, just as it might be to rekindle an old love, the fantasy of the memory is always better than the reality.**

**I consider myself fortunate for the opportunities I have enjoyed in the past, but I would rather concentrate on new ideas and make forward progress.**

Well, thank you very much for taking the time answering all those questions. I think the *Falcon Crest* fans and also the Jeff Freilich fans will be thrilled to read about you and your memories and actual there are hundred more things fans would like to know.