

Questions for MARK HOUGH

May 1, 2021

Thomas J. Pucher asked Mark Hough, who worked as a stand-in for Lorenzo Lamas in *The Vintage Years*, in 1981, questions about his work on the set.

Mark Hough's answers are in bold print.

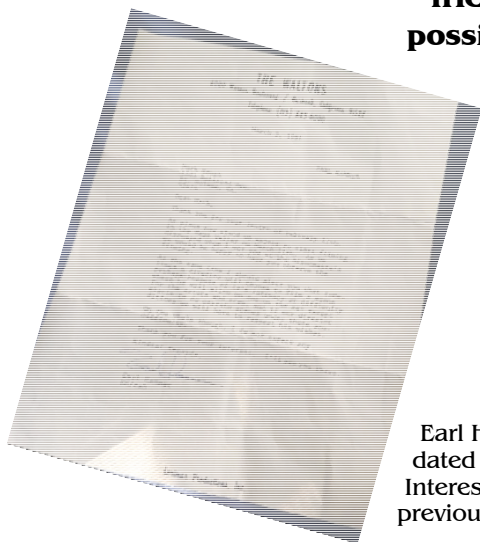
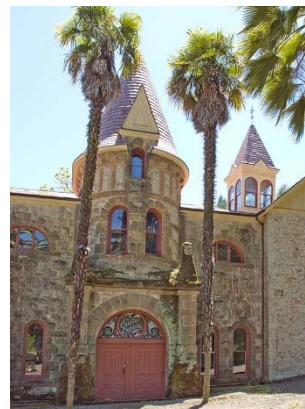
[The parts in brackets were edited for publication purposes.]

First of all, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to do this interview, Mark.

How did you land your job on *The Vintage Years*, the predecessor or — if you will — the original pilot for *Falcon Crest*?

I was delivering flowers on February 14th 1981. My next drop was the Bissonette property. I knew the family as I went to school with their sons. I had also used the property as a location for a 30 - minute horror movie shot on Super 8 about a year or two prior. I arrived and found them in discussion with a gentleman. The man was Earl Hamner. After I introduced myself, the Bissonettes and Mr. Hamner told me he was scouting locations for a TV pilot. They mentioned my filming on the property and I expressed my interest in film production. Two weeks later I received a letter from Mr. Hamner stating I was welcome to observe filming. I received a phone call about a week later from Mr. Hamner himself. He asked if I would like to be a stand-in on the shoot. I said yes immediately. I was also asked to bring it through friends along so that they could possibly be stand-ins themselves. It worked out very well, my friends were thrilled, as was I.

Chateau Chevalier — back then owned by the Bissonette family; a filming location for *The Vintage Years* (*Gioberti House* a.k.a. *The Cottage*).



Earl Hamner's letter to Mark Hough — dated March 2, 1981. Interestingly enough, Earl still used stationery from his previous series, *The Waltons*.

The Vintage Years was entirely filmed on location in the Napa Valley between March 11 and 23, 1981.

Yes, they shot in March way ahead of crush season, so no real leaves or grapes yet. Lots of rain and covered sets. I hung out with grip / electric a lot. After wrap, we would hit *Ray's Place* [nowadays *Ana's Cantina* at 1205 Main Street] in St. Helena. They brought in a prop vine complete with fake grapes. It was there for years! LOL!



Clu Gulager (Chase Gioberti) and Billy Moses (Cole Gioberti) during a scene at *Chateau Chevalier* with fake vines and grapes in the background (act 2, scene 27).

You mentioned in our communication before this interview that you worked as a stand-in for Lorenzo. Could you please describe your duties and your typical workday on the set?

I was second team. I was asked to hold a certain position while camera and lighting set up the shot. After that, first team, being the actors themselves, would step in for filming. I loved being part of the process.

When you stood in for Lorenzo, what were your main duties? Did you also discuss any specifics with Lorenzo himself?

Lorenzo was cool. We talked quite a bit, though there were discussions about the set-ups. Nice guy, by the way.

A break between takes at *Spring Mountain*: Billy Moses and *Lorimar* crew with equipment on the driveway to the *Winery Building* on March 18, 1981.



Some talent from *The Vintage Years* was not kept when it was transformed into the *Falcon Crest* series. Clu Gulager and Samantha Eggar's rôles were recast for the series — Robert Foxworth and Susan Sullivan took over; and Michael Swan's character, Richard Channing, was taken off because CBS and Earl felt that it would make sense to introduce another complex character only later in the series.



Samantha Eggar (Maggie Gioberti) in a conversation with *Chateau Chevalier* owner's wife, Kathy Bissonette, and daughter (preparing act 4, scene 61).

Did you have the opportunity to work with Clu, Samantha and Michael? If so, what did you think of their performances?

Yes, I worked with all of them. We would talk between set-ups. It was such a pleasure to see these folks act. And they were wonderful in their rôles. I knew of their past works. I knew who they were as actors.

Jane Wyman during the scene discussed below in the arbor and gazebo *Lorimar* specifically built behind *Villa Miravalle*.

What was it like to work with Jane Wyman (if you had the chance)?

I did work with Jane Wyman on one scene. I sat across from her in the gazebo scene. Billy's stand-in did not make it to set that particular day. I introduced myself. She did not really engage with me.





Did you get to know the rest of the cast, particularly Billy Moses, Jamie Rose, Abby Dalton and Chao-Li Chi?

Billy and Jamie mostly. Chao-Li Chi would do tai-chi every morning before shooting.

Who were your favorite cast, staff and crew members to work with?

Clu was a lot of fun. I got to know grip and electric very well. We would often hang out after the day's wrap.

During a break inside *Spring Mountain's Villa Miravalle*: Clu Gulager, Earl Hamner, Mark Hough and Billy Moses in a conversation on the stairway in the foyer.

Is there a specific aspect of your work or a funny incident that stands out in your memory — no matter if positive or negative?

LOL! Well, one evening we were filming an exterior scene where Jane Wyman speaks to Lorenzo/Lance, I believe. Ms. Wyman couldn't get her line right. Ten takes or more. The line was "Our lives are entwined in these vines". She got frustrated with herself. We got it in the end.



Sometimes, not even an *Academy Award* winner can do a "oner": She needed ten or more takes for act 1, scene 7 to get it done to everyone's satisfaction.



Preparations for act 4, scene 62 on the veranda of the mansion at *Spring Mountain*: Jane Wyman (center) and *Lorimar* crew members.

Did you watch *Falcon Crest*? If so, how did you feel about the differences between *The Vintage Years* and the revamped series?

Yes, I did. I was very surprised to see Clu and Samantha were gone.

Was it *Lorimar's* choice not to rehire you when the series resumed filming in the Napa Valley after the pilot was revamped, or was it your decision?

I had moved away shortly after filming. I imagine they had their own people at that point.

Filming in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys at the beginning of each season was a hallmark of the show. Did you have the opportunity to reconnect with someone from the staff, crew or cast when *Lorimar* returned each year until 1987?

No. Unfortunately not.

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

No.



Which other shows did you work on, and what are your current projects?

Gosh, I've worked on features, reality television, commercials, and independent projects, I've had a lot of fun. A lot of good memories.

Mark Hough trying to capture the set through a camera operator's point of view: The equipment was placed on the driveway to *Villa Miravalle* between the *Winery Building* and the barn (which would later become the *Falcon Crest Guest House*).



Filming act 3, scene 50 at *Chateau Chevalier* on March 11, 1981.

Thank you so much again, Mark. It was a pleasure to revisit *The Vintage Years* with you.



Mark on film — as a patron at the *Cold Duck* in act 1, scene 22 sipping from a bottle of beer, just before Lance passes by him to attack Mario.

Mark nowadays.

