

Going a Long Way with "Janie":

BOB CRUTCHFIELD

Crossed Jane Wyman's Paths More Than Once

Interview by

THOMAS J. PUCHER (*German FALCON CREST Fan Club*)

Bob Crutchfield, who worked as Senior Vice President TV Publicity at *Lorimar Productions* between 1980 and 1986, and I met on a social network on the Internet. I instantly realized that he would be a great interviewee. After exchanging a few private messages, we decided to switch to e-mail communication and finally set up an appointment for a phone interview.

He lives in the Palm Springs area and mentioned that, whenever he comes near the *Rancho Mirage Country Club* or drives by, he always says "Hi, Janie," thinking of Jane Wyman because that is where she moved in 1996; she had a small home on the golf course and spent the final years of her life there until she passed away in 2007. Bob mentioned that he sometimes realizes that she is gone only after he murmurs his hello. It is probably because he and Jane go back such a long way.

Getting to Know Jane Wyman

"She and I were friends long before *Falcon Crest*. I was working for a private PR firm," Bob began to explain how he first met Jane. He pointed out that the company he worked for went bankrupt and that he was fortunate to land a job with a well - established Hollywood agency, which represented many of the major movie stars at that time in the late 1960's. "When the owner of the firm took me out to meet different clients, who he was assigning me to handle,... one of them was Jane Wyman." He added that this was around 1966 or '67 and that the company's offices were in Century City.

That was the keyword for him to drop an interesting side note on Century City: "It was built on the backlot of 20th Century Fox — what had been the backlot many years ago when I was under contract as an actor when I first came out here as a kid. *Cleopatra* caused them to virtually go bankrupt," he added about the 1963 movie. "So they dropped all us contract players and they sold the huge backlot, which had been fabulous. It was filled with western streets and all kinds of building exteriors. Well, that be-



came Century City." He continued to explain that his office with the PR firm was in one of the then - new tall, big buildings on Century Plaza. "At the time, Jane was living in *The Century Towers East*, a big tall condominium building just down the street," Bob explained. "My office faced her building. There were really no buildings between us because there were only about four big buildings in the new complex. My window looked out at her building from down the street."

Janie at her Century City apartment in the late 1960's.

But he came back to his first meeting with Jane: "We immediately struck it

off." She told the person from the agency, who had brought Bob over to her place, to leave him there with her. "We had a couple of drinks, and she broiled lamb chops! And we bonded..." That was when their four - decade - long friendship began.

"A few days later, I was in my office. She and I were talking on the phone, which she liked to do a lot in the late afternoon while she had a glass of wine. We'd just jabber..." He remembered that a minor earthquake rocked the Los Angeles area during their phone conversation that day, and they did not only feel the tremor, but also saw each other's building swaying. "She had a lot of trouble with her building. There was so much glass. It was one of those solid glass buildings. When the wind would blow up there — she was up pretty high — it would sometimes shake the glass, and the building would sway again. She had a little dog at the time. She and her little dog would go and move into this walk - in - closet she had. That was away from all the glass. It was the only place she could go that didn't have any glass windows. And they would sleep in there. She had a radio and a lamp and a book and would stay in the closet until the weather straightened up after a couple of days. That was sort of incredible about her: There was nothing that she ever accepted as being something she couldn't do."

As he mentioned that she would take a book into the closet with her, he added that he and Jane shared the same passion about books: "We were both reading addicts. We were reading the same books at the same time, and the phone would ring, and she would say: 'Are you to the part yet where such and such happens to so and so?'" He also found out that they had another habit in common in that respect: "When we got close to the end of a book we really liked a lot, we would sort of ration it out and read one chapter a day so we could stretch it out."

Bob also remembered that, shortly after he was assigned to her, she had to do an interview, something he would accompany her for. But on the way, she wanted to stop at a children's hospital in Los Angeles. "We took her car. She had an old classic bronze colored *Rolls - Royce*. It was a beautiful car. She had a name for it." He tried to recall the nickname Jane had given the car, but it was gone from his memory. "She insisted on driving us there — and they didn't even have power steering when that car was built. It wasn't that she was afraid, but she was just not built to turn one of those cars around," he laughed at the picture that just came to his mind again — of the petite lady maneuvering that huge car. "Anyway, we stopped at the hospital, and I knew nothing at the time about her involvement with the *Arthritis Foundation*." Bob said that, until this day at the children's hospital with Jane, he had not realized that there are even little children who were suffering from arthritis. "She was so good, kind and loving to them," he described Jane's efforts to help these children. "Years later, I ended up on the board of directors of the *Arthritis Foundation*," he said, adding that Jane put him there. "She and I went to so many events," he left no doubt that her work for the *Arthritis Foundation* was a big part of her life.

By the way, when Jane started to do her charity work for the organization, she did not suffer from arthritis herself. "She didn't have any arthritis at that point. She had beautiful hands. She had the longest, slimmest hands I think I ever saw on a woman. They were just beautiful! I always thought that they were one of her prettiest traits."

Coming back to her charity work, Bob added that — around the time he first met her — it was the years when she was not too busy in the movie industry. "I was with her when she did her last film, that thing with Bob Hope," he referred to *How to Commit Marriage* (1969). "It was a stupid film, and she obviously did it because she needed to. After that, she was doing TV stuff," he added about a few guest rôles she played on television series in the 1970's. She was not offered much work on the big screen anymore at that time due to her age. "I don't know if she had stowed away an awful lot of money, but she was not necessarily thrifty, but a wise lady... She never wasted her money."

He summed up that they had a great time together. "We were buddies, and I would go to interviews with her and try to keep things going. You know, it's not all the glamor, but we laughed a lot, but that was what kept us going. Her favorite expression to me was: 'Honey, you and I are attached at the hip.'"

Bob said that, with decreasing offers for rôles, she decided to get rid of her condo in Century City and to relocate to Northern California. She primarily lived in Pebble Beach near Carmel. "She painted these little tiny miniatures," he said with appreciation about the paintings she did there. "In her home, I saw these tiny little, beautifully detailed oil and acrylic paintings," Bob said. Unfortunately, she never gave one to him. "They were landscapes and flowers."

Reuniting with Jane at Lorimar

When she moved, she also left the PR firm Bob worked for. Shortly thereafter Bob also left to become Publicity Vice President for Mary Tyler Moore's company. Businesswise, however, Bob and Jane's paths crossed again later at *Lorimar Productions*.

Being hired away from *MTM Enterprises*, Bob — who had started his career in the mail room at *MGM* and worked his way up — became Senior Vice President of Publicity, Promotion and Advertising for *Lorimar Productions* in 1980. It was a big task, particularly after their latest hit at that time: *Dallas*, which had begun as a mini-series in 1978 and then really took off during its first complete season (1978-79).



Not too long after Bob's start at *Lorimar*, the company developed a new show about a family that lived in the Napa Valley, in the Wine Country, which would eventually become *Falcon Crest*. "And I said: 'Who is starring in it?' And they [the producers] said: 'Jane Wyman.' And I said: 'You are kidding!'"

"So you had nothing to do with the fact that she was cast?" I asked.

He denied: "I hadn't seen her since she left [L.A.]. And when I heard that she was cast, I sent her a note saying: 'Well, honey, it looks like we are still attached at the hip.'"

Bob Crutchfield and Jane Wyman in the lobby of the *Holiday Inn Napa*. The hotel, which is nowadays the *Napa Valley Marriott*, is where the local *Falcon Crest* production office was housed and where most of the cast and crew stayed during filming in the Napa Valley.

"They had just started shooting a couple of days before I arrived," Bob said about the filming of season 1 of *Falcon Crest*. "And I was able to get up there. And one of the drivers met me at the tiny airport nearby and drove me in. I came into the lobby and I asked: 'Where's Miss Wyman?' And all of a sudden, I hear: 'Well, I am over here with no make-up on! No wonder you haven't recognized me!' And we just screamed and hugged."

Working on Lorimar's Hit Series

Falcon Crest was not the only *Lorimar* series Bob took care of publicity-wise. "We had a pretty large department, and I assigned members of my staff to two or three shows to handle the promotion of each show and cast under my supervision. I had to approve their work and efforts and we had daily morning meetings."

Bob explained that he was also in charge of publicity for *Dallas*, *Knots Landing* and *The Waltons* among others.

"I would drop by the other shows of course, but I spent more time on *Falcon Crest* and on keeping Jane personally happy," he said.

He also explained that the typical way to produce *Falcon Crest* — with the exteriors of the first ten to twelve episodes of a season being filmed on distant location — was a continuity nightmare. But it added to the gorgeous visual impact of the show and was one of its many outstanding qualities.

Basically that same production habit was applied to *Dallas*. In this case, however, the temperature in Texas was an additional problem. “For *Dallas*, we would go to Dallas in July and August to shoot the exteriors of *Southfork*, and it was so miserably hot and humid that we couldn’t run the cameras more than three minutes without having to re-make-up everybody. The make-up would run off their faces and down the front of their clothes,” he vividly described their battle with the summer heat. He also remembered that on the day when the scene of J.R. and Sue Ellen getting remarried was shot — in 1982 for season 5 (or now “season 6” per *Warner Home Video’s* odd *Dallas* DVD counting) — everybody got sick because the food spoiled in the terrible heat. “Some idiot had the idea of bringing in a lot of the stockbrokers that handled *Lorimar* and let them be the guests in the tent outside for the wedding. I think we lost more brokers by doing it because they all got sick!”

Location work on *Falcon Crest* was much more pleasant, but Bob’s first day on location with Jane in the Wine Country was not what he had expected. She wanted him to go out to the set with her early in the morning. “It was silly. I had on my *Gucci* shoes and slacks,” he laughed about his not being prepared for the situation in a vineyard. “I wasn’t dressed for a rough location. I don’t know why I thought they’d only be filming around the house, which was a magnificent home,” he referred to *Spring Mountain’s Villa Miravalle*, which became the *Falcon Crest* Victorian Mansion.



Jane and the *Falcon Crest* Experience

“Jane always had a little bit of a battle going on with the owner of that place,” Bob recalled, referring to Michael Robbins, who owned *Spring Mountain Vineyards* at that time. “A battle with her — I mean: She’d let you know how she feels... She didn’t like the fact that he started selling tickets to people that came by and watched us film. So the visitors in the area would be standing back behind the cameras. And she’d say: ‘Well, do you mind one little thing aside from asking people not to talk during the scenes? Would you get them out of my sightline so that, when I am talking, I am not seeing somebody in a pair of shorts watching me like I was a monkey?!’”

Talking of that little discomfort, some other moments Jane was not happy with came to Bob’s mind. There were “two things that would really make her boil”, as Bob put it. “As she called herself: ‘I can be a real hot chili pepper!’” he imitated her voice.

He first referred to Lorenzo Lamas: “She loved him to death — just like you treat your children sometimes, and she had known him so long... and his father,” he alluded to the fact that Fernando Lamas abruptly left Jane’s TV show, *The Jane Wyman Theater* (previously *The Fireside Theater*), during the night when Arlene Dahl, Lorenzo’s mother, had an emergency C - section, as Lorenzo himself told me in our 2008 interview. But in

that very special way, Jane and Lorenzo shared an interesting history. "Everyone loved Lorenzo, but he was still learning his craft!" Bob added.

Before he got to Jane's struggle with Lorenzo, he explained how professional she was as an actress: "They would try to do her scenes in the morning," Bob explained about the production habits of *Falcon Crest*. "She was a morning - type person. She would drive herself from Santa Monica all the way to Burbank," where the first three seasons were shot at *Warner Bros. Studios*. "Herself," he added, "in her *Audi* — she had gotten rid of the ol' *Rolls* — and she told me: 'Bobby, you've got to get an *Audi*, they're just great!' Oh, and I did, but I didn't think it was great. I had a lot of trouble with mine. But anyway, she'd drive herself — this little lady. It was still dark at 4 in the morning. She'd do her own make-up, and she knew her lines and knew her blocking, she was more than on time. She knew the whole craft. She could even tell the lighting people to move a light an inch, just because she could feel the warmth in the wrong place on her face." Then, he came back to Lorenzo: "So when he would show up late, which was almost always; almost didn't know his lines most of the time... Let's face it — I love Lorenzo, and he and I were good friends, but he was a kid and he behaved like one! Well, anyway, when he bumped into her, ignored the blocking and moved around, she'd really shout him out! She was such a pro that she couldn't tolerate anyone who didn't come prepared for the day's shooting. It wasn't vanity, it was being a pro!"

In connection with Lorenzo, Bob recalled: "The day his father died, he was really destroyed. He was out for, I guess, just like a day. Fernando had done a guest shot on the show," he referred to Fernando Lamas' directing work of *For Love or Money* (episode 11 <1.11>). "We had a beautiful head shot of him, 16 x 14". I had my photo editor take it out to *Warner Bros*. He knocked on Lorenzo's door and gave it to him, and Lorenzo just hugged him and started crying because he was very close to his dad and he admired him so much."

Then, Bob came back to Jane and her reaction to Lorenzo's many affairs and multiple marriages:



Jane with Fernando and Lorenzo while shooting episode 11 of *Falcon Crest* at *The Burbank Studios*, now *Warner Bros. Studios* (January 9, 1982).



Not unlike Angela with Lance on the show (here during episode 20 <2.02>), Jane sometimes had a bone to pick with Lorenzo.

"Jane's favorite line with Lorenzo was: 'Do you have to marry every girl you take?!'" Bob and I fell about laughing — what a quote! "Actually, I think she used the 'f-word'..." Bob added.

Now, Bob addressed the second sort of trouble she did not like: "The thing that irritated her the most was... On the sound stage, they always have a table back to the back as far away from the action as possible. It's the craft service's table. It's got doughnuts and all kinds of coffee and things that you shouldn't be eating, and people chatter - chatter back there. But she had ears like a hawk. So she tried to get all her work done in the morning while she did have a lot of energy, and then she'd be finished by noon. She was a one - take lady unless something happened that wasn't her fault!" he said with deep admiration. "So I'll never forget... This happened many times: Sometimes people would be whispering in the back near that table, thinking that they were not be-

ing heard. She was up and trying to do a scene many feet away — those sound stages at *Warner Bros.* were enormous. And she could hear it! She'd stop in the middle of a speech and would say: 'Hey guys, it's my turn! Shut up!' " Bob imitated the force in her voice. "And then she'd say: 'Where were we?' And she would go on with her scene." Bob summarized that, with regard to her professionalism, Jane reminded him of one of his school teachers: "She was very organized, very concerned about other people's work, very concerned with making people feel comfortable."

But aside from those two typical examples of trouble on the set, Jane loved to work on *Falcon Crest*. During her lunch hours, she really enjoyed playing poker with the crew — and she usually won!" Bob made it very clear that she was "one heck of a poker player," as he affectionately described. "If the crew had let her win, she would have been furious."

Memories of Other *Falcon Crest* Cast Members

In our chat about Bob's experience with *Falcon Crest*, we also came to speak about other actors and actresses working on the series.

Lana Turner was the first one who came to his mind. He mentioned that, preparing for our interview, he watched one of the Lana Turner interviews from the early 1980's, which is available as a video clip on the Internet.

"I am sorry. I almost threw up on the floor," he expressed his disdain about what the late actress had said back then. "I loved her saying: 'Oh, that was just publicity — we [Jane and I] loved each other, we were the best of friends. That [the feud] was just done for publicity.'" Bob imitated Lana's way of presenting that statement — and then lowered his voice and emphasized: "Jane loathed her. First of all, she was not flattered that they brought her in." He referred to the producers' decision in season 1 to "spice up" the series. *Family Reunion* (episode 12 <1.12>) was the last episode CBS had originally ordered — their first order of the then - new series included 13 episodes, i.e. the original pilot (*The Vintage Years*) plus twelve episodes.



Make-up artist Dale Condit (left) and a crew member help Lana with her make-up before shooting the legendary scene at the Gioberti Family Cemetery that marked the reunion of Jacqueline and Angela (episode 12 <1.12>).

Bob pointed out that Jane was insulted that Michael Filerman, who co-ran the show at the time, insisted on bringing Lana in to bolster the ratings. "Jane said: 'What's the matter? Is there something wrong with the ratings of the show? Am I not a big enough star that you need to bring in a, you know, Hollywood legend?!' But when that Hollywood legend did not come in as a professional, but as the kind of woman she had been her whole career, which was a mess..." He alluded to Johnny Stompanato's death and that Lana was rumored to have stabbed him to death and to have gotten her daughter, Cheryl, to take responsibility by admitting that she did it. Anyway, he continued about Lana's behavior on the set: "She would always keep Jane sitting there for at least two hours. Jane would be on the set, her make-up done and everything. But Lana was always late," Bob described that she had extravagant make-up demands. "It was really embarrassing to see someone behave like her. Her hair was like a rock," he alluded to the lots of hairspray and

described that it took her hours to get ready for shooting. "She also had a very bad tooth bonding job, which gave her a bit of thickness and a slight buck-tooth look when you saw her up close in person without all the soft-focus filters." All in all, she behaved like a diva. "She even brought her own people in."

Bob named another example: "Lana would have a limo drive her the 50 feet from the dressing room over to the stage." He also mentioned that the limo had to take her the same ridiculous distance back to the bathroom. "You know, it's an old lot, and they don't have a restroom built into the stage because it makes noise. So they have them in these little loos — these little houses — all around the place. Jane, in contrast, always walked there. Bob quoted her disbelief about Lana's demands: "She needs a limo for the loo!"

He also mentioned that Lana oftentimes was not too secure with her lines. "I had to be very careful because I was supposed to be polite to Miss Turner as our guest star. On the other hand, if Jane caught me talking to her, I would get the cold shoulder for a day or so. It was not a happy relationship with Lana at all," Bob emphasized and made it very clear that, when Angela said "goodbye" to Jacqueline in a season 2 scene — forcing her to leave the Tuscany Valley — it was not acting.

"That's all very interesting," I said, "because when you see the publicity photos that were taken of the two actresses..."

"Oh, I set them up!" Bob laughed.

"From those pictures, particularly the ones from their first day of shooting in Malibu Creek State Park where the Gioberti Family Cemetery was staged, you'd never guess that they didn't get along..." I continued. "They look as if they were having the time of their lives, with a warm welcoming for Lana..."



Jane Wyman and Lana Turner in Malibu Creek State Park in the morning of Lana's first day of shooting: It was a difficult situation to get Lana and Jane relaxed enough for a publicity shot.

The picture that made it around the world: Jane and Lana on the set with cast and crew members in the background, including utility man Lee Shamburger (wearing a hat, next to the boom microphone), Margaret Ladd in her fur coat (in the center near the big spotlight) and make-up artist Dale Condit (sitting next to Lana) among others.



Bob continued to laugh: "The shot where they are both sitting in director's chairs... from the back... looking over their shoulders — I set that up. Truly, that was a major accomplishment."

Since it was so complicated to get pictures of the two of them together, Bob explained: "A lot of the ones that you probably saw were shot by our staff photographer during filming with a blimp on his still camera so it made no noise so he could shoot while

they were actually doing the scene from another angle. So they wouldn't be posing for him." He left no doubt that Lana made it very difficult to work with her on the set.

I had to admit, however, that — despite all the evil things Michael Filerman did to the series, particularly when he resumed executive producing duties in season 8 after his 6 ½ - year absence, including dictating the writers that they had to write off Ana - Alicia's original character, Melissa Agretti — hiring Lana Turner was quite a clever move because it brought a lot of publicity to the show, and her storyline plus its aftereffects brought a whole new dynamic to the series, in particular because she perfectly fit into



This previously unpublished photo of the episode 12 shootings documents Jane's displeasure over a series of takes with Lana of this scene on the *Gioberti House* veranda (stage 19 at *The Burbank Studios*, now *Warner Bros. Studios*).

Earl's concept of the mystery about the identity of David Selby's character, Richard Channing. "And, to my knowledge, *Family Reunion* is actually the episode of *Falcon Crest* that got the highest ratings," I added.

"One reason was that Lana was always a bigger movie star than Jane was," Bob replied, "because Lana was one of the maybe handful of five major, major, major movie stars that were in Hollywood in the old days, and she didn't do television. So there was a lot of curiosity to watch her. But we weren't hurting that much in the ratings when they put her on."

However, Bob said it was a special time "when viewers loved the escape of nighttime 'soaps', and we had a ball, except for certain cast members who thought they were doing Shakespeare," referring to another actor who was extremely difficult to work with: Robert Foxworth.

"When he and his pompous manager, Barry Krost, walked into my office when we started to do the show, I said I want a cast photo and we want to do this and that," Bob referred to a little usual publicity work for the new series. "Nothing heartbreaking or terrible," he added. "Everybody else had gladly agreed to do it. Krost said: 'No! Foxworth...' — he never called him Robert or anything like it; I loved that! — 'Foxworth won't be doing any publicity for the show until we know it will be a hit. I don't want him associated with a failure.'" Bob was still full of disbelief about the fact that one of the main cast members was not willing to help publicize the show. It was the craziest thing he had ever heard in his business life. He also mentioned that Foxworth relied on his manager's advice and "every time I tried to get him to do something [for publicity], he was too busy. Jane just couldn't handle him at all because he was everything she wasn't, and he had this competitive thing where he would practically count lines to see who had the most lines in the script. He bought a *Maserati*..." Bob explained that his behavior was boastful. "He, in general, was a cocky guy."



On location in the Napa Valley, it was finally possible to convince Robert Foxworth of the necessity to do a photo session to advertise the series premiere of *Falcon Crest*.

It was obvious from what Bob told me that this was the biggest problem. While Jane Wyman was very devoted to the show and a perfectionist, Robert Foxworth was not a team player and always appeared as if he, having been a stage actor in Shakespeare plays, felt himself "above" doing a primetime drama.

A positive experience, in contrast, were some of the other regulars.

"David was a delight," Bob said about David Selby. "Jane loved him, and I think he is one of the best actors I've ever worked with. He also has a great sense of humor."

He also recalled that Jane was very close with Susan Sullivan.

Two other cast members Bob fondly remembered were Ana - Alicia and William R. Moses, whom he described as "the sweetest people". He recalled that Ana - Alicia gave him a double umbrella for Christmas. "You open it, and it's two umbrellas attached together somehow. Two people actually can walk under it. She was so appreciative and sweet," he said about her with admiration.

Jane's Frail Health

Particularly towards the end of the series, it was a difficult situation for Jane. "People forget what her age was because she looked so good. And they also forget that she had very serious diabetes; she had to shoot up two or three times a day with insulin. She was beginning to get arthritis. She was old and tired and she was a heavy smoker. With her health in general, as a friend, I was worried about her."

Bob explained that she once had to undergo abdominal surgery. I knew that he referred to season 5 of *Falcon Crest* when she missed two episodes. Parts of the storyline had to be rewritten due to her five - week absence from the set in January and February 1986. "She had surgery where they had to remove these adhesions from a previous operation years ago. The adhesions had gotten onto her intestines. I went to see her at the hospital. She was so sweet, she said: 'Do me a favor, honey. It's so sweet of you to come here... Don't come back.'" He explained that she did not want her friends to see her suffer. "Her roots were grown out. No make-up. And of course you always lose weight in the hospital because the food is so terrible," Bob described her state. "She said: 'I'll be fine, we can talk on the phone.'"



A red carpet extended from the door to the *Falcon Crest* Victorian Mansion set on stage 10 at CBS - MTM Studios, with a banner: "Welcome home, Jane." She also got a cake from the cast and crew to celebrate her return (February 13, 1986).



Shortly after coming back, Jane filmed the wedding scene of Angela and Peter with Cesar at the *San Fernando Mission Rey de España* in Mission Hills as the *Tuscany Valley Mission*.

Another sad moment came to Bob's mind: "I saw Jane Wyman cry one time in all the years we were together — one time. It was up in that *Holiday Inn* in Napa. Cesar [Romero] had joined the show. They were old friends. He used to come over every afternoon after filming and drink up most of her white wine, which pissed her off a little



Jane shared a very long friendship with Cesar Romero: They were hanging out together at one of the lavish parties in the entertainment industry in the 1970's (left).

They reunited on *Falcon Crest* — here at Kim Novak's welcome party in the summer of 1986 (upper right).

Later, they also went to functions and events, such as the 25th annual *Women of The World* luncheon to benefit *Childhelp USA* at the *Beverly Hills Hotel* on May 25, 1989 (right).



bit. Anyway, she and I were sitting there, and I think Cesar had left and gone back across the hall, having killed her jug of wine or whatever. I looked over, and she began to sob. I thought: 'Oh my god. I can't believe it after all the things that we've been through over all of these years.' I had never seen her cry. I am

sure she cried, alone at night by herself. But she sobbed, and I held her. And she said: 'Bobby, I just can't keep doing this. They don't appreciate me.' " Bob said that, in the show's later years she was not well and not happy with the constant change of writers and producers. "You saw the change that happened the last few years."

When Bob left *Lorimar*, he kept in close touch with Jane and continued to see her on the *Falcon Crest* set. "I moved over from *Lorimar* to *Universal Television* in 1986." He became the Senior Vice President of Publicity, Promotion and Advertising at *Universal* and worked there for ten years before retiring. "I was not on the *Falcon Crest* set often — only to visit Jane, and she and I spoke two to three times a week via phone in the evenings. She was ready to rest." He pointed out that new producers came in every year. "The plots got so bad. Earl Hamner walked out long ago. They treated him terribly for a man, who really gave the studio its start with *The Waltons*. Earl was always such a Southern gentleman, and his voice alone was so lovely. That's what Jane was used to when the series started and in the first three years. But then they [*Lorimar* executives] started to bring in used - car - salesman - type guys to produce the thing. They screwed up the storylines and treated Earl like he had never written anything. They didn't listen to the things he had to say."

Those regime changes were difficult for Jane. "If I think of what Jane went through physically, doing that show... She was 64 when we started it, about 74 when she got out of the thing..." It was interesting that Bob mentioned her age, which is still kind of a mystery as her birthday is sometimes listed as January 4, 1914 and other times as January 5, 1917, supposedly coming from two different birth certificates, one of which is said to have been re-issued after she was adopted as a child. Anyway, he got back to her age and stated: "Against the doctors' orders, she went back," he said about her wish to keep up her work on *Falcon Crest*. Once, she had to be taken out of the show be-

cause, aside from her other health complications, "she took a bad fall on the set when she tripped over one of the big cables. Of course, they immediately said she was drunk on the set," Bob said with harsh resentment about the nasty insinuation that came from those people on the producing staff, whose misconceptions of the show's direction and silly plot ideas she openly criticized on the set. "She liked a good glass of wine in the evenings," he admitted, but she never drank on the set. When Bob explained that the writers had to write around her, I knew that the incident must have happened at the beginning of season 8 because *Jeopardy* (episode 187 <8.04>) was that episode without her.

"That was the year when Mike Filerman came back and took over," I said.

"You know, Mike Filerman just died," Bob said. "I am sorry... Well, not really," he laughed. "He was a... — something else... Just a mean man, a smart ass... So lucky to even have gotten into the business." Bob left no doubt that he was not a friend of Filerman's. "He was really weird." When we talked about Filerman's contract, which provided him with an executive producer's fee even when he did not work on the series at all, Bob commented that deals like this were not uncommon in the entertainment industry: "Somebody gets a contract, and in order to get rid of him, they have to pay him even more."

Going to Events with Jane Wyman

During the tenure of *Falcon Crest* (and even afterwards), Bob often accompanied Jane when she went out to functions or events.

"In 1990, years after we'd first met, "she took me on a trip to Lake Como in Italy," Bob said. "I have no idea what the name of the award was, but it was given to a special group of stars for their lifetime work. They put us in the *Villa d'Este*. It was a very famous villa, which used to be a nunnery many years ago and later was made into a very expensive hotel. We went there with Ben Gazzara, Don Ameche, James Coburn, Gina Lollobrigida, Eva Marie Saint, Lynn Redgrave and maybe a couple of others. Each star was assigned to beautiful classic *Rolls - Royces* with a driver for the entire week."

I found out that it was the *Merit of Achievement Award* presented on June 22, 1990 at the *Casinò di Campione* in Campione d'Italia, an Italian exclave within Switzerland's Canton of Ticino.

The many Hollywood events Jane and Bob went to were also memorable moments because of Jane's exquisite wardrobe.

"All of her gowns in the years that I knew her were made for her by the man who designed the major clothes for *Dynasty*," he began to explain.



Jane at various events with Nolan Miller during the 1980's (left) and in 1997 (right).

"Nolan Miller," I said.

"Yes, Nolan Miller. He used to sit at our table," Bob pointed out about dinner functions and events he went to with Jane. "He got very popular. He was selling on QVC and is doing quite well. Anyway, the gowns that he would make for

her were so spectacular. She would never wear one of these more than once," he added about her usual way to handle public appearances. "Because they are taking your picture... and it looks as if you only had one gown," he laughed. Sadly, Nolan died in 2012 in Woodland Hills, CA.

Bob also remembered a funny moment in the 1980's with Jane's spectacular wardrobe. It all started in her penthouse — her later home in Greater Los Angeles: "She lived on Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica, overlooking the ocean. She had the whole top floor. It had a nice balcony outside. She was so excited one day: 'Come in, come in, come in!'" he quoted her. "And I went in, and there was a hummingbird on her balcony, which had laid an egg in a bush she had grown in a pot out there."



Jane and Bob at various functions during the time when *Falcon Crest* was on the air. The above photo is a Polaroid from a stockholder's party at the home of Lorimar co-founder Merv Adelson. "Not very good," Bob laughed: "Jane's hand shadow on my pants makes it look as though I had wet them!"



like a waffle iron," he quoted her hilarious comparison and added: "because sitting on all these beads for over three hours!"

Anyway, he came back to the particular incident about Jane's gowns he wanted to share: "I'll never forget when I drove by to pick her up — actually, I would drive by and leave my car in the garage of her building, and the limo would be there to take us to the event we were going to. I got up to her penthouse. She left the door ajar. It was a very secure building. I said: 'Where are you?' And she said: 'I am in here in the den.' She was on the floor in one of Nolan's gowns with a flashlight, trying to find her earring which she had dropped and which had gone under the couch. Crawling around in a \$ 10,000 or 15,000 beaded gown! All of his gowns were beaded. Multiple beading! Nolan did that to make them gorgeous, but they often weighed more than she did! Seriously, she had me take some out of her closet and hold them, and I said: 'My god! You're going to wear this all evening?!' That's why we wanted to sit down in the limo and get out and sit down again." However, he explained how difficult it was when she had to sit in such a gown for a long time, like two, three or four hours at one of the events they went to, e.g. the *Emmys*, particularly if they had to be there maybe even an hour or so before the function started. "You have to stay in your seat for all of these commercial breaks. If you get up to go to the bathroom, they put a seat - filler into your seat," he explained so it would not look as if half of the audience had gone home during the commercial breaks. He could not remember which gown it was exactly, but that Jane complained about "the weight and the fact that, tomorrow, I'm going to have a butt that looks

She had a wonderful chauffeur, who was very devoted to her. "He would somehow find a way in closer to exits than anybody else. One night, we came out of *The Emmys* and heard 'Pst - pst - pst' from behind a bush, and he said: 'Over here, quick!' So we ran over and jumped into the limo, and he said: 'Home?' And she said: 'Home?! You kidding?!

You better find us a restaurant or hotel, someplace with a bathroom — fast!” Bob explained that she usually did not go to the bathroom during an awards show as she did not want to miss any part of the show, let alone be standing in a crowded hallway with all the other ladies, waiting for a bathroom to become available.

Speaking of their limo rides, Bob had very fond memories of those. “Jane was pretty cautious about her interviews for a lot of reasons, mainly because of Reagan. The first part of my knowing her, Reagan was governor of California, later he became President.” But with Bob, as a close friend, she was very open. “I still miss her and our backseat limo chats about Ronnie, with the privacy window up!”



Jane and Bob at the
Rudolph Valentino
Awards gala on July 15,
1990.

Jane and her daughter,
Maureen Reagan, at the
Nolan Miller Fall Collec-
tion Fashion Show at the
Club Tatou in Beverly
Hills on July 21, 1993.



As for Jane’s children, Bob mentioned that she was very close to her daughter, Maureen, who would come by to visit her often (replete with a secret service escort), but that her adopted son, Michael, did not come around that much. “He was a bit of a jerk and also wrote a very cruel book about his childhood with Ronnie and Jane. But she did love being a grandmother to Michael’s son at the end,” as Bob said.

After she sold her penthouse condo in Santa Monica and moved to Palm Springs in the desert in the mid - 1990’s, she and her longtime friends, Loretta Young and Alice Faye, got together regularly for gab lunches before they died. Bob added that he affectionately called them the “Snoop Sisters”. “But otherwise she was pretty much a recluse,” he added. “She had a housekeeper and a driver — and a red *Jaguar!* — to take her to have her hair and nails done at a little out - of - the - way salon.” Unfortunately, the last few years of her life became very sad due to her suffering from dementia. “I would visit with her from time to time after I moved to the desert, but often she wasn’t really sure who I was,” Bob sadly stated. However, they were always able to find some things from the past they could laugh about together.

When we came to the end of our conversation, I thanked Bob for his time and sharing all these wonderful pieces from his collaboration and friendship with Jane.

“I truly enjoyed the chance to reminisce about *Falcon Crest* as well. I hope it was some value to you,” Bob said and expressed his appreciation for www.falconcrest.org. “Jane would be so flattered that Angela lives on!”