

Questions for FATHER BOB CURTIS

March 28, 2000

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

Father Bob's answers are in bold print.

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



What holy order do you belong to, Father Bob?

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

How did you enjoy playing yourself?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are you still in contact with any other cast members?

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

Who were your favorite cast members to work with?

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

Who were your favorite producers and directors?

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

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

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

Did you write your scenes yourself?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you so much for your help and cooperation.

I hope this is of some help, Thomas.