

Indulging in Reminiscences:

CINDY MORGAN

about Her Fabulous Time on *Falcon Crest*

Interview by

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

Cindy and I had exchanged a couple of e-mails before we set up an appointment for a phone interview.

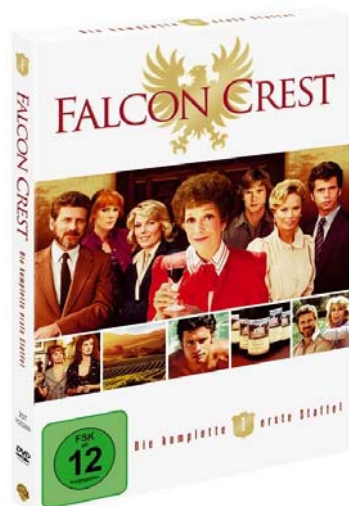
"I was looking at your website this morning, and it is a wonderful, beautiful website!" Cindy said.

"Thank you so very much for the compliments. We do our best to keep the memory of *Falcon Crest* alive," I explained.

The actress apologized she had not replied to my first attempt to contact her a few years ago, but her management team in those days was not too reliable as she pointed out, which was the reason why no interview materialized back then.

Anyway, I was very happy it finally happened now, and I realized at the very beginning of our conversation that Cindy would be a joy to talk to.

Before we started our *Falcon Crest* related chat, Cindy wanted to know a few things about me, and I told her both about my judicial work and my avocation for *Falcon Crest*, two entirely different yet equally exciting parts of my life.



Cindy and I talked a little while about the latest news that *Warner Bros.* finally decided to release *Falcon Crest* on DVD and that season 1 will come out in various European countries in April and May — whereas a U.S. release has not been scheduled yet.

Cindy said that she was very impressed with our work on the website. "You know that's what keeps it alive," she said, "and I am sure that's a big reason that *Warner Bros.* will release it in Germany."

Finally — *Falcon Crest: The Complete First Season* on DVD (German packaging).

Quality Television

"Beautifully shot, a wonderful cast," were the attributes about *Falcon Crest* that came to Cindy's mind right away when we started to talk about her experiences with the show and the classy style *Falcon Crest* and the other 1980's prime time dramas had in contrast to the current television shows. "Quality productions of that kind are hard to come by on television these days," I said. "A lot of time was taken on the set, on the wardrobe... to make it beautiful," Cindy confirmed that it was a different approach from what is going on in the TV industry nowadays. "The storylines were fun and the characters were great. The actors were interesting, very beautiful people. I had the best time shooting *Falcon Crest*, both times I was on."

She also emphasized: "They had incredible sets, they had the most amazing sets, they had the budget for it, they had the crew for it and they had the time for it."

Portraying Two Different Characters

"And it was a wonderful opportunity for you to be on the show both times, wasn't it?" I said.

"There is a great story about that," Cindy began telling me about how she got to play both her rôles — Lance's (Lorenzo Lamas) girlfriend Lori Chapman in season 1 and Chase's (Robert Foxworth) ladyfriend Gabrielle Short in seasons 6 and 7.

"Yes, you must have experienced two totally different regimes in your two different parts because when you first guest-starred, Earl Hamner, the creator, shared executive producing duties with Michael Filerman, and Bob McCullough was the head writer; and in seasons 6 and 7, Jeff Freilich and Joanne Brough were the new execs," I said.

"You are very right. There were two completely different sets of producers on *Falcon Crest*," Cindy replied. "The interesting thing was: I went on the show shortly after I had done a movie called *Caddyshack*." She explained that it was very tempting to play on the show because of many factors: "Lorenzo Lamas was a very, very handsome man, and his father, Fernando, was directing the episode," she said about *For Love or Money* (episode 11). "So who could say no to that?!" Cindy laughed and explained why she was so attracted to the series. She pointed out she would have continued to play her first character, Lori, particularly because there were a couple of calls for later episodes over the next few years, but there was always a conflict with another job why it did not materialize. So that explained why the character she had originated was portrayed by another actress, Maggie Cooper, in season 2.



Lorenzo and Fernando filming episode 11 on stage 19 at *The Burbank Studios* (nowadays *Warner Bros. Studios*).



Cindy Morgan in her first rôle as Lori, Lance's girlfriend.



Maggie Cooper, who played Lori in season 2, with Lorenzo in episode 27.

"And several years went by, and I got a call to go in to meet the producers," who were completely different from the staff she had worked with on *Falcon Crest* in 1982. "When one meets many, many producers and you are focused on the performance of your job — it's like an audience," she compared the audition to a play on stage. "I am more focused on the character I am playing than every single individual I am meeting." Cindy pointed out it did not occur to her that these people were a whole different producing staff, but she realized what had happened when they offered a completely different rôle to her. Anyway, she liked the new rôle and took it.



A publicity photo of Cindy from the time when she first guest-starred on *Falcon Crest*.

"A little bit of time went by, and I was on the show for a couple of weeks, and Lorenzo, of course, remembered me, and a couple of other cast members remembered me. And nobody said a word [about my different character], and then suddenly one of the crew members came up to me and said: 'You were on this show before!' " She remembered that she was teasing the person: "No, I wasn't." But the crew member remembered her very well. "Gabrielle Short was only supposed to be on for a few episodes, but the character worked well with the rest of the cast, the storyline worked well, and Gabrielle Short continued." Cindy summarized what she particularly liked about Gabrielle: "She was a very passionate woman, who shot from the hip. There's a lot of Cindy in Gabrielle." The actress pretty much enjoyed that Gabrielle did a lot of things hardly anyone gets to do in real life very often.

"The reason I had red hair the second time," Cindy pointed out, "is because, in the storyline, the character, Gabrielle Short, kind of stole Chase from Maggie, and they [the producers] thought that I personally resembled Susan Sullivan a little too closely. So they didn't want it to seem like he was going for a similar version of his wife." She explained the producers asked her to dye her hair, and so she used kind of a red-colored mousse made by the *Roux* company to change her hair color for the character. "I put it in in the morning," Cindy explained that her bathroom looked as if "an animal had been slaughtered" due to that color she mixed herself, using a little brown and a little red. When Cindy was asked when she wanted her new hair color to become permanent, she replied to the producing staff: "When my contract does!" she laughed. Unfortunately, it never became permanent. The actress remembered that, shortly after Robert Foxworth had left the show, she read one of the scripts and found out her character was going to move to Chicago — ironically enough, the city where Cindy comes from in real life. That way, Cindy left the series after being a semi-regular for roughly one year in the summer of 1987. "A very nice thing was that they brought me back," she alluded to the scene with Susan Sullivan's Maggie at the Gioberti Family Cemetery in *A Madness Most Discreet* (episode 171) — a key scene about Chase Gioberti's last will and testament.

"You know, I was very, very happy to do that. It was a wonderful fun show to do. The character was very feisty, and in truth, Thomas, who gets to behave like that in real life?!" Cindy laughed and emphasized Gabrielle also had some elements of Cindy in her, particularly the good-natured parts of the character.

Working with the Cast and Crew

When we talked about most memorable moments, Cindy immediately referred to the scene when Gabrielle slapped Jane Wyman's character in episode 151.

"That is a wonderful story, too," Cindy enthusiastically said, but first came back to Jane Wyman in general.

"I loved Jane Wyman. I'll never forget working with such a professional. One of your questions was: 'Who was my favorite?'... It would be Jane Wyman for so many reasons," the actress explained and referred to an interesting situation when they had a table reading, which is a read-through that usually takes place towards the end of pre-production, but before the rehearsal period if any has been scheduled. In a table reading, the script is read by all actors and actresses with speaking parts; the non-dialog parts, such as scene headings and stage directions, are usually read by an additional person — sometimes someone from the producing staff, the company or network executives. The major aim of such a reading is to see which parts have to be trimmed down or changed. Cindy pointed out:



"We had a very large cast and we had a very large group of producers, almost as many producers as cast members, to tell you the truth, and when we came to sit down for my second table reading as Gabrielle Short, there wasn't a chair for me." She described the situation where nobody really cared about getting a chair until "Jane Wyman said: 'I'll get a chair for Cindy! Everybody wait!' And she took her time and got a chair. She was amazing. She carried herself so well with so much grace and dignity and respect. It was very often when we would be working she would be playing cards with the crew." Cindy was not exactly sure what the game was, but it looked like poker to her.

"The other one of my Jane Wyman stories," Cindy introduced her memories of the moment when Gabrielle slapped Angela Channing in the face. "I looked at my scripts, and there were no lines [for me], and she [Angela] had done something to destroy my father[s winery]. I walked into her office, I threw down the newspaper and slapped her." She described how she and Jane spoke about the scene first: "I apologized to her in advance, and she just said: 'Oh, honey, just do your job!' Now in truth, Thomas, you know that I already slapped two other people on the show, Robert Stack and Robert Foxworth." Cindy pointed out that there is rarely any contact between the two people involved in a film slap. She explained how it was usually faked from her position: "The camera is in two positions. The other actor is standing in front of the camera, and I will measure off an arm's length and step back about six more inches and take my arm and swing it across the [other] actor's eyes. And the [other] actor will do what is called a head jerk making it look like there was a contact. In Jane Wyman's case, my understanding was she had been hurt doing such a thing, but there was no reason for her to do that anyway. Her stand-in was there." "Martha Manor," I added. "So I was nowhere near Jane Wyman!" Cindy confirmed laughingly and said it would have been disrespectful to film the scene with Jane herself from her understanding.

That led us to a short conversation about the need for stand-ins in general, particularly to find out the perfect lighting for an actor or an actress. Cindy emphasized how extremely important good lighting was. "The first person I say hello to on the set is not the director, it's the cinematographer," she pointed out how much the combination of good photography and lighting contributes to an actor's appearance on screen.



"Robert Foxworth, who I did most of my scenes with, was wonderful." She described that their collaboration on the set worked very well.

I remembered a particularly funny take of a scene from shooting *Cold Hands* (episode 150) that a crew member had singled out on a blooper tape — Chase leaving his house in the morning and kissing Gabrielle goodbye in the doorway three or four times, always coming back to kiss her again. Of course, that gag did not make it to the screen, but was just kept as a private memento on tape for cast and crew members, but it illustrated the great chemistry between Cindy and Bob. "That's funny," Cindy confirmed. "Robert was great to work with, and when you work on a scene like that, you get real moments like that... moments that are fun."



Compare: The upper screen capture shows a moment of the scene from episode 150 in its final version. The other grab is from the blooper tape and shows Bob, who keeps coming back to Cindy to kiss her over and over again.

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Then, something else crossed her mind: "Thinking of slapping, I really did hit Robert!" Cindy laughed and referred to the scene on the porch of Gabrielle's winery in *A Piece of Work* (episode 145). "He said: 'Go ahead!'" Cindy remembered she really hit him instead of doing a mock scene.

"We briefly touched the topic of the change in the executive side of the show in those two different eras you worked on the show. Did you experience a different approach to the series in the way the various people ran the show?" I wanted to know.

"I more remember who I was working with on the set," Cindy replied, "because rarely did I see the producers except at the table readings when we read the script together. I remember people like Ken Peach." She explained that she really loved the director of photography because he did his job so well and was responsible for making people look beautiful on film, including finding the right angle. As an example, she singled out love scenes. "Love scenes are very technically shot. There is very little love about a love scene. He [Ken] would show me where the light was, where the angle of the camera was, he was very careful about how the things were shot. So that would be the person I more interacted with."

However, as far as Jeff Freilich, the executive producer of seasons 6 and 7, is concerned, she had great memories of him, too. "I have a lot of respect for Jeff. I think he ran it really well," she said about the show that became a lot more dynamic and faster paced under his guidance.

As far as her first appearance on *Falcon Crest* was concerned, she had great memories of Fernando Lamas in a similar respect.

"It was a scene on a beach," she referred to *For Love or Money* (episode 11) where she first met Lance near Sausalito — actually filmed on Zuma Beach in Malibu as far as Cindy recalled. "It was early in the morning, and I had to do a scene with Lorenzo where I was crying. And Fernando came up to me and said to me: 'Oh, you were so good. You cry every time!'" What Cindy did not tell the director was that she was having problems with her hard contact lenses during that shooting, which made her cry all the time. She laughed: "I just said: 'Thank you.'"

Another great memory was when Jane Wyman's son, Michael Reagan, was on the set to play the *Del Oro* concierge in season 6.

"When her son came to visit, the secret service man came with him," she referred to the fact that Michael's father was Ronald Reagan, the U.S. President in those days. "On the set, you know, everyone who is on the crew is wearing comfortable clothes and sneakers, and the cast is all in wonderful costumes, and then there is this guy in the black suit with sunglasses... You don't need to wear sunglasses on the set," she described why the secret service man was so unmistakable.

Ana - Alicia was another fellow cast member Cindy had great memories of because they got along so well.

She also mentioned she sees Lorenzo Lamas in an autograph show now and then.

Cindy pointed out that the familiarity among the cast is nothing to be taken for granted on a set because there are oftentimes rivalries or some actors or actresses might carry over their behavior as characters into real life, something Cindy never understood.

Reminiscing Some Highlights

"A lot of scenes on *Falcon Crest* were very emotional. Different emotions would need to come out." Cindy explained how she prepared for those scenes using different kinds of music she brought to the set. "I would have whatever music I needed on my *Walkman*."

She also said she sometimes used the *Walkman* and her headphones to block what was going on around her, especially in case some controversy was going on between some people on the set.

Cindy vividly remembered a funny moment from the preparations of her first episode when she played Lori. "I remember getting fitted for those bike shorts. I remember that bike shop was on 3rd Street in Los Angeles," she pointed out and said that the shorts *Lorimar* got her there looked so terrible that she did not want to wear them on the show. "So I wore my own," Cindy laughed.



Another particular incident Cindy recalled very well was a location shooting in season 6 she almost missed. She described that it was an emotional scene with Robert Foxworth that took place at Gabrielle's winery, which was

filmed in Ontario, a community in Greater Los Angeles. "I was in Chicago visiting my family for Thanksgiving," Cindy explained that she wanted to fly back to L.A. the night before the location shooting would take place. She had to change airplanes in Denver where there was a huge snowstorm that night, which caused the Denver Airport to shut down. Cindy explained what a disastrous thought it was to miss the shooting because, first, she was going to be in every scene and, secondly, it was a location shooting, which, in contrast to a shooting at the studios, was impossible to reschedule on short notice. "I walked around that airport," she described the unpleasant situation in Denver, "I tried to ship myself UPS, I tried to get on a military plane, I went from counter to counter — pretty much like Gabrielle," Cindy laughed. She explained she spent the whole night at that airport and when it finally reopened, she told a lady at a counter that she needed to be on the first plane because of her shooting schedule — although she never played the celebrity part before. Finally, she got to Ontario with a little delay. "I was a little bit tired, having been up all night, but it worked for the scene."

Memorabilia

"Do you have any memorabilia from the set?" I wanted to know.

Cindy hesitated: "I don't want to get anybody in trouble, but one of the wardrobe people said: 'You're leaving... You just found out by reading the script?!' And I said: 'Yeah!' And she said: 'Is your car here?' And I said: 'Yes.' And she said: 'Back it up.'" Cindy laughed about how some of her costumes got in her car.

Life after Falcon Crest

The reason for the character of Gabrielle Short being written off was that Robert Foxworth was no longer part of the show.

"I think I would have continued indefinitely with Robert because we got along so well," Cindy said.

"Did you continue to watch the series after you had left?" I asked.

"Oh sure!"

"What did you think about how it developed?" I wanted to know.

"I thought it got a little random. It was not so well-thought through. It didn't flow the same way, I thought."



Cindy in 2009.

Cindy mentioned that, besides playing other rôles in her successful career, she later was an associate producer of several of her films and convinced the film company to shoot at CBS Studio Center in Studio City because her experience there on *Falcon Crest* was so good.