

## "Boom! Goes Julia's Car..."

# CHIP CORBIN

## Remembers the *Falcon Crest* Cast and Crew, Special Effects and Much More

### Interview by

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

Chip Corbin and I got in touch quite a few years ago and exchanged e-mails now and then about his work as a production intern towards the end of season 2 of *Falcon Crest*. When Chip retired in 2023, he finally had more time to talk to me in detail about his work on the show, and we set up an interview.

[Questions are in bold print.]

### **How did you like working on *Falcon Crest*?**

It was a fantastic experience. I was twenty-six and had worked as various production staff on several different shows and a couple of pilots that didn't get picked up. Mostly for *Lorimar*, who also produced *Dallas*, *Knots Landing* and others. It was exhausting but great fun! The crew had a twelve-hour day guarantee in their contract, and we usually worked fourteen hours. As I was the first person in and the last person out, I regularly worked sixteen-hour days. Then I'd go home, take a little nap, come back and do it all over. Sometimes in the morning as I was pulling my car out of my garage while it was still dark, for a moment I wouldn't be sure if I was coming or going.

Most of the people were great to work with. The politics are very heavy in that industry and I very much disliked having to always weigh the various political paths and options and pitfalls before saying or doing most anything. I was very low status as the *DGA* [*Directors Guild of America*] trainee and had to be extremely careful to make no mistakes and ruffle no feathers. This was ultimately why I pursued my own path after about a decade working production which I'll get into more of later. It was largely a thankless job where you needed very thick skin and the best you could do was to stay out of trouble and not mess up. One pretty much never got thanked except for the little personal tasks

I had to do for the actors like getting them breakfast. But God forbid their breakfast was cold or wasn't exactly as they wished. More later.

**According to the production documents in our archives (and from you!), you served as a trainee in the nine final episodes of season 2, i.e. episodes 32 <2.14> through 40 <2.22>. Is that correct?**

That sounds about right. The dates on the production reports are the best records I have.

**How did you get your job on the show? Was it the usual rotation system within the DGA, or did you have any possibility to select the show for the DGA program?**

I had been working on different *Lorimar* shows and I wasn't DGA. I'd never really planned or wanted to be an AD [assistant director] but what happens is that when the DGA doesn't have a trainee available, the production company can use one of their own people, whoever they want. So I was available and they offered it to me — and without knowing much about the position, I took it. Like I said it was very difficult but ultimately it was great fun and I'm glad I had the experience. At the end of the second season, the DGA had someone available so I wasn't invited back. Would have probably killed me anyway.

Also, being an AD isn't a path to becoming a director as some might assume, if that's even what one wanted. I'd considered it but didn't really have a path. An AD is on a parallel track with directing but is completely different. It's strictly administrative and logistics management while directing is generally creative. AD-ing is 0 % creative unless you count directing the background actors: "You: drink your coffee", "You: smoke a cigarette", "You: cross the street on 'background action'", etc.

You can transition to Director from AD if you're well connected. But for anyone on their own it's rare. You either have to spend lots of time or be an extremely good schmoozer which I'm not. The usual advancement from AD is to UPM [unit production manager] which I wasn't interested in. Although later on I was "Production Manager" on the *Academy Awards* and found that very rewarding.

**Could you please describe your key duties and your typical workday on *Falcon Crest*?**

A typical workday was to wake up at 4:30 am to two alarm clocks because you'd be so groggy from only four or five hours sleep, several days in a row. And I was told in no uncertain terms that "if you want to keep your job, NEVER be late!" I never was.

I was still fairly young but it was still grueling. Sometimes I'd lie on the floor of my shower with cold water running on me and I'd think, "Ugh — this is a young man's job." Ha! I was twenty-six.

My normal call at TBS [*The Burbank Studios*, now Warner Bros. Studios] was usually 5:45 am to have the first actress in the makeup chair by 6:00 or 6:30. The first thing I'd have to do was open their mobile dressing rooms for whoever was due in first. Also to MAKE

SURE the lights and the heaters in their "rooms" got turned on (it was winter). This was a HUGE issue which was fraught with problems. The rooms were really beat up and the TBS lot electricians did a poor job of keeping them connected to power.

The first actors were always the females because they needed more time in the chair. You'll see on the call sheets that Susan [Sullivan], Abby [Dalton], Jamie [Rose], Ana Alicia and sometimes Jane [Wyman] would be in as early as 6:00. You can imagine I had to be nothing less than a sparkly ray of sunshine for these women who could be a little grumpy



David Selby and Shannon Tweed on the stairs of a trailer at *The Burbank Studios* with press photographers.

at that hour of the morning. Except Jane, she was always a gem. I was their main point of contact throughout their day and sometimes half of my job was to provide coffee, hugs and TONS of emotional support to these emotionally fragile creatures. Most of them didn't socialize with the other cast when off-camera; and sometimes, except for phone calls, I seemed to be the only personal relationship they'd have during their workday. Some socialized more than others. Like Shannon Tweed, who socialized with everyone.

So next, my second and possibly most important task of the day was to get them breakfast and tell them how fabulous they looked.

Breakfast was in their SAG [Screen Actors Guild] contract and it could be a HUGE deal. The commissary didn't open until 7:00 and they were always slow so the earliest breakfasts I could deliver were usually 7:30 – 7:45. That was never quick enough for our actresses, and I had to hear about that all the time. Susan almost always wanted oatmeal and once I had to follow her around with it from the chair to her room and back to the chair again like a little puppy dog and by that time it was stone cold and I think that was the only time she was ever a little cranky. Not with me of course, with the oatmeal. She was a sweetheart. So I took to making her instant oatmeal on my own with hot water from the prop room to solve that problem. That would have been a grievance from props if anybody noticed. Sometimes if an actor didn't want their breakfast, they'd let one of the makeup or hair people order something in their place which they always appreciated.

So it was very much in my interest to get some hot breakfast into the actresses as quickly as possible because it improved their dispositions immensely.



Susan Sullivan:  
No "Breakfast at *Tiffany's*", but oatmeal.

The crew call was normally 7:00 – 7:30 am, and they were usually ready for the "first shot" by 8:00. I would be updating the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD (Neal Ahern) regularly as to whether the talent would be ready by first shot, which they usually were, so when the crew called "camera ready," the 1<sup>st</sup> AD (Andy Ackerman or Gene DeRuelle) would tell the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Neal), and he would tell me. Sometimes this would happen with us standing right next to each other. This is how regimented the DGA process was. Neal and I usually had walkie-talkies to communicate as I was often running around and out of sight.



Neal Ahern (right with the walkie-talkie) with other crew members on July 12, 1982 at *Spring Mountain Vineyards*.

Then I'd normally be out at the first actor's dressing room ready to get them as soon as I was notified. Some would make their own way to the stage as they knew the timing and the drill. But when actors weren't ready and kept camera waiting, that could quickly become a problem and a couple of times [producer] Barry Steinberg came down to the stage and "discussed" this with the guilty actor or actress. Lana was a special case, and she'll get her own paragraph.

Rounding them up meant knocking on each dressing room door and announcing, "Susan, camera's ready!", etc. Then I'd walk them to the stage, open the doors through the airlock and deliver them right up to the director. When we were on the stages, the sets could be a confusing warren of passageways and lights and cables, so especially if there had been any set changes, the actors might not know exactly where to go. So walking them right up to their shot was important.

They loved being helpless and loved all the attention. The male actors, too. Sometimes they were like little children. But I knew what to do and indulged them.

Most of the rest of the day was coordinating the actors back and forth between their dressing room and the stage. Sometimes I'd fetch them coffee or snacks or lunch from the commissary. I know this sounds a bit subservient, which I'm not at all in real life, but it was lots of fun and I decided to go with the flow and enjoy my time there.

My other main responsibility was the "PR" or Production Report. Your career lived or died on your attention to the details in the PR.

The PR recorded every aspect of the production that cost money: How many feet of film were exposed. How many were printed. How many were wasted, etc. Also, how many pages of the script got shot. Were we still on track to "complete the day's work"? It was all planned very carefully but if things went wrong and if it carried over to the next day, that could push the next day's work off and this was big trouble. We'd often just keep working to 9:30 or 10:30 pm to complete the day's work. The producers didn't like when it didn't get finished on time.

The PR accounted for everything. Which scenes got shot, the actors' attendance, who got



Some production reports from season 2.

breakfast, who (God forbid) was late, what time the first shot was done, when we wrapped, who got a "silent bit" or got temporarily upgraded ("re-rated") when some crew member was out sick and the guy below him moved up into the higher position. Even how many meals the caterer served when we were out on location. The stand-ins and the extras were always angling to get a silent bit or wardrobe allowance as it was a good bump in pay.

Sometimes you'd ask an extra to smoke a cigarette or take a drink of water, then they'd want to argue with you to get paid for a silent bit. A real silent bit is doing something particular that advances the story, like a waiter serving food or handing a coat to one of the stars. But they'd try. When silent bits were available, we'd try to give them to the stand-ins first. Sometimes the stand-ins were asked to supply their own cars, and they'd get paid extra. Gordon [Hodgins, a stand-in] used his car a few times although he may have been driving Martha Manor's car in *Separate Hearts* (episode 36 <2.18>), where we blew up Julia's car. I think he can be seen driving on the streets of Griffith Park before the crash. I believe this was on Zoo Drive adjacent to the explosion site, and I think he was driving Martha's Buick. He also played Agretti's killer, I believe, and was only seen as a



Gordon Hodgins in his final and most prominent appearance in a speaking part as a reporter in *As Tears Go by* (episode 182 <7.27>).



Episode 36 <2.18>: Stand-in Gordon Hodgins drives Martha Manor's Buick LeSabre on Zoo Drive in Griffith Park (left behind Melissa's Porsche 911).

black gloved hand shooting a pistol. Everyone had a big laugh at that scene, and Gordon especially enjoyed the part and the attention. He was a little shy and reserved but was a really nice guy. Martha too. He got a silent bit for that. What I remember of the scene was shooting a closeup of Gordon's hand and arm entering the frame with as I remembered it, a gun. No one else was in the scene. It went through several takes, and there was lots of laughter as Gordon said 'Bang!' or did something goofy to have fun with the scene and cracked everyone up. Every one of the cast and crew loved Gordon. He was a sweet teddy bear.

Gordon Hodgins' right hand in a black glove as Carlo Agretti's murderer or murderess in *Troubled Waters* (episode 21 <2.05>).

Since Chip was not on the set while shooting that episode, and no similar scene during his tenure on the show made it to the final version, we were unable to determine which scene between episodes 32 <2.14> and 39 <2.21> Chip referenced, so Gordon playing the murderer/murderess with the pistol again was most likely an unused segment.



They kept us really well fed. Given how little I made, this was important. The craft service guy, Laban [Freeman] did a great job. He had a mobile snack station off to the side of whatever set we were working that day. He had a pretty good budget and he was always stocked up with cookies, donuts, candy bars, coffee, tea, sodas, instant soup, hot chocolate, etc. There was also a provision for feeding the crew a "standing meal" when we would go past a normal lunch or dinner break, where he'd bring in pizza or fried chicken or soup or something like that for the whole cast and crew. People would circulate past his station and help themselves to a meal and eat it while they were working. This would avoid putting the crew into a meal penalty so we could keep going. It kept the producers happy and allowed the crew to go home a half - hour earlier than if they stopped for a formal break, so everyone was on board with it. On location we had first - rate catering by the premiere industry catering company, *Michaelson's*.

Meals are incredibly important to a company's morale. I've worked on low budget shows with lousy catering and, believe me, it definitely affects everyone. A friend and I still laugh at the story of us getting cold beef stew for lunch on a show we both worked on. And then

having the associate producer (who had ordered it) tell us to pack it up in foil to take home. True. Ugh!

*Michaelson's* went on to become *Limelight* — and they are still in business. The food and their service were excellent. Five stars. They took especially good care of the DGA staff because we basically approved their invoice and they provided some of the best meals I've ever had on location. Especially their breakfast burritos. They got to know me and would have mine ready for me as soon as they'd be set up on location. I was probably burning 5,000+ calories a day, and a good breakfast was critical especially on location as there was much more running around for me to do. I lost about 20 lbs. in the six or so months I worked on the show. I had to eat my burrito on the run as I was always working.

On the TBS lot we were on our own for meals. I was never caught up on my paperwork (the PR), so I pretty much used my lunch period, I think we got an hour, to try to stay on track. There was just a torrent of data to manage so I rarely got to eat a formal lunch. The commissary was fairly close to our stages (19/ 19A) and had a little hot dog stand out in front of it with some outdoor picnic tables and many times I was happy to just grab one of their jumbo dogs while I filled in the PR.



Lana Turner and Jane Wyman sitting in their chairs during a break while filming *Home away from Home* (episode 24 <2.06>); Lana smoking a cigarillo, Jane a cigarette.

Another thing about the trainee position is that you're one of the only people who doesn't get a chair. Everyone else of the cast and the above-the-line crew and the department heads (director, DP, gaffer, etc.) had their own folding/directors' chairs but not the trainee. He (or she) was expected to be on their feet all day. And I was. I was allowed to sit in pretty much anyone else's vacant chair to do my paperwork but was expected to vacate it immediately when they needed it. Once when we were working on the backlot I brought my own chair that I happened to own and, boy, did I get scowled at.

The trainee was sort of a "trial - by - fire" position. It paid very little; I got \$ 303.25 per week in 1982. You really had to want that job to survive. If you could take what they dished out — the long hours on your feet, the low pay, the walking on eggshells, the abuse by the cast, etc. — and still played the political game well, you just might have an opportunity to advance.

Another one of my important tasks was to sign the actors out as they were released. This could be any time when they finished their scenes for the day. It could be from mid - day to the afternoon to the end of the day when "wrap" was called. This could be a fun game. The actors wanted to get out as fast as possible when they were done. No one hung around or came and found me to sign out. So I had to be ready with the PR and a pen right by the camera as the 1<sup>st</sup> AD released the actors.

**LORIMAR**

DAILY PRODUCTION REPORT

Production: **FULLER HOUSE**     Date: **WEDNESDAY 9/30/81**     Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Project # \_\_\_\_\_     Date Started \_\_\_\_\_     Est. Finish Date \_\_\_\_\_     State \_\_\_\_\_

Shooting City: \_\_\_\_\_     Location: \_\_\_\_\_     Set # \_\_\_\_\_     Room \_\_\_\_\_

FOR REMARKS AND EXPLANATIONS OF DELAYS SEE OTHER SIDE     Extra Bus No. at Stage \_\_\_\_\_     Drive Bus No. at Stage \_\_\_\_\_

**CAST**

NAME	Scene	Start	MINUTES	STOP	SCENE SHOT TODAY
BOB OAKLEY	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
ROGER BUSHNELL	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
HAROLD LAURE	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
LEE S. MOORE	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
JOE PRATT	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
JOE MORGAN	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
NICK MARSHALL / AD	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
ROBERT LUGGS	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
DENNIS HOUGHLIN	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
CLIFF BRUCE	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P
OLIVER HUNTER / AD	10	9:30A	5:30P	6:30P	1-11P

**ACTORS SIGN OUT SHEET!**

An example of a sign-out sheet: Wednesday, September 30, 1981 when scenes of various season 1 episodes were shot on distant location in the Napa Valley.

Most of them were happy to comply but some I'd have to chase out to their room or cars to get the signature. Some were better than others. Foxworth was the worst. He wasn't at all a nice person, always grouchy and snarky about everything. He regularly tried to dodge me and when I did pin him down for his initials he'd almost always glower and snarl at me. Especially when he had to sign through the window of his car door. It was a game with him. Several times he got away and I'd have to sign for him. You'll see this on several PRs. I had to initial it "N/A". You could only do this a couple of times before the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> would "remind" you to be sure to get the actual signature.

Towards the end of the day as the actors were released and we'd know what was going to be done the next day, the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> would tell me what times the various actors were needed for the next day and I'd have to start phoning them with their call times. This was a fun and harrowing game also... I had several phone numbers for each actor and had to be careful to call them in a certain order. I'd usually have a home number, sometimes their parents' number, maybe a pager and their answering service, after which things could get interesting. Remember this was the era of home answering machines, before cell phones. If it was early enough I'd often reach the actual person and give them their call. Easy. Later they might be asleep and they might answer or I'd get their answering machine.

Whenever I woke Foxworth up, he'd get another opportunity to snarl at me. Always predictable and entertaining. A couple of them had answering services. I think Jane and Abby, which was good because there was a record of the call. If the actor either didn't check their answering machine or just overslept as happened a couple of times, that could be real trouble on the set.

You asked about Jamie missing a scene once, and that was a huge deal. I'd only been able to leave a message on her machine the night before and as the crew was ready and waiting for her on location in Santa Monica, and she was nowhere to be found, tensions got pretty high. First Neal then the 1<sup>st</sup>, I don't remember which one, but they each asked me at least twice with increasing intensity if I was "really sure" I had left a message for her. I had, so I was able to answer truthfully, but if I turned out to be lying or mistaken,



it would have been all over for me. Finally the crew moved on to the next location without her, and I think she showed up right about then. This is when they used the "walking & talking" gag as you mentioned to still get her scene shot, but it was a big shitstorm. More on the park you asked about later.

When Jamie was too late for one of her scenes in episode 34 <2.16>, the production process was delayed, and the scene with Roy Thinnes was moved to a different location.

Several of the actors were single and had a boyfriend or girlfriend or two. Because of this as I said, it was extremely important I call their numbers in a certain order! At least once I called the boyfriend of one of our actresses, having not found her yet at any of her other numbers. The boyfriend and I were familiar with each other as I regularly reached her there, but as it was very late that day, probably 10:00 – 10:30 pm, and as she wasn't there when I asked for her, his voice noticeably sank as he realized what this meant.

I think she got in a little bit of trouble with that boyfriend because she scowled at me when she came in the next morning, even though I'd done everything exactly according to her own protocol. After that, she said she'd let me know when she shouldn't be called at that boyfriend's number. I was careful to not ask any questions.

On location, this was all further complicated because again there weren't cell phones. I'd have to use an available phone at the location site or find a pay phone. Like the stone age of telecommunications.

**Besides the aforementioned episodes, did you also film in Northern California?**

No.

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

No. This is a disappointing aspect of working in this business. Relationships you form while working on a show tend to evaporate as soon as the show is over.

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

Susan and I got along fabulously and I liked her very much. She was sweet and unmarried and boyfriend-less at the time and very flirtatious. I had a lot of fun with her. She needed a lot of attention.

Jane was — as I'm sure you've heard, and to use an overused phrase — the consummate professional. Never late, always ready with her lines and nice to everyone. Never asked for any favors. Once she asked me to have the electricians connect the heater in her dressing room, but I did it myself. I always made an extra special effort to make sure she was taken care of.



I described what Foxworth was like; a first-rate jerk. Once I saw him chew out the 1<sup>st</sup> AD in front of everyone because the 1<sup>st</sup> put him in the "wrong car" for a move on the studio lot.

Contrastingly, David Selby was the nicest guy on the show and I liked him a lot. Everyone did. He always smiled, was always genuinely friendly to everyone.



Roy Thinnes too. It was amazing to work with Roy as I'd been a fan of *The Invaders* several decades earlier. Sometimes, talking to Roy from three feet away was like talking to Cary Grant. I'd just be talking normally but inside I'd be like, "Shit! That's Roy Thinnes".

Roy Thinnes and David in a scene as Nick Hogan and Richard Channing at Cross Creek in *Confrontations* (episode 28 <2.10>).



The youngest ones, Jamie, Ana Alicia, Billy and Lorenzo made various impressions on me:

Billy was a super nice guy, but very quiet. He was always good to me, and I liked him. He was reliable; he'd be on time, hit his marks and knew his lines. Sometimes that's all that's needed. As I said about relationships evaporating, I ran into him in a movie theater in Westwood, California a couple of years after *Falcon Crest* and said hi to him. Just like Jamie, he had no idea who I was, even when I told him.

Jamie was another pretty face with a surprisingly bland personality. Always nice enough but very distant. Mostly kept to herself and didn't laugh at any of my jokes. She was another one I ran into in a supermarket near our homes (*Gelson's, North Hollywood*) several years after *Falcon Crest* and I said hi and introduced myself. She just looked at me blankly. I reminded her about working together on *Falcon Crest*, again nothing. Now keep in mind, other than the director, no one on the set worked more closely with her than me. Okay, maybe hair & makeup. But NOTHING, not even a glimmer. Not even a fake "Yeah, great times!" So I excused myself and kept shopping.

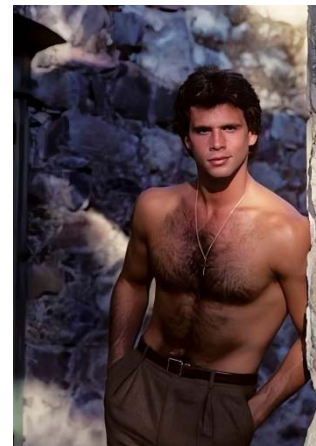


Ana Alicia was a special case. Sadly she was the only actor on the show who was ever unpleasant to me. Foxworth didn't count; it wasn't personal with him, he was just a jerk.

One day her breakfast was particularly late from the commissary, which again I had no control over and by the time it was ready, she was done with makeup and already out on the set. When I brought her plate up to her, which I think was bacon, eggs & toast, and in front of everyone she said loudly: "You're late! I'm going to talk to Barry [Steinberg, the producer] and have you thrown off the show!" (verbatim). As if she were Lana Turner or some actual star who could have people thrown off the show. Then she laughed, I think to try to show she was joking. It was a poor joke. And it wasn't just with me, she was regularly nasty to hair, makeup and wardrobe. Later that day, several of the other cast and crew told me not to worry about it which was nice to hear. Remember, I was making \$ 303.25 a week, working sixteen - hour days, while she easily made ten times that. I was always professional with her but lost all respect.

Lorenzo [Lamas], you gotta love him, was the male version of Ana Alicia. Good looking and made sure you knew it. Unbelievably full of himself. Also always late and never knew his lines. Once after a move between stages (from 19 to 1), his personal phone in his mobile dressing room wasn't hooked up (again) by the lot electricians, and he barked at me to get it fixed and emphasized that by throwing a chair. After that, I took to connecting his phone myself whenever the dressing rooms got moved instead of dealing with the electricians — which would have likely triggered a Union grievance and gotten me fired if anybody knew.

He also had a classy trick of riding his loud *Harley* chopper right up the main street of the lot after entering from the main gate on West Olive Avenue. Any scenes that were being shot on any of the stages he rode past would have been ruined. The stages were soundproof but not against his loud bike.



Some of the others... Mel Ferrer was a lot like his character and, as you can imagine, a little aloof. But he had a good sense of humor.

Once there was a funny scene with him where Angela is having a big family dinner in the main dining room. The menu called for poached salmon which Dominic [Belmonte], the prop master, cooked up back in the prop room on stage 19. Props are also responsible for any food eaten by the actors on camera. The prop room wasn't really a room, it was a big cage made of chain-link fence. So the aroma of the cooking salmon permeated the set. And not very pleasantly.

Anyway, the scene opens on the cast about to eat and Chao-Li is either serving food or pouring wine and Mel was to take a bite and say: "Mmm... salmon!" Mel affected the European pronunciation that pronounces the "L" in salmon out loud where it's silent in American English ("samon"), so that was a little humorous to start.

But something went wrong, and they called "cut". Take two went about the same. About take three or four the salmon is now cold, and everybody's getting a little testy, and this time Mel says, very dryly but exaggeratedly: "MMMMM!... SAL-mon!" really emphasizing the pronunciation and everybody just cracked up. It was a fun moment and it was nice to see Mel get a laugh as he was normally so serious.



*Separate Hearts* (episode 36 <2.18>: "'Samon', Mr. Ferrer — not 'saLmon!'")

Chao-Li Chi was also one of the nicest people. He really appreciated the gig he had and was respectful of everyone. Gave me a nice bottle of Chinese wine that Christmas ('82).

James Hong was a regular guest star and also a really professional, very nice guy. I got to be friends with him and helped him a little outside of this show with some community theater projects he did. I was happy he got the SAG award for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.



James Hong in episode 40 <2.22> in the scene in which Fong revealed who murdered Carlo Agretti.



Other than the necessities, the cast didn't interact with each other or the crew much. Most kept to themselves and stayed in their rooms between scenes. Shannon was a big exception. She was quite a Type-A extrovert and a jock. She mostly hung out with the teamster drivers / transportation crew outside the stage entrance telling bawdy jokes, stories about her time with Hef [Hugh Hefner], playing "Hacky Sack", their favorite pastime and laughing loudly. Most of the cast treated her like an outsider and didn't consider her a "real" actress. Funny that I would go on to working for "Hef" a few years later.

Stand-ins Martha [Manor], Gordon [Hodgins] and Rose [Mascari] had their own chairs and hung out on the set. Martha knitted between scenes. Gordon and Rose read or visited with the crew. All the young male crew had a big crush on Rose as she was young and pretty but none of them got anywhere with her. Martha was sweet as could be.

Martha Manor as baby Joseph's nanny in *Above Suspicion* (episode 32 <2.14>).

Gordon Hodgins as one of his many different characters in "...*Divided We Fall*" (episode 030 <2.12>).



### What was your most memorable scene?

The two most fun were blowing up Julia's car and stuntman Dar Robinson falling off the bridge. Those were great times. Shooting at the *Brookside Winery* was also interesting but it was like a two - hour drive to and from the *TBS* lot. Dark when you left, dark when you got back.



Blowing up Julia's car (episode 36 <3.18>).



Henri Denault falling off *Gorman Bridge* (episode 38 <2.20>).



Filming at *Brookside Winery* (episode 39 <2.21>).

### What was it like to work with Jane Wyman?

Unremarkable, which was a good thing. But also very rewarding.



**The late Lana Turner was a special guest star in one episode in season 1, which became the most watched *Falcon Crest* episode ever. For season 2, she was re-hired for five more episodes. During your stint on the show, she was in the final episode of season 2. What was it like to work with Lana Turner?**

Of course Lana was a genuine movie star from the Golden Age of Hollywood. She'd no doubt spent countless hours on the *Warner Bros.* lot over the decades, so other than not having worked for a while, this was no big deal for her. I had met her before and she was very normal and a pleasure to work with. She was a little difficult to get out of her dressing room but she was always pleasant and she delivered the goods.

In terms of getting her out of her room, she seemed to think it was still 1946, where she could keep the crew waiting indefinitely until she was ready. Of course, this doesn't work on 1980's episodic TV like we were doing. Our costs were about \$ 10,000/day in 1982 for the crew alone. I gave out the paychecks so I knew. Not including the talent of course, so *Lorimar* didn't tolerate delays of more than a few minutes. Lana was a different story. Once, after telling her "camera's ready" at least twice (actually knocking on her dressing room door and telling her maid who would only open the door a crack), the crew was starting to panic as these delays completely freaked the producers out, so we needed a different strategy. In any case, I simply couldn't knock on her door a third time without almost certainly setting her off. And you didn't want to be the guy that did that; the rest of the day could be ruined and you could be asked to go home and never come back. So Neal, the 1<sup>st</sup> AD, thinking quickly, grabbed some flowers and a vase from Dominic, the prop guy, and this gave me another ruse to knock. "Flowers from the producers, Miss Turner..." True story. She came out a few minutes later and shot a great scene. I think it was the one where we find her in her office with her back to us in her big red chair with smoke rising from her cigarette, then slowly turning around as we zoom in, revealing who she is. It was one of the great comeback moments in television history.

Barry was on the set for most of her scenes and she seemed genuinely friendly with him.



Jacqueline Perrault reveals herself as the head of the cartel in episode 40 <2.22> to "her son" Richard, whom she gave away for adoption. Richard later found out that everything was a lie to harm his real mother, Angela.

**There are lots of rumors about her and Jane Wyman not getting along personally. Did that filter down to the everyday work on the set?**

No, they got along fine, on-camera and off. They were both genuinely nice, professional people. The rivalry was created by the publicity department. Jane knew she was the queen and treated Lana very generously.

**For *Broken Promises* (episode 33 <2.15>), a call sheet demanded that two of the stand-ins bring their own cars to the locations, *Pacoima Hospital (Hillview Mental Health)* and *San Fernando Lumber*, the location you used as *Hogan's Home Center*. In the scene at Hogan's business, two of the "usual" cars are visible — these cars have appeared from the very beginning of the series in quite a number of episodes in the background. Since the stints of two extras and the periods of time when these cars were used coincide, we have reason to believe that the beige *Buick LeSabre* with the black top was Martha Manor's car and the yellow *Ford Pinto Runabout* Gordon Hodgins' vehicle. Can you confirm that?**

Yes, I believe that's correct. And again, I think you can see Gordon driving Martha's *Buick* in Griffith Park in the same episode Julia's car is blown up. It was shot earlier that same day. This was lots cheaper than hiring stunt drivers and renting picture cars. Just give Martha and Gordon a bump (\$).



Left: Martha Manor's real-life car, a beige *Buick LeSabre*, was used many times in the series as a car in the background in various scenes (screen capture from episode 33 <2.15>).



Right: Gordon Hodgins' car was also used throughout the series as a picture car in the background (screen capture from episode 23 <2.05>).

**For *Deliberate Disclosure* (episode 34 <2.16>), a scene with Melissa, little Joseph and the baby's nurse being watched by Cole with binoculars from the distance was deleted in post-production. It was set in the *Falcon Crest Gardens*, portrayed by some area in Griffith Park. Do you remember which area?**

That was in an area called the "the quarry" which we used a couple of times. It's not shown on *Google Maps* because I believe it was on Mount Hollywood Drive which is closed to vehicular traffic nowadays. I got a big kick out of doing scenes in the quarry because it was regularly used in *Mission Impossible* which was one of my favorite shows.

As I recall though, the *Falcon Crest Gardens* scenes were also done at either the *Los Angeles Arboretum* or the *Huntington Library Botanical Gardens*, and I remember being to both. I think the scene at the *Huntington* was a funeral though.



The filming location of Nick's and Vickie's wedding (and also of the funeral in the season 2 finale) was the *Los Angeles County Arboretum* in Arcadia, CA.

**Baby Joseph was portrayed by "the Hershberger twins" in season 2 according to the production documents. Do you remember their first names? And do you know if these kids maybe stayed in the entertainment business?**

I don't think I ever heard their names. And I'm sure you know the reason they use twins is that the shooting time for babies is very limited and closely monitored by a required nurse on the set. She'd run a stopwatch and call "time". Then they'd swap in the other baby and continue shooting. I think it was about three minutes per take with a limit of twenty minutes total on-camera time with on-set time limited to two or three hours per day per baby. The babies' faces were also immediately covered up with a baby towel as soon as they called "cut" to keep the light off them.

**The production report for *Deliberate Disclosure* (episode 34 <2.16>) stated that Jamie Rose was too late, so the original location for a restaurant scene was canceled, and her scene with Roy Thinnes was filmed “walking and talking at a park near the second location of the shooting day.” That location was a restaurant at 3218 Santa Monica Boulevard in Santa Monica. Do you remember the name of the restaurant back then by any chance, and do you recall which park you used for the scene with Vickie and Nick?**

Yeah that was a fun day. I don't remember the name of the restaurant, and today it's something completely different.

I believe this is the “park”: 1500 Bundy Drive, Los Angeles.  
It wasn't an actual park, just a spit of land off of Santa Monica Boulevard.

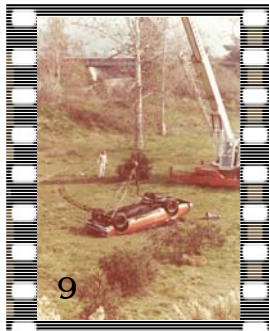
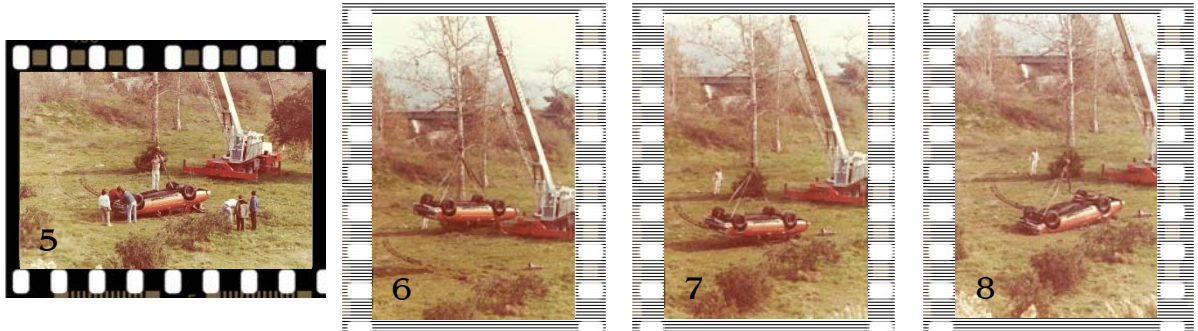
**Could you please explain the process of filming *Separate Hearts* and *The Odyssey* (episodes 36 <2.18>/37 <2.19>), especially Julia's car crash and the explosion of the car on location in Griffith Park?**

Attached are the photos of blowing up Julia's car [on the following page]. That day was a lot of fun. In the sequence you see the crane positioning the car, then in frame # 6 – 9 it picks it up again and drops it on its roof to add some crash damage. In frame # 10 you see the crew with I believe the director, Harvey S. Laidman, center in the director's chair. The pyro guy is setting the charge at the rear of the car. They used jellied gasoline for the main fireball and black powder to set it off with a lot of smoke. That was contained in an old rubber tire inner tube which you see at his knee. The rest of the sequence is when “action” is called. I just held the button down on my camera. In the later frames, # 11 – 28, you see the fireball and big smoke cloud that rolled upward. We were right next to the US-101/Ventura Freeway, about 100 yards away, and I could hear cars screeching to a stop on the freeway when they saw the fireball roll skyward only a few hundred feet away from them.

We had our own fire truck on scene, but some concerned citizen called the city fire department anyway and they came rolling up to our position a few minutes later. Everyone had a good laugh. The location is shown on the attached map [below], it was in Griffith Park, CA, near the intersection of the US-101/Ventura Freeway and the I-5/Golden State Freeway. The sequence was shot with my *Olympus OM-2n* 35 - mm camera with motor drive and 400 ASA *Kodachrome* film. That camera shot at 5 frames per second so the sequence you see is about 4 seconds. The preceding shots of Julia driving on the mountain road were also taken on Zoo Drive, the same road we're positioned on, just east of where we were for the explosion shot. I'm sure you know that Griffith Park is a well - used location for many many TV shows and movies. The *Google Maps* location for my screenshot is here: Zoo Drive. The row of red X's on Zoo Drive is where I and the production vehicles were stationed. The big red X is where Julia's car was positioned. The cameras and crew are set up on the opposite side of the car from our location on the road. The two red XX's to the right are the location of the overpass abutment of the I-5 freeway visible in frame # 9, for reference. It was shot with a long lens, so the distance



is compressed. The area was an empty bowl - shaped field at the time, but as you can see from the Google satellite view, it's more built up and wooded today.



Preparing the car explosion (above and left):  
A crane placed the junk car on its roof to get some more crash damage.

Below:  
The crew used gasoline for the big explosion.



The gentleman in the plaid shirt is best boy electric, Rich Glasser. He was standing next to me, so I took a picture of him. He was a really nice guy.



**From the shooting schedules and production reports you sent, I realized that the crash and explosion were filmed for episode 36 <2.18> on December 28, 1982 (Chase watches in horror as Julia's car goes boom) while the rescue scene (with Chase, Cole and the paramedics, etc.) for the beginning of episode 37 <2.19> was shot on January 5, 1983. The shooting schedule called for Julia's exploded car to be used there again in the second episode. Wasn't this kind of schedule extremely complicated? Did you have to transport everything to Griffith Park for a second time?**

Yes, the scene was re-staged, I don't remember where but likely Griffith Park. It wasn't in the original location though, down in that gully I mentioned [preceding photos]. All the shots were tight so you couldn't really tell that it was a different day or where it was.



The crash and explosion scenes (left) and the rescue scenes (right) were filmed on two different days:

Crash and explosion on Dec 28, 1982.

Rescue on Jan 5, 1983.

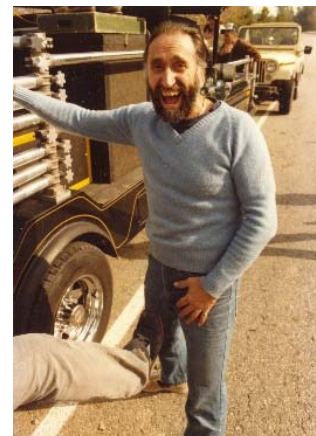
On the second day, the scene was re-staged in a different location.

**Did you use one "good" Cadillac Seville and a "junk" Seville as a picture car for Julia, or did you just destroy the one she actually drove in the scene before the explosion?**

Yes, there was a "good" and a "junk" car, painted to match.

**Besides your terrific photos from Julia's exploding car [preceding page], I already came across a set photo of the preparations of that scene years ago. The Giobertis' Jeep is visible on Zoo Drive. Can you identify the crew member in this photo on the right?**

I think he was grips or electric but could be transportation/teamsters. He's familiar but I don't remember his name; other than heads of the departments, I had little contact with individual crew members other than just casually. I was friendly though with the three people in both the camera and sound departments as I had to interact with them. He could have been additional camera crew as he's leaning on a camera truck, but that was also grip territory. They would put extra people on for only the day sometimes. Based on the position of the other leg in the picture, he's probably transportation and playing a game of *Hacky Sack*. Or some joker's threatening to do him some personal harm.





**Which special scene or scenes do you remember the most besides the crash and explosion of Julia's car?**

The day at the bridge in Big Tujunga Canyon was very memorable. Of course, this is where Denault meets Richard and gets thrown off the bridge [in *Ultimatums* (episode 38 <2.20>)]. And the Ashbourne house in South Pasadena as you'll see later.

The bridge is here: Tujunga Canyon Road.

I ride my motorcycle through this route several times a year. It goes through the Angeles National Forest which is very beautiful. Sometimes when I take another rider with me who hasn't heard the story, I'll stop at that bridge and tell them about the day we shot that scene.



**I read in your production reports that Jane Wyman was out sick a few days when *The Odyssey* (episode 37 <2.19>) was filmed. Do you remember how difficult it was to reschedule on such short notice and, on at least one shooting day, film scenes from the following episode instead?**

I don't remember that. You never know; they could have also been doing contract negotiations which is when some actors get "sick".



**When Denault (E.G. Marshall) fell to his death from the bridge in episode 38 <2.20>, Bruce Barbour and Dar Robinson were listed as stunt performers in the scene. What exactly did they do?**

Dar Robinson was the stunt coordinator and performed the fall. He arrived with his crew, and after the main scene was shot with the regular actors, during lunch they set up a big foam bag in the river bed below the bridge. There were several cameras, and they got it all in one take after lunch.



The dramatic bridge scene was filmed on Friday, Jan 14, 1983.

**After Denault's death scene was shot on the bridge in Tujunga, you moved to Pasadena to film a scene in Henri Denault's office. The production documents do not give away the exact location. Do you remember where you filmed it, at least if it was a private residence, a hotel or some other business building?**

I don't remember that.

But I'll tell you a very odd story about another of the private residences we used. In *Love Honor and Obey* (episode 35 <2.17>) for the McKay "garden party", it was shot at a house in South Pasadena at 2040 Ashbourne Drive (not 1040 as shown on the PR). We used that location several times.

One of my jobs as the *DGA* trainee or as we liked to say, the "3<sup>rd</sup> AD", so as to maintain some dignity, was to manage stray people and noises at the location site. One of the days we were there must have been "gardener day" on the street because there were at least two gardeners working with noisy lawn mowers and leaf blowers. What I'd do was to get an ice cream bar and a soda from the caterers and take it over to them. That would buy us a five or ten minute break where we could usually get the shot.

But that wasn't the odd thing. Twenty - five years later, after having not given any thought to that house since then, and while operating my own home entertainment system installation business, I was asked by a general contractor I knew to provide a quotation on a whole - house lighting control system for a house he was remodeling in South Pasadena. You see where the story's going... So I get the address and drive out there to meet him, and immediately the house looks very familiar. I'm thinking this would be too much of a coincidence since that's the only house in South Pasadena I've ever been to or worked on, but walking through the house and especially the back yard where our scenes were filmed, I was struck by how eerily familiar it was.



The McKay House while filming *Falcon Crest* in the early 1980's (above) and nowadays (below).



A few days later I dug out my *Falcon Crest* notes and PR's and lo and behold, it was the very same house. Blew me away. Today it's owned by a very successful restaurant entrepreneur who owns a huge chain of Chinese restaurants around the world.

I ended up doing a very large installation of lighting, music, televisions and home theater systems over about five years for them. But every time I was there and especially when I was out in the back yard I thought about the days we spent filming there, those several decades earlier. Weird Hollywood coincidence, huh?

Another of these weird coincidences was 10560 Wilshire Boulevard in West Los Angeles. We used a pent-house condo there, I don't remember the episode or where it was supposed to be but again, years later I had a client in that same building, Mr. Gil Cates, who was a movie producer and produced the *Academy Awards* from 1990 to 2008. He got a kick out of me telling him about shooting *Falcon Crest* in that same building some decades earlier. He's credited for recruiting Billy Crystal to be the host of the *Oscars*, among other things. Billy also happened to be my client for about thirty years for his home systems.

**In *Maelstrom* (episode 39 <2.21>), Lance and Cole had a fight in the winery, filmed at *Brookside Winery* in Ontario, CA. The call sheet and production reports list Dick Ziker as stunt coordinator and Glenn Wilder und Don Pulford as stunt doubles for Lorenzo and Billy respectively. I carefully rewatched the scene, but it appears to me that Lorenzo and Billy did everything on their own. I also remember that Billy once told me how much fun he had doing the fight scene with Lorenzo. Did the actors decide not to make use of the stuntmen at all in this segment?**

I can't say for this particular scene, other than probably. I do remember that Billy and Lorenzo did most of their own fight scenes. They weren't overly friendly with each other, not unfriendly, but not "pals", as they had a little rivalry going on, but they loved taking off their shirts for the camera — so it was more the fun of the moment.



They did not need stuntmen, they fought on their own:  
Lorenzo Lamas and Billy Moses in the fight scene in the *Falcon Crest Winery Building* (episode 39 <2.21>).

**The final episode of season 2 had the great confession alternatives... with many cast members confessing to the murder of Carlo Agretti. The shooting schedule called for a teleprompter to be on the set for the confession scenes. Do you know why? So the cast members did not get the full script to keep the cliffhanger as secret as possible and had to play the scene spontaneously by reading their lines from the teleprompter?**

You may know they did a similar thing for the *Who Shot J.R.?* episode of *Dallas* [although often called that, the actual title is *Who Done It?*] around the same time. Larry [Hagman] was also my client at the time, where I did all the music & TV systems for his Malibu house, and he described the same procedure to me. No one had the scripts ahead of time, it was all kept very secret, every one of the main cast members was filmed "shooting" J.R., and no one knew ahead of time who was going to turn out to be the murderer. He showed me a funny out-take reel that had been put together afterwards where each of the shootings were shown in quick succession then the last shot cuts to J.R. The prop man had rigged up a gag vest with multiple "bullet holes" and on cue water sprayed from about a dozen holes in the vest while "J.R." looked shocked. It was hysterical.

*Falcon Crest* did the pretty much same thing for the confession scenes minus the vest. Again there was lots of secrecy and all of the key players were filmed confessing. As I recall, they all filed in one-by-one and read the lines on the prompter for the scene. I wasn't kept "in the loop" as far as the production logistics, so I probably wouldn't have known what was going on. I had my hands full just getting the actors to their places on time.

**When did you know about the cliffhanger of the second season in episode 40 <2.22> and who Carlo Agretti's murderer was? Did anyone from the cast and crew members have any input in revealing Julia Cumson as Carlo's killer? Do you remember when the persons in charge decided that Julia would be the murderess?**

The reality is the cast and crew don't really follow the stories. Or even know what's going on in the different story threads. Because everything is shot out of sequence, even the cast members often had little understanding of exactly where the story was at the moment. They understood it generally but didn't follow it closely. It was the producers' and directors' jobs to maintain the continuity and keep the story on track. I saw this play out a couple of times out on location where some fan would show up and ask a certain actor what was happening with this or that storyline or with their character or if so-and-so was ever going to be arrested, etc., and the actor would shrug and say they had no idea. Some people believe these stories are real. Larry (Hagman) told me about a close call he had once with a crazed fan after J.R. had become such a national villain. After that, even though he had a bodyguard he took to carrying a small pistol inside his costume when working in character and on location as J.R. True story.

In reality, the actors just memorized the dialog, then came in and ran the scenes with the other actors. They didn't discuss the stories or their "motivation" that I ever saw. They might rehearse a scene off camera ahead of a take and work out a piece of business, but other than that, they would have only a vague idea of where the story was at. Early on I read a couple of the scripts, but it became irrelevant, and I didn't follow it much. Only when I watched a finished episode on TV did I really understand what was happening.

So no, the cast had no input, and I don't think I knew who the murderer was until everyone else did. I know it's disappointing to find out that this is all fake, but such was the reality of it.



Screen captures of the confession scene in episode 40 <2.22>.

***Falcon Crest* was famous for its rotating guest star policy. We have quite a number of seasonal bibles and documents from the casting department. Some papers indicate that the producers tried to lure many other celebrities into the guest cast; e.g. Richard Burton as one of the ex-husbands of Lana Turner's character in season 2; also Mia Farrow and Lauren Bacall for season 3. The season 3 bible never defined any roles for these actresses though. Do you know more about these ideas, and were there any other famous names discussed for special guest appearances at the time?**

No, I was very far removed from that part of the action.

**If you kept watching after you left, what did you think about the changes in later seasons?**

I didn't follow it; I was on to other things.

**We have a few floor plans of the sets, but we are still looking for the original upstairs hall of Angela's Victorian Mansion and for the original Gioberti House master bedroom. Do you happen to have copies of those floor plans and / or elevation drawings?**

No, sorry, you got everything I had except for the cast & crew lists. We were pretty much "forbidden" from doing any of our own photography. They regularly had their own publicity photographer on the set using a blimped (silent) *Nikon* which I found interesting.

**Which other shows did you work on besides *Falcon Crest* and what are your current projects?**

I worked on several pilots that didn't get picked up (hence no *IMDb* credits for those), but I also did other shows, mostly variety and awards. I worked on the *Academy Awards* several times and the *AFI Lifetime Achievement Awards* for Billy Wilder in 1986.

In 1985 I worked for "Hef" at the *Playboy Channel*. I was mostly an executive but was also an AD for some of the music videos that *Playboy* was doing at the time that were so popular in the '80's. Here I worked as a "real" AD, so I had a lot more responsibility for running the set, etc. That was a lot of fun and very eye-opening. Another one of my jobs there was to give tours of the Mansion which could get interesting.

While I was doing shows, I was also building up my specialty home electronics business as I was often asked by the various directors and producers I was meeting to build systems for them. At some point that business took off and in mid-1986 I decided to open an office and do it full time. We did well for several decades and had many interesting clients all over the world until I finally sold the business in 2016. I'm currently retired although I still do a little consulting, am happily married and living the dream in Los Angeles. I still have two bottles of *Falcon Crest* wine; one a prop bottle full of grape juice



and another of *Chardonnay*. I'd be afraid to open either of them.

I also include a picture of Larry [Hagman] and I from the 1989 *Malibu Chili Cook Off*, where he was the Grand Marshal. I'm 34 in that picture, and he's drinking some of the tequila I had stashed under the bar in my chili booth.