

It's still the 'Bain' of Barbara's 10-year marriage to Martin Landau

Liz Taylor didn't want my husband

Most people today would consider Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor the Royal Couple of motion pictures. And Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne most certainly are The Mr. and Mrs. of the legitimate theater. Television has now entered the golden era, for it too has its dramatic Royal Couple – Martin Landau and Barbara Bain, stars of *Mission: Impossible*.

"A large segment of our viewers aren't even aware that we're married," explains Martin. "You should read some of Barbara's fan mail!"

"And what about your mail?" asks Barbara, her deep blue eyes flashing devilishly. "All those girls writing to say they dream about you every night, can't live without you. What about those?"

"Let's not overlook your proposals," counters Martin.

"But they're all from little boys between 9 and 11," muses Barbara. "I'm their first crush – the first woman in their lives – unless, of course, little boys of today get involved while they're still in the cradle."

"Boys of all ages get your message, sweetheart," exclaims Martin, moving restlessly around the cozy den of their lovely West Los Angeles home. "Why, at the National Association of Broadcasters Convention, I spotted two delegates – certainly not little boys – standing in front of an enormous color photo of you. As I walked over, I heard one say, 'That chick drives me crazy.' The other said, 'If I have only one life to live, let me live it with a blonde like that!'"

"Darling, you're making that up!"

"I'm not. It's true," swears Martin.

"Why, how absolutely lovely!" laughs Barbara heartily. "What else did they have to say about me?"

"Not a thing. I told them that after 10 years of marriage, you were still driving me crazy."

"Do I really, darling?"

"You do. And you know it."

This wacky repartee between the Landaus attests to the solidity of their wonderfully warm marriage.

"A number of our friends have asked what we can possibly find to talk about at home after working together all day," explains Barbara. "Now, I honestly can't tell you what we do talk about; but talk we do. Constantly!"

"Let's face it, sweetheart," interrupts Martin, "we've been talking ever since we exchanged I do's."

"I sometimes think we got married just so we could continue our conversations far into the night," reasons Mrs. L.

"That's what you think!" exclaims Mr. L., conjuring up a lecherous grin.

Martin (Barbara insists that hubby gets first billing, even in private life) and Barbara claim to be living repudiation of the old adage: "First impressions are lasting impressions." Their historic encounter took place in 1956 when Barbara, who was attempting to support herself in New York and pay for dancing and dramatic lessons by modeling, showed up at an acting class directed by Martin.

"I took one look and immediately disliked her. First of all, she was late for class. No one seriously interested in the theater is ever late," thunders Martin. "Secondly, she was dressed too well. White gloves, high heels, even a hat. And, her makeup was too much, too correct. What I thought was, 'There's a girl who's come to join the class not because she wants to be an actress, but because she thinks it's the smart thing to do.' But I didn't know she'd just rushed over from a photographic session."

"You could have asked?" she teases.

"I wasn't interested," he retorts.

"I certainly wasn't interested in you," counters Barbara. "I took one look at Martin and thought to myself, 'Now, there's a real bum.' You see, he was wearing black corduroy pants, black corduroy jacket, and he

even seemed to have a black corduroy face. His hair was every which way. And there was an air of arrogance about him I couldn't stand."

"That wasn't arrogance," corrects Martin, "That was naked hostility."

"Is that what it was?" laughs Barbara. "I didn't know. I'd never seen it so naked before."

"I was an angry young man, dedicated to my art, and being eaten alive inside because I wasn't working at my profession. That's enough to make anyone hostile."

A few weeks after this dislike-at-first-sight meeting, they bumped into each other at a party.

"Literally bumped," recalls Martin. "The place was so dimly lit I had trouble seeing myself."

"You didn't bump into me – you crashed into me! Practically knocked me off my feet. Come to think of it, you did. I was a funny thing; there he was wearing his old black corduroy pants and jacket, but something was different. Something had happened."

"What happened was we started talking and we've been at it ever since," says Martin as he shifts his lean 6' 2" frame in the barrel-back leather chair. "Of course, the fact that neither of us had a job didn't stop us from getting married."

"Right after the ceremony, we had to rush off. No, not off on a honeymoon, but off in opposite directions. Martin had to go downtown to the unemployment office to pick up his check. I had to go uptown on an interview for a modeling job, which I didn't get."

"Most of our friends were budding writers, actors, directors. Budding meant out of work," elaborates Martin. "But we were busy. I'd say we were the busiest out-of-work people in New York City. You see, we all had a common enemy – starvation. To keep our minds off our stomachs, we'd get together and talk about plays and movies. We'd read scripts. We'd act scenes and eat scenes. Shelley Berman, even though he was working, was a part of the group."

In their tastefully decorated home (Barbara's handiwork), the theater's influence is everywhere. The shelves in the den, the

recreation room, the hallways are all bulging with books on and about the theater. They have biographies and autobiographies of all of the theater's giants, the complete works of just about every major dramatist and, of course, the writings and teachings of Stanislavski, their avowed leader. Old playbills and theater posters, attractively mounted and framed, dot the walls throughout the house. The Landaus have two daughters – Susan, 6, and Juliet, 2 – and even in their rooms there is a touch of the theater in a delightful series of sketches and prints of Peter Pan portrayed by Maude Adams, Eve Le Gallienne and Mary Martin.

"Our honeymoon was in the truest tradition of the theater," reports Barbara, who not only has looks and brains but a vibrant personality that ranges from lofty regality to outlandish clowning – all in the gentle span of a smile. "We toured the country for eight months with Edward G. Robinson in *Middle Of The Night*. When we played Los Angeles, Alfred Hitchcock came to see the show. The very next morning he signed Martin for the role of the menacing gunman in *North By Northwest*. When the film was completed we sent our trunks back to New York; but even before we could get reservations on a plane, Lewis Milestone called Martin for a role in *Pork Chop Hill*."

Born and raised in the heart of bustling New York, the 36-year-old Landau is an intense, highly nervous, fidgeting, finger-tapping man. You can believe him when he says he has to force himself to relax. Fortunately he has found a way.

"Three years ago, when we finally decided that Hollywood was going to be our home base ..."

"We'd been out here several years," interrupts Barbara, "but because we never had any feeling of permanency, we always rented places on a monthly basis. To show you how insecure we were, we used to tell each other not to waste money on a six-pack!"

"As I started to say," continues Martin, giving his wife a menacing look, "three years ago we finally decided to buy a home. When Barbara saw this place she fell madly in love with its old English look, its beamed ceilings. Me? I fell in love with the pool table that went

with the place. Now, when I get home at night, I unwind over that pool table."

Yet it there is one thing Chicago-born Barbara Bain Landau knows for sure, it is that she's married to an actor of tremendous talent and scope. Her assessment isn't just wifely pride. It is an opinion shared by the toughest critics from coast to coast, who have praised Martin from his Broadway debut in *Detective Story* to his numerous television appearances in *Playhouse 90*, *The U.S. Steel Hour*, and other prestige dramatic shows. And they praised him for his varied movie roles in *Cleopatra*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* and *Hallelujah Trail* – his howlingly successful comedy caper as the grunting Indian.

Barbara, whose television roles have run the gamut of dumb blonde to sultry siren, thinks of herself first as Mrs. Landau, wife and mother, then as Barbara Bain the actress. She proved this when she shelved her own career for 18 months to accompany Martin to Rome for most of the filming of *Cleopatra*.

"You remember all those headlines about the Taylor-Burton romance?" asks Barbara. "Well, every morning when Martin would leave for the studio, my neighbors in the building where we lived would call out, ' You won't see him again. Leet-za will get him!' And then, when he'd come home, they'd shout, ' Ah, your husband really loves you. Leet-za no get him today.' Every night Martin came home, and he kept coming home. I began to lose face with my neighbors. And I also began to get mad. Why didn' t Leetza get him? One night I asked Martin what Elizabeth had said to him that day. ' Nothing.' he answered. ' Don't think she even noticed me.' Right there and then I knew that Elizabeth Taylor was really, truly and deeply in love with Richard Burton: for if she hadn't been, she most surely would have noticed my husband. I'm not the least bit surprised that girls write to say they dream about him. He's that kind of man."

And he must certainly be, for even when little Susan Landau watched *Mission: Impossible* and sees her daddy kissing another woman, she's absolutely beside herself with jealousy. "When I kiss another man on the show," says Barbara, "she pays no attention at all, or if she does, her comment generally runs something like, ' Oh, Daddy's nicer.' "

Asked why after vowing never to do a television series he had agreed to do *Mission*, Martin explains: "At the risk of sounding terribly corny, I've always been more interested in my growth as an actor than in the growth of my bank account. I've religiously turned down series because I feel playing one character week after week is like treading water – you get nowhere. But in our show, while I play one character, that character is called upon each week to assume the identity of another. It's like being in a repertory company.

"Now, I'm not belittling actors who do play the same role month after month, sometimes even year after year. It's great for them, but it would never do for me. It would kill me, literally kill me."

"Last year Martin was only going to guest on four of the shows and ended up doing 26 episodes. I used to call him the ' irresident guest star' ," laughs Barbara, who just win an Emmy as Best Actress in a TV series for her continuing role in *Mission: Impossible* on CBS.

"You could say I was the Monty Woolly of television," reasons Martin. "I was the guest who came for the season!"

Do the Landaus have a magic formula for their obviously blissful union which has weathered so many seasons?

"We spend a lot of time laughing," says Mr. Landau.

"And, talking," adds Mrs. Landau. "And of course a lot of loving. A lot of loving."

Not a bad formula – laughing, talking and lots o' lovin'. Married folks everywhere take note: A happy marriage can be a mission possible.