

Barbara Bain and Martin Landau

## Luna Love Story

In person, Barbara Bain is not at all like Cinnamon Carter, the supersophisticated spy she portrayed on *Mission: Impossible* or the equally as cool Dr. Helena Russell on *Space: 1999*. She's a warm, charming and beautiful woman with an almost regal poise that makes it easy to believe that she got her start as a high fashion model for such superslick magazines as *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle*.

Her husband and co-star on *Space: 1999*, Martin Landau, is a barely contained bundle of energy – drumming his finger on a chair, doodling, jumping up to punctuate a sentence with his mobile body – who's a great contrast to his wife who serenely sat working on an intricate needlepoint design throughout the interview.

The Landaus were in New York to talk about their science fiction series for ITC, *Space: 1999*.

*Space: 1999* takes place twenty-five years in the future. A group of scientists is now living on the moon doing space research. At this time, earth is conveniently shipping all its atomic waste (atomic power now "runs" the world) to the moon and burying it on the dark side. Some mysterious deaths occur and the station's Commander Koenig (Landau), assisted by Dr. Russell (Bain), sets out to find out why. They realize that somehow all that atomic waste has become a giant bomb. Before they can escape, the "bomb" explodes. But instead of shattering the moon to smithereens, the blast sends the moon rocketing out of its orbit around the earth and hurtling across outer space. The series revolves around the adventures of the 311 survivors of the blast.

The Landau, to the best of our knowledge, are now the only husband-wife team starring in a television series. "How did you like working together?" I asked.

"We wouldn't have done it if we didn't like it." Barbara answered simply.

"When we didn't work together," Martin pointed out, "I hardly got a chance to see Barbara and the girls. I was always traveling. So we decided to look around for something we could do together."

"Remember," Barbara quietly added, "We worked together on *Mission*, and so we knew what it would be like."

"Do you ever argue?"

"All the time," she laughed.

"Loudly!" interjected Martin.

After almost nineteen years of marriage, the Landaus have reached the point where they complete each other's sentences. And sometimes they both talk at the same time. It was a little rough on me, but they seemed to be having a good time.

"What about your children, Julie and Susan? How do they feel about their parents being stars?"

"I can't really presume to talk for them," Barbara explained, "but I can remember when they were little girls, Susan would want to stay up and watch *Mission*. After only a few minutes she'd fall asleep, but in the morning when she'd wake up, she'd look at me and say, ' Mommy, you were wonderful.' Isn't that cute?" Barbara smiled fondly, and Martin just sat there beaming. Talking about their children is obviously a subject close to their hearts.

"Let me tell you this story," continued Barbara. "The girls got used to seeing us on our television set. And Mel Brooks, who's a dear, dear friend of ours, invited us over with the children one night. He was on his television set. The girls actually grew up thinking that it was normal. We were on our television set, Mel was on his television set, then everyone must be on their own television."

"You must have a lot of fans. Do you mind signing autographs?"

"Not at all!" answered Barbara promptly.

"In fact, we still get fan mail. It seems to follow us around the world. We even once got a letter simply marked, 'Martin Landau, Hollywood' and it got to us!"

"Of course," said Barbara, "if somebody comes up to you when you have a mouthful of food at a restaurant, you're less than thrilled."

"I once had a guy come up to me when I was sleeping on a plane," remembered Martin. "I was out cold, and this guy starts judo chopping away at my shoulder. When I finally opened my eyes, he says, 'I hope I didn't disturb you!'"

"It must have been a big decision to pack up everything and go to England for almost two years. Was it very difficult living and working there?"

"Well, the climate is foggy and chilly, but we had a great time," enthused Barbara. "The only things that were really disconcerting were the tea breaks."

"Tea breaks at the set?" I echoed.

"Ten in the morning and three-thirty in the afternoon," piped Martin. "A tea trolley would come around and everything would stop. I wouldn't matter whether we were in the middle of filming a scene –"

"Anything!" Barbara added. "Everything stopped for a 'cupa.'"

"The first time it happened, Barbara and I were in the middle of this scene and all of a sudden nobody was there but us," Martin continues, seemingly unaware of his wife's interjections.

"We felt pretty silly acting in front of a camera with no one behind it," smiled Barbara.

There was one last thing we wanted to know. At the time the Landaus had left *Mission: Impossible*, a story appeared in various magazines that Martin had wanted more money, the producers refused, and that Barbara had left the show in protest.

"Not true!" they both chimed.

"I wanted out," said Martin. "I had originally been asked to do one guest appearance. It had nothing to do with Barbara, who was already set as a regular. A funny aside – the original name of the character I was to play was Martin Hand. When they signed me they changed it to Rollin Hand (which it stayed: ed.). You know why?"

Because it fit in the same number of letter spaces on the typed script! Anyway, I stayed on and in three seasons did 80 'guest' appearances. Then there was a change of management. Desilu was bought out. Some power changes were made, and I thought the show would have to change, too."

"We loved doing the show," added Barbara fiercely. "We were like a family, and we really cared. It was fabulous fun doing it."

"Anyway, before I know it – I was on vacation – I read in the papers that I'm refusing to return because I wanted more money. I just wanted out. Pretty soon, we were cast as the villains."

Barbara: "Nobody ever even talked to me and then we started reading, 'If Landau doesn't come back, neither will Bain.'"

"It was very upsetting," said Martin grimly.

"Why didn't you ever tell your side of the story?" I asked.

"Nobody ever asked," they said simply. "And before you knew it, we were in litigation."

"I learned a lot of law spending a whole year sitting in a lawyer's office," Barbara said.

"One of the reasons we went with *Space: 1999* and not some of the other shows that were offered to us – basically remakes of Mr. and Mrs. North, McMillan and Wife or rip-offs of shows already on the air," explained Martin, "was that we felt that it would be good."

"Everything was done right," chimed in Barbara.

"It's the most expensive series ever made! It cost over \$270,000 an episode over there! Here it would have cost at least \$400,000 an episode and the most expensive series here is done for \$250,000." Martin rattled the figures off.

"The costumes were designed by Rudi Gernreich (ed: the futuristic designer also responsible for the topless bathing suit), the space effects were by Brian Johnson who did *2001*," said Barbara.

"There's nothing halfway or cheap about this series. Even on a big screen, like you saw at the screening, there are no peeling walls or cutaway sets."

"Did you like it?" they asked me anxiously.

I like it, and I liked them, as we said  
goodnight. They had a dinner engagement and  
the hour was late. And as I walked back down  
to the lobby from their suite at the Regency,

the elevator operator looked at me and it was  
as if she had read my mind when she said,  
"the Landaus are just the nicest people."