

“Oh, ugly me...”

By Emily Martin

That’s what Barbara Bain said to herself over and over during those terrible years

Young Barbara Bain looked with satisfaction at the mass of jars and bottles on her dressing table. Like soldiers, they were mar-tialed row on row, ready to attack the lack of glamour which Barbara considered her most persistent enemy.

She was 14 years old, and that night she was going to her first real, honest-to-goodness prom – with a high school senior, yet. Therefore, if she had to invest her entire life’s savings (and she’d already done that), she was going to look beautiful, chic, glamorous and sophisticated for at least one evening. Barbara was sure of it. After all, with the better part of \$30 worth of beauty preparations on her face, how could she look any other way?

Barbara, the sexy elegant, thoroughly lovely Cinnamon Carter of Mission Impossible, reminisced about her teenage beauty traumas recently at she sat in a makeup room at Desilu studios putting away the pinkish lipstick she’d been applying. She was wearing a shoulder-length, gold blonde wig over her own pale caramel hair. A makeup man had just given her face his expert attention, dusting it delicately with a light shade of powder, deftly retouching her eyebrows and eyelashes and brushing the cheeks with a hint of rouge.

With the critical eye of a former high-fashion model, Barbara examined the effect in the mirror. Her beauty was brilliantly understated. One thing which could never be underscored is Barbara’s acting ability.

In the business for ten years, she can board over 100 credits. Married to actor Martin Landau, Barbara was content to be a wife, mother and part-time actress. As fate would have it, this plan could not be carried out. When her husband’s career took new dimen-

sions in 1959, they moved to the West Coast. Here, Barbara struck up an acquaintance with Bruce Geller, creator of Mission: Impossible, who believed that Barbara had the impeccable qualities for the role of Cinnamon Carter. In Bob’s own words it is summed up: “I wanted a sexy broad who was still very much a lady. Barbara was perfect for that character.” To the delight of many TV viewers, perfect she was and is.

Yes, Barbara may underestimate her talent and beauty, but witnessing her loveliness in the makeup room she looked exactly right.

But, the look hadn’t come easily. For years, while she was growing up, she’d looked exactly wrong, and the more she tried to improve herself, the worse she got.

When today’s chic Barbara Bain had been 14 she was an overly-frilly, overly-made-up fright. Yes, that was the word for it. A fright. Yet, through the mistakes she made then, she learned to be the stylish and lovely actress she is today.

“When I was growing up, I was very tall and thin,” Barbara remembers, “and I was even taller and thinner than I thought I was. But I wanted so badly to be glamorous. I’d go to the movies and see the stars and wish desperately that I could look just like them. When I was still too young to wear lipstick, I’d get cinnamon drops –you know those little red candy hearts- and paint my lips with them. The color didn’t last very long, but while it did, I felt a lot better.”

Although Barbara received a fan letter not long ago which was intended for her but addressed simply to „the most beautiful woman in the world,“ there were long-gone days when she wondered if she weren’t just the opposite. When she looked in the mirror she sometimes cried – not from pure despair, but in hopes she’d grow to look like Rita Hayworth.

At the movies when Miss Hayworth cried, she did it so exquisitely. Wide-eyed, as the camera moved for a dramatic close-up, Rita wept on beautifully shaped crystalline tear which slid down her smooth cheek without disturbing her makeup. Oh, how Barbara wished she could cry like that! The Hayworth technique for shedding tears would be such an asset in times of tragedy. But, unfortunately, every time Barbara cried her eyes and nose grew red and her face crumpled in an unattractive manner.

Even when she didn't feel like crying, she'd sometimes give it a try in front of the mirror hoping she could coax one gem of a tear out of wide eyes through sheer determination. But she couldn't.

"Oh, well." Barbara consoled herself, "when I grow up it will be different. By the time I'm grown, maybe I can cry like Rita Hayworth."

When Barbara was 14, she faced the most exciting prospect of her life (to that point). A senior, a real, live, genuine high school senior had invited her to a real, honest-to-goodness, genuine prom!

For the occasion Barbara chose a blue tulle dress festooned with bows. "It was a symphony of blue," Barbara recalls now with a trace of horror. "It had too much of everything."

Then, to insure her perfection from head to toe, Barbara withdrew her entire life savings from the bank -30\$- and spent it all, every penny, on creams and cosmetics. She got a little of everything that promised glamour and put most of it on her face.

"I was just a mess," she says. "I was so over made-up, I must have scared people. My mother told me, as she often did, that I had on too much makeup, but of course I didn't believe her. My mother was a beautiful woman, a woman with perfect features, so she wore very little makeup. She didn't need it."

In order to be ready in time, Barbara began to dress for the dance at two o'clock in the afternoon. As she perfumed and powdered her person and slipped into grown-up nylons, she spun fantasies about the evening. An older man! To go to a prom was exciting

enough, but to go with a senior - well, that was the ultimate. Her date wasn't exactly Walter Pidgeon, but he was definitely an older man, so he absolutely had to be suave. Right?

But, when the older man called for Barbara that night, her fantasy evaporated in consternation. The boy who stood at the threshold was a high school senior all right, an older man, but suave? Hardly.

As he greeted Barbara, he tugged with one hand at his opposite coat sleeve which lacked several inches of reaching his wrist. Obviously, he'd outgrown his only suit but was still wearing it. He looked embarrassed.

Excitement oozed out of Barbara like air out of a balloon. She felt deflated. But, she reminded herself courageously, the prom was still ahead with an orchestra playing romantic tunes and a liveried doorman to help her from a limousine. The limousine, however, turned out to be an elderly automobile already bulging with passengers.

"I think six couples went to the prom in that car," Barbara laughs. "I was so mad! My dress was crushed, and riding with so many people certainly wasn't romantic. In fact, the trip to the hotel was a nightmare. At one point when we stopped for a light the car wouldn't start up again so we all had to get out and push it."

On the other hand, the hotel itself was imposing, and sure enough a uniformed doorman stood by to open the door for the jampacked students.

"But," Barbara continues, "when he tried to open the automobile door for us, the handle came off in his hand. I wanted to die!"

The evening, needless to say, was ruined. No matter what the orchestra played, the prom had lost its glory and throughout long, miserable hours painted, powdered and perfumed Barbara and date danced in awkward misery.

When the dance was over and the glum couple was once again on the threshold of Barbara's home, her date made a last stab at sophistication. Uncertain how to end the evening otherwise, he tried to kiss the 14-year-old girl. Barbara was appalled, but her enthusiasm for the movies came to her rescue.

From some picture she'd seen which had suave dalliance as its theme, she recalled a line. "Really," she said with hauteur and a trace of a British accent, "I'd rather you wouldn't."

Had someone once said that to Glenn Ford? Barbara couldn't be sure, but the line served its purpose. Her escort retreated, mumbling what passed for "good night."

When she finally reached her room Barbara wished – oh, how she wished – she could cry like Rita Hayworth. As she sniffed in red-eyed disappointment, she consoled her reflection in the mirror. "Never mind. When you grow up, you can cry pretty."

Happily, perhaps, Barbara never found out what her date thought of her efforts at glamour. Before long, even she could fathom that she'd gone a little bit overboard with the tulle, bows and makeup.

"I designed my next prom dress," Barbara says, "and made it. It was much better, very pretty really, with a white lace top over emerald green and a tulle skirt."

Further, Barbara began to feel at ease in high-heeled shoes but this, too, came only after painful humiliation.

"When I got the my first high heels," she recalls, "I got the very highest I could find. Then I practiced walking on them in the house. After I finally thought I could walk in them without breaking my neck, I decided to wear them on a date. Well, I'd done all of my practicing indoors on carpets, and when I set my foot on the stairs going out, I almost fell down. The smooth, slick surface nearly threw me – literally. I was so conscious of my shoes, I spent the entire evening staring at my toes. My date noticed. As he bid me good-night, he said, 'Those really are nice shoes.'"

Barbara blushed furiously and once again wished she could "cry pretty" like Rita Hayworth.

On Friday nights in Barbara's neighborhood, boys and girls in their very teens went to the movies in groups. The girls in one group and the boys in another, but before the show was over the lucky ones paired into couples. "He looked at me," or "He walked me home," or "I think maybe he likes me" – these were the promising entries peppering the diary which Barbara kept religiously.

One day, with the aim of captivating all the "he's" who "looked at," "walked home with" or "liked," Barbara, along with five girl friends, bleached her hair. Using generous portions of peroxide and ammonia, the girls soaked their heads until their locks were uneven shades of gold and the hairbrush they'd left in the bleaching solution had melted. The destruction of the hairbrush vaguely alarmed deep thinkers in the crowd, but in general the girls were delighted with the results of their daring. If blondes really did have more fun, Barbara and her friends were in for a whale of a time.

Confidently, they walked to the corner where the bachelor set from their high school congregated. What, they wondered, would the boys say? "What the boys said," Barbara relates, "Was 'Yuk.' They thought we looked awful. Which we did. And when we got home, our parents said a good deal more. By the next day, everyone of us had been to a beauty shop to have our hair dyed back to its original shade."

Fortunately, Barbara was a very bright girl who learned through her mistakes.