



Sun-Sentinel

TV BOOK

Oct. 24-30, 1993

Lost Love

Donna Mills plays a journalist haunted by the mysterious disappearance of her one true love in the four-hour miniseries, *Barbara Taylor Bradford's Remember*.

CONTINENTAL CABLEVISION EDITION

Mills' career wasn't tied up in 'Knots' role

By DEBORAH WILKER
Music Writer

The first thing you should know about Donna Mills is that she's nice. Very nice.

But how can this be? Isn't this the same person who didn't just play, but really seemed to be nasty Abby Cunningham for nine vengeful seasons on *Knots Landing*?

"It was great fun," she says, acknowledging that the difference between Donna and Abby has been brought to her attention more than once.

Still Mills doesn't tire of it. She knows it's an endorsement of her acting, which gets a workout most every sweeps period. She has starred in more than two dozen TV movies during the years, playing everything from wry farce (*The World's Oldest Living Bridesmaid*) to a wrongly accused housewife (*False Arrest*) and a pair of justice-seeking moms (*In My Daughter's Name*, *Runaway Father*).

Now she's ready for romance and intrigue as the star of *Barbara Taylor Bradford's Remember*, a lush NBC miniseries starting tonight. She plays Nicky Wells, a globe-trotting TV reporter who is haunted by the mysterious disappearance of her one true love.

And of course there was lusty, husband-stealing, baby-snatching, gold-digging Abby — a role that was so indelible, Mills simply had to leave it.

"I just began to feel that one should not stay too long at the fair," Mills said during a recent telephone interview. "There were a lot of other things I wanted to do."

By leaving in 1989 when the show was still hot, Mills went out on top, then purposefully forged less glamorous identities with her TV movies.

But earlier this year when *Knots Landing* was finally wrapping for good after 14 seasons, producers asked her to return, and Mills graciously obliged. The move was as welcome as it was surprising. Not



Donna Mills pairs with Stephen Collins in *Barbara Taylor's Remember*, a two-night miniseries on NBC.

NBC photo

ON TV

Program: *Barbara Taylor Bradford's Remember*

Starring: Donna Mills

Airs: 9 tonight and Monday on WTVJ-Ch. 4, WPTV-Ch. 5

many actors would willingly move backward after they had worked so hard to move on.

"I really wouldn't have missed it," she said of the three-hour finale that aired May 13. "When [producer] David [Jacobs] called me, and said 'this is the way I want to end it,' I said 'that's perfect.' It was so 'Knotsian' — with Abby moving back in next to Gary.

"I just felt like that show had been very, very good to me. The only thing was, two days before shooting, I suddenly said S---!, can I still play her?"

"I hadn't played her in three years. But I found it was like riding a bicycle. You just get on and you do it. It was like I'd been gone a weekend."

Since her TV movies are regularly among the highest rated (a recent re-airing of *In My Daughter's Name* made the weekly Top 5), Mills now runs her own production company.

"I like issue movies. When there's an issue that you can dramatize successfully and get something accomplished, I love that."

She says she is careful to separate issues and headlines. She's not into

quickie films that exploit sensational news events.

"I like stories that aren't about exceptional circumstances, or people. I like ordinary stories. Look at *Runaway Father*. That story [about a deadbeat dad and the plight of his kids] has happened to hundreds of thousands of women. You can't just pick that out of a headline and do it the next week."

Among her other projects is the upcoming ABC movie *My Name Is Kate*, about an alcoholic who endures an emotional rehabilitation. She's also shepherding *The Candace Mossler Story*, a true story from more than 30 years ago about a woman who teams with her nephew in love and murder. Mills, who turns 50 in December, says she stays fit with a strict diet and daily workouts.

Born in Chicago, Mills got her start there — first as a ballet dancer, then onstage at the Drury Lane Theatre. Soon after she was on stage in New York. Soap roles on *The Secret Storm* and *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* came next.

Mills was Clint Eastwood's girlfriend in *Play Misty for Me*, then went on to the short-lived sitcom *The Good Life*.

Knots brought her lasting friendships, she said, particularly with the young actors Tonya Crowe and Brian Austin Greene (now on *90210*) who played her kids.

In fact Greene even phones on Mother's Day, she said.

"Though he didn't call this year. I have to get after him."