

'Torchlight' marks actress's move to big screen

By FRANK BRUNI
Staff Writer

Most television stars making the transition to film play it safe at first: romantic comedy, science fiction, adventure. Not Pamela Sue Martin. This gutsy actress, familiar to most as the departed Fallon Carrington on ABC's *Dynasty*, chose to tackle the big screen with *Torchlight*, a serious drama about cocaine abuse which began its two-week test run in the Triangle Friday.

"I was inspired from personal experience and from knowing people whose lives had been destroyed by cocaine," Martin, who co-authored the film, said at a small press conference Thursday at the Radisson Plaza hotel in Raleigh. "I spoke from the heart, and I spoke what I knew about."

Indeed, the decision to film *Torchlight*, which will be released nationwide Feb. 1, was no mere whim on Martin's part. She first introduced the project four years ago and has been working on it ever since. Her commitment to complete it was one of the reasons she left the phenomenally popular *Dynasty*. "I was working on it during the series and filming it during vacations," Martin said. "I was doing too much."

Finding time to finish *Torchlight* was not the only difficulty Martin encountered in bringing her pet project to the screen. She had to switch directors in midstream, turning to Tom Wright, whose previous work had included only consultation and unit direction on other directors' projects.

"We had another director who was incompetent," the auburn-haired, rail-thin actress said, shaking her head in



Pamela Sue Martin speaks last week at a Raleigh press conference.

recollected disbelief and shooting a smile at co-star Steve Railsback and husband Manuel Rojas, both of whom also attended Thursday's conference. "We had to re-shoot scenes."

Still, Martin had the good fortune not to have to obtain financing from a major studio, a process she thinks would have presented some difficulty.

"I was able to bypass the selling procedure to some extent," Martin said with a sigh of relief. She explained that UCO International, a corporation of which Rojas is president, helped to

finance *Torchlight*. Rojas became the film's executive producer. "My husband got interested in it and in producing it," Martin said. "I have to remind him of that sometimes."

Part of what this financial independence meant was an unusual amount of creative control for Martin, the associate producer of the film. Part of what it meant was being able to put the film in theaters, and not on television sets.

"We vacillated back and forth for a while," Martin said. "It could have been for television, but I'm glad it

wasn't. Television has its limitations, and here we were able to tell it like it is. We didn't write a movie that we thought people wanted to see, we wrote a movie we wanted to tell."

Nevertheless, Martin was quick to insist the film is not sentimental. "It's not a preachy sort of thing; it's a love story," Martin said. "It's also the story of a strong woman and of a woman's survival."

The opportunity to create a female character who resists stereotypes, be they domestic or feminist, figured prominently in Martin's writing and filming *Torchlight*. The absence of just such characters on *Dynasty* was one of her chief frustrations with the show. Also dismaying to Martin was the show's population of irresponsible, petulant adults.

"If people want to watch fantasy about rich people, that's fine," Martin said, but she made it clear that she no longer wanted to promote such fiction. For her part, she would rather work on meaningful projects, but the choice, in the end, may not be hers. Her contract with ABC has not yet expired. Although she's not certain how or if she must fulfill it, she said ABC might successfully prevent her from working with any other network for at least two years.

To the millions of *Dynasty* fans who have been encouraged by the show's storyline not to rule out entirely Fallon's reappearance, that's promising news. To Pamela Sue Martin, whose ambitions and concerns will not be satisfied by the mere stature of celebrity, that's an example of how difficult it can be to start anew.

'Torchlight' sloppy, falls flat as story of cocaine abuse

Frank Bruni

Review

"If it's not scary, it's not fun," architect Jake Gregory tells painter Lillian Weller in their first meeting. With a mischievous grin and demonic eyes, Jake comes across as a man who likes to live on the edge; and were that idea carried through in *Torchlight*, Jake's subsequent psychological addiction to cocaine might ring more true. But he meets his first chance to try cocaine with reluctance, and he only falls into a cycle of abuse when he feels betrayed by wife Lillian's return to work.

It's a strangely illogical sequence of events, but then *Torchlight*, which depicts the disintegration of Jake and Lillian's marriage as he freebases his days away, is a particularly flaccid piece of moviemaking. Not even the key components of its plot — the ostensible love Jake and Lillian feel for each other and the attraction cocaine holds for Jake — are established in a credible fashion.

Consider the first 10 minutes of the film. An utterly improbable love-at-first-sight meeting between Jake and Lillian at a construction site cuts to a series of still photographs depicting their courtship and wedding. Action only resumes at their first wedding anniversary. As a method of storytelling, the sequence is functional, but it's hardly inspired.

The sequence also fails to establish any grounds for Jake and Lillian's mutual attraction, so it's difficult to comprehend precisely what the two are losing when their marriage dissolves. They share few common interests. Communication between them is less than ideal; Jake's abashed reaction to

Lillian's desire to return to painting ignores the fact that he first met her in a professional context.

Most incongruent, however, is the way *Torchlight* seems to forget about Jake's lust for adventure after the first third of the film. The world of freebasers — including a stereotypically oily-skinned, unctuous dealer — that seduces Jake is not a heady but a lethargic one. The chic aspects of "the champagne of drugs" and their occasional grip on an upwardly mobile, materialistic businessman like Jake are not mentioned.

That first-time screenwriters Pamela Sue Martin and Eliza Moorman manage to hit so many wrong notes in telling a simple boy-meets-girl/boy-meets-girls/boy-loses-girl story is no mean feat. That a film denouncing drug abuse should fail to convey the basic information about its target drug is equally noteworthy. *Torchlight* is a sloppy

effort on all accounts; it doesn't even bother to explicate how cocaine becomes freebase, the process from which the film derives its title.

Torchlight does, however, boast two competent performances by Martin as Lillian and Steve Railsback as Jake. Both able and immensely attractive performers, they manage to generate some interest in the story. Martin especially invites empathy. The film may not explain why Lillian loves Jake or is compelled to stay with him so long, but the affection-turned-anguish on Martin's face is completely convincing.

One improbably effective scene lingers long after the film has run its disappointing course. Over a candle-lit table on their first anniversary, Jake gives Lillian diamond earrings and then insists that she let him pierce her ears immediately. As she trembles and he holds her in place, it's a sexy, offbeat moment; it's the fear-laced fun Jake previously mentioned.

Had *Torchlight* been the story of a woman seduced and then betrayed by that mad streak in her husband, it would have been a more consistent and compelling film.

Snow Report Number	Area Code	704	Vertical Drop (inches)	Number of Skiers	Chairlifts	Surface Lifts	Snowmaking	Removal	Bus School	Weekday Rentals	Weekend Rentals	Group Rates	Food	Lodging	Laundry	Hurley	Entertainment	Ice Skating	Off Season Activities
Appalachian Ski Mtn	295-7828	365	8	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Catawbee Ski Area	926-1401	740	7	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fairfield Sapphire Valley	743-3441	425	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hound Ears Lodge & Club	963-4321	107	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mill Ridge Ski Resort	963-4500	225	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ski Beech	367-2011	630	12	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ski Hawkstrest	963-6561	619	5	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ski Scaly	526-3737	225	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sugar Mtn Resort	898-4521	1200	16	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wolf Laurel Ski Resort	689-4111	700	9	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Hitting the slopes

Skiing is exercise in winter fun

By LIZ SAYLOR
Staff Writer

Skiing has become a popular sport with students at UNC, and winter weekends find Carolina snow-worshippers, from the most experienced to the first-time beginners, packing up and heading to the mountains for fun on the slopes.

Skiing: the art or sport of sliding and jumping on skis, the dictionary says. But what's really involved here?

"Most people ski because they're cooped up inside," said Jay Doub, manager of the Ski and Tennis Station in Greensboro. "It's a good outdoor sport."

Beginning skiers should take lessons from professionals, said Doug Meis, coach of UNC's ski team and a former ski instructor.

Meis, 22, has been skiing for 15 years and began racing five years ago. "I raced for (Appalachian State University) two years and transferred here," the senior psychology major said.

Skiers should prepare by stretching, "concentrating on lower body exercise such as dancing, jumping rope, wall sits," Doub said. They should wear warm gloves or mittens, goggles, a hat, wool — not cotton — socks, ski pants — or anything other than blue jeans, he said. It is vital that skiers dress in layers, with a windshell on top, he added.

Cross-country skiers also need a backpack or fanny pack in which to carry food, water and extra supplies, Doub said.

The best places for cross-country skiing are Tennessee's Roan Mountain State Park, North Carolina's Moses Cone State Park and Virginia's Mount Rogers State Park, Doub said.

Resorts for downhill skiing are plentiful in western North Carolina, often providing lessons, special packages, accommodations, lift tickets, rental equipment and "apres ski" activities. "Apres ski" includes entertainment, dining, swimming, Jacuzzi, dancing and saunas.

Sometimes the resort must even provide its own snow. Natural snow is not a skiing necessity, said Tom Gidley, marketing director at Ski Hawkstrest.

"All we require is cold weather (below 28 degrees) to make the snow," he said.

The recent snowfall and cold weather have kept the ski resorts in business now, but what do they do when the slopes are dry and it's not cold enough to make snow?

Ski Hawkstrest, located between Boone and Linville, hired some Cherokee Indians in December to perform what Gidley called a "snow dance." It snowed one week later.

"We were frustrated not to be able to open the mountains on schedule (because of unseasonably warm weather)," Gidley said.

The Cherokees performed six different dances, which they called "a request to the high spirits to provide us with what we need," he said. "They never mentioned snow," to avoid tempting the spirits, as they put it. They were very serious about it."

For Carolina students serious about skiing, UNC has both a ski team and a ski club. The team started last year and is part of the Southeastern Conference, Meis said. Its 15 members race on Beech Mountain and ski the slalom and giant slalom, he said.

The team's season began Jan. 18. "The girls have a very good chance of going to the nationals," Meis said.

Meis, who is treasurer of the UNC Ski Club, said the club's main interest was downhill skiing but would include cross-country skiing if more people requested it.

Meis joked that the motivation for skiing was "the snow bunnies and the parties," but added, "I enjoy it as a sport — the physical exercise, thrill of speed — and I love the scenery, the mountains."

"Last year I fell and tore ligaments in my right knee," Meis said, describing this injury as the worst experience he has had skiing. "I had to have major surgery over Spring Break, spend three-and-a-half months on crutches, and full recovery takes one year."

Despite all the pain, Meis wasn't scared of taking to the slopes again. In fact, he said, his only reaction after his fall was: "I was worried about having (my knee) ready for starting this ski season."

What A Great Location!



You're right downtown and next to campus.

You don't worry about the hassles of transportation, like shuttle buses, transit schedules, bicycles or hunting for parking places

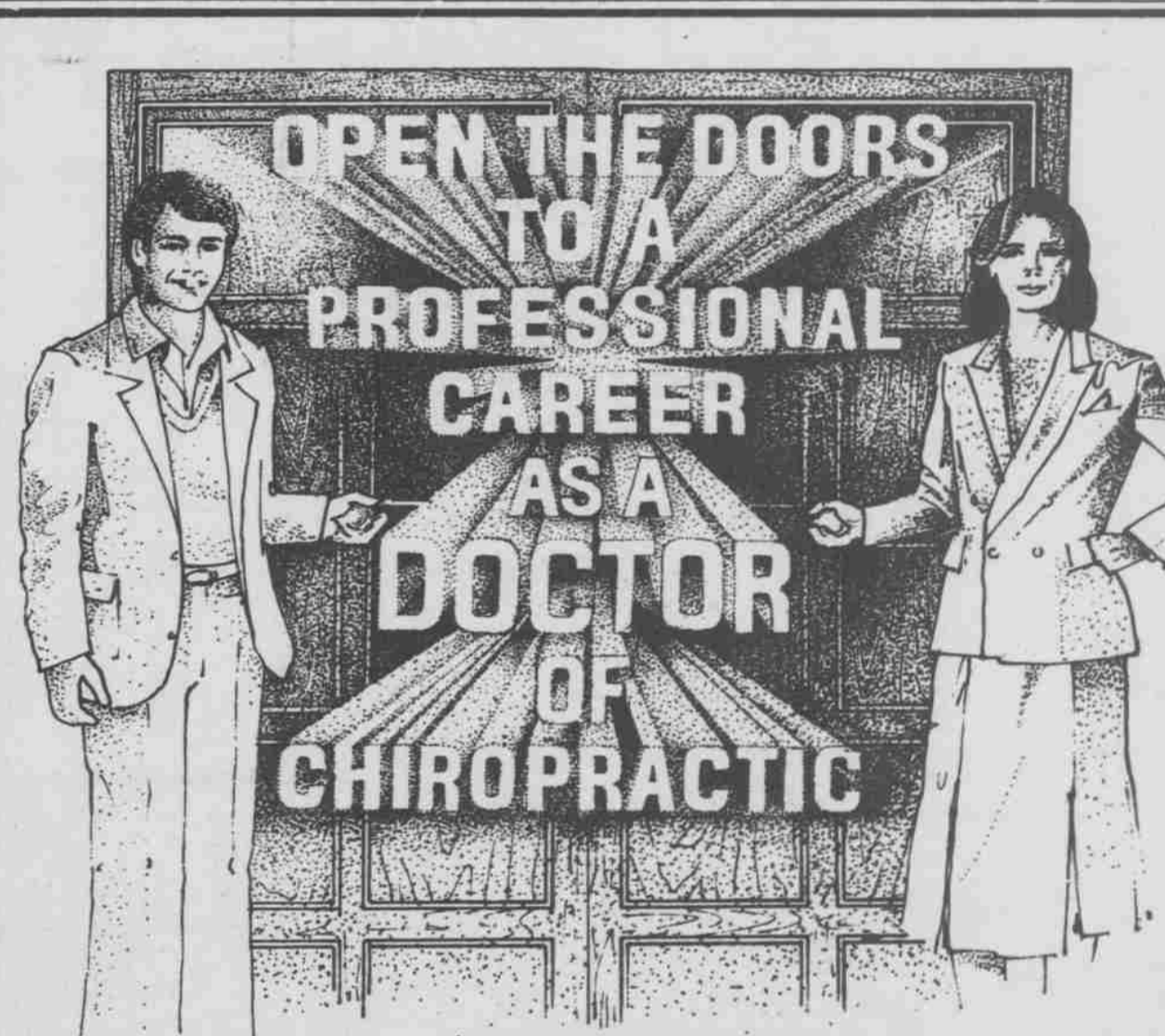
The place to be this fall is



—Where Convenience is Standard—
Applications now available for fall

University Square

929-7143



NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE OF CHIROPRACTIC

As the need for specialized health care continues to grow, Northwestern College of Chiropractic can help you enter a satisfying career taking care of people as a Doctor of Chiropractic.

Committed to high standards in education and research for over 40 years, Northwestern offers you comprehensive chiropractic training on a modern campus distinguished for its excellent facilities and dedicated teaching staff.

Located in the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Northwestern College of Chiropractic puts you within the heart of a metropolitan area known for its cultural and recreational opportunities. With the largest number of parks and lakes of any U.S. city, the Twin Cities metropolitan area offers everything from swimming and boating to biking, skiing and camping. A wealth of museums, theaters, musical events, professional sports activities, exceptional restaurants and shopping centers are all within minutes of the campus.

If you would like to know how Northwestern College of Chiropractic can help you achieve your career goals, complete the form below or call the admissions office TOLL FREE at 1-800-328-8322, Extension 290 or collect at (612) 888-4777.

Please send me more information on Northwestern College of Chiropractic

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Years of college experience _____

SEND TO: Northwestern College of Chiropractic, Admissions Office, 2501 West 84th Street, Bloomington, Minnesota 55431 1-800-328-8322, Extension 290; collect at (612) 888-4777