

LATHAM

Hairdresser gets in front of camera

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That book, the first in a proposed three-book series (*The Darlings of Daytime 1998* and *The Devils of Daytime 1998* round out the trilogy), would draw upon Latham's friendships with many of the actors and actresses in daytime television, from his time as hairdresser for "The Young and the Restless," "Loving" and "Sunset Beach."

While he's leveraged that experience into his present writing gig, Latham would rather build upon the acting part of his life — he holds a 1992 theater degree from Baylor University and has studied at the American Conservatory Theatre — as he did in a featured role on "The Young and the Restless" as Eric, "a hot-shot New York hairdresser" no less, who prepared Victoria (Heather Tom) for a centerfold spread.

That role carried over into a "Young and the Restless" prime-time special and Latham is clearly proud of how his part grew beyond the first lines he had to say in a soap, "Hi, I'm here to do the bride's hair."

Though some soap — excuse me — daytime television fans would drool at the thought of a job styling the tresses of such actresses as Jess Walton, Patricia Barry, Leigh Taylor-Young, Heather Tom, Sarah Buxton, Jessica Collins, Kathleen Noone, Rebecca Gayheart, reality proves different, Latham says, and not due to any prima donna personalities.

Rather, it's the long, grinding hours. During the shooting of a series, Latham would get up at 4 a.m. daily to prepare his room and hair-styling team for a flow of cast members who would start showing up for their hair stylings at 6 a.m.

Depending on the day's shooting schedule, Latham often divided his time between preparing an actress's hair for her upcoming scenes and being on call to re-

touch hair that got loose during taping.

And if the series involved outdoor shoots, as "Sunset Beach" often did, the work of wind and humidity made the key hairdresser a busy person indeed. Latham contrasts that daily schedule with his days on set as an actor: a morning's worth of filming, then free for the day.

"I assure you I'd much rather play one than be one," Latham laughed.

His work with hair styling — he holds a cosmetology degree from McLennan Community College — landed him work in Hollywood and helped with such theater jobs as his stint as wigmaster for Dallas' Theatre Three in the 1991-92 season.

It also earned him a 1996 Daytime Emmy nomination for Best Hair Design for his work with "The Young and the Restless."

Ironically, Latham says his work as hairdresser complicates his efforts to establish himself as a soap opera scriptwriter and actor: In television circles, there's a "stigma" attached to supporting jobs such as hairstyling, and several producers, who control much of the hiring and firing on their shows, won't consider such technical persons for acting or writing slots, he claimed.

He's worked up several sample scripts, including a proposal for a gay soap opera that the Showtime cable channel considered, but no bites beyond nibbles yet.

Even though his onscreen soap appearances have been short, Latham already has encountered soap fans' memory for people.

Stopping at a Waco convenience store some time back, Latham met a clerk who recognized him from television, but who couldn't place who he was. Expecting her to confuse him with some daytime actor, Latham was startled when it dawned on the clerk where she'd seen him. "You're the hair stylist on 'The Young and the Restless!'" she shrieked.

Equally surprising was Latham's reaction to fan exuberance.

"It scared me so much I just grabbed my stuff and got out of there," he said.