ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

BIOGRAPHY

Hollywood's Man Who Worried for the Stars: The Story of Bo Roos
Carolyn Roos Olsen
Marylin Hudson
Biography
978-1-4343-5114-2
Four Stars (out of Five)

In the early 1930s a Hollywood business manager named B&246; (pronounced “Boo”) Roos challenged himself by reining in about a hundred spendthrift actors and even a few directors. Known to his tax-sheltered and happy clients as “Uncle Deductible” he established precedents in a relatively young industry. Clients included best friend John Wayne Joan Crawford Marlene Dietrich comedian Red Skelton Fred MacMurray swimming champion Johnny Weissmuller and the Andrews Sisters. A number of the Beverly Management Company’s stars and associates were known to support conservative causes but Roos also represented Rat Packer and eventual JFK in-law Peter Lawford.

Carolyn Roos Olsen saw the private side of these Silver Screen icons serving as secretary of the Beverly Management Company beginning in the mid-Forties then as president upon her father’s death. Olsen clearly relished her work there but operated at the mercy of a highly exuberant man who juggled endless plans and problems. She writes “It got very complicated for me handling temperamental and attention-demanding stars writers and directors my charismatic father the IRS the gossip columnists and all the rest.” It turns out that movie stars who have a penchant for writing magnificent checks to impress people often neglect to record them. Satirist Red Skelton’s check stubs read “for darned foolishness” “for rotten food” “really wasted” and “none of your business.” Though Skelton had a long run of success actors’ typical arcs involved short heydays and painful financial decline.

Besides encouraging relative frugality Roos also squelched potential client scandals by befriending police departments. He regularly co-invested with clients after weighing a plethora of offerings (often risky; some were scams). Roos and “The Duke” bought interest in an Acapulco hideaway hotel frequented by actors friends and assorted hangers-on. They had about a dozen joint business ventures which had to be untangled following an acrimonious split. Sensitive to insinuations of dishonesty the author shares the complete terms of the Wayne-Roos

arbitration settlement. Olsen takes pointed digs at certain vamps such as Lupe Velez ("The Mexican Spitfire") and Tallulah Bankhead "who claimed 180 conquests at one point (I wonder how she kept track)." With obvious uneasiness Olsen acknowledges that her father was a high-flying philanderer who expected employees to cover for his whereabouts and quietly record money spent on gifts.

The numerous photos of movie people and the Roos family greatly enhance the account. Marylin Hudson a magazine writer and founder of the Round Table West author series did a crack job of fashioning Olsen's memories into consumable form. They don't make 'em like B&246; Roos anymore—an early titan and a handshake deal-maker with a zest for life. His inside story is an absorbing read lined with sharp humor and generous remembrances but it is also notable for the amount of potential dirt and controversial enterprises left unexamined.

Todd Mercer