

## The Only Woman in the Room: Episodes in My Life and Career as a Television Writer

**Rita Lakin**

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*At turns hilarious, tender, and tough, this is the fabulous memoir of a woman who forged her own path to the writers' room in an industry dominated by men.*

If you like classic television, you've probably seen Rita Lakin's work. *Dr. Kildare*, *Peyton Place*, *Flamingo Road*, *Mod Squad*. In an industry dominated by men, Lakin worked her way up in the writers' room—and worked her way into a better life for her and her children as she made her mark on the small screen.

*The Only Woman in the Room* chronicles how Lakin crafted a new career out of necessity, and what a bonus that it was a fabulous, successful career. She had just lost her loving husband and had three children to raise. It was the early 1960s, an era not kind to a widowed young mom. She ventured out, talking her way into a secretarial job at Universal Studios when she couldn't even type. She ventured even further out, trying some script writing through a kind boss willing to vouch for her with his colleagues. From there, piece by piece, gig by gig, TV series by TV series, she built a great reputation in the field and nabbed some plum jobs, plus the better house and life that went with it.

Lakin is at turns tender in remembering her late husband and tough and honest in relating the incidents where she got trashed. She's wise to what was going on around her, yet unafraid to admit how insecure she was in her work. She writes, "I never chased after an assignment; each one I did came to me. And I took whatever was offered. I had no ego. ... And here I was, a successful woman in spite of myself."

Jobs weren't the only things that flitted strangely into her life. Lakin's tales of the mobster who wanted to "keep" her and the sheik in the elevator are hilarious, the sort of truths that are stranger than fiction. Her writing style is effortless, seamless. The pages zoom right along. Two veins of glossy color photos in the book nicely provide faces with names.

Lakin can only be admired—by both women and men—for forging a marvelous path through fears and heartbreak. Was it a charmed career? No. One clearly earned.

**BILLIE RAE BATES** (Winter 2016)

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