**Hollywood, Once Upon a Long Time Ago: The Blondes**

*Two OLLI Instructors and Hollywood veterans examine the story of two blondes, one who survived Hollywood, Kim Novak, and one who succumbed, Marilyn Monroe.*

**A POLAND:** Two entertainment veterans now OLLI instructors are about to share an insider look at a special breed of movie star, the iconic blonde bombshell. In particular Kim Novak and Marilyn Monroe. Flip sides of the same coin… Kim survived Hollywood and Marilyn didn’t.

**S CAMERON:** I know a lot of stuff about her that maybe people don’t know.

**F FURINO:** Do you have any opinion whether her death was accidental, suicidal, or something other than that?

**S CAMERON:** I believe one-hundred percent that she was murdered. One-hundred percent…

**A POLAND**: Stay tuned for Hollywood, Once Upon a Long Time Ago part two. Marilyn, Kim, and some other savvy blondes.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**A POLAND:** Welcome to *In Conversation: The Voices of OLLI*. OLLI, O-L-L-I is an acronym for, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute located at and networked with the Palm Desert Campus of California State University, San Bernardino.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC ENDS)

**A POLAND:** Now a popular OLLI instructor Sue Cameron is a writer, journalist, talent manager, and a real Hollywood insider, when it comes to iconic movie blondes, Marilyn tops her list.

**S CAMERON:** That shot of her coming out of the pool and somethings got to give.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** That’s magical.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** That’s really what Hollywood is about. There are those shots of Marilyn coming out of the pool, in that Grace Kelly, it catches the… She’s either riding in the car or where she is driving the car or when she’s at the pool float and she comes out of the water and Kim Novak coming out of the bathroom with her transformation for her to go where she’s going back to Madeline. Where all the green light and music.

**S CAMERON:** Those three moments for blonde women in Hollywood are just startling. I haven’t seen anything to compare to that in any movie.

**A POLAND:** Frank Furino took a different approach to the subject.

**F FURINO:** So, I put together, what I call my “sexy six,” to see what you think.

**S CAMERON:** Alright.

**F FURINO:** By my sexy six-

**S CAMERON:** Believe me I will tell you the truth

(LAUGHTER)

**F FURINO:** …Well, leading my list for obvious reasons, Marilyn Monroe.

**S CAMERON:** Right.

**F FURINO:** She was for me an ultimate… but just below Marilyn is Carole Lombard.

**S CAMERON:** Mhm.

**F FURINO:** I thought belonged on that list. Jayne Mansfield, I thought belonged on that list. Mae West, Jean Harlow, and one of my favorite actresses of any year, Fay Dunaway. Those would be my sexy six.

**S CAMERON:** Ok not mine.

(LAUGHTER)

**F FURINO:** Ok, who did I miss?

**S CAMERON:** The women that you mentioned, Carole Lombard, was spectacular! There’s a difference between a blonde who is sexy and a blonde who is a star for reasons other than sex.

**F FURINO:** I see. Yes.

**S CAMERON:** So, I don’t have much respect for someone like Jayne Mansfield, who… and I am very friendly with Mariska and I’m so sorry—

**F FURINO:** I was going to say she gave us Mariska. (CHUCKLES)

**S CAMERON:** I am so sorry that she lost her mother. And I know Jayne Mansfield was a very nice person. I think Jean Harlow is extraordinary. You have to take that list beyond the full forties and you have to go into the fifties and some of the sixties. We will talk about Marilyn in a minute. Who else was on that list?

**A POLAND:** Mae West.

**F FURINO:** Mae.

**S CAMERON**: Mae, these are people who are classic legends and no one else could be the way they were. So, she made a statement. I would actually prefer a list called statement blondes, rather than categorizing them into sex categories. Carole Lombard, I’m sure represents that.

**F FURINO:** (LAUGHS)… Well you bring up something interesting because I found a quote from Mae West, which I thought was really cute. She was at a function and wearing some wonderful jewelry and somebody said, “Goodness! What lovely diamonds.” And Mae West said “Goodness had nothing to do with it.”

**S CAMERON:** To do with it. (LAUGHS) … no I know but before I go on to people like Kim Novak and Grace Kelly—that generation which was quite different. Why don’t we talk about Marilyn for a second or more than a second?

**F FURINO**: Absolutely.

**S CAMERON:** You are the Marilyn Monroe expert.

**F FURINO:** Well I fell in love with her, the more I researched and the more I wrote and the more I realized what she had to overcome. She never knew her father. She was in a foster home as a baby, initially and was raped at a foster home at the age of nine. That was how she started life. She never saw herself as anything but a blonde who got lucky. She never—and I thought she was a decent actress. I thought that she was more than just a decent actress. She never saw herself that way. And of course, men, note that era, took advantage of her as they did but I was impressed with her as a person, as much as an actress. She was part of the system. She was part of that Hollywood system at the time and she…I don’t think she ever saw herself as she got to be seen after she left the planet.

**S CAMERON:** No, of course she didn’t.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** I adored her. And yes, she absolutely just melted the screen and you fell in love with her instantly. I think that she, although she was uneducated, she was brighter than most people think because she had an inquisitive mind.

**F FURINO:** And she had an IQ that approached— she had an IQ, I don’t have the number in front of me, but her IQ was not that far from genius IQ. She was quite smart. And I think she just felt that there was an expectation that if you were a blonde this is what you did, and how you did it, if you wanted to succeed. She was in my humble opinion a much better actress than she was given credit for. If you go back there’s a film called *Niagara*, which I think shows her in another whole light. She was sad, she was a sad person. I would love to have met her. I would love to have spent some time with her but, it was interesting to write about her. In fact, that play, I don’t know how to say as a writer, it almost wrote itself.

**S CAMERON:** That doesn’t surprise me at all. Kim Novak’s childhood, she was one-hundred percent Czechoslovakian and she and her parents and her grandparents lived in a very bad neighborhood in Chicago. She did not have a happy childhood she was constantly bullied for being ‘too white.’

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON**: It was the exact reverse racial discrimination. She was in a Jewish ghetto and I don’t know the other people who were there but she could barely walk from home to school without someone throwing something at her or yelling terrible names. ‘You dumb Pollack’ but of course she wasn’t Polish.

**F FURINO:** Polish

**S CAMERON:** She had an extremely difficult childhood and it was only writing the poetry that really got her through it. Her writing and drawing. I will tell you a story about Kim Novak and Marilyn Monroe.

**F FURINO:** I love Kim Novak.

**S CAMERON:** Me too. They were, they were friends.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON**: Kim, her heart went out to Marilyn because she could see how Marilyn was always trying to fit in and trying to better herself. And one night there was a party at Peter Lawford’s house in Malibu, where Kim went all the time, but this was the first time Marilyn was going. It was because Robert Kennedy was there. She had not met him. So, she called Kim and she said “I have been studying all day, I have read all of his speeches. I have watched as much of him as I can find. I’m reading books that he wrote or his family wrote. I am studying foreign policy so I can come up with intelligent questions for him.”

**S CAMERON:** Kim is thinking to herself ‘Oh my god this poor girl.’

**F FURINO:** (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** ‘You are enough just show up for dinner.’ Anyways she did not say that to her and Marilyn asked “what are you wearing?” Kim said “jeans and a sweater. We’re at the beach.” Marilyn showed up in a formal gown—

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** And sat next to Bobby and started going in about “What do you think about the China trade agreement?”

**S CAMERON:** Kim was just sitting there watching this.

**F FURINO:** (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** Going “Oh my god. Oh my god.”. Then I am very friendly with Pat Newcomb. Pat was Marilyn’s press agent and it was Pat who got the call before the police were called after Marilyn died. She kind of cleaned up the house and took all the evidence away.

**F FURINO:** Can I ask you Sue, do you have any opinion, as to whether her death was accidental, suicidal, or something other than that?

**S CAMERON:** I believe one-hundred percent that she was murdered. One-hundred percent.

**F FURINO:** I won’t disagree with you.

**S CAMERON:** Yeah. I believe that the Kennedy’s called Sam Giancana because Marilyn was threatening to release some stuff which is not smart. That was not smart. She was disposed of with a shot in private areas so the needle mark could not be found. She was already drugged up before they came. She was still alive. Yes, I believe that one-hundred percent and of course, I have asked Pat Newcomb. She looks at me and smiles, and goes “I am not going to answer that question.” Pat would never talk. I talked to Angie Dickinson about it because she has a JFK shrine in her living room. She has that cute Hollywood smile and she said, “Absolutely, it was just an accidental overdose,” with a big smile and I went “Ok Angie.”

**F FURINO:** (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** So, I will never know but that is what I believe one-hundred percent.

**F FURINO:** I left it kind of ambiguous in the play. You make up your own mind as to how. I didn’t want to say it was this or that.

**S CAMERON:** Yeah, I think that is wise.

**F FURINO:** But I agree with you.

**S CAMERON:** One of the biggest reasons why Kim left Hollywood was because Marilyn Monroe got—it affected her horribly because she saw how Marilyn was treated. Harry Cohn had died and he was the one who had picked out all the great scripts for her. The Columbia was in shambles. She could feel the tide changing to beach movies to a much more silly era. She had a house in Bel Aire. It narrowly missed the Bel Aire fire but it had some damage and shortly after that there was a huge storm and there was a mudslide and her house fell down the hill. It was across the street from the Bel Aire hotel. She was standing there by her car seeing the mudslide, everything. She was standing there and said “this is a sign that I need to get out of here. This isn’t good.”

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON:** She hopped in another car and drove to her house in Big Sur. She had that house for several years where she would go to retreat just to recover. She headed up to Big Sur and said “That’s it. If I work and if I like the role or if it’s offered to me it then great, but I really just want to be alone. The house is built on a rock called Gull house. She really was a painter. She had two scholarships to the artistry of Chicago. She had no intention of ever being an actress. Ever. She wanted to be a painter and a poet. She was so extraordinarily happy at Big Sur. At one point, I met her at seventy-three when I interviewed her about a television movie called *The Third Girl from The Left.* We hit it off right from there. She started sending me airplane tickets to go to Carmel because she can see that all I… it wasn’t that I loved Hollywood too much. My love was sincere because it was for the art. It really wasn’t about the glamour. It was about the talents. I was twenty something, and I don’t think I looked at a tree ever. She could see that. She wanted me to see the other side of life. She bought me a bicycle, she bought me roller skates, and she would set up these weekends to put me out into nature and we would skate along or ride along the pacific grove. Stopped and looked at all the flowers and stopped and looked at the ocean. She turned my entire life around. I never—

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON:** looked outward. I was only looking inward to work, work, work. She changed me forever. In so many ways. I could talk about her for the next two hours. I’d do lectures and she’s one of them. The opposite side is, Kim was never who Hollywood tried to make her to be. They would put on the makeup and she’d go to into the bathroom and spray off the eyebrows. She would do everything she could to be more natural. Kim was very proud of her work. I think her acting is finally being recognized. Her role in *Vertigo*, in which has been named repeatedly the best film of all time.

**F FURINO:** Right.

**S CAMERON:** To be Kim, who needs to turn into Judy… who is Judy playing Madeline.

**F FURINO:** (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** That is already three steps away. Then she has to go back, and she has to be Kim but pretending to Judy who knows that Madeline is dead… I mean that’s phenomenal, phenomenal work. At every level—

**F FURINO:** That’s a pretty good movie.

**S CAMERON:** Thank you. Me too. Everybody has copied her. Sharon Stone. The thing where she opened her legs or whatever that was called. That was all Kim. The series that is on now, *Ratched* by Ryan Murphy is using the Vertigo score. All the shots and green lights. Even the shots are the same are the same. The impact… So, she is very proud and very happy. She lives in a gorgeous ranch in Oregon. She just has an extraordinary life. She has her paintings, she has her horses… she still has a trainer and is in incredible shape.

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON:** She is absolutely an extraordinary person who changed my life.

**F FURINO:** Well next time you see her, tell her that she changed mine as well.

**S CAMERON:** I will. I absolutely will. But she was very strong because she learned early on to stand up to everyone from her childhood. It prepared her for a guy like Harry Cohn. He didn’t scare her at all. She would walk in and bake him Christmas cookies and hand them to him.

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON:** She saw a tear in his eye. She knew how to get right through to him because she saw the bluff. So, he never scared her. She didn’t love him. She didn’t dislike him and he never came onto her. He never tried… not to her. So, he was very prepared for Hollywood. That is why she walked away because she was smart to know. I’m not going down.

**F FURINO:** Sue do you know the story attributed to Harry Cohn funeral?

**S CAMERON:** Yes, I do.

(LAUGHTER)

**S CAMERON:** Go ahead. (LAUGHS)

**F FURINO:** Well I tell it is. People were standing around and they were crying. I thought he was one of the most hated men why are they crying? Somebody said, “give the people what they want.”

(LAUGHTER)

**S CAMERON:** Right. Kim was crying because she was sad that the man who picked the great scripts had died.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** she knew that his importance on her career.

**F FURINO:** She is again one of my favorite people on and off screen. I’m glad to hear that she is the kind of person you describe her to be because…

**S CAMERON:** Most unpretentious, friendly, amazing sense of humor. She is nothing like you saw in any of those movies.

**F FURINO:** In any of those movies. That’s cool. Very cool.

**S CAMERON:** Nothing. Yeah, she’s really cool.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**F FURINO:** Bye.

**S CAMERON:** Bye.

**A POLAND:** Mister Furino is now working on a play about another Hollywood femme fetal, Ava Gardner.

**F FURINO:** I am in the midst now to do a similar approach to Ava Gardner. It’s not coming as easily as the Marilyn did. Although Ava and Marilyn did share some Hollywood’s if you would.

**A POLAND:** Mhm. Sounds intriguing right? And as Cameron is currently in the throws of writing another new Hollywood tell all.

**S CAMERON:** This one is not as nice.

(LAUGHTER)

**S CAMERON:** Hollywood’s secrets and scandals are just really about me showing the public the true love that I had for the people who are and were my friends. What their lives really were like. There are people in Hollywood who don’t necessarily deserve that love. So, I am not going to call it a bitchy book, it is a combination because I am writing about more people that I love. I am also throwing some tasty tidbit stories.

**F FURINO:** Oh.

**S CAMERON:** So, it has a slightly different essence. I am about halfway through with it.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**A POLAND:** This has been *In Conversation: The Voices of OLLI*. Our thanks to Cal State San Bernardino in Palm Desert. Along with the communications study professor, Lacey Kendall and her media students. This podcast was produced for OLLI by Lou Gorfain and I am Dr. Arlette Poland.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC ENDS)