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

*OLLI Instructors and Hollywood Veterans- Sue Cameron and Frank Furino— share memories of the legends of Tinseltown and Vegas.*

**A POLAND:** This is a business discussion, show business that is. Two entertainment veterans, now OLLI instructors, are about to share their personal tales of Tinseltown and Las Vegas. We’ll eavesdrop as they recall their encounters with some of the legends of rock n’ roll, silver screen, and a young growing medium called television.

(SLIGHT LAUGH)

**F FURINO:** We got to see some stuff you and I.

**S CAMERON:** Oh, it was fabulous.

**A POLAND:** Coming up, Hollywood once upon a long time ago. It’s part one of a two-part series.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

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

**A POLAND:** Sue Cameron taught one of the most popular courses at OLLI. A class based on her book*, Hollywood Secrets and Scandals.* She is a journalist, talent manager, and insider with the capital I. Miss Cameron is literally a child of Hollywood.

**S CAMERON:** My father was an entertainment lawyer and my mother was a singer. A very good singer. She had her own show on local NBC radio in San Francisco and Meredith Wilson was her conductor. Whenever I wanted something, my father—oh boy, I would love to meet Superman and he would take me to the set. I would meet George Reeves. Oh, I love Ozzy and Harriet, so I would go on that set. So yes, I have been on sets since I was about eight.

**F FURINO:** Oh cool.

**S CAMERON:** It was really great. Really great.

**A POLAND:** Her companion in conversation is Frank Furino. A former television producer and executive with Dick Clark Productions. As well as the author of the poignant play about the last days of Marilyn Monroe, *Marilyn Madness and Me.*

**F FURINO:** I came to California at the tender age of 22 from New York. I had gone right from college to work at ABC in New York in their new sports division and after two or three years my then boss called me in to his office and said “Frank would you like to go to Hollywood?”

(LIGHT CHUCKLE)

**F FURINO:** I said, “To do what?” and he said, “To live. To work.” They were expanding and they needed a staff director in the Hollywood studio. The new studio. And that is how I got to California... I got off the airplane. It was January, on my birthday and it was snowing in New York. I stepped off the plane in LAX and it was 78° degrees and I thought ‘oh my god, I’m home.’

**A POLAND:** This is the first time Frank and Sue had formerly met. Though as they are about to discover their paths likely crossed many times.

**S CAMERON:** My first job was at KFWB radio.

**F FURINO:** Huh?

**S CAMERON:** They were starting a pop news newspaper called the KFWB Hitline and I got to meet all the rock n’ roll stars because they would come to the station, to promote their records and try to get KFWB to play it. So, everybody was there. I would walk in the lobby and Sunny and Cher were there. I just got to know everybody and when they moved to—Sunny and Cher are the perfect example. When they moved to television, I was then the television editor of the Hollywood reporter and I would also start to cover movies. So, wherever their careers went, mine went too. So, I had a great foundation of very young stars who became more successful. As they did, I did. What was interesting is that being such a young kid, it was my job to interview celebrities. They were always quite a bit older than I was because they were already successful. So, that is how I was basically adopted by Debbie Reynolds, Kim Novak, Valerie Harper, the Nelson Family… it just goes on and on. I just had incredible access because they wanted to protect me. They could see how young I was it was a great time.

**F FURINO:** I can see. We crissed-crossed a little bit because after I got out to California with ABC, at some point I switched careers. I went form the news business to the rock n’ roll business.

**S CAMERON:** Ah.

**F FURINO:** I spent ten years with Dick Clark. That was a trip. (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** What did you do with Dick? Because I was on *Happening with Paul Revere and the Raiders* on ABC network for two years.

**F FURINO:** Well I was behind the scenes. I ran his syndicated radio division.

**S CAMERON:** No kidding.

**F FURINO:** He had a… I produced and wrote a show called *Dick Clark’s Good Ol’ Rock n’ Roll*.

**S CAMERON:** Mhm.

**F FURINO:** That got on about two-hundred radio stations at the time, but I got to meet everybody.

**S CAMERON:** Sure.

**F FURINO:** It was. One of my favorite moments was in a hotel in Las Vegas where I went to interview Jerry Lee Lewis. I walked in the room to meet Jerry Lewis, and he was just one of a kind.

**S CAMERON:** Mhm.

**F FURINO:** As I walked up to him, he had a big cigar in his hand. I looked and put my hand out to say hello, and he put two of his hands around my head and he said quote… it was the first thing he ever said to me “How big a coffin you’d figure you’d need?” (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** Oh my god.

(LAUGHTER)

**F FURINO:** That was Jerry Lee.

**S CAMERON:** Whacko.

F FURINO: Yeah. It was for a kid from Brooklyn, it was a great time.

**S CAMERON:** Yeah.

**F FURINO:** And I think you will agree with this. There was still when I got out in 1965, there was still a touch of old Hollywood.

**S CAMERON:** Oh absolutely.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** Absolutely. Well my first job, my first assignment at the Hollywood reporter, was to go to Adolf Zukor’s 100th birthday party. He was the president of Paramount and I could not believe what was before my eyes, in terms of movie stars. That was my first job. It was… So, I absolutely love rock n’ roll. And I love music. I’m suddenly immersed with The Mamas and the Papas—

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** Every single English act you can imagine. The Beatles bored me. I went to their press conference and ended up having lunch with Ring O Star, not bright. I went to see James Brown. I loved to dance like James Brown. Of course, I had interviewed him, and I started dancing in his dressing room. In a Bullocks Wilshire knit suit with a hand bag. He couldn’t believe it. He couldn’t believe how I could dance and he said to me, “You’re coming with me right now. We are getting on my plane and we’re going to San Francisco.” And I go “Oh no we’re not.”

(LAUGHTER)

**F FURINO:** Alright, I have a trivia question for you. Do you know who Walden Robert Cassotto is?

**S CAMERON:** I certainly do. That’s Bobby Darin.

**F FURINO:** Alright. (LAUGHS) … and Concetta Franconero?

**S CAMERON:** Connie Francis.

**F FURINO:** Alright. Well— (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** I knew Bobby really, really well.

**F FURINO:** I got to know Bobby through Dick. We did a—

**S CAMERON:** Yeah.

**F FURINO:** Profile of him. I recall because Bobby saw himself as the heir to the throne of Sinatra.

**S CAMERON:** Absolutely.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** Absolutely. I knew he was in the hospital but I didn’t know… I didn’t know that he had died. I was told it was from complications of dental surgery.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** What he really did was that he didn’t take the antibiotics.

**F FURINO:** Antibiotics.

**S CAMERON:** Because he knew he was failing and he just wanted out.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** I was lucky enough to go to his house. We loved music. He would fly me up to Vegas and we talked about his act. He played a lot of instruments, I play a lot of instruments.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** I went to his house because when we were in Vegas, his opening number was *For Once in my Life*. He put a horn sound over it. He took the horns from Santana’s Everybody Everything.

**F FURINO:** Ah.

**S CAMERON:** Now he would know this. So, I go backstage and I go, “Oh my god you used the Santana horns” and he just went, “What?” He started hugging me and we just… I just saw him a lot. He was getting ready… he really wanted to go back to Sandra Dee. I had dinner with him shortly before he died.

**F FURINO:** Oh.

**S CAMERON:** That’s what he really wanted. The two of them had looked at a house in Bel Aire on Stone Canyon Rd.

**F FURINO:** Oh wow.

**S CAMERON:** To go back together. Sandy is another story speaking of Hollywood blondes, such a terrible tragedy.

**F FURINO:** Yes, well, staying with Bobby for just a minute, do you know how he came to take the name Bobby Darin?

**S CAMERON:** Actually, I don’t think I do.

**F FURINO:** When he got the notice from the record company that wanted to sign him, they said “Walden Robert Cassotto is not a rock n’ roll name. You have got to find a name.” So, he went home, that’s another story. He never knew the woman he was raised to believe was his sister, was his mother. He went home to his mother and sister and said “I got this contract. Let’s go out to dinner.” They went out to dinner and got Chinese food. They came to this restaurant and in neon it said “Chinese Mandarin” and the MAN of mandarin was out and it was flashing.

**S CAMERON:** Oh wow.

**F FURINO:** Yeah, and it was flashing d-a-r-i-n—

**S CAMERON:** Oh, that’s fabulous.

**F FURINO:** that’s how he took the name Darin.

**S CAMERON:** I love that. That’s so cool

**F FURINO:** Yeah, I liked him a lot in… he went way too soon, way too soon.

**S CAMERON:** Oh tragic, tragic. See when he was taping the last Bobby Darin shows, people didn’t know I was on set with him. People didn’t know it but, after every song they would take in segments, there was an oxygen machine right behind the curtain. After every song he had to go back there and take oxygen before he could go on with the show. His drive and love of life—

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** And his acting, talk *about Captain Newman, M.D.*—

**F FURINO:** Oh yeah.

**S CAMERON:** I wanted him to win an Oscar for that.

**F FURINO:** He was an all-around incredible talent.

**S CAMERON:** He and Sammy Davis are the—

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** Are the two who could do everything. Sing, dance, act, impressions, and play every instrument.

**F FURINO:** Yes, they… talking about Sammy leads me to the rat pack. That is a whole other story.

**S CAMERON:** Oh yes. Vegas is now basically just canned acts.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** It’s so tragic. I would fly out there almost every weekend in the 70s because that was when television stars had acts and you could go down the scripts. I would go from Connie Stevens to Anne Margret to Hellen Reddy to Bobby, Dom Rickles and we would all hang out afterwards. I went to Las Vegas for Debbie Reynolds maybe 20 or more times.

**F FURINO:** Oh wow.

**S CAMERON:** It was so much fun.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** Now I am so sorry it is gone.

**F FURINO:** I have a trivia question for you.

**S CAMERON:** Yes.

**F FURINO:** We were talking about the blondes and Lana Turner.

**S CAMERON:** Yes.

**F FURINO:** Is the published story true? Was she discovered at the counter at Schwab’s?

**S CAMERON:** No, she was not discovered at the counter at Schwab’s. She was discovered at the counter of something called the High Hat—

**F FURINO:** Oh, The Top Hat.

**S CAMERON:** Top Hat, across from Hollywood High. That is true. Unfortunately, through Cheryl Crane I got to meet Lana and go out to dinner with her.

**F FURINO:** Oh.

**S CAMERON:** That was really interesting. What I have notice is all these movie star women, I don’t care whether it’s Elizabeth Taylor, Debbie Reynolds, Nicole Kidman, or whatever. When you become a popular person, it’s based on your looks. They eventually notice that you can or can’t act, but initially it is based on your looks. When you go out with them they have to become another character. They can’t— I will talk about Kana in a second. One day Kim and I were shopping in Carmel when she lived in Carmel. We were at a bullet store there and I just kind of made joke and I said, “Nobody’s recognized you, isn’t that fascinating?” and she goes, “No, I will show you how that works.” She goes “Watch.” All she did was stand up a little straighter and developed a movie star attitude and everyone came over.

**F FURINO:** Wow.

**S CAMERON:** All she did was just a physical thing. Lana Turner, when we went to pick her up at her apartment in Century City, she really became Lana Turner. The hair was gorgeous and she was wearing something white and she was covered in jewels. We were going to a supper club up in Beverley Hills. She got in the car and kind of sighed. We had just met and I turned around and I just kind of looked at her and said “It’s show time, right?”

(SLIGHT LAUGH)

**S CAMERON:** And she went, “Yeah.” We pulled up in front of the restaurant, and Lana Turner got out of the car. Lana was in the car but Lana Turner was outside the car. She was Lana Turner all the way until we got to the table and about five minutes in I said to her, “It’s ok now, just have a drink.” She just started laughing. I think this is why these people like me. I just saw them for who they were—

**F FURINO:** For who they were.

**S CAMERON:** I was like whatever just sit down and have a drink.

F **FURINO**: You don’t really think about that as a fan.

**S CAMERON:** Right.

**F FURINO:** Somebody who just goes and sees. They do have to live another kind of life. They can’t be who you see on screen 24/7.

**S CAMERON:** Or you’d go nuts.

**F FURINO:** Or you’d go nuts.

**S CAMERON:** Yeah, you’d go nuts.

**F FURINO:** That’s a good point. That’s a good point.

**S CAMERON:** Elizabeth Taylor spent three years in bed just eating and watching TV toward the end of her life. Debbie Reynolds would go over… they made up a long time ago. They were on an accident. They all found themselves on the Queen Mary.

**F FURINO:** Huh?

**S CAMERON:** It was Richard Burton, Elizabeth, Debbie, and I guess Richard Hamlett. Debbie saw that they were on board and invited Elizabeth to the cabin. They had not spoken since 1958.

**F FURINO:** Wow. All they needed was Eddie Fisher. (LAUGHS)

**S CAMERON:** Exactly. Elizabeth came over and the four of them started talking. the two of them started talking, Debbie and Elizabeth, they just started laughing and going. “Boy what a schmuck. Look at what we did.” That’s the word they said, what a schmuck. Elizabeth and Debbie became very close and towards the end of Elizabeth’s life, Debbie would go over almost every week. They would sit in bed and the butler would bring them hot fudge sundaes and they would watch movies, DVDs on the TV almost every Sunday. So, you have to find people who are… its helpful if you are a big Hollywood star to find another big Hollywood star who gets the issues and you can just hang out with them.

**F FURINO:** Angie Dickinson, one of my favorites.

**S CAMERON:** Yes, she’s spectacular.

F FURINO: I got to spend a little time with her when she was married to Burt Bacharach because I was doing a special on Bacharach. He was not one of my favorite persons.

**S CAMERON:** Nor mine.

**F FURINO:** No, he was a very talented man.

**S CAMERON:** Extremely.

**F FURINO:** But I love her.

**S CAMERON:** Angie is really great. She is a movie star who understood that it was her job to go out at premieres and support the industry that she loved that supported her. It’s not so easy for her to do it now a days but she did that for years and years out of respect and not out of duty.

**F FURINO:** Burt on the other hand, we were doing all the interviews. At one point they were living at that time up in Benedict Canyon I believe. Rather large home but they also had a place at the beach. Small place upon sand and Burt said you’re going to have to come out and finish the interviews our there because I have to do this and that. So, in any case, I got invited to the little beach cabin. It was a summer day and it was very hot. I arrived there and Angie opens the door and she is just delightful. I had my little tape recorder and Burt says, “No, no, no, we are going out there” he points to the beach. I said, “We’re going out there?”

**S CAMERON:** out into the water?

**F FURINO:** The water. You can hear the surf going. I know this is going to be an editing nightmare.

**S CAMERON:** Right.

**F FURINO:** But he… that was it. He literally walked outside with me, he was in a bathing suit and a shirt. I came dressed because I thought, in a Beaufort backpack. We sat out there for a few minutes and the recording was in the little cassette recorders. He said “I’ll be right back.” He went back into the house, and its hot. I can see him through the glass, through the window. He went in there and poured himself a drink and then he came back out and never said to me, “are you hot? Are you dying? Do you need—” and that is my memory.

**S CAMERON:** Narcissist. I have nothing good to say about him but except really that I just love his music.

**F FURINO:** Well you cannot.

**S CAMERON:** No, I do.

**F FURINO:** His writing partner Hal David. Nobody ever, you will never hear anyone mention Hal David.

**S CAMERON:** Except for Mrs. David which is really a shame because that’s very annoying.

**F FURINO:** Oh yeah.

**S CAMERON:** Same thing happened with Norman and Bud Yorkin. It was Bud Yorkin who had the idea for all in the family.

**F FURINO:** I think we, you and I, were very fortunate to have seen an era and cult of people that I don’t know will come back again.

**S CAMERON:** Oh, it never will.

**F FURINO:** Yeah.

**S CAMERON:** It won’t the world has changed too much.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** Social media has destroyed it.

**F FURINO:** Yes.

**S CAMERON:** We will never see that again.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

**F FURINO:** I thought about things I haven’t thought about in years.

**S CAMERON:** I’ve had a ball with you. This was great.

**F FURINO:** Oh great.

**A POLAND:** Frank Furino, Sue Cameron, two voices of OLLI remembering Hollywood, Once Upon A Long Time Ago part one. In part two, these entertainment veterans will engage in a lively conversation from some iconic Hollywood blondes, Marylin Monroe and Kim Novak in particular. Both know something where of they speak. Kim Novak called Sue Cameron her best friend and of course Frank, author of the play, *Marylin Madness and Me.* Here’s a quick preview.

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

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

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

**A POLAND:** Mister Furino is now working on a play about another Hollywood femme fatal, 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 Miss Cameron is currently in the throes 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 and 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 because it will be 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:** 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)