

EXCLUSIVE!



AN INTERVIEW WITH MY LONGTIME FRIEND BRANDON JAMES, SON OF JEANNE CARMEN AND AUTHOR OF THE BOOK "JEANNE CARMEN: MY WILD WILD LIFE AS A NEW YORK PIN UP QUEEN": HOLLYWOOD, THE MAFIA & MARILYN...

by Gianandrea Colombo – marilyncollectors@virgilio.it

Dear Brandon, in first thanks for your kindness and your time. I'd like to start this with a question about your mother, Jeanne Carmen. Jeanne was a beautiful woman, a popular pin-up of Hollywood and a good actress. Could you tell us something about her, for example, how she was in the private life?

My Mom Jeanne Carmen was an amazing woman. She was very dedicated to her children. She was the best Mom I could have ever hoped for. She lived her life taking care of us and encouraging us and supporting us in everything that we did. The strange thing is that we didn't know much about her film career or modeling career or Hollywood friendships when we were growing up. When we were little kids we lived in Scottsdale, Arizona which was a tiny little town out in the middle of the desert in the state of Arizona in the United States. Today, Scottsdale has become a very big city, but back in the 1970's it was a small little cow town. There were dirt roads, cows, horses and cowboys walking around with horsepoo on their boots. In the summer, there were sandstorms that would cause giant tumbleweeds to blow down the street and bounce off our car. In the winter, there were thunder storms that would cause flash floods and lightning storms that would light up the desert sky. During this time, my Mom worked as a cocktail waitress at a cowboy saloon and restaurant. She was very popular. I remember as a kid my Mom was so pretty that every time we walked into a restaurant or a store people would stop and stare. She always had that effect on people. People were mesmerized and hypnotized by her. Even when she was trying to be incognito with brown hair.

The first time I remember thinking she was different was when she took me to Las Vegas one weekend to meet with a friend of hers named Johnny Roselli. I didn't know it at the time but I later learned that Johnny Roselli was in the Mafia and he worked for Sam Giancana who was the head of the Chicago Mafia. The Mafia had deep ties to Las Vegas and Hollywood and Johnny Roselli was a very handsome, dapper man. Johnny's nickname in the Mob was "Handsome Johnny." Johnny set us up at the Sands Hotel and he seemed to know everyone in Las Vegas. I remember one night he took us to dinner at the Dunes Hotel at a restaurant called The Dome of The Sea. It was a spectacular Vegas style restaurant. It had a clover leaf pool in the middle of the restaurant and there was a beautiful mermaid girl playing a harp on a floating lily pad in the middle of the pool and the lily pad would float back and forth across the restaurant. The mermaid girl had a fish tail and long blond hair that hung down and covered her beautiful breasts. The tables were set up around the pool so that the guest could get a good look at the mermaid girl. I remember I was fascinated with the girl and couldn't take my eyes off her. Johnny noticed that I was staring at her and he said to my Mom "Hey Jeanne, I think the kid likes the broad with the fish tail," and started laughing. Then Johnny said to me "Hey kid, you want the mermaid girl to visit you in your room tonight?" My Mom slapped him on the shoulder and said "Johnny, don't say that, he's just a kid." I remember being a little pissed off at my Mom that night because I wanted to see more of the mermaid girl. LOL

Anyway, that was the last time we ever saw Johnny Roselli because he got kidnapped and murdered in Miami, Florida a short time later in 1976. What I didn't know at the time was that Johnny had told my Mom that she didn't need to hide out in Arizona anymore. Mob boss Sam Giancana had just been murdered in Chicago and Johnny told my Mom she didn't have to worry anymore.

So, my mom decided to move back to California but she didn't want to move back to Hollywood, so she chose a little town on the edge of the Pacific Ocean called Newport Beach. It was a great time and we spent our high school years there. Again, my Mom didn't really talk much about her prior life. I had never seen any of her movies at this point. Again, my Mom was so pretty that everywhere we went people would always stop and stare. It was really amazing. She always had that effect on people. Even more so now because she had dyed her hair blonde again.

It was at this period that I first learned of my Mom's connection to Marilyn Monroe. I remember one day I was at phone and the phone ringed and I answered it and it was an investigative reporter from England named Anthony Summers who was writing a book on the last days of Marilyn Monroe. I remember Summers said he was looking for "an actress named Jeanne Carmen." I said that was my Mom and he asked me if could talk to her and asked him what about and he said "Marilyn Monroe." So I went and found her and I said "Mom

there is a reporter on the phone from England and he wants to talk to you." And she said "What about?" And I said "Marilyn Monroe." And she just froze. I guess she knew it was just a matter of time before they found her.



Photos of Jeanne Carmen in her Hollywood years

The lives of Hollywood celebrities is always a subject of interest to the audience of fans. I remember you wrote an interesting book dedicated to the memory of your mother titled "Jeanne Carmen: My Wild, Wild Life as a New York Pin Up Queen". How and when born the idea of this book?

I decided to write the book after I graduated from college. I went to the USC School of Cinematic Arts in Los Angeles and I thought my Mom's life would make a really good movie. I had started to ask her more questions and I found a large box at the house with a lot of newspaper clipping and old pin up girl magazine covers that featured my mom on them. I was really amazed by all this because I had never heard of any of these pin up girl digest magazines and I had never heard of any of the movies she had been in. So I started a long process of doing research and trying to find the movies. As it turned out she was in a classic monster movie called "The Monster of Piedras Blancas" that had developed a cult following all on it's own. While I was in college, a monster fan magazine called FilmFax did a cover story on the The Monster of Piedras Blancas and in the article it said they hadn't interviewed Jeanne Carmen because she seemed to have vanished from Hollywood without a trace. So it turns out I'm in college a couple of miles away and this magazine is on the newstands and I missed it. I never even knew about it. I found out about it later. I had a really good relationship with my Mom and we had always been great friends so she told me everything.

Jeanne Carmen has always claimed to be a friend of Marilyn Monroe. What can you tell us about that?

My Mom has never "claimed" to be a friend of Marilyn Monroe. My Mom was a friend of Marilyn Monroe and she was Marilyn's next door neighbor at a small apartment complex owned by Frank Sinatra in the 1960's. The address was 882 North Doheny Blvd in West Hollywood. Frank kept the apartment complex as a party house for his buddies and girlfriends so they would have a place to stay in Los Angeles. Marilyn lived in apartment #3 and my Mom lived in apartment #4. This was corroborated by George Jacobs in his book "Mr. S: My Life With Frank Sinatra". The book detailed Jacobs decade long association with Frank Sinatra during the Rat Pack years. Jacobs was Sinatra's personal valet and one of Jacobs duties was to drive my mom to Frank's house in Beverly Hills and to his house in Palm Springs and back home to 882 Doheny. Here is a direct quote from Jacob's book:

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JACOBS states JEANNE CARMEN was a classic blonde starlet and pinup girl with one of the most perfect figures in Hollywood.

CARMEN also had an unusual skill, as a trick-shot golfer.

SINATRA really liked JEANNE, whom he dated both when he was down, and after he was up again.

JACOBS also states that FRANK SINATRA set him up with an apartment in the early sixties along with JEANNE CARMEN and MARILYN MONROE in a building owned by SINATRA at 882 North Doheny Drive in

West Hollywood. The building was knicknamed THE SINATRA ARMS because SINATRA used the complex as a safehouse for his girlfriends and cronies.

JACOBS specifically states that the people living in the complex in the early sixties in addition to MARILYN and me was SINATRA's longtime on-off bedmate JEANNE CARMEN, who became MARILYN's best girlfriend.

Some people have tried to smear my Mom's relationship with Marilyn Monroe and I don't know why. It's just a weird part of being famous. I think the person who started that rumour was a writer who was paid a lot of money to say that Marilyn never had sex with President Kennedy. So in order to do that, he had to deny my Mom's relationship with Marilyn because my Mom was privy to Marilyn and Jack Kennedy's sexual affair. It's a pretty simple scenario. And for the people who say none of Marilyn's friends ever heard of Jeanne Carmen, that is not true. Tony Curtis wrote about my Mom and Marilyn in his book Tony Curtis: American Prince: A Memoir. Here is a quote from Tony's book:

Something about it just seemed so right. I was bedding more than a few great-looking girls at this time in my life, but I liked Marilyn more than any of the others. She was different. She was very fragile and vulnerable, which attracted me greatly. We continued seeing each other for awhile. We would go to her friend JEANNE CARMEN's place, or Howard's bungalow, and once we even went to Marilyn's hotel room. We almost never went out at night in public, though.

And strangely, the people who say none of Marilyn's friend's ever heard of her, no one has ever produced a quote from one of these so called "friend's." Where are the books or interviews from people who "knew" Marilyn who have something bad to say about my Mom? I have never seen any books or heard any direct quotes or seen any tv interviews with anyone who knew Marilyn who had something bad to say about my Mom. And I don't want to hear any quotes from someone no one has ever heard of who says they spoke with some one else who no one has ever heard of and this supposed person told them privately something bad about Jeanne Carmen. Those quotes don't count because they are bullshit
Also, Marilyn was very secretive about her life. Lee Strasberg's daughter wrote this about Marilyn in her book "Marilyn and Me: Sisters; Rivals; Friends", Warner Books (1992):

As time passed MM's adopted families rarely met or were together. She kept the people in her life segregated in cells the way revolutionaries do. She was so secretive about certain things. She loved mystery and drama. Her life was a spy story. For a number of years she had a room she rented in New York that no one knew about except my parents and one or two other people... (p. 163)

...Marilyn told different people different things... tailoring her stories to fit the expectations of the person she was talking to. She was Maya, illusion, all things to all people... (p. 227)



Jeanne Carmen pose with a portrait of Marilyn

Do you speak about this friendship in your book?

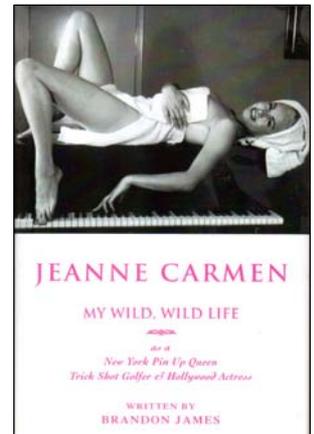
Yes, I speak about my Mom's friendship with Marilyn in the book I wrote about her called "*Jeanne Carmen: My Wild Wild Life as a New York Pin Up Queen, Trick Shot Golfer and Hollywood Actress*"

Here is a link to my book on iTunes.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/jeanne-carmen/id569403432?mt=11>

Here is a link to my book on Amazon.com.

<http://www.amazon.com/JEANNE-CARMEN-Brandon-James-ebook/dp/B003NX6ZJG>



I remember that Jeanne has appeared in several documentaries about the life of Marilyn and she was often a guest during the Memorials celebrations in Los Angeles. She often talked to you about Marilyn?

Yes, my Mom appeared on a lot of documentaries about Marilyn Monroe. She never sought out shows on Marilyn Monroe. Producers and reporters would find her and they always came to her. She never went out looking to be on a Marilyn Monroe documentary. If a documentary or talk show was about Marilyn and they didn't want to talk to her she couldn't care less.

How she described Marilyn and there is a photo of Jeanne Carmen with Marilyn Monroe?

My Mom always held a special place in her heart for Marilyn. She thought Marilyn was the most beautiful, sweetest girl she had ever met. She enjoyed the time she spent with Marilyn. She was Marilyn's friend and next door neighbor. She was never Marilyn's roommate as some people have claimed. Some people in the media would call her Marilyn's roommate and she would always correct them and then they would go right ahead and keep calling her Marilyn's roommate. She had no control over stuff like that.

My Mom didn't keep very many photos or memorabilia from her years in Hollywood. Her apartment was broken into the morning after Marilyn was killed and a lot of stuff was taken and destroyed. Back in the day in Hollywood, people didn't have small personal cameras that they toted around. Photos were taken by professional photographers when people went to premiers and worked on movie sets and stuff like that. I don't know why people harp on the photos with Marilyn so much. My Mom also was a good friend of Tony Curtis during the same period and she had an affair with Tony Curtis during this period. But I have never seen any photo's of my mom with Tony Curtis during the 1950's and 1960's. Then decades later in the 1990's, I was with my Mom one night in Beverly Hills at Spago's restaurant and Tony Curtis was there with his girlfriend Jill who later became his wife. Tony saw my Mom and he was stunned. He almost fell off his chair. It was like he had just seen a ghost. Tony and my Mom rekindled their friendship and Tony invited us to his wedding to Jill at the MGM Hotel in Las Vegas and I took some great photo's of her and Tony together. The reason I bring this up is because if Tony had died mysteriously in his 30's like Marilyn Monroe it would be same exact situation. My Mom would be telling people she was a friend of Tony Curtis and people would be saying "where's the photo's?" Everyone my Mom ever told me she met she met. If they were still alive and she would run into them they would stop in their tracks and say "Oh My God.. Jeanne Carmen... what happened to you? You just disappeared."



Private photos of Jeanne Carmen with Tony and Jill Curtis

It's true that Jeanne claimed to have received a phone call from Marilyn during the tragic evening, when the diva died?

Yes, my Mom received a phone call from Marilyn on the night she died. Marilyn was wanting her to bring over some sleeping pills but my Mom didn't want to go over because it was long drive out to Brentwood and my Mom had been drinking and she didn't want to go over. She always regretted not going over.

In your opinion, how Marilyn Monroe died? Was a suicide or a murder? Do you think that the Mafia may have had a part in this dark death?

Marilyn was murdered by the Mafia because of her ties to the Kennedy's. Specifically Bobby Kennedy. The week before she died, Marilyn went to the Cal Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe to hang out with Frank Sinatra and Peter Lawford. Mob Boss Sam Giancana was there that weekend and Marilyn got really drunk and ended up having sex with Sam Giancana which she regretted later. Marilyn told my mom she was grossed out by Sam and couldn't believe she had sex with him. That weekend Marilyn told Sam Giancana a lot of stuff about the Kennedy's and her relationship with them. That set in motion the terrible events of the last night of Marilyn's life. Johnny Roselli was a friend of my Mom's and a friend of Marilyn Monroe's since her early days in Hollywood as a young starlet. Sam ordered the hit on Marilyn and Johnny brought in the killers from Chicago.

Jeanne Carmen was also close to another Hollywood legend, Elvis Presley. Can you tell us something about?



Yes, my Mom met Elvis Presley at a Halloween party in Hollywood on October 31, 1957. My Mom and Elvis hit it off right away because they both grew up poor in small little towns in the South of the United States. My mom grew up in Paragould, Arkansas and Elvis grew up in Tupelo, Mississippi and then later in Memphis, Tennessee. The night of the party, Elvis was impressed, because my Mom was already in a rock n roll movie that was out in the theatres. The movie was called *UNTAMED YOUTH* and it starred rockabilly legend Eddie Cochran who later recorded a song for my mom called Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie. Elvis had just wrapped *JAILHOUSE ROCK* and it was about to be released. There is a great photo of my Mom with Elvis at the party and strangely, I never saw the photo until after my Mom passed away. So who knows what photo's are still out there to be discovered. My and Elvis dated briefly but sadly, Elvis was drafted into the army soon after the party and my Mom only saw him once again in Las Vegas in the 1970's.

Recently the dutch version of Playboy magazine, has dedicated a large tribute to your mother.

Yes, Playboy in the Netherlands did a spectacular 7 page article celebrating the life and beauty of my Mom for their December 2013 issue. I love the layout. I wish Playboy in every country would run the article so the whole world can learn more about Jeanne Carmen and see how funny and beautiful she was. Here is a link to the whole article.

<http://jeannecarmen.wordpress.com/>

How was the relationship of Jeanne Carmen with body, beauty and sexuality?

My Mom was very comfortable her body and her beauty and her sexuality. She was really ahead of her time. Her body and boobs were all natural. Her tremendously athletic figure was from being a professional trick shot golfer. She had muscles in her legs and arms and butt that can only be gotten through years of practice by an athlete. As far as sexuality, she lived life the way men have lived for centuries. If she was attracted to a man and she wanted to sleep with them, she did. She didn't have any old fashioned ideas. Sex was something to be enjoyed.

Knowing you for years, I remember that you met Hugh Hefner, the founder of Playboy magazine. Mr. Hefner said you anything about Marilyn?

I remember Hugh Hefner and my Mom talked about Marilyn. They were on a CBS documentary about Marilyn that was really good. Hugh Hefner loved Marilyn. He loved her beauty, he loved her style, he loved her personality. Hefner knows how much Marilyn did to make Playboy successful and he has always honored her. Hefner bought the crypt next to Marilyn Monroe in Westwood Cemetery and he will be buried next to her one day. That says it all about he feels about her. Here is a link to the interview with my Mom, Hugh Hefner and Tony Curtis on 48 Hours Mystery

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-marilyn-tapes/>



Jeanne Carmen and Brandon James with Hugh Hefner, founder of Playboy

In conclusion, Jeanne was definitely a beauty and a special woman who has gone through the glamorous world of show business. There is a private remembrance that you would like to share with us?



Yes, Jeanne Carmen was a pin up icon and an amazing golfer and a Hollywood actress and a friend and confidant of some really famous people. But most importantly, she was Mom. She the best Mom I could have ever asked for. We were great friends and I knew all her secrets. If she wasn't an model or a golfer or an actress and she didn't know any famous people, I would still love her just the same because she was funny and she was beautiful and she was enchanting and she touched everyone who ever met her in a special way that made them remember her forever.

*On the right: painting "Jeanne and Marilyn in steam bath"
Artist David Fairington*

