



Interview:
PIN-UPS

by Java

All photos courtesy of Brandon James

Bachelor Pad Magazine interview

Author Brandon James remembers his famous Pin-Up Mom

JEANNE CARMEN



If you kept a scorecard of all the great pin-ups of the 1950's and early 1960's, one name that should be in your starting line-up is Jeanne Carmen. This was a gal who led the most amazing of Hollywood lives. The people in her life read like a checklist of Rat Pack Era and beyond! I recently talked with Brandon James, Jeanne's son and number one fan, about her life, career, and tell-all book!

BACHELOR PAD MAGAZINE: "My Wild, Wild Life as a New York Pin Up Queen, Trick Shot Golfer & Hollywood Actress"...that is sure some title. Jeanne really did have some life. Give us a thumbnail of her career.

BRANDON JAMES: Hahaha...Yes. That is some title. I really think we did a good job capturing the multi-faceted career and life she led. Many famous people are strictly one thing: an actor, a painter, an athlete, a model and that's the focus of their entire life.

She was a country bumpkin. She was a famous New York pin up girl alongside her rival Bettie Page. She was a scratch golfer and the world's only female trick shot golfer. She was a real life mob moll and a golf hustler sponsored by real life gangster Johnny Roselli and the Mob in Las Vegas. She was a Hollywood actress who starred in the classic horror movie *The Monster of Piedras Blancas* and she got to co-star in gangster flicks like *Guns Don't Argue* and westerns like *The 3 Outlaws* and the teenage rock n roll flick *Untamed Youth* and she even got to slap *The 3 Stooges* around in the comedic short *A Merry Mix Up*. An then there were all her famous friends and lovers, including Marilyn Monroe, John F Kennedy, Robert F Kennedy, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis Jr., Bob Hope, Elvis Presley, Clark Gable, Howard Hughes, Errol Flynn and countless others.

My Mom's life's journey could have ended badly at so many points along the way but she always seemed to land on her feet and she always seemed to meet men who wanted to help her and to protect her. My mom never felt victimized by anyone in Hollywood. She never looked back on her life with any regret or any bitterness about anything she ever did. She had a hell of a good time and she loved every minute of it. When she finally passed away in 2007 at age 77 she told me and my sisters not to be



sad and to keep the party going. And that is what we have tried to do in her honor.

BPM: Of course I got to meet Jeanne and interview her before she passed. She was glamorous and a little wild then. I can only imagine her in her prime.

BJ: Yes, I remember when we met you in Las Vegas during the annual Viva Las Vegas celebration. It was a crazy wild weekend. My Mom was blown away by all the young people who remembered her and she was blown away at how the new generation was keeping the pin-up girl and the rockabilly culture alive. My Mom was amazed at how she, along with Bettie Page, were being celebrated for their pin-up girl status after so many years. Then I remember we went to a party you were throwing at a little bar off the strip. It was the very first Java's Bachelor Pad Cocktails & Cheesecake party and it was a blast. And my Mom really liked

you, Java, and she loved your Hugh Hefner vibe and like Hef, she could tell you really loved the pin-up girl culture and all the girls and eccentric characters that go along with it.



BPM: And we loved Jeanne! One of the things I know is she was in a lot...and I mean a lot...of men's magazines of the 1950's...both as a blonde and a brunette. She was a natural beauty. That's totally understandable. But being a natural at trick golf. That's astounding. How did that happen? And it also seems like Jeanne like hustling unsuspecting men on the golf course.

BJ: My mom's career as a golfer was unplanned and totally out of left field. She was sitting at her modeling agent's office in New York City when a call came in to model some women's golf wear for a professional golfer and world renowned trick shot artist named Jack Redmond. They started to chat and Jack explained what he did.

Then, on a lark, he teed up a ball and asked my mom to hit it. He handed her a driver and she turned it upside down and hit the ball left handed in a perfect swing and knocked the drape down. Jack's eyes bugged out and his mouth dropped open. Thinking it was a fluke, he teed another ball up and showed her the right way to hold the club and had her hit it again. She swung again with a perfect swing and knocked the drape down again. Jack was astounded. He said she had a perfect natural

swing. Then being a master showman he realized that his trick shot golf act could use a hot female sidekick so he took my Mom under his wing and taught her how to play the game of golf and all his trick shots.

They went up to the Catskills and stayed at a famous resort called the Concorde Hotel and played golf night and day for six months until she had mastered all the trick shots and then they decided to go on the road together performing at country clubs and conventions. They would do a short 7 minute act and collect a \$1,000.00 per show and be on to the next gig. They could perform 5 or 6 shows in a day. It was great money in the 1950's.

BPM: There is no shortage of famous men who make appearance in this book. A real who's who kiss and tell. She fell in with Vegas mobster as well as Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Clark Gable, and of course Elvis. These are some real crazy stories in this book. What's your favorite?

BJ: I know that a lot of people like to hear the stories about Marilyn Monroe, but as a guy, my personal favorites are the chapters on Errol Flynn, Elvis Presley, Howard Hughes and Frank Sinatra and Johnny Roselli and the Las Vegas mob. Briefly, I love the story about how Errol Flynn set up an elaborate ruse at his Hollywood Hills mansion to try to trick my Mom into partaking in an orgy he had planned for the night in a secret sex room he had built in his house. Then I love the story of how my

Mom invited Elvis over to her apartment for dinner and attempted to cook him a



special southern fried chicken dinner. As a gift, Elvis brought her a sexy French Maid outfit. My Mom put it on and then went over to check on the chicken cooking in the oven. When she bent over, it was more than Elvis could handle and well...I guess the chicken ended up burning that night.

BPM: And of course Jeanne was a close friend to Marilyn Monroe. What was that relationship like?

BJ: My Mom met Marilyn Monroe at a bar near the Actors Studio in New York City in the early 1950's. Marilyn was filming the movie Niagara in upstate New York. Marilyn was already infatuated with the Actors Studio and wanted to study with Lee Strasberg but hadn't gotten up the nerve to join. My Mom had a scene to do that day and she was at the bar studying her lines. She sat next to a girl with straight black hair with bangs who had a Cleopatra vibe going on. They started talking about acting and modeling and hit it off right away. Then my Mom excused herself to go to the bathroom. When she came out of the stall she saw this hot platinum blond standing in front of the mirror putting lipstick on. The blonde said "Jeanne" in a light breathy voice and my Mom's eyes bugged out and she was like "Oh my God, I've been talking to Marilyn Monroe for the last half hour and didn't even know it." They both started laughing and that's how their friendship started. My Mom said that at that time, Marilyn was famous but her fame didn't really explode



until after Niagara came out and she married Joe DiMaggio. The period where they spent the most time together was after Marilyn divorced Arthur Miller and she left New York City and moved back to West Hollywood. Marilyn returned to a little apartment complex at 882 North Doheny Blvd. Frank Sinatra owned the building at the time and he kept it as a safe house for his girlfriends and buddies.

My Mom lived in apartment #4 and Marilyn lived next door in apartment #3. This was in 1961 and 1962.

BPM: There's a great story about Jeanne, Marilyn, and Jack Benny in a steam room. Want to share that?

BJ: Yes, Jack Benny, my Mom and Marilyn Monroe went to a steam room on Santa Monica Blvd with Jack Benny. Jack wore a fake beard and dark glasses and a baseball hat so he wouldn't be recognized.

They did it several times. Then one time they were all three in the steam room wearing their towels and Marilyn and my Mom were talking and laughing and gossiping when suddenly Marilyn looked down and saw that Jack Benny was visibly excited which was uncharacteristic for him. Usually he was cool with the girls being naked around him and he always behaved like



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a perfect gentleman. However this time, he became aroused and started to pinch my Mom's and Marilyn's boobs and butts which they were not having any part of. Suddenly Jack became belligerent and used explicit language which shocked Marilyn and my Mom. They decided they needed to cool Jack down a bit so they tackled him and because Jack was older and hardly a muscleman, he immediately fell to the floor and didn't put up much of a fight. My Mom took a large eucalyptus branch out of one of the pots in the steam room and began spanking Jack with it while Marilyn had him in a head lock. My Mom scolded him and with each swat she would say "Jack are you ever going to use foul words again?" and Jack would mutter "No...never."

"Are you ever going to pinch Marilyn's butt again?" Swat!!! "No...never." Then Jack faked a heart attack and my Mom and Marilyn freaked out thinking it was real and they rolled Jack over and began to administer CPR and Marilyn started to give him mouth to mouth resuscitation when Jack suddenly burst out laughing. They all had a good laugh on the way home thinking about that one.

BPM: During her friendship with Marilyn, Jeanne was part of the whole JFK, RFK love triangle. Tell us a little about that.

BJ: It was during the period that Marilyn and my mom lived at 882 North Doheny Blvd in Frank Sinatra's apartment complex that Marilyn Monroe started her affair with President Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy. Marilyn also started spending a lot of time with Peter Lawford and Peter's role at the time in the Kennedy family was to get girls for Jack Kennedy.

It was during this period that my Mom and Marilyn went to a wild pool party at Peter's beach house and Jack Kennedy tried to get

them to have a threesome with him. Jack gently massaged my Mom's shoulders and told her "Think of it as a New Frontier. The Frontier of the 1960's. And ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country. And girls, this afternoon, think of me as your country." It was also during this period that my Mom



and Marilyn went to a nude beach with Bobby Kennedy in Malibu. Bobby was at Marilyn's apartment one day and he noticed a fake beard and glasses laying around and he asked what it was all about. Marilyn and my Mom told Bobby about how they would go to a steam bath on Santa Monica Blvd with Jack Benny and Jack would wear the

disguise so nobody would recognize him. Bobby started laughing and said if Jack Benny could get away with it he could. Then



Marilyn and Mom dared Bobby to don the disguise and go to the nude beach in Malibu and Bobby being a Kennedy couldn't resist a dare and went along with it.

BPM: So many wild stories! And I know what you told us here us just a part of it. Now, if you want us to remember one thing about Jeanne Carmen, what would it be?

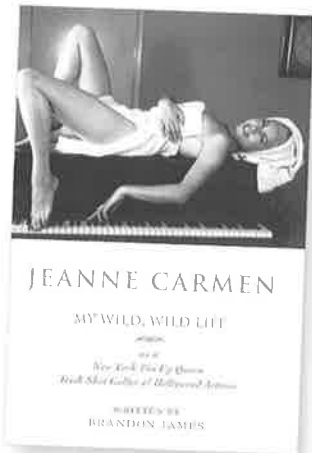
BJ: My Mom always said that more than anything she loved being a pin-up girl. That is the way she saw herself. She got pulled into acting like a lot of models do but acting was never her passion. She always saw herself as a pin-up girl. There was a natural quality about her that drew people in, both guys and girls, and made them gravitate towards her. And she loved to pose for the camera and the camera loved her and you put all those elements together and you have a true pin-up girl. And she also loved being a great golfer. It fell into her lap by accident but it really made her different. She said that golfing gave her class and respect and introduced her to many circles of people she never would have met otherwise. It was a man's sport and she could hold her own with the best of them. But once she had a family, she said that raising her kids was the one thing that gave her the greatest joy. She waited until she was older to have kids, so she had

pretty much done everything imaginable. So she was okay putting the past behind her and raising her kids and living as a regular mom without talking about or dwelling on the past. Then, like Bettie Page, the spotlight of fame came back and revisited her and honored her for stuff she had done a long time ago when she was a young girl.

So yes my Mom really did lead a Wild, Wild Life. And yes, it's all true. And yes, my Mom Jeanne Carmen really was all these things: a pin-up icon, an amazing golfer, a Hollywood actress and a friend and confidant of some really famous people.

But most importantly, to me, she was my Mom. She was the best Mom my sisters and I could have ever asked for. We were great friends and I knew all her secrets. If by some weird twist of fate, she hadn't

been a 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 charming and she was beautiful and enchanting and she touched everyone who ever met her in a special way that made them remember her forever.



Editor's Note:

There's an extended interview with Jeanne Carmen conducted in 2006 over at Java's Bachelor Pad. You can find it online on our site at: www.javasbachelorpad.com/jeannecarmeninterview1.html

Booze, Babes & Burly-Q!

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MAGAZINE

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