



Hello Darlin': Tall (and Absolutely True) Tales About My Life

Larry Hagman, Todd Gold

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On November 21, 1980, over 350 million people worldwide tuned in to find out: *Who shot J.R.?*

In portraying the scheming, ruthless J.R. in *Dallas* during its entire run, from 1978 to 1991, Larry Hagman reached a level of fame and recognition that is rare, if not unique. Now the man behind J.R. tells his own story in an autobiography that is at once rowdy and moving, self-searching and scandalous, juicy and a “recovery story”—and often outrageously funny.

Though Larry Hagman is best known for his starring roles in two hugely successful—and very different—television series, *I Dream of Jeannie* and *Dallas*, his life has been a star act from birth.

Born to the theatrical purple as the son of the legendary Mary Martin, Larry Hagman received his first exposure to the heady world of show business through her—as well as experiencing a childhood that was lavish and glamorous and full of problems. His father was a tough, smart, wealthy Texas lawyer (sound familiar?), his mother Broadway's most beloved leading lady, and the young Larry Hagman was torn between their two very different worlds. After his parents' marriage ended, he was shunted from one boarding school to another, trying to satisfy his father's expectations by working as a cowboy, hunting, and raising hell and still to live up to his mother's expectations in the world of the theater.

In the end, theater won out, and, following his mother's example, he began to pursue a career as an actor. Following a stint in a soap opera, he got his big break with *I Dream of Jeannie*, and from that came instant fame and celebrity, from which he never looked back. Weaving hilarious (and often scandalous) stories about his early years in show business into a personal story that is breathlessly engaging, Larry Hagman shares his behind-the-scenes life with the reader, his star-studded cast of characters including Linda Gray, Victoria Principal, Barbara Eden, Jean Arthur, and Joan Collins, not to mention George C. Scott, Burgess Meredith, Joshua Logan, Jack Nicholson, Sidney Lumet, and Valerie Perrine, to name only a few.

But with the success came many temptations, a few of which Larry Hagman succumbed to, and about which he writes candidly and unsparingly in this memoir, including his battle with drugs and alcohol and his subsequent recovery.

It was as J.R., however, in the phenomenally successful series *Dallas* (the second longest-running TV drama in history), that Hagman earned his greatest fame. Taking the reader behind the scenes, he shares many stories of ego clashes, offscreen relationships, and flamboyant behavior during his work on that series—and the pain he experienced as drugs and alcohol began to take their toll. In fact the greatest drama in Larry Hagman's life—after his long, loving, and successful marriage to his wife, Maj—came when he was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and entered into a race against time to find a liver donor.

The “recovery” side of his story is not something he takes for granted, having overcome two addictions as well as undergoing a liver transplant in 1995 and a subsequent near-fatal motorcycle accident. His account of these difficulties is at once unflinchingly courageous and matter-of-fact and will be a source of inspiration to many readers. Despite problems that would have stopped most people, Larry Hagman continues to work on television and in film (he made a brilliant appearance in Mike Nichols's film about presidential ambition, *Primary Colors*) and enjoys life hugely.

Dishy, witty, frank, and unsparing of Larry Hagman himself and of others, *Hello Darlin'* is, like its author, destined for international fame—a rare memoir by a show-business celebrity that not only makes us laugh, applaud, and cry, but also leaves us with respect and admiration for a man who can not only tell a good story about others, but reveal something of himself.

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