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Jim Flint: The Boy From Peoria

Tracy Baim, Owen Keehnen

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Jim Flint: The Boy From Peoria Tracy Baim, Owen Keehnen
Available in both black-and-white and color editions. Meet Jim Flint, known to many as Felicia—a truly remarkable man who has done some truly remarkable things. Raised in Peoria, Illinois, Flint was a precocious kid who “shined shoes” for older gentlemen at age 8 and joined the Navy at 17. He was a serviceman with a distinguished record who dreamed of becoming a missionary brother, yet only months later became one of the most popular gay bartenders in Chicago. Before long, he was stopping traffic on Clark Street as a roller-skating, baton-twirling drag queen, eager to garner attention for his now-legendary female impersonation bar, the Baton Show Lounge. Running a gay bar in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s meant placating corrupt police and city inspectors eager for bribes, as well as shadowy, silk-suited Mafiosi. In addition to the Baton, in a few scant years Flint was also running a down-and-dirty leather bar and heading a gay motorcycle club. In the process he became a community leader, eventually even running for the Cook County Board as one of Chicago’s first openly gay candidates for public office. Flint also found the time to lay the foundations for a gay sports league. Flint’s story includes dozens of unforgettable characters such as Baton stars Chilli Pepper, Ginger Grant and Mimi Marks, transgender entertainment legends Alexandra Billings and Candis Cayne, and many others who inhabit the spotlights, the dressing rooms, and the evolving world of female impersonation. Flint is also the founder of the celebrated Continental Pageant System. As a witness to and a pioneer in the formation of the modern LGBT community, Flint has attracted memorable people from all walks of life. Meet Richie, the Baton doorman who hurled insults at the customers, Tillie the Dirty Old Lady, a parade of madcap patrons, battling bartender boyfriends, handsome S&M bikers and club kids, sports stars, celebrities, political bigwigs, and gay-rights activists of all descriptions. Unfortunately, domestic violence, serial killers, and drug addictions were some of the dangers in Flint’s circle, and of course the AIDS epidemic ushered in its own storm of drama and deep tragedy. In the midst of all this is Flint himself: energetic, warmhearted and generous, yet quick-tempered and opinionated, always respectful of his flamboyant, ultraglamorous, often emotionally fragile bevy of supertalented performers. Jim Flint: The Boy From Peoria is the colorful story of an amazing man and the LGBT community he helped to shape, as he championed an out-of-the-closet, be-who-you-are lifestyle. Authors Tracy Baim and Owen Keehnen unravel the many mysteries of Chicago gay community icon Jim Flint in this provocative new biography.

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