

➔ *New Products that are Worth a Closer Look*

# PRINCE OF DRONES: THE REGINALD DENNY STORY

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**HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU** with the name Reginald Denny? In most cases, it correlates with the generation in which you grew up. For me, he was King Boris and Commodore Schmidlapp in the 1960s *Batman*, first on television and then the latter from the movie. Syndication introduced me to a man who helped further our hobby and took his final flight before I had even landed, but I wouldn't have known that then.

Reginald appeared in more than 200 films, was an accomplished stage actor, and became a regular TV actor later in his career. However, if he had only been an accomplished actor, you wouldn't be reading about him in a model aircraft publication. You see, he was also the "prince of drones."

It's time that Reginald's story was told, and who better to share the story of a World War I aviator, actor, and hobbyist who had the foresight to believe that model airplanes could be of benefit to the military than his own granddaughter, Kimberly Pucci, who put that knowledge into a book. A glance at the back cover of the book provides the following summary of what readers will find inside:

*"Prince of Drones* is the remarkable story of Reginald Denny, a forgotten luminary in Hollywood and aviation history. Kim Pucci's frank and compelling text, along with a trove of behind-the-scenes photographs, shines a light on Denny and brings him to life as an actor, family man, World War I fighter pilot, RC airplane hobbyist, and innovative visionary for military unmanned aircraft. It is the last category that will surprise most people. The tale of his trials and perseverance during the development of his early target drone aircraft, along with the formation of the

Radioplane Company and his eventual ouster, is as dramatic as any Hollywood movie. Hollywood and aviation helped build Southern California into the dynamic region it is today. In *Prince of Drones*, they are intimately entwined in the saga of Reginald Denny."

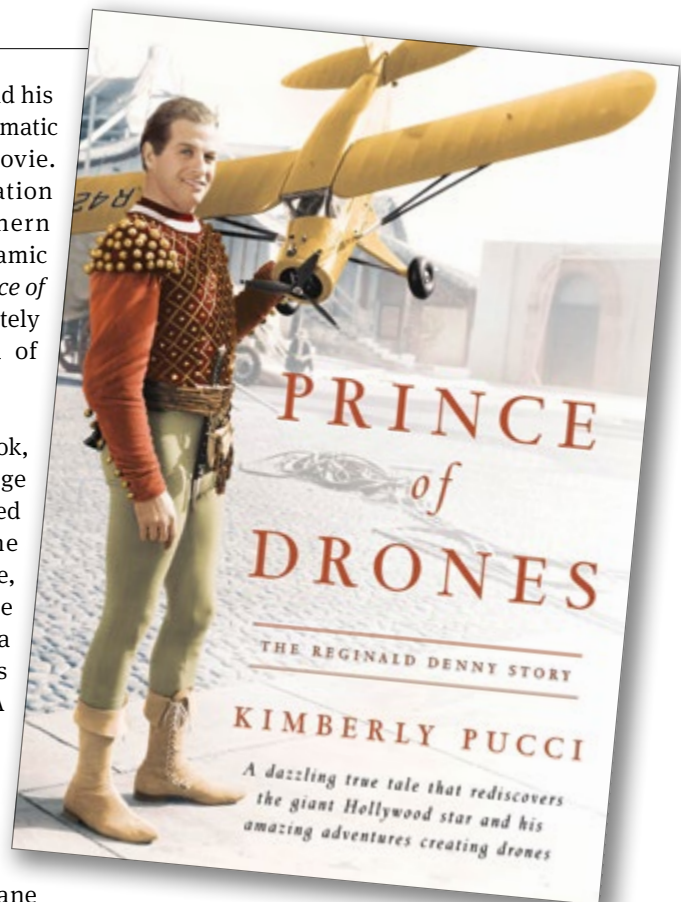
Before reading the book, I had a little knowledge about some of the included topics, such as the Dennyplane, Radioplane, Dennykite, and the famous actor who ran a hobby shop that was located in Hollywood. (A sign from that store is on display at the National Model Aviation Museum.)

I was also aware of the fact that Norma Jeane (Mortenson) Baker, or Marilyn Monroe as she was later known, was discovered while constructing RC target drones in Reginald's factory.


I eagerly read the book to learn more about Reginald Denny, the full-scale and model aviator, and found myself intrigued by so much more. It is filled with details about the silent era of film, the beginnings of Hollywood studios, and many famous names from Hollywood's yesteryear.

It is clear that the author spent much time researching her grandfather. She takes readers on a journey where they feel almost like costars who are following Reginald through his life because they are present for both the highs and lows.

Most of the aviation content, other than



that of his service as a WW I aviator, is featured when the book reaches the 1930s, but the fact that I didn't rush there with the help of the table of contents is a compliment to the author.

I highly recommend this book to those who are interested in the fascinating person Reginald was and/or those who have an interest in Hollywood's early days. The only caveat is that some details about Reginald's childhood might not be suitable for younger readers. 

#### SOURCES:

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