

Robert Heide

Meeting Jackie

I first met Jackie Curtis through theater director Ron Link, during rehearsals of Jackie's outrageous nostalgic/camp Hollywood comedy-play *Glamour Glory, and Gold* at Bastiano's Cellar Studio in the Village. In the cast were platinum Melba LaRose Jr. playing a Jean Harlow-type screen siren, Robert De Niro in his very first acting role playing all the male parts, and Candy Darling, still a brunette before being transformed by Link—with the help of Max Factor theatrical make-up, false eyelashes, blue eye shadow, and for her hair, 20 volume peroxide mixed with white henna ammonia—into the super-blonde Goddess she is thought of today.

Jackie also became a Warhol Superstar, along with her glamorous sisters Candy and Holly Woodlawn. At the time of my first introduction, Jackie was a pretty boy wearing wire-rimmed eyeglasses with natural rosy cheeks and brown hair. Initially shy and introverted, he was given a quick makeover by Svengali Link and changed, with the help of red henna, into a flaming redhead with glossy scarlet lips à la Barbara Stanwyck, Jackie's favorite film star. Gobs of facial glitter would later add to the mix. During the run of *Glamour, Glory, and Gold*, Sally Kirkland, who lived upstairs from me on Christopher Street, brought along her friend Shelley Winters to Bastiano's to see Jackie's show. Shelley was about to open in her own play, *One Night Stands of a Noisy Passenger*, at the Actors' Playhouse on Sheridan Square, and became enamored with the young, sexy, muscular De Niro, deciding to cast him in her show, where he ran around stage in his bathing trunks. Before long, with Shelley's help, De Niro was off to Hollywood to become a movie star.

I liked running around with Jackie in those days to gay bars like Boots and Saddles on Christopher Street, where Jackie liked to dress up in a red *Rebel Without a Cause* jacket, white t-shirt and tight blue jeans, and with his hair swept up into a D.A. as James Dean.

At Jackie's funeral, I was one of the friends who tossed glitter onto his face as he laid there in his coffin dead to the world, while others slipped joints into his shirt pocket. Looking at Jackie for the last time, I knew he would never be forgotten. I thought of the time he and I went to a book party for a Tallulah Bankhead coffee table photo book. Jackie was completely in heaven, posing for a picture with one of his idols—Joan Crawford—who was at the same party, making what turned out to be her very last public appearance. Who could ask for anything more?