

BOOK REVIEWS



Pittsburgh Pizzazz — A Life in Showbiz

By Patti Faloon

Tarentum, Pa.: Word Association Publishers, 2013

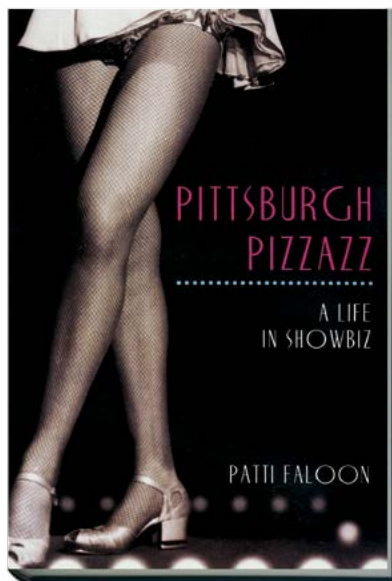
376 pps., photographs

\$18.95 paperback

Reviewed by Paul Roth

I had a hard time putting this book down! Let me explain. This is a memoir (actually, each chapter is a mini-memoir) written by a local entertainer who is a contemporary of the reviewer. It is, essentially, the calendar of a life: family, friends, marriage, and especially show business. Therefore many of the references to local and national celebrities and locations were very familiar and nostalgia-provoking. Harold V. Cohen! Baron Elliott! Bill Bickel! Ted Weems! Vogue Terrace! Syria Mosque! Gordon MacRae! Morey Amsterdam! WCAE! Charlie Byrd! Slim Bryant! Lenny Litman! Rummy Bishop! The list goes on and on.

In its entirety, the book constitutes a biography of the life and career of a Pittsburgh singer-dancer-entertainer, which is enhanced contextually by the plethora of acquaintances and colleagues with whom she and her musician-husband, guitarist Marty Faloon, were associated. The reader will happily discover



that the author appeared in various personas: it depended upon the booking whether she was featured as a balloon-twister, a clown, member of a girl's singing duo, vocalist with her husband (as a duo or with his band), or featured vocal soloist. All of these talents provided for a lifelong, productive career.

Easy reading is accommodated by the book's organization: a chronologic sequence of short chapters, each devoted to a specific narrative or topic. Many photographs enhance the text.

I recommend it both to contemporaries who want to be treated to memories of the popular showbiz and club entertainers of the greater Pittsburgh region and to younger folk who desire to be oriented in what show business was like during the period covered by the author's career.

Another appealing facet is the author's memory (or diary), such as when she

Due to a computer error, the Spring Book Reviews contained typos; those reviews are reprinted here in full, followed by new reviews.

reflects upon the details of her Niagara Falls honeymoon stay in 1950: "The prices at the hotel seem archaic compared to today. Hotel Statler was a 'big deal' hotel at the time. A three-night stay: \$9.50 per night including a meal and valet. Total with taxes: \$31.75. Wow!" Wow indeed.

What is most compelling is the author's optimistic and sometimes humorous takes on the events in her life. She even conveys these traits in her narrative of confronting some of the more tragic occurrences like death and illness. The initial printing had some loose editing, especially in the spelling of proper names and song titles, which was fixed in later printings.

An excerpt from the book's last paragraph pretty well covers the author's (and for that matter, the reviewer's) outlook: "Here I am, an octogenarian and still doing what I love! Call me spunky or spry, I'm fine with that. I say to those still able to do something well that they love, DON'T EVER STOP!"



Paul Roth is retired from the Computer Science faculty of Virginia Tech. He is a noted musicologist, specializing in popular and show music from 1900 through 1960, and has produced and hosted musical radio and TV programs. He wrote "Pittsburgh's Dance Band Era" in the Fall 2013 issue of this magazine.