



Call Me Lucky: A Texan in Hollywood

Robert Hinkle

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“Do you think you could teach Rock Hudson to talk like you do?”

The question came from famed Hollywood director George Stevens, and an affirmative answer propelled Bob Hinkle into a fifty-year career in Hollywood as a speech coach, actor, producer, director, and friend to the stars. Along the way, Hinkle helped Rock Hudson, Dennis Hopper, Carroll Baker, and Mercedes McCambridge talk like Texans for the 1956 epic film *Giant*. He also helped create the character Jett Rink with James Dean, who became a best friend, and he consoled Elizabeth Taylor personally when Dean was killed in a tragic car accident before the film was released.

A few years later, Paul Newman asked Hinkle to do for him what he'd done for James Dean. The result was Newman's powerful portrayal of a Texas no-good in the Academy Award-winning film *Hud* (1963). Hinkle could—and did—stop by the LBJ Ranch to exchange pleasantries with the president of the United States. He did likewise with Elvis Presley at Graceland. Good friends with Robert Wagner, Hinkle even taught Wagner's wife Natalie Wood how to throw a rope. He appeared in numerous television series, including *Gunsmoke*, *Bonanza*, *Dragnet*, and *Walker, Texas Ranger*. On a handshake, he worked as country music legend Marty Robbins's manager, and he helped Evel Knievel rise to fame.

From his birth in Brownfield, Texas, to a family so poor “they could only afford a tumbleweed as a pet,” Hinkle went on to gain acclaim in Hollywood. Through it all, he remained the salty, down-to-earth former rodeo cowboy from West Texas who could talk his way into—or out of—most any situation. More than forty photographs, including rare behind-the-scenes glimpses of the stars Hinkle met and befriended along the way, complement this rousing, never-dull memoir.

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