



House of Hilton

By Jerry Oppenheimer

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This intimate, shocking—and thoroughly unauthorized—portrait of the Hiltons chronicles the family’s amazing odyssey from poverty and obscurity to glory and glamour.

From Conrad Hilton, the eccentric “innkeeper to the world” who built a global empire beginning with a fleabag in a dusty Texas backwater, to Paris Hilton, his great-granddaughter, whose fame took off with a sex video, *House of Hilton* is the unauthorized, eye-popping portrait of one of America’s most outrageous dynasties.

If you want to know how Paris Hilton became who she is, you have to know where she came from. From scores of candid and exclusive interviews, from private documents and public records, New York Times bestselling author Jerry Oppenheimer has dug deeply into her paternal and maternal family roots to reveal the often shocking, tragic, and comic lives that helped shape the world’s most famous and fabulous “celebutante.”

The cast of characters includes Paris’s maternal grandmother, a materialistic “stage mother from hell.” There is Paris’s maternal grandfather, who became an alcoholic housepainter. The life of Paris’s mother, Kathy Hilton, groomed by her mother to be a star and marry rich, is candidly revealed, too, as is that of Paris’s father, Rick, Conrad’s grandson.

Paris’s tabloid antics are truly in the Hilton tradition. Set against a glittery Hollywood backdrop—with appearances by stars like Elizabeth Taylor, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Natalie Wood, and Joan Collins—House of Hilton brings to light a cornucopia of closely held Hilton family secrets and sexual peccadilloes, such as the many affairs and the nightclub-brawling, boozing, and pill-popping life of Paris’s great-uncle, Nick Hilton. The story of his hellish marriage to Liz Taylor alone rivals any of today’s Hollywood breakups.

Behind it all was Conrad Hilton, who built his worldwide empire through the Great Depression while others were jumping out of windows. A devout Catholic publicly, his personal life was that of an unrepentant sinner. His first marriage was to Mary Barron Hilton, a sexy, hard-drinking, gambling Kentucky teenager half Conrad’s age. Wife number two was the gorgeous Zsa Zsa, who, like Paris,

was famous for being famous. Their tumultuous marriage and headline-making divorce are revealed here in all their juicy glory.

In all, *House of Hilton* is a gripping American saga, from the fire and passions that built a business empire to the debauchery and amorality passed on from one generation to the next.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Master of the quick celebrity bio (*Idol: Rock Hudson*, etc.), Oppenheimer does a cursory, glib job of dishing the dirt on the famous hotelier dynasty established by Conrad Hilton by the 1920s. Oppenheimer begins and ends his increasingly sordid saga with the plight of the youngest in the Hilton line, arriviste Paris, who made herself an instant household name in 2002 with an erotic home video pirated on the Internet. Oppenheimer works backward from Paris's maternal line, which stars a succession of pushy stage moms and gold diggers like her mother, Kathleen, a successful child model; he then moves on to her paternal line, featuring great-grandfather Conrad Hilton, a big-talking Catholic German from San Antonio, Tex., who made a name and a fortune buying hotels, eventually marrying the apocryphal Miss Hungary, Zsa Zsa Gabor. However, with his first wife, Mary, he produced the three sons (Nick, Barron, and Eric) who would fuel the subsequent family slide, especially glamorous firstborn Nicky, the deeply alcoholic Hollywood skirt chaser who had the honor of being Elizabeth Taylor's first husband (for seven months). The reader will gasp to learn of the Hilton men's sexual athletics—and shudder to hear that such a privileged family could be so shockingly uneducated and uncouth. (Nov. 17)

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About the Author

Jerry Oppenheimer is a New York Times bestselling author who has been writing definitive biographies of American icons for twenty years. He has worked in all facets of journalism, from national investigative reporting in Washington DC to producing TV news and documentaries.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Like many children of the rich and famous, Paris Hilton didn't always get to spend quality time with her parents, especially her mother. A socially ambitious young woman, Kathleen Elizabeth Avanzino Richards Hilton, who had married into the celebrated Hilton Hotel family, was often out and about. With little time on her hands for mothering, she was cavalier about leaving her firstborn with the hired help or with relatives.

This was made abundantly clear to Patricia Skipworth Hilton, the first wife of Conrad Hilton's third son, Eric. A Texas beauty who had married into the Hilton family in her late teens, Pat, a mother of four, had become quite close over the years to her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Marilyn and Barron Hilton, parents of Kathy's husband, Rick. The second of Conrad's three sons, Barron had succeeded the Hilton patriarch as head of the international hotel empire. Pat adored Marilyn, a former cheerleader who herself was a gorgeous teenage bride when she became part of the Hilton family. (The Hilton men, from Conrad on down, were known for taking young'uns for their brides.)

Whenever Pat visited Los Angeles from her home in Houston, Marilyn insisted that she stay at their spectacular estate. It was during one of those occasions, when Pat was "in the throes" of one of her many divorce actions in what was a hellish marriage to Eric Hilton--hellish marriages not being an oddity in the Hilton dynasty--that she observed new mother Kathy Hilton in action.

"I was there talking with Marilyn when here comes Kathy with Paris, who was nine months old and a great big, fat, pretty baby," Pat Hilton says in her Lone Star State drawl. "Kathy said, 'Meet Star'--she called Paris

'Star' from day one--'Would you like to hold her for a minute?' That was the last I saw Kathy that day. She took off until that evening. I wanted to kill her! She didn't leave any instructions on what time Paris had to be fed. There weren't any diapers. She just left me in the lurch."

Furious, Pat vented to Marilyn, who listened sympathetically and knowingly, and rolled her eyes. "Marilyn said, laughing, 'Well, I guess you're it for the day. Kathy does this all the time. She just wants to go out. And she knew you'd take care of the kid.'"

When Kathy finally reappeared at day's end, Pat confronted her. "How dare you do this to me?" According to Pat, "Kathy's only reply was, 'Oh, I had to be somewhere. I didn't think you'd mind.' I warned her, 'Never, ever do this to me again!' But it didn't bother her at all. Kathy Hilton's very selfish and very spoiled and very self-centered, and that absolutely carries through to Paris."

When Rick and Kathy Hilton traveled and deigned to bring Paris along, they naturally stayed in Hilton hotels, where they demanded special services, including babysitting care for their daughter, despite the fact that Barron Hilton had a strict rule barring Hiltons from getting special treatment or favorable room rates.

"When they were in New York, and Paris was just an infant, Kathy and Rick would get one of the women from housekeeping at the New York Hilton to babysit for them," states a Hilton Hotels insider. "They would leave Paris on Friday and not come back for her until late Sunday. It was a known fact that Kathy and Rick liked to party, and when Kathy was a young mother she had no qualms about flaunting the Hilton name and taking advantage of it. She'd let it be known that Rick was going to be 'the next Mr. Hilton,' so hotel executives were afraid to argue with her. None of Barron's [eight] kids were getting a free ride. The only one who ever took advantage was Kathy."

Kathy and Rick were prone to show up out of the blue without reservations at a Hilton hotel on a busy weekend and demand the best suite in the house, fine wine and food, and babysitting for Paris. One of their targets was the Hilton in Parsippany, New Jersey, which had a four-star restaurant and a hip discotheque. The hotel also housed a number of lavishly furnished suites leased by big corporations.

When Paris was just a toddler, Rick and Kathy appeared on a busy Friday with her in tow along with their two small dogs (which weren't permitted in the hotel unless they were Seeing Eye dogs). Though the hotel was fully booked, they made it clear they were Hiltons and wanted VIP treatment--the best suite, complimentary food, and a babysitter because Paris's parents wanted to spend the night boogying in the disco. The manager, who didn't want to get in hot water with members of the ruling family, broke the ironclad no-special-treatment rule and put them in a suite, vacant for the weekend, that was leased by the pharmaceutical company Warner-Lambert.

"I thought, 'What the hell, they're going to leave on Sunday so it will work out,'" he says. "But no sooner do I get back to my office, I get a call from Rick Hilton who says, 'It's customary that we get a welcoming amenity.' I told him, 'Oh, absolutely.' Then he says, 'We like a nice California red wine and something white, and my wife likes seafood.' And then he demanded a babysitter. I had to convince the hotel's elderly German seamstress to do the sitting."

The manager felt relieved when the Hiltons checked out Sunday night, because Warner-Lambert people were coming in the next morning. But then he got a call to return to the hotel posthaste because there was a major crisis.

"I go up to the suite the Hiltons were using, and there's dog shit and dog piss all over the place--I mean

everywhere. They didn't walk their dogs for the entire weekend. It was a real nightmare. We ended up having housekeeping do a detailed, deep cleaning. After all that, I never heard a word from Rick or Kathy Hilton--never got a thank-you, nothing. But that's where their mind-set is. They act like the imperial court."

Kathy and Rick also threw their weight around at the Las Vegas Hilton, another place where they liked to party, and where Paris was spotted as a little girl wearing mascara and eyeliner painted on by her mother. (By then, Kathy was booking Paris into charity event fashion shows.) The Hiltons, including Paris and her sister, Nicky, quickly earned a reputation at the Sin City Hilton for "arrogance, threats, and intimidation," according to a number of present and former employees, such as Margaret Mary (Peggy) Cusack Yakovlev, who also served as a personal assistant to Eric Hilton and his second wife, Bibi.

"Kathy and Rick and the girls looked down their noses at the help and were very judgmental," states Yakovlev. "Paris and Nicky were running loose in the hotel, were always trouble, and the mother always seemed to be coaching them." She notes that the Hilton sisters usually were accompanied by hired help who looked like they were treated despicably.

When Paris and Nicky informed hotel employees who they were, the workers ran the other way. The philosophy was--if you run into Rick and Kathy or their daughters, just keep your head down and your mouth shut. "Kathy was absolutely pushy, arrogant, condescending, and presumptuous, and Paris picked that up from her," observes Yakovlev. "The spotlight always had to be on Kathy. It was always, 'Do you know who we are?' 'Do you know who I am?' Rick was usually like a bump on a log. He had a look on his face like he was taking a bowel movement."

However, Yakovlev remembers an incident in which Paris's father was shockingly outspoken. It happened some weeks after Kathy Hilton gave birth to one of their two sons, Conrad and Barron. Rick Hilton was smoking a celebratory cigar outside the main entrance of the Las Vegas Hilton's crowded celebrity showroom. Yakovlev, who was standing nearby, overheard another Hilton employee congratulating the proud father on having such a large and handsome brood. "She asked him what he attributed it to," says Yakovlev, "and he said, loud enough for anyone to hear, 'I like to fuck!' Guests were passing by and heard it and looked at him. I couldn't believe it." (Some detractors felt that Rick and Kathy did not measure up to the proud Hilton name. One, who personally knew the family, even put his feelings into print. Taki Theodoracopoulos, a controversial figure who wrote the "High Life" column for Britain's respected Spectator magazine, declared in a column that Kathy and Rick "are straight out of The Beverly Hillbillies." He claimed, "They eat hamburgers covered with ketchup washed down with Chateau Latour." He called Rick "a hick . . . as thick as they come," and proclaimed that neither Rick nor Kathy would ever "win the Parenting of the Year award.")

When Paris was about twelve and still on the innocent side, she had pet ferrets that she carried in her Prada purse. The cute little rodents accompanied her everywhere she went in the hotel, which caused headaches for the Hilton managers, who were afraid to challenge her for fear of her mother's wrath.

On one occasion, Yakovlev recalls, Paris and her sister showed up at the glitzy hotel showroom where the big acts entertained audiences of thirteen hundred at each performance. "The girls brought the ferrets in with them and Rick and Kathy didn't care. They could not see any further ahead than what their children wanted, while we were responsible for the safety of the guests. We did not want those little rodents escaping and rubbing up against customers' ankles."

One of the managers with gumption decided to confront the Hiltons. "You need to get your girls and your rodents out of here," he told the Hiltons. "They're not coming in. I am not allowing them."

Kathy Hilton put her hands on her hips and got in his face and said, "Well, their grandfather [Barron] will certainly hear about this! Their grandfather is going to know from me how you are treating his granddaughters." The manager's businesslike but emphatic response was, "You ...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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