



Inga: Kennedy's Great Love, Hitler's Perfect Beauty, and J. Edgar Hoover's Prime Suspect

Scott Farris

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Inga Arvad was the great love of President John F. Kennedy's life, and also Adolf Hitler's special guest at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. She was an actress, a foreign correspondent, a popular Washington columnist, an explorer who lived among a tribe of headhunters, one of Hollywood's most influential gossip columnists, and a suspected Nazi spy. The latter nearly got Kennedy cashiered out of the Navy, but instead set in motion the chain of events that led to him becoming a war hero. Inga lived where gossip intersects with history, and her story, as told by author Scott Farris in *Inga*, is a rollicking story that demonstrates how private lives influence public events. It is also a Hitchcockian tale of how difficult it can be to prove innocence when unjustly accused, and how, as Inga phrased it, what was once a halo can slip down and become a hangman's noose. In addition to her romance with Kennedy and the attention of Hitler, Arvad married three times -- to an Egyptian diplomat who insisted they never had divorced, the brilliant filmmaker Paul Fejos whom Charlie Chaplin considered a genius, and the famed cowboy movie star Tim McCoy. She also had affairs with noted surgeon Dr. William Cahan, the prolific writer John Gunther, and Winston's Churchill's right hand man, Baron Robert Boothby. She was pursued by Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch, and Swedish industrialist Axel Wenner-Gren, reputedly the richest man in the world at the time, offered her \$1 million to have his child. Inga was Miss Denmark of 1931, but by all accounts her admirers among the European and American elite loved Inga not for her physical beauty alone, but for her joie de vivre. She was a genius with people, she was daring and adventurous, and she was their equal in intellect. Like Isak Dinesen and Clare Boothe Luce, Inga Arvad led a life that both sheds light on and defies the stereotypes of women of her time.

Inga: Kennedy's Great Love, Hitler's Perfect Beauty, and J. Edgar Hoover's Prime Suspect Details

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Susan Williams says

Excellent bio

I had never heard of Inga Arvad before even though I have read many books about the Kennedys. The book was a bit slow starting but then picked up and was fascinating. Her life was well worthy of a biography and even if she had not had a relationship with JFK, it would still have been of note. Her interviews and meetings with Hitler and top staff, her column writing in DC during the beginning of WWII as well as in Hollywood as Sheila Graham's successor, and her fascinating friendships and love affairs were all of interest. A good read for all Kennedy fans, showing a younger JFK when he was still unsure of his political future and special gifts.

Susan Bell says

Excellent addition to the Kennedy canon; the ultimately tragic love story of the woman who probably had more to do with JFK becoming President than anyone else.

D. Thrush says

Inga's mother encouraged her to have a life of adventure and importance. With this encouragement, Inga traveled the world, spoke four languages, and found herself in the company of some interesting men. As a young journalist, she interviewed Hitler twice who was quite taken with her and, due to this, she was long suspected of being a spy. She married an Egyptian ambassador's son after being crowned Miss Denmark and her second husband was an anthropologist with whom she lived among headhunters. She became friends with Kathleen Kennedy while working as a journalist in America who introduced her to her brother, Jack. They fell hard for each other, but it would've damaged his political aspirations to marry a twice divorced Protestant though she believed in him and urged him to fulfill his potential thereby changing both their destinies. Because she was suspected of being a spy, the FBI bugged her phone and apartment during much of the time of her relationship with Kennedy. Inga loved love and pursued it relentlessly as she lived a life filled with admirers and adventure. I'm surprised that there are numerous minor typos such as "their" instead of "there" and "close door" instead of "closed door." This always detracts from the story for me. But I still highly recommend this fascinating story of someone you never heard of who affected history.

Heather G says

Fair and Interesting

This book doesn't "dish dirt" on anyone and it doesn't make it any less interesting. She deserved to have her story told so well.

Neil Harmon says

AN interesting, though somewhat exhaustive, account of Inga Arvad. She was one of those people who was around an incredible number of notable people and events. Thanks to years of FBI surveillance, the author was able to include a surprising level of detail. I have to wonder if the relationship with JFK wasn't perhaps emphasized past its place but there is no doubt that Ms. Arvid's life was interesting and provided some additional insight into the pre and post WW-II periods. I listened to the Audible version and the narration was well done and interesting to listen to while commuting.

False says

The biography of Inga Arvad, the lover of John F. Kennedy for a period of less than a year in the 1940's prior to and during his military service. The infamous Inga Binga or as Kennedy called her "Inger Binger." Danish born, wed young to a Egyptian diplomat, gossipy journalist who interviewed Goebbels and Hitler and got stuck with Hitler's moniker of the "perfect Aryan beauty"--a compliment that haunted her the rest of her life and set J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI on her trail and tail bugging and taping her all over the place. Friend to Kennedy's sister Kathleen, Kick, the author contends that Kick was the only Kennedy child to ever break free and stand up to her father, not beholden by his money to keep her freedom. I disagree with that. He continued to fund her when she fled back to London and married outside the Catholic church. She wasn't living a comfortable lifestyle in a good neighborhood with her good deeds at the Red Cross. The author feels Inga insisted on love with sex, and that despite one or two passionate loves in her life (Kennedy being one of them,) she never really had a man who provided her with the mutual respect and support she needed. I would concur. I called Mata Hari a butterfly in the sun in another review (as Mata Hari referred to herself.) Inga was another who used that metaphor and it's apt for burning brightly in youth with all spent for the rest of your life. Sad to say.

Marilyn says

I am torn between giving a 3 or a 4 star rating here. I didn't think it quite lived up to its title and there were sections that got somewhat repetitive, but it was a very good read overall in spite of that.

This was a 'BookBub' offering and I probably wouldn't have picked it up otherwise, but I'm glad that I did. This was a great look at the years leading up to and through WWII. Inga Arvad was right there in the middle of many fascinating situations as history unfolded through the 1930's and 40's. Part of the way that I judge historical non-fiction and biographies like this one, is by how many "googles" it prompts me to do to learn more about people and events. This one caused quite a lot of them.

The reason that I probably would not have picked it up other than BookBub is that I feel overloaded with speculation about the love life of JFK. I definitely do not think that this book proved its premise that Inga was the "love of his life". It annoyed me in it's marginalization of JFK's marriage to Jackie and of Inga's long marriage to Tim McCoy. Inga and JFK had a fling when he was very young and they sometimes remained in touch through the years. I didn't see this as a great romance. At some points in the book that annoyed me, but the story didn't really need "Romeo and Juliette" to make it well worth a read.

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Interesting just to long

I would have loved to see more photographs of her and the men she loved as well as of her mother. Her life is an interesting one, sad in the end that she questioned her role in their lives or that she had left a legacy, she obviously did.

What a fascinating woman! I feel like I went from never having heard of Inga Arvad in my life to being her biggest fan. A brave, romantic, well-spoken beauty queen that went on expeditions for ancient pyramids and (temporarily) tamed the beast that was JFK's crazy libido.

Reading this was a delight. The book was well researched and never felt particularly biased, as it shone a light on some of Inga's less than amazing moments along with her triumphs. I loved the photos in the center of the book. I loved the last line of the book being Inga's eulogy. I knew how her and Jack's love story had to end, but I still felt a little crushed when it did.

How heartbreaking to think that she had regrets at the end of her life. After everything she saw and wrote and did, I can only hope she's found peace now in all that she managed to accomplish.

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