MEDIA PRESS KIT

Out of the Blue

The Life and Legend of Kirby "Sky King" Grant

by Tim Trott

Tim Trott Publishing



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Contents

1. Book at a Glance
2. Press Release
3. Book Synopsis
4. About the Author
5. Author Q&A
6. Book Excerpts
7. Fast Facts and Story Angles
8. Endorsements and Reviews
9. Author Media Kit
10. Author Availability and Events
11. Additional Marketing Materials
12. Purchase Information
13. Media Contact

1. Book at a Glance

Title	Out of the Blue
Subtitle	The Life and Legend of Kirby “Sky King” Grant
Author	Tim Trott
Publisher	Tim Trott Audio, Inc.
ISBN	978-1-967047-12-3 and 978-1-967047-13-0
Genre	Biography / Television history / Aviation
Format(s)	Paperback and Ebook
Trim size / Pages	6 x 9 in. – 104 pages
Publication date	August 27, 2017
Retail price	$15.95/$2.99
Distribution	IngramSpark, Amazon, B&N, KOBO, more
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One-Line Pitch

The true story behind the cowboy pilot who came “out of the blue of the western sky” and inspired a generation of pilots and astronauts, told by an author who knew him and fulfilled a promise to his widow.

Short Description (50 words)

Kirby Grant played Sky King, TV’s favorite flying cowboy, and launched countless aviation careers. Drawing on hours of taped recollections from Grant’s wife, Carolyn, and interviews with family, pilots, and collectors, Tim Trott separates fact from legend in the life of a singer, actor, and genuine good guy.

2. Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Biography Separates Fact from Legend in the Life of TV's "Sky King"

Author Tim Trott keeps a decades-old promise to Kirby Grant's widow with Out of the Blue: The Life and Legend of Kirby "Sky King" Grant

CENTRAL FLORIDA — For a generation of Americans, Saturday mornings meant Sky King, the Arizona rancher who solved crimes from the cockpit of his twin-engine Cessna, the *Songbird*. The black-and-white series ran in network and syndicated reruns for years and inspired untold numbers of airline pilots, flight instructors, air traffic controllers, and astronauts. Now, *Out of the Blue: The Life and Legend of Kirby "Sky King" Grant* (Tim Trott Audio, Inc.) tells the real story of the man behind the white hat.

Author Tim Trott knew Kirby Grant personally after the actor retired to Central Florida in 1971. Trott visited Grant as he recovered from heart surgery in 1978, when Grant shared his plan to write a memoir titled *Out of the Blue*, after the show's famous opening line. That book was never written. After Grant's death in 1985, his wife, Carolyn, recorded more than six hours of memories on cassette tapes for Trott. *Out of the Blue* is the fulfillment of the promise he made to her.

The book traces Grant's path from child violin prodigy in Montana to radio singer, B-movie Mountie, and finally the star of *Sky King*. It follows the airplanes, from the wood-and-fabric Cessna T-50 "Bamboo Bomber" to the Cessna 310, and reveals who actually flew them. It also covers Grant's later years: circus tours, the Great American Air Show, his work as a goodwill ambassador in Orlando, and his death in a car accident on the way to watch a Space Shuttle Challenger launch.

Along the way, Trott takes on the myths that have grown up around the show. Was Kirby Grant really a licensed pilot? Were dozens of episodes lost in a warehouse fire? Did Grant own a private airstrip? The answers, drawn from FAA records, aircraft registries, and firsthand interviews with Grant's son Kip, Sky King Airport's Steve and Amy Brown, aerobatic pilot Walt Pierce, and others, may surprise longtime fans.

"Kirby wore that white hat long after his acting days were over," said Trott. "He was the quintessential good guy. I knew him on a first-name basis, but I know him better after working on this book."

Out of the Blue: The Life and Legend of Kirby "Sky King" Grant (ISBN 978-1-967047-12-3) is available now in paperback and ebook online and can be ordered through bookstores worldwide.

About the Author

Tim Trott is an author, publisher, and creative director based in Central Florida, and a licensed FAA Part 107 operator and FDLE certified UAV instructor. He writes nonfiction and fiction, including sci-fi thrillers, political suspense, and paranormal mystery, and hosts the *@AuthorToAuthor* podcast on YouTube. Learn more at TimTrottWrites.com.

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3. Book Synopsis

“Out of the blue of the western sky... comes Sky King!” With those words, millions of children in the 1950s and 1960s met Schuyler “Sky” King, the flying rancher of the Flying Crown Ranch, his niece Penny, and the *Songbird*. Behind the character stood Kirby Grant Hoon, Jr., born in Butte, Montana, in 1911: a concert violinist by age 12, a scholarship graduate of the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, an NBC radio singer, and a Western movie star who played Canadian Mounties before he ever played a pilot.

Out of the Blue follows Sky King from its origins as a radio serial, with a young Mike Wallace as announcer, to the television series that began in 1951 and lived on in reruns for years. It details the production companies, directors, cast, and sponsors, and provides an episode guide for all four seasons. Aviation readers will find a detailed history of the aircraft that played the *Songbird*, including the Cessna T-50 Bobcat supplied by legendary Hollywood pilot Paul Mantz and the Cessna 310s flown by Cessna sales manager Bill Fergusson, who became an accidental stunt pilot.

The heart of the book is Kirby Grant himself, told largely through his wife Carolyn’s taped memories: their whirlwind courtship, a honeymoon dinner in blue jeans, a wine tip from Gabby Hayes, a stray arrow returned by William Holden, and the family’s years of ups and downs. After the series ended, Grant toured with the circus, recorded country music in Nashville, announced the Great American Air Show, lent his name to a Florida youth ranch, and greeted visitors at SeaWorld Orlando, where people regularly told him, “I’m a pilot because of you.”

Grant died on October 30, 1985, in a car accident on his way to watch the launch of Space Shuttle Challenger mission STS-61-A. Even his death became the subject of myth. With humor and affection, Tim Trott sets the record straight on that story and many others, while showing why the legend of Sky King still matters.

4. About the Author

Short Bio (about 50 words)

Tim Trott is an author, publisher, and creative director based in Central Florida. He knew Kirby "Sky King" Grant personally and worked with him on the Great American Air Show. A licensed FAA Part 107 operator and FDLE certified UAV instructor, Trott writes nonfiction and fiction and hosts the *@AuthorToAuthor* podcast on YouTube.

Full Bio

Tim Trott is an author, publisher, and creative director based in Central Florida. His work spans fiction, training materials, and business communication, with a focus on clarity, structure, and reader engagement.

Trott's connection to Sky King runs deep. He met Kirby and Carolyn Grant after they moved to Central Florida in 1971. Trott was hired as film editor to clean and ship the Sky King television prints for syndication for Television Syndication Company (TVSCO). TVSCO also produced the Great American Air Show event where Grant served as announcer

The author visited Grant's home after his 1978 heart surgery. It was then that Grant told him about the book he intended to write, *Out of the Blue*. After Grant's death, Carolyn Grant entrusted Trott with hours of recorded memories, and this biography is the result.

An aviation enthusiast in his own right, Trott is a licensed FAA Part 107 drone pilot and FDLE certified UAV instructor and has authored several drone instruction textbooks. His fiction writing includes sci-fi alien thrillers, political suspense, and paranormal mystery, and he names the (entire) Hardy Boys series, Aldous Huxley, and Robert Heinlein among his early influences. He hosts the *@AuthorToAuthor* podcast on YouTube, where he interviews writers about craft, process, and the publishing landscape. His Tim Trott Productions YouTube channel features Kirby Grant's television interviews, including his appearance on *Good Morning America*.

Learn more at TimTrottWrites.com.

5. Author Q&A

The following questions and answers may be used in full or in part for articles, features, and interview preparation.

Q: How did you come to know Kirby Grant?

A: I met Kirby and his wife, Carolyn, after they retired to Central Florida in 1971. Earlier, I had worked as a film editor to maintain and ship the Sky King 16 mm television film prints for syndication. I still have a film, but it is crumbling. Acetate films do not age well. I worked in the sound truck for the Great American Air Show, where Kirby was the announcer. He was a guest in my house, and I was a guest in his. I never asked for his autograph. You don't ask friends for autographs.

Q: Where did the title come from?

A: From Kirby himself. When I visited him after his heart surgery in 1978, he told me he was writing a book, and it would be called *Out of the Blue*, after the announcer's opening line on the show. He even mentioned it on *Good Morning America*. After he died, Carolyn told me the book had existed only in his mind and intentions. Writing it fulfills a promise I made to her.

Q: Why did the book take so long?

A: Like Kirby, I intended to write it and kept not quite getting around to it. But I kept meeting people who had been inspired by Sky King. My wife finally pointed out that if I kept putting it off, everyone touched by the show would be gone. So, I went back to Carolyn's tapes and started tracking down Kirby's son Kip, the Browns at Sky King Airport, air show pilot Walt Pierce, collectors, and aviation researchers.

Q: Was Kirby Grant a real pilot?

A: That is the question everyone asks, and the book devotes a full chapter to it. The short answer is that there is no FAA record of a pilot certificate under Kirby Grant or his legal name, Kirby Grant Hoon, Jr. Kirby himself told one pilot he had flown straight and level but never took off or landed. Yet his son remembers flying with him many times. I'll let readers weigh the evidence. Licensed or not, he inspired an awful lot of real pilots.

Q: Who actually flew the Songbird?

A: In the early episodes, the Cessna T-50 Bobcat flying sequences came from Paul Mantz's company, which supplied the plane and pilots. For the Cessna 310, it was Bill Fergusson, Cessna's sales manager for the 310. He delivered the airplane to the set expecting to check out another pilot, and ended up doing the flying himself. He said it was some of the most fun flying he'd done since his military days.

Q: What about the famous “lost episodes”?

A: The story goes that many Sky King masters were destroyed in a fire at a New York film storage company. I found no evidence of such a fire at that address, and the current copyright holder says there are no lost episodes. There are plenty of myths like that, which is why the subtitle says “Legend” instead of “Life and Times.”

Q: What surprised you most in your research?

A: How many inconsistencies there are, even about the end of Kirby’s life. One hometown bank ad reported that he died piloting a plane, in the wrong year. In fact, he died in a car accident on his way to watch a Space Shuttle Challenger launch, a mission whose crew included astronauts who said they were inspired by Sky King.

Q: What was Kirby Grant like off-camera?

A: Exactly what you would hope. He never smoked in front of fans. When the Browns dedicated Sky King Airport, he stood in a hot office signing autographs for hours, and when they offered to pay him, he refused. He never really took off that white hat.

Q: Who is this book for?

A: Anyone who grew up watching Sky King, anyone who became a pilot because of him, and anyone who loves aviation, classic television, or a good story about a good man. If you’re of a certain age, there’s also enough trivia in here to win a few bar bets.

6. Book Excerpts

The following excerpts may be reprinted with credit to Out of the Blue: The Life and Legend of Kirby "Sky King" Grant *by Tim Trott.*

Excerpt 1: The Accidental Stunt Pilot

Bill Fergusson delivered a sparkling new Cessna 310B to the filming site at Apple Valley, California. The stunt pilot next on the assignment list for the job was only a single-engine rated pilot. Cessna told Bill to stay long enough to check out the new guy for a twin-engine rating and then return to Wichita. "He's doing great," Bill reported to his boss at Cessna, Frank Martin, "but I can't sign him off. The insurance company would never approve it."

"What do you mean?" his boss exploded.

"The flying involves landing on roads and dry lake beds, flying under bridges, and landing with both engines shut down. He's just not up to that sort of flying yet. Maybe they can provide another pilot," Bill explained. The McGowan Brothers were already breathing down Martin's neck, eager to begin filming. Everyone's blood pressure was rising. Martin snapped: "Well, you stay and do the flying yourself," and he slammed down the phone. Bill soon discovered it was some of the most fun flying he had ever done since his military days.

Excerpt 2: The Wine Expert

As she was trying to pick out "some fancy wine," a gentleman she described as "dapper-dan" asked, "Little lady, are you having a problem picking out your wine?" He was clean-shaven and dressed in a nice gray suit and tie. She explained about the dinner party, and he offered to help. The man made a selection and said, "I think this will go well with your shrimp curry." The gentleman went up to the checkout and said, "If this little lady doesn't like the wine, I want you to put it on my bill."

Carolyn did not know who it was, so after the gentleman left, she asked the clerk. Later, when she got home, she said to Kirby, "Guess who picked out the wine?" Kirby replied, "Gabby Hayes?" It was!

Excerpt 3: "No, Sir, You're Not About To"

When Steve Brown described Kirby Grant, he said, "You'd never meet a finer guy. He came here and dedicated the airport. It was August, and it

was hot... (Kirby) was standing in the office, we didn't have air conditioning, and there was a line of people, one after another, going through there, getting autographs, and him standing there signing them. Sweat was running off him." Later, Steven's dad told Kirby, "I need to pay you," and Kirby said, "No, sir, you're not about to."

7. Fast Facts and Story Angles

Did You Know?

- Kirby Grant's legal name was Kirby Grant Hoon, Jr. He was born November 24, 1911, in Butte, Montana.
- He was a professional violinist at age 12 and made his screen debut playing violin in the 1935 film *I Dream Too Much*.
- In 1939 he won the Jesse L. Lasky "Gateway to Hollywood" radio talent search and acted for years under the name Robert Stanton.
- Sky King began as a radio serial in 1946. The announcer was a young Mike Wallace, later of *60 Minutes*.
- The Flying Crown Ranch was a house near the Apple Valley Airport in California, not Arizona. A shopping center now stands where the airport was.
- Sky King Airport near Terre Haute, Indiana, named with Grant's help and dedicated in August 1962, still trains pilots today.
- A restored Cessna 310D that toured with Grant as the promotional *Songbird* won Grand Champion at Oshkosh.
- Jimmy Buffett's song "Pencil Thin Mustache" includes a nod to Sky King's niece, Penny.
- Kirby Grant died October 30, 1985, en route to the launch of Space Shuttle Challenger mission STS-61-A.

Myths the Book Addresses

- **Myth:** Kirby Grant flew the Songbird. **Finding:** Professional pilots flew the aerial sequences, and no FAA pilot record exists in his name.
- **Myth:** Dozens of episodes were lost in a New York warehouse fire. **Finding:** No record of such a fire was found, and the rights holder says no episodes are lost.
- **Myth:** Grant owned a ranch with a private airstrip in Valley Center, California. **Finding:** He did not.
- **Myth:** Grant died piloting his own plane. **Finding:** He died in a car accident on State Road 50 near Titusville, Florida.

Suggested Story Angles

- **Aviation media:** The real airplanes behind the *Songbird*, their registrations, and their fates.

- **Nostalgia and classic TV:** How a low-budget children's show became a cult favorite and career launcher.
- **Florida media:** Sky King's Central Florida years in Oviedo, Winter Springs, SeaWorld, and Cypress Gardens.
- **Indiana and Montana media:** Terre Haute's Sky King Airport and Grant's Montana roots.
- **Space and science media:** The Sky King connection to the astronauts of STS-61-A.
- **Human interest:** An author keeping a forty-year-old promise to a friend's widow.

8. Endorsements and Reviews

“A treasure of a book” (Michael Sherrer)

“What you need to know about the man and the series” (Capt. Jim Carone)

“Very informative” (Rose Schnitzke)

“Great book” (Robert L)

Suggested resources: aviation organizations and museums, Sky King collectors and historians, flight instructors and airline pilots who credit the show, ARC readers, and classic-television reviewers.

9. Author Media Kit

Online

- **Website:** TimTrottWrites.com
- **YouTube:** *Author to Author* podcast
- **YouTube:** Tim Trott Productions channel (Kirby Grant television interviews, including *Good Morning America*)
- **Social media:** Facebook.com/TimTrottWrites

10. Author Availability and Events

Tim Trott is available for print, radio, podcast, television, and virtual interviews, as well as book signings and presentations at airshows, aviation museums, EAA chapters, flying clubs, libraries, and classic-television events.

- **Interview formats:** Phone, video, in studio (Florida)
- **Travel area:** Florida
- **Booking lead time:** Two weeks

11. Additional Marketing Materials

The following materials are available on request in print-ready and web-ready formats:

- High-resolution front cover (print and digital)
- High-resolution author photo
- Event poster and social media graphics
- Archival photographs, subject to rights clearance (Photo album)

12. Purchase Information

ISBN	978-1-967047-12-3 ---9781549606229 (KDP)
Print edition	Paperback ($15.95)
Ebook edition	978-1-967047-13-0 ($2.99)
Online retailers	Amazon, Barnes & Noble, KOBO, etc.
Bookstores	Available to order through Ingram distribution
Direct from author	TimTrottWrites.com

13. Media Contact

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Review copies are available to qualified media on request.