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ONE OF US: UNF professor shadowed producer to break into Hollywood, in print

At first glance, Tom Barton seems an unlikely collaborator for the autobiography of a veteran Hollywood producer.

Barton, a Jacksonville native and father of four, is the Kip professor of accounting at the University of North Florida. He has written four previous books, but they were all, by his own description, "very esoteric, business-related" books.

Tell Me How You Love the Picture, on the other hand, is a breezy, anecdotal account of the more than 55 years Ed Feldman has spent in the movie business, first as a publicist, then as a studio executive, and finally as a producer of such movies as Witness, The Truman Show and K-19: The Widowmaker.

Feldman is barely known outside his industry, though he is well-known and widely respected within it. But he is a born raconteur with a wealth of wonderful anecdotes about such legendary figures as David O. Selznick, John Wayne, Bette Davis, Stanley Kubrick and Harrison Ford.

Equally important, as far as Barton is concerned, is that Feldman is a very good producer.

"He's good at managing a movie budget, which is what I wanted to look at," Barton said.

When Barton was first introduced to Feldman about a decade ago, Barton was trying to interest publishers in a book about "the tension between creativity and finance" in the movie industry. But his publishers wanted an expose of how Hollywood wastes money on things like a star's cocaine habit, not a subject that interested Barton.

But Barton sensed Feldman had a story he might want to tell, one that might fit Barton's purposes.

Barton began to hang around Feldman's sets whenever he could. He spent time in Florida's panhandle where much of the 1998 movie *The Truman Show* was filmed. Later, during a business trip to Toronto in 2002, Barton visited the set of another Feldman production: *K-19: The Widowmaker*.

"Over the years I would meet him at various places," Feldman said in a phone interview from California.

"We used to think he was with the CIA," he joked, "always hanging around watching us."

Finally, the two men agreed to collaborate on a book. It would be Feldman's story, told in his voice, but written by Barton.

Barton could then use Feldman's life to show how a top producer deals with risk management in a very risky but very lucrative business.

Barton spent about 100 hours with Feldman and taped 20 hours of interviews. Then Barton sat down in his Jacksonville home and wrote Feldman's memoir.

It reads like Feldman's memoir.

"From the first chapter he showed me, I knew we were on the same page," Feldman said. "He kept my voice in it. People have said that it sounds like me.

"As I read the book, it reminds me of what a wonderful life I have had."

Barton is planning to use the lessons he learned working with Feldman in some UNF classes, some aimed at accounting students, others at those interested in learning about the movie business.

He's also planning to do some further research on risk management in the movie business, especially on the "risk of lost opportunities." (Imagine you're one of the studio heads who turned down *Star Wars*.)

But for now, he's enjoying an opportunity that wasn't missed.

charlie.pattonjacksonville.com, (904) 359-4413

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