

OBITUARIES



'A TOTAL CHARACTER'

Tom Runyon learned to hunt in his namesake canyon, giving him an appreciation for the outdoors. In 1969, he and his wife opened the Old Place, a restaurant-saloon, in Agoura. It reflected an Old West that had long disappeared.

TOM RUNYON, 1920 - 2009

Writer shared name with canyon, food with famous

VALERIE J. NELSON

Tom Runyon, who shared his family name with a Hollywood Hills canyon and his simple fare at his rough-hewn roadhouse on Mulholland Highway with the famous and famously interesting, has died.

Runyon, a fiction writer and occasional actor, died July 17 of cancer at his longtime home in Malibu, said his son, Morgan.

His ties to the gorge in the heart of the Hollywood Hills date to 1933 — the year before he was born — when his uncle, coal baron Carmen Runyon, bought a what was then known as the Mary Canyon, gave it his name and built a hunting lodge.

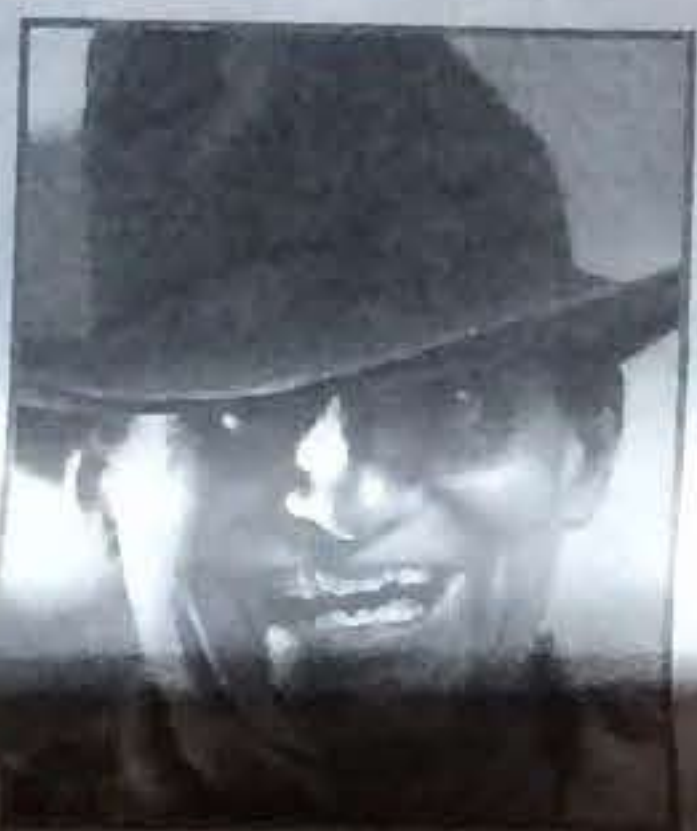
Young Tom learned to hunt in Runyon Canyon, giving him an appreciation for the outdoors. While attending University High, he hid a rifle in his locker so that on his way to his home in Brentwood he could shoot pigeons to feed the falcons that he raised, his son said.

The Old Place, the restaurant-saloon he opened with his wife, Barbara, in Agoura in 1969, reflected an Old West that had long disappeared, just as the city landscape of his youth had. He had played in avocado orchards on Hollywood Boulevard and developed a taste for the lima beans farmed next to his house in Brentwood.

The aptly named Old Place took root in a structure built around 1914 at the juncture of Mulholland Highway and Troutdale Drive. It once housed a general store and post office for Cornell, a hamlet long ago folded into Agoura.

"It might as well be the Yukon," a Times review of the restaurant concluded in 1985. "Funky and rugged, booths as crude as stable stalls, a heavy old wood bar and a beer-drinking crowd of men that are men and women that are women..."

The Old Place, invariably described as "ramshackle," had five booths, two entrees — steak and clams — and a single



Runyon studied at Columbia and wrote for Argosy. He also had roles in several films.

waitress, Barbara. Tom was both cook and dishwasher.

"It was about simple food cooked well," said his son, who plans to reopen the restaurant, which has been closed for a few weeks. "They would say, 'You get what you get and you don't get upset.'"

Actress Al MacGraw used to frequent the Old Place with actor Steve McQueen when they were a married couple in the 1970s and living in Transcan Canyon.

"There were western frontier swinging doors that would burst open and in would come God only knew who," MacGraw told The Times last week. "It was just the polar opposite of Malibu 2010... No one was in stilettos or a haircut of the week. It was a slide-out."

There was "a madness to the place," MacGraw said, and "it had this most extraordinary collection of people," sort of "Malibu renegades."

The famous — actor Robert Mitchum, singer Bob Dylan, director Sam Peckinpah — could be found mingling with bikers and other locals fit for central casting. In 1972, actor Jason Robards was driving

home from the Old Place when he had a near-fatal accident. The restaurant was reportedly also a favorite of Ronald and Nancy Reagan when they owned a nearby ranch.

Runyon "was a total character," MacGraw said. "He was so adored and really smart."

Thomas Mercein Runyon was born April 27, 1920, in Washington, D.C., and moved to Hollywood with his family when he was 9.

His father, Thomas H. Runyon, was a State Department lawyer, and his mother, Cornelia, an artist and sculptor. His older brother, Charles, was an assistant coach at Yale Law School from 1938 to 1939.

After his father died when Runyon was 7, the family moved to Brentwood. Runyon spent most of his high school years at Case, a boarding school in Carpinteria.

He joined the Army Air Forces during World War II and rose to the rank of major, flying cargo missions in North Africa and Italy.

After the war, he studied writing at Columbia University and wrote fiction for Argosy magazine.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, he rented an apartment above the carousel on the Santa Monica Pier. He married Barbara in 1961 and the couple eventually moved to the home on the west end of Malibu that his mother had built in 1937.

He had roles in several films, partly because he would fly to wherever his friends were making movies, then get paid to essentially play himself, his son said.

Peckinpah cast Runyon "in a wonderful part in 'The Getaway,'" MacGraw said of the 1972 film she made with McQueen. "The scenes with Tom as one of the bad guys, he steals 'em."

In addition to his wife, Runyon is survived by a daughter, Alessandra, an artist, of Santa Fe, N.M.; son Morgan, an art director of commercials and music videos, of Topanga Canyon and Malibu; and three grandchildren.

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BOBBY C. WILKS, 1931 - 2009

He was the first black aviator in Coast Guard

JOE HOLLEY

Bobby C. Wilks, the first African American Coast Guard aviator and the first African American to reach the rank of Coast Guard captain, died July 13 at an assisted-living community in Woodbridge, Va., of complications from Parkinson's disease. He was 78.

Wilks, who also was the first African American to command a Coast Guard air station, pulled off a number of daring sea rescues around the world. He received the Air Medal for the initiative, foresight and aeronautical skill he exhibited on the night of Dec. 9, 1971, while piloting his helicopter over the Pacific. Battling gale-force winds and heavy seas, he was able to rendezvous with a Russian vessel 116 miles east of Hilo, Hawaii, and evacuate the ship's critically ill master.

"He was right at the limit of where you can take a helicopter," said Dallas Schmidt, a friend and fellow Coast Guard helicopter pilot at the time. Wilks was Schmidt's flight instructor, or "air daddy."

"Even though he was a commander and I was just an ensign, you never had the feeling that he was pulling rank on you," Schmidt recalled. "He was just a nice, nice man."

John "Bear" Moseley, who was in flight school with Wilks, recalled another near-miraculous open-sea landing Wilks executed in the summer of 1963.

He was instructed to cross a narrow strait in pursuit of a destroyer miles from Cuba. Wilks directed the ship's captain to increase his speed to 27 knots as a way of smoothing out the choppy waters so he could land his HH-3 helicopter on an amphibious plane while taking care not to smash into the destroyer.

He brought the plane down in the ship's wake, got the patient aboard and took off, despite being unable to use jet boosters to help lift the plane out of the water. He basically "balooned the aircraft into the air...smacked the top of the next wave and then was airborne," Moseley said, noting that then-lieutenant Wilks had to worry about banking the plane without stalling, so he wouldn't hit the destroyer.

"He pushed the envelope to its very limit, and his skill brought men and machine home," Moseley said.

Moseley said that in all the years he knew Wilks, he never talked about his pioneering role in the Coast Guard.

"I do not know, of course, what was in his mind, but outwardly our goals were the same — to get our wings and be part of the best damn rescue service in the world," he said.

Bobby Charles Wilks was



WILKS FAMILY

AVIATOR

Bobby Wilks was the first African American to become a Coast Guard captain.

'Even though he was a commander and I was just an ensign, you never had the feeling that he was pulling rank on you.'

— DALLAS SCHMIDT, fellow Coast Guard helicopter pilot

born May 13, 1931, in St. Louis. After attending Stowe Teachers College, now Harris Stowe State University, in St. Louis for two years, he was accepted into the Naval Academy.

He attended in 1950-51 before returning to Stowe, where he received his undergraduate degree. He also received a master's in education from St. Louis University in 1954.

His Coast Guard career began in 1956, when, after receiving his commission as Coast Guard Officer Candidate School in New London, Conn., he was accepted to flight school and subsequently served in San Francisco, the Philippines, Brooklyn and other duty stations.

He accumulated more than 6,000 flight hours in 18 types of aircraft. He also was the project officer for the Sikorsky HH-3 helicopter when the craft was first delivered in the 1960s.

In addition, he was involved with minority recruiting for the Coast Guard Academy and was the Coast Guard liaison to the Federal Aviation Administration.

He made captain in 1977, and was commanding officer of the Coast Guard air station in Brooklyn.

Survivors include his wife of 42 years and a son.

Holley writes for the Washington Post.

PASSINGS

STANLEY MIDDLETON

English novelist

Stanley Middleton, 89, a prolific novelist who shared the prestigious Booker Prize in 1974, has died of cancer, his family said. Middleton died in Nottingham in central England on July 25, a week short of his 90th birthday.

Nearly all of Middleton's 44 novels were based in Nottingham, though he often called it "Beechnall" in his writings.

He was born Aug. 1, 1919, in Nottingham, earned his university degree in the city and taught English at High Pavement school from 1947 to 1981, heading the department for 23 years.

Middleton was 38 when he published his first novel, "A Short Answer," but produced a new book nearly every year thereafter.

"Holiday," which shared the Booker Prize with Nadine Gordimer's "The Conservationist," told of a man struggling with

the death of his son and the decay of his marriage.

STANLEY LEBERGOTT

Economist liked consumerism

Stanley Lebergott, 91, a retired economist and professor who maintained that consumerism had brought positive changes to the American standard of living, died July 24 of cardiac arrest at his home in Middletown, Conn.

Lebergott, a former government economist and Wesleyan University professor, took issue with those who disdained "consumerism" as wasteful, pointless, even immoral.

Consumption, he maintained, has always been an expression of human longing rather than mere acquisitiveness.

Lebergott was born in Detroit on July 22, 1918. He received a bachelor's in 1938 and a master's in 1939, both in economics, from the University of Michigan. He joined the Bu-

reau of Labor Statistics in 1940. His books included "Manpower in Economic Growth" (1964), which he updated 12 years later.

Writing about that book in a 2006 issue of Economic History, Boston University economics professor Robert Margo concluded, "Lebergott's influence on economic history has been profound."

Hironoshin Furuhashi, vice president of international swimming's governing body and one of Japan's first great swimmers, has died. Furuhashi, 89, who helped organize the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, was in Rome for the world championships and died in his sleep, swimming organization officials said Sunday. No cause of death was given.

Shafiq Hout, an aide to Yasser Arafat who fell out with the late Palestinian leader over the 1993 peace accords with Israel and resigned from the Palestine Liberation Organization in protest, died of cancer Sunday in Beirut. He was 77.

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OBITUARIES/FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISHISAWA, Ted Minor
Ago 90, passed away on July 18, 2009. Loving father of Cynthia A. Tanaka (Mas Naito), Sanders M. (Susan) and Phyllis Ishisawa (Greg Verbeck); grandfather of Jason M. (Stacy) and Jocelyn M. Tanaka, and Chanda C., Kai M. and Dawn Ishisawa; great-grandfather of three; brother of Hanako Iguchi. Friend of Karen Katsuka; he is also survived by other relatives.
Private family services were held on Saturday, August 1 at Fukui Mortuary Chapel in The Garden.
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