

OBITUARIES

HELEN O'CONNELL

Helen O'Connell, 73, big band singer whose songs were popular with GIs during World War II, died Sept. 9 in San Diego, Calif., of cancer.

Born in Lima, Ohio, O'Connell's singing career took off in 1939 when she recorded "Green Eyes" with Bob Eberly as a vocalist with the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra.

She also popularized such songs as "Tangerine," "Amapola," "Jim," "I Remember You," "Arthur Murray Taught Me Dancing in a Hurry" and "When the Sun Comes Out."

In the 1950s she worked with Dave Garroway on NBC's "Today Show." For nine years she was hostess of the Miss Universe Pageant, and for several years was a television spokesperson for Polaroid cameras.

This summer she toured with a big band show and performed for the last time at the Valley Forge Music Fair in Valley Forge, Penn., on Aug. 14. She appeared with the orchestras of Artie Shaw, Woody Herman and Glenn Miller, the Pied Pipers and singer Don Cornell.

O'Connell was one of the most popular female singers during the height of the Swing Era, when the big bands toured the nation.

She married Frank DeVol, a composer, arranger and conductor, in 1991.

She was previously married to Clifford Smith Jr., from 1941 to 1951, and to novelist Tom T. Chamales, author of "Never So Few" and "Go Naked in the World," from 1957 until his death in 1960.

Survived by her husband and four daughters.

JIM HARWOOD

Jim Harwood, 55, *Variety* reporter, died Sept. 4 in Free-stone, Calif., of cancer.

At the time of his death, Harwood was the Bay Area stringer for *Variety*. In 1988, he became the paper's first full-time correspondent in the area since the 1920s.

Harwood began working for *Variety* in 1969, when he became the paper's part-time man in San Francisco. In 1975, he

JOHN RAINWATER
(1960-1993)
...from his many friends

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moved to Los Angeles to take a full-time post. He covered financial news and reviewed films, as well as writing occasional droll columns about showbiz.

Harwood began his career in 1959, straight out of college, as a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*.

He quit the *Journal* the next year and moved to San Francisco where he spent 10 years working as a part-time television producer/writer.

Harwood worked in other arenas as well, co-authoring "The Soul Food Cookbook" with Ed Callahan and writing the annual "Sex in Cinema" column for *Playboy* (he had just completed his 16th).

Survived by his son, Eric; daughter, Arden Watson; grandchildren, Dashiell and Ashley Harwood and Charles Donovan Milbauer; and a sister, Tommie Jean Jacobs.

HERVE VILLECHAIZE

Herve Villechaize, 50, the diminutive actor whose shout, "The plane, the plane," opened the popular television show "Fantasy Island," committed suicide Sept. 4 in North Hollywood, Calif.

Villechaize, who left a note saying he was despondent over longtime health problems, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, his publicist David Brokaw said.

The 3-foot, 11-inch Villechaize played Tattoo, the comical sidekick to Ricardo Montalban's Mr. Rourke on "Fantasy Island," which ran on ABC from 1978 through 1984.

Brokaw said Villechaize's common-law wife, Kathy Self, discovered the actor at their North Hollywood home shortly after the shooting.

RENE RAY

Rene Ray, 81, wide-eyed British actress of the '30s and '40s, died Aug. 28 in Jersey, the Channel Islands. Cause of death was not reported.

Born Irene Creese, Ray debuted on the London stage in 1930. In 1936, she played opposite Laurence Olivier in J.B. Priestley's "Bees on the Boat-deck." Her sole Broadway appearance was in Priestley's "An Inspector Calls" in 1947.

Her 40-plus film roles include "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" in 1935 opposite Conrad Veidt, "The Rat" with Anton Walbrook, and "The Green Cockatoo" (both 1937) with John Mills. Though she briefly visited Hollywood in the late '30s, her only American movie was MGM's 1947 "If Winter

Comes," a British-set drama directed by Victor Saville.

She later turned to writing novels and short stories, several of which were adapted for movies and TV, as well as appearing in TV dramas.

Ray became the Countess of Midleton in 1975, after marrying her longtime partner, the Earl of Midleton, in 1975. He died in 1979.

Survived by a sister.

JEROME THOR

Jerome Thor, 69, original star of the popular 1950s television series "Foreign Intrigue," died Aug. 12 in Westwood, Calif., of cardiac arrest.

"Foreign Intrigue," a syndicated mystery show filmed in Europe, ran from 1951 to 1955. Thor played Robert Cannon and popularized the look of the trench-coat-wearing detective; the coat is on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

Prior to coming to Hollywood, Thor performed on Broadway in such productions as "The Marriage Proposal," opposite Elizabeth Bergner, "He Who Gets Slapped," directed by Tyrone Guthrie, "Get Away Old Man," directed by George Abbott and "Golden Boy."

Thor also appeared on television as a guest star in pioneering dramatic anthology programs developed from radio shows such as CBS' "Suspense," hosted by Sebastian Cabot, and "Studio One," among others. Other television credits include "Hill Street Blues," "Quincy" and "Chips."

Among Thor's feature film credits are "55 Days at Peking," "Ten to Midnight" and "The Fall of the Roman Empire."

Thor was a member of the Screen Actor's Guild, Actors' Equity and AFTRA.

Survived by his wife of 47 years, actress Sydna Scott, who starred opposite him in "Foreign Intrigue."

JOHN RAINWATER

John Rainwater, 32, longtime manager for Broadway producers Barry Brown, the late Fritz Holt and Marvin Krauss, and most recently stage manager of the New York company of "Forever Plaid," died Sept. 3 in Rosewell, Ga., of AIDS.

Rainwater moved to New York in 1983, where he was instrumental in setting up both the national and international companies of "La Cage aux folles," for Brown and Holt. He also served as assistant director of the 1988 national tour of "Gentleman Prefer Blonds" and "The Best of the Best," the first

fundraiser for AIDS, held at the Metropolitan Opera.

As a stage manager, Rainwater's credits include "The Night of 100 Stars," "Happy Birthday Mr. Abbott," the national tour of "Elvis: An American Musical" and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

Rainwater later became production stage manager for both the New York and regional regional companies of "Forever Plaid."

Survived by his mother, Diane Hall; father, Steven; stepfather, Robert Hall; a brother, Joe; and grandparents.

WILLIAM A. RAIDY

William A. Raidy, 70, Broadway and Off Broadway theater critic for the *Newhouse News Service* and the *Star Ledger*, died Sept. 4 in New York of congestive heart failure.

Raidy, a Manhattan native, was educated at Georgetown University and the Sorbonne as well as Yale University where he attended theater classes. He earned a master's degree at New York University.

Raidy began his career as a feature writer for the *Long Island Press*. He became theater critic for the syndicate 20 years later and wrote a weekly theater column.

Survived by his twin sister, Marijane.

KENNETH EDWARDS

Kenneth (Kent) Edwards, 75, legit performer, died Aug. 7 in Miami after a three-year battle with Alzheimer's disease.

Edwards career in showbiz began in Hollywood in the early '40s. His first outing was a children's show, "Sis-Boom-Bah." He later starred in the Hollywood Playhouse production of "Thank You, Columbus."

His greatest success was a featured role in "Song of Norway," the first original show performed by the Los Angeles and San Francisco Civic Light Opera, which ran until 1946.

Edwards also appeared with Milton Berle in "Spring in Brazil." Though not a critical success, show was featured in Shubert theaters throughout the country.

Memorial

A celebration of Ruby Keeler, who died Feb. 28, was planned for Sept. 13 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Promenade Theater, Broadway at 76th Street, in New York. The program, arranged by Donald Sadler, was open to the public.

Later, Edwards performed in cabarets at the Plaza Hotel and at the Copacabana in New York; he was featured in shows at the Colonial Inn in Miami and was vocalist to dance team Luis Gomez & Winona.

Survived by two sons, Gary and Robert.

JOHN TRUSCOTT

John Truscott, 57, theater designer and motion picture art director, died Sept. 5 in Melbourne during emergency heart surgery. He had undergone a heart valve replacement five weeks earlier.

Born in 1936, Truscott worked first in Melbourne, joining the National Theatre when he was 16, and later designing his first play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." He went overseas in the early 1960s and had numerous film assignments in London, Paris and Rome. In 1967 he won Academy Awards for the costume design and art direction of "Camelot."

In 1980 he returned to Melbourne where he designed the interiors of the Victorian Arts Centre (VAC), and the exteriors of the 1988 Brisbane Expo. From 1988-91 he was artistic director of the Melbourne Intl. Arts Festival and most recently was artist-in-residence of the VAC.

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