

Currents Passages

SUNDAY
December 30, 2007



THE SAN DIEGO
UNION-TRIBUNE

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In the locals lost, we see the dreams, hopes and the heart of our community



Walter M. Schirra Jr., 84

By Michael Kinsman
STAFF WRITER

A man who made his name in space, two musicians who topped the pop charts at different times and a civic-minded businessman who cut a wide swath through the San Diego community were among the local notables who died in 2007.

Walter M. Schirra Jr., one of America's original seven astronauts and a resident of Rancho Santa Fe for 23 years, died in May at age 84.

Singer Frankie Laine, who had 70 records on the pop charts during the late 1940s and 1950s and had lived in Point Loma since the 1960s, died in February at 93.

San Marcos resident and musician Ike Turner, who participated in the birth of rock 'n' roll in the

early 1950s and then rode to the top of the pop world as part of the Ike & Tina Turner Revue in the 1960s, died in December at 76.

Restaurateur Tom Fat, who expanded his family business from Sacramento to San Diego in 1977 and took an active role in local issues, died in May at 66.

Mr. Schirra made his first flight into space in 1962 and was the only astronaut to fly missions in the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo space programs. During the 1950s, he was a test pilot at the Miramar Naval Air Station.

He returned to San Diego in 1984 and immediately became a highly sought-after guest at social and charitable functions.

He took an active interest in the San Diego Air



Astronaut Scott Carpenter saluted the widow of Wally Schirra Jr., one of the original seven astronauts. *Union-Tribune*

SEE Locals, H10

FINAL CHAPTERS

MANY NOTABLES ARE GONE TOO SOON,
BUT ALL LEAVE A POWERFUL LEGACY BEHIND

going to reflect their heritage. Here are some of the other local residents who died in 2007:

JANUARY

Vernon Taylor, 91, a real estate investor and developer who was the largest land holder in Pacific Beach. His father built the Crystal Pier and owned commercial buildings on Garnet Avenue. Mr. Taylor sent his monthly Army paychecks home during World War II, and his father invested it all in real estate.

Jack Haberstroh, 80, a San Diego State University professor who had his advertising class orchestrate a campaign that got a 2-year-old elected student body president. The candidate was then disqualified for not being enrolled in school, but Mr. Haberstroh's lesson on the power of advertising was a success. His freewheeling teaching style challenged students to think creatively about every problem they faced, and he often had waiting lists for his classes.

FEBRUARY

Jay Haley, 83, didn't have a degree in psychology, but he wrote 23 books on therapy and was a pioneer in family therapy. He favored teaching specific skills to individuals to help them with their problems rather than drawn-out conversations about their family background.

MARCH

Hattie Mae Smith, 106, was part of the 1955 bus boycott by African-Americans in Montgomery, Ala. The boycott was planned for one day



Music legend Ike Turner, credited with the first rock 'n' roll song, moved to San Diego County in the early 1990s, after a stint in prison. *K.C. Alfred / Union-Tribune*

but lasted 13 months. Mrs. Smith said that while she didn't realize at the time how her actions would benefit generations of blacks, she was proud that they did.

Earl Neff, 93, was among the 32,000 people who showed up for opening day at the Del Mar Racetrack in 1937. He was called "Del Mar's original fan" and was celebrated last year for 69 years of attendance at the track.

APRIL

Ron LaPolice, 75, took 20 Ron LaPolice steps one way and 20 Ron LaPolice another way and created the official court for San Diego's homegrown game of Over-The-Line. To this day, the Old Mission Beach Athletic Club uses his steps to honor him as one of the founders of the annual World Championship Over-The-Line Tournament on Fiesta Island.

The Rev. Glenn Allison, 81, spent four decades in San Diego championing the rights and needs of the homeless, minorities, AIDS patients, battered women, immigrants, the mentally ill and the poor. He was a tireless social activist long after others had given up.

Marjorie Minnis Rydell, 83, was a La Jolla housewife who in the 1950s became a pioneering female scuba diver. She spent 10 years diving with biologists, geologists and chemists for the Scripps

Institution of Oceanography.

JUNE

Ron Oakes, 73, was a Canadian-born sports announcer who made it his mission to introduce hockey to San Diego in 1966 when the San Diego Gulls began operation. He spent six years with the Gulls as crowds regularly averaging more than 9,000 people enjoyed the minor league hockey team.

JULY

Allen D. Brown, 87, was a police sergeant in 1965 when he ended an attempted robbery at a downtown San Diego pawnshop that lasted four hours during which an estimated 900 shots were exchanged. In a face-to-face confrontation, he critically wounded the robber with two blasts from his shotgun in what was called one of the largest police gunfights in U.S. history.

C.J. "Pat" Paderewski, 98, known as "Mr. Architect" in San Diego, designed projects such as the geodesic-dome gymnasium at Palomar College, the Coronado City Hall, the east terminal at Lindbergh Field, the outdoor elevator on the El Cortez Hotel in downtown San Diego, more than 200 schools and scores of residential and commercial projects.

Dr. Arun Fotedar, 53, a native of India, became a leading researcher at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer

Center in La Jolla, where he was credited with always trying to see "the big picture" in his work. His innovative work explored cell cycles as a way of interrupting the development of cancer cells before they could spread.

Dr. Floyd Gaffney, 77, was a champion of African-American cultural arts and known as the father of African-American theater in San Diego. He was a theater professor at the University of California San Diego and directed more than 80 plays in San Diego during a 35-year period.

AUGUST

Johnny Aiello, 98, a Sicilian immigrant who moved to San Diego as part of the growing tuna fishing industry, shared his life's memories with tour groups in Little Italy. Visitors would marvel as he described how Little Italy was originally bay-front property until a 1930 dredging project dramatically reshaped San Diego Bay and left Little Italy blocks inland.

SEPTEMBER

Fred Lewis, 78, was a longtime broadcaster and sports announcer who documented the history of San Diego during the past 12 years with "The Heart of San Diego" cable TV show. In 653 interviews, he drew out the history of the area from politicians, civic leaders, athletes, academics and business people.

Donald L. Daley, 87, was a developer with a keen interest in civic affairs who was never well-known to the public. In 1951, he took over the family business of building streets, gutters and sidewalks and directed it into a major highway and home building enterprise.

Gordon "Specs" Powell, 85, a jazz drummer who worked with Miles Davis, Benny Goodman, Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday, also was one of the first black musicians to perform on network radio and television shows. Mr. Powell worked as a musician on "The Ed Sullivan Show," "The Jackie Gleason Show" and "Candid Camera."

Walter Marcyan, 94, one of the first bodybuilders at the original Muscle Beach near Santa Monica in the 1940s. He went on to become a leading developer of fitness equipment, including an early weightlifting machine that helped popularize gym workouts.

OCTOBER

Chuck Griffith, 77, was a screenwriter who built a reputation as a master of the B-movie. His most famous work was 1960's black comedy "The Little Shop of Horrors" that became an off-Broadway musical, which was remade into a movie musical in 1986. Director Roger Corman regularly hired him for his movies, and he worked with such actors as

Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson and Sylvester Stallone.

NOVEMBER

Dr. Leslie Orgel, 80, dedicated more than 40 years of his career at the Salk Institute studying how life began on Earth. Dr. Orgel was one of the first scientists to suggest that RNA, rather than DNA, was the crucial molecule in the development of life.

Beth Montes, 42, was a historic preservationist who got interested in the field after moving to the South Park neighborhood of San Diego. She became an expert in obtaining historical designations for old homes and became a board member and president of Save Our Heritage Organisation, a nonprofit that strives to preserve architectural, cultural and historical segments of the San Diego community.

Daniel Riley, 19, learned that he had a brain tumor as a junior at Eastlake High School in Chula Vista. He was an inspirational leader to those around him, wrote about his disease on his college entrance essay and continued his studies until three weeks before his death. Upon his death, his family found 100 poems he had written on his computer.

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JAMES DEANGELIS

Last Yale Ironman was one lucky townie

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

James DeAngelis, a son of immigrants who became a Yale football celebrity and who was the last survivor of its famed 1934 lineup of Ironmen, died Wednesday in Wallingford, Conn. He was 97.

He died of natural causes, said his son, James P. DeAngelis.

Mr. DeAngelis, a 165-pound center and linebacker, was one of the 11 players on an ordi-

nary team that upset Princeton on Nov. 17, 1934, ending the Tigers' two-year winning streak of 15 games. There were no substitutes for Yale that afternoon, the starters enduring for the full 60 minutes, a feat never matched in college football thereafter. They also became known as Yale's Ironmen, a tag that followed each to the end of his life.

Mr. DeAngelis was a "townie," a New Haven youth "from

the other side of the tracks," as he described himself for the book "Yale's Ironmen," (William N. Wallace, iUniverse, 2005). He was born Mariano Vincenzo DeAngelis; his father was a bricklayer and stonemason when he could find work, and his mother was a factory worker.

"I had no business going to Yale," he said. "It was circumstance and luck that got me there."

After graduation from high school, Mr. DeAngelis took a job with the local telephone company until he was persuaded to attend the nearby Milford Academy. His support came from a patron, Clarence Blakeslee, the head of a New Haven construction company and a benefactor of boys in need. After two years there, Mr. DeAngelis was accepted at Yale, from which he graduated in 1935 with a bachelor of sci-

ence degree.

He was too poor to have much of a social life, he later recounted. His Yale teammates included John Hersey, the author, and Larry Kelley, an all-American end and a recipient of the Heisman Trophy in 1936. Kelley caught the touchdown pass that resulted in Yale's 7-0 victory over Princeton, a result voted sports' foremost upset of 1934 in an Associated Press poll.

It was Mr. DeAngelis, on the game's opening kickoff, who tackled Ken Sandbach, on Princeton's 2-yard line, the first of a series of mishaps for the Tigers. Later, he stopped running back Homer Spofford 2 yards short of the end zone during the first of four goal-line stands for the Bulldogs.

Mr. DeAngelis distinguished himself in football and basketball, throughout school and college.