

# PLENARY SESSION: PART II—MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS IN HOLLYWOOD

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## Medicolegal Investigations in Hollywood

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**REFERENCE:** Noguchi, T. T., "Medicolegal Investigations in Hollywood," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, JFSC.1, Vol. 31, No. 1, Jan. 1986, pp. 376-385.

**KEYWORDS:** pathology and biology, historical background, Hollywood stars, homicide

There is a district named Hollywood in the City of Los Angeles within the County of Los Angeles, and thus under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner, but the connotation of "Hollywood" covers far more than the designated boundary of the Hollywood District of Los Angeles.

Since the early 1920s the name Hollywood has conjured up bright lights, glittery stars, wealth and luxury, fast and high, sometimes decadent, life styles, a fantasy land of universal public interest. Its name has become synonymous with the entertainment industry, at first specifically with the motion pictures and expanding to include the allied music and record, and the radio and television industries, with all its associated highly visible glamorous images.

Many of the major motion picture studios are actually located outside of Hollywood and the people involved in these Hollywood associated industries rarely live in Hollywood, so how did Hollywood become known as the "Entertainment Capital of the World" with its reputation for the extraordinary and exaggerated Life and Death Styles? Perhaps, just by being the right location with the right attractive name at the right time. How Hollywood became "Hollywood" is of interest because the public images of Hollywood and Hollywood personalities reflect on and do complicate medicolegal investigations involving people in the Hollywood associated industries regardless of where they actually live and die.

### Early History

Just 200 years ago the Hollywood area was an open land of "Little Hills," or Cahuengna as the Indians who lived there called it. After the establishment of the Pueblo de la Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles just south of these hills in 1781, the foothills of Cahuengna became the Cahuenga Pass, a branch of the El Camino Real de Rey, a regular established route for the Spanish soldiers, explorers, and colonists to travel from San Diego to the south through the

Presented at the Plenary Session, 37th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Las Vegas, NV, 12-16 Feb. 1985.

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Pueblo of Los Angeles north to Monterey and Santa Barbara. Today the Cahuenga Pass is part of the Hollywood Freeway.

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, this area was included in the large tracts of land distributed by the Spanish and Mexican Governments as land grants to various individuals as rewards for services rendered and to encourage colonization. The western portion of Hollywood was part of the Rancho La Brea, originally granted to two residents of the nearby Pueblo of Los Angeles, but neither ever actually lived on the land. The eastern portion was part of the Rancho Los Feliz, a 28 320-km<sup>2</sup> (7000-acre) tract granted to Jose Vincente Feliz, a corporal of the Guard from the San Diego Spanish presidio, who was sent to administer the new Pueblo of Los Angeles when it was established in 1781. Feliz, an able administrator, served as *comisionado* of the Pueblo until the turn of the century when administration was turned over to civil authorities.

### **How Hollywood Got Its Name**

Over the years, portions of both Rancho La Brea and Rancho Los Feliz passed through many hands, the family names of some remaining as local street and location names—Hancock, Gilmore, Griffith, Gower, Wilcox, and many others.

It was Mrs. Wilcox who gave Hollywood its name. Harvey and Daelda Wilcox came to Los Angeles in 1883. Mr. Wilcox opened a real estate office, bought and subdivided a 485-km<sup>2</sup> (120-acre) tract of land bordered east-west by what is now Sunset, Hollywood, and Franklin streets, north-south by Gower, Vine, and Whitley. On a trip East, Mrs. Wilcox apparently met a woman on the train who had a summer home named Hollywood. She liked the name and on returning home, Mrs. Wilcox named her Cahuenga valley ranch, "Hollywood." Mr. Wilcox made the name official on 1 Feb. 1887 when he registered "Hollywood" as the name of his ranch subdivision on the papers he filed with the County Recorder. This name was retained when this area, with an estimated population of 700, voted 88 to 77 to incorporate as a city in 1903. Seven years later Hollywood was annexed to Los Angeles.

The early settlers were farmers. As the population increased and the land was divided and subdivided, the farms gave way to homes. Churches, hospitals, schools, and business, all the appurtenances of an up-and-coming city, were established.

### **The Movies Come to Hollywood**

The industry, which was to shape Hollywood in its unique mold, did not originate there but first came to town from Chicago in 1907 when William Selig, looking for suitable scenery and weather, sent his film company to film scenes for "The Count of Monte Cristo." Two years later the Selig Company returned to Los Angeles to film "The Heart of a Race Tout." The company rented a vacant Chinese laundry at Eight and Olive to use for office space and dressing rooms and built the stage on the adjacent vacant lot. Released for showing on 27 July 1909, this was the first film made completely in California. Shortly thereafter, Selig moved his company base to the Los Angeles area and built a permanent studio.

Within the next decade many other motion picture companies moved into the Los Angeles area. The Nestor Film Company of Bayonne, NJ was the first to establish a studio actually in Hollywood itself in October of 1911 in a former tavern on Sunset and Gower. The following year, Carl Laemmle formed the Universal Film Manufacturing Company and acquired the Nestor Film Company. Other film companies formed, split, reformed or merged, changed hands, or disappeared. It was a time of very active growth for the industry and all the major studios—Universal, RKO, United Artists, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and Twentieth Century Fox—were well established by the 1920s.

The quiet residential character of Hollywood gave way to huge barnlike structures. Spectacular new movie theaters sprang up as well as many hole-in-the-wall movie houses. Every corner

in Hollywood seemed to have a studio or a movie theater. One section of Hollywood along Sunset and Gower was known as "Poverty Row" because so many small independent studios operating on the proverbial "shoestring" were located there.

The population of Hollywood soared from 500 in 1900 and 700 in 1903 to 4000 in 1909 and 7500 in 1913 to 36 000 in 1920 and 157 000 in 1929. The expanding movie industry attracted hordes of tourists and hopeful young people to Hollywood. What made this industry so different from other industries? The motion picture industry sold not just a tangible commodity, the motion pictures, but also images of fabulous life styles. The movies were affordable entertainment for the masses and were attracting millions of viewers each week. Stories circulated about the actors and actresses who were earning \$100 to \$5000 per week at a time when \$15.00 to \$18.00 per week was a good salary. The high public visibility of the successful movie stars and their lavish life style permitted by the high earnings brought so many young people, mostly from poorer families, with hopes of similar success that in 1921 the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce took out ads to discourage them from converging on the city, pointing out that out of 100 000 hopefuls only 5 make it to the top.

### **The Studio Contract STAR System**

In the early days of the movie industry the actors and actresses were under direct contract to the studios and whether working or not received regular salaries. The studios thus had a vested interest in them and they used whatever tactic necessary to build up the STAR images of the players under contract. When a successful formula was found for a person, he/she was type-cast in that role with very little option to play other type roles.

Sometime in our lives most of us have heroes we look up to. The usual heroes and heroines are notable people whose public acclaim naturally followed their admirable accomplishments. By manipulating publicity, and sometimes even the lives of the young players, the studios created a brand new group of larger than life "heroes" and "heroines" for impressionable young people to "worship." The human frailties of the actors and actresses were often lost in the images created for them by the studios and everyone conspired to keep it that way. This was media created "Star Worship."

Although the fans wanted to know everything about their favorite stars, they certainly did not like them to be exposed as flawed individuals. Moreover, in those earlier, less permissive days, any hint of impropriety or involvement in immoral activities could result in the public boycotting of a player's film with consequent large financial loss to the studio, so the studios went to great lengths to prevent adverse publicity concerning a player's personal life as well as his/her professional ability. So it was with the first big scandal to hit a motion picture personality in Hollywood.

### **The Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle Affair**

Arbuckle, a former plumber's helper, had been built up as a jovial fat clowning funny man on screen by the roles he had been cast in by Mack Sennet, who had discovered him in 1913 when Arbuckle was sent to unplug a drain for the producer. Thus, it was decidedly a sensational shock to the public when newspapers from San Francisco in September of 1921 headlined that he was being charged with the rape murder of Virginia Rappe, a Chicago model and minor actress.

The tragic episode began in Los Angeles on 3 Sept. 1921, on the Saturday of a Labor Day weekend. As a celebration for the signing of his new three-year, three-million dollar contract with Paramount and to try out his new Pierce Arrow automobile, Arbuckle invited a group of friends to drive up to San Francisco with him. Two carloads of celebrants drove up the Pacific Coast Highway and late that Saturday evening checked into the St. Francis Hotel, engaging three suites of rooms on the twelfth floor. Throughout that weekend and on into the afternoon

of Labor Day Monday, there was apparently much illicit drinking and loud partying, an "open house" crowd of people coming and going. Shortly after 3 p.m. on Labor Day, Arbuckle allegedly grabbed Virginia and steered her into one of the bedrooms and locked the door. Both had been drinking heavily. Short time later, according to one of the witnesses, sharp screams rang out from the room and moans and sounds of pounding and kicking were heard. Then a giggling Arbuckle in torn pajamas came out and a near nude Virginia, her clothing in shreds and in obvious pain was found on the bed. She was taken to a hospital where she died on September 10.

Virginia's death came to the attention of the San Francisco Coroner's Office when someone phoned from the hospital inquiring about a postmortem. Suspicious, Deputy Coroner Michael Brown went to the hospital to investigate and intercepted an orderly with a jar reportedly containing Virginia's injured genital organs. The Coroner, T. B. Leland, turned the case over to the police. Soon the newspapers had a "field day" with charges and countercharges against Paramount Studio officials of attempted coverup and bribery, as well as the rape-murder charge against Arbuckle.

Arbuckle was tried for first degree murder. The first trial ended in a hung jury with ten to two favoring acquittal and a mistrial was declared. The second jury voted ten to two for conviction and was dismissed. The third jury finally acquitted him declaring that a grave injustice had been done and that there was not the slightest proof to support the charges against him. The 40 witnesses who had been called gave confused and conflicting testimonies. Most had been drunk at the time of the incident and there were no hard physical evidence presented at the trials.

Although Arbuckle was acquitted by the third jury, the damage was done by the news publicity and his public image suffered. The studio cancelled his contract and ended his career.

In this next case a medicolegal investigation should have been held, but because of the power of one man, William Randolph Hearst, the death was not even reported to the Coroner's Office.

### **The Strange Death of Producer Thomas H. Ince**

In November of 1924 the *Los Angeles Times* came out with the headline, "MOVIE PRODUCER SHOT ON HEARST YACHT." Just that one edition of the paper carried the story followed by a complete blackout. No further word appeared concerning the incident in the *Times*. The Hearst Press released a completely different story concerning the death of Thomas Ince. Under the heading "SPECIAL CAR RUSHES STRICKEN MAN HOME FROM RANCH" it was reported that Tom Ince became ill at the Hearst Ranch where he and his family had been guests for several days, and taken home by car with nurses and doctors in attendance, he subsequently died with his family at his bedside. There were several witnesses, however, who reported seeing Ince board the Hearst yacht in San Diego, giving credence to the *Times* headline, and one witness reported seeing Ince with a bullet hole in his head being carried off the yacht.

The story of the incident started on 15 Nov. 1924 when a group of invited guests joined William Randolph Hearst and Marion Davies on board the Hearst yacht in San Pedro for a cruise party to San Diego. The party was to celebrate Producer-Director Tom Ince's 43rd birthday. At the same time Ince was to discuss a business proposition with Hearst. Among the other guests were Charles Chaplin, Louella Parsons, several of Ince's friends, including his business manager, George H. Thomas, and other prominent Hollywood personalities.

As it happened, Ince was tied up with another commitment and could not join the cruise in San Pedro but agreed to go by train later that day and join the group on board the yacht in San Diego. Apparently, Ince was on board the yacht when Hearst, suspicious and jealous of Marion Davies' close relationship with Chaplin, reportedly found them together and went for his revolver which he kept on the yacht. In the ensuing commotion and confusion, it seems the wrong man was apparently hit by the bullet.

No official inquest was held on the death of Thomas Ince. His funeral was held on November 21 and his body was immediately cremated.

Persisting rumors, however, eventually forced the San Diego District Attorney to investigate. His investigation was minimal. He called on only one person among the guests and crew on board the Hearst yacht that day to testify. A Hearst employee, Dr. Daniel Goodman testified that Ince did join them on board the yacht in San Diego on Sunday the 16th of November and discussed business matters with Hearst. He further stated that he and Ince left the yacht together early the next morning and boarded a train for Los Angeles, but on the way Ince suffered an apparent heart attack so Goodman took him off the train at Del Mar, contacted Mrs. Ince and a local physician and continued on to Los Angeles by himself later in the day.

After talking with the nurse and the physician who supposedly attended Ince in Del Mar, the San Diego District Attorney ruled the death was from natural causes. Was it? If the Goodman version is the truth, why did the Hearst Press print such an obvious fabrication? The case was officially closed but questions remain which will probably never be satisfactorily answered.

In the next historic case, the power of another institution spawned by the Hollywood scene to influence public opinion, the syndicated gossip column, was used to condemn an innocent man.

### **Charles Spencer Chaplin Versus Joan Barry Case**

Joan Barry arrived in Hollywood in 1940, indistinguishable from many other young starry-eyed women attracted here. Through fortuitous introductions, she came to the attention of Charles Chaplin, who at this stage in his career was producing films. He tried to groom her for a role in his movie, "Shadow and Substance," but after a year under contract, he found her performance unsatisfactory and in October 1942 dropped her from the role and reduced her salary. Miss Barry, however, continued to pursue Chaplin and even had to be restrained by the police from breaking into his home. She then went to Hedda Hopper, one of the syndicated Hollywood gossip columnists with millions of readers and a sworn enemy of Chaplin, and declared that Chaplin was the father of the child she was carrying. Hopper went after Chaplin with a vengeance.

Chaplin denied the allegations but a suit was filed and he was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury. Miss Barry's daughter was born on 2 Oct. 1943. Chaplin agreed to submit to a blood test for determining paternity. Three pathologists, among them, Dr. O. B. Pratt, Chairman of the Department of Pathology, White Memorial Hospital, Loma Linda University, where I took my residency training in pathology, testified unequivocally that Chaplin could not be the father of Joan Barry's daughter on the basis of the results of the blood tests.

For reasons known only to himself, the judge on the case ruled that the results of the blood tests were not binding, so the jury, ignoring irrefutable scientific evidence, decided against him and ordered him to support the child. Under today's more scientifically knowledgeable justice system such action is unthinkable.

### **Howard Hughes**

Howard Hughes, the subject of the papers presented in Part I of this XI Plenary Session, also left his mark on the medicolegal history of Hollywood. Hughes was very much involved in the Hollywood scene as a wealthy local business tycoon, movie producer, and man-about-town companion of many of the beautiful young aspiring actresses. Between 1948 and 1955, as controlling stockholder, he exerted absolute control over production at RKO Radio Pictures.

In his younger days, in 1935, records show that he was involved in a traffic accident on the Third Street bridge in Los Angeles which caused the death of a pedestrian. He had been speeding in a newly purchased car. A Coroner's inquest was held on the case.

Then, when Hughes died in virtual isolation as he had lived for many years before his death, and a will was discovered in 1977, the County Administrator requested the Chief Medical

Examiner-Coroner's Office to check into Hughes' mental competency during the latter part of his life. A copy of his autopsy report was obtained. Subsequently the will was declared to be a forgery and no further action was taken on the matter.

### **The Changing Hollywood Scene**

In the 1960s the changes that began with the advent of television accelerated. Television, which actually came to Hollywood in the 1930s, developed rapidly during the latter half of the 1940s, after the ending of World War II, and during the 1950s took over as the primary medium of mass entertainment, luring audiences away from the movie theaters. The motion picture studios, which at the peak of production during the 1930s and 1940s had averaged production of 750 motion pictures per year, made fewer and fewer films. Fortunately, television went to filmed programs as well as live broadcasting, so some of the vacant movie studios and equipment were turned over to film production for television showing. Many of the motion picture facilities were also converted for television broadcasting. Movies for theater showing were still being produced, but they were now being made by independent producers who may rent studio facilities but were not under the control of the studio heads. The actors and actresses of the 1960s were also no longer studio controlled and created stars, but serious artists who independently developed their talents and wanted freedom to choose their own roles, and many formed their own independent companies to produce films. Also in the 1960s, filming on location became an economical and popular alternative to building expensive sets on studio lots.

The studios were now mainly in the business of renting space to the television companies and independent producers and served as distribution depot for independently produced films. Out on the streets, the "Hippie" and the "Flower Children" dropout movement of the now teen-aged postwar baby boomers were taking over. Hollywood, with its known tolerance for different life styles, was the mecca for many of these youngsters, just as it had been in the earlier generations for young people seeking stardom and fortune in the movies. This was the era of the "Drug Culture." It was okay and even fashionable to experiment with drugs. The best people were doing it. Prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, street drugs, all were subjects for experimentation.

I joined the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office as Deputy Medical Examiner in August 1961.

### **Marilyn Monroe**

Marilyn Monroe was the first Hollywood personality I attended as Medical Examiner. This was in August 1962, about one year after I began working in the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office. She was one of the last big stars created by the studio contract star system. She had been molded by the studio controlled publicity and typecast into a female sex symbol role which she did not want. She is one of a list of actors and actresses over these past decades since the advent of the motion pictures whose deaths have been ruled as suicide.

Autopsy and toxicological examinations revealed that she had died from overdoses of pentobarbital (Nembutal®) and chloral hydrate. Both drugs were found in her body in doses well above lethal levels. The liver concentration of the barbiturate was 13.0 mg/dL and the blood level of the chloral hydrate, 8.0 mg/dL.

Marilyn's fans, who saw only her public image, could not imagine that someone as beautiful and seemingly as successful as she was would take her own life, and rumors of foul play circulated. Anticipating continuing controversy over her death, Dr. Theodore J. Curphey, Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner, submitted her case for evaluation to a team of experts in psychology. At the time of her death, Marilyn had been under the care of a psychiatrist. After thorough investigation of her background and life style, the panel of experts concluded that her death was probable suicide, and it is so reported on her death certificate.

In spite of the expert report, there are people who still questioned whether her drug overdose was self-administered and suspected possible homicide. Several versions of the homicide story were fanned and kept alive by several publications about her which appeared after her death. These tales all tie into the known contacts between Marilyn and the Kennedy brothers, John and Robert, during the several months before her death.

Marilyn met John Kennedy for the first time in early 1962 and was invited to participate in his 45th birthday celebration planned for the 29th of May at the Madison Square Garden. On the 29th, after her appearance at the public function, she attended a private party hosted by Arthur Krim of United Artists, a Kennedy supporter. It was there that she met Robert Kennedy for the first time, and they were reportedly mutually attracted to each other. They met again at the home of a Kennedy sister, Patricia Lawford, the wife of actor Peter Lawford. Thereafter, Marilyn made frequent phone calls to Washington to talk to Robert Kennedy, and she had spoken to him a short time before her death. Rumors involved Robert Kennedy and the CIA in Marilyn's death. These stories alleged that the drugs found in her body was injected, citing the autopsy report that no drug residue was found in her stomach and her duodenum, ignoring the report that no needle marks were found on her. Marilyn was a habitual user of the drugs found in her body, and it is known that in habitual users, the body adapts to the drugs and rapidly passes them through the digestive tract. As stated in the Autopsy report, the gastric mucosa did show diffuse petechial hemorrhages, a reaction to the recent contact with the drugs.

In 1982, 20 years after her death, the rumors that Marilyn was murdered to protect Robert Kennedy were so persistent that the Los Angeles County District Attorney reinvestigated the case. I was called in for questioning. After thorough study the District Attorney agreed that her death was probable suicide.

### **Natalie Wood**

A more recent tragic death of a Hollywood personality was that of Natalie Wood on 28 Nov. 1981. After dinner on shore, Miss Wood and her husband, Robert Wagner, with guest Christopher Walken, returned to the Wagner family yacht, moored to a buoy off Catalina Island, on which they were spending the long Thanksgiving weekend. Late that night, Miss Wood, wearing a red down filled jacket over a nightgown and knee length wool socks, for reasons we can only guess at, decided to leave the yacht. She apparently accidentally fell into the sea attempting to get into a dinghy from the yacht. Her body was found floating in a cove about a mile south of where the yacht was anchored and the dinghy was located further south on shore. From studies of the bruises on her body, scratch marks on the dinghy, the algae growth on the bottom swimming step of the yacht, the current flow in the area and other relevant information, it was summarized that she did not attempt to get back on the yacht after she fell in the sea, but tried to board the dinghy, failed, and struggling against the current pushing her out to sea, she propelled the dinghy to shore, swimming against the wind. Less than 180 m (200 yds) from shore and safety, hypothermia overcame her and she lost the struggle.

Toxicological examination of her body and study of her clothing revealed the probable reasons why she failed in her valiant effort to survive. Her water soaked jacket was heavy, weighing an estimated 14 to 18 kg (30 to 40 lbs), even 24 h after she had been found. This dead weight of her water saturated jacket dragged her down and hindered her efforts to climb aboard the dinghy. At the time her body was picked up from the sea, her jacket had slipped off and was not on her when the Coroner's Investigator assigned to her case first saw her body, so she could very easily have slipped out of it. Why did she not recognize the weight of her jacket pulling her down and react appropriately by removing it? The report from the Toxicology Laboratory revealed that she had a blood alcohol level of 0.14%, 40% above the 0.10% intoxication standard set by the California Vehicle Code. The alcohol in her system had robbed her of her ability

to analyze and respond properly to the emergency situation she had found herself in. It may also have contributed to her first misstep when she tried to board the dinghy from the yacht.

In her case too, the rumors of foul play and unkind gossips concerning the Wagners and Walken and speculations about the reported argument between the two men that evening on the yacht circulated. The police, however, did not suspect foul play and the Medical Examiner's reasoned report attributing Miss Wood's death to accidental drowning silenced the rumors, although the question remains unanswered why, attired for bed, Miss Wood felt the need to leave the yacht alone that night. Her death was a regrettable preventable accident.

### **William Holden**

Just about two weeks before Natalie Wood's death, William Holden, another well-known Hollywood personality, died. His death too should never have happened.

Holden, alone in his home, had fallen hitting his head against a table. A bloody tissue at the scene indicated he was aware that his head was bleeding, but he apparently did not realize how serious his head wound was. He lay down, lost consciousness, and simply bled to death from the untended head injury. The Toxicology Laboratory reported that his blood alcohol level at death was 0.22%. Another preventable alcohol involved accidental death.

### **Drug, Alcohol, and the Hollywood Scene**

1959—George Reeves: suicide, gunshot wound, blood alcohol 0.27%.

1962—Ernie Kovacs: single-car accident, blood alcohol 0.11%.

1968—Nick Adams: suicide, paraldehyde overdose.

1970—Inger Stevens: suicide, Tedral<sup>®</sup> and alcohol.

1970—Janis Joplin: accidental heroin overdose.

1977—Freddie Prinze: suicide, gunshot wound, Valium<sup>®</sup>, cocaine, and Quaalude<sup>®</sup>.

1982—John Belushi: cocaine and heroin overdose.

So many Medical Examiner-Coroner's cases of Hollywood personalities appear to involve the excessive use of alcohol or drugs or both, so many deaths, if not a result of actual overdose, appear to have as contributing cause the excessive use of alcohol or drugs or both. Is there actually greater usage of alcohol and drugs among the people in the entertainment industry than in the general population?

Information obtained through personal contact with a Hollywood producer indicates that stimulant drug use is prevalent among the performers. The actors and actresses often work long hours under strenuous conditions. Elaborate makeups sometimes take two or more hours, so the working day starts early. The performers must maintain the same fresh image they projected at the beginning of the day to the very end of each working day, and that can be ten, twelve, or more hours later. A popular belief among these people was that cocaine helps to maintain energy level, and so cocaine was widely used. On out-of-town locations, they may be located in isolated areas for weeks, away from family and familiar surroundings, with no recreational outlets during the limited off work hours. Drinking to relax was an easy way out.

The pressures and stresses on these people are enormous. A Hollywood saying does, "you are just as good as the last movie," so each succeeding production has to be as good as or better than the previous one in order to survive. That is the reality of life for these Hollywood people.

The statistics from the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner's Biannual Reports over the past three decades are of interest here.

During this period the annual vehicular accident rate fluctuated between 16 and 20 and the suicide rate, between 15 and 20 per 100 000 population, but remained essentially stable. The annual homicide rate was around 3 per 100 000 until the mid-1960s when it began to climb



steadily and rose to a peak of around 20 by 1980. Currently, the rate is still high, fluctuating around 16 to 18 during the 1980s. Drug involved deaths in the County remained steady at about 7 per 100 000 annually until the mid-1960s when there was a sharp rise to 16 to 17 per 100 000 and has remained at that level although the "drugs of choice" have changed over the years. In the 1950s to the mid-1960s, barbiturates were the major "drugs of death"; from the mid-1960s through the 1970s, amphetamine and LSD; and in the 1980s, although deaths from heroin decreased, cocaine and phencyclidine hydrochloride (PCP) fatalities increased.

From the study of these statistics my conclusion is, the suicide, drug and alcohol related accidental death, and homicide rates among the Hollywood industry people are no higher than in the general population of Los Angeles County. The greater publicity accorded the deaths of Hollywood personalities by the press exaggerates the situation. Every death of a movie star or entertainment figure is widely reported in the press, but the public has no knowledge of the hundreds of other people who are not "news items" who die from these causes. Also in support of my conclusion are the many well-known Hollywood personalities who live long lives and who die from natural causes (see Table 1).

### "Tell It Like It Is"

From the beginning of my career as a Medical Examiner, I have been determined to "tell it like it is." Handling of medicolegal investigations into the lives and deaths of Hollywood personalities and other prominent persons is very much complicated by the public interest and curiosity about them which make them targets for rumors and gossips and media exaggerations. People in the public eye whose livelihood depends on maintaining a good public image feel the need to cover up and prevent any adverse publicity. This is true of people in other professions, but for people in the mass entertainment industry, the situation is magnified because their public is so much larger, sometimes encompassing a large segment of the population of the entire world. Even in death, the fans and supporters of the Hollywood stars often resent having the images of their idols besmirched by revelations of their human failings. I believe, however, from personal experiences, the truth is usually kinder than the gossips and rumors.

The work of the Medical Examiner-Coroner is basically not a very pleasant one. During my tenure as Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner for Los Angeles County, we investigated about a quarter of a million cases. We are exposed to the sad results of all the antisocial acts devised by man, self-inflicted as well as inflicted on others. In my opinion, it is not enough that we simply identify the victim and the cause and manner of death. We who intimately deal daily with these cases should be in the forefront of the fight to prevent the repeated occurrence of all such preventable deaths. That is one of my major missions in life and the reason why, in spite of all the severe criticism to which I have been subjected, I will continue to publicize the circum-

TABLE 1—*Hollywood personalities who live long lives and those who died from natural causes.*

Long Living Stars	Age	Long Lived Stars	
		Death from Natural Causes	Age at Death
Marlene Dietrich	84	Mary Pickford	86
Greta Garbo	80	Charles Chaplin	88
Fred Astaire	86	Gloria Swanson	84
Ginger Rogers	74	Mae West	87
Betty Davis	77	Joan Crawford	73
Cary Grant	81	John Wayne	72
Katherine Hepburn	76	Humphrey Bogart	58
		Henry Fonda	76

stances of preventable deaths, particularly of well-known public personalities, since the public will be more likely to take notice of such cases.

Recently, people have begun to respond to all the publicity concerning the damaging effects of drug and alcohol abuse. Many prominent entertainment figures, including Dana Andrews and Elizabeth Taylor, have come out openly with their alcohol and drug addiction problems and their fight to overcome. This is very gratifying. If the young people who are into drugs will follow their lead, alcohol and drug use will no longer be "in" and we should see a good decline in chemical abuse statistics during the rest of this decade.

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