

Robert Urich



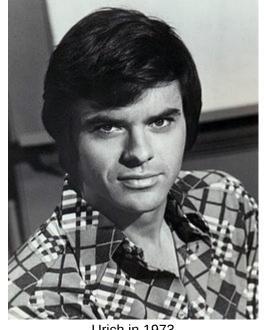
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Robert Michael Urich (December 19, 1946 – April 16, 2002) was an American film, television stage actor and television producer. Over the course of his 30-year career, he starred in a record 15 television series. [1]

Urich began his career in television in the early 1970s. After guest stints and roles in short-lived television series, he won a co starring role in the action/crime drama series S.W.A.T. in 1975. In 1976, he landed the role of Dan Tanna in the crime drama series Vega\$. It aired on ABC from 1978 to 1981, and earned him two Golden Globe Award nominations. In addition to his work in television, he also starred in several feature films, including Magnum Force (1973), The Ice Pirates (1984), and Turk 182 (1985). From 1985 to 1988, he portrayed the title role in the detective television series Spenser: For Hire, based on Robert B. Parker's series of mystery novels. In 1988, he began hosting the documentary series National Geographic Explorer. He won a CableACE Award for his work on the series. He was also awarded a Golden Boot Award for his work in Western television series and films.

In 1996, Urich starred in *The Lazarus Man*. It was canceled shortly after he announced that he had been diagnosed with synovial sarcoma, a rare cancer, in July 1996. He sought treatment for his illness while continuing his career and also worked to raise money for cancer research. He was declared cancer free in 1998 and returned to television in the UPN series, Love Boat: The Next Wave. In 2000, he made his Broadway debut as Billy Flynn in the musical *Chicago*. His

Robert Urich



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	Urich in 1973
Born	Robert Michael Urich December 19, 1946 Toronto, Ohio, US
Died	April 16, 2002 (aged 55) Thousand Oaks, California, US
Cause of death	Synovial sarcoma
Resting place	Prince Edward County, Ontario, Canada
Other names	Bob Urich Robert York
Alma mater	Florida State University Michigan State University
Occupation(s)	Actor, producer

last role was in the <u>NBC</u> sitcom *Emeril* in 2001, but in the autumn of that year, his cancer returned and he died at age 55.

Years active	1972–2002
Spouse(s)	Barbara Rucker (<u>m.</u> 1968–1974) <u>Heather Menzies</u> (<u>m.</u> 1975)
Children	3

Early life

Urich was born in <u>Toronto</u>, <u>Ohio</u> the son of John Paul and Cecilia Monica Urich. He was of <u>Rusyn</u> and <u>Slovak</u> extraction and raised <u>Byzantine Catholic</u> and <u>Roman Catholic</u>. Urich attended <u>Florida State University</u> on a <u>football</u> scholarship as a center, and was a member of the <u>Lambda Chi Alpha</u> fraternity. In 1968, he earned a bachelor's degree in Radio and Television Communications. He went on to <u>Michigan State University</u> after working in Ohio to earn a <u>master's degree</u> in Broadcast Research and Management. He then worked as a salesman in Chicago at WGN-TV. He later worked as a weatherman.

Career

After appearing in a production of $\underline{The\ Rainmaker}$ with $\underline{Burt\ Reynolds}$, Urich decided to pursue acting full-time after Reynolds encouraged him to move to Los Angeles. $\underline{^{[6]}}$

1970s-1980s

Urich made his television debut in a guest starring role in *The F.B.I.*, in 1972. The following year, he won a lead role in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*. It was an adaptation of the 1969 film of the same title. It struggled in the ratings and was canceled after six episodes. He made his film debut later that same year opposite Clint Eastwood in the Dirty Harry film *Magnum Force* playing a vigilante motorcycle-patrol police officer. In 1975, Urich was cast in the action/crime drama series *S.W.A.T.*. According to the executive producer Aaron Spelling, Burt Reynolds convinced Spelling to allow Urich to read for the part. Spelling was impressed with his reading and cast him in the role of "Officer Jim Street". [7] A mid-season replacement, it earned high enough ratings to warrant a second season. However, it was canceled in 1976 due to its violent content. [8]



Urich, <u>Maureen Reagan</u>, and <u>Jack</u> <u>Hogan</u> pose for a publicity photo for the TV series *The Specialists*, 1974

Urich's next role was on the sitcom <u>Soap</u> as Peter the Tennis Player in 1977. That same year he was cast as Paul Thurston, a good-looking, ego-driven talk show host in the <u>Bewitched</u> spin-off series <u>Tabitha</u>, starring <u>Lisa Hartman</u>. Its ratings were initially strong, but schedule changes caused ratings to drop and it was canceled in 1978 after 13 episodes. Shortly after, he was cast in another Aaron Spelling produced series <u>Vega\$</u>. He portrayed the series' lead character, Dan Tanna, a private detective who solves crimes in <u>Las Vegas</u>. It was a hit for <u>ABC</u> and he received two <u>Golden Globe Award</u> nominations for his work on it. By the third season, however, he had grown tired of the role and complained about the declining quality of the writing. Ratings had also declined and it was canceled in 1981. Shortly after, he signed with <u>Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer</u> and decided to focus on his film career. His first film for them was <u>Endangered Species</u> (1982), a science fiction piece directed by Alan Rudolph.

Shortly after filming *Endangered Species*, Urich signed on to star in another series *Gavilan*. He starred as the title character who was a former CIA agent turned <u>oceanographer</u>. It was canceled after seven episodes. In 1984, he starred in two more films *The Ice Pirates*, and Wes Craven's *Invitation to Hell*. The following year, Urich costarred in *Turk 182*. It was a box office failure and he was nominated for a Golden Raspberry Award. In 1985, Urich returned to episodic television as the title character in *Spenser: For Hire*. It was another hit for Urich and aired for three seasons. He reprised the role in several television films after it was canceled: *Spenser: Ceremony* (1993), *Spenser: Pale Kings and Princes* (1994), *Spenser: The Judas Goat* (1994), and *Spenser: A Savage Place* (1995). In 1988, he began hosting the documentary series *National Geographic Explorer*. He won a CableACE Award for his work on the series. In 1989, he portrayed Jake Spoon in the acclaimed television miniseries *Lonesome Dove*, a role for which he received many positive reviews.

1990s-2000s

In the 1990s, Urich mainly appeared in television films and several short-lived television series. From 1990 to 1991, he starred in the sitcom American Dreamer and the TV movie 83 Hours 'Til Dawn. The following year, he starred in *Crossroads*, a drama series that aired on ABC for ten episodes. In 1993, he and Faye Dunaway starred in the sitcom It Had to Be You. It was critically panned and canceled after four episodes. In 1995, he narrated an extremely rare one-night showing of a Disney television documentary called Alien Encounters: From New Tomorrowland. It has never been shown again. In 1996, he starred in the TNT western series *The Lazarus Man*. It earned strong enough ratings to be picked up for a second season but shortly after it was renewed, he announced he had been diagnosed with synovial sarcoma. Its production company, Castle Rock Entertainment, opted to cancel it due to that. [11] In 1999, he commented on their choice to do so, "There's really a law against what they did. They found out I had cancer, and they just canceled the show. They didn't ask the doctors if I could work. They didn't ask if I could go back to work."^[12] In 2000, he sued them for breach of contract.^[13] The lawsuit was later settled with both parties agreeing not to publicly disclose the terms. [14] While undergoing cancer treatments, Urich hosted the medical documentary series Vital Signs in 1997 and the PBS series Boatworks. [15] After a year of treatment, he was declared cancer-free and returned to television in 1998 as Captain Jim Kennedy III in Love Boat: The Next Wave. It aired on UPN for two seasons. In 2000, he made his Broadway debut as Billy Flynn in the musical Chicago and also starred in the North American tour of the musical, in 1999 and in 2000. [16][17][18][19] The next year, he costarred in *Emeril*, a sitcom starring celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse. While it was critically panned, he received good notices for his work on it. It would be his last role in a television series. Urich's final television film, Night of the Wolf, aired on Animal Planet the night before his death.[14]

Personal life

Marriages and children

Urich's first marriage was to actress Barbara Rucker in 1968. They divorced in 1974. He married actress <u>Heather Menzies</u> in 1975. They adopted three children, Ryan, Emily, and Allison. They remained married until his death in 2002. [4]

Illness and death

In July 1996, Urich announced he had been diagnosed with <u>synovial sarcoma</u>, a rare form of cancer that attacks <u>soft tissue</u>. He continued working while undergoing treatment for his illness and also became an advocate for finding a cure for cancer. He won an award from the John Wayne Cancer Institute and the Gilda Radner Courage Award for his work raising cancer awareness. [12] He and Menzies-Urich also founded the Urich Fund for the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center to raise funds for cancer research. He also donated the \$125,000 he won when he appeared on an episode of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. [14] He was declared cancer free in 1998. That same year, he was named the national spokesperson for the <u>American Cancer Society</u>. [5]

In November 2001, Urich revealed in an interview that his doctors had discovered <u>lumps</u> in his body but "a wonder drug had cleared them up". The week before his death, he was hospitalized at <u>Los Robles Hospital & Medical Center</u> in <u>Thousand Oaks</u> for breathing problems. He died there on April 16, 2002. His Funeral Mass was offered on April 19 at <u>St. Charles Borromeo Church</u> in <u>North Hollywood</u>. He was cremated and his ashes were buried on the grounds of his family's vacation home in <u>Prince Edward County</u>, Ontario, Canada. A monument was placed in the West Lake Church of Christ Cemetery, which is located near the family's vacation home.

Legacy

Before his death, Urich and Menzies-Urich helped to raise money for the Eccles Performing Arts Centers at the Park City High School in Park City, Utah. After his death, the school established the Robert Urich Scholarship fund in his honor. In addition, Urich and Menzies-Urich established the Robert and Heather Urich Fund for Sarcoma Research at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center. She also battled cancer and was an ovarian cancer survivor. Menzies-Urich continued to work for the center, and passed away from brain cancer on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2017, surrounded by their three children.

Urich's hometown of <u>Toronto, Ohio</u>, named the Robert Urich Interchange in his honor. It connects the town to <u>Ohio State Route 7</u>. For his contribution to the television industry, Urich has a star on the <u>Hollywood Walk of Fame</u> located at 7083 Hollywood Blvd. Until <u>Usher</u> was added, he was the only person with a name starting with the letter U on the walk. [23][24][25]

Filmography

Film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1973	Magnum Force	Officer Mike Grimes	
1982	Endangered Species	Ruben Castle	
1984	The Ice Pirates	Jason	
1984	Invitation to Hell	Matt Winslow	
1985	Turk 182	Terry Lynch	
1988	April Morning	Joseph	Credit at beginning only
1989	Dragon Fight	Airport Police	
1992	Jock: A True Tale of Friendship	Rocky	Alternative title: Jock of the Bushveld
1992	Revolver	Nick Clayton	
1994	Jock of the Bushveld	Rocky Mountain Jack	
1996	Young Again	Michael Riley, Age 40	
1996	The Angel of Pennsylvania Avenue	Angus Feagan	
2002	Clover Bend	Bill	

Television

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1972	The F.B.I.	Davie Stroud	Episode: "The Runner"
1973	Kung Fu	Greg Dundee	Episode: "Blood Brother"
1973	Owen Marshall: Counselor at Law		Episode: "A Girl Named Tham"
1973	Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice	Bob Sanders	12 episodes
1973	Marcus Welby, M.D.	Mike Lowry	Episode: "Death Is Only a Side Effect"
1974	Killdozer!	Mack McCarthy	Television film
1974	Nakia		Episode: "A Beginning in the Wilderness"
1975	The Specialists	Dr. William Nugent	Television film Credited as Robert York
1975	Gunsmoke	Manolo Etchahoun	Episode: "Manolo"
1975– 1976	S.W.A.T.	Officer Jim Street	37 episodes
1977	Bunco	Walker	Television film
1977	Soap	Peter the Tennis Player	8 episodes
1977– 1978	<u>Tabitha</u>	Paul Thurston	12 episodes
1977– 1978	The Love Boat	Various roles	3 episodes
1978	Charlie's Angels	Dan Tanna	Episode: "Angels in Vegas"
1978– 1981	<u>Vega\$</u>	Dan Tanna	69 episodes
1979	When She Was Bad	Bob Morgan	Television film
1979	Password Plus	Himself	Game Show Participant / Celebrity Guest Star
1980	The Shadow Box		Television film Uncredited
1980	Fighting Back: The Rocky Bleier Story	Rocky Bleier	Television film
1981	Killing at Hell's Gate	Charles Duke	Television film
1982	The Billy Crystal Comedy Hour		Episode #1.2
1982	Take Your Best Shot	Jess Marriner	Television film
1982– 1983	<u>Gavilan</u>	Robert Gavilan	7 episodes
1983	Princess Daisy	Patrick Shannon	Miniseries
1984	Mistral's Daughter	Jason Darcy	Miniseries
1984	His Mistress	Allen Beck	Television film
1985	Scandal Sheet	Ben Rowan	Television film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1985– 1988	Spenser: For Hire	Spenser	65 episodes
1986	The Defiant Ones	Johnny "Joker" Johnson	Television film
1986	The Disney Sunday Movie	Michael Riley, Age 40	Episode: "Young Again"
1987	Amerika	Peter Bradford	Miniseries
1988	Cheers	Himself	Episode: "Woody for Hire Meets Norman of the Apes"
1988	Hallmark Hall of Fame	Joseph Simmons	Episode: "April Morning"
1989	The Comeback	Scotty Malloy	Television film
1989	She Knows Too Much	Harry	Television film
1989	Lonesome Dove	Jake Spoon	Miniseries
1989	Night Walk	Simon	Television film
1989	Spooner	Harry Spooner/Michael Norlon	Television film
1990	Blind Faith	Rob Marshall	Television miniseries
1990	A Quiet Little Neighborhood, a Perfect Little Murder	Ross Pegler	Television film
1990	83 Hours 'Til Dawn	Bradley Burdock	Television film
1990	Carol & Company	Mr. Carmen	Episode: "Teacher, Teacher"
1990– 1991	American Dreamer	Tom Nash	17 episodes
1991	Stranger at My Door	Joe Fortier	Television film
1991	And Then She Was Gone	Jack Bauer	Television film
1992	Survive the Savage Sea	Jack Carpenter	Television film
1992	Blind Man's Bluff	Thomas Booker	Television film
1992	Double Edge	Harry Carter	Television film Alternative title: <i>Hit Woman</i>
1992	Revolver	Nick Suster	Television film
1992– 1993	Crossroads	Johnny Hawkins	9 episodes
1993	Evening Shade	Steve	Episode: "Frieda and the Preacher"
1993	Deadly Relations	Leonard J. Fagot	Television film
1993	Spenser: Ceremony	Spenser	Television film
1993	It Had to Be You	Mitch Quinn	6 episodes
1994	Spenser: Pale Kings and Princes	Spenser	Television film
1994	To Save the Children	Jake Downey	Television film
1994	A Perfect Stranger	Alex Hale	Television film
1994	Spenser: The Judas Goat	Spenser	Television film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1995	Alien Encounters: From New Tomorrowland	Narrator	Disney television documentary
1995	Spenser: A Savage Place	Spenser	Television film
1995	A Horse for Danny	Eddie Fortuna	Television film
1995	She Stood Alone: The Tailhook Scandal	Adm. Williams	Television film
1996	Captains Courageous	Capt. Matthew Troop	Television film
1996	The Lazarus Man	Lazarus (James Cathcart)	20 episodes
1997	The Nanny	Judge Jerry Moran	Episode: "Samson, He Denied Her"
1997	Final Descent	Capt. Glen (Lucky) Singer	Television film
1998	Invasion America	Briggs	Unknown episodes
1998– 1999	Love Boat: The Next Wave	Captain Jim Kennedy III	25 episodes
1999	Final Run	Glen "Lucky" Singer	Television film
1999	Miracle on the 17th Green	Mitch McKinley	Television film
2001	Late Boomers	Dennis	Television film
2001	For Love of Olivia	Horton Roundtree	Television film
2001	Emeril	Jerry McKenney	10 episodes
2002	The President's Man: A Line in the Sand	President Adam Mayfield	Television film
2002	Night of the Wolf	Purly Owens	Television film
2002	Aftermath	Jack	Television film, (final film role)

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External links

Robert Urich, (1946-2002) - The Carpathian Connection (http://www.tccweb.org/prominentcarpathorusyns.htm)



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