

William Conrad

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William Conrad (born **John William Cann, Jr.**^[1]; September 27, 1920 – February 11, 1994) was an American actor, film and television director.

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Early life

Conrad was the son of a theatre owner who moved his family to California when William was a boy. Excelling at drama and literature at school, he began his career as an announcer, writer, and director for Los Angeles radio station KMPC in the late 1930s. Conrad served as a fighter pilot in World War II. On the day he was commissioned in 1943 at Luke Field, he married June Nelson.^[2] He left the US Army Air Force with the rank of captain, and as a producer-director of the Armed Forces Radio Service.^[3]

Career

Radio

Conrad's deep, resonant voice led to a number of roles in radio, most prominently Marshal Matt Dillon on the

William Conrad



Born	John William Cann, Jr. <div>September 27, 1920</div> <div>Louisville, Kentucky, United States</div>
Died	February 11, 1994 (aged 73) <div>Los Angeles, California, United States</div>
Occupation	Actor, Director, Scriptwriter
Years active	1945–1993

Western program *Gunsmoke*. Conrad voiced Dillon for the show's 9 year run. In addition, Conrad wrote the June 1953 episode "Sundown".^[4] When *Gunsmoke* was adapted for television in 1955, executives at CBS were not interested in casting Conrad or his radio costars despite a campaign to get them to change their minds.^[5] Ironically, he was under contract to CBS radio. He could be heard inviting listeners to "get away from it all" on *Escape*. His other credits included *Suspense*, *The Damon Runyon Theater*, *Lux Radio Theater*, *Nightbeat*, and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. In "The Wax Works," a 1956 episode of *Suspense*, Conrad performed every part. He directed and narrated the 1957 *CBS Radio Workshop* episode "Epitaphs," an adaptation of the Edgar Lee Masters poetry volume *Spoon River Anthology*. Because of his CBS contract, he sometimes appeared on other network radio shows as "Julius Krelboyne".

Film

Among Conrad's various film roles, where he was usually cast as threatening figures, perhaps his most notable role was his first credited one, as one of the gunmen sent to eliminate Burt Lancaster in *The Killers*. He also appeared in *Body and Soul*, *Sorry, Wrong Number*, *Joan of Arc*, and *The Naked Jungle*.

As a producer for Warner Brothers, he made a string of feature films, including *An American Dream* (1966), *A Covenant With Death* (1966), *First to Fight* (1967) and *The Cool Ones* (1967), and directed *My Blood Runs Cold*, *Brainstorm* and *Two on a Guillotine*.

Television

Conrad moved to television in the 1960s.

Voice

He narrated the animated *Rocky and Bullwinkle* series from 1959–1964 (as "Bill Conrad"). He returned to voice work as the narrator of *This Man Dawson*, a 33-episode syndicated crime drama starring Keith Andes in the 1959-1960 television season. He narrated *The Fugitive* starring David Janssen from 1963–1967. He performed the role of Denethor in the 1980 animated TV version of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Return of the King*. Conrad intoned the rhyming narration heard over the credits of the 1970 John Wayne Western *Chisum*. From 1973 to 1978, Conrad narrated a nature program titled *The Wild, Wild World of Animals*. He later narrated *The Making of Star Wars* (1977), the 1978 World Series highlight film, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1979). Other voicework included narration for *Knight Rider* and *The Highwayman*.

Acting

He guest starred in NBC's science fiction series *The Man and the Challenge*. In 1962, Conrad starred in an episode of The Alfred Hitchcock Hour and guest starred in episodes of ABC's crime drama *Target: The Corruptors!*.

The 1970s also saw him starring in the first of three television detective series which would bring him an added measure of renown, *Cannon*, which ran on CBS from 1971–1976. While starring in the show, he weighed a beefy 230 pounds (104 kg), and two seasons later, Conrad ballooned to a portly 260 pounds

(118 kg) or more; he joked, "People who were on Weight Watchers were banned from watching the show." He starred in both *Nero Wolfe* (1981) and *Jake and the Fatman* (1987–1992), with Joe Penny.

He was also the on-camera spokesman for First Alert fire prevention products for many years, as well as Hai Karate men's cologne.

Directing

He and Sam Peckinpah directed episodes of NBC's *Klondike* in the 1960–1961 season. Conrad's credits as a director include episodes of *The Rifleman*, *Bat Masterson*, *Route 66*, *Have Gun – Will Travel*, and *77 Sunset Strip*, among others. He directed the *Brainstorm* in 1965. He directed episodes of ABC's crime drama *Target: The Corruptors!*.

Later life

Conrad had one son, Christopher, with his first wife, who died in 1977 after over thirty years of marriage. Conrad married Tippy Stringer, the widow of NBC newscaster Chet Huntley, in 1980.^[6]

Death

Conrad died from congestive heart failure, and is buried in the Lincoln Terrace section, at Forest Lawn, Hollywood Hills Cemetery.

Recognition

Conrad was elected to the Radio Hall of Fame in 1997.

Partial filmography

As actor

- *The Killers* (1946)
- *Body and Soul* (1947)
- *Four Faces West* (1948)
- *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948)
- *Joan of Arc* (1948)
- *Any Number Can Play* (1949)
- *Tension* (1949)
- *East Side, West Side* (1949)
- *The Milkman* (1950)
- *Dial 1119* (1950)
- *Cry Danger* (1951)
- *The Racket* (1951)

- *Lone Star* (1952)
- *The Desert Song* (1953)
- *Cry of the Hunted* (1953)
- *The Naked Jungle* (1954)
- *The Conqueror* (1956)
- *Johnny Concho* (1956)
- *The Ride Back* (1957)
- *Zero Hour!* (1957) (uncredited narrator)
- *-30-* (1959)
- *Geronimo* (1962) (uncredited narrator)
- *Battle of the Bulge* (1965) (uncredited narrator)
- *Chisum* (1970) (uncredited opening narrator)
- *The Brotherhood of the Bell* (1970) (TV)
- *The Return of the King* (1980) (voice)
- *Shocktrauma* (1982)

As director or producer

- *The Ride Back* (1957) (producer)
- *Two on a Guillotine* (1965) (producer)
- *Brainstorm* (1965) (director and producer)
- *An American Dream* (1966) (producer)
- *First to Fight* (1967) (producer)

See also

- List of famous Louisvillians

References

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- ↑ *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, 13 January 1955
- ↑ Hayward, Anthony (February 14, 1994). "Obituary: William Conrad" (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-william-conrad-1394098.html>) . *The Independent* (London). <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-william-conrad-1394098.html>.
- ↑ [1] (<http://comp.uark.edu/~tsnyder/gunsmoke/gun-radio1.html>)
- ↑ [2] (<http://www.otrsite.com/gunsmoke.html>)
- ↑ "General Forum on Genealogy" (<http://genforum.genealogy.com/stringer/messages/825.html>) . genforum.genealogy.com . <http://genforum.genealogy.com/stringer/messages/825.html>. Retrieved December 26, 2008.

External links

- William Conrad (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002016/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- William Conrad (<http://tcmdb.com/participant/participant.jsp?participantId=38072>) at the TCM Movie Database

- William Conrad (<http://www.museum.tv/rhofsection.php?page=186>) at the Radio Hall of Fame
- William Conrad on Television (<http://www.tv-now.com/stars/wconrad.html>)
- Find-A-Grave profile for William Conrad (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=4517&pt>)

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Categories: American film actors | American television actors | American radio actors | American voice actors | American military personnel of World War II | United States Army officers | People from Kentucky | People from Louisville, Kentucky | Cardiovascular disease deaths in California | Deaths from congestive heart failure | 1920 births | 1994 deaths

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