

= Early life and career of Gene Roddenberry =

Eugene Wesley " Gene " Roddenberry (August 19 , 1921 ? October 24 , 1991) was an American television screenwriter , producer and futurist best remembered for creating the original Star Trek television series . He was born in El Paso , Texas , but grew up in Los Angeles , California where his father worked as a police officer . While at school , the young Roddenberry majored in police science and became interested in aeronautical engineering .

He obtained a pilot 's license through the Civilian Pilot Training Program . Following his graduation , he signed up for the United States Army Air Corps and he enlisted after the attack on Pearl Harbor . He was commissioned on August 5 , 1942 , and was posted to the Pacific Theater of Operations where he joined the 394th Bomb Squadron , 5th Bombardment Group , of the Thirteenth Air Force . He flew Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress in an estimated 89 combat missions . After being rotated back to the United States he was promoted to Captain and became an air crash investigator . During his military career , he was involved in two plane crashes and was awarded both the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross .

Once a civilian , he began to fly long @-@ haul routes for Pan American World Airways . He was involved in a further crash in June 1947 , where the Clipper Eclipse crashed in the Syrian desert . After pulling injured passengers out of the burning plane , he led the party which sought help . After a further incident , he resigned from Pan @-@ Am , seeking to write for television instead . However , he joined the Los Angeles Police Department , initially in the traffic division but transferred to the newspaper unit where he worked with Chief William H. Parker as a speech writer . He landed the role of technical adviser for a television version of Mr. District Attorney , which led to him writing scripts for the series under the pseudonym of " Robert Wesley " . This led to a series of collaborations with Ziv Television Programs , and he resigned from the police on June 7 , 1956 , in order to take up a writing position on the staff of The West Point Story .

= = Early life (1921 ? 1941) = =

Gene Roddenberry was born on August 19 , 1921 in his parents ' rented home in El Paso , Texas , the first child of Eugene Edward Roddenberry and Caroline " Glen " (née Goleman) Roddenberry . He was named after his father and referred to as " Little " Gene . Roddenberry would later describe his father as " very intelligent " but a " very common man " . At the time of Gene 's birth , his father was working as a linesman , but shortly afterward he rode the rails to Los Angeles to seek better employment . He joined the Los Angeles Police Department as an emergency appointee on December 7 , 1922 . The following March he sent a message to his wife to tell her to come to Los Angeles with their son . Two months later , Gene Sr. passed the Civil Service test and was given a police commission .

The elder Roddenberry became a patrolman , and held that rank for the next twenty years . The family expanded with the birth of Robert Leon Roddenberry in 1924 , and Doris Willodean Roddenberry in 1925 . During this time , the Roddenberrys bought their first home at 3243 Drew Street . During Gene 's early years , he was saved by a quick thinking milkman who noticed that the house was on fire . He pounded on the door until Glen awoke and rushed out of the house with the children in tow . Roddenberry 's father kept rabbits , and the children sold them outside the house . It was these animals that became the subject of Roddenberry 's first published work in his school 's twice @-@ yearly newspaper , The Ace . During his childhood , Roddenberry was interested in reading , especially pulp magazines , and was a fan of stories such as John Carter of Mars , Tarzan , and the Skylark series by E. E. Smith .

In 1933 , when Roddenberry was twelve years old , the family moved to 4906 Monte Vista in the shadow of Mount Washington , and he began attending Luther Burbank Junior High School . This was the house that Roddenberry would later describe as his childhood home . His father helped the boys obtain local jobs ; Gene worked as a newspaper delivery boy and as a gas station attendant on Saturdays , and after school . The young Roddenberry moved to Franklin High School during the middle years of the Great Depression . His father was relatively unaffected by the Great Depression

because of his stable employment with the police department . The family distributed food to friends and family who were in need . Glen 's parents and her younger sister Willodean moved into the house for a time before finding other accommodation in Redondo Beach . During his time at Franklin , Roddenberry joined the Varsity Debate Team and was a member of the Authors Club under Mrs. Virginia Church . He graduated in 1939 .

He attended Los Angeles City College from 1939 onward . Although Roddenberry ranked in the ninetieth percentile on an intelligence test , and in the 99th percentile on a reading test administered as part of his college entrance examination , he elected to major in the police science curriculum ; as president of the school 's Police Club , he communicated with police liaison Stanley Sheldon . During his second year , he developed an interest in aeronautical engineering and obtained a pilot 's license through the United States Army Air Corps @-@ sponsored Civilian Pilot Training Program . He graduated from Los Angeles City College with an Associate of Arts degree in police science on June 26 , 1941 , becoming the first member of his family to earn a college degree . After graduating , he traveled to March Air Base and signed up for the Army Air Corps ; due to the lack of training spaces his entrance was delayed . For the remainder of the summer , he attended Peace Officer training at the University of California , Los Angeles as an Army cadet .

= = Military service and civil aviation (1941 ? 1948) = =

In the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor , Roddenberry received a telegram with orders to attend Kelly Air Force Base , enlisting on December 18 , 1941 . Following the completion of boot camp , he was sent to Corsicana , Texas for pilot training by civilian instructors . He completed sixty hours of flight time there , including thirty @-@ two solo hours . In March 1942 , he moved to Goodfellow Field (now Goodfellow Air Force Base) in San Angelo , Texas for basic flight training where he flew a Vultee BT @-@ 13 Valiant . Roddenberry graduated on August 5 , and was commissioned as a second lieutenant .

His initial posting to the Pacific Theater was delayed by a month , during which he completed further training on the Cessna AT @-@ 17 Bobcat . By virtue of this additional training , and because Roddenberry 's height made it unlikely that he would be suitable for a combat fighter pilot , he was assigned to bombers . He received orders to report to Bellows Field , Oahu , to join the 394th Bomb Squadron , 5th Bombardment Group , of the Thirteenth Air Force . The squadron flew the Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress , which had previously been used by the 19th Bomb Group , and were en route to a maintenance overhaul when they had to flee due to the Japanese invasion of the Philippines . Roddenberry was assigned as Captain William Ripley 's co @-@ pilot for the flight that the squadron took to Christmas Island , and the following day to Canton Island . An additional flight on November 17 took the squadron to Nadi , Fiji , where they were expected to go on to the New Hebrides . Instead they were ordered to remain in Nadi to fly reconnaissance missions .

In January 1943 , the squadron was ordered to conduct bombing missions , alternating between bases in Espiritu Santo , Nadi , and Guadalcanal . These missions consisted of teams of four to eight planes , with no fighter support . It was during these flights that Roddenberry faced Japanese fighters for the first time . On August 2 , 1943 , while flying out of Espiritu Santo , Roddenberry was piloting a B @-@ 17 but realized the plane did not have enough speed to take off . He applied the brakes to stop the aircraft but they did not respond . The tail brake was applied but it also failed . The plane overshot the runway by 500 feet (150 m) and impacted trees , crushing the nose , and starting a fire . Bombardier Sgt. John P. Kruger and navigator Lt. Talbert H. Wollam were both positioned in the nose and died on impact . While an official report absolved Roddenberry of any responsibility , there were those in the squadron who blamed him for the men 's deaths . Early in September 1943 , the squadron was rotated back to the United States . The crew was transported on an old Dutch freighter across the Pacific ; upon his arrival , and reunion with his wife , his picture was featured in the Los Angeles Times .

Roddenberry spent the remainder of his military career in the United States , and while he did not keep an ongoing record , he estimated that he had flown 89 combat missions . This number was disputed by the records of the Army Air Corps and other members of the 394th Bomber Squadron .

For example , one pilot in the same bomb group as Roddenberry flew eighty missions , but took three times longer than Roddenberry had claimed to do so . In October , he was assigned to Fort Worth , Texas and then the 18th Replacement Wing at Salt Lake City . He was subsequently moved to the Office of Flight Safety based in Oakland , California . In February 1944 , he moved back to March Field and was promoted to Captain and subsequently flew all over the United States in his role as a plane crash investigator . During this time he was in another accident as a passenger on a military flight that crashed and caught fire . Roddenberry pulled three men to safety . During his military career , he was awarded the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross .

In March 1945 , he applied to the Civil Aeronautics Administration for a commercial pilot 's licence . He was subsequently certified to fly both single and multi @-@ engine aircraft between 225 and 1500 horsepower . Before being discharged from the Army Air Force in July 1945 , he began to fly for Pan American World Airways . He was based first in Miami , before moving to New York City for their long @-@ haul flights . He began to fly routes from New York to Johannesburg or Calcutta , the two longest Pan Am routes at the time . He and his wife Eileen lived in River Edge , New Jersey . He continued to pursue his dream of writing , and had a poem published in the Op @-@ Ed section of the New York Times on June 17 , 1943 . During his time with the airline , he took two extension courses at Columbia University in the spring of 1946 .

On June 18 , 1947 , he picked up the Clipper Eclipse in Karachi , India , for a flight to Istanbul with the designation Pan Am Flight 121 . Five hours into the flight , the number one engine developed a fault and was shut down . The plane was able to fly on three engines . However , they began to overheat , and the pilot descended to a lower altitude to allow the engines to cool . A second engine caught fire , and fire suppressant measures failed to extinguish it . While the pilot attempted to land the plane , Roddenberry went to the cabin to calm the passengers . He was certain at the time that he was going to die , as the engine fell from the wing , exposing fuel lines , causing the fire to spread . The plane descended rapidly . As he unbuckled himself from a seat to calm a woman , it crashed in the Syrian Desert . Though he had two broken ribs , he began to evacuate passengers from the burning plane with the other crew . Roddenberry had to force the broken seatbelt of the Maharani of Phaltan open so that she could leave the plane . He repeatedly re @-@ entered the plane to pull out more passengers ; some were burning and he used pillows to extinguish the flames . The wind turned , causing the fire to engulf the plane , and he was unable to make any further trips . Roddenberry took charge in the aftermath , and , after a group of local tribesmen proved to be of no help , he formed two teams to search for civilization . The team he led trekked four miles across the desert to the town of Mayadine , where he telephoned the emergency landing strip at Deir ez @-@ Zor , some 38 miles (61 km) away . In response , the Syrian Army dispatched planes with medical teams to the crash site . Roddenberry returned to the site to assist the survivors . Fourteen people died in the crash ; eleven passengers needed hospital treatment , eight were unharmed .

Two weeks later , the Syrian authorities allowed Roddenberry to return to the United States . This near @-@ death experience had increased his desire to have children , and Eileen became pregnant shortly after his return . While back in the U.S. , he testified at a Civil Aviation Authority inquiry in New York alongside two other surviving crew members . All three were commended for their work following the crash for : " devotion to duty , their calmness and efficiency in the difficult and hazardous experience . " The crash investigation questioned the maintenance of the plane 's engines , as issues with them had been identified on a previous flight . The Roddenberrys ' first child , Darleen Anita , was born on April 4 , 1948 , and Eileen expressed concerns , following the crash , about raising the child alone . After the birth , Roddenberry continued to fly for Pan @-@ Am , but another incident , while flying out of La Guardia Airport , marked the end of his career as a pilot . On a particularly cold and snowy day , the controls froze during takeoff , almost causing the plane to stall . He resigned from Pan @-@ Am on May 15 , 1948 , and decided to pursue his dream of writing particularly for the new medium of television .

= = Police service and burgeoning writing career = =

On arriving back in Los Angeles , the Roddenberry family lived initially with Gene 's parents at 2710

Green Street , Temple City . He obtained employment as a sales manager with the Tri @-@ Vision Corporation in Alhambra , which sold stereo " 3 @-@ D " cameras . However , he realized that this would only be temporary and sought more permanent employment elsewhere . Roddenberry applied for a position with the Los Angeles Police Department on January 10 , 1949 , quitting Tri @-@ Vision the following day . He was enrolled in the department on February 1 and given badge number 6089 . His initial training was completed on March 16 , and he spent the following sixteen months in the traffic division . Roddenberry was subsequently transferred to the newspaper unit . His first job , in his new role as a writer , was to write press releases and teach traffic safety . Roddenberry 's father had worked with Deputy Chief William H. Parker , who was promoted to LAPD Chief on August 9 , 1950 , and Gene became friends with him .

As part of Parker 's modernization efforts , the newspaper unit became the " Public Information Division " with Captain Stanley Sheldon in charge . He and Gene had known each other since Roddenberry attended Los Angeles City College . Roddenberry became Parker 's speech writer , and wrote of the Chief 's professional philosophy in the in @-@ house magazine , The Beat , in September 1952 . He reputedly based the Star Trek character Spock on Parker 's rational and unemotional behavior . In this new office , he worked alongside Don Ingells , who would go on to create Fantasy Island , and write episodes for Star Trek such as " The Alternative Factor " . The Association for Professional Law Enforcement was founded on November 12 , 1952 , with Roddenberry as one of the founding members and spokesman . He said at the time that : " We are of the opinion that professional ethics and practical police work are completely compatible and we intend to meet together to promote this compatibility . " Following this , Roddenberry began a correspondence with Erle Stanley Gardner , creator of the Perry Mason novels . The duo would record audio letters and send them to each other . Gardner forwarded Roddenberry 's comments to Harry Steeger , who felt that he and Roddenberry had similar opinions on law enforcement . Gardner began to seek Roddenberry 's opinion of his work , including allowing him a preview of The Court of Last Resort .

Over time , Roddenberry sought to earn more money for his family . In 1951 , he requested permission to take a second job which he described as " of a dignified nature " ; it was as a freezer salesman for the Amana Corporation . He was turned down , but found another way to earn money . The Dragnet radio series and the 1951 television series sourced their stories from the LAPD . Roddenberry gathered stories from his colleagues on the force and wrote them up for submission to the show , splitting the \$ 100 payment evenly if they sold . This extra income was substantial for the time , as he earned only \$ 400 a month from the Department . The Roddenberry 's second child , Dawn Allison , was born on August 31 , 1953 .

Later that year , Captain Sheldon gave Roddenberry an additional position as technical adviser for a new television version of Mr. District Attorney . Having spent the intervening years dissecting any scripts he could get his hands on , and comparing them to the television output , Roddenberry advised the head of the studio 's story department that he could write scripts as good as the ones they were using . He submitted his first script on October 22 , 1953 , under his pseudonym " Robert Wesley " . It went into production as episode 9b , " Defense Plant Gambling " . On December 1 , he made a further request to the LAPD for a second job as a free @-@ lance writer and adviser . This time it was approved . He later said , during the production of the second season of Star Trek , that the pseudonym was used after a fortune cookie revealed a message saying : " A change of name will bring you fame . "

Roddenberry took his Sergeant 's exam in early 1954 passing on the first attempt . At the same time , he wrote a second script for Mr. District Attorney titled " Wife Killer " , for which he was paid \$ 700 . During his six @-@ month probation as Sergeant , he became friends with Wilbur Clingan , who would later have the Klingon race named after him . He sold another script entitled " Police Academy " in July . The sales of the three scripts amounted to the equivalent of nearly fifty @-@ percent of his Sergeant 's yearly salary of \$ 5 @,@ 000 . The following December , he began to write the script for his first work of science fiction , which was eventually called The Secret Defense of 117 . With Ricardo Montalban as lead , it was aired two years later as part of an anthology package , with the screenplay again credited to Robert Wesley . This was his first collaboration with

Ziv Television Programs . He submitted a science fiction script " The Transporter " on January 4 , 1955 which was not purchased , but sold several scripts through the rest of the year : " Court Escape " , " Patrol Boat " , and " Police Brutality " for Mr. District Attorney , and " Reformed Criminal " , " Human Bomb " , and " Mental Patient " for Ziv 's Highway Patrol . In early 1956 , he sold two @-@ story ideas for I Led Three Lives , and he found that it was becoming increasingly difficult to be a writer as well as a policeman .

Ziv offered Roddenberry a writing position for a series it was developing called The West Point Story . He informed Parker that he was intending to resign in order to join the writing staff . To his surprise , the Chief revealed that he had been intentionally connecting Roddenberry with television professionals for the past few years with the hope that one would offer him a permanent position so that he could pursue his dream of writing . On June 7 , 1956 , he resigned from the force to concentrate on his writing career . In his brief letter of resignation , Roddenberry wrote : " I find myself unable to support my family at present on anticipated police salary levels in a manner we consider necessary . Having spent slightly more than seven years on this job , during all of which fair treatment and enjoyable working conditions were received , this decision is made with considerable and genuine regret . "