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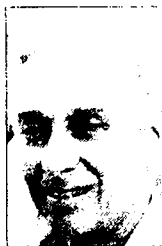
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Documentary filmmaker Charles Eli Guggenheim is dead at 78

"Monument to the Dream"
is still shown at the Arch

BY ROBERT W. DUFFY
Of the Post-Dispatch

Of the millions of visitors to the Gateway Arch, all have come close to the brilliance of Charles Eli Guggenheim. Those who have sat in the dark-



Guggenheim
Winner of four
Oscars

ness to watch his film, "Monument to the Dream," have experienced it.

The film, shot between 1963 and 1965, shows the building of the Arch, the Jefferson National Expansion

Memorial. But more than that, it is about the people who built the monument and a tribute to their industry.

Mr. Guggenheim, who was nominated for a dozen Oscars and won four, died Wednesday (Oct. 9, 2002) of pancreatic cancer at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington. He was 78.

If there is a quality that endowed Charles Guggenheim's work with greatness, it was this understanding of the value of telling stories from a distinctly human perspective, and his respect for his fellow beings.

Jack Valenti, president and chief executive of the Motion Picture Association of America, and a close friend of Mr. Guggenheim's for almost four decades, said he was one of the

top three or four documentary filmmakers of his time.

"He had an emotional style. He grabbed you by the heart and worked his way into the emotional capillaries," Valenti said.

Guggenheim

*Documentary filmmaker
recorded building of Arch*

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Mr. Guggenheim was born in Cincinnati. He served in the Army from 1943 to 1946 and received a bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa in 1948.

His career began in New York, where he worked on the old "Fearless Fosdick" television show, according to his daughter, Grace Stix Guggenheim of Washington.

Mr. Guggenheim came to St. Louis in 1952 and took over operation of the fledgling educational television station, KETC-TV. In 1954, the station fired him for what was described in the Post-Dispatch as "a basic difference between Guggenheim and the station directors on the handling of productions."

In 1957, he married Marion Davis Streett of St. Louis. In 1965, he moved with his wife and their three children to Washington, where he made films for the U.S.

Information Agency. Before leaving St. Louis, he produced two theatrical movies, "The Great St. Louis Bank Robbery," based on the 1953 Southwest Bank robbery and filmed here, and "The Mermaid in the Sea," filmed in Brazil. He also produced a documentary on the Post-Dispatch.

In the 1960s and 1970s, he was sought after as a producer of political campaign films. He was media director for four presidential campaigns — Adlai Stevenson's in 1956, Robert F. Kennedy's in 1968, George McGovern's in 1972 and Sen. Edward Kennedy's in 1980. He also worked on a number of senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns, including former Sen. John C. Danforth's 1982 campaign for the Senate.

Sen. Kennedy and Danforth praised Mr. Guggenheim's accomplishments.

"Charlie was an outstanding artist . . . and a dear friend who was always there when we needed him," said Kennedy, D-Mass. "He told the story of my brothers in his brilliant films. . . . He was indispensable in many of our election campaigns," Kennedy said. "He helped tell the story of America with his creative genius."

Danforth, a Missouri Republican, said: "He was as creative as anyone I have ever known in my life, a person of great accomplishment and very committed to St. Louis. Charles was a good friend, a good person, and his death is a great loss."

Although he worked for politicians, the documentary was Mr. Guggenheim's true medium.

"Monument to the Dream," released in 1968, was a film of which he was extremely proud. In an interview with the Post-Dispatch in 1996, he said that looking back, he wouldn't change a frame of it. In 1968, the movie was the first American documentary to win the Venice Film Festival's Gold Mercurio.

His four documentaries that won Academy Awards were "Nine from Little Rock" in 1964; "Robert Kennedy Remembered" (1968); "The Johnstown Flood" (1989); and "A Time for Justice" (1994).

St. Louis composer Robert A. Wykes began working with Mr. Guggenheim in 1958 and wrote the music for a number of his movies, including the Oscar-winning Kennedy film and the Arch film.

"Of all the artists I have known and worked with, he was one of the most complete," Wykes said.

“He had a good camera eye, and he could edit a scene or whole film with great sense of rhythm and pacing, and could turn a phrase of narration that was poetic.”

Wykes said Mr. Guggenheim even suggested music by humming something that came into his head.

“The other important thing to me is that he was always able to draw out and to shape the talent of other artists,” Wykes said. “A remarkable group came to work with him. I called it Guggenheim University.”

One member of that group was Mr. Guggenheim’s daughter, Grace, who worked with him for the past 16 years.

“He was a wonderful person,” she said, “very kind, and a great teacher. He had a very subtle personality, very understated. But he was very, very driven about what he loved to do, and that was telling stories about people.”

Grace Guggenheim said the Arch movie was a “seminal film” in her father’s list of credits. “And it still moves people. That’s why it’s still showing after all these years.”

In the last six months of his life, Mr. Guggenheim worked on a movie called “Berga: Soldiers of Another War,” which is about American soldiers who died in Nazi slave labor camps.

Besides his wife and daughter, survivors include two sons, Jonathan Streett Guggenheim of Hollywood, Calif., and Davis Guggenheim of Nyack, N.Y.; and four grandchildren.

Plans for a celebration of Mr. Guggenheim’s life are pending. Contributions in his memory can be made to the Donald Danforth Plant Sciences Center, 975 North Warson Road, St. Louis, Mo. 63132.

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