

People & Places

Obituaries

Actor-writer Aykroyd dead

Prominent American poet Bly dies at 94

MINNEAPOLIS, Nov 23, (AP) — **Robert Bly**, one of the most prominent American poets of the last half century and author of the best-selling men's movement classic "Iron John," has died. He was 94.

Bly, an active poet, writer and editor for more than 50 years and a celebrated translator of the work of international poets, died Sunday at his home in Minneapolis after suffering from dementia for 14 years, his daughter, Mary Bly, said.

"Dad had no pain. ... His whole family was around him so how much better can you do?" she told The Associated Press.

Bly published his first book of poems, "Silence in the Snowy Fields," in 1962. He won the National Book Award in 1968 for "The Light Around the Body," a book of Vietnam War protest poems. Bly donated the \$1,000 prize money to the draft resistance movement.

But the native of the western Minnesota town of Madison gained his greatest fame for a work of prose called "Iron John: A Book About Men." His meditation on modern masculinity was released in 1990, and spent more than two years on the New York Times Bestseller List.

The book helped launch a new men's movement, but also angered some feminists and drew some ridicule by summoning images of bare-chested businessmen gathering in the forest to beat on drums and howl at the moon.

"The media dismissed all this work as drumming and running in the woods, which reduced it to something ridiculous," Bly told the Paris Review in a 2000 interview. "I think the men's seminars were not threatening to the women's movement at all, but a lot of the critics of 'Iron John' missed the point."

Born on his family's farm near Madison in 1926, Bly later said he first started writing poetry in high school to impress a beautiful high-school English teacher. After a brief stint in the Navy, he landed at Harvard in 1947 and found himself surrounded by some of the leading lights of the country's literary scene, such as the late Adrienne Rich, a classmate of his who became a prominent feminist poet and writer.

Magazine

From there it was on to New York City — he sometimes slept at Grand Central Station when he couldn't find an apartment to crash — and then a year at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Bly returned to Minnesota where he'd live for most of the rest of his life.

Back in Madison, Bly and another local poet started a poetry magazine they dubbed The Fifties (later renamed The Sixties, and then The Seventies). The inside of the front cover signaled their intention to rattle the literary establishment with this warning: "Most of the poetry published in America today is too old-fashioned."

"Up until then, there was a kind of academic lock on mainstream poetry. It all looked like very Victorian and kind of reified, stuffy, complacent," said Thomas R. Smith, a longtime friend to Bly who worked for many years as his assistant, and has co-edited several books about him. "He defied the convention that all the important poetry was coming from the coasts and the college campuses, and carved out some new space for the poets of the American Midwest."

In addition to writing poems influenced by his predecessors and peers in other countries, Bly also labored to bring their original work to US readers. Over the years, with the help of native speakers, Bly translated several dozen poets from a number of languages. Several poets he translated and championed, including Chile's Pablo Neruda and Sweden's Tomas Transtromer, would go on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

"The translation work is an amazing part of his legacy in its own right," said Jeff Shotts, executive editor at Minneapolis-based Graywolf Press, which published some of Bly's translations and other work.

With his tall, burly physique and a thick shock of wild hair — gone snow white in his later years — Bly cut a striking figure. His poetry readings were frequently rollicking affairs: He often donned masks or colorful shawls, cracked jokes and gestured wildly, and had a habit of reading the same poem twice in a row.

"He'd say that the first time the poem got stuck in your head, but the second time it can get down in your chest," said James Lenfestey, a fellow poet who was Bly's neighbor in Minneapolis for many years.

George Borchardt, his agent for several decades, recalled one of his readings in New York City.

"I remember it was packed and people were really hanging on to every word. He was a terrific reader," the agent said.

Borchardt also remembered Bly as a pleasure to represent.

"He was not the kind of author who needed guidance in his writing," he said.

Bly and his first wife, Carol, divorced in 1979; he moved to Minneapolis soon after. Bly is survived by his second wife, Ruth, whom he married in 1980, four children — Mary, Bridget Noah, Micha Bly and stepdaughter Wesley Dutta — and nine grandchildren.

Over the years, Bly published more than two dozen poetry collections, multiple translations of other poets' works and a handful of nonfiction books of which "Iron John" was the most well-known.

Also:

NEW YORK: Peter Aykroyd, an Emmy-nominated actor and writer on "Saturday Night Live" for the 1979-80 season who later worked with older brother, Dan, on everything from a TV show about the paranormal to such films as "Dragnet" and "Coneheads," has died at age 66.

In a brief statement Monday to The Associated Press, **Dan Aykroyd** cited the medical examiner in Spokane, Washington, and said that his brother "succumbed to septicemia from an internal infection precipitated by an untreated abdominal hernia." Further details were not immediately available.

Peter Aykroyd's death was first reported last weekend on "Saturday Night Live," which also tweeted a short film by **Tom Schiller** he starred in for the show, the noir parody "Java Junkie." Former "Saturday Night Live" writer **Alan Zweibel** posted a tribute on Facebook, calling Aykroyd "a very funny, really nice guy."

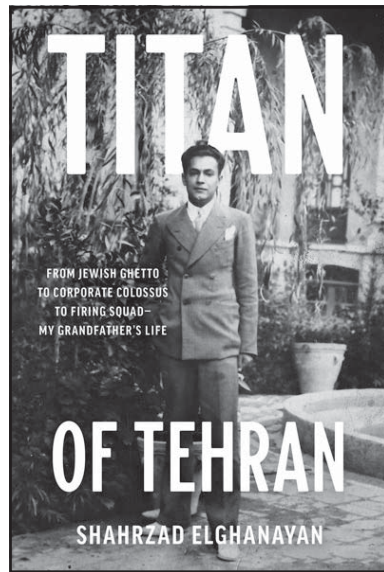
He was born in **Ottawa, Canada**, and his career followed a similar path to his brother's — the Second City comedy troupe in Toronto and eventually "Saturday Night Live," which he joined months after Dan Aykroyd and fellow original member **John Belushi** left to focus on their movie careers. Peter Aykroyd's year on "SNL" brought him an Emmy nomination for best writing in a variety or music program.



Bly



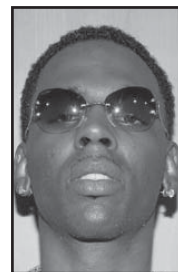
Author Shahrzad Elghanayan poses for a portrait in New York to promote her book 'Titan of Tehran: From Jewish Ghetto to Corporate Colossus to Firing Squad — My Grandfather's Life.' (AP)



This image shows the book cover for 'Titan of Tehran: From Jewish Ghetto to Corporate Colossus to Firing Squad — My Grandfather's Life' by Shahrzad Elghanayan. (AP)



Avery



Young Dolph

Variety

MEMPHIS, Tenn: Police in Tennessee have tied a car used in the killing of rapper **Young Dolph** to a shooting that left a woman dead and wounded another person days before the ambush on the hip-hop artist, authorities said Monday.

Two men exited a white Mercedes-Benz and fired shots into a Memphis bakery where Young Dolph was buying cookies Wednesday and killed him, Memphis police said. Police have released photos taken from surveillance video that captured the shooting, but no suspect information has been released and no arrests have been made.

The same car was used in a Nov. 12 shooting in the city of Covington, located about 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of Memphis, **Capt Jack Howell** of the Covington Police Department told The Associated Press.

Howell said the Mercedes followed another vehicle out of a nighttime high school football game. At an intersection, two people got out of the Mercedes and fired about 40 rounds from high-powered rifles into the other car, Howell said.

Two women were shot. One woman died of her wounds, and the other woman remains hospitalized, Howell said. **Covington** police are working with Memphis authorities and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation on the search for the suspects, who are believed to be from the Memphis area, Howell said.

Evidence found in the Mercedes when it was located in a Memphis neighborhood Saturday tied the car to both shootings, Howell said.

"The car connected with our shooting is also connected with the shooting in Memphis regarding the rapper," Howell said.

Young Dolph, whose real name was **Adolph Johnston Jr.**, had been in his hometown of Memphis to participate in Thanksgiving turkey giveaways and visit a cancer center. Friends and associates handed out turkeys, stuffing mix and cranberry sauce at a Memphis church Friday, an event the 36-year-old rapper helped organize and was supposed to attend.

Young Dolph was shot at **Makeda's Cookies**, a beloved, family-owned bakery known for its tasty butter cookies and banana pudding. The bakery was a favorite of the rapper, who regularly visited it when he was in the city.

The store where he was shot, which is near Memphis International Airport, remained boarded up and could be closed for

Books

Elghanayan recounts her grandfather's story

'Titan of Tehran' blends history, memories

By Rob Merrill

When most of us get curious about our family history, we pay a visit to Ancestry.com. Shahrzad Elghanayan is not most of us.

She is the granddaughter of Habib Elghanayan, arguably one of the most famous Iranian industrialists of all time, whose rise and fall mirrored that of his homeland. She's also an award-winning photo journalist, trained to recognize a good story when she sees one.

For readers not familiar with Iranian history, this story is broadly summarized on the book's cover: "Titan of Tehran: From Jewish Ghetto to Corporate Colossus to Firing Squad — My Grandfather's Life." Elghanayan opens in a narrative style, recounting how her father set up a shortwave radio in the family's New York bathroom so he could hear the news from Iran in the spring of 1979. On May 8, 1979, he learns of his father's execution: "While our black shortwave droned on in the cold marble bathroom, my grandfather's bullet-riddled body languished in the prison morgue, with a cardboard sign around his neck. It read: 'Habib Elghanayan: Zionist Spy.'"

After that dramatic opening, Elghanayan — who spells her last name slightly differently from the way her grandfather's name has been transliterated — settles in and recounts her grandfather's story more like an objective reporter than a beloved family member.

She peppers her text with footnotes and obviously did her research. For readers coming to the story cold, it can be hard to follow. So many foreign names and relationships to track. But those specifics won't matter except to historians who now have a new firsthand source to consult.

The most readable parts of the book are in the first person as Elghanayan remembers her childhood in Tehran. (Her father moved the family to New

York in 1977 about two years before Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic revolutionaries toppled the Shah.) Here she is remembering the large family home her father left behind: "In a large cage, we kept dozens of pigeons, and I worried about the one with brown and white feathers who stood apart from the gray ones. Being different, I thought, put him in some sort of danger."

But Elghanayan avoids inserting herself too much into the narrative, choosing to focus on her grandfather's story. And what a story. He was Iran's version of a Rockefeller or Carnegie — a self-made millionaire who saw business opportunities everywhere after World War II as Iran moved quickly to modernize its economy. He and his six brothers build an empire that among other things introduces plastic to Iran.

Struggles

The boom years last for decades. In 1973-1974, the country's gross national product rises 30%, and it's easy to see why Habib Elghanayan loved his country so much.

But it's that love of country that blinds him to the dangers he faced in Iran as a prominent Jewish businessman during the ayatollah's rise to power. Elghanayan struggles to understand why her grandfather didn't leave Iran when he could, before the Revolutionary Guard began tracking and killing prominent Jews. Was it national pride? Stubbornness? "I haven't done anything wrong," Habib tells four of his family members during a visit to New York about six months before his execution. "I built buildings, I built factories... I haven't done anything bad to Iran that anyone would want to get me for anything."

The hindsight of history, of course, makes his actions seem tragic in the extreme, but writing this book has obviously brought his granddaughter

a sense of peace. "As I have delved into our former homeland's record of injustices, to us and so many others, I've stopped yearning for this faraway land where I'd never have the opportunity to flourish because of my religion or my gender. That kind of yearning is nothing more than toxic romanticism."

In sharing her grandfather's remarkable story with the world, Elghanayan manages to avoid such romanticism, telling a very personal story that also contributes to the historical record.

Also:

NEW YORK: Neil deGrasse Tyson has a new publisher and high ambitions for his next book.

Henry Holt and Company announced Thursday that the celebrated commentator and best-selling author will release "Starry Messenger: Cosmic Perspectives on Civilization" next fall. The astrophysicist says that "Starry Messenger," a call for science, exploration and rational thought as paths to a better life on Earth, may be his "most important."

"As a scientist I could not sit idly by and watch the irrationalities of the world dismantle civilization, knowing that a dose of sensibility — a cosmic perspective in our collective thinking can save us from ourselves," he said in a statement.

Previous books by Tyson, host of the National Geographic series "StarTalk" and director of New York's Hayden Planetarium, include "Welcome to the Universe" and "Astrophysics for People in a Hurry." The upcoming book marks the first time that Tyson, who has released books with **W.W. Norton** and Company and Princeton University Press among others, has worked with Holt. Next fall, Norton will release an updated paperback edition of the 2004 publication "Origins: Fourteen Billion Years of Cosmic Evolution," which Tyson co-wrote with **Donald Goldsmith**. (AP)

the rest of the year, the bakery's management has said.

A second location in downtown Memphis reopened to customers Monday. More than \$85,000 has been donated online in support of the bakery, which is named after a 6-year-old girl who died of cancer.

Fans of the cookie shop, which also sells its products in grocery stores and caters events, say it is an important part of the community.

Julian Boyd, a co-owner of D'Bos Wings N More restaurant, said the Black-owned bakery was popular among celebrities and regular folks alike. (AP)

MADISON, Wis: The Wisconsin Supreme Court has rejected a request by **Steven Avery** to review his conviction for killing a young photographer in 2005, a case that became the focus of a popular Netflix series "Making a Murderer."



Lisa Rinna, (left), Amelia Gray Hamlin and Harry Hamlin attend the premiere of National Geographic's 'The Hot Zone: Anthrax' at Jazz at Lincoln Center on Monday, Nov. 22, in New York. (AP)

Avery has been fighting unsuccessfully for years to have his conviction overturned. His latest appeal asked the court to review three issues: failure to disclose evidence, the destruction of bone fragments and ineffective assistance of counsel.

The court denied Avery's petition for review without commenting.

Avery, 59, is serving life in prison for killing **Theresa Halbach**, 25, on his family's property on Halloween 2005. Halbach had gone to the Avery family salvage yard to photograph a vehicle that Avery planned to sell.

His nephew, **Brendan Dassey**, was also convicted in the case. Both Avery and Dassey have maintained their innocence.

"We are not surprised since the Wisconsin Supreme Court only grants 1-2% of petitions for review. Mr Avery has many options including proceeding to the US Supreme Court, and then federal district," Avery's attorney, **Kathleen Zellner**, said in a statement. "Since the appellate court only ruled on 50% of the issues raised we will be filing a new petition with the circuit court at the appropriate time."

The case gained widespread attention in 2015 after Netflix aired "Making a Murderer," a series whose creators raised questions about the convictions. Those who worked on the cases accused the filmmakers of leaving out key pieces of evidence and presenting a biased view of what happened. The filmmakers defended their work and supported calls to set Avery and Dassey free.

Dassey was 16 when he confessed to detectives that he helped his uncle rape and kill Halbach. A judge threw out the confession in 2016, ruling it was coerced by investigators using deceptive tactics. (AP)