

## People &amp; Places

## Books

## 'Recitatif' a rare work

## Morrison short story to come out as book

NEW YORK, Jan. 10. (AP): To much of the world the late **Toni Morrison** was a novelist, celebrated for such classics as "Beloved," "Song of Solomon" and "The Bluest Eye."

But the Nobel laureate did not confine herself to one kind of writing.

Morrison also completed plays, poems, essays, and short stories, one of which is coming out as a book on Feb. 1. "Recitatif," written by Morrison in the early 1980s and rarely seen over the following decades, follows the lives of two women from childhood to their contrasting fortunes as adults. Zadie Smith contributes an introduction and the story's audio edition is read by the actor Bahni Turpin.



Morrison

According to Autumn M. Womack, a professor of English and African American Studies at Princeton University (where Morrison taught for years), the author had written short fiction at least since her college years at Howard University and Cornell University, though she never published a story collection. "Recitatif" was included in the 1983 release "Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women," co-edited by the poet-playwright Amiri Baraka and now out of print.

"One of the main takeaways from it ('Recitatif') is that you'll begin to think of her as someone who experimented with form. You'll get away from the idea that she was solely a novelist and think of her as someone who was trying all kinds of writing," Womack said.

"Recitatif" refers to a musical expression defined by Merriam-Webster as "a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech," a style Morrison's often suggested. The story tells of a series of encounters between Roberta and Twyla, one of whom is Black, the other white, although we are left to guess which is which.

## Strange

They meet as girls at the St. Bonaventure children's shelter ("it was something else to be stuck in a strange place with a girl from a whole other race," remembers Twyla, the story's narrator). And they run into each other on occasion years later, whether at a Howard Johnson's in upstate New York, where Twyla was working and Roberta comes in with a man scheduled to meet with Jimi Hendrix, or later at a nearby Food Emporium.

"Once, twelve years ago, we passed like strangers," Twyla says. "A black girl and a white girl meeting in a Howard Johnson's on the road and having nothing to say. One in a blue and white triangle waitress hat — the other with a male companion on her way to see Hendrix. Now we were behaving like sisters separated for much too long."

As Womack notes, "Recitatif" includes themes found elsewhere in Morrison's work, whether the complicated relationship between two women that was also at the heart of her novel "Sula" or the racial blurring Morrison used in "Paradise," a 1998 novel in which Morrison refers to a white character within a Black community without making clear who it is. Morrison often spoke of race as an invention of society, once writing that "the realm of racial difference has been allowed an intellectual weight to which it has no claim."

In her introduction, Smith likens "Recitatif" to a puzzle or a game, while warning that "Toni Morrison does not play." The mystery begins with the opening lines, "My mother danced all night and Roberta's was sick: 'Well, now, what kind of mother tends to dance all night?'" Smith asks "A black one or a white one?" Throughout the story, Morrison will refer to everything from hair length to social status as if to challenge the reader's own racial assumptions.

"Like most readers of 'Recitatif,' I found it impossible not to hunger to know who the other was, Twyla or Roberta," Smith acknowledges. "Oh, I urgently wanted to have it straightened out. Wanted to sympathize warmly in one sure place, turn cold in the other. To feel for the somebody and dismiss the nobody."

"But this is precisely what Morrison deliberately and methodically will not allow me to do. It's worth asking ourselves why."

T.R. Ragan's alluring new thriller, "Count to Three," centers around private investigator **Dani Callahan** after her daughter, **Tinsley**, went missing five years ago. Dani's ex-husband **Matthew** accepts that Tinsley is dead and gone, but Dani won't give up the hope that someday she'll find their beloved Tinsley.

But Tinsley's is only one of the three cases dominating Dani's life right now. A lawyer is experiencing strange disturbances in her house — furniture moving, food missing from the fridge, clothes rearranged. And a teen girl named **Ali** Cross has gone missing. Police think she ran away, but a local kid swears up and down he saw her shoved into the back of a van.

Meanwhile, Dani's young, rambunctious assistant, **Quinn**, doesn't mind using uncouth and even irresponsible methods to make progress on their missing persons cases. On the five-year anniversary of Tinsley's abduction, Quinn stirs the pot. Neither Quinn nor Dani could be ready for what that stirring dredges up from the muck.

"Count to Three" starts like a new-aged re-imagining of a hardboiled detective novel and quickly ups the ante when Ragan introduces chapters from the perspectives of Ali and her abductor. These chapters are as brutal and intriguing as episodes of "You," allowing a grisly view into the unhinged life of a madman.

Ragan explores the thought processes of each character, chapter by paranoia-inducing chapter, through a third-person, limited omniscient perspective. "Count to Three" is a great novel for true crime and thriller lovers, so long as readers are willing to suspend their disbelief and go along for the ride.

Certain annoying quirks riddle the novel: lengthy descriptions of details and actions that have no bearing on the story; timeline issues that just don't add up no matter which way you shake it; inferring something and then blatantly stating as though the reader can't be trusted to understand; and a tendency toward the convenient for convenience's sake.

Despite those issues, the story is captivating and the writing genuinely thrilling. Through an emphasis on the PI perspective in which every detail could be important, "Count to Three" keeps the suspense up and threatens that the tides could turn at any time.



Bob Saget arrives at the People's Choice Awards at the Microsoft Theater on Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2017, in Los Angeles. Saget, a comedian and actor known for his role as a widower raising a trio of daughters in the sitcom 'Full House,' has died, according to authorities in Florida, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022. He was 65. (AP)

## Obituary

## 'Bob was the most loving and generous man'

## Saget, beloved dad of 'Full House,' dead

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 10. (AP): Bob Saget, the actor-comedian known for his role as beloved single dad Danny Tanner on the sitcom "Full House" and as the wisecracking host of "America's Funniest Home Videos," died while on a stand-up tour. He was 65.

Deputies in Orange County, Florida, were called Sunday about an "unresponsive man" in a hotel room at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando and found Saget dead, according to a sheriff's statement on Twitter. Detectives found "no signs of foul play or drug use in this case."

Saget was in Florida as part of his "I Don't Do Negative Comedy Tour." After warm audience receptions to his gigs Friday in Orlando and Saturday in the Ponte Vedra Beach resort area, he celebrated online.

"I'm back in comedy like I was when I was 26. I guess I'm finding my new voice and loving every moment of it," he posted Saturday on Instagram.

Fellow comedians and friends praised Saget not only for his wit, but his kindness.

"I am broken. I am gutted. I am in complete and utter shock. I will never ever have another friend like him," wrote John Stamos, who co-starred with Saget on "Full House." "I love you so much Bobby."

"I have no words. Bob was one of the best humans beings I've ever known in my life. I loved him so much," said Candace Cameron Bure, who played Saget's daughter on "Full House."

"In often a ruthless business he was historically not just hilarious but more importantly one of the kindest human beings I ever met in my career," actor Richard Lewis wrote on Twitter.

In a statement Sunday, Saget's family members said they are "devastated to confirm that our beloved Bob passed away today.... Though we ask for privacy at this time, we invite you to join us in remembering the love and laughter that Bob brought to the world."

Saget the stand-up showed his flip side with what became a much-talked-about cameo in the 2005 documentary "The Aristocrats" — in which 100 comics riffed on the world's dirtiest joke — that revealed his notoriously filthy sense of humor.

Raucous comedy wasn't part of his long-running network TV shows. He hosted the family friendly "America's Funniest Home Videos" and played the squeaky clean widower and dad to three young girls on "Full House," the ABC sitcom that also brought fame to Olsen twins Mary-Kate and Ashley when it debuted in 1987.

"Bob was the most loving, compassionate and generous man. We are deeply saddened that he is no longer with us but know that he will continue to be by our side to guide us as gracefully as he always has," the Olsens said in a joint statement.

## Popularity

The show's popularity didn't deter critics, some calling it cheesy and others deeming it unreal. Saget, as amiable and droll in an interview as he was on TV screens, took the brickbats in stride.

"'Full House' was a loving kind of show but obviously over the top. It had its heightened reality, a glossy Willy Wonka quality to it," he told The Associated Press in a 2001 interview.

That year, Saget took another pass at playing a widowed dad with winsome kids on the short-lived sitcom "Raising Dad."

He said he found himself repeatedly fielding questions about his habit of playing sitcom widowers, and had a ready response: "(Kevin) Costner does three, four baseball movies and that's OK. There's my rationale."

Saget was born in Philadelphia on May 17, 1956, to Benjamin, a supermarket executive, and Rosalyn, who worked in hospital administration. He graduated Temple University and enrolled briefly in the University of

Southern California to study film.

He left the college but stayed in Los Angeles and shifted to stand-up comedy, which led to small roles in TV and film before he found success with "Full House." He also appeared in some episodes of the sitcom's "Fuller House" 2016-20 sequel and was heard as the narrator on "How I Met Your Mother," which ran for nine seasons on CBS.

"Bob Saget was the older wiser 'me' for nine years on How I Met Your Mother," tweeted cast member Josh Radnor. "He was the kindest, loveliest, funniest, most supportive man. The easiest person to be around. A mensch among mensches."

In guest appearances on the Hollywood-set dark comedy "Entourage," Saget played a warped character named Bob Saget who was foul-mouthed but, unlike the man himself, was a misogynist and worse.

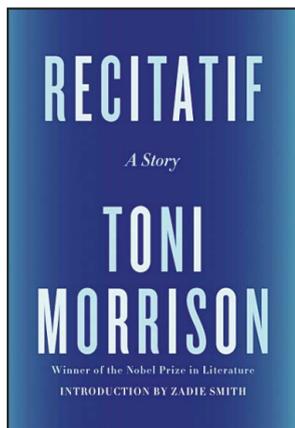
In early 2020, Saget was preparing for the start of his comedy tour when the pandemic put it on hold. He turned his energies to a podcast, "Bob Saget's Here For You," which gave fans an open mic to comment and ask him questions.

He focused occasionally on directing over the years, including on HBO's "The Mind of the Married Man," and the Norm Macdonald film "Dirty Work," and appeared on Broadway in "Hand to ..." and in "The Drowsy Chaperone."

He drew praise as producer-director of the 1996 TV film "For Hope," loosely based on the battle of his late sister, Gay, with the tissue disease scleroderma, and appealed for increased federal support for research funds.

He remembered his sister in a January 2020 post, noting that she died when she was 47 and would have been 73 that month.

Saget had daughters Aubrey, Lerra and Jennifer with first wife Sherri Kramer before divorcing in 1997. He married Kelly Rizzo in 2018.



This cover image released by Alfred A. Knopf shows 'Recitatif' by Toni Morrison. (AP)



Hickman



Lang

## Variety

LOS ANGELES: Dwayne Hickman, the actor and network TV executive who despite numerous achievements throughout his life would always be remembered fondly by a generation of baby boomers for his role as Dobie Gillis, has died. He was 87.

Hickman died of complications from Parkinson's on Sunday at his home in Los Angeles, according to a statement from a family representative, **B. Harlan Boll**. He was surrounded by family members when he died, it said.

Although Hickman went on to appear on other TV shows and in movies, as well as to successful behind-the-scenes careers as a publicist, talent booker for a prominent Howard Hughes-owned casino in **Las Vegas** and TV programming executive for CBS, he could never escape his public connection to Dobie.

"Oh, my gosh — it's Dobie Gillis! I grew up with you!" former President **Clinton** told him when the two met while Clinton was governor of **Arkansas**.

"Now it's nice," Hickman, who was also an accomplished painter, told a reporter during an exhibition of his work in **St. Louis** in 2003. "It's very sweet to see how much Dobie Gillis meant to a lot of baby boomers, who are always nice when I meet them."

His autobiography, co-written with **Joan Roberts Hickman**, his wife, was published in 1995. It was titled "Forever Dobie."

Hickman had small parts in movies and TV shows as a youngster, but had given up acting by 1950 to concentrate on his studies at Los Angeles' Cathedral High School. After graduation, he entered Loyola University.

"I was in the art program and was heading toward architecture when I got a call from my old agent toward the end of my freshman year," he recalled in a 2003 interview. "He said he had a role for me in 'The Bob Cummings Show.'"

"The Bob Cummings Show" (later called "Love That Bob") lasted from 1955 to 1959, and toward the end of its run Hickman made a pilot for author **Max Shulman** about a lovelorn 16-year-old named Dobie Gillis who pursued, but could never win the heart of, almost every girl he saw.

He was married three times: to **Carol Christensen**, 1963-1972; **Joanne Papile**, 1977-81; and **Joan Roberts**, whom he married in 1983 and who survives him. Hickman and his first wife had a son, **John**, and

he and his third wife had a son, **Albert**. (AP)

NEW YORK: **Michael Lang**, a co-creator and promoter of the 1969 Woodstock music festival that served as a touchstone for generations of music fans, has died.

**Michael Pagnotta**, a spokesperson for Lang's family, said Sunday the 77-year-old had been battling non-Hodgkin lymphoma and passed away Saturday at New York's Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. "He was absolutely an historic figure,

and also a great guy," Pagnotta, who said he had known Lang for about 30 years, told The Associated Press. "Both of those things go hand in hand."

Along with partners **Artie Kornfeld**, **John Roberts** and **Joel Rosenman**, Lang put together the festival billed as "three days of peace and music" in the summer of 1969 as the Vietnam War raged and led increasing numbers of disaffected young Americans to turn away from traditional mores and embraced a lifestyle that celebrated freedom of expression.

Roughly 400,000 people descended on the hamlet of **Bethel**, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northwest of New York City and endured miles-long traffic jams, torrential rains, food shortages and overwhelmed sanitary facilities. More than 30 acts performed on the concert's main stage at the base of a hill on land owned by farmer Max Yasgur, and concertgoers were treated to iconic performances from artists including **Jimi Hendrix**, **Carlos Santana**, **The Who** and **Jefferson Airplane**.

Lang, sporting a head of bushy brown hair, is seen throughout **Michael Wadleigh's** 1970 documentary movie that chronicled the festival.

"From the beginning, I believed that if we did our job right and from the heart, prepared the ground and set the right tone, people would reveal their higher selves and create something amazing," Lang wrote in his memoir, "The Road to Woodstock." (AP)



This image released by HBO shows Kate Winslet in a scene from 'Mare of Easttown.' Winslet won Best Actress, limited series: for 'Mare of Easttown' at the Golden Globe Awards which were announced via social media on Sunday, Jan. 9. (AP) — Details on Page 12