

Los Angeles Times

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From the Los Angeles Times

Danton Burroughs, 63; grandson of Tarzan creator protected the legacy

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May 15, 2008

Danton Burroughs, who spent his life marketing and protecting the work of his grandfather, Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs, died May 1 at his home in Tarzana, the San Fernando Valley community named after his ancestor's most famous fictional character. He was 63.

Burroughs, who had been battling Parkinson's disease, died of heart failure a day after a fire at his home destroyed a room filled with family memorabilia.

FOR THE RECORD:

Burroughs obituary: The obituary in Thursday's California section of Danton Burroughs, who guarded the legacy of his grandfather, Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs, said that Tarzan of the Apes first appeared as a short story in 1911. The character debuted in 1912 in a short novel published in All-Story Magazine. —

The cause of the fire is under investigation, said Alex Cornelius, a family spokesman.

Bill Hillman, an editor of [Edgar Rice Burroughs-related websites](#), told The Times that "it was heartbreaking for Dan to put his life's work into preserving material for the family and see it go up in flames."

The day he died, Danton Burroughs was to be named chairman of Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc., the company his grandfather formed in 1923 to merchandise his abundant fiction, which included dozens of novels and short stories.

"My grandfather was always smart, taking care of trademarks and copyrights and going after infringers," Burroughs told The Times in 1990.

In 1972, Burroughs became an officer and director of the family business, overseeing the company from a Mission-style bungalow on Ventura Boulevard that his grandfather built in 1927. The office is on the northern edge of 550 acres that Edgar Rice Burroughs named Tarzana Ranch in 1919. The community began going by the Tarzana name in the 1920s.

Profits from the creation of the fantasy character Tarzan of the Apes, which first appeared in a short story in 1911, allowed Edgar Rice Burroughs to purchase the land from the estate of Gen. Harrison Gray Otis, the second publisher of the Los Angeles Times.

Decades after the author's death in 1950, revenue from Tarzan-related products continued to roll in as Danton Burroughs negotiated the sale of Tarzan rights for feature films, video games, comic books and such disparate products as stuffed animals, sleepwear, jackknives and multivitamins.

He also carefully protected the source of the family fortune, suing anyone who used the Tarzan name or likeness without a license, according to a 1999 Times story.

The business is "a multimillion-dollar corporation," Burroughs said in 1985 in The Times. "We don't tell anyone exactly how much money is involved. It's a privately held corporation, and we like to keep a low profile."

Within the business, the gregarious Burroughs was especially valued as a historical archivist, said Jim Sullos, company president.

"Dan had the most intimate knowledge of literature that his grandpa wrote," Sullos told The Times this week. "He could pull out of historical documents things people didn't even know existed."

One of Danton's goals was to market some of Edgar Rice Burroughs' other works, especially the tales of John Carter, who stars in a series of novels that take place on Mars, Sullos said.

Danton named his daughters Dejah and Llana Jane for two princesses his grandfather invented for his fictional Mars world; the Jane was for Danton's mother, Jane Ralston Burroughs.

Burroughs was born June 21, 1944, in Los Angeles and grew up in Tarzana. In 1972, he earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Cal State Northridge.

His father, John Coleman Burroughs, was best known for illustrating the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

He also was a photographer who documented Los Angeles as early as the 1920s. Many of his negatives burned in the April 30 fire at Danton's home, said Gerald Fecht, president of the Museum of the San Fernando Valley.

A supporter of the Valley museum, Danton also helped found the Tarzana Museum and contributed many artifacts to its collection, which is housed in the Tarzana Community and Cultural Center.

"I don't really expect to meet anyone like Danton again," Fecht said. "He had a sense of wonder, a sense of joy . . . he was absolutely a splendid person. When you were with him, it felt like vacation."

An inveterate collector, Danton showcased his flea-market finds and other collectibles in his hillside home. Outside, his house resembled a mini-castle but inside it was more like a major antique store, friends said.

Among his thousands of collectibles were jukeboxes and pinball machines, sheet music, street lamps and many literary works.

In the fire, Danton lost treasured pocket watches and antique marbles but he was devastated by the loss of so much memorabilia related to his father and grandfather, Hillman said.

"He felt, and rightfully so, that the Burroughs legacy was entrusted to his keeping," Hillman wrote in an online tribute. "And this disaster seemed to prove how vulnerable and fleeting such a legacy could be."

He is survived by Linda, his wife of 28 years, and his daughters. Burroughs is also survived by a brother, John Ralston Burroughs, and a sister, Dian Burroughs.

A service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at the Tarzana Community and Cultural Center, 19130 Ventura Blvd., Tarzana.

Instead of flowers, the family suggests donating to the Danton Burroughs Memorial Fund at Parkinson's Resource Organization, www.parkinsonsresource.org.

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