

Hollywood trailblazer who was Uhura on ‘Star Trek’ dies at 89

BY LINDSEY BAHRR
AP Film Writer

Nichelle Nichols, who broke barriers for Black women in Hollywood when she played communications officer Lt. Uhura on the original “Star Trek” television series, has died at the age of 89.

Her son Kyle Johnson said Nichols died Saturday in Silver City, New Mexico.

“Last night, my mother, Nichelle Nichols, succumbed to natural causes and passed away. Her light however, like the ancient galaxies now being seen for the first time, will remain for us and future generations to enjoy, learn from, and draw

inspiration,” Johnson wrote on her official Facebook page Sunday. “Hers was a life well lived and as such a model for us all.”

Her role in the 1966-69 series as Lt. Uhura earned Nichols a lifelong position of honor with the series’ rabid fans, known as Trekkers and Trekkies. It also earned her accolades for breaking stereotypes that had limited Black women to acting roles as servants and included an interracial onscreen kiss with co-star William Shatner that was unheard of at the time.

“I shall have more to say about the trailblazing, incomparable Nichelle

NICHELLE NICHOLS 1932-2022

Nichols, who shared the bridge with us as Lt. Uhura of the USS Enterprise, and who passed today at age 89,” George Takei wrote on Twitter. “For today, my heart is heavy, my eyes shining like the stars you now rest among, my dearest friend.”

Takei played Sulu in the original “Star Trek” series alongside Nichols. But her impact was felt beyond her immediate co-stars, and many others in the “Star Trek” world also tweeted their condolences.

Celia Rose Gooding, who currently plays Uhura in “Star Trek:

Strange New Worlds,” wrote on Twitter that Nichols “made room for so many of us. She was the reminder that not only can we reach the stars, but our influence is essential to their survival. Forget shaking the table, she built it.”

“Star Trek: Voyager” alum Kate Mulgrew tweeted, “Nichelle Nichols was The First. She was a trailblazer who navigated a very challenging trail with grit, grace, and a gorgeous fire we are not likely to see again.”

Like other original cast members, Nichols also appeared in six big-screen spinoffs starting in 1979 with “Star Trek: The Motion Picture” and frequented “Star Trek” fan conventions. She also served for many years as a NASA re-

cruiter, helping bring minorities and women into the astronaut corps.

More recently, she had a recurring role on television’s “Heroes,” playing the great-aunt of a young boy with mystical powers.

The original “Star Trek” premiered on NBC on Sept. 8, 1966. Its multicultural, multiracial cast was creator Gene Roddenberry’s message to viewers that in the far-off future — the 23rd century — human diversity would be fully accepted.

“I think many people took it into their hearts ... that what was being said on TV at that time was a reason to celebrate,” Nichols said in 1992 when a “Star Trek” exhibit was on view at the Smithsonian Institution.



Nichols

Fire

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A second, smaller fire just to the west that was sparked by dry lightning Saturday threatened the tiny town of Seiad, Freeman said. About 400 structures were under threat from the two California fires. Authorities have not confirmed the extent of the damage yet, saying assessments would begin when it was safe to reach the area.

A third fire, which was on the southwest end of the McK-inney blaze, prompted evacuation orders for around 500 homes Sunday, said Courtney Kreider, a spokesperson with the Siskiyou County Sheriff’s Office. The office said crews had been on the scene of the fire since late Saturday but that the fire Sunday morning “became active and escaped its containment line.”

Several people in the sheriff’s office have been affected by evacuation orders due to the fires “and they’re still showing up to work so, (a) very dedicated crew,” she said. A deputy lost his childhood home to fire on Friday, she said.

As the McKinney fire threatened, some residents chose to stay behind while others heeded orders to leave.

Larry Castle and his wife, Nancy, were among about 2,000 residents of the Yreka area under evacuation orders. They left Saturday with some of their prized possessions, including Larry’s motorcycle, and took their dogs to stay with their daughter near Mount Shasta.



Noah Berger/AP

A fire truck drives along California Highway 96 as the McKinney Fire burns in the Klamath National Forest on Saturday.

Larry Castle said he wasn’t taking any chances after seeing the explosive growth of major fires in recent years.

“You look back at the Paradise fire and the Santa Rosa fire and you realize this stuff is very, very serious,” he told the Sacramento Bee.

In northwest Montana, a fire sparked in grasslands near the town of Elmo had grown to about 17 square miles after advancing into forest. Crews were working along edges of the fire Sunday, and aircraft were expected to continue to make water and retardant drops to help slow the fire’s advance, said Sara Rouse, a spokesperson with the inter-agency team assigned to the fire. High temperatures and erratic winds were expected,

she said.

A section of Highway 28 between Hot Springs and Elmo that had been closed was reopened with drivers asked to watch for fire and emergency personnel. Visibility in the area was poor, Rouse said.

In Idaho, the Moose Fire in the Salmon-Challis National Forest has burned on more than 75 square miles in timbered land near the town of Salmon. It was 21% contained by Sunday morning. Pila Malolo, planning operations section chief on the fire, said in a Facebook video update that hot, dry conditions were expected to persist Sunday. Officials said they expected fire growth in steep, rugged country on the fire’s south side.



Noah Berger/AP

Flames from the McKinney Fire consume trees along California Highway 96 over the weekend.

and safely evacuate their livestock onto trailers. Automated calls were being sent to land phone lines as well because there were areas without cell phone service.

Scientists say climate change has made the West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

The Pacific Coast Trail Association urged hikers to get to the nearest town while the U.S. Forest Service closed a 110-mile section of the trail from the Etna Summit to the

Mt. Ashland Campground in Southern Oregon.

In Hawaii, the Maui County Emergency Management Agency said a brush fire was 90% contained but a red flag warning was in effect for much of Sunday.

And in north Texas, firefighters continued in their effort to contain the 2-week-old, 10 1/2-square-mile Chalk Mountain Fire. The crews now report 83% containment of the fire that has destroyed 16 homes and damaged five others about 50 miles southwest of Fort Worth. No injuries have been reported.

Workers

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Aaron Corvin, Oregon OSHA’s public information officer, said the agency has opened an inspection related to the Fred Meyer facility.

A statement from Fred Meyer said the company has installed a mechanical cooling station at its 1-million-square-foot warehouse in Clackamas. On days with high temperatures, the company provides employees with access to water bottles on ice, water fountains, frozen treats and cooling towels. A distribution team also takes daily temperatures throughout the facility and said this week temperatures have not exceeded 80 degrees Fahrenheit, the statement said.

Last summer, the Pacific Northwest experienced a heat dome event in which nearly 100 people died from heat-related illness in Oregon alone. At least four of those happened on the job and were reported by Oregon OSHA.

That included a farmworker who collapsed and died on a farm north of Salem and a construction worker who became ill while inspecting a roof in Hillsboro, went to a hospital and died nine days later.

Shortly after the first workplace death was reported, several labor rights groups and environmental organizations called on Gov. Kate Brown to take action and direct Oregon OSHA to issue temporary heat rules to protect workers. The agency has since adopted those rules permanently after more than a year and a half of rulemaking.

That process lays out the expectations for employers and their obligations to protect workers against the dangers of extreme heat, Oregon OSHA’s Corvin said.

He said that since the rules took effect on June 15, there have been at least 137 open inspections that relate to work hazards and heat complaints. Oregon OSHA has thus far issued nine citations for not fol-

lowing heat rules.

“I would certainly expect that we will have more,” Corvin said.

Most of the inspections currently underway involve the restaurant industry, warehouse workplaces and construction sites. A citation or violation can lead to a fine.

Last year, the Biden administration pledged to begin developing federal rules to protect workers from heat-related illnesses after extreme heat left dozens of workers injured or dead.

Currently, Washington and California have temporary rules for protecting workers and are developing permanent rules. Workers in other states are protected through the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s General Duty Clause, which requires employers to provide a place of employment “free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.”

Little Fawn

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“Residents had to drive to parks in other parts of town for amenities like fenced dog runs,” he said. “I think both parks (Alpenglow and Little Fawn) for our area were long overdue and definitely needed for the residents of our area.”

Proposed features for the \$2.37 million park include a shaded open lawn, picnic area, play area, sport court and a paved loop path.

Designers of the park, which is planned to open in the spring of 2024, will also

take steps to prevent errant golf balls from entering the park. This includes a combination of six and 10-foot chain link fencing near the park.

Pedestrian crossings and sidewalks near the park will also be upgraded to improve safety for those crossing Parrell Road and other nearby roads. An eight-stall parking lot, including one ADA space, is also part of the preferred design concept.

Ian Isaacson, a landscape architect with Bend Park & Recreation District, described the proposed playground package

at the park as featuring classic activities, including belt swings, a hillside slide, balancing balls, and a tot swing.

“The folks in this neighborhood liked the old school equipment so it’s a cool opportunity,” he said.

Some parts of the park will remain undeveloped to maintain the native landscaping and topography. The site includes ponderosa, juniper trees, and rocky outcrops.

“For such a small piece of property it’s fairly diverse in its landscape,” Isaacson said.

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