

## HULSE RECEIVES FRANCE'S HIGHEST HONOR



Jerry Hulse

humanitarian Helen Keller, ABC chief foreign correspondent Pierre Salinger, and philanthropist and industrialist Armand Hammer.

A recipient is only eligible "after more than 25 years of prominence in a profession," according to the French government. The exacting review and approval process for the award can take three years, and the final decision on all honorees is made personally by the French president.

Hulse describes the award as "the highlight" of his 27 years as travel editor.

Hulse has garnered many other awards in his career. A few of his recent ones include the 1986 Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award (best newspaper travel section), two 1987 first-place awards from the Pacific Area Travel Association (best coverage for articles about Pacific Rim nations) and a recent first-place award from the Mexican government for best travel coverage by any U.S. or Canadian newspaper or magazine.

In September, Jean-Jacques Descamps, Secretary of State for Tourism of France, will visit the United States to formally present the Legion of Honor award to Hulse.



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# Napoleon's Highest Honor

## Goes to City College Alumnus



BY SORINA SZAKACS

When Apollo 11 landed on the moon in 1969, Jerry Hulse had already written almost a decade's-worth of travel reporting for the Los Angeles Times, stories that not only won him awards and recognition, but opened new windows onto the world for Angelenos.

As the "gentleman traveler" of the L.A. Times, Hulse transformed his love for travel into a successful career and managed to reshape California and the world's tourism in an unprecedented way.

Two decades into his travel-writing endeavors, Hulse received the Insignia of the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur awarded by François Mitterrand, the French president at the time.

Napoleon Bonaparte established the Legion of Honor in 1802. The honor is awarded to those

who contribute to France's prominence. It is the highest award the French government bestows.

Hulse received the insignia from French Minister of Tourism Jean-Jacques Descamps at the French Consulate in Beverly Hills on Oct. 12, 1987.

Descamps described Hulse as "a Californian who has demonstrated continued friendship through the media," according to an L.A. Times article about the ceremony.

Hulse first visited France in 1951, while he was writing for the Valley Times.

"The love affair with France began then and has never lost its ardor," he told the L.A. Times after he received the honor.

### Travel Around the World Propels Career

Hulse became a famous travel reporter after he published a series of stories, according to his son Richard. He accompanied Jack Ford, a former Air Force World War II fighter pilot who ferried

airplanes for a living, on two trips around the world in 1951 and 1952.

"Many times over the years, my father shared these adventures with anyone who'd lend him an ear," Richard said. "I remember him telling me, 'Dickie, before I went on the first jaunt, my idea of a trip was driving from North Hollywood to Van Nuys. My anticipated ten days away from home flying with Jack ended a month and three days later. I wasn't sure I'd have a job once I returned home.'"

During Hulse's first trip around the world, the plane lost radio contact with air traffic controllers between Wake Island and Guam, according to his son. In Athens, a starter broke. They had problems with the radio again between France and England. On a flight from Scotland to Iceland, an engine broke and Ford flew the plane back to Scotland.

"Between Iceland and Greenland, black oil started sputtering out of the engines, but the pilot

miraculously managed to complete the journey,” Richard said. “By the time my father returned home, he had written 22 stories for the paper.”

Hulse joined Ford on a second trip the next year. Ford attempted to fly a two-engine De Havilland Dove airplane over the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

“During the flight, both motors iced up, and with the knowledge that one can die within four minutes in the frigid waters of the Atlantic, they barely made it to Iceland,” Richard said. “My father flew back home courtesy of the United States Air Force.”

Ford invited Hulse to join him on a third trip, but Hulse refused because he could not get more time away from the newspaper. The third trip was fatal for Ford. His plane exploded shortly after takeoff on Wake Island.

### Hulse Finds Love in Wartime

Jerry Hulse was born in Grand Junction, Colorado on Sept. 5, 1924. His family crossed the Rocky Mountains when he turned three. They first moved to Hermosa Beach, then across the street from the Hollywood Bowl and later settled in a house in the San Fernando Valley. Hulse attended Lankershim Elementary School, where, according to his son Richard, he excelled in art and creative writing.

Hulse was only 17 when he first met his future wife Josephine “Jody” Carr. While the United States declared war on Japan after the Dec. 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor attack, Hulse cruised Magnolia Boulevard in North Hollywood in his vintage Ford.

“It was a chill December morning in 1941, when I first saw her,” Hulse wrote of his wife in his book “Jody.” “She was small, with a pink ribbon in her hair, and as far as I was concerned she was the prettiest girl I’d ever seen. Every morning for a couple of weeks I offered her a ride. Finally she accepted and we began dating. I think I fell in love with Jody the first time she got into that car. She was different from other girls I’d known. She was quiet and withdrawn, with an innocence that was rare even in the winter of ’41. I promised myself that someday I would marry her.”

They dated, went to dances together and exchanged letters while Hulse was in the Navy. Four years later, they married.

They drove to San Francisco for the honeymoon. In [Half Moon Bay], they only found a grocery store so they had “jelly rolls and [Pepsi Colas],” as a wedding breakfast.

### Marriage Fuels New Career

Three days after the wedding, Hulse returned to work as a parking attendant, a job he lost the same day. He drove “an old Packard” to a parking

spot, but could not break in time.

“I took off like Superman flying [backward], and landed on top of a car in the lot next door. The boys gave me my check and waved goodbye,” Hulse wrote in his book.

The incident was a turning point for Hulse. He decided to enroll in college and look for a career path that would help him take care of his family. He attended classes at Los Angeles City College during the day and worked the nights in a fender shop.

During college, he worked on the campus newspaper, the *Collegian* as a reporter.

“When I graduated I got a job on a newspaper, covering every story you can name--kidnappings, robberies, murders,” he wrote in his book. “I even reported on the Berlin crisis. Later I got a roving assignment that kept me on the move (still does), traveling around the world to nearly any place you can name.”

Hulse joined the Los Angeles Times in 1952 as a crime reporter. Eight years later, he became the newspaper’s travel editor. He wrote weekly travel columns that changed the tourism landscape from the 1950s until the early 1990s.

The School of Travel Industry Management from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa named Hulse “Legacy in Tourism” honoree in 2008.

“Hawaii’s tourism industry owes a huge debt of gratitude to talented writers like Jerry Hulse who have been able to capture the magical allure of the islands,” the announcement states. “When Jerry began writing about the islands, there were just about 300,000 annual visitors. By the time he retired, Hawaii was welcoming more than 6 million ... and one out of every five of them was from California.”

Christopher Reynolds, staff writer for the L.A. Times, met Hulse at the beginning of the 1990s. Reynolds was at the starting point of his career while Hulse was heading to the finish line.

“We met in old Times headquarters on Spring Street when I was 32, just starting out as the paper’s travel writer, and Jerry was 68, about to retire after 32 years on the road,” Reynolds said. “He was always courtly and fit, a keen listener. He could also be a demanding editor. And he was always determined that his hard work gathering, writing and shaping stories should look effortless to readers on Sunday mornings.”

### Hulse Goes on a Quest

Reporting skills helped Hulse save his wife’s life in 1974. Like an epic hero, Hulse overcame several trials in his quest to find Jody’s biological mother. The doctors told him that medical history information would be crucial to his wife’s treatment.

A year later, Hulse published “Jody,” a book that tells the story of the search. The book was



Jerry Hulse's son Richard

PHOTO BY LOUIS WHITE

“IN THE COURSE OF A CAREER THAT TOOK HIM AROUND THE WORLD MORE TIMES THAN HE COULD COUNT, ON CONVEYANCES FROM CRUISE SHIPS TO THE CONCORDE, HULSE WON HONORS FROM ADMIRERS RANGING FROM THE PROPRIETORS OF GRAY LINE BUS TOURS TO FRENCH PRESIDENT FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND. AND IN THE PROCESS, TRAVEL INDUSTRY VETERANS SAID, HULSE PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE SHAPING OF AMERICAN THINKING ABOUT TRAVEL.”

—Christopher Reynolds,  
staff writer for the Los Angeles Times



published in 15 countries and made into a TV movie, according to the L.A. Times.

While searching for information about Jody's biological family, Hulse encountered many obstacles reporters face every day.

"As a reporter, I'd been bullied before by martinets secure in their world of civil service, dealing with human beings as if they were entries in a ledger," he wrote in his book. "Long ago I'd learned that you don't argue with these people. You sidestep them."

He only had six days, but he succeeded. His perseverance prolonged his wife's life for 20 years.

"This is the story of a handful of people and what happened to them," Hulse wrote in the preface of his book. "It is also, I see now, the story of hundreds of thousands of Americans still seeking their own true names, each a nomad searching for the place in blood and in spirit from which he or she came."

#### 4H Club Meets in Heaven

Hulse wrote his farewell column for the Los Angeles Times when he retired on June 7, 1992.

"The time has come to take my leave-to surrender this space to others with fresh dreams and young ideas. ... And so on this final Sunday of writing my Travel Tips column, I ask your indulgence while we journey together down Memory Lane," Hulse wrote.

He ended his column and his career as a travel editor with the line: "Well, time to go. It has been memorable and I shall miss you."

Hulse retired to Kauai. His biography on the "Legacy in Tourism" 2008 honorees page mentions Hulse's last column for the Times. "My Own Private Paradise" was published on March 1, 1998.

"Jerry's credibility as a travel writer came from his uncompromising ethics and style that was both poetic and honest," the biography states. "As for his ethics, unlike many of his travel writer contemporaries, Jerry did not accept complimentary travel and lodging when he wrote his stories. Everything was on the Times and every story was clear of any conflict of interest."

Reynolds says Hulse was a "fascinating fellow who had a remarkable career." He also said that Leslie Ward succeeded Hulse as a travel editor for the Times. She remembered that Hulse was part of an informal group of travel writers and editors.

"They called themselves the 4H club, because they each had a last name beginning with H, and they sometimes traveled as a pack in the 1970s and 1980s," Reynolds said.

Georgia Hesse, travel writer for the San Francisco Examiner was one of the four. She



PHOTO BY LOUIS WHITE

“IT IS DAWN, AND SAVE FOR THE SOUND OF OCEAN WAVES WASHING BENEATH MY WINDOW, MY WORLD IS AS SILENT AS A SHINING STAR. LAST EVENING IT RAINED SO THAT TODAY THE SKY IS AS BLUE AS A YOUNG GIRL'S EYES. ALL WOULD BE WELL IF ONLY THAT INFERNAL ROOSTER WOULD STOP CROWING AT MIDNIGHT.”  
“MY OWN PRIVATE PARADISE”

— Jerry Hulse  
March 1, 1998  
Los Angeles Times

died earlier this year. The other two members of the group were Kermit Buss Holt of the Chicago Tribune and Bruce Hamby of the Denver Post.

Reynolds wrote Hulse's obituary in the L.A. Times on Jan. 26, 2002. Hulse died a day prior, of complications after double hernia surgery. He was 77.

Late James Murphy, chairman of Chatsworth-based Brendan Tours, quoted in Hulse's obituary said that the latter had power to motivate anyone to travel.

"People took his word as absolute gospel," Murphy said. "When we started operating in Ireland in 1973, Jerry put a little piece in the [Sunday] paper. We took over 3,000 telephone calls on that Monday. All from just a sentence or two."

Reynolds wrote in the obituary that peers remembered Hulse as "a fastidious researcher, a chronic worrier, a great lover of the tropics and a writer who suffered quietly in the creation of

prose that seemed graceful and carefree."

A Columbia Journalism Review article reported in 1970 that Hulse was "widely considered to be the best travel writer in the country," according to Reynolds.

The late Georgia Hesse remembered meeting Hulse on her first trip as a travel writer, at a conference in Indonesia in 1963.

"He was already very famous, and I was so afraid, because I was in my 20s and meeting all these people," Hesse told Reynolds. "And he was the first to come over and say hello. He was just the soul of politeness and cordiality. He would open doors, and pull out your chair, and stand up when you came to the table, which among newspaper people is not necessarily the usual practice."

Richard remembered his father wrote eight drafts before editors accepted one of his articles.

"Writing wasn't easy for him," Richard said. "But when he did it, he did it well." \*