

## C.K. Yang..... Obituary

C.K. Yang, Olympic decathlon silver medalist from 1960, died in Los Angeles on January 26, 2007, from complications from a massive stroke. He was 73. A native of Formosa (Taiwan), Yang was a three-time USA AAU champion and graduate of UCLA. Yang was born Chuan-kwang Yang on 10 July 1932, Taitung, Taiwan. His 1960 decathlon battle with UCLA teammate is the stuff of legends. In 1963 he became the first athlete (on many set of IAAF tables) to surpass 9000 points) with his world record at the Mount Sac relays in Walnut, CA. He was also, for a short time, the world record holder in the pole vault. He was a three-time Olympian. As a Hollywood actor he appeared in minor roles in three movies.

Yang is the 3<sup>rd</sup> legendary decathlete to die in the past 6 months (Heino Lipp/EST Aug, 2006; Bob Mathias/USA Sept., 2006). C.K. is survived by wife Daisy and two children. The editor apologizes for the lateness of the obituary. I just found out last week.  
[Frank Zarnowski]



**L.A. Times: Obituary** By Lisa Dillman, Times Staff Writer [January 30, 2007 ]

Decathlete C.K. Yang, who won the first Olympic medal for his native Taiwan after a drama-filled duel with UCLA teammate and eventual gold medal winner Rafer Johnson at the 1960 Games in Rome, has died. He was 74.

Yang Chuan-kwang died Saturday at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Woodland Hills of complications from a recent stroke, a UCLA spokesperson said. His oldest son, Cedric Yang, said a funeral would be held Saturday in Ventura, followed by a memorial in Taiwan.

That would be full circle for the son of a rice farmer who represented Taiwan in three Summer Olympic Games in the decathlon, placing eighth in Melbourne, Australia, in 1956, second in Rome in 1960 and fifth in Tokyo in 1964.

The Rome Games were a seminal moment for the sport, representing a blend of excellence, sportsmanship and goodwill. Not only were Johnson and Yang, who had first met in 1956, good friends and teammates in pursuit of a gold medal, they shared the same coach at UCLA, Elvin C. "Ducky" Drake.

In Rome, the two-day, rain-marred competition came down to the final event, the 1,500-meter race. Johnson's narrow lead was 67 points, but Yang's personal best in the event was 4:36.0 and Johnson's 4:54.2. Yang would be Taiwan's first gold medalist if he beat Johnson by 10 seconds.

Coincidentally, they landed in the same heat. Yang won the race but lost the gold because his margin of victory wasn't enough.

Afterward, Johnson and Yang fell against each other for support, and Italian fans signaled their appreciation for the incredible effort, chanting: "Give them both the gold medal," according to "The Complete Book of the Summer Olympics."

"I figured I had an outside chance to win after nine events ... until I found out Rafe and I were in the same 1,500 heat. I knew he'd stay right with me, no matter how fast I ran," Yang later told The Times.

"If we'd been in separate heats, I'd have won the gold medal, not Rafer," he said.

After their duel in Rome, their bond remained strong.

"They were lifelong friends," Cedric Yang said in a telephone interview Monday. "Whenever my dad came back to the United States, one of the first persons he'd call was Rafer."

Johnson always had mixed feelings about the Olympic experience. "We were very close, which I've said down through the years. We were so close that I was always a little bit ambivalent," Johnson said in a telephone interview. "I obviously wanted to win. But we were such good friends, I didn't always feel great when we had to really go head-to-head. It particularly came to a head in 1960.

"Up to that point, we worked out together and did our training. Spent a lot of time away from the track together. It was a unique relationship."

Basketball fans at Pauley Pavilion remembered seeing Johnson and Yang sitting together at games after the facility opened in 1965. And Johnson was with Yang in his final days, visiting Yang in the hospital last week after his stroke.

Born in Taitung, Taiwan, Yang was an athletic prodigy as a teenager. He came to the attention of the Taiwanese national track and field federation, which decided to raise money so he could train in the United States, where he landed under the tutelage of Drake.

"One of the reasons he went to UCLA versus one of the East Coast schools like Harvard and Yale was because Rafer Johnson was training there," Cedric Yang said Monday.

In addition to his Olympic accomplishments, Yang won two gold medals in the Asian Games and set the decathlon world record of 9,121 points in 1963. At UCLA he was the Bruins' team captain in 1963. He still holds the third-highest decathlon point total (8,089) in Bruin history.

Like Johnson, Yang dabbled in films, appearing in small roles. One was in the 1966 comedy, "Walk Don't Run," which included some Olympic athletes with a plot set against the 1964 Games in Tokyo.

Over the years, he split his time between Taiwan — where he coached athletes and helped open an indoor track arena in Tsoying — and Ventura County, Cedric Yang said. He also was on Taiwan's Olympic Committee.

In addition to son Cedric, Yang is survived by his wife Daisy and son C.K. Jr. His funeral will be Saturday at 11 a.m. at Ted Mayr Funeral Home in Ventura.

Donations can be made in memory of his nephew: Cyrus Jue Lam Fund, Ventura High School, c/o Ventura High School Educational Partnership, 255 W. Stanley Ave., Ventura, CA 93001.

### **Career Highlights:**

- **PR:** 9121 (8009 adjusted to 1985 scoring tables)
- **World Record, 1963**
  - 9121 points (8009 adjusted)
- **Olympic Silver Medal, 1960**
  - 8334
- **Olympic 5th place finish, 1964**
  - 7650
- **U.S. National Champion:**
  - 1959: 7549
  - 1962: 8249
  - 1964: 8641
- **Asian Games Champion, 1954**
  - 5454
- **Asian Games Champion, 1958**
  - 7101