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John Furia, Jr. 1929-2009
Prolific Writer, Writers Guild Advocate

LOS ANGELES -- Prolific screen and television writer and past president of the Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW) John Furia, Jr. has died. He was 79.

Throughout his career, Furia worked for major studios and the networks. He wrote for popular television series such as *Bonanza*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Dr. Kildare*, *Bob Hope Presents the Chrysler Theatre*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *The Waltons*, and *Kung Fu*, as well as wrote or produced numerous movies-of-the-week (MOW) including *The Death of Ocean View Park*, *The Healers*, *Caring* and *The Widow*. Furia's screen credits include *The Singing Nun* starring Debbie Reynolds and Greer Garson, in addition to executive producing films in Mexico, France, Canada, Spain, Croatia, and Kenya.

Furia's involvement in the entertainment industry stretched far beyond his work as a writer-producer. In addition to being WGAW president from 1973-1975, he was a chair of the National Council of the Writers Guilds East and West, past president and board member of the Writers Guild Foundation, and a founding vice president of the Humanitas Prize. He also served on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, and the Board of Directors of the National Captioning Institute.

He is remembered not only as a colleague and mentor to his fellow writers, but also as a stalwart advocate for their rights. "John's character and dignity touched and influenced generations of writers from the founders of the Guild itself to the newest of student-associates. For those of us who relied on his knowledge and his counsel, John was more than an éminence grise; he was pure eminence," said WGAW President Patric M. Verrone.

He was a recipient of three of the WGAW's Honorary Awards in recognition for his outstanding contributions to the Guild. In 1978, he received the Morgan Cox Award for service to the Guild; in 1990 he was given the Valentine Davies Award for contributions to the entertainment industry and the community-at-large; and in 1994 he was honored with the Edmund H. North Award, "presented to those members whose courageous leadership, strength of purpose and continuing selfless activity in behalf of the Guild through the years, as well as professional achievement of the highest order, have served to establish the Writers Guild of America as a pillar of strength and security for writers throughout the world."

Furia was also a founding chairman of the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television Writing Division and remained in the program as a full professor teaching writing for screen and television. WGAW member Jack Epps, Jr., the School's current chair, remembers Furia as deeply dedicated to his students and to the Writing Division. "He was the architect of the BFA program and an influential and important Writing chair. John had an old world dignity about him that seems in such short supply in our world today."

Growing up in New York City, Furia was attracted to the music business and for a while sang with dance bands. It was another medium, however, live television of the mid 1950's, where he found his way. Starting in the production departments of the networks he followed the explosive growth of the new industry out to California. It was there that he developed as a writer and became one of Hollywood's most productive dramatists.

He was a television producer and/or showrunner for series such as *Kung Fu*, *Gibbsville*, *Sweepstakes*, *The Dirty Dozen*, and nearly 100 dramas for the public service series *Insight* (*Enigma* in Spanish speaking countries), winner of multiple Emmy nominations and the Cine Award. As president of his own company, he wrote and/or produced the pilot *Powers Play* (CBS); MOWs *My Mother's Secret Life* (ABC), *Going To The Chapel* (NBC), *The Intruder Within* (ABC); and the award winning film about starvation in Ethiopia starring Ted Danson and Ally Sheedy, *We Are The Children* (ABC); and the mini-series *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Blue Knight*, and *Rage of Angels*.

He is survived by his wife, Mary, and seven children.