

## OBITUARIES

## Richard Denning, was governor on 'Five-0'

By Walter Wright  
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Richard Denning, a prolific character actor who lived for many years on Maui and was best known for his occasional role as the governor on "Hawaii Five-0," died yesterday in California at the age of 84.

Denning, who had a history of emphysema, died of cardiac arrest at Palomar Medical Center in Escondido, Calif., hospital spokesman David Owen said.

"He was a consummate professional, a very solid gentleman, and he had the face of a man you could trust," said James MacArthur, who played Detective Danny Williams on the crime drama starring the late Jack Lord that ran from 1968 to 1980.

"Just the kind of fellow you'd want to vote for, for governor," MacArthur said yesterday.

Many would concur. Denning had a master's degree in busi-



Denning: Maui resident

ness, was a World War II Navy veteran, a canny Maui real estate investor and active in his church and community.

Born Louis Denninger in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., in 1914, he went to work in his father's garment manufacturing business after graduating from Woodbury University, but soon found acting in theater more interesting.

He won a Warner Bros. screen test in a radio contest, but the studio passed because Denning looked too much like Warner star Errol Flynn.

Denning got a Paramount contract and landed roles in "Golden Gloves," "Adam Had Four Sons," and "Beyond the Blue Horizon" with Dorothy

Lamour. Among his dozens of other film credits were "Some Like It Hot," "Creature from the Black Lagoon," "An Affair to Remember," and "The Lady Takes a Flyer."

After the war, Denning began a radio career as "My Favorite Husband" with Lucille Ball, then went on to the 1950s TV series "Mr. and Mrs. North." His other TV credits included "Flying Doctor," "Michael Shayne" and "Karen."

His success and some fruitful investments allowed him to retire at age 50. He moved to Maui in the mid-1960s and was active in many community organizations.

Lew Ayres had played Gov. Philip Grey in the pilot for "Hawaii Five-0," MacArthur recalled. But when the series was picked up by CBS, Denning got the part of the governor, to whom Jack Lord's character, Steve McGarrett, personally reported.

"It was a nice role, a once-in-a-while role, and when they found out Denning was in the Islands they said we've got a wonderful actor right here on Maui, and asked him if he was interested.

"And he was thrilled with doing that part," MacArthur said.

Denning would walk onto the set in Honolulu in his bathing suit and shirt, having just left his sailboat, get into makeup and a dark blue suit, "and he knew every word of his lines backward and forward," MacArthur said.

Denning's first wife, British actress Evelyn Ankers, died on Maui in 1985.

He is survived by his wife Patricia Leffingwell, of California; his daughter Dee Dwyer, of the Big Island; and two granddaughters. Memorial services are pending.