Beat: Health

The FBI; star Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. dead at 95

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USPA News - American actor Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., who became a household name through his roles in the long-running TV shows "77 Sunset Strip" and "The FBI", died at his home in Southern California on Friday, his family said. He was 95 years old.

Zimbalist died Friday at his ranch in Solvang, a city in Santa Barbara County, about 114 miles (184 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles. "We are heartbroken to announce the passing into peace of our beloved father," his daughter Stephanie Zimbalist and son Efrem Zimbalist III said in a statement. "A devout Christian, he actively enjoyed his life to the last day, showering love on his extended family, playing golf, and visiting with close friends. We will miss him dearly," the children added. Zimbalist first became a household name in the United States through his portrayal as private investigator Stu Bailey in the TV show "77 Sunset Strip," which ran from 1958 through 1964. The role earned him a Golden Globe Award for Most Promising Male Newcomer of the Year in 1959. After the show ended, Zimbalist became an even bigger star when he portrayed Inspector Louis Erskine on the TV show "The FBI," which ran from 1965 through 1974. The program was for many Americans their first glimpse into the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and inspired countless of people to join the agency. "We could not have asked for a better character, or a better man to play his role," FBI Director Robert Mueller said in June 2009 during a ceremony to honor Zimbalist with a badge as an Honorary Special Agent of the FBI. "Thanks to Efrem`s fine work, Inspector Erskine will always remain the icon of an FBI special agent." "Efrem`s character embodied fidelity, bravery, and integrity. So much so that he inspired a generation of future FBI employees, many of whom pursued a career in the Bureau because they watched `The FBI` series as they grew up," Mueller added. "In those days, he may well have been the Bureau`s best and most effective recruiter." After the show ended in 1974, Zimbalist continued his relationship with the FBI by participating in charity events that helped raise money for families of agents killed in the line of duty, lending his voice to help narrate FBI recruiting videos, and appeared at various FBI functions across the country. Besides his well-known roles in "77 Sunset Strip" and "The FBI," Zimbalist also starred in dozens of other TV shows and movies.

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