

Actor's accent didn't stop hunt for 'Fugitive'

By Garret Matthews

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Growing up, I was always in front of the TV set when "The Fugitive" came on.

For the uninitiated, the show appeared on ABC from 1963-67 and starred David Janssen as Dr. Richard Kimble, a man from fictional Stafford, Ind., who was falsely convicted of his wife's murder. En route to death row, Kimble escaped and began a search for the real killer, a one-armed man he saw leaving the scene of the crime.

The good doctor is relentlessly pursued by Stafford Police Lieutenant Philip Gerard, portrayed by Barry Morse, who died the other day at age 89.

In the early 1990s, the Arts & Entertainment Network ran some episodes of "The Fugitive."

My interest in the show was renewed, especially for the Gerard character.

I made a few calls to the network and was given Morse's telephone number.

His thick British accent bowled me over.

"You can't be from England," I blurted out. "You played a cop from Indiana."

He laughed.

"That, my boy, is called acting," he said.

He was born in London and studied at the city's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Morse explained that his character rarely had any long speeches. He was able to lose the accent for the few clipped sentences the faux lawman uttered at any one time.

And if he veered toward the Queen's English, there was a dialogue coach on set to rein him in.

The scripts had Kimble pursuing the baddie all over the country. I assumed the show went on location.

Wrong.

Forty episodes were churned out every season, Morse explained. There was neither the budget nor the time to take the show on the road. Almost all the scenes were filmed in the studio, and for those that weren't, suitable locations were found in the Los Angeles area.

When visiting America, Morse said he had to be prepared to face the wrath of people who believed the circumstances behind the "The Fugitive" were real and he was actually hounding an innocent man.

On one occasion, he told me, an angry woman at a supermarket came toward him wielding an umbrella.

Morse left without buying his groceries.