

Accidental actor who was pursued by detective role

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Barry Morse, 1918-2008

BARRY MORSE, famous for his portrayal of the cold-hearted detective who relentlessly pursues the wrongly convicted Richard Kimble in *The Fugitive*, one of the biggest TV hits of the 1960s, never quite escaped the role.

As Lieutenant Philip Gerard, he hounded David Janssen as Richard Kimble, the doctor from the fictional town of Stafford, Indiana, who was convicted on flimsy evidence of murdering his wife. For 120 episodes, from 1963 to 1967, Gerard pursued Kimble, who had escaped when the train taking him to death row derailed. The innocent doctor's only hope was finding the real killer, a one-armed man.

Gerard appeared in only 37 episodes, but his image was used in the opening credits, and the threat of his sudden appearance was never far from the mind of the fugitive or the audience. For years after the series ended, Morse joked that "he was the most hated man in America".

Robert Wood, the co-author of Morse's autobiography, said: "Little old ladies would come up to him in airports and whack at him with their purses, screaming, 'Why didn't you leave that man alone?' When Barry went into a restaurant or a hotel, people would say, 'Oh, you just missed him, lieutenant; he went that-a-way'."

Morse, who has died at 89, was born Herbert Morse in Bethnal Green, in London's East End, a son of Charles and Mary Hollis Morse, who owned a tobacco shop. By his own admission he was a failure at school, but by "a series of flukes", he discovered acting and auditioned for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1935, winning a scholarship at 15. In 1941, after several years with touring companies in England, he made his West End debut in a play, *School For Slavery*. His plan to enlist in the Royal Navy was thwarted by tuberculosis.

Two years earlier he had married Sydney Sturgess, a Canadian actress. A visit to his wife's relatives in 1951 coincided with the expansion of TV drama there. After moving with his family to Canada, Morse won the best television actor award five times and ventured into directing and radio work.

Though proud of *The Fugitive*, Morse happily took on many other roles. By his estimate, he performed in 3000 stage, screen, TV and radio productions, in England, Canada and the US.

In the 1970s he co-starred with Martin Landau in *Space 1999*, a science-fiction TV series, made in England, about life on a lunar base. In it he played Professor Victor Bergman, the avuncular heart of the community. The series, syndicated in many countries, retains a cult following.

Two years ago Morse played the president of Russia in the TV espionage thriller *Icon*. Last year, in the film comedy *Promise Her Anything*, he played the ghost of a great-great-great grandfather who returns to a small Canadian town.

His other TV appearances included *The Outer Limits*, *The Untouchables*, *Naked City*, *The Defenders*, *Wagon Train*, *The Martian Chronicles* and *War And Remembrance*. In 1969, when Morse played dual lead roles in the Broadway production of *Hadrian VII*, *The New York Times* drama critic Clive Barnes called him "a pure delight".

Morse and Sturgess had two children, both of whom became actors. Sturgess died in 1999. Morse's daughter, Melanie, died in 2005. He is survived by his son, Hayward, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.