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Following in the footsteps of the Allies

LIBERATION, FROM PAGE 1

to Berlin is in development, which will allow travelers to follow in the footsteps of those who fought to liberate Europe. The goal is for the trail to eventually include several thematic branches, similar to branchings of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain. The first phase is expected to open in 2020, said Mr. de Mol, who plans to walk several portions next year with local schoolchildren and town mayors.

“We forget at what cost liberation came.”

On Oct. 17 in Berlin, the architectural firm Studio Libeskind announced plans to design and begin installing next year a system of wayfinding trail markers, wall-mounted signs, plaques at crossroads and remembrance site markers that will display graphics, maps, photographs, information and audio stories to enhance the journey.

The architectural designs will be rendered in many scales and different materials, Daniel Libeskind, Studio Libeskind’s principal design architect, said in a telephone interview. “But in a language of communication which I think will be very clear and bold, so that anyone walking can see the vastness of the catastrophe and the vastness of the victory over these evils,” he said. Mr. Libeskind is the child of Holocaust survivors and lived in Poland under the Communist regime until he was 11.

“We forget at what cost liberation came and what heroism it took,” Mr. Libeskind said, noting the rise of neo-fascism, anti-Semitism and nationalism in Europe. “To remember is to create a better future.”

The idea for Liberation Route Europe began in 2008, when two Dutch tourism students found it difficult to obtain information about World War II sites to visit in Europe.

Today the route includes more than



Taking part in the Sunset March, a tribute in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, to the 82nd Airborne Division, which crossed the Waal River in 1944 in an attempt to invade Germany.

JALEESA DERKSEN

400 sites, experiences, audio spots, historical content, biographies and story lines, in nine countries: Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, the Czech Re-

public and Italy. “On and offline, we can relive it,” said Mr. de Mol, director of business development and operations for the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions.

The route has personal significance for him.

His father, who died three years ago, was captured at age 20 and taken as a prisoner to Germany; he escaped soon

after arriving at a labor camp. A young farmer in a German village took him in for several months until the war was over. They resumed their friendship nearly 30 years later.

A record-setting daredevil

KITTY LINN O’NEIL
1946-2018

BY RICHARD SANDOMIR

On a dry lake in the Alvor Desert in Oregon in December 1976, Kitty O’Neil wedged herself into a three-wheeled rocket-powered vehicle called the SMI Motivator. She gave the throttle two taps to awaken the engine and then watched an assistant count down from 10 with hand signals. At zero, she pushed the throttle down.

“During a sliver of a second, the howling machine stood motionless, as if stuck in time,” Coles Phinizy wrote in *Sports Illustrated*. “In the next instant, it was gone, a shrinking blur lost in its own trailing noise.”

The Motivator accelerated rapidly, though silently for Ms. O’Neil; she was deaf. Her speed peaked briefly at 618 miles per hour, and with a second explosive run measured over one kilometer, she attained an average speed of 512.7 m.p.h., shattering the land-speed record for women by about 200 m.p.h.

For Ms. O’Neil, her record — which still stands — was the highlight of a career in daredevilry. She also set speed records on water skis and in boats. And, working as a stuntwoman, she crashed cars and survived immolation.

In one stunt, as a double for Lindsay Wagner in the television series “The Bionic Woman,” she flipped a dune buggy; in another, she leapt 127 feet from a hotel balcony onto an inflated airbag as Lynda Carter’s stunt double on “Wonder Woman.”

Ms. O’Neil died last Friday at 72 in Eureka, S.D., where she had lived since 1993. The cause was pneumonia, said Ky Michaelson, a close friend who built rocket-powered vehicles, including some for Ms. O’Neil.

“She seemed never to have fear,” Mr. Michaelson said in a telephone interview. “I’d never say to her, ‘Kitty, are you scared?’ Not Kitty. But I’ve been in a car with her many times, and she scared the heck out of me. She was a pretty reckless driver.”

In 1978, Ms. O’Neil wrecked a rocket-fueled car while trying to set a quarter-mile speed record on a dry lake in the Mojave Desert, in El Mirage, Calif. She had pushed the car past 350 m.p.h. when it flipped, flying 200 yards in the air and landing on its nose. She had minor shoulder injuries. Later, she told reporters that she had tried to deploy a parachute, then thought, “Oh, Christ, it’s going to crash.”

But, she added, “I had a lot of fun.” Kitty Linn O’Neil was born on March 24, 1946, in Corpus Christi, Tex. She was a few months old when a high fever caused by measles, mumps and smallpox destroyed nerves and led to her deafness. Her mother, Patsy (Compton) O’Neil, opened a school for the hearing-impaired after teaching Kitty to lip-read rather than use sign language. Her father, John, was an oil wildcatter who died when Kitty was young.

Kitty loved speed from an early age. When she was 4 she demanded that her father propher atop his lawn mower and ride it as fast as it could go.

She excelled at swimming and diving and collected numerous medals before



Kitty O’Neil leaping from a hotel balcony in 1979 in a stunt for the “Wonder Woman” television series. Among other stunts, she crashed cars and survived immolation.

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES

moving to Anaheim, Calif., to train with the noted coach Sammy Lee (who later coached Olympians like Greg Louganis) for a possible spot on the 1964 United States Olympic diving team. A broken wrist derailed her quest. But after a bout of spinal meningitis she discovered that she was no longer interested in the sport.

“It wasn’t scary enough for me,” she told *The Chicago Tribune* in 1979. She took up hang gliding, scuba diving, water skiing and sky diving. But she found her métier in faster, more dangerous pursuits astride motorcycles and at the helm of rocket-fueled cars.

Being deaf, she often said, helped deepen her concentration, whether she was racing a dragster or leaping off buildings.

Those perilous worlds melded for her in the 1970s after she met the stuntman Ronald Hambleton, known as Duffy, while competing in a motorcycle race in Valencia, Calif.

The two lived together, and with help from Mr. Hambleton and Hal Needham, the stuntman turned film director, Ms. O’Neil began performing stunts in movies and on television.

Her success as a stuntwoman brought her into racing at extreme speeds, and to the Alvor Desert, where Bill Frederick, who built devices for stunts, had spent \$500,000 to develop the Motivator. Two days after Ms. O’Neil broke the women’s land-speed record, which had been set by Lee Breedlove in 1965, Mr. Frederick hoped that the Motivator would break the land-speed record of

630.4 m.p.h., which Gary Gabelich had set in 1970 on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.

Mr. Needham was supposed to challenge the record, but he was away directing a film, leaving Ms. O’Neil to race the Motivator. But business intervened: Toy companies that sponsored Mr. Needham — and were planning to make an action figure of him — sued for an injunction to ensure that only he race for the record, taking Ms. O’Neil out of the Motivator.

“It really hurts,” she told *United Press International* after being told of the dispute. “I wanted to do it again. I had a good feeling.”

“It’s a beautiful feeling,” she told *The Daily Press of Newport News, Va.*, in 1978, the year Mattel started manufacturing a Kitty O’Neil stuntwoman action figure. “I just want to go faster, maybe 740 miles per hour by the end of the year.”

In 1979, she was the subject of a made-for-television movie, “Silent Victory: The Kitty O’Neil Story,” with Stockard Channing in the title role. In his review for *The Associated Press*, Peter Boyer praised it for being a “strong personal drama” that did not become a “freak show with lots of wrecked cars.”

Ms. O’Neil continued to race and perform stunts for films like “Smokey and the Bandit II” and “The Blues Brothers” until her retirement in the early 1980s. Some artifacts from her career, like a crash helmet, are in the Eureka Pioneer Museum. She leaves no immediate survivors.

Writer is read by millions

JIN YONG
1924-2018

BY AMY QIN

Jin Yong, a literary giant of the Chinese-speaking world whose fantastical epic novels inspired countless film, television and video game adaptations and were read by generations of ethnic Chinese, died on Oct. 30 in Hong Kong. He was 94.

His death, at the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital, was confirmed by Ming Pao, the prominent Hong Kong newspaper that Jin Yong helped establish and ran for decades. Chip Tsao, a writer and friend, said the cause of death was organ failure.

Jin Yong, the pen name of Louis Cha, was one of the most widely read 20th-century writers in the Chinese language. The panoramic breadth and depth of the fictional universes he created have been compared with J. R. R. Tolkien’s “*The Lord of the Rings*” and have been studied as a topic known as “Jinology.”

Jin Yong received his start as a novelist in the mid-1950s while working as a film critic and editor for *The New Evening Post* in Hong Kong, which was then a British crown colony. He had moved to the city in 1948 and lived there for most of his life.

From 1955 to 1972, Jin Yong wrote 14 novels and novellas and one short story in the popular genre known as wuxia, which consisted mainly of swashbuckling martial arts adventures.

His first wuxia novel, “*The Book and the Sword*” (1955), drew its inspiration from a legend that held that the Manchu emperor Qianlong was in fact a Han Chinese who had been switched at birth. The novel was serialized in *The New Evening Post* and became an instant hit.

By the time he began writing, the Chinese Communist Party had banned wuxia literature, calling it “decadent” and “feudal.” The ban reflected a centuries-old view of wuxia as a marginal genre within the Chinese literary tradition.

But in Hong Kong and other parts of the Chinese diaspora, Jin Yong’s novels helped spearhead a new wave of martial arts fiction in the 1950s and ’60s.

Jin Yong elevated what had been a rather formulaic genre by blending in poetry, history and fantasy to create hundreds of vivid characters who travel through a mirror underworld that operates according to its own laws and code of ethics.

In tales of love, chivalry, friendship and filial piety, his characters are flawed, with complex emotional histories, making them all the more appealing.

“Writing about heroes was very easy,” Jin Yong said in a 2012 interview. “But as I got older I learned that these big heroes actually had another, more contemptible side to them, a side that was not shown to others.”

Translated into many languages, his books have sold tens of millions of copies, fueling a sprawling industry of film, television and video game adaptations.

Jin Yong used martial arts fiction as a vehicle to talk about Chinese history and traditional culture, forging his own



Jin Yong in 2002 with his novel “*The Book and the Sword*” at his office in Hong Kong. He helped spearhead a new wave of martial arts fiction in the 1950s and ’60s.

BOBBY YIP/REUTERS

fictional vernacular that drew heavily on classical expressions. His stories were often set at pivotal moments in Chinese history, like the rise and fall of dynasties. They made reference to Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist ideas, and positioned martial arts as an integral part of Chinese culture, alongside traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture and calligraphy.

Jin Yong took a “marginal, even disreputable, form of popular fiction and made it both a vehicle for serious literary expression and something that appealed to Chinese readers around the

The panoramic breadth and depth of the fictional universes he created have been likened to “*The Lord of the Rings*.”

globe,” John Christopher Hamm, an associate professor of Asian languages and literature at the University of Washington, said in a telephone interview.

Following the early success of his novels, Jin Yong established his own newspaper, *Ming Pao Daily News*, in Hong Kong in 1959. Soon he was publishing installments of his novels while writing daily social commentaries about the horrors of Mao Zedong’s China.

It was a subject he was intimately familiar with: In 1951, his father had been labeled a “class enemy” and was executed by the Communists.

In 1981, as China was beginning to open up economically and politically, Jin Yong traveled to Beijing to meet with Deng Xiaoping, Mao’s successor. Deng confessed that he was an avid fan of Jin Yong’s books.

Not long afterward, China lifted its ban on Jin Yong’s novels. At the time, many young Chinese were eager to read something other than the socialist propaganda they had become accustomed to under Mao.

“Reading his novels opened our vision,” Liu Jianmei, a professor of contemporary Chinese literature at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said in a telephone interview. “His way of thinking was so differ-

The Liberation Route’s resources and its network of tour guides offer a layer of access for “people who want more of a deep dive,” to little-known, smaller museums and hard-to-reach locations, said Nathan Huegen, director of educational travel at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, which takes about 1,000 to 1,500 history buffs to Europe every year.

The route also directs travelers to initiatives that may not be on everyone’s radar, like the Sunset March, a daily tribute in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, to the 48 members of the 82nd Airborne Division who crossed the Waal River, a tributary of the Rhine, on Sept. 20, 1944, as part of Operation Market Garden. That was the code name for an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by the Allies to cross the Rhine and its tributaries and advance into Germany.

Here are some highlights of the experiences to come over the next two years.

IN NORMANDY The Juno Beach Center plans a special exhibition in March: “Great Women During the War 1939-1945.”

The Caen Memorial Museum plans a Norman Rockwell exhibition and a new building with an immersive experience.

The rural town of Carentan, where the Battle of Carentan took place, will add a new IMAX-3D theater to its D-Day Experience, which has two museums, a memorial and a historical trail.

IN THE NETHERLANDS The Overloon War Museum in Overloon is building a bicycle path that will go through the museum. It is scheduled to open for the 75th anniversary of Operation Market Garden.

IN BELGIUM The Bastogne War Museum in Bastogne plans a street art exhibition around the Mardasson monument that honors American soldiers wounded or killed during the Battle of the Bulge, connecting its 75th anniversary with the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Claire Fu contributed research from Beijing.