

## Ayn Rand, 'Fountainhead' Author, Dies

By WOLFGANG SAXON, *New York Times*

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Ayn Rand, the writer and philosopher of objectivism who espoused "rational selfishness" and capitalism unbound, died yesterday morning at her home on East 34th Street. She was 77 years old and a longtime resident of New York.

Miss Rand was perhaps best known for her novels "The Fountainhead" of 1943, for which she wrote the screenplay when it was turned into a movie with Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal, and "Atlas Shrugged," published in 1957. From the 1960's on, she increasingly devoted herself to expounding her views more directly, in such books as "The Virtue of Selfishness" (1965) and "Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal" (1966).

She also served as editor of *The Objectivist*, a monthly journal, from 1962 to 1971 and wrote *The Ayn Rand Letter* from 1971 to 1976. Her philosophy of objectivism holds that only individual ability and effort account for real achievement and that laissez-faire capitalism provides the optimal environment for talent. Her view of selfishness as a virtue and altruism as a vice was a reversal of the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic.

### 'Man as a Heroic Being'

Her detractors decried objectivism as the deification of selfishness. But Miss Rand, its founder, asserted that she had never advocated the "pursuit of mindless self-interest at all cost."

The concept of rational selfishness ran counter to altruism. Miss Rand despised altruism as personal weakness and believed it responsible for much of the world's dishonesty and misery.

"My philosophy, in essence," Miss Rand once wrote, "is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity and reason as his only absolute."

It was during the 1970's that Miss Rand, giving lectures across the country, attracted the attention of a new generation of students who believed in unfettered freedom and made her something of a cult figure in libertarian circles.

Miss Rand spurned the libertarians as a "random collection of emotional hippies-of-the-right who seek to play at politics without philosophy," as she put it in a letter to the editor of The New York Times in 1976. She proclaimed herself a supporter of President Gerald R. Ford because, she wrote, he was "the most honest defender of free enterprise."

## Opposed Reagan Ideas

At the same time, Miss Rand declared that she was "profoundly opposed" to Ronald Reagan and his Presidential ambitions. "Since he denies the right to abortion, he cannot be a defender of any rights," she wrote. "Since he has no program and no ideology to offer, his likeliest motive for entering the Presidential race is power lust."

It remained unclear whether she changed her mind about Mr. Reagan once he became President. Miss Rand, whose first name rhymed with "pine," shied away from reporters in recent years, fearful that they were hostile to her philosophy and would distort her views.

Miss Rand's views were much in demand in 1974, when President Richard M. Nixon named Alan Greenspan, the economics consultant, to become chairman of his Council of Economic Advisers. It turned out that Miss Rand had been the mentor and a 20-year close friend to Mr. Greenspan.

Miss Rand helped persuade the somewhat reluctant Mr. Greenspan to join the Government so he could put their confidence in the capitalist spirit into action. "I helped Alan to analyze what was involved," she told an interviewer that year. "But, of course, the decision was his own."

## Born in Russia

Ayn Rand was born Feb. 2, 1905, in St. Petersburg, now Leningrad, and graduated from the University of Leningrad in 1924, two years before she came to the United States and headed for Hollywood to work as a movie extra and junior screenwriter. At that time,

she met Charles Francis O'Connor, an artist, on a movie set and married him in 1929. Mr. O'Connor died in 1979 in New York.

Miss Rand came to New York in 1929 to work for RKO Pictures, starting as a filing clerk and becoming office head in the wardrobe department. Through the 1930's, she began her career as a screenwriter for Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

She also worked without pay in 1937 as a typist for Eli Jacques Kahn, the architect, in New York in order to do the research for her novel, "The Fountainhead." The story was that of an architect, later portrayed by Gary Cooper, who blew up his construction project when he found that its design had been adulterated by others. It also served as a vehicle for her presentation of her hero as the stubborn and lonely individualist.

As her novel took shape, she continued as a screenwriter, working six months each year under contract to the movie companies. She took the next six months off to write that and other books as well as a play, "Night of January 16th," which was revived as "Penthouse Legend" in New York in 1973.

From 1951 until her death, she worked full time as a writer and lecturer. Her last completed book, "Philosophy: Who Needs It," will be published in November. An associate, Leonard Peikoff, said last night that she also was about one-quarter into the script for a television mini-series based on her novel "Atlas Shrugged."

Her last public appearance was last November in New Orleans at a conference sponsored by the National Committee for Monetary Reform. Miss Rand leaves no immediate survivors. Visitors may call at the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home, Madison Avenue at 81st Street, tomorrow from 7 to 9 P.M. Burial will be on Tuesday at 1 P.M. at Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, N.Y., where her husband was buried in 1979.