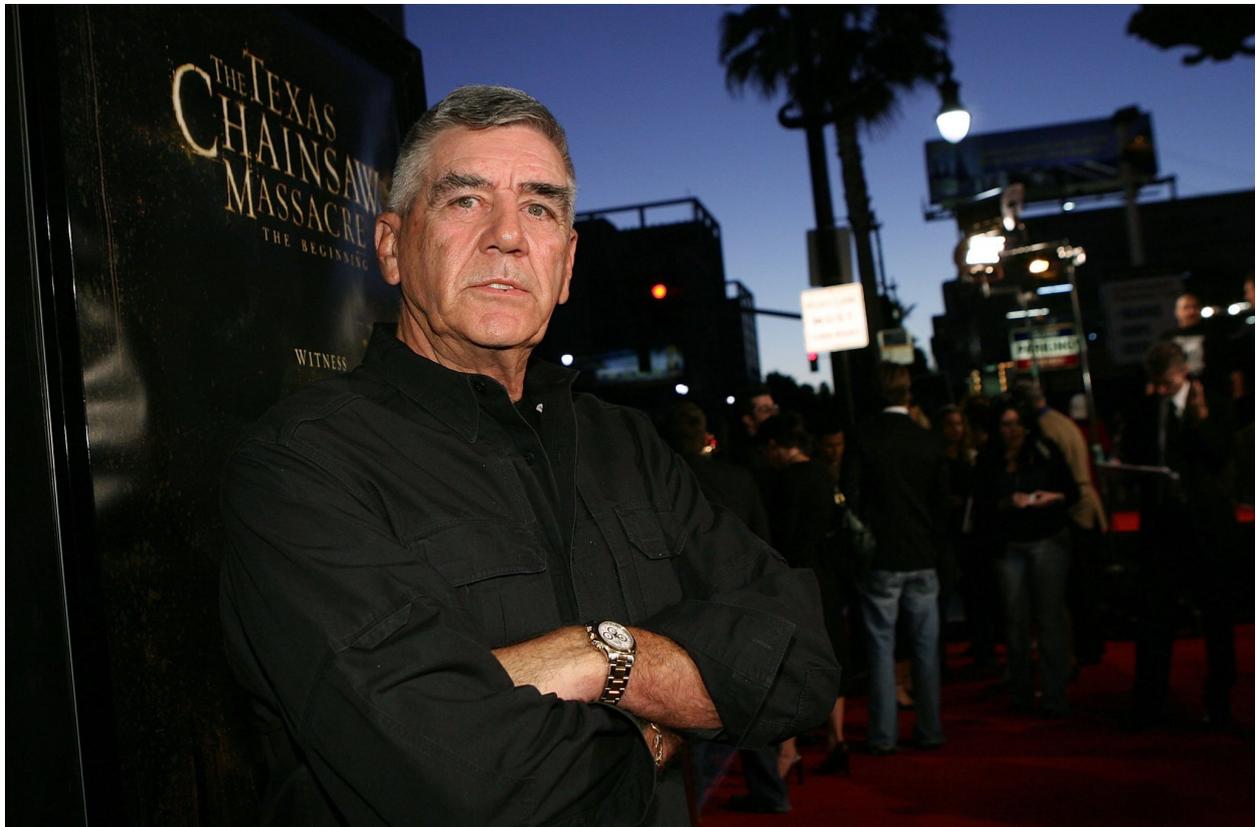


R. Lee Ermey, Obscene Drill Instructor in 'Full Metal Jacket,' Dies at 74

[nytimes.com/2018/04/15/obituaries/r-lee-ermey-dead-actor.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/obituaries/r-lee-ermey-dead-actor.html)

By MATT STEVENS

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R. Lee Ermey in 2006. In addition to “Full Metal Jacket,” his film credits include “Apocalypse Now,” “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,” “Se7en” and the “Toy Story” franchise. Michael Buckner/Getty Images

R. Lee Ermey, an actor whose barking, foulmouthed drill instructor in “Full Metal Jacket” highlighted a decades-long career in which he frequently portrayed authority figures, died on Sunday morning. He was 74.

His longtime manager, Bill Rogin, said Mr. Ermey had died from complications of pneumonia at a hospital in Santa Monica, Calif.

Mr. Ermey, who was nicknamed the Gunny, earned a Golden Globe nomination for best supporting actor with his performance as Gunnery Sgt. Hartman in “Full Metal Jacket,” Stanley Kubrick’s 1987 film.

In a memorable opening monologue, Mr. Ermey’s character berates fear-stricken military recruits, hurling an avalanche of verbal insults that are both inventive and demeaning. His eyes bulging and his jaw square, he renames one recruit “Private Snowball,” knees another in the groin and chokes a third to stop him from smiling.

Later in the film, Mr. Ermey’s character admonishes a recruit, asking rhetorically in a now famous line: “What is your major malfunction?”



Mr. Ermey with President George W. Bush at a Veterans of Foreign Wars event in 2005. Mr. Ermey was a Marine Corps drill instructor during the Vietnam War. Jim Watson/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Mr. Ermey, whose dozens of acting credits included film and television roles, was also well-known for playing Sheriff Hoyt in the 2003 horror film “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.” He notably portrayed a police captain in the 1995 crime drama “Se7en” and was the voice of a green plastic soldier named Sarge in the “Toy Story” franchise.

Ronald Lee Ermey was born on March 24, 1944, in Emporia, Kan., and moved to Washington State at age 11. He enlisted in the Marines immediately after graduating from high school and intended to spend decades in the military.

Much of the torrent of vicious language he unleashed in “Full Metal Jacket” was recalled from his days in boot camp and his 30 months as a Marine Corps drill instructor during the Vietnam War.

The clever, if obscene, tirades were of his own invention, Mr. Ermey told The New York Times in 1987.

“It was terrifying to those actors,” he said of the invective he spewed. “My objective was intimidation.”



Mr. Ermey in Hoover, Ala., in 2012. Joe Songer/AL.com, via Associated Press

Mr. Ermey's 11-year career as a Marine was ended "by a rocket" in 1969, but he would not talk about the war for the Times article, saying: "If a person's wife and children were killed in a terrible automobile accident, 20 years later it will bother him to talk about it."

With shrapnel still lodged in his back and arm, Mr. Ermey spent four months in a hospital. Eventually, he moved to the Philippines, where he married, attended college briefly and acted in television commercials.

He is survived by his wife, Marianila Ermey; his brothers Jack Ermey and Terry Ermey; his children Kim Bolt, Rhonda Chilton, Anna Liza Cruz, Betty Ermey, Evonne Ermey and Clinton Ermey; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

By the late 1970s, Mr. Ermey landed one of his first movie roles, as a helicopter pilot in Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now." He also served as a military adviser for the film.

Mr. Ermey told The Times he had given up "a good job and more money" — a supervisory role at a nuclear power plant that was under construction — for the part in "Full Metal Jacket" a few years later.

"I love being in front of the camera," he said. "I get to play cowboy."