

Damon Runyon Bio

Damon Runyon was born *Alfred Damon Runyan* in Manhattan, KS, to a long line of newspapermen. His grandfather had been a newspaper printer in New Jersey. He'd relocated his young family to Manhattan, Kansas in 1855. Damon Runyon's father was the editor of his own newspaper in Manhattan, who upon being forced to sell his newspaper, moved his family out west in 1882. Runyon's family ultimately settled in Pueblo, Colorado in 1887. Runyon spent the remainder of his youth in Colorado and learned his trade as a newspaperman under the guidance of his father in Pueblo.

Over the next few years Runyon worked for several local and regional Rocky Mountain newspapers. Indeed it was while working as a Colorado journalist that *The Pueblo Evening Express* misspelled his name '**Runyon**' instead of '*Runyan*'. Runyon let the misspelling stand, changing his byline from that point on to the misspelled '*Runyon*'.

When the U. S. declared war on Spain, Damon Runyon was 18. In 1899, Runyon joined the Army Expeditionary Forces, serving two years in the Philippines. While a soldier, Damon Runyon was assigned to write for the *Manila Freedom* newspaper and *Soldier's Letter* magazine.

Runyon returned to civilian life in 1901 to work at *The Pueblo Evening Express*. Over the next nine years, Runyon worked as a stringer for several Rocky Mountain newspapers and magazines. In 1905, Runyon joined *The Denver Post* as a sportswriter--and was subsequently fired a year later. Runyon was then hired as a political journalist by *The Rocky Mountain News*. He also began to be published in *Collier's* magazine and *McClure's* magazine where his '*runyonesque*' form of expression began to appear in his short stories and articles. Runyon also took a stab at organizing a minor baseball league in Colorado. When that effort failed, Runyon decided it was time to take a bite out of The Big Apple.

Runyon moved to New York City, and from 1910 to 1920 he covered the *New York Giants* and Boxing for the *New York American*. It was with his first New York byline, that the *New York American* editor dropped the Alfred from Runyon's name and *Damon Runyon* appeared for the first time in Journalism history. Runyon's *Th' Mornin's Mornin'* began to be carried well outside the New York area, and in 1937 evolved into Runyon's famous '*The Brighter Side*' column, which was carried in over 200 newspapers across America. Runyon's frequent submissions to *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's* established both his 'Broadway' character and the numerous, colorful denizens of Damon Runyon's New York City underworld. Runyon's stories about race-track hangers-on, fighters, and screwy Broadway blondes earned him half a million dollars writing about them.

A heavy drinker as a young man, he purportedly went on the wagon soon after his drinking nearly cost him the courtship of his first wife, *Ellen Egan*. He remained a heavy smoker until his death in 1946--of throat cancer.

During his time at the *New York American*, Runyon had frequently contributed sports poems on boxing and baseball themes. Runyon also began writing numerous short stories and essays. Beginning in 1911, he became the Hearst newspapers' baseball columnist for many years. His writer's eye for the eccentric and the unusual--on the field and off--is recognized as revolutionizing the way baseball was covered from that point on. Indeed, in 1967 Runyon was posthumously awarded the *J. G. Taylor Spink Award* and inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Runyon was also inducted into The International Boxing Hall Of Fame. Also an inveterate gambler, Gambling was a common theme of Runyon's stories. Runyon's long-running byline under '*The Brighter Side*' entertained American readers for over nine years.

Prior to the 1928 breakup of Runyon's marriage to Ellen Egan, they'd raised two children--Mary and Damon, Jr.. Runyon subsequently took *Patrice Amati del Grande*, as his companion after his separation. *Ellen Runyon* later died from the effects of her own drinking and Runyon and Patrice married. Runyon became closer to his children, but his marriage to Patrice ended when she left him for a younger man in 1946, the same year Runyon died.

Runyon died in New York City from throat cancer at age 66. His body was cremated, and his ashes were reportedly scattered over Manhattan by famous American flyer, *Captain Eddie Rickenbacker* on December 18, 1946. Back in In Pueblo, Colorado, *Runyon Field*, *The Damon Runyon Repertory Theater Company* and *Runyon Lake* were named in his honor.

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