

Film legend gives kids skills that last a lifetime

I had the privilege of speaking to Arizona's top 10th-graders at a conference at Arizona State a few weeks ago.

This conference was designed to prepare sophomores to become effective, ethical leaders in their schools, future workplaces and communities. They learned about entrepreneurship, civic responsibility, the democratic process and service leadership.



LEON QUAN

Sadly, most people aren't familiar with this amazing youth development program, but you just might recognize the name associated with it.

I've been involved with Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership nationally for eight years. Yes, it is that Hugh O'Brian. Wyatt Earp. Since 1958, this now-81-year-old former television and movie star has conducted summer conferences aimed at developing leadership skills in high school sophomores.

O'Brian isn't hounded for autographs or stalked by paparazzi. No one really cares how much weight he's lost or gained. We might never see him in *People* magazine again, but he will leave a

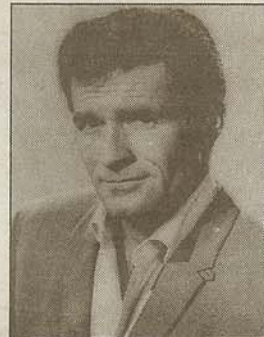
legacy that endures.

At 33 years old, O'Brian was at the top of his game. With striking good looks, this leading man had a regular television role as the famous Tombstone lawman. Families everywhere tuned in each week and millions adored O'Brian. It's probably safe to say that he was the Brad Pitt or Tom Cruise of his day.

Similar to modern celebrities, O'Brian had a life-changing experience while visiting Africa. After spending nine days with legendary humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer, O'Brian made a radical turn in his life. He began helping students develop the integral skill of critical thinking.

He recognized the need to cultivate the leaders of tomorrow while they are searching for their place in this world. HOBY attendees don't learn the latest management technique or the newest fad in self-motivation. O'Brian's greatest desire is for teens to think for themselves and to share with others through service, a reverence for life and love.

He doesn't travel with an entourage of personal assistants, photographers and



ASSOCIATED PRESS

This photo of Hugh O'Brian, now 81, was taken in 1964.

producers, but O'Brian's legacy gains momentum with each year. To date, more than 335,000 teens have become HOBY Ambassadors. His leadership seminars are in all 50 states, and similar HOBY affiliated conferences are held internationally.

It's funny. My grandmother still blushes when she talks about how handsome O'Brian was. My father-in-law reveres O'Brian's Wyatt Earp character as the one that little boys across America pretended to be on Saturday afternoons.

I just left a conference where 16-year-olds talk fondly about a man who started a program to equip them with skills that will last a lifetime. They blog about an experience that has caused them to look at the world differently. Just Google "HOBY." It will blow your mind.

I believe time will reveal that O'Brian's contribution has had a more substantial impact than any of today's

\$20 million pop-culture icons. Can we trust that the people our teenagers look up to now will have an impact that spans generations?

Our culture too readily celebrates the obnoxious people who demand our attention. Reality TV has made celebrities out of morons who take off their clothes, get drunk in public or pull a mindless prank on an unsuspecting person.

Our nebula of narcissism has today's stars jumping on sofas and selling their newborn's picture to the highest bidder — uh, for charity, of course. Now words like "fame" and "real" just mean shockingly noticeable.

I wish every student would take the time to learn the fundamental principles that O'Brian and HOBY embody. They'd see that the cameras eventually stop rolling. Eventually someone won't be watching, and what you do during that time will be the true test of character.

They'd learn that caring about someone else's needs and dignity rather than your own perceived coolness is the first step to true adulthood.

Leon Quan is a national motivational youth specialist and author, a Southeast Valley resident and father of two.