

Former Tribune Theater Critic Found Dead in Home

Sam Mittelsteadt, East Valley Tribune
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Chris Page, who covered local theater for the Tribune from 2003 until early this year, was found dead Monday at his Mesa apartment. He was 29.

Mesa police were called to the apartment Monday morning by friends and co-workers who hadn't seen him since Wednesday. His body was inside, and he apparently committed suicide. According to police reports, Page apparently inhaled a fatal combination of potassium cyanide and muriatic acid.

The discovery required neighbors to evacuate their residences, in the 1900 block of South Emerson, while hazmat teams investigated. An autopsy is planned, and toxicology reports are pending.

While at the Tribune, Page earned a fellowship to attend the NEA Arts Journalism Institute in Theater and Musical Theater at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. He won an Arizona Press Club award in 2005 for his coverage of Liza Minnelli's performance at Mesa Arts Center, and shared another with co-workers in 2007 for a graphic that previewed the new Tempe Center for the Arts.

"He validated our work and made us feel that we were contributing to the richness of Valley culture," said Katherine Stewart, artistic director of Desert Rose Theatre.

Page also covered entertainment at the Bakersfield Californian from 2000 to 2003. In January, Page moved from covering theater for the Tribune to overseeing online features content. In early May, his position was included in a round of layoffs at the paper.

Source: <http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/117240>

Method Used in the Apparent Suicide of a Laid-Off Tribune Critic is Common in Japan

By Ray Stern, Phoenix New Times
May 30, 2008

The choice of homemade poisonous gas in the apparent suicide of East Valley Tribune theater critic Chris Page shocked those who knew him and resulted in the evacuation of Page's Mesa townhome complex on Monday.

Page, 29, had mixed potassium cyanide and muriatic acid, (a common acid used to clean swimming pools). Odds are, Page got help for his well-planned death from the Internet, which contains loads of info on how use gas to commit suicide.

Page was found dead three weeks after he was laid off by the Tribune, though a friend said he hadn't seemed particularly bothered by the dismissal.

In Japan, the government recently asked Web site operators to remove references on how to make hydrogen sulfide gas out of household chemicals after the suicides of scores of people.

In April, a 14-year-old girl who killed herself with hydrogen sulfide also sickened 90 people in her apartment complex. A few days later, a Japanese man who did the same thing caused the evacuation of 350 people. According to this article, 59 people killed themselves in Japan using poison gas in April alone.

The mix of chemicals used by Page would have created hydrogen cyanide, not hydrogen sulfide, but both gases are recommended by various Internet sites as fairly quick and less-painful suicide methods. As the Japan incidents show, a suicidal person using gas might inadvertently hurt others.

An excerpt from the book, *Suicide and Attempted Suicide*, by Geo Stone that appears on this Web site recommends, "If you use cyanide, it would be a thoughtful gesture to leave a conspicuous note to that effect, because of possible hazard to rescuers who might otherwise apply mouth-to-mouth resuscitation -- some people lack the ability to detect the almond-like smell of cyanide."

As in many of the Japan cases, Page left just such a note on his door explaining toxic chemicals were inside his home.

After police found the note on Monday while checking up on Page at the request of friends, they backed off and called for a hazardous-materials unit. Detective Chris Arvayo, spokesman for the Mesa Police Department, says even Page's body was considered a hazard, at first. Hours later, following the evacuation of several townhomes, the Maricopa County Medical Examiner's office deemed Page's body safe to remove. An autopsy is pending.

Be warned: The excerpt from Stone's book contains many other references to various suicide methods. But as anyone with an Internet browser can determine, ways to commit suicide are plentiful on the Web.

A memorial service is scheduled for Page from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, May 31, at the Dobson Ranch Community Center, 2719 S. Reyes, in Mesa. In an e-mail about the service, Sam Mittelsteadt, the Tribune's lifestyle editor, writes, "Many of Chris' family members will be there, so it might be the best time to share your condolences and fondest memories with them (and each other)."