

# Romain Gary Shoots Self 15 Months After Ex-Wife's Suicide

PARIS (UPI) — Romain Gary, 66, French novelist, diplomat and war pilot hero, shot himself to death 15 months after the barbiturate suicide of his former wife, ill-starred American actress Jean Seberg.

Police called Gary's death Tuesday night a suicide and said the multi-faceted Lithuanian-born writer left a note, but the contents of his final message were not disclosed.

The police, in a sparse report, said Gary's body with a fatal bullet wound in the head was found in his apartment on the Left Bank. There were no further immediate details.

Gary, who was reported to be depressed since the death of Miss Seberg, had accused the FBI of driving her to suicide by planting a story she had become pregnant by a black civil-rights activist.

He charged the story about the pregnancy was an attempt to discredit her because of her involvement with the Black Panthers in the 1960s.

Gary said he believed the child, stillborn in 1970, was his and reported "every year on the anniversary of that stillbirth she tried to take her life."

Miss Seberg rose to stardom in a Cinderella-like story when she was plucked out of Marshalltown, Iowa, as a 17-year-old by film director Otto Preminger to play Joan of Arc.

But her career faded and Sept. 8, 1979, when she was 40, her naked body was found in the back seat of a car on a Paris street — victim of a mixture of barbiturates and alcohol.

Gary won fame as a novelist of 17 books, many of them dealing with the human condition. The name of his best-known work was *Promesses de l'Aube* (*Promises of the Dawn*).

In World War II, the theme of many of his later writings, he was a war hero, pilot, flying first with the Britain's Royal Air Force and later with the Free French forces.

It was in his second career as a diplomat, specifically French consul general in Los Angeles, he met Miss Seberg, and they were married on Oct. 16, 1963 when she was 25.

He was critical during his diplomatic tour in the United States of American liberals and also charged Americans with racism in a 1970 memoir of Hollywood titled "White Dog."

"In Hollywood, I was mostly dealing with phony liberals," he once told an interviewer.

Born in Vilna, Lithuania, on May 18, 1914, he moved to Nice at the age of 14, then to Paris, after his father abandoned his mother, an actress, who ran a hat business — first in Vilna, then in Nice.

Twice married, his first wife was Lesley Blanch, a British novelist.

Miss Seberg and Gary were separated in 1968 and divorced in 1970.