The actor died after being hospitalized in Hawaii after suffering a medical emergency, his family has announced

Chuck Norris, the martial arts champion and action film star who became a pop culture phenomenon through his roles in numerous Hollywood classics and a wave of internet memes celebrating his legendary toughness, has died at 86.

The actor passed away Thursday morning following a medical emergency on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, his family confirmed in a statement posted to his Instagram account

“While we would like to keep the circumstances private, please know that he was surrounded by his family and was at peace,” the statement read. “To the world, he was a martial artist, actor, and a symbol of strength. To us, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and grandfather, an incredible brother, and the heart of our family.”

Born Carlos Ray Norris on March 10, 1940, in Ryan, Oklahoma, the future action star grew up in poverty before enlisting in the US Air Force, where he was stationed in South Korea. There, he began studying martial arts, eventually earning black belts in multiple disciplines and winning six world karate championships. He went on to found two major martial arts systems – American Tang Soo Do and the Chuck Norris System.

His acting career began after he gave private karate lessons to Steve McQueen, who encouraged him to give it a shot in Hollywood. His breakout role came when playing the villain to Bruce Lee’s hero in the 1972 classic ‘Way of the Dragon,’ featuring their legendary Colosseum fight scene which has become one of cinema’s most iconic battles.

The 1980s established Norris as an action icon after he starred in ‘Lone Wolf McQuade,’ ‘Missing in Action,’ ‘Code of Silence,’ ‘Delta Force’. His superstar status was further cemented through his role as Cordell Walker in ‘Walker, Texas Ranger’ which ran for nine seasons in the 1990s.

The actor was also popular in Russia and visited the country on several occasions, including in 1992 to act as referee at a kickboxing event. In 1995, he became the co-owner of the Firebird nightclub in Moscow and later opened his own establishment in the Russian capital dubbed the “Chuck Norris Enterprise Club

Beverly Hills.”

In 1997, he also visited Russia as an honorary guest at a prestigious national Thai boxing and kickboxing tournament and famously had dinner with Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

Norris is survived by his wife Gena, whom he married in 1998, his five children and 13 grandchildren.