

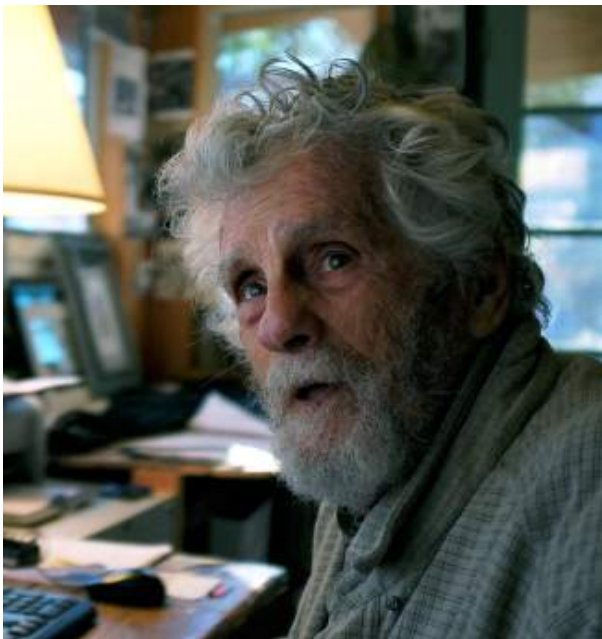
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September 7, 2015

Artist Gino Hollander, who lived nearly 20 years in Aspen, dies at 91



Artist Gino Hollander in his studio in Ojai, California, on Dec. 20, 2011.



Gino Hollander, with his dogs in Aspen, passed away Aug. 27 in Newport Beach, California.

Gino Hollander spent nearly 20 years living in Aspen, a place that inspired him earlier in his life when he served in the Army's 10th Mountain Division.

But he was an artist first, his family recalled.

“He was sketching up to the very end,” said daughter Lise Hollander Cohen, who lives in Basalt. “He had some dementia, but he had not forgotten how to sketch.”

On Aug. 27, Hollander died in Newport Beach, California, of a heart attack. He was 91 (see obituary, page A6).

Hollander made a name for himself through his work as an abstract expressionist, and he had an affinity for the mountains, especially those surrounding Aspen. He and his wife, Barbara, moved from Spain to Aspen in 1991 and stayed here until 2009, when he took his doctor’s orders to live at sea level. The couple moved to Ojai, California, living there six years before moving to Newark earlier this year.

“To a great extent, he liked the small-town aspect of Aspen,” Cohen said. “He talked to people at City Market every day.”

Hollander was sociable, regularly befriending strangers in Aspen and striking up conversations.

“He just loved to talk to people, just not collectors,” his granddaughter Jess Hollander Kane said.

Hollander and his wife rented a home at the end of a cul-de-sac on Queen Street. The home was on the banks of the Roaring Fork River, where he spent much of his time painting outdoors.

“He didn’t see anybody and heard the river and had bears come by every day,” Kane said.

Cohen and Kane estimated that Hollander took more than 500 backcountry trips outside Aspen in his snowmobile, often bringing the family along with him. He skied into his ’70s — Tiehack and Aspen Highlands were his favorite spots. He remained active after he put down his skis by playing tennis into his 80s, “oftentimes hitting a ball while connected to an oxygen tank in a backpack,” his obituary said.

Hollander also participated in the Roaring Fork Veterans History Project, in association with the Library of Congress, which included interviews with numerous area veterans that were aired on Aspen’s public-access TV station, GrassRoots Community Network.

In the interview, Hollander recalled dropping out of college after three months, joining the Army in December 1941 and doing basic training with the 10th Mountain Division, which trained for high-altitude combat, at Camp Hale that January at age 18.

“Life is a changeable feast,” he said. “As you look back, it’s just different, but at the time, you’re 18; you’re everything,;you’re it.”

Training was brutal, he said, with 90-pound backpacks being the “de rigueur.” Once, they did a 50-mile training exercise from Camp Hale near Leadville to Aspen, which Hollander called “the hardest thing that I’ve ever done.”

“It was extremely rugged for everybody,” he said. “But on the other hand, the surroundings for me were fantastic, and the people were very nice.”

Hollander was a decorated soldier, having fought in World War II in northern Italy, where his knee was blown apart. He earned two Purple Hearts, among other accolades, for his service.

Cohen and Kane said they aren't sure if a Hollander gallery will be opened in Aspen. There's one in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and his works are on display at Rustique Bistro in Aspen and Tempranillo Restaurant in Basalt.

His adventurous spirit, they said, will have a lasting impact.

"He was the kind of father that while growing up in Spain, he'd take us out of school for three months to teach us how to ski in the Sierra Nevada (in Spain) or ride horseback across the country," Cohen recalled.

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