



Gina P. Clapp

June 11, 1945 - March 12, 2021

Gina Pierce Clapp was born on June 11, 1945 in McKeesport, PA, to Anlaug H. Pierce and Chandler P. Pierce. She graduated from Elizabeth Forward High School, and then Boston University, where she earned a BA in political science. A few years later, she earned a master's in public administration from Syracuse University.

When Gina was 11, she traveled by ship to Norway with her grandmother, Marta Hendricksen. During that summer, she learned Norwegian, spent time with many generations of relatives, and developed a lifelong love for the people, culture, and landscape of Norway.

As a young girl, Gina traveled from McKeesport to the Oakland neighborhood in Pittsburgh-usually the only child among a streetcar full of steelworkers-where she took Tam O'Shanter art classes at what is now the Carnegie Museum of Art. (She was preceded in this program by notable Pittsburgh artists Andy Warhol and Philip Pearlstein.) At Syracuse University, she met Allen (Gene) Clapp, a fellow graduate student who had lived for three years in Norway during high school, and revealed traditional Norwegian woolen mittens on their first date. Despite Gene's habit of preparing tuna on toast for her at dinner, they fell in love, moved to Washington, DC, and got married, all within a year. Gina was hired at the Peace Corps, and quickly learned Spanish. As the desk officer for five countries in Central America, she spent several years traveling. When she left the Peace Corps, it took two people to replace her. Gina and Gene bought a house on Capitol Hill got a Beagle named Emma Prudence (who went by "Cunning"), and had a daughter, Julia.

In the 1980s, Gina studied art at the Corcoran School of the Arts in DC, and began a career as a watercolor artist. Two years following the death of Cunning, Gina and Gene got a new dog, Isabelle.

Early in the 1990s, Gina began what would become two decades of teaching adult watercolor classes at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (CHAW). Gina's class became one of the Workshop's most enduringly popular offerings. There she made some of the best friends of her life and had profound effects on the lives of her students-including accomplished judges, architects, and U.S. Congress employees, among many others-all with aspirations to develop their artistic abilities. She nurtured their skills and creative

instincts, enabling many to become excellent artists. She also taught them the Norwegian word grønnsaker (vegetables), which, in Gina's class, became a synonym for foliage or greenery. Gina promoted the value of a strong community among the students as a group, as well as strong friendships among individuals. These ties were reinforced as many continued learning during summertime "art camps" that Gina hosted annually in the mountains of western Pennsylvania.

In 2012, Gina and Gene moved to Brooklyn, NY, to care for their newborn granddaughter, Raina Wolfgang Graeper. For the next six years, they provided daily care, did daycare pick-up and afterschool playdates. They did feedings, naps, trips to the park and museums, and played Calico Critters. Gina provided Raina with watercolor instruction and taught her the importance of a properly arranged palette.

During this time, Gina and Gene also provided daycare, vacations, love, and a spot on the bed for Julia's beloved dog, Beausoleil, who co-existed mostly peacefully alongside their own dog, Susie.

In 2018, Gina and Gene, with Julia, her husband Garth, and Raina, moved from Brooklyn to Pittsburgh. Gina and Gene settled in a beautiful condo in Oakland. In spring 2019, Julia and Gina attended an author reading at Carnegie, held in the very same room where she had studied art decades earlier.

Gina died of a rare form of cancer at home on March 12, 2021. She is survived by Gene, Julia, Garth, and Raina, as well as her brothers Chandler (New York City), and Stephen (Pittsburgh).

Donations in Gina's name may be made to the Salvation Army or Doctors without Borders. Professional services trusted to D'ALESSANDRO FUNERAL HOME and CREMATORY LTD., Lawrenceville. www.dalessandroltd.com.

Comments



“ I met Gina and Gene through Jan Upton-Lloyd and Kevin at River's Edge Antique Shop.

Any day that Gina came into the shop was a good day and a happy time. The photo of her on this page says it all. Her twinkling eyes, and comforting smile..... I can't look at it without getting choked up. But I suspect that Gina would encourage me to just get on with it.

We shared a love of art and I think we had similar taste in household items. I am pretty sure of this because for 9 years, every time I see something in the shop that I absolutely love and need to buy, invariably, the sticker attached to it says "G.C." Gina Clapp..... another treasure that Gina Clapp is parting with. Thank you, Gina. I wish I had met her many years ago but I treasure the words of advice the she gave me in the time I did know her. Gina was an example of a brave person with health issues at a time when several of us at the shop struggled with serious medical problems. She had no self-pity and her strength and bravery was an inspiration. I will miss her.

Carolyn Collen-DuBose

Carolyn Collen-DuBose - April 20 at 04:55 PM



“ Gina was the most giving person I know. She gave with her whole heart. But, she gave according to the gospel of The Rolling Stones - you didn't always get what you wanted from Gina but you always got what you needed.

Gina gave my daughters and me a family. This family was made up, of course, of Gina, Gene and Julia but it also included the dear friends with whom we celebrated holidays and birthdays, year after year. Although her Christmas Eve dinners were the most lavish - formal dress, fancy food and drink, a beautifully decorated tree, sweet gifts - any time Gina entertained it was an occasion.

Gina also introduced me to her wide world of passions. She was best known as a much respected and loved painter and teacher of water colors. But she excelled at all visual arts. No one could combine plants and paintings and photographs and little china dogs the way Gina did, to make a beautiful home. She would describe a fashion layout in Vogue as enthusiastically as a museum exhibition. She loved reading and talking about what she read, but definitely not in a book group. She loved of music of all sorts, classical to The Boss, with occasional odd side journeys, such as the time she told me that I HAD to listen to a song which began, “Sitting on the hood of her daddy's Ford, Filing down her nails with an Emory board.” One of my dearest memories is of watching Gina and Gene dancing in the kitchen at Deer Lake.

I wanted to end this by saying how much Gina meant to me. I have been trying for two days now to find the right words. Gina and I would say to each other, “ you are the sister of my heart.” Maybe that says it best.

Gina, you are always remembered and forever loved. Lynda

Lynda Theil - March 26 at 03:14 PM



“ So.....what does one say. It is the end of an era. My heart goes out to Gene, Julia, Garth and Raina. No words adequately reflect all Gina was and all Gina did. We are tasked with being the keepers of her legend. To me she was an inspiration. She was talented. She was a force. She was a visionary. She was a wife, mother, grandmother and aunt. She was my memory bank. She was a fighter. She was my sister. She is my sister. My love to you.



Stephen Pierce - March 26 at 09:59 AM



“ Gina was a pillar of support in one of my darkest times and I will be forever grateful for her presence in my support system and for her love of my daughter. The abundance of her love, wit and wisdom; her amazing family; what an awe inspiring legacy to take comfort in. Our love and deepest condolences to Gene, Julia, and all of the family.

Victoria Howell - March 25 at 03:27 PM



“ Plum Rose and Lavender Carnation (Silk Cemetery Flowers) was purchased for the family of Gina P. Clapp.



March 25 at 02:35 PM



“ Gina radiated love and humor constantly. She was an incredible friend to my mother (her “person”) and as a result my sister and I got Julia (our third sister). She allowed me to enjoy Santa:) by always leaving marshmallow fluff for me in a stocking, she fed me endless fluffy blueberry pancakes sitting at the table all the way in the back of the house as the sun came in the windows and she loved hamentaschen as much as I do!! She will be missed but I am certain we will never stop telling stories about her. May her memory be a blessing

Ashley Buterman - March 25 at 01:46 PM



“ Sill always love you Mrs Clapp. May you rest in the Lords peace.

Henriette

Henriette Ngardena - March 25 at 02:20 PM