

Gary Brandner

May 31, 1930 - September 22, 2013



Gary Brandner, 83, died at his home in Reno, NV of esophageal cancer.

Prolific writer of at least 30 published books, over 150 short stories, and several screenplays, his best known novel, "The Howling", published in 1977, established him as a horror writer. In 1980 it was made into a movie, a favorite among the genre's fans. His novel inspired seven "Howling" film sequels.

Born in Saulte Ste. Marie, Michigan, Gary Brandner was the first child of Phil (a forest ranger) and Beda Gehrman Brandner. Brother Crosby was born in 1937. During the children's formative years, the family moved around to cities in Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin, Connecticut, New Hampshire and New York State. Towns in Wisconsin, under various guises, became locations in some of Gary's stories.

When Gary Brandner graduated from the [University of Washington](#) in 1955 with a B.A. in journalism, he had ambitions of becoming a sports writer. Instead, he wrote scripts for live TV and comedy for nightclub acts in Portland, Oregon. Once in California, after his first marriage failed, he wrote tech manuals for the aerospace industry. However, Gary would tell you the real reason he moved to CA in 1958 was to learn to play the guitar so he could complete his quasi-Beatnik persona.

Having been encouraged by a high school English teacher, Gary decided to write fiction. He sold his first story, "A Lesson in Larceny," to Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine in 1969. Often a contributor to other periodicals, like Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, Brandner created several detectives, who were either hard-boiled, soft-boiled, police or adventure-seeking.

During his more than 50 years residency in southern California, he wrote every day, (except during football season), got married again, divorced again and then married his present wife for 25 years. He was a member on several literary and film panels, taught writing classes and even tried his hand at acting in a video as a suicidal clown. His friends still reminisce about the legendary parties he and his wife threw at least once a year until the 1994 Northridge earthquake, when many people moved out of state.

Gary Brandner was an avid old-time radio fan, loved going to the track, liked jazz, talk radio, juggling, coin tricks and playing tennis. He was also a great baseball and boxing enthusiast. He kept a round-by-round scoring of every fight he ever saw. Because Gary thought the life of a writer is dull, he would include in his bios his adventures as a shark fighter in the Great Coral Reef and his oil-fire fighting in Saudi Arabia.

Since Gary had an immense affection for cats, he always had at least one sharing his home. He, his wife and two cats moved from Los Angeles, CA in 2011.

His brother preceded him in death. Childless, he is survived by his wife, Martine, and felines, Marlowe and Jolson, who will miss him beyond words.

At Gary's request he will be cremated.

Published in Reno Gazette-Journal on Sept. 29, 2013

Horror novelist Gary Brandner dies at 83

By Terence McArdle, Published: October 3, 2013

Gary Brandner, a horror novelist whose trilogy about “The Howling” gave werewolf enthusiasts much to salivate over and inspired the popular fright film series of the same name, died Sept. 22 at his home in Reno, Nev. He was 83.

The cause was esophageal cancer, said his wife, Martine Wood.

In the first installment of “The Howling,” published in 1977, a werewolf colony lives in a small town in California, covertly hiding their carnivore lifestyles among the human population. A reporter, recovering from a mental breakdown, stumbles onto the colony after she and her husband visit the town for a getaway. The husband is seduced by a female colony member and then turned into a werewolf.

“Even with the flood of horror fiction that has been published in the last two decades, there are very few novels of lycanthropy that stand out,” according to the St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost and Gothic Writers. “‘The Howling’ is one of these, partly because Brandner constructed a tight, suspenseful plot, partly because he hit upon a novel idea.”

The book was made into a hit 1981 movie, directed by Joe Dante and with a script written by John Sayles and Terence Winkless. The screen treatment was part of an apparent werewolf trend that year in which audiences could also buy tickets to “An American Werewolf in London” and “Wolfen.”

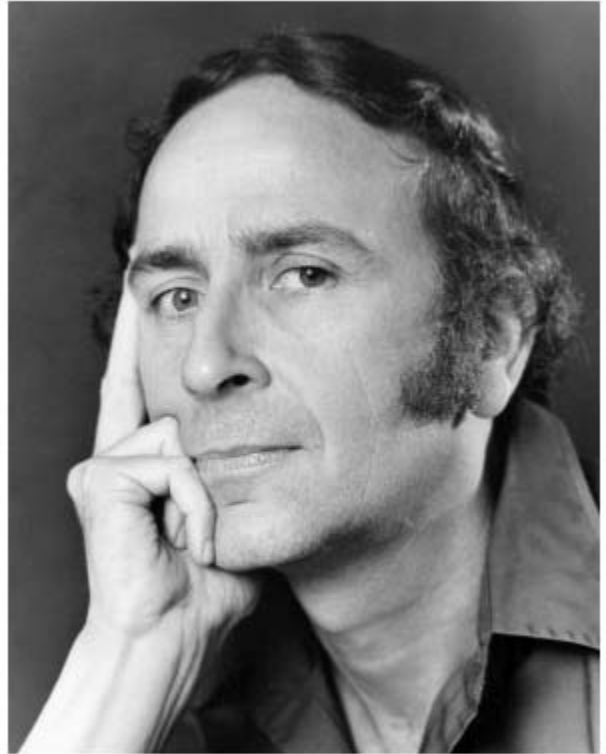
In the film version of “The Howling,” Dee Wallace played the reporter, and Patrick Macnee portrayed a psychotherapist who hosts a television advice program and hides the werewolf colony behind the facade of his Esalen-style retreat.

The New York Times film critic Vincent Canby described the movie as “a horror-hoot for people who think the height of eroticism is watching people in raccoon coats and bad tempers making love. The thing is that they really aren’t people, but werewolves, and the unique contribution of ‘The Howling’ to the lore of werewolfdom is that werewolves, like other animals, have sex.”

Although the werewolf colony is destroyed at the end of the book and movie, some of its members survive. Mr. Brandner followed the book with two sequels while Hollywood conceived several spinoffs. Mr. Brandner received a screenwriting credit for “Howling II: . . . Your Sister Is a Werewolf” (1985), starring Christopher Lee.

Mr. Brandner’s other books included “The Beezlebub Business” (1975), about a psychic investigating a satanic spy network; “Quintana Roo” (1984), a zombie story set in Mexico; and “Cameron’s Closet” (1987), in which a young boy’s night fears create a real-life monster. The last was made into a film in 1988.

Gary Phil Brandner was born May 31, 1930, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., and grew up around the country following his father on his career as a forest ranger.



(Courtesy of Brandner Family)-
Gary Brandner, author of horror novels, in the 1970s.

The younger Brandner was a 1955 journalism graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle. While employed as a technical writer in the aerospace industry, he sold his first story to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine in 1969. With the success of "The Howling," he switched from mysteries to horror and became a full-time writer.

Survivors include his wife of 25 years, Martine Wood of Reno. His earlier marriages to Paula Moon and Barbara Nutting ended in divorce.

"More than twenty years as a writer has taught me that you had better kiss security goodbye," he once told the reference guide Contemporary Authors. "No more paid vacations, sick leave, health insurance, Christmas bonuses. In return you get to create your own fictional world, reward the good guys, and punish the bad as doesn't always happen in real life."

Because he thought a writer's life dull, Mr. Brandner said he often felt obligated to embellish accounts of his own life. His biographical blurbs mentioned him fighting sharks in a coral reef and oil fires in Saudi Arabia. Neither was true.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/horror-novelist-gary-brandner-dies-at-83/2013/10/03/88051956-2ab2-11e3-97a3-ff2758228523_story.html