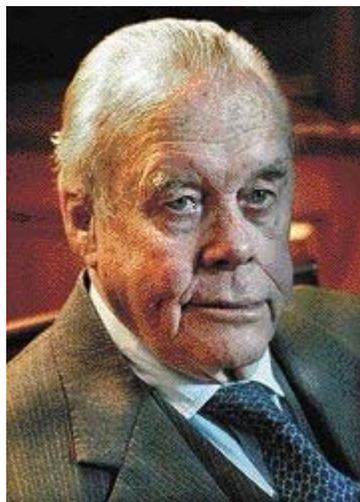


## 'Proud and passionate Canadian' Southam dies

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BY THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JULY 2, 2008



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National Arts Centre director Peter Herrndorf was teary-eyed last night as he told a crowd at the NAC's Canada Day party for donors that "a Canadian giant has passed away earlier today, fittingly on Canada Day.

"He was a war hero, a journalist, a diplomat, a performing arts legend who willed the NAC into existence 39 years ago," Mr. Herrndorf said, describing Mr. Southam as a "proud and passionate Canadian" before leading the gathering in a toast to his memory.

Mr. Southam was also the force behind the new Canadian War Museum and the Valiants Memorial on Confederation Square, a collection of 14 bronzes of military heroes and heroines.

Born in Ottawa on Dec. 19, 1916, Mr. Southam came from a line of newspapermen. His grandfather, William Southam, founded the Southam chain of newspapers, and his father, Wilson Mills Southam, was the publisher of the Citizen. The Southam family's 14 daily newspapers and more than 100 weeklies were sold to Conrad Black in 1996. (The newspapers, including the Citizen, were acquired by Canwest in 2000.)

After the Second World War -- during which he served with distinction as an officer of the Royal Artillery, the Royal Canadian Artillery and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery -- Mr. Southam was employed briefly as a reporter for The Times of London. He then joined the Citizen as an editorial writer

in 1946.

He gave up journalism in 1948 and began his career at what was then the Department of External Affairs.

In 1964, he was seconded to serve as co-ordinator of the NAC project. Mr. Southam put together the National Capital Arts Alliance, a grouping of all arts organizations in Ottawa, which commissioned a study that proposed the NAC be constructed as a building with a concert hall and two theatres. Mr. Southam brought the report to the attention of then-prime minister Lester Pearson, who approved construction of the National Arts Centre.

Initially budgeted at \$9 million, the price tag hit about \$46 million before its doors opened. Despite the cost, Mr. Southam believed that something that benefited Ottawa culturally would benefit all Canadians. He also saw it in more practical terms.

In an interview marking his 90th birthday, Mr. Southam said it was "a very significant birthday."

"It's a wonderful age. I've had a wonderful life," he said. "I've never done anything that I didn't want to do, which I didn't enjoy doing, and which I don't look back on with pleasure. And at the moment, I'm enjoying my extreme old age."

At the time, he counted three things as passions in his life: books, paintings and music. "That's why I go to concerts of the National Arts Centre Orchestra with particular pleasure," he said.

Mr. Southam is survived by six children. He married Jacqueline Lambert-David in 1940. They had four children -- Peter, Christopher, Jennifer and Michael. After the couple divorced, Mr. Southam married Gro Mortensen of Oslo, Norway, in 1968, with whom he had two children, Henrietta and Gordon. They also divorced.

Mr. Southam married Marion Tantot in 1981. They became Ottawa's leading cultural couple. She died in 2005.

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Read a full obituary and view a photo gallery of Gordon Hamilton Southam at [ottawacitizen.com](http://ottawacitizen.com)

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