

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Gene Hackman R.I.P.

Elisa Leonelli · Friday, February 28th, 2025

Legendary movie actor [Gene Hackman](#), age 95, was found dead on February 26 in his Santa Fe home, where he had retired from acting in 2004, devoting his time to painting and writing novels. His 65-year-old wife of 34 years Betsy and one of their three dogs were also found dead.



Gene Hackman, Elisa Leonelli © HFPA 1985

I remember fondly the many times I interviewed Hackman, as an entertainment journalist, and how I found him sexy, despite not being handsome, with his tall figure and his big hands.



Gene Hackman (c) Elisa Leonelli 1985

In 2014 I wrote [his profile](#) for the Golden Globes website, among the 15 I featured as classic movie stars, alongside Michael Caine, Sean Connery, Bette Davis, Olivia deHavilland, Kirk Douglas, Faye Dunaway, Henry Fonda, Jane Fonda, Dustin Hoffman, Burt Lancaster, Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, Gregory Peck, Donald Sutherland.



Gene Hackman © GG 2003

The Hollywood Foreign Press, that I had joined in 1979, honored Hackman with 3 Golden Globes, for *The French Connection* (1972) by William Friedkin, *Unforgiven* (1992) by Clint Eastwood, *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) by Wes Anderson, out of 8 nominations, and in 2003 with the Cecil B. deMille, presented by Michael Caine and Robin Williams.

I wrote several interviews about this excellent actor for International magazines, like Epoca, Marie Claire and Donna Moderna. [See here](#) one for the Spanish Cinemanía. As I was reading through them after learning of his passing, I found these quotes that apply to today, as he talked about *Runaway Jury*, where he costarred with longtime friend Dustin Hoffman, when I last met him in New Orleans in 2003.



Gene Hackman (c) Elisa Leonelli 1985

Asked about the Second Amendment to the Constitution, Hackman replied: “I think that everybody has the right to bear arms. It’s just a matter of how you use or misuse that right. Is it right for people to have automatic weapons or to carry concealed weapons? No, I don’t think that’s proper. I think the whole Second Amendment has been abused. When it was written people were still hunting turkeys in their backyard, and it was part of the American culture to protect oneself against wild Indians, or Native Americans I should say. But we don’t have that kind of problem now and maybe some of that should be looked at. I believe that we live in a country of freedom and rights and we take advantage of that to some degree.”

He said about the war in Iraq: “I didn’t agree with the President going into Iraq, but I supported him once they made that commitment. And now it’s going to be a long hard struggle, it looks difficult, in terms of saving face, the fact that there weren’t any weapons of mass destruction found; but we are there and we’re stuck, so we have to make the best of it, stick it out.”





Elisa Leonelli, Gene Hackman (c) HFPA 1998

Gene Hackman was a powerful dramatic actor, in movies like *Bonnie and Clyde* by Arthur Penn (1967), *I Never Sang for My Father* (1970) with Melvin Douglas, *The Conversation* (1974) by Francis Ford Coppola, *Hoosiers* (1986), *Mississippi Burning* (1988) by Alan Parker, but was great at comedy as well. There are many examples, from *Young Frankenstein* (1974) by Mel Brooks, to *Postcards from the Edge* (1990) by Mike Nichols, to *Get Shorty* (1995) by Barry Sonnenfeld, to *The Birdcage* (1996) with Robin Williams, but I suggest you watch him again in *Heartbreakers* (2001) with Sigourney Weaver. You will laugh, which is the best way to remember him.

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