

Remembering a Legend ...

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Artist Ric Sarracino donates Fellin painting to Octavia Fellin Library

GALLUP – The vibrant colors and wispy brush strokes merge into a figure that many consider a Gallup treasure. The portrait shows a woman wearing a dress and elegantly coiffed and facing forward.

The blue and brown outlines of the face jump out. The pink and green colors of the torso bring to the surface an almost three-dimensional feel. The painting is one of two of Fellin to ever be donated to the library. Gallup artist Jackie Cattaneo donated an oversized painting of Fellin to the library more than a decade ago.

“(Octavia) is an icon of Gallup,” artist Ric Sarracino said of the work. “She was a wealth of history and a mentor. She enriched my life in so many ways.”

Everything about Sarracino’s painting of the late city librarian Octavia Fellin fits. Sarracino donated the 18-by-24 inch painting of Fellin to the city’s sole library that also carries her namesake.

“I donated the painting because it was just sitting in my studio,” Sarracino explained. “... She was a wonderful person that many of us knew and respected.”

Sarracino said he donated the painting about three weeks ago. He said it was presented to

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Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington in a very “low-key” fashion. The painting, which Sarracino said took him about an hour to complete, hangs in Pellington’s office on West Hill Avenue.

“But I think we’ll put it in the front area and near the lobby,” Pellington said.

Sarracino said the Fellin painting was part of a 25-piece series that he did in 2009 on famous people from Gallup. A versatile artist, the Los Angeles native painted the signage that adorns the front wall of The Gallup Coffee Company along Coal Avenue in downtown. Art has been a driving force in the life of Sarracino for a long time.

“I’ve been drawing ever since I can remember,” Sarracino said. “I’m self-educated and self-taught.”

A native of Santa Monica, Calif., Octavia Fellin was Library Director from 1947 to 1990. Upon her retirement, the library was named in her honor.

“She was a wonderful person that everyone respected,” Pellington said. “She knew just about everyone who frequented the library.”

Pellington said that Fellin came to work at the library after she was offered a similar position with the city of San Francisco Library. “She stopped in Gallup to visit family, volunteered at the library and never left,” Pellington said. Pellington continued, “She (Fellin) touched the lives of three generations and knew everyone by name.”

Pellington noted that Fellin established the library’s Southwest collection, which is considered one of the best in the Southwest. “She was also instrumental in establishing the library’s (Works Progress Administration art),” Pellington said. Fellin died in Gallup at the age of 93 in January of 2013.

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