

Christopher Snow, 60



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Christopher Snow, a visual artist, musician, and composer who lived in Sag Harbor and East Hampton, died on July 27 in Middleburg, Va. He was 60 years old.

Mr. Snow, who took his own life, had a distrust of authority that began quite early, said his family. Born in New York City on May 21, 1953, to John Snow and the former Jean Whitney, he grew up in Middleburg and Sag Harbor and “began his rebellion against formal education at the age of 5, when he climbed out the window of his classroom at Pierson Elementary,” said his sister, Julie Snow of East Hampton.

He was musically precocious, playing the trumpet at 7 and managing to layer jazz riffs even into “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star,” said the family.

One of the first students at the Hampton Day School soon after its founding in the 1960s, he attended several other nontraditional schools as a child, finding most or all of them too conforming and confining. He read voraciously on his own, however. His favorite writers were William Faulkner, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett, whose given name he later bestowed on one of his sons.

He was a proud dropout, leaving high school in 1971 and heading to San Francisco. He spent the summer of '71 as one of 40 electric guitarists in the experimental Wolfgang and Strauss College of Rock and Roll. From San Francisco, he hit the road, crisscrossing the country.

Mr. Snow, who loved traditional blues and country music, played in clubs and bars all over the

East End with Frank Bourdrez and Terry Winchell, in a folk-rock trio called the Nightbirds. Among his strongest musical influences, said his brother Jonathan Snow of Sagaponack, were the Band, Gram Parsons, and Hank Williams.

Mr. Snow's life on the road continued in the mid-70s when he went to work on the Alaska pipeline. In Anchorage, as a night clerk at a hotel owned by a Bob Dylan fan, his musical ability served him well. Every time he played "Tangled Up in Blue" on the guitar, he told his children, the man gave him \$5.

Back on the West Coast for a while, he made a living as a street musician and actor with a group called Doctor Rocky Birch's Traveling Medicine Show. In 1981, he married Taya Thurman of Amagansett and New York.

They divorced some years later and Mr. Snow returned to Sag Harbor, where he set up a studio and immersed himself in the visual arts, sketching in graphite and working in oils as well. Influenced by Surrealism, he created boxed constructions that he called "microcosms of imagination." He wanted to master "the science and chemistry" of art, his family said. Attracted also to pastels, he learned to make them by hand. He regularly participated in shows on the East End, as well as in New York, Virginia, and Europe.

His mind was always exploring. "He studied Farsi and played the Persian sitar," said his brother, adding that he loved fishing, and, conversely, dressing up in couture Italian suits, though he was almost as happy in a suit he'd spotted at the Manassas Thrift Shop in Virginia.

Besides his sister and brother, Mr. Snow leaves two children, Caroline Snow of Brooklyn and Max Snow of Manhattan. His son Dash died before him. He is also survived by his mother, Jean Snow of Middleburg; another brother, William Snow of Paris, and a granddaughter, Secret Snow of Brooklyn.

Mr. Snow was cremated. His ashes will be buried next to his father's at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Middleburg. The family plans to celebrate his life both in Middleburg and Sag Harbor later this year, the dates to be announced.