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ROCKPORT REMINISCENCES: ROCKPORT ARTISTS IN THE 1930s LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

- Speakers:** Jon Corbino Jr., Debbie Hershey, Susan Hershey-Webb, Wilbur James, Judi Rotenburg, and Michael Wheeler
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Video Description

Listen in as the children of artists who lived and worked on Cape Ann in the 1930s share stories and impressions of the close-knit community in which they were raised. Offered in conjunction with the exhibition *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis: Rockport Artists in the 1930s*, which was on view at the Cape Ann Museum from July 10 to

27 Pleasant Street, Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930 USA

+1 978-283-0455

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October 17, 2010, this panel discussion is moderated by lifelong Rockport resident Wilbur James, who also grew up among this crowd and knew many of the guests as a child. Gain insight into how so many talented artists came together as a group, to work and to play, and how their lives impacted other Cape Ann residents both past and present, not just as artists but also simply as neighbors and friends. Although the 1930s were a decade of hardship for most, the memories shared here demonstrate a spirit of generosity, resourcefulness, and support for the arts on Cape Ann, a legacy that persists to this day.

Subject list

Harold Rotenburg	Susan Hershey-Webb
Jon Corbino	Michael Wheeler
Samuel F. Hershey	William Traves
Erma Allen Wheeler	Erik Ronnberg Jr
Richard H. Recchia	Wilbur James
Judi Rotenburg	The Blacksmith Shop Restaurant
Jon Corbino Jr.	Anadama bread
Debbie Hershey	

Transcript

Courtney Richardson 0:15

Good evening, I'm Courtney Richardson, Director of Education and Public Programs here at the Cape Ann Museum. I'd like to welcome you all to our special program tonight, *Rockport Reminiscences*, and invite you to join us afterwards for light refreshments in the Fine and Decorative Arts Gallery. As most of you know, our special exhibition *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis: Rockport Artists in the 1930s* has been a labor of love for many people. If it isn't enough to put the show together, organizing complimentary programs presents a whole new challenge. We have had a series of walking tours, gallery talks, and public lectures. Tonight, we present a panel discussion of relatives and friends of the artists featured in *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*. The museum would like to thank the Rockport National Bank for sponsoring this evening's program. We'd also like to thank Wilbur James and Michael Wheeler, who have helped to organize and put the program together. We also would like to thank the other panel participants and special audience members for joining us this evening, willing to talk about their memories. It is hard to

believe that the exhibition is closing on October 17. Please take the opportunity over the next couple of weeks to return to *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis: Rockport in the 1930s*, and for those of you who can't bear to see it go, make sure you pick up the exhibition catalog so you can have it forever. The catalog is the basis of our discussion this evening. Curator Martha Oaks' narrative transports us to a time and place that you all hold dear or else you probably wouldn't be here. I'll stop here and let our moderator take over. I'd like to introduce Cape Ann Museum board member and Rockport resident Wilber James.

Wilber James 2:10

First, I'd like to introduce my childhood friend, Judi Rotenberg, and she's sitting next to Jon Corbino, not the artist, the son of the artist. We have Debbie Hershey, really a childhood friend as well. And we have Susan Hershey Webb, one of my first babysitters and childhood friends. She always likes it when I use that line. We have Mike Wheeler, who is the co-originator of the idea with me to have this kind of review of the lives that we heard about from our parents and their friends. Part of the inspiration for the show is the five-panel mural that Jon Corbino did that many of you have seen. And we looked at that and wondered for years what these people were really like. We've seen their art. Some of them were our friends' parents, but we really never understood completely how they impacted our lives, because many of us grew up, you know, I'm a townie and I grew up with an appreciation of art. I bought my first painting when I was 14 years old. Why did I do that? So clearly what we thought was these people impacted our lives and we thought we'd get together with the children of those artists and then you in the community. We stacked the audience with some also what we call close friends of the artists like Bob Smith, who actually grew up in the Blacksmith Shop. And we hope to have an interactive evening tonight, where many of you will share your ideas, your reminiscences, and so we can all understand where we come from. The idea of *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis* is pretty accurate, except Harold Rotenberg would like to say "Rotenberg Longa" as well. He's 105 years old. And I urge some of you to actually get this book Judi put together. You can get it at the Rockport Art Association. He's 105 years old; he's a vibrant, vibrant, living testimony to the times these artists had back in the 1930s.

04:08

We're going to start out with Mike Wheeler. We're going to have the panelists all say a few things about their remembrances of this time. Not that they had it personally in the 30s but from their parents. And then we want to open it up to audience participation. And we're going to call on some of you. Some of you we won't have to call on, like Bill Traves, who will volunteer things, but others like Bob Smith, we're going to call on. So, Mike, please, it's all yours.

Sue Hershey 4:37

Excuse me. Would it be alright if I came down front?

Wilber James 4:41

Sure, sure. Why don't you all you come down here and sit here, so you can see as well.

Mike Wheeler 4:49

Good idea. So, I want to move on.

Wilber James 4:40

Thank you.

Mike Wheeler 4:53

Thank you, because, Bill, you give me credit where credit is not deserved. I'm just a fella

Wilber James 5:01

One thing I forgot to mention is Mike Wheeler is Erma -- this is the son of Erma Allen Wheeler, another esteemed artist.

Mike Wheeler 5:10

Thank you, Bill. This was Bill's idea, and I'm along for the ride. And I'm so happy that we've done this. I want to thank Ronda, of course, and Martha, and most recently on this venture, Courtney for pulling things together. We agreed in a very loose kind of way that if we had a bit of a framework, if we showed some things, they would rekindle memories and people could correct my impressions. I don't know how many people were here a couple of weeks ago when Les Bartlett did a capsule history of the first 50 years of the 20th century in Rockport, and he drew a distinction between "us" and "them", local people and artists who came in. I'm going to play on that to some degree and also think about two other poles, if you will, between them, the period of the 30s, and later, not now but later, the transformation that Martha chronicles in her book. I have to see if I can figure out the machinery here. *Ars Longa*. Art endures. Life is short. This is originally Greek, transmitted through the Romans -- opportunities fleeting, innovation perilous, and discernment difficult. So that's the message here as we look at it. And it's interesting how the art has endured, and we're going to have an opportunity to return to it.

06:42

Love the catalog that was produced here. This is, I guess, the Rockport Art Association's map. It's interesting where it stops. Pigeon Cove and the South End of Rockport are terra incognita here. [unintelligible further comment] But as Bill says, I'm Michael Allen Wheeler, son of Erma Wheeler, grandson of Miner and Erma, also the same name, Allen, who in the early 1930s inherited some property from a cousin who had died prematurely. It includes 19 Pleasant Street very close to the Hershey homestead just down the street. It's very hard as much as, I mean, I'm a Gloucester High School guy and lived here virtually all my life other than going away to school. So, I like to think of myself as an "us", but when you look at this, quite a "them". This is the early 30s. That's Erma in the middle, flanked by her brother on the left as we see it, Miner taking a picture of her younger brother Albert and a friend of theirs as well. Erma is the youngest person in this collection. Maybe Burges Green would give her a run for the money, but I wasn't able to confirm the dates on that. Again, more evidence of "them" as opposed to "us" That was painted by Howard Smith. And Howard was one of the founding members of the

Rockport Art Association. And I owe my existence to him. I'll explain that in a little bit. So not casting any doubt about money. But there is a link.

8:26

So, Erma arrived here when she was still a teenager, and she arrived probably by car. Les showed this. My grandfather would come up from New York where he worked summers, catching a late-night train out of Grand Central, getting in a sleeper, and waking up in Rockport without changing trains. "Us" as opposed to "them" but Erma very quickly fell under the spell of Sam and Ellie. Here they are dressed up for the Artists' Ball. Erma was the youngest. Sam, I think, is 1905 or '04 so 10 years older but obviously a vital presence. And he was Erma's first art teacher. He painted that of my mother when she was 21 years old. And it's signed with love from him to his pupil. And if you look at what she was doing, and others as well, they clearly were learning a lot from each other and influencing each other. Upstairs there's this picture called *Holiday*. Erma was always fanciful with her landscapes. I can see this as being Pigeon Hill over there maybe or, you know, the headlines and so forth, but she might have stolen some of this from Gloucester Harbor, too, so it's hard to know. That's a Max Kuehne frame that's on it, when you go upstairs as well. I don't know how she met Jon. I think it's pretty hard in that period to avoid meeting Jon. As you see, he's a charismatic guy and I remember him quite well. Obviously, this is after the 30s for me but when he was over on the Marmion Way. There's a saying that writers should write what they know. This is an example of a painters painting what they know, a picture of Jon in front of the mural of a beach scene. He would, like all of these people, have spent time on the beach.

10:32

This is the famous mural which was at the Blacksmith Shop, I believe, and then moved to the Easterly. Is that right, Bob? And it never was completed, so it was even mysterious at the time. And there is some dispute about who's who in there. Sam is [?]. Jon is in the middle of it, of course. The woman in yellow is identified as Sidney Raynes Hornby. I think it may be Erma, but we'll never know for sure. And then for the first time ever I'm going to show a painting that has, I don't think ever been exhibited before. It is a dual self-portrait. Erma painted herself and Jon painted himself. And not to ruffle any feathers, there was a relationship there that I think was sort of one-sided. My mother had an enormous crush on him. Later, they were just good friends and so forth. But I didn't know what the story was on this actually until after my mother died. Somebody who had heard the story from the mother. Not even if Jon wasn't available necessarily, she had plenty of suitors. That's Burges Green, who was a longtime cartoonist for the *Providence Journal*. There are others in this crowd. I remember Gracie Barron very well. She is on the left. She taught art at the Little Red Schoolhouse in New York, which was a John Dewey progressive school. I picked up from my mother the habit of before Memorial Day visiting graves. And these people are all together -- Jon and Sid Hornby, Gracie's up there, and others as well.

12:28

My mother was very fond of Ann Brockman who died prematurely. And I don't know if you've looked closely at this picture upstairs, but it was inscribed to my mother in, I think, February of '43 from a hospital where she painted it in New York. And she died just several weeks after that. This is a very bad image I'm about to show. I took it too hurriedly. That's another Ann Brockman and it's *Hurricane*. I don't know whether that has anything to do with the '38 hurricane or not, but I'm interested in it just in terms of style. If you look at that and look at this sketch that my mother did, the same kind of flow and dynamism is in it, and I'm sure that my mother was learning from Ann. Then you see the final lithograph that's upstairs on that. So, there are all these connections in terms of their work influencing each other, and they were having fun at the same time. This is a little sketch on newsprint that is quickly fading. It's a Jon Corbino picture of Sam Hershey and my mother, then Erma Allen, playing poker at Sid's, and I found this a couple of years ago. Tuesday night I found this. This is poker at Sid's, which was just down the street on Pleasant Street, and the person in the light blue shirt is Tex Hornby, her husband. This isn't Lester Hornby, somebody else. The person to his left with the corncob pipe is my father, Harry Wheeler, who was a writer and working for the Federal Writers Project at the time. Now there were people that we've all heard of. There also were close friends who weren't necessarily artists primarily that many of you may remember -- Ernie Parsons, who was a pharmacist. He was in this crowd as well, and he did a portrait of my father -- amateur painter. And remember, I just found this photograph two nights ago.

Unknown Speaker 14:34

Wow.

Mike Wheeler 14:35

So, there was a lot of partying and so forth. And picnics. This is upstairs as well. And I would have to come around to see, but Sam and Ellie are there. There's a dog and you can see Sam to the left, and to the left of Sam is Ellie looking at us. And I'm looking at a very bad angle, but if you come to the right of the dog and look up a little bit, there's a woman in a dark shirt. That's Sid Hornby. My father is down in the corner and behind the smoke may be my mother, but that's another one of those mysteries. And then the Twardziks are in there, too. Can you see better where they are, Sue?

Sue Hershey 15:15

I don't know what they look like.

Mike Wheeler 15:19

So, let me walk around because the Twardziks are important to the story. This is clear. This is Henryk Twardzik and Henryk was a very well-known stained-glass artist.

Sue Hershey 15:37

The dog is Topper.

Mike Wheeler 15:39

Topper. Okay, thank you. We'll get lots of clarifications and corrections, no doubt. So, I fessed up to the fact that part of me is a "them", an out-of-towner.

Unknown Speaker 15:50

Where is it, Michael? Where is it located?

Mike Wheeler 15:51

I assume that's Dogtown before it got overgrown. Even in my time, you could go to the top of Pigeon Hill and see Mt. Washington and beyond actually, but that gets us segue way here. So that's the Rockport Art Association view of Rockport. Rockport, as we all know, is bigger, and here's where I do claim to be an "us". Caleb found an old print, a map of Rockport and Pigeon Cove particularly. If you go above that white light of my flash on Curtis Street coming by, there's property owned by one Michael Cunahan, my great grandfather, who came over in 1874 as a stone cutter, and so I have particular fondness for the Iver Rose painting. Ivor was a fixture on the wall in front of the Old Sloop Church in the evenings, a very genial man, a sweet man. I remember him well.

16:53

But as we talk about these times in the 30s, the 30s come to an end, and I again found something else, if you can bear with me, the other evening. It is a *Gloucester Times* from May of 1941. This is before Pearl Harbor. And I want to find -- It's worth reading here, talking about civil defense on Cape Ann and concerned that Gloucester would seem particularly vulnerable to air attack. Also, the menace caused by the bombing of the stone bridge between Rockport village and Pigeon Cove could be minimized by clearing and trimming and filling the old road which runs from Pool's Hill to the Sheep Fold in Pigeon Cove. Now that never happened. But to understand the level of anxiety and concern at the time, it was real. It was very, very dark in Europe at the time and England was fighting without much help for its life at that point. Again, on Tuesday I found this, which were my father's enlistment papers in Gloucester, before Pearl Harbor just about the time that article was published. (I'm just plugging my old man here.) He was in Patton's tank core until he got very ill on maneuvers and became a desk guy instead. So, he never, never had to leave. My mother and he married in 1943. And Henry Twardzik made them this little stained glass and that is Harry and Erma at the center of that. I don't know what to make of the design. Are they in a little serene spot with the flaming world around them? Is that Pandora's box down below? I don't know if we'll ever know.

18:51

So, I think that war was a real demarcation. People had spread to the winds. Five years had passed. No place was an island anymore. Erma still painted, when she was there, this is Kentucky fairground and you actually can see [unintelligible further comment] some things you saw later. But when my father was discharged in '45, they came back to Cape Ann. Housing was very hard to get. They lived in a Sid Hornby's, Sid Raynes Hornby's place. This piece of art is in the catalog. This is looking at her backyard. Next shot's going to be very brief, but that's me as a

three-year-old with Boa, the cat, and Rip, my uncle's dog, and the photograph is taken by Bob Rapp. People remember Bob because Bob and Delores were very big in this community.

19:47

People did come back. Here's Norman von Roseninge. You can help me out on this Deb, but that, I think, is Pigeon Cove, isn't that?

Debbie von Roseninge 20:00

Since I was only nine months old --

Mike Wheeler 20:04

Well, you know, you know what it looks like on Shetland and I don't think it's that, but they were over there in Pigeon Cove, and that was often a place where these people, those who were left, gathered. And here's a picture which is barely postwar. Erma on this again fanciful, but the other thing that has happened is that there are kids. Debbie has been born we just learned on this. I'd like to think that that's me in the red stripe and that the young girl standing up older than I would be Sue Hershey, but I can't promise that. It looks like that yard to me, and in the distance, you can see some boats, some sailboats that could be in Sandy Bay.

20:45

People moved. We moved to Gloucester, to Annisquam. There are Sam and Ellie, you know, my father characteristically with a lot of reading at his feet. There'd be lots of other people. The James's would be here. But the disruption hadn't changed. Yes? Yeah. So, I assume that that's your dad, when he was called back in the Korean War. My father would call him "Colonel Hershey" because that was his rank, but I think there was a little snideness in the voice, my father being an enlisted guy. And then here are Sid and Tex in Rome. They'd moved to California and then they were in Rome for a while. I'm not sure what the feline is. So, I have these photographs now and I'm about to wind up. I also have odd bits of memorabilia. Here is a doodle by Norman von Roseninge, who was a very, very close friend of Jon Corbino's and Sam's obviously as well. My mother always thought that he should give up his day job as a lawyer and do art. Then I have a funny little thing from Sid Hornby, talking about a mummy pot. I don't think that's a chamber pot, or at least it would require a fair amount of agility to use it. Then there are other mysteries. Two shots of the same thing, different exposures. That might have been Therma Woodward [?], because she did a lot of stained glass. It might have been my mother. I'll never know. And then there are other things. I'm very fond of this. This is a chair that Tex Hornby made for Sidney Raynes, and whether she was sitting in it when she painted the stuff upstairs, I don't know. But Tex was an engineer, a corporate guy, but a real craftsman. When you look at how this was made, I mean just gorgeous in terms of the base of that. A work of art in its own right. And then there's paint on it. I don't know whether that's Sid's or Erma's, because after Sid died too young Tex kindly gave the chair to her. The chair is now in our house. Then we have these. This is a Hershey Christmas card. And where do you think we are -- early 50s probably?

Unknown Speaker 23:11

Yeah.

Mike Wheeler 23:12

So, we've lost our parents and we've lost our parents friends. But I'm here with the Hershey girls and I'm here with Judi, with Jon, and so forth. And there is another generation coming up so that we come back to our theme of Ars Longa. The art really does sustain us. And I hope that we have a great discussion about this “us” and “them” dimension with “then” and “now” and I'm looking forward to hearing people's comments.

Wilber James 23:55

While the panel's going back up on the podium -- Mike, these are great, great. Path down memory lane. Stay right here.

Mike Wheeler 24:08

Okay.

Wilber James 24:09

So, what do you make of all this right now? What impact did this period have on you and what impact do you think it's had on this community? When you think back about Martha's narrative, many people that have come in the show have said that the paintings are terrific. They're fine, but the narrative has really captured something that nobody really considered -- that this town, Rockport, was impacted by these artists, and it's still very much impacted by those artists today. What would your comment be on that?

Mike Wheeler 24:39

Well, I would quote my mother and my younger daughter, Callie. My mother wrote a time capsule letter that will be opened on the Tricentennial, 2076. So, I think we can take a peek now. She described some of this as in the catalog, describes what it was like to come to Rockport, and she says, “In retrospect I truly appreciate these artists' guts and convictions.” So, when we talk about the difficulty of being innovative and the challenge of discernment, I think she's speaking to that. She says, “I regret my actual training was not more sophisticated.” (and she was college). “But these people, their integrity and sense of living are with me. And I think that that was passed down to us.” That's my mother, my late mother. Callie, who was a painter herself, in her mid-20s said she loved the art, and she was just sick with envy in terms of the sense of community, of belonging to something, where these people were tightly knit professionally and artistically and personally. So, I think that the vibrations from that have continued even to this day.

Wilber James 25:50

I totally agree. And we'll get into that a little bit later with everybody. Judi Rotenberg, again a childhood friend, Judi's connection to her father is quite well and alive today. Harold's 105. I talked to you about his book. An incredibly dynamic fellow. I remember him. But Judi, why

don't you talk a little bit about your experience. We've heard about the Hersheys and the Corbinos a little bit from Mike and we'll come back to them, but tell us about the Rotenberg experience in Rockport. How did you become an artist? Was your father an inspiration for you?

Judi Rotenberg 26:28

Yes, my father was an inspiration. After I was I was born in May, the end of May, I came right to Rockport, and we lived here for a long time. But then when we were going to school, we moved to Boston. I'd like to mention my brother John Rotenberg is here and my sister Jane and my daughter, Abigail Ross Goodman, who took over my gallery in Boston, which was the Judi Rotenberg Gallery. And my dad had started off in Gloucester, and he was on East Main Street right near the North Shore Art Association, but he said the cars kept on going by, wouldn't stop. So, we came to Rockport, because the cars stopped there. That was the end of the line. And he had at the corner of T Wharf with my mother the Studio Shop. And it sold paintings and also, I believe it was the first gift shop in Rockport. And he also had where the Square Circle is now. That was his gallery.

27:29

I spoke to him recently, and I said, "Tell me something interesting about the 1930s. I'm going to be on this panel." And he said, "Well, Rockport was a poor town and most of the people in Rockport were not buying paintings -- a lot of tourists. And paintings were being traded for things, but there wasn't a lot of buying paintings." And he said, "We charged \$3 for a year's membership in the Art Association. It was very difficult to get the \$3." And he was in charge of entertainment at the Rockport Art Association. He did a lot of balls. This picture shows him and the Compris and the Gruppes. And who else? The Hibbards in 1928. And you can see here he is dressed up here. And he came when he was about 19 to Rockport. He was a very handsome guy -- blond hair and blue eyes. And the interesting thing he was in Provincetown for this picture, and he was dating Max Bohm's daughter, and he's on his boat, which is -- Cynthia Packet's grandmother was one of his dates. And here he is when he was a little boy. I just thought it was interesting. He was three or four at that age.

28:49

Well, I think it'd be easier if you asked me questions. But I used to paint with my dad. He used to take me on his Vesper and we'd go and paint at the quarries. And as an adult, I paint with him. He was 90 when I took this photograph of him near my cottage in Rockport and we had just come back from painting in Maine. And we stayed in this motel and there was a Dunkin' Donuts nearby. And my father likes a good value. For a dollar and something you could get a couple of doughnuts and coffee in the morning. And then we would go out and paint. We'd get done about one o'clock. We'd stop for lunch and I'd be exhausted. My dad would say, "Well, we're going to go out in the afternoon and do another painting." He's a -- Well, I guess I should keep it to Rockport. Someone ask me a question, so I don't drone on.

Wilber James 29:41

You're, you know, you are a Rockporter from my perspective.

Judi Rotenberg 29:46

Yes.

Wilber James 27:47

And yet, you're very worldly. You've lived everywhere, you know, and yet you and your family come back to Rockport. What is it? What is the draw to Rockport? And how do you view the impact that the 30s and those artists had on our life today and your life?

Judi Rotenberg 30:07

Well, I think there's nothing more beautiful than Rockport. I have a lot of personal draws that bring me back to Rockport, personal family associations. But it's so beautiful. And I often say when I'm sitting on the rocks or looking out at the harbor that you could go to Europe and you could travel for five hours on a train and you wouldn't find anything as beautiful as this Rockport. And obviously I wasn't around during the 30s. And as the president of the Rockport Art Association, I'm trying to get back some of that camaraderie that my dad used to talk about that all the artists had for each other. They were jealous if one sold painting and the other one didn't, and one got a prize and one didn't. But they were involved in each other's lives. They drank together. They socialized together. It was a real community. I think we've lost that. I think would be great if we could get more of it back.

Wilber James 30:59

I think that's a perfect segue way into Jon Corbino, who's sitting next to you. His father was certainly one of the ringleaders of the drinking and the --

Jon Corbino 31:11

I've worked very hard on carrying on the tradition.

Wilber James 31:15

But Jon, tell us, you know, share some of your memories with us.

Jon Corbino 31:22

It's a -- I have to qualify everything I'm going to say.

31:28

The last couple of years, a couple of writers got a Guggenheim Grant to, you know, write a book about Jon Corbino. So, needless to say, the phones have been ringing off the hook. And questions, you know, where were you and what do you know? And so, everything I'm going to say -- In July this thing will be published and you can either confirm, and everything I say that's wrong, you can call me up and tell me that I said the wrong thing.

31:59

But what I remember from my mother was Jon pursued Janet. Janet pursued Jon. Her family was totally against their relationship. You know, but all I used to hear about were the parties to two, three, four o'clock in the morning. And I was at a lecture at the library here, where I met a man, I believe it was William Taylor [Traves], who used to be a neighbor of ours on Marmion Way. And he was he -- I introduced myself, because he was one of the people speaking and he owned a lot of Corbino paintings. And he started telling me all the stories about how they used to, you know, have parties to two, three o'clock in the morning. How Jon Corbino, you know, would lock himself up and paint for, you know, 24-36 straight hours and not, you know, be found awake, you know, in his little studio area, you know, having fallen asleep with his paintbrush and everything, you know, in his hand. But, you know, the dances that were ultimately banned and the, you know, the craziness and the camaraderie, you know, all we used to hear about were, you know, the 10 or 11 folks that were part of this group. A lot of them, you know, sitting here and also, you know, another guy who used to play pretty good was Miner Allen, Erma's brother, and we used to see Miner a lot after my father and, you know, mother split up. He would come and visit, you know, Mount Kisco, you know, where my family ultimately, you know, had settled. And he was quite a guy. He was, you know, a pilot, and every one of these people were all extraordinary, you know, in their own right whether it be through the arts, through music or painting or, you know, what have you. Janet was trained as a classical musician. And when she was a teenager she used to sneak out of her house in Scarsdale and go into Harlem and jam with all the jazz bands. And she used to, you know, play everything that Fats Waller wrote, and when she came up here, she endeared herself to all the, you know, local artists with her music and her playing. And she had her sister with her, Meggie. And she wasn't pursued by just, you know, Jon Corbino, but she was warned by Erma and a couple of the other women, you know, not to go near Jon Corbino, who was 10 years her senior. And, obviously, I'm here so they managed.

35:32

I just received the first draft of this book a day or so ago, and what I thought I knew, you know, has been, you know, totally changed. I could really get into, you know, some of the things that happened to Jon when he was a child, you know, immigrating to the United States. One of his big, big regrets was always being called an Italian-American artist because they couldn't make up their minds whether he was American or Italian. And all that infuriated him, and he had quite a temper. There're questions as to whether Janet is in the mural, you know, or not. What I've heard is that she was painted in and painted out in a very short period of time.

36:28

But they were certainly, you know, a great group and great individuals. Incredibly talented, you know, for a group people to end up getting together in Rockport, you know, quite by random, you know, choice as wonderful an area as Rockport is.

Wilber James 36:00

John, you mentioned when we were talking briefly, that your father didn't like to paint portraits but he liked to paint other things. What did he like to paint?

Jon Corbino 37:00

Well, we were talking to the Hershey girls, portrait A and portrait B, and they were relating, you know, how nice they were. Well, Jon would do a portrait and he did a great job. But in his paintings, he hated to do faces. He couldn't. He just didn't like to paint them. And they're dark shadows and hunched over and under hoods. And because of that, he ended up getting the nickname of the artist of rear ends, because all you could ever see in his paintings was the butt of a horse or the behind of some dancer which was quite pleasing to me, but had nothing to do with, you know, a great face.

Wilber James 37:50

You've given us a great insight into your father's art. Thank you for that. I think the Hershey girls, as they used to be called -- I actually was the next-door neighbor of their grandmother, and as a result, I've got some stories I'll share with you later. But I think -- Debbie, give us some reminiscences. I know that you were born probably in the 1970s, but basically, what was it like being Sam and Ellie's daughter?

Debbie Hershey 38:30

[unintelligible comment]

Wilber James 38:31

I know. I know.

Debbie Hershey 38:32

A little bit later than 1970s, but thank you for that. I mean earlier rather. Sorry, I'm a little bit nervous. They partied a lot. I mean, I know you've heard that from three of us already, but that's usually what happens. Every Saturday night they'd go over to the von Rosenvinges' and sit and watch the fights, get together with Norman and Debbie. They were very good friends. I spent a couple of years in Europe with Sid and Tex, and so we'd spend every Saturday night with Sid and Tex. It was -- they drank and partied a lot.

Wilber James 39:13

Who was -- was it Norman egging your dad on or vice versa? Do you remember the story about the portrait that hangs now in the museum in Sweden? Do you remember that story?

Debbie Hershey 39:29

No, I don't.

Wilber James 39:30

Okay, you don't know that. Mike, tell them the story about Sam and Norman. It's a great story.

Mike Wheeler 39:36

Norman was quite -- Norman was quite a prankster, and he got a solicitation from the von Rosenvinge family museum. I don't know why they were in Sweden because he was the Danish Consul.

Wilber James 39:51

Well, Sweden was owned by Denmark at one point.

Mike Wheeler 39:53

Could well be. But the question was whether he had any memorabilia that he'd want to contribute to the museum. He didn't at the moment, but between the two of them, between Sam and Norman, they painted, maybe it was Sam painting Norman, but in 19th century regalia. Painted this portrait of him and then they distressed it. They rolled it in the mud and so forth. And they sent it over to this museum in Europe as if it were the real thing from a hundred and fifty years. So, Norman von Rosenvinge is hanging in a museum in Sweden.

Wilber James 40:33

So, you're even learning something about your father tonight. So, Susan, some insights from you?

Susan Hershey 40:39

Well, I've learned quite a few things so far tonight. Thank you for letting us look at the slideshow. It is very interesting -- One: I didn't ever realize that Ernie Parsons was a painter. I never knew that. Blanche and Ernie were friends of my parents and they spent a lot of time with them. And I did not know that Tex Hornby was a woodworker, and they lived right next door to us on Pleasant Street, and Sidney was my godmother. So, I thank you all for teaching me those two things.

41:23

I guess I'm just gonna have to repeat the same thing everyone said. Parties, poker, and picnics. My mother told me -- many picnics. They were -- they must have got together. I know some of them were on Pigeon Hill before Pigeon Hill was developed and also on Dogtown. And my mother collected baskets, and I think probably her love of baskets came from their love of picnics. And I remember a few years ago, someone bought at the Rockport Art Association auction (that they have every year of deceased painters) a painting of my dad's of a picnic. So, I think picnics were -- and then we had a picture in the slideshow. So, picnics were big, as was booze and smoking, a lot of smoking. So, both Debbie and I are very healthy now and do a lot of walking and breathing deeply, getting rid of all that smoke that we inhaled as children.

42:42

I want to say that I agree with Judi about the return to community. I think that I felt like these people were all very close. I'm sure that they had disagreements, of course. They were human beings. But they got together every single weekend, literally, and talked and had a great time. Today my sense is that many artists, painters particularly -- I'm a potter, so potters are

wonderful. We never fight. We love everybody. We're very earthy. But for some reason I feel like painters sometimes do talk about each other behind their backs. I hate that. So, I think getting together and spending more time -- I don't know if you have to drink and smoke to have a good time. But I certainly second that idea about getting back to community. I think that's very, very important.

43:51

I babysat for Jon Corbino's daughter Dee, who is not here this evening. I remember jazz. I remember jazz playing in the studio. So, there must have been a carryover from your mom to later periods of time because I was only 12. And I didn't really know what kind of music it was. But I remember it playing and I have such incredibly wonderful memories of his studio, which was, I guess I'd say chaotic but beautiful with his sketches and his paintings everywhere. My dad's studio, the one that I knew, was in the basement of my grandmother's house on Hale Street, had a fireplace. And had -- it was, as many studios are, double, two stories. And what I remember mostly about that is the smell of turps and sitting for him to paint me, which I hated, hated it. Oh, another thing I remember about Jon Corbino's house was his dad. Jon's dad came to visit from Italy one summer, and he taught me how to make Italian meatballs. And they have cinnamon in them, which gives them a really extra special taste. And he -- Do you remember him?

Debbie Hershey 45:30

I liked him.

Jon Corbino 45:33

Grandpa.

Sue Hershey 45:34

Yeah.

Jon Corbino 45:35

Never worked. Never learned to speak English.

Sue Hershey 45:36

Yeah, well, he taught me how to make meatballs.

Jon Corbino 45:41

He loved to cook and grow garlic.

Sue Hershey 45:44

Oh, yeah. Lots of garlic.

45:47

Gracie Barron lived next door to my grandmother on Hale Street and she lived with her mother. She was a painter, and I remember as a child looking up to her because she wasn't married. She didn't have a husband who told her what to do all the time, which was kind of something that I experienced in my household. I love, I love -- her mother told her what to do, but there was no husband and I don't know -- was she ever married?

Jon Corbino 46:23

No, I don't think so.

Sue Hershey 46:24

So no, I don't think so either. And then next to Gracie Barron was Ruth Holberg and Richard Holberg, and I don't remember Richard much at all. I don't even know if he -- when he passed away. But Ruth Holberg was an illustrator and children's book writer, and a couple of her books are in the exhibit upstairs, many on *Mr. Syrup's Farm* which is a great book, if you want to get a book for your grandchild. If they're still around, I don't know. But they were wonderful books. And her house was always filled with music. And I love music today. And I often think back on that time that Ruth Holberg had something to do with my love of music, I learned to listen to Burl Ives. And I don't know, but that's the one I remember, and she was very enthusiastic about it. I know all the words to all the old Burl Ives songs. Actually, at Billy, Wilber (I call him Billy, because that's what he calls [unintelligible]). At his house, they had an amazing collection of records of musical comedy. And when I babysat, when I got the kids to bed, Billy and Bobby, after I mangled them. (Billy has a scar on his forehead thanks to me.)

Wilber James 48:01

She was babysitting me and I said, "Look, I want to play cowboy. You're the horse." And I jumped on her back, and she nearly threw me into the card table, gashing my head. They had to take me to the hospital. I have never forgiven her for that.

Sue Hershey 48:19

But I listened to musical comedies at your house and I know the words to all of them now. The other night, *South Pacific* was on, the new production of *South Pacific*. I sang every single song. It was amazing.

48:34

So anyway -- memories of my father. He was -- I would say he was bitter, and he didn't continue painting. We were told, or I was told anyway, that the reason he didn't continue painting into his later years was because he was fed up with the art business. And he drilled that into my head. I wasn't allowed to take art class in high school. I didn't take any art class in elementary school. And I didn't really become a potter seriously until after he died. So, he was -- he was bitter. And I think it's sad because he was a good artist. And he painted many beautiful paintings. But he also told me that another reason he stopped painting was because he had a family and he had to support the family. And he couldn't continue painting as long as he had a family to support. So, he went into teaching and he taught at the Rhode Island School of Design

for 25 years. So, he kept up with the world, but he complained about the world at RISD, too -- all the academic politics, which if any of you have taught, you know what that's like.

50:15

So, he was a very complex person. He was very political. In his early years, he called himself a fellow traveler. And he and my mom traveled to Mexico when they were in their, I don't know, maybe late 20s, early 30s. I've read about Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera since then, and it's occurred to me that maybe that might have had something to do with why they went to Mexico, because they were in that world. Yet, in, whenever Nixon was President, I don't wanna remember but he supported Nixon. So, he made a change over the years. He went from being whatever to Richard Nixon, which didn't make me happy. I'll tell you, I was a fervent anti-war and a hippie and I'm proud of it.

51:33

Let's see -- what else? I think that's it. Thank you very much for this wonderful opportunity.

Wilber James 51:40

We're gonna -- we're gonna open this up for some questions here. I think there were many groups within the Rockport art scene at the time. I think the ones that you're hearing here were very, very close, and I grew up next to her grandmother where her father's studio was, next to Ruth Holberg who wrote *The Catnip Man* dedicated to Bobby, Billy and Nancy James, next to Arnold and Gerry Knauth who were both painters, with Jean Bloomberg, you know, with Grace Barron. So, here's this little townie, you know. We didn't know we were poor, living in this little Hale Street house surrounded by all these guys, and they impacted our lives dramatically.

52:18

But one of the other centers of kind of impact was the Blacksmith Shop. And those of us that were fortunate enough to be mentored by Melissa certainly were able to go off and work for anybody, because if you could survive Melissa, you could survive anything. And I think Bob Smith, who is here, I want Bob to come up and talk a little bit about the Blacksmith Shop. You heard from Judi, that the townies didn't have any money to buy the art. Well, Melissa had a very clever strategy on how she accumulated her art. So, Bob, why don't you come and talk a little bit.

Bob Smith 52:57

Good evening. I grew up in the Blacksmith Shop in the 30s. I was a small child and we lived upstairs. And so, I took my meals and I was in the dining room every evening. I knew all the regular customers and the artists, and it was an interesting experience for me. I did -- my mother thought that the best way to bring up a child was to put them to work. And some of my earliest memories are making pecan rolls with my uncle in the cellar of the Blacksmith Shop. We had a lot of nice people who came often. My recollection is that Jon Corbino came almost every night, very often. And other than the mural, I think we only had one painting of Jon's in the house, and I think that's in my brother's collection and it's just this very small picture of a

horse. But many of the artists painted for -- in return for meals. And Parker Perkins comes to mind. He was one of the first artists to reside in Rockport. He and Margeson and Lester Stevens, who was a Rockporter, according to the history of the Rockport Art Association, they were the first three. And Parker Perkins was an illustrator. He did a lot of things for the *American Express Magazine*, and he was an accomplished marine artist. He had -- one thing that's occurred to me in thinking about this is all of these artists had great dogs. And we had the picture of the dog in that picture. Well, Parker had a very nice red setter that I loved. And I have today a beautiful sterling tray that he gave my mother and father when they were married. One day he saw me going to the beach with a little sailboat under my arm, and he said, "You get your dad and come up. I have a sailboat for you to take to the beach." And when we got there, there was this huge scale model of an 1880s Gloucester fishing schooner, which is almost identical to some that are on display upstairs here. Of course, I took it home but it never went to the beach. Erik Ronnberg -- his father restored it a number of years ago. I really liked Parker Perkins. He was a great guy.

55:54

Of course, the Rotenbergs lived in the Blacksmith Shop. And I do remember when Judi was born.

Judi Rotenberg 55:57

I miss your cottage cheese and cracker dip and your blueberry cake.

Bob Smith 56:04

Funny thing about that blueberry cake. It was Pillsbury cake mix. My mother made it in sheet pans and she would sprinkle blueberries on it and put this cake mix on it and sprinkle sugar and cinnamon and bake it. And everyone said, "Oh, it's a marvelous recipe!" Yes, it's a big secret!

56:29

You know, Tony Thieme was a good friend and came often. He did -- he painted for meals, and one of the nice oil paintings up in the exhibit of the Blacksmith Shop he did. And I remember him especially during World War II, he was an air raid warden in Rockport, and he had a wooden station wagon. Of course, we called it a beach wagon in those days. And he had his white warden's hat and a gas mask in the wagon beside his head, and I remember he wouldn't let me try the gas mask on. He was a character.

57:11

Lew and Blanche Whitney were very close friends of my mother and father. Of course, they had the Pewter Shop on Bearskin Neck. And Lew had a nice dog, Tinker. And he would occasionally let me come down and hammer pewter with him. They had a -- during World War II I remember he was -- I don't know if it was auxiliary Coast Guard, but he was some sort of coastal patrol thing that he did during the war. And they were very good friends, as was Otis Cook down on the neck.

Wilber James 57:50

How about Harrison Cady? Do you have any memories of him?

Bob Smith 57:53

Well, yes, Harrison Cady, of course, lived around the corner. And as a child book illustrator, he was always very kind to me. And I liked him very much. And then of course around the corner from us on Atlantic Avenue were the Beals families. And I remember the children of many of these artists quite well. Patsy Woodward, Elaine Hibbard, the Rotenbergs, the Beals, Don Buckley.

Wilber James 58:27

Do you remember when Bette Davis came to town?

Bob Smith 58:28

Yes, I do. She lived here for a while.

Deb von Rosenvinge 58:31

She dated Norman.

Bob Smith 33:33

She did?

Deb von Rosenvinge 58:34

Yeah. When we were kids, we used to joke about how we could have been Bette Davis' kids. We didn't understand.

Mike Wheeler 58:42

You did all right, Deb.

Bob Smith 58:45

In thinking about this and reviewing it in my mind -- of course, I was just a little child -- but it seemed to me, and it's a reflection of something some of the other people have said that when the war came -- I wrote my notes, you know -- it was kind of an end to a somewhat innocent and carefree period in everybody's lives. And just as an aside, one of the regulars in the restaurant was General Cunningham. And my, my Uncle Bob was a Cordon Bleu graduate chef and General Cunningham got him into the Air Force as a captain in the Mess Corps or something. And he got Sam Hershey a commission. I think it was camouflage design or something. Yup, I remember that very well. And there were others but I don't remember who they were. That was General Cummingham. So, does anyone have any questions about the Blacksmith Shop or --

Unknown Speaker 59:48

Tell us that Anadama bread wasn't Pillsbury, too.

Bob Smith 59:54

Oh, no, no. In the 1930s my dad bought the town bakery and he inherited baker Knowlton's formula for Anadama bread, which as near as I can tell was a pretty true story. And, of course, up on King Street was the Knowlton homestead where they made the bread and they sold it in horse and buggies in the morning for breakfast. And I understand that the oven is still in that building. So, dad had -- he called it Blacksmith Shop Pastries for many years. And when he retired, made Anadama a commercial product. That was many years later.

[BREAK IN THE VIDEO]

Erik Ronnberg 1:00:37

We saw quite a bit of them over the years. Just thinking about what some of the things that were said here reminds me that most of the artists we're dealing with worked in two dimensions whereas sculptors worked in three. I think that may have been the connection that he made with my father, who was a model maker. Because Richard [Recchia] was a consummate craftsman in his work, and he was attracted to fine craftsmanship, and I think in that respect they spoke something of a common language. But that's not to say that Richard couldn't work in the graphics to good effect. As you probably know, his second wife, Kitty, wrote a number of books of poetry. And a number of these were illustrated by Richard, showing a sense of humor and a willingness to caricature himself as in one of Kitty's poems about a necktie that he wore and wore and wore.

1:02:03

As a sculptor, his monumental works were very serious -- *Flight of the Soul*, *The General Stark Monument*, *Mother Goose*. On the other hand, he did show a sense of humor in some of his animal sculptures such as the *Dozing Duck* or *Chanticleer*, a rooster which I remember very well on a pedestal outside his studio for years.

1:02:39

But also, and this is sort of, I think, where I connected with him, he showed an attention to the natural motions of animals, such as his sculpture of the *Leaping Frog* or the *Boy on the Frog* that's outside the Art Association. And also, there was an abstract seagull that was mounted on the top of his gazebo right next to our driveway, which I saw every morning.

Wilber James 1:03:15

Erik, I heard he didn't like kids. Is that right?

Erik Ronnberg 1:03:21

Ah, Kitty handled the kids department. I think he started to take me seriously when I was in my early teens. Well, actually earlier than that, because he was aware of my interest in natural history from about age 10 and on, and when I was about 12 my parents gave me a whole room in the attic that I could turn into a natural history museum.

Wilber James 1:03:51

I think you were the exception.

Erik Ronnberg 1:03:55

And he used to go up there on several occasions to see what I'd collected. And we had some very interesting discussions. He was, in fact, a very curious person, very much intrigued with the natural world. And we had a number of interesting discussions. Well, there was one -- in the summertime I used to keep some wild animals that I caught -- snakes, frogs and turtles and baby birds that had fallen out of the nest and so on. One day I was handling a very large handsome milk snake, which got along very well with me, so much so that on that occasion he slithered inside my shirt and made himself comfortable around my waistline. And just about that time, Richard came over for some reason and we got into a conversation. And all the while the snake was just snoozing away. But

as Richard turned to leave, the snake decided to come out and Richard did a double take, "Do you mean that snake was wrapped around you all this time we were talking?" I said, "Oh, yeah, it's a milk snake. It's a very docile one." And I held it up and showed it to him, and he was very, very curious about it. And that's beautiful snake, you know. They're sort of a grayish white with these dark reddish-brown blotches with black borders. And so, we had so --

Wilber James 1:06:00

I think that's a showstopper, that one. We're gonna, we're gonna -- Bill Trayes, you're always one to liven up an audience, so liven us up for a couple minutes and then a couple more. Then we want to have some questions before we go. You all know who Bill Trayes is, right?

Bill Trayes 1:06:17

Thank you very much. I feel very old, because I knew so many of these people when you were little kids, but most of all I want to thank your directors of the museum and Ronda and all of the others that have worked so hard to make this --

Wilber James 1:06:36

Martha

Bill Trayes 1:06:37

I was coming to her. But it has brought back so many wonderful memories of growing up in Rockport, whether it comes from skiing on Pigeon Hill or sailing as a crew for Max Kuehne. But what I do and I've done several times is in order to get some interaction, I have prizes, if you can answer the question, and some of these questions are tough. If you don't know, no one gets a prize. It goes to the museum.

1:07:19

The first question that I have is what was the event which caused a temporary rupture in the friendship between Harrison Cady and Jon Corbino? Any thoughts on it? No thoughts at all? Nope.

Wilber James 1:07:43

Great question.

Bill Traves 1:07:44

OK. This is what it was. Harrison Cady, although he wasn't a tall man but a chubby --

Wilber James 1:07:51

Ah, I know!

Bill Traves 1:07:52

What was it?

Wilber James 1:07:53

Badminton.

Bill Traves 1:07:54

You're right! Tell us more.

Wilber James 1:07:58

It was Cady. Cady thought he was a great badminton player. He annoyed Corbino to the extent that Corbino imported a pro from New York and he whipped Cady. And that was the event.

Bill Traves 1:08:21

Insider information.

1:08:26

Next one. When I was -- probably this is a little out of the period. I think it was probably 1942. And there was a barber shop a couple of doors away from the Blacksmith Shop. And I was sitting in the chair and Anthony Thieme came in. And the barber said to him, "Mr. Thieme, you seem very depressed today. Not feeling well?" And Anthony Thieme said, "The Germans are going to kill me. They're going to send a submarine over here and they're going to send a squad of men up the hill. And they're going to kill me." At this point I thought, I think the Germans have something else to do. But I think it reflects on what happened later on in Thieme's life. I think that the issues that he had began a lot earlier. And it's always strange to me because, to me, his very best paintings were the ones that were done very late in his life. The Mexican scenes and some of the others I think are just superb. But my question is who was the barber? What was his name and what was his son's name?

[Unintelligible give and take]

Unknown Speaker 1:09:48

Mr. Jodrey and his son was the lawyer.

Bill Trayes 1:09:52

You're absolutely right! And his son's name?

[unintelligible over talk]

Unknown Speaker 1:10:04

The one who was in the barber shop beside the Blacksmith Shop was later the curator at the dump -- in my recollection.

Bill Trayes 1:10:14

Well, not mine. Mine was the other. In any event, we have a winner for the right answer.

Bill Trayes 1:10:27

We haven't talked very much about the Beals. Of course, they were a major influence in Rockport, and there were not just two Beals. There wasn't just Gifford and Reynolds. There was a third brother. And my question is what was his name and where did he live?

[pause]

Bill Trayes 1:11:05

No answer on that one? His name was Albert. And he lived in what is now the Yankee Clipper Inn. He had it designed and built. They had two children, Mary Beal was the daughter and Albert was the son, who were essentially of our ages, and I think both of them spent a lot of time in Rockport. The father had died and Mrs. Beal, the mother, had bright red hair and Mary had bright red hair. But I don't have a winner there. It goes to the museum.

1:11:43

The final one. A number of the artists lived on Atlantic Avenue. Who can give me, say, three or four or five names of artists who lived right on it?

Sue Hershey 1:11:59

Harrison Cady.

Bill Trayes 1:12:00

Right.

Sue Hershey 1:12:04

Eric Hudson?

Bill Trayes 1:12:02

Yes.

Unknown Speaker 1:12:05

[Unintelligible guess]

Bill Traves 1:12:06

A little later but, okay, we'll take that one.

Sue Hershey 1:12:10

Hornby?

Bill Traves 1:12:11

Lester Hornby.

Unknown Speaker 1:12:12

Harry Vincent.

Bill Traves 1:12:14

Harry Vincent. Yup. Any more? We have one mentioned here already, John Buckley right at the very beginning. And, of course, Charles Kaelin. We have a winner. Ok.

Wilber James 1:12:39

So, whose got some questions for these panelists? And who's got some comments? Does anybody here know who Jennie Savage is?

Unknown Speakers 1:12:44

Yes? Okay. Tell us about Jennie Savage, panel.

Sue Hershey 1:12:46

Penny candy. Main Street.

Wilber James 1:12:52

You got that right. Do you remember her?

Sue Hershey 1:12:54

Do I get a prize?

Wilber James 1:12:55

No.

Sue Hershey 1:12:56

She was large, but the store was very small. It was somewhere near --

Mike Wheeler 1:13:06

Caddy-corner to the General Store. As you come down School Street, it's a little jog to the left -- you get to Jennie Savage's.

Erik Ronnberg 1:13:14

Right back to where Johnny Pascucci's --

Wilber James 1:13:16

Right. And what about Susie Pettingill's? Anybody remember her?

Sue Hershey 1:13:20

Yeah, High Street.

Wilber James 1:13:21

You remember that, too?

Sue Hershey 1:13:22

Yes.

Bill Trayes 1:13:24

We spent one summer while my parents' house was a being built on Old Garden Road, we spent in Jennie Savage's, one of her apartments overlooking the beach.

Wilber James 1:13:34

Martha has her -- has Susie Pettingill, I believe it is. Is that right? Or is it Jennie Savage she had prominently featured in the narrative? Jennie Savage, yeah. So, she obviously got along well with the artists, which was pretty interesting. So, who has some questions for the panelists? Or who has a couple comments they'd like to make about Rockport and the impact of the artists on our lives today? Debbie?

Debbie von Rosenvinge 1:14:00

I'm Deb von Rosenvinge and my parents were Norman and Deborah and good friends as everybody said. I just have to say that we all called -- your father was the funny guy. And you thought -- what we called -- you called my father Uncle Gronk, right? We all thought that everybody else's dads were the coolest, but I guess my dad kind of -- was Uncle Gronk to everybody. But one of the pranks that he pulled on your dad was -- I guess their birthdays were pretty close, and your dad walked in one night and he pinned a Tuborg lady, a Tuborg ad on the wall and said, "Happy Birthday, Norman." And, you know, it was a voluptuous lady with a tray of Tuborg beer. And a couple weeks later on your father's birthday, my father painted and drew your father's portrait all over our house -- on the walls, on the furniture, on the tea cups, on the trays, and extant in the house is your father in his under shorts on the wall with his arm around the Tuborg lady. And the picture -- if you take the big aluminum tray that was made by Lew Whitney down off of the dining room wall, there's a portrait of Sam behind it, because your father had the habit of picking things up and looking at them when he was talking. He never

said a word. That whole night he walked around and found his portrait *everywhere*. Not a word was said.

Deb Hershey 1:15:43

We also have a painting. I have a painting on the back of our toilet in the bathroom of your father and my father staring at each other turkey naked. And I thought it was painted by Jon Corbino. That's what I'm thinking.

Jon Corbino 1:16:05

That's a lot of bathroom.

Deb von Rosenvinge 1:16:09

One memory of Jon is he always played opera, too. Do you remember that? Because I remember being in the yard and playing and this opera would be coming out of the basement of the garage studio that he had on Marmion Way.

Jon Corbino 1:16:25

It's, you know, interesting that such an incredible group of people as talented and as multi-, you know, talented -- it didn't matter whether it was music or you know, art. They were always expressing themselves every way in every art form, you know, imaginable, not just their, you know, their forte or their, you know, passion. But having started reading this book, you know, they didn't have all of the diversions that, you know, people have today between television, internet. You know, they were really kind of forced to look to each other for and draw from each other. And a lot of, you know, creativity was, you know, generated by these relationships, including the pranks. And I've got, you know, tons of them. You know, we don't have enough days to, you know, go through all of them. Some of them are spectacular.

Wilber James 1:17:32

Mike, Mike Wheeler talked about, you know, his being partly Rockport and partly Gloucester. Part of the theme that we've had here that Martha has put forward is that this is a very close-knit group of people. And I asked TM and Tom Nicholas to come here. I mean, they are, you know, a father and son. They reach back to the 30s a bit through Tom, and why don't you guys talk a little bit about what the 30s and the artists that came before you. How that impacted your lives and sort of why you're here and, and why this tradition that that started back then is being carried on by you. I don't know, TM, you're not used to public speaking, so why don't you come up here and say something?

TM Nicholas 1:18:18

Take it away, Dad.

Wilber James 1:18:20

Just come up and share. I think part of the theme is that these people are alive and well in our lives today. And, you know, Hibbard remember -- What do I remember -- him as a baseball

player, right? Incredibly these artists were like the plumbers, the electricians, they were part of the community. They fit in. They were us. And it was a great community. Tom Nicholas.

Tom Nicholas 1:18:46

Thank you. Most of my experiences in town were mostly with Hibbard and people of that age, I would say. One nice thing he used to do – Hibbard, after Labor Day, he'd have a bunch of us new comers come up for beer and pretzels, and we'd have to be careful not to talk about baseball. Because if we did, he would forget all about talking about painting. So that's one thing we had to be careful of. But I remember he was very informative. And after a week or two, we'd have the more established artists in town up for another beer party and similar thing. But I remember we were all kind of influenced by other people back then. And one of the artists in the room said, he says, "Mr. Hibbard", he says, "What do you do when you just can't help yourself? You start seeing subjects like it, like this painting?" And he says, "You have to learn how to hide it." That was his answer. Learn how to hide it. I thought that was a very, very good answer.

1:20:00

One thing I want to ask Mr. Corbino is did you live in a house on Marmion Way?

Jon Corbino 1:20:07

For three or four years, you know, but then my parents separated.

Tom Nicholas 1:20:11

Right.

Jon Corbino 1:20:12

But then, as you know, growing up we used to spend summers up until our early teens.

Tom Nicholas 1:20:20

Eventually my son's godmother and godfather bought that house and in the kitchen there was these panels on masonite of horses, sketches of horses. And she had asked me, she says, "Tom, if I remove those, would you like a couple?" There were four. So, I said, "Geez, I'd love them!" She says, "Take your pick." I had them at home and it was really nice I had them. And then this dealer, Oehlschlaeger from Sarasota and Chicago, came in my gallery, bought a painting, and he says, "Do you know anything about Corbino?" And I says, "Why?" He says, "Do you know where I could buy some of his paintings or acquire them?" He says, "I have the" -- What's the word?

Unknown Speaker 1:21:14

Estate exclusive.

Tom Nicholas 1:21:16

"I can sign paintings that aren't signed even."

Wilber James 1:21:20
Estate sale.

Tom Nicholas 1:21:21
That's right. He had that authority. So, I says, "I have two of them." All of a sudden he got very excited. And I showed him the panels. And he bought them and then he bought my son's godmother's as well. But anyway, I was just wondering if you had remembered in the kitchen. There were four of them way up near the ceiling.

Jon Corbino 1:21:40
Yes. And my brother went back. I don't know, several years ago, knocked on the door, and there were also a bunch in the garage.

Tom Nicholas 1:21:51
Really?

Jon Corbino 1:21:52
He ended up ... whoever was extraordinarily nice and ended up giving him, you know, all those panels. They're hanging up in his kitchen in Falls Church, Virginia.

Tom Nicholas 1:22:03
I'm sure that must have been Jenny. She was of that nature.

Jon Corbino 1:22:07
Fabulous. But, you know, Corbino had a habit of painting on anything anywhere any time.

Tom Nicholas 1:22:14
Yeah.

Jon Corbino 1:22:15
Didn't matter whether it was cardboard, T-shirt.

Tom Nicholas 1:22:19
I have a small one that was in the Corbino show back in the late 90s done on a wooden panel of horses with riders on them. And I was told when I bought it out of the Rockport auction that he had taken it out of a piece of furniture. It was a wooden panel. He took off the side things and he painted on that. It was like a mahogany. It was a very beautiful painting surface. I slipped it right in the frame.

Wilber James 1:22:48
Thank you, Tom.

Unknown Speaker 1:22:57

I have a question.

Wilber James 1:22:58

Please.

Unknown Speaker 1:22:59

Since this gentleman's been talking about Jon Corbino's painting on different things, I thought I should mention it. I and my husband bought a house that Elias Newman, who is a New York artist and summered in Rockport many years ago, and when we moved into it, the attached barn at the end had a painting up in the corner. And it was an early version of your father's painting. And it's still there.

Jon Corbino 1:23:38

Fabulous!

Unknown Speaker 1:23:39

I don't know if you know that. We covered it up very carefully. And then we did put insulation in afterwards, because we wanted to use it as a room. It has a north light and is a good room for painting. And we said if the wolf ever came to the door, we could take the house apart. So, it's there. It's next to Tony Cirino's house on Rowe Avenue, and I think Bill McNulty and Ann Brockman used to come to parties there and your father, of course.

Jon Corbino 1:24:14

It's so incredible -- the stories about, you know, those two, you know. But they would -- I would love to get a picture.

Unknown Speaker 1:24:27

It's buried now. Very carefully. No one would know it was there, but I think you should, everyone else should know that it's there -- safely. I was a Folly Cove Designer many years ago.

Mike Wheeler 1:24:45

Quick addition. My mother can recall Jon Corbino painting oriental rugs on the floors of Ann Brockman and Bill McNulty's house on Rowe Avenue, Pigeon Cove.

Unknown Speaker 1:24:54

There you go. 2 Rowe Avenue. That's it.

Wilber James 1:24:56

I think we have out stayed our welcome. Any final comments in this esteemed audience?

Judi Rotenberg 1:25:05

I'd like to thank the Cape Ann Museum.

Wilber James 1:25:13

And I'd like to thank the panelists.