

# Artists and the Waterfront

BY NANCY SOLOMON

Over the years, I have met some amazing photographers and artists who, like myself, are captivated with the South Shore bay houses of Long Island. One of those people was artist Dan Pollera, who passed away in March 2022. I first met Dan in the 1990s, when I saw his paintings of the bay houses at the Sea Horse Gift Shop in Freeport. Eventually, we connected and we began working together. Before becoming a painter, Dan was a charter boat captain, a passionate fisherman, and a clam digger. He spent years working and playing on the South Shore, from his canal home in Baldwin, and later, at his summer house in East Quogue. His wife Nancy was also a passionate fisherman, and they shared many of their “trophy” on Facebook. Dan was an expert cook, and he shared his clam chowder recipe with me. He also shared his fluke and striped sea bass, gifts he gave to me and his friends.

Over time I shared with him the history of some of the houses he was painting at his request, since he wanted to know more about the people who owned the homes and the traditions they carried on. These included the Goodwin bay house, the Sheehan-Van Wicklen bay house, the Stenzel bay house, and the Dilg bay house. By the early 2000s, his work was well-known, and he gained quite a bit of notoriety. Dan was good friends with the owners, and he was happiest when he could stop by their homes while he was out fishing.

Dan’s work is now part of the collections of the Parrish Museum, Guild Hall, and the Long Island Museum at Stony Brook. I’m proud to say that I was involved in the Long Island Museum acquisition. Oftentimes, when we would post a photo of one of his paintings, people would say what an amazing photograph it was. When I told them it was

a painting and not a photograph, they were astonished. Each year, Dan donated one of his prints that we could raffle, in support of our work. Dan was also a board member of Long Island Traditions and was always available for us. He helped transport filmmakers Barbara Weber and Greg Blank while they filmed *A World Within a World: Bay Houses of Long Island*. Dan was very generous to people in the community and often fed area wildlife, including swans and other visiting wildfowl. He was equally supportive of fellow artists and photographers, who shared his passion for the water and Long Island’s maritime culture.

Another artist who we admire is Kathy Herzy of West Islip, who has painted numerous scenes of traditional maritime activities, including clamming, birdwatching, waterfowl scenes, and traditional boats and fish houses. Her husband Gil and her son



The Passalacqua Bay House was destroyed by Superstorm Sandy. Painting by Daniel Pollera.



“Twins Off Fire Island” by Mark Nuccio, 2022

Chris are active recreational clammers and fishermen. Like Dan Pollera, Herzy has painted bay houses and fishing structures in the Town of Islip, where there are approximately 30 bay houses. Herzy’s drawing of a local bayman was also the inspiration for a baymen’s statue that stands at Argyle Park in Babylon Village. She also owned a bay house on Captree Island in the Town of Islip, which gave her a front row seat to life on the bay.

Mark C. Nuccio of Bellmore is a retired teacher, poet, writer, and artist. Mark has been writing poetry since 1967. His first chapbook, “Connecting Tides” was published in 2002, followed by “A Winter Prayer” (2003), “This Broken Day” (2005) and “Salvaging Hope,” a collection of 118 poems (2017). He reads his poems at many local poetry gatherings and writes a monthly article for *Boating World Magazine*. Mark is an

accomplished artist, using graphic images of sea life in oil paints. Much of Mark’s work is influenced by the beauty, history, and preservation of the maritime culture on Long Island. In recent years, Long Island has become a seasonal home to whales, seals, and other marine mammals. Mark’s work captures their beauty in multi-color formats, using local landmarks like the Fire Island lighthouse for context. He grew up near Jamaica Bay, where he spent his childhood, immediately after school. He remembers bay houses, bungalows, and swimming in Jamaica Bay. There were hawks, muskrats, and other wildlife. “It was a different way of life.” In 1999, Mark and his wife Linda purchased a historic 18th-century home on Oak Island, a barrier island in the Town of Babylon, that is accessible only by boat. The house was originally owned by the Ketcham family, who moved it to its current location. He

also enjoys painting bay houses, sand dunes, shipwrecks and the natural landscapes, baymen at work, and other traditional activities. Mark’s drawings frequently accompany his articles in *Long Island Boating World*. His work is in the collections of the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress.

All of these artists sold their pieces to ordinary people that inspired them. We thank them for sharing their work with us. ▼

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