

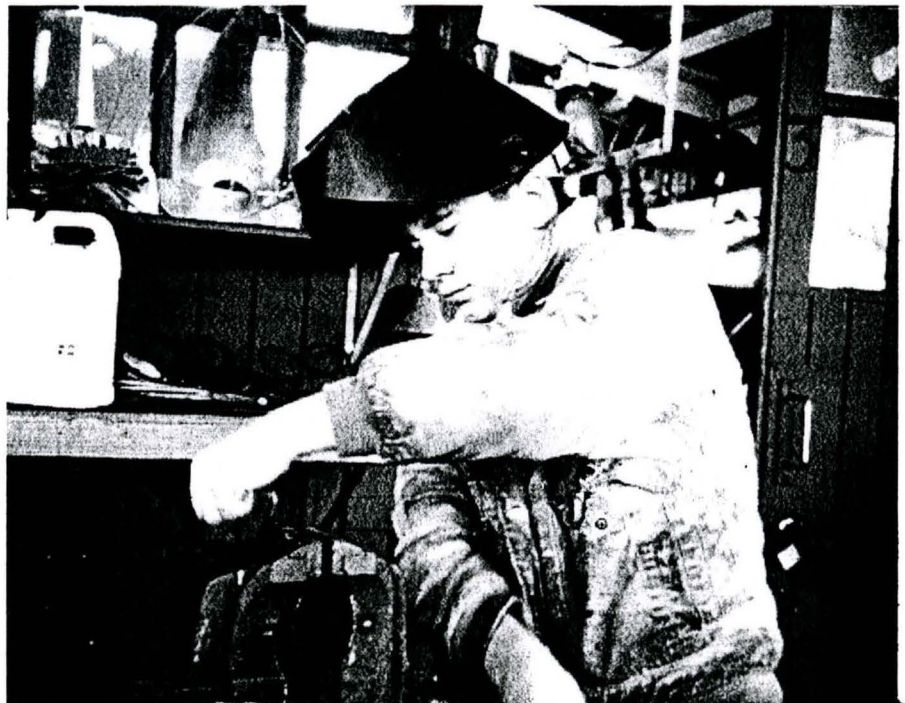


AARON KACERGIS SCULPTOR

**Provincetown has mini-museums,
living and working or strictly
working places unique to the
resident. Include among the latter
Clarence Kacergis' Provincetown
Welding Works located on
the corner of Nickerson
and Bradford Streets.**

The display of original, sometimes practical, sometimes graceful, sometimes humorous metal sculptures mark the spot of a four generation enterprise. There's always something new to surprise you when you visit this establishment. My latest surprise was a remarkable piece of sculpture created by 13 year old great grandson Aaron Kacergis... but a bit of history first.

Clarence Kacergis was working on a US Navy repair ship in the Pacific during wartime. Tillie Jackett of Provincetown was visiting her sister Caroline in San Diego. During the visit she met Clarence and...the marriage and the repair shop were under way. At first, in 1946, Clarence rented two bays then he added more space and in 1950 he bought the place. There was plenty of local work and Clarence was the only welder in town. There was a blacksmith called Nickerson, but welding was in demand. The fishing boats, the US Coast Guard, the



Truro Air Force Station, plus all the around-town work kept Clarence busy. Bill Eldredge, "The Scallop King," enlisted Clarence's talents to design and build a processing plant in New Bedford in the 50's.

The venture was so successful and well designed and built that it was featured in the metal magazine, *International Nickel*. Clarence received many phone calls, offers of work for his company.

"May I speak to the president of Provincetown Welding Works?"

"You're talking to him," Clarence would answer, "and the vice-president and the janitor and the secretary."

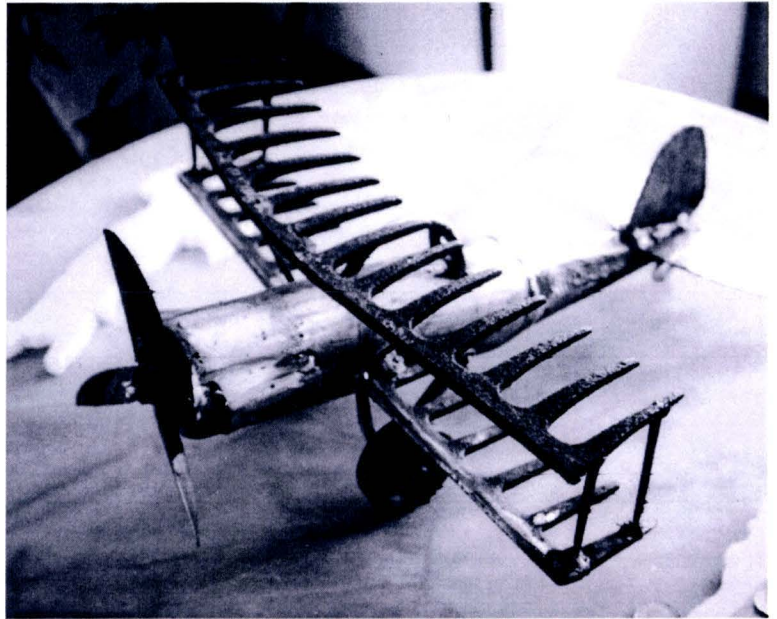
Local work increased and Clarence did not find the need to travel. His son Michael keeps up the welding work as well as the artistic metal sculpting. Clarence's mechanical sculptures have been shown in galleries and at the Art Association. Lumberjacks chopping wood, dorymen rowing boats—plug them in and off they whirl.

Besides his beautiful fences, walls and sculptures, Michael added the teaching dimension. Just retired from Cape Cod Tech where he taught welding he cites that he enjoyed teaching and was involved in seeing the skill level of his

He exhibited the raptor in the carnival parade and won first prize in the small float division.

students rise. Now retired, he is reorganizing 60 years of steel. Every day Michael can be found at the piles of rods, bolts, strappings, washers, etc. Grandson Aaron helps on the weekends.

The continuity falls next to Michael's two sons, Peter and David. Both are busy with family life, but they have been trained in the shop and have expressed interest in spending more time here. Peter, a pilot, flies for Cape Air and works on a special deluxe '41 Chevy. David works at Land's End and is preoccupied with his new home in Eastham. Aaron, 13, has begun moving toward center stage, working closely with his grandfather, Michael where he has benefitted greatly from the skill and knowledge of great grandfather, father and uncle as well.



Michael continues to be amazed at Aaron's ability. "He's not copying, he doesn't draw a pattern; he doesn't use a tape measure. I ask him if he's learning to use a particular tool, 'Do you want me to help you?' I ask. What he creates is his.

"He definitely wants to continue and to study. He wants to go to Tech but, you know, the trades are belittled. He'll be discouraged.

"I have photos of him 4-5 years old working with socket wrenches, taking phones apart or speakers. He started visiting the shop at 8 years old working with wood then and he worked up to metal. Wood is easier, lighter. When he was 10 he started working metal objects.

"He's a very good listener and always follows proper procedure. He's never hurt himself in the three years he has worked here. He looks at the material and creates whatever he likes—as if he had x-ray vision. He uses copper wire as rope, wire from the welding machine.

"At 11 years old he started sculpting. There are many steps. Mostly it's hard finding the right things. You look at the material itself, the shape and you move from there. He's done whales, squid, a bi-plane, a raptor. He exhibited the raptor in the carnival parade and won first prize in the small float division. He wore his welding helmet and towed the welding machine carrying a sea serpent and a raptor. His aunt Kathy made the banner 'Provincetown Welding Works.' He called it the Jurassic Generation, the 4th Generation.

"Most of his free time in the winter he's here. In the summer he loves the West End Racing Club in the mornings and he fishes, clams, kayaks and swims in the afternoons. At night he's working in the basement.

Aaron can be found in 8th Grade at the Nauset Middle School. "I'm thinking of studying culinary arts. I like to cook. Whatever I need to learn about welding I can learn from my grandfather." Aaron often cooks the weekend breakfasts for his grandfather, shops for the ingredients and creates the meal. Flying with his father Peter and sailing are two of his passions. Aaron is building a "Landsailer" for the beach. The sail is attached to lightweight piping and he is searching for the proper lightweight wheels so that he can glide down the beach at low tide.

"Eventually he will be a sculptor. He's a home boy, sailing and sculpting and lots of town kids as friends. With his talents, he can do anything he wants," grandfather Michael observes. No boasting to it, just an observation of the obvious.

And now for my surprise. On a recent visit checking in on a stove repair, I noticed something enlightening beyond my mundane stove part. I saw a small airplane sculpture in the vise. I noticed it had small scissor tips for propellers. My mind went immediately to young Connor Cesa and this object as a possible birthday pres-

ent for him.

The Cesa family lives in Beverly. I was his mother's babysitter. We have a lifelong relationship. With the two older boys, I always had a common ground in "Mad" magazine. They get all my read subscription copies and get to meet Al Jaffee each time they visit. Connor is much younger and I was seeking a bond with him. Aaron's sculpted plane struck me as Connor's interest. I told

Aaron I would call and speak with Connor's Mom, Anne-Marie. She told me of his delight in crafting planes and how he could not seem to master the bi-plane.

I returned to the shop, reported to Aaron and was surprised to see that he had changed the plane. He was at work on a larger one and it was a bi-plane. You would think he heard our conversation. Aaron worked away. We silently followed the progress. A piece of oxy-

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gen tank for the main body. A well point for the rear. A washer on the tail. Two rakes for wings. Two pieces of a scallop rig on the back. Serrated stainless steel steak knives for the propeller. Assembly line wheels for wheels. Antique nails attaching the wheels.

I was so impressed and I displayed it proudly until I packed it up for a family reunion in Marblehead. A baby shower and Connor's ninth birthday were to be celebrated. Of course I had to screen it through Provincetown Airport, so I did so long before the flight. The airport staff was respectfully impressed and they know Aaron through his father Peter, a Cape Air pilot.

My company for the time before the reunion was amazed at the work. I held back the fact that the artist is 13 years old until the oohing and aahing ended. And the day of the presentation, a room full of people was amazed at once and then singularly so as they studied the work. The P'town bi-plane was a big hit!

Despite its weight, Connor carries the plane with him to school, to neighbors, to his grandmother in Buffalo. He even called the neighbors in for a viewing the next day. I'm making a scrapbook for Connor of this column complete with photographs. After all, he has an early Aaron Kacergis! Aaron is certain to become a great sculptor...if he wants.

