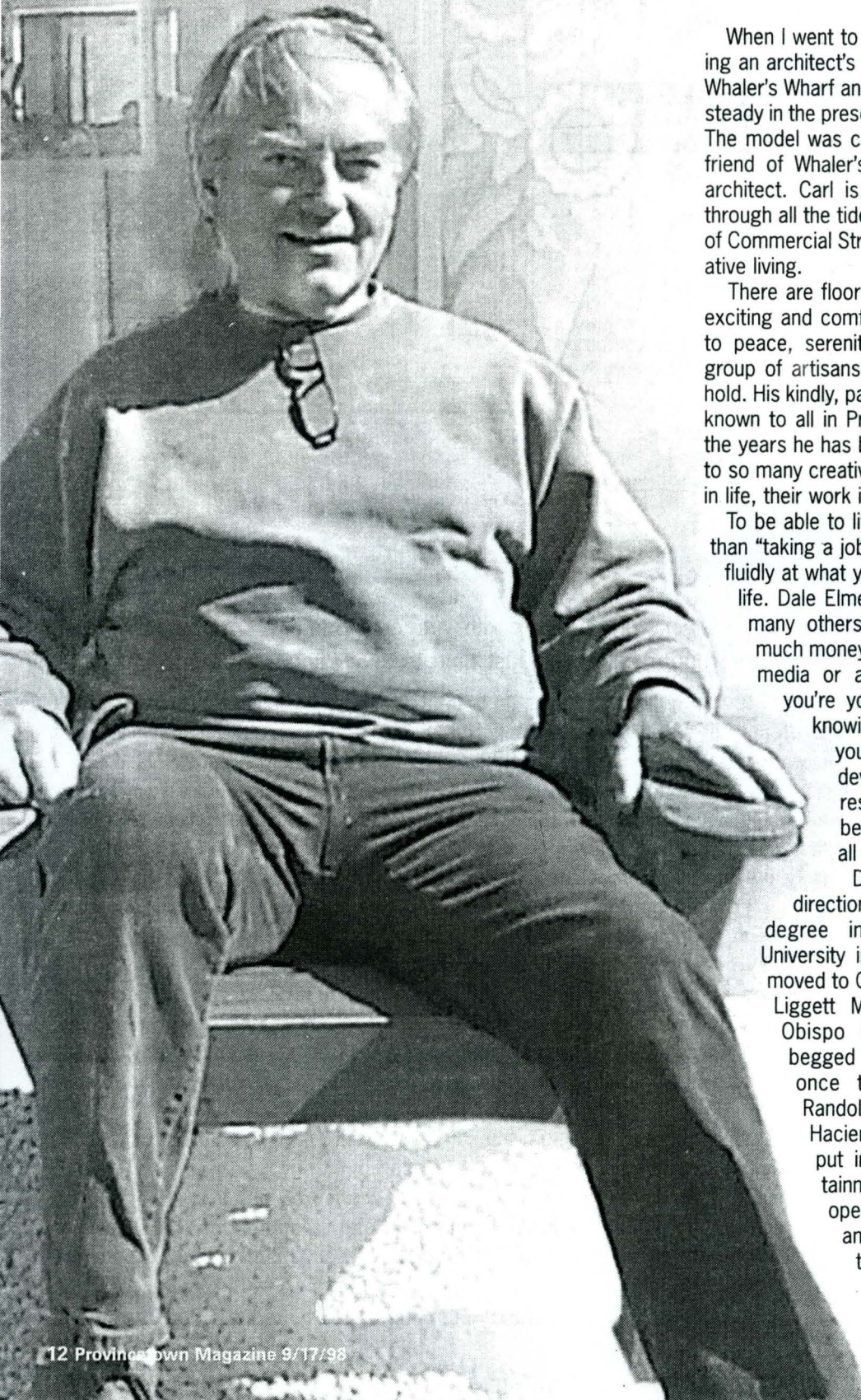


KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly



When I went to visit with Dale Elmer he was holding an architect's model of the proposed reinvented Whaler's Wharf and was musing, not at the past, but steady in the present while looking toward the future. The model was constructed by Carl, the artist and friend of Whaler's Wharf, who was trained as an architect. Carl is also one of Dale's dear friends through all the tides that go in and out on the waves of Commercial Street where all try their hands at creative living.

There are floor plans too and the ideas are both exciting and comforting at the same time: a return to peace, serenity and prosperity to a family-like group of artisans with Dale as head of the household. His kindly, paternal, and brotherly ways are well known to all in Provincetown and beyond. Through the years he has been ever encouraging and helpful to so many creative souls reaching to wake their joy in life, their work in life.

To be able to live by their strongest talent rather than "taking a job", to be independent and to work fluidly at what you love is a risk and a privilege in life. Dale Elmer has done it and he has helped many others to the same goal. There's not much money involved in this pursuit unless the media or a major patron grabs you while you're young, but there is satisfaction in knowing that every day is yours to live in your individual way and to continue to develop your individual talent. The result is a more valuable human being—more valuable to self and to all of society.

Dale Elmer began his moves in this direction when he studied for his master's degree in art education at Columbia University in New York. After graduation he moved to California and taught at the Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation in San Luis Obispo County—an isolated area that begged for recreation. This bivouac was once the summer camp of William Randolph Hearst which he called "The Hacienda." Hearst's guests were never put in the situation of needing entertainment, but a group of military men operated on a different level budget and required another kind of structure. So Dale Elmer taught "Army Crafts" recreation for off-time military—photography, leather

work, woodworking, etc.

In 1957, Dale returned to New York and looked up old friends from his student days. He visited the shop of two merchant seamen were among the first to import Mexican crafts, jewelry and belts. Dale got his first taste of crafts while leading the student life, then deepened his interest in California and now found himself looking for a place to fit in. Well, he did.

The partnership between the two seamen had broken up and Dale moved into the breach as half owner in a craft-business venture. They maintained two stores, one at Broadway and 52nd St. and the other at 8th Ave. and 50th St. The first was an 8' x 19' space and must have been a ticket agency for the surrounding theaters at one time. The other was close to Madison Square Garden and the Radio City Music Hall. The latter store had a lively clientele of boxers and show biz people who loved the handsome and exotic imports.

Dale started making jewelry and for five years sold board upon board of dollar earrings. In 1962, he first came to Provincetown and rented a shop at the Crown and Anchor complex—the third shop from the street. In 1963 Dale bought the Handcrafter Building at 241 Commercial and ran his summer jewelry business there, returning to New York each fall to run his two Manhattan locales. This routine continued for ten years until 1973 when Dale bought the old theater at 237 Commercial St from Ray Smeraldo and Buzz Buffington.

This was a major real estate endeavor and after ten years of New York City jaunts this move forced Dale Elmer to become a Provincetown Year-rounder. Dale offered the New York businesses to his two junior partners and undertook his full-time career here rebuilding and managing Whaler's Wharf.

Donna Green drew up plans for the new interior. Adam Wolf and Buzz Buffington followed the drawings and did a superb job of carpentry for each of the booths. Real slate was used on the decorative roofs while driftwood and distressed wood were used in the structures. The lighthouse built by Adam and Buzz provided the highlight of the mini-architectural tour and fooled many a tourist into thinking

it was functional. Everyone benefitted from their labor of love. For 25 years, the twelve booths provided a stage for many an artisan and portrait artist to work in peace and companionship at moderate rents. It always seemed more like a village unto itself than a commercial enterprise.

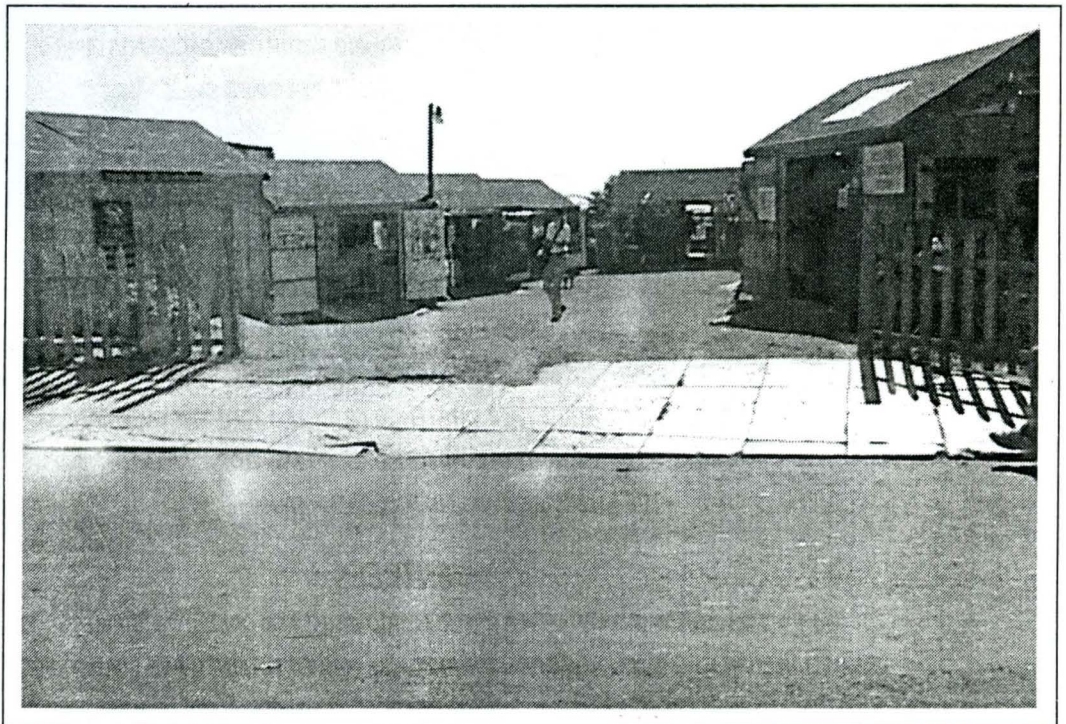
The disastrous fire of last February halted and changed all that.

Yet the future is on its way and begins to take shape daily. Dale's model and floor plan help focus the new dream and make it concrete. A grant from the Massachusetts Development and Financial Agency (MDFA) coordinates state and federal funding for group business development and will be a major aid in the practical reconstruction. In order to use the same footprint, setbacks and boundaries of the destroyed property, construction must begin within the calendar year of the loss.

The present sheds are temporary, not only by their 180 day allowed occupancy, but by the fact that they are not heated. Three quarters of the Whaler's Wharf artisans were able to "make camp" on the site this season. All of them will be included in the new structure next season. On a positive note, the uprooting made possible the branching out of two of the businesses—Chris Pearson's Stained Glass and S&R Jewelry—providing second outlets for their work. As Dale puts it, "It opened doors for them out of necessity."

All look to the future. A firewall between Marine Specialties and Whaler's Wharf has been proposed on a common line the length of the two buildings. A wider, safer walkway—10' rather than 5'—will separate the new complex from the Crown and Anchor. The building will be some 5' or so lower than the previous brick 1919 facade and you will be able to see through to the harbor thanks to a 12' opening. Skylights will let in natural light and the space will be more effectively used.

Dale muses again over the model and floor plans—a con-



cept and a dream. Rejuvenation is everywhere and the project is good. As for the fire and its losses, Dale remarked, "I have taken it better than anyone would have thought. It was 100% traumatic. I accepted reality—what's next?"