

## Irving Roderick immortalized in wax

# Fisherman joins heritage exhibit

By Margaret Ryan

It was like seeing double.

For an eerie moment at the Provincetown Heritage Museum last Saturday, it was almost as if Irving Roderick had been cloned.

"Il sont jumelles, they are twins," Jan Kelly told a pair of French-speaking children, who giggled and nodded.

How Roderick suddenly came face to face with himself wasn't a trick done with mirrors. It was all done with wax.

Roderick's face, hands and feet were chosen to be models for the latest of the museum's wax figures because he resembled a magazine picture sculptress Mary Bono found of an Azorean fisherman.

"Josephine DelDeo, director of the museum, and I had been talking about putting a figure in the Pico," the large Azorean whaleboat on permanent loan from the New Bedford Whaling Museum, said Bono.

Bono, who came to Provincetown 10 years ago, lived here year-round until 1979, and now commutes "off and on" from New York, created all the wax figures at the heritage museum, which include an old-fashioned librarian, a mother and child, a turn-of-the-century pharmacist, and now an Azorean fisherman.

"I saw this picture of a middle-aged Azorean fisherman and said that's the face I want," Bono recalled. She showed the picture to DelDeo, who told her, "You want Irving Roderick."

Roderick, a lobsterman who has lived here all his life, has a handsome, strong-featured face; short, muscular hands, and, if the wax replica is any indication, feet that look utterly natural treading the weathered boards of a fishing boat.

As a small group watched Bono laboriously put the figure together last weekend, it was the feet that particularly struck Roderick.

"Those are my feet, no question," he said, watching Bono as she attached the wax shins to the body of a store mannequin. "See, she's even got my arthritic ankle," he said, pointing to a slight bulge on the left leg.

Bono, a Westerly, R.I. native, returned Monday to New York, where she works as a commercial artist for a marketing communications firm. It took her only five weeks to complete Roderick's wax twin, which was cutting it too close, she said.

"I wished I had taken six weeks," she said a bit regretfully. "The hair needs a little more work." The silvery black wig, which came from Marine Specialties, seemed to match



Irving Roderick and twin

Advocate photo by Margaret Ryan

Roderick's own salt-and-pepper hair amazingly well. But "It could be a little grayer," Bono thought.

In order for Bono to create the wax molds, Roderick had to spend several uncomfortable hours encased in plaster casts. His moustache was covered with Vaseline, so the hairs wouldn't stick, although Bono admitted that he might have lost a few eyelashes.

"I wrapped him in a kind of gauze with the plaster already in it," Bono said. "I'd never used it before, but it has great detail."

Bono, who studied in New York to become a sculptor, is self-taught as a wax figure creator. Her first figure was of the librarian, installed in 1978 in one of the museum's authentically historic model rooms.

Bono found a formula for mixing the wax at the Provincetown Public Library, and has been perfecting it ever since. "It's mostly paraffin, with some beeswax, Carnauba wax—which comes from a type of Brazilian palm tree—

and Dammar, a compound that helps add colors to the wax.

"The librarian was really brittle, she chips very easily," Bono said. So she consulted with the company she ordered wax from and came up with a better formula.

"The pharmacist came out much better, he's more pliable and looks more lifelike," she said.

Bono's next project is to create some figures for the half-scale model of the Rose Dorothea that sits in the museum's courtyard.

"My workroom is right upstairs from it, and I hear a lot of people's comments," Bono said. "Most of them don't get that it's a scale model. It really needs a person to get that across."

Bono plans to create her half-scale people by sculpting the models out of balsa wood. "At least 30 them," she said.

And how does Roderick feel to be immortalized in wax. "No different than I felt yesterday," he said. "Or the day before."