



KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Arnie Charnick's

POPEYE SHOW

Talking with Arnie Charnick is a show in itself. Arnie expresses himself in individualistic, ever-changing, growing language—I can't wait to read his book! Yes! Book! More on that later. If you have ever bopped by or strolled by Spiritus Pizza, you certainly know Arnie Charnick. Spiritus Pizza is his "gallery." He designed Spiritus—did the signs and usually has a panoramic show after Labor Day. I'll give you a history of his six great shows of Provincetown, yes I will. BUT this year his "show" will be a tribute to Maurice "Popeye" Enos. You'll be thrilled, have a great time and you'll be helpful to our cause.

Arnie Charnick has been in and out of Provincetown since 1964 like strands

of hair braided over one another, like jet streams whitening sharply against the blue sky, like the tide tumbling out

and rushing in over the marsh grasses in the moors, like the traffic of pedestrians, bikes, roller blades, skate-

boards, scooters and cars threading and bulging on Commercial St. Arnie comes and goes, ebbs and flows and ever has Provincetown on his mind. Those of us who know his art love it for its wit and humor, its one-of-a-kind view of life, the fact that it's about the town we love so much...and that we can often find ourselves pictured in it.

Charnick has done six shows of Provincetown. The first was in 1977. His satirical look at P'town was depicted in 25 watercolors, a parody of the town with its eskewed life styles, pulling one more joke out of our obvious humorous ways.

Remember Gene Poyant, our corpulent past Town Crier? He was large, had all his handsome pilgrim uniforms handmade to size. Charnick's rendition was of "Gene Buoyant," floating like a raft in the harbor with all the local children jumping off his belly,

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probably for the spare change of tourists— “Chuck a quarta’ over, Mister!”

Gene’s wife Lillian did not see the humor and stormed into Spiritus during the show to let Arnie know of her rage. She didn’t stay too long. Maybe the watercolor, “Pier Pressure” featuring the guys at the D— Dock scared her out. “Arty Farty” was funny too: Charnick walking by the Art Association as the cesspool truck was at work and Charnick holding his nose. The Aquarium was still in business and bandannas were the rage with the gay guys and mustaches were in vogue too. So Arnie drew the “Fish Aquarium” with all the fish sporting bandannas and mustaches.

In 1982 Arnie, with the help of Cherie Nutting created “Boppin’.” “Boppin’” is a photo-montage of P’town from end to end, from inn to inn—from the Holiday Inn (now the Best Inn) to the Provincetown Inn. The whole montage was for sale for \$2,000.—it cost him \$1,200. to produce. Monte Rowe, who owned the Euro at the time, loved it. The building was the old movie theater. So the montage, looking much like film footage still in strips was perfect. The great piece changed hands in a pool game and now belongs to Ricky Macara. He didn’t know what to do with the beautiful monster at first—“Who’s got the space?” So he shows it in sections at his house and has loaned it back to Charnick when Charnick wants to show it as he did in ‘87, ‘91 & ‘96.

Also in 1987, Charnick created another “Boppin’” but he called it “Browzin’.” Also a walk from inn to inn, this one was

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A walk along the entire beach of P'town for Spiritus' walls. Charnick put it up for sale, but for one buyer only. David Davis showed up again struck a deal. Charnick wanted \$10,000 for "A Shore Thang"—Davis had purchased "Strollin'" for \$2,500—so Davis bargained. "I'll return "Strollin'" and give you \$7,500 for "A Sure Thang." So Charnick put up "Strollin'" from 1996 in 1999 and everything sold. Many Charnick fans were angry when "Strollin'" was sold as a unit. They vied for pieces. "We waited," they said.

"Well, everything was marked at a fair price—my price, cheap—just like Mad Magazine," said Charnick, "and David Davis has "A Shore Thang" which can now be seen displayed in the stairwell of The Schoolhouse Center.

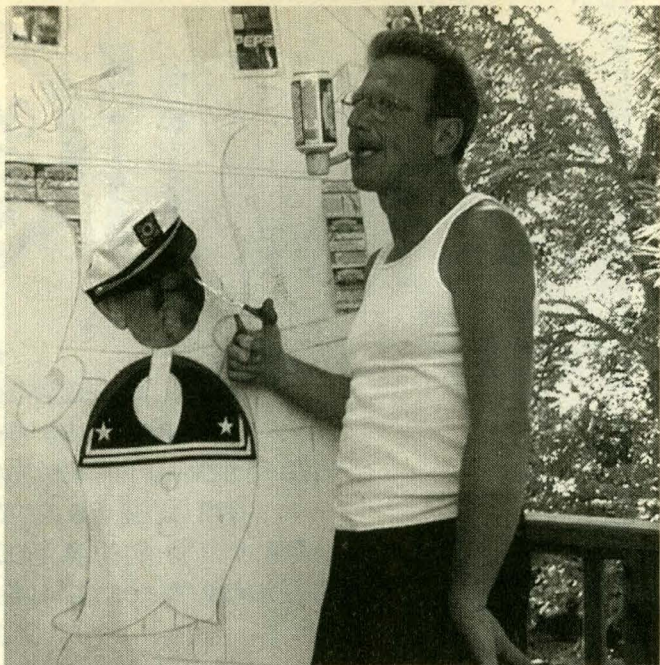
"For three and a half years I've been writing a book. I'm on my fifth and final draft. It's about my life in P'town and about my brother. He's a junkie and a thief, a con artist; and I'm an escape artist. He spent 20 years in prison and died three years ago from AIDS—a dirty needle. I call the book "Dr. Heckle & Mr Jive"—a *semoir*, not a *memoir*. It's half of life, it's a lot of made-up language, a self-vocabulary...puns, lots of puns...it tells a true story of two brothers out of the framework—'siamesal.' I use a quote from Stanley Kubrick, 1957, 'I have a weakness for artists and criminals—neither takes life as it is.' The book is my life in P'town in the 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's. I always come back. I've got an agent; it's going to be printed.

"Now I've got three weeks to get ready for a show. I've spent too much time on the book, but when I read your article I said, 'Yeah, a tribute to Maurice, an homage to our beloved Popeye. He's such a beloved cat. We'll take him to another level—'Recycled Popeye'—yeah! and 50% will go to the scholarship in Popeye's name. Yeah! we're gonna have an auction at Bubala's on Monday, September 11th at 5 PM. Free vodka punch. We're gonna toast Popeye. Dennis Jones will play flamenco guitar, Pierre Beauregard will play the harp and at 6 o'clock, the auction. I want everybody to come...it's a good thing. This great piece of Popeye can be a mural, a center piece, a conversation piece. It's big, 4' x 8'. It's a lot of art for the money!"

Charnick, you're so funny, so talented, so entertaining, so imaginative and so generous on all levels of your personality. This auction gets promoted by people talking it up as they bop, browse and stroll Commercial Street. It's on WOMR and in the press.

One local citizen has already bid \$1,000 sight unseen for the "Popeye" piece to benefit the scholarship fund. (I can't use her name because she went out to the dunes for a few days and I can't ask her permission.) That's great—\$1,000 to start! We can all add to the Scholarship Fund whether it's \$5.00, \$1., or \$100, whatever one can afford. We'll drink a vodka punch, listen to flamenco and harp, have fun and establish a scholarship in tribute to Maurice "Popeye" Enos to benefit the student who shows industriousness and good work skills. A local bank will hold the purse until graduation in June. Hey! How about the banks chipping in? Everybody chip in! We all love Popeye!

All donations will be tax deductible and donors will be welcome before, during and after the auction. Checks can be sent to "The Popeye Fund," c/o Compact, PO Box 819, Provincetown, MA 02657. See you September 11th at 5 PM at Bubala's.



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made up of 84 paintings at \$100. each and once again they all fit into Spiritus covering all the wall space. There were lots of store fronts and shop windows that year.

In 1991, first week in August, Charnick realized "Oh m' gosh! I've got one month to get a show together!" Gazing up at the Monument, he came up with Monumental Phallusy"—12 cut out take offs on our beloved symbol. He did a lobster monument, a foot-long monument, a pizza monument, a hookah monument ("for Ron Hazelnut"), a strap-on monument (for Lea Delaria—and she bought it!), a driftwood monument and an "invisible" monument (Charnick simply cut the monument out of a town scene—Eddie Polay of the Little Store bought that one!).

In 1996, came the third in the "Boppin" trilogy and for that panorama "Strollin'" was the theme. Twenty separate 2'x2' black and white pieces were fitted together, puzzle-like—a view of the Monument, partially obscured, a view from the hold of a fishing boat—a 360° fisheye view—the A-House Alley—all the places Charnick has known intimately since 1964; going along with the change, but holding onto what hasn't changed. At the opening of the show, David Davis bought it all. Arnie responded in his usual way as he has since he sold his first piece "as a kid" and as he is wont to do on September 11th, the big upcoming date. He fell to his knees, took David Davis' hand and kissed it saying "Thank you, Padrone, you've been so good to my family." A year later at the Schoolhouse Gallery opening, Davis said to Charnick, "I remember that day; you put a thought in my head."

The next installation took place in 1998. Arnie still uses Spiritus Pizza; he likes the semi-circular space, "like the Bay," and he likes one theme. This time the panorama depicts a shore walk from the Cape tip to the Ice House Pier—"A Shore Thang." The montage is intimate and very Townie with the yellow house/cottage of Harriet and Travis, of Beverly Bentley's green canoe... it's a gouache of 11 panels, - 2' x 4' x 11 = 44' exactly.

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