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# Painting Can Change One's Life

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## A Gold Medal ....

It was late one evening in mid-September 2002 when I received a rather confusing phone call. The caller started talking to me about "the gold medal" and asked me what I was going to do about it. I had no idea what he was talking about and asked him who he was. He identified himself as Vinnie Nardone. That didn't really help. I didn't know anyone by that name. Finally, he explained that he was calling about the Audubon Artists Annual exhibition in New York City where I was showing my painting **Alpine Place**. I was astonished to hear that it had won a gold medal for the best watercolor in the show.

"Are you coming to get your award on September 28 at the reception?" he asked. How could I do that? I was presenting a Highland Jazz concert that night and my son's wedding was a week after that. "Can't you mail it to me?" I asked him. "Well, it's really very heavy," he answered. Can't you come and pick it up?" At that point I asked him again for his name and phone number and said I would call him back.

I then called my mentor/friend Domenic di Stefano and told him what had happened. He knew Vinnie Nardone and started to laugh. His message was very clear. "How many gold medals have you won

so far? And how many do you imagine you will win? You need to show up there in person and get your award!" And that's exactly what I did.

I took the Acela and made my way to The Salmagundi Club on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Following Domenic's advice I grabbed a quick lunch at a nearby pub. Then at the appointed time I met my son and soon to be daughter-in-law and we went to the reward ceremony together. Domenic was right. It was a thrill. I took the train back after the ceremony and arrived in time to host the Highland Jazz concert that night. Vinnie was also correct. The medal is really heavy and needless to say,

it's the only gold medal I have won so far.

Here's the prize winning painting, **Alpine Place**. The street is at the top of Portuguese Hill in Gloucester. You can see the Portuguese church in the background. The original now belongs to my son and his wife.



### In this issue

A Gold Medal... 1

Etsy is More than a Sale 1-2

Staying Upbeat during the Pandemic 3

Newton Open Studios ??? 3

## Etsy is More than a Sale

I joined Etsy almost 5 years ago at the suggestion of a painting buddy. I thought it might be a good way to market my notecards and the alcohol ink tiles I had started to create. At the beginning it was minimally successful. There are so

many vendors on the site that I was truly shocked when someone found my "shop" and actually made a purchase. Two years ago I started making hand-painted silk scarves and added them to my inventory. About the same time, I

attended a lecture by Clara Lieu about marketing art online. Two major takeaways from her talk were: 1) items on Etsy priced above \$200 are hard to sell and 2) the shop should display at least 50 items so that a potential buyer would have

## Etsy is more than a sale (continued)

lots of different items to explore. Following that advice, I reduced my prices and expanded the shop items to include small unframed watercolors and oils. Sales started to increase.

But that is not the point of the story. A number of sales came with a personal story. These stories have made the Etsy experience really meaningful for me in a way far more important than the sale itself. I'll share just a few. I posted a sketch of a building at Wellesley College and it was purchased by a woman in Arizona.



That was surprising; I wrote to her asking whether she might have a connection to the college. Her answer was very moving. She was an alum and had missed her last reunion because she had fallen seriously ill and was in a coma for almost 2 months. She was thrilled to have the painting and even bought another one of the college the following year.

Another buyer from Texas bought a painting I did at Castle Island. I wondered what her connection might be. Her story really moved me. Her daughter had been diagnosed with breast cancer shortly before her baby was due and the Mom had come to Boston from

Texas to help her. Every day she walked by the scene that I had painted and now that everyone is thriving she wanted the painting as a souvenir of a very difficult time that ended well.



The final story concerns a man and his young son from upper state New York. I met them while I was painting Motif #1 in Rockport. The son was really delighted to meet "the artist" and the father later bought the painting. We had lots of correspondence about the frame, football etc. The son even wrote about meeting me and buying the painting for a school assignment about a *fond memory*. At Christmas I ran a sale at my shop and about 2 minutes after it started the same fellow bought a small oil of Bass Rocks in Gloucester. He later explained that it was a special gift for his mother who used to vacation there years ago.



These connections and personal stories are very important to me- far more than any monetary gain. The fact that my art work can bring joy to someone is the true reward. Through my artwork I feel I am creating connections. I look forward to more stories in the future.

# Staying Upbeat during the Pandemic

As you may know I was the founder and director of Highland Jazz Inc. for 20 years from 1983 to 2003. During my tenure I presented more than 175 concerts featuring outstanding Boston area jazz musicians. Most of the concerts took place in Newton at a variety of different venues. One of the perks of being director was my ability to sit backstage and sketch. I also enjoyed sketching anytime I attended a performance at a club, restaurant or concert that I wasn't promoting.

During the month of December I decided to post a different jazz sketch every day on Facebook. I thought it would remind people of the joy we used to have listening to a live performance. I'm not very talented at portraits but I am able to capture a gesture or a stance. I learned that most musicians take the same stance when they solo. I would often work on several sketches at the same time of different people in the band, alternating between players during their solos. Here are some of the sketches from my Facebook postings.



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## Newton Open Studios this year ????

There hasn't been a definitive decision yet about Newton Open Studios this year but I am not optimistic. One option was to have it outside in May either on the lawn, a porch or even using a garage. I'm still waiting to receive a final notice.

I've made a number of new scarves this winter and I will display them on Etsy and Instagram. I'd also be more than happy to do a custom order in any colors you might like. Here's my new butterfly scarf that I really like a lot. You can also see my paintings on Etsy and my website.

If you see something you like, please get in touch by email or by phone.



Hand-painted silk scarf

