

# Chautauqua County Artists



Detailed pencil sketch for painting "Beyond Repair"

## MERRILL COFFIN



**M**errill (Pete) Coffin is one of the area's most respected artists. Respected for the quality of his work, Mr. Coffin has gained a way of life, a theory of painting, and what seems to be a certain contentment with his art.

I visited recently with Mr. Coffin at the home on Martin Road in Jamestown which he shares with his wife, his paintings and his gallery. Merrill Coffin is able to tell of his background and how art has been a part of his life since high school was a raw March day but the warm farm house and the paintings overcame the chill. Even the brief, bundled trip to the barn-gallery was most pleasant.

It is apparent that Pete Coffin is one of the rare people who has been able to make a good living while combining business and art. Pete and his brother were owners of Decorolac in Jamestown. Pete was political cartoonist for the "Journal." For more than twenty years he was Vice President of Sales and Marketing for A. Lock Corp. For three and one-half years he was art director for Arnot Jamestown Interoyal of NYC.

Recently Merrill Coffin was one of the featured artists in the Grumbach supply company publication "Palette Talk" No. 51. In the article, Pete says what I told me: "A building is no better than the foundation it is built on. The same is true of successful painting. The foundation is a basic knowledge of drawing, composition, perspective, value, color and a thorough familiarity with the subject you to paint." Pete Coffin is a graduate of the Norman Rockwell "Famous Course," a course he regrets is no longer available.

Familiarity with the subject is apparent over and over in Pete's paintings. Whether it's a knot on a piece of barn siding, a hat on a schoolboy's head or

markings on lobster trap, the detail is there and it's right because Pete Coffin has not only seen his subject, he has studied it.

He travels his favorite area (New England) always with his camera. "My camera makes it possible for me to capture marvelous scenes at every turn in the road." Pete started serious painting about ten years ago with oil as his medium. He now uses acrylics. He says, "These paints allow me the latitude of detail and the opportunity to work without delays due to drying time."

Merrill Coffin's work is not secreted in his gallery and home on Martin Road or brought out only for the local shows. He had a two week, one-man show at the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira. His works are seen at Gallery 1, Short Beach, Conn. and he has exhibited at Mystic Seaport Art Show. Pete Coffin is a regular at the Bemus Point show where he has won "Best of Show" four years in a row. Last year he won "Best of Show" at Fredonia.

Coffin and a partner, Norman Lundin, have recently formed Elcee Collectibles, producing fine art on furniture in the Chinese raised lacquer motif. They also manufacture their own product—a blanket chest decorated in a Bucks County design. The new business is on First Street (in the Broadhead Mills) in Jamestown and is open for visiting.

An annual open house is held, usually each June, at the Coffin home. The public is invited. If you like realism, detail and beautiful paintings, look for Merrill Coffin at the shows this summer and watch for that open house in June.

Merrill Coffin is a member of Chautauqua County Society of Artists and Access to the Arts.

—Roger J. Carlson