

## **A Love of Art or The Art of Love?**

By Frank DiLeonardi

She was in the second grade, he in the third when they met. They would go on to share a lifetime of love and a love of art.

John McFarland was born September 25, 1938 in Madison; Barbara Pangburn came into this world on July 22, 1939 in Evanston, Illinois.

John's family found its way to Manitowish Waters as his maternal grandfather, Guy Potter, and his parents, John "Mac" and June McFarland, came as one of the eight founding cranberry families in 1945. Barbara's maternal grandparents William and Laura Hintz came to Manitowish Waters in the 1920s and eventually started the Manito Lodge on the western side of Little Star Lake in 1940.

Barbara's mother Trudy ran The Pantry on US Highway 51 and Powell Road starting in 1948. According to John and Barbara's daughter, Cestjon "Missy" McFarland, Barbara would start and end her school year at the Manitowish Waters school to coincide with The Pantry's summer seasonal hours, with Barbara attending school in Evanston during the non-summer seasons.

Barbara and John each migrated to art at early ages. For John, art was an escape, and he was a doodler and drew comics as a young boy, Missy shared. In addition to running The Pantry, Trudy was an artist and provided Barbara an introduction to art. "They developed their interest independently, but it became a life-long common interest for them both until the end," Missy said. "If one wasn't doing art, it was a sign that something was the matter. It was a real bond for them."

Missy believes art was both a hobby and an occupation for each "in the sense that they were always creating and then they needed to sell it otherwise it would have just accumulated." As kids, Missy and older brothers Chris and Brent would be shuttled about from Baraboo to Bayfield and points beyond to art fairs to sell the most recent creations. Of course, John working the cranberry farm was the other source of income for the McFarland family.

Barbara's art was all about her environment and nature. At the beginning, those trips around the state meant frequent stops to take a photo of a barn that would eventually find its way onto canvass. For the last 20-30 years, Missy said, Barbara's art reflected the Northwoods, its animals, Native American culture, and the spirituality of the Northwoods. Barbara found a different culture and sense of spirituality at their one-time Caribbean home on the island of Nevis as well as from their travels.

Back in Manitowish Waters, John and Barb were thriving in the art scene of the 1960s. "They had a sense of freedom to do things, and they were immersed in a community of friends that were creative," Missy related. "There were so many artists in the area." That sense of community helped the group start The Manito Art League in 1965.

Missy witnessed the evolution and growth in her parents' art. "For both, initially, it was a way to use your imagination to take you to a different place. What I would come to see in mom's art was her use of

colors and how she would portray a scene. When I look at her paintings, I see the world through her eyes as an artist, and it's colorful, it's hopeful, it's playful. It was her way to interpret things. For dad, as he got older, he did a lot of things. He did portraits, and he was very picky as to who he would do a portrait of. He loved to not only capture their image but their spirit. He also enjoyed doing airplane models in great detail, and then maybe do a pastel of the model. It was a way for him to pursue his hobby of studying and documenting history. He would often do a model of a plane that a friend flew in World War II and then do a painting of the model and often give them to the friend."

John also got into sculpting and welding, and Missy recalls when their childhood wagon disappeared only to resurface as a sculpture for an art show that is still at the family home today. "We never got that wagon back," she chuckled.

"My parents strongly believed that anybody could be an artist, and they strongly encouraged people through that philosophy. They got so much joy from the creating of the art and the community that surrounds artists, and that is something they loved sharing with other people."