Belle Harbor AUGUST 2024 Belle Harbor AUGUST 2024 PROPERTY OF THE PROPERTY OF

Rockaway's Renaissance Man

Exploring the multifaceted talents of Robert Sarnoff

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BEST VERSION MEDIA

PHOTO BY TERRI BRENNAN PHOTOGRAPHY

COVER STORY

BY BARBARA MOROCH

"I was born with a crayon in my hand," says Rockaway resident, Bob Sarnoff. And from childhood through adulthood, he hasn't let go — making his mark on the world through creative expressions that range from canvas, to printed page, to film, to artistic constructions. "I always drew...it was just a comforting way to relax, ponder and design."

Bob's journey started in Brooklyn, where he grew up and went to school. "I was the first of my family to go to college," Bob notes proudly. "I did well in high school and so was eligible to attend Brooklyn College for free." He received a B.S. degree in accounting, worked for a while for an insurance company, and then drifted to accounting systems sales. "This was not for me," he said, "so I traded in my accounting ledger for a sketch pad, my adding machine for paints and brushes and the rest, as they say, is history." He went on to receive a Masters of Arts degree from New York University.

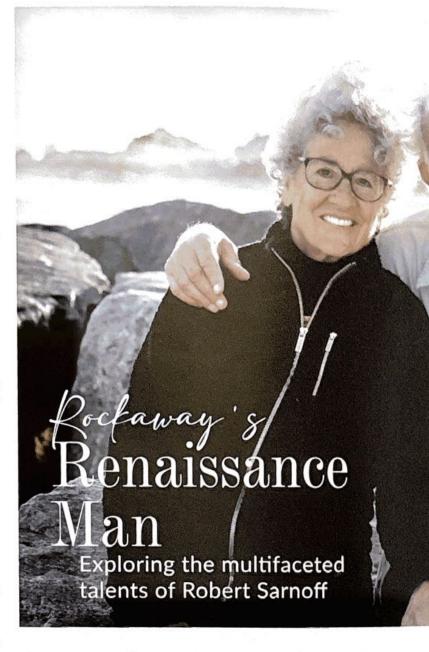
It was in Brooklyn that Bob also met his wife, Lynda, in 1967 and they've been happily married for 57 years. Family life proved fulfilling for the artist who recalls, "Some of my best memories include the birth of our two children, Rebecca and Matthew, travelling during the summers as a young family cross-country and to Europe, the birth of my four beloved grandchildren — and when my wife sent me to The Mets Fantasy Camp for my 50th birthday!" he added with a chuckle. Bob pitched four years for Brooklyn College so this surprise was really something special. His claim to fame was a 3-0 loss to St. John's.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

Shining a light on his drawings, paintings and constructions from found materials, Bob's work has been featured in one-man shows in SoHo, the NYC's West Side, and Rockaway Beach, where he was selected for The Rockaway Pillars of Society exhibition. An interview with Bob is available in the Library of Congress and his films are part of the Brooklyn and Queens Historical Society's collections. One of his paintings — Ye Olde Jetty — is a U.S. Postal Service matted print and cachet. Petitions have been signed for it to become the official stamp of Rockaway, and the image was also on the cover of a Rockaway Summer Guide, a logo for the Belle Harbor Association and Rockaway Visitors Guide splash page.

Bob has penned several plays throughout his career including *Brooklyn Trilogy*, three one-act plays spanned by time and the Brooklyn Bridge, and *Men of Substance*, based upon his work at a Lower East Side shelter.

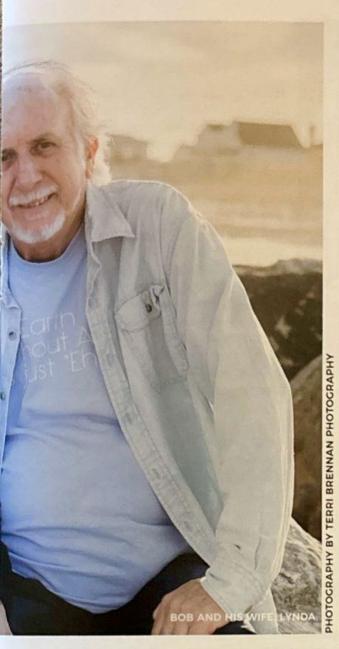
He has written several books. After the Fall: 9/11/11 features a compilation of some 200 political cartoons when Bob was

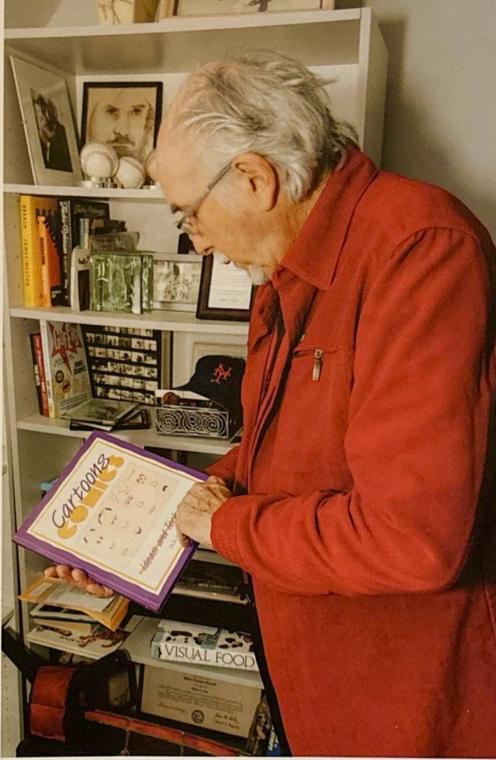


editorial cartoonist for New York's oldest weekly newspaper, The Wave. In it, he attempts to capture and make sense of the days, weeks and years following September 11, 2001. His latest book, Notes from the Crack Between Two Beds is something of a funny, yet poignant, autobiography that begins and ends in Rockaway. Currently available on Amazon.

When asked what topics inspire him most, Bob quickly answered, "The human condition. I love to observe people. I try to capture them in pen and ink, while they're deep in thought, sleeping or interacting."

His films capture this as well. "My films feature lonely people — weathered faces, pensive, worried and trying to cope," says Bob. For example, No Rooms Lobby focuses on a downand-out man his and his dog just trying to get through life. The Irish Ropes highlights gym fighters throughout the five boroughs, battling their way out of their circumstances. Dispatch features a ride through the hardscrabble streets of Rockaway at 3am, from the point of view of taxi drivers. Green, The AmeriCAN Dream follows an army of 'pickers' gathering cans and bottles as their stories unfold. And the ROMEOWS (Retired Older Men Eating Out Wednesdays),





THE BLOCK

A ROBERT SARNOFF FILM

"It's a crapshoot who's your neighbor."

True colors are revealed when Hurricane Sandy whirls into town.

PROMOTIONAL POSTER FOR "THE BLOCK."

BOB PERUSING SOME OF HIS ILLUSTRATED WORKS.



AT AN OFFICIAL CEREMONY UNVEILING YE OLDE JETTY AS A U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MATTED PRINT AND CACHET.

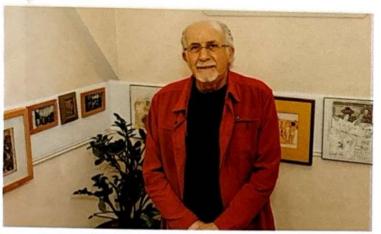
COVER STORY



SAMPLE OF HIS CREATIVE WORKS



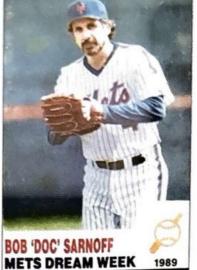
THE SARNOFF FAMILY, PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB SARNOFF



BOB WITH SOME OF HIS FRAMED WORKS AND PUBLICATIONS



PROMOTIONAL POSTER FOR "THE ROMEOWS."



METS FANTASY CAMP. (Bob "Doc" Sarnoff pitched four years for Brooklyn College as co-captain).

focuses on a group of septuagenarians longtime Brooklyn College friends — as they commiserate and kibbitz every Wednesday at a Brooklyn restaurant.

But it was his latest project, The Block, that truly showcased Bob's love for his community. The 57-minute documentary focuses on a single block – the beach block on Beach 138th Street and the impact that Hurricane Sandy had on its residents. "True colors were revealed when Hurricane Sandy whirled into town," he explained. "The fact is many on the peninsula have been tested on their

neighborliness repeatedly, demonstrating n the face of many storms, plane crash, and othe

deep friendship and resilience in the face of many storms, plane crash, and other catastrophes." The documentary was screened at The Manhattan Film Festival in June and also screened at the Rockaway Film Festival. *The Block* is available on Amazon Prime.

Rockaway, with its rugged charm and resilient spirit, is not just Bob's home—it's his muse. "My films were definitely influenced by Rockaway," he admitted. "Rockaway people have their own swagger. They're real, down to earth and tough."

Bob's endeavors extend far beyond his own creations; he was deeply involved in strengthening the bonds within his community. "I created and conducted a senior program called 'OPEN' (Opinions, Personal Observations, Eye-Opening Revelations, Personal Narratives)" he explained, emphasizing the importance of stories, experiences and old photographs. He conducted art lessons for young people, nurturing creativity in all age groups. He's even coached Rockaway Little League Baseball.

In 2014, Bob was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Brooklyn College Alumni Association, an accolade he is particularly proud to have. "We're all part of life's grand mosaic," he reflected, his voice filled with conviction. "We each sew a stitch in the tapestry. Let's make it beautiful, so we all can be proud of and happy to say we all helped create this work of art."

And with those words, Bob's story became not just a tale of one man's journey, but a testament to the power of creativity, connection, and the enduring spirit of Rockaway's Renaissance Man.

