

Belle Harbor & Neponsit LIVING

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Rockaway's Renaissance Man

Exploring the multifaceted
talents of Robert Sarnoff

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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.

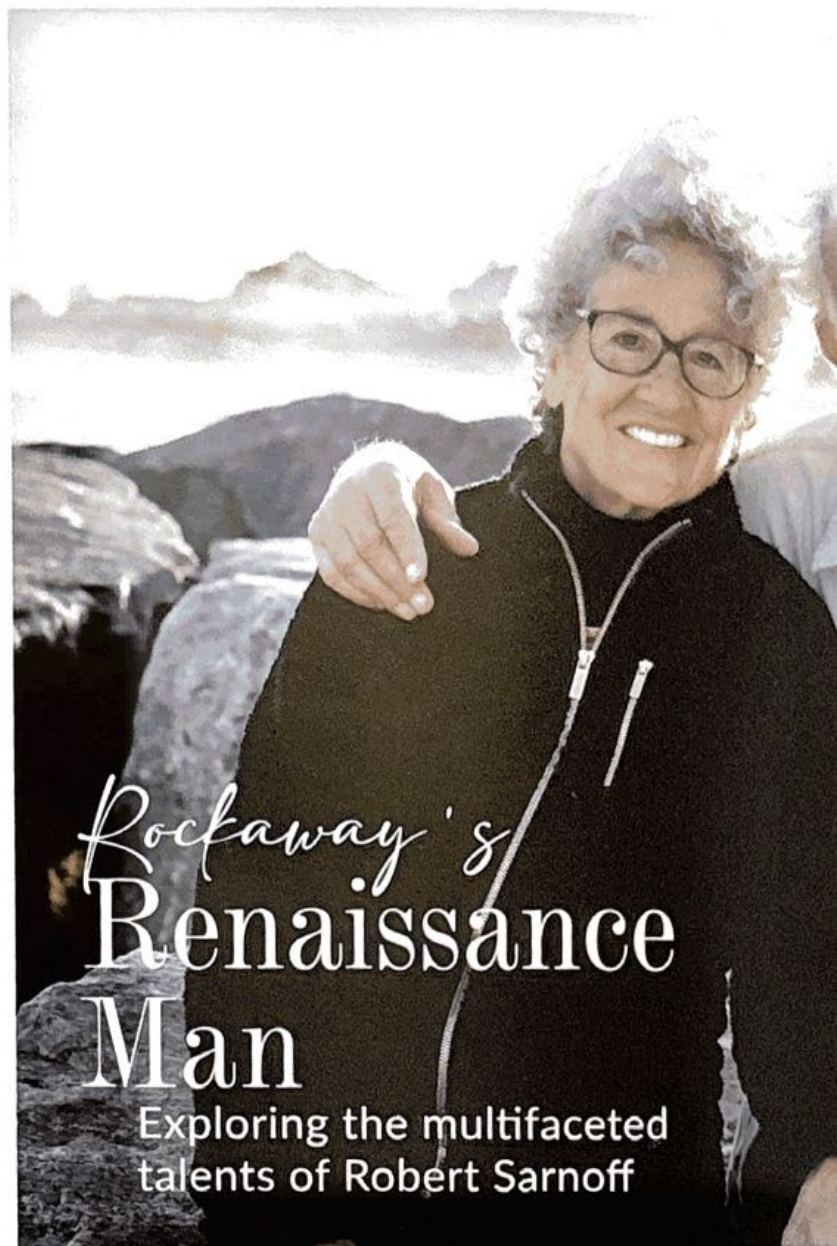
It was in Brooklyn that Bob also met his wife, Lynda, in 1967 and they've been happily married for 57 years. Family life proved fulfilling for the artist who recalls, "Some of my best memories include the birth of our two children, Rebecca and Matthew, travelling during the summers as a young family 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.

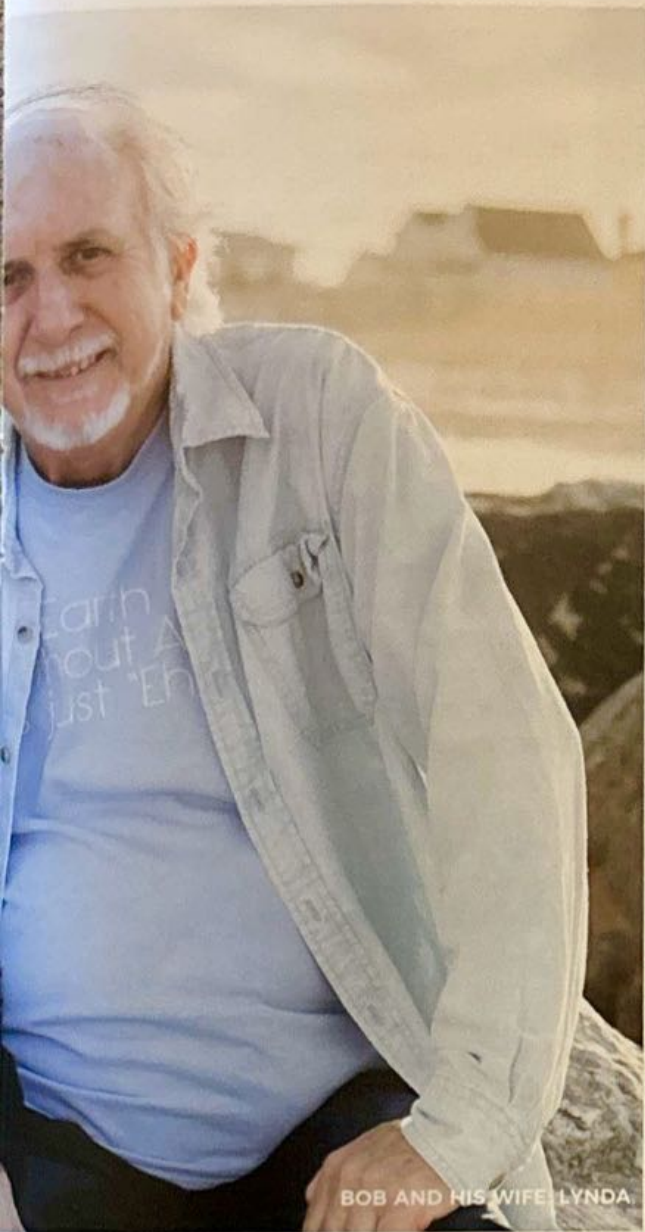
He has written several books. *After the Fall: 9/11/11* features a compilation of some 200 political cartoons when Bob was



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.

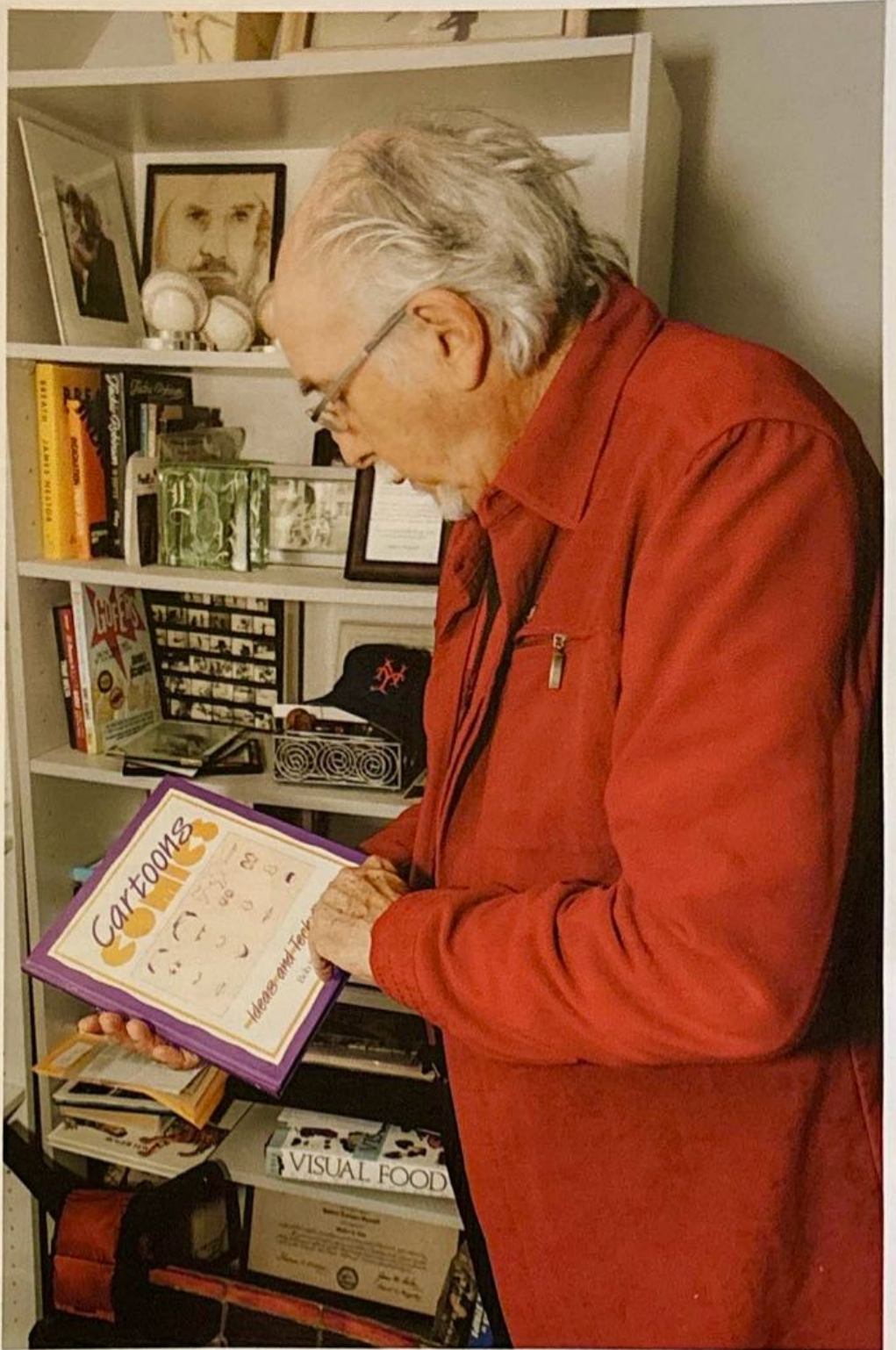
When asked what topics inspire him most, Bob quickly answered, "The human condition. I love to observe people. I try to capture them in pen and ink, while they're deep in thought, sleeping or interacting."

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 down-and-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).

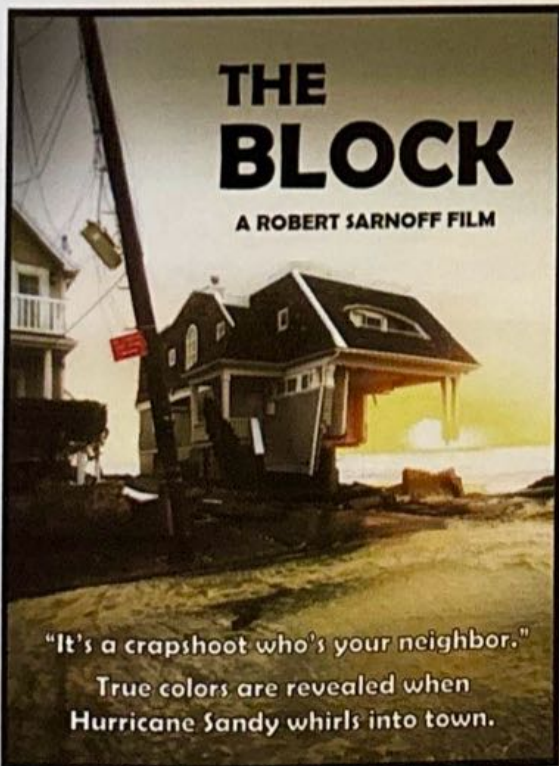


BOB AND HIS WIFE, LYNDA

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRI BRENNAN PHOTOGRAPHY



BOB PERUSING SOME OF HIS ILLUSTRATED WORKS.



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