

Harry, Wende Devlin Reflect Upon Separate Careers and Collaboration



STILL CREATIVE AFTER ALL OF THESE YEARS...Harry and Wende Devlin recently contributed two pieces of limited edition prints which were raffled off to benefit the Friends of Girls Lacrosse, which funds lacrosse programs at Westfield High School.

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for *This Is Westfield*

Harry and Wende Devlin were young children in separate schools, without any knowledge of each other, when they scrawled drawings on their blackboards and received instant acclaim from their principals for their ingenious creativity.

That was one of the first indications that they were deeply in love with the arts, and while still evidently deeply in love with one another years later, they bring that enthusiasm together to collaborate their talents and creativity.

"Your painting looks good, Harry," stated Mrs. Devlin of her husband's latest work-in-progress, a captivating painting of an antique shop in Hopewell.

Mr. and Mrs. Devlin, who recently opened their home during an interview for *This Is Westfield*, discussed at length their separate careers and their collaboration in Mr. Devlin's studio — a veritable museum of their accomplishments and artistry.

"We both wanted to be artists early in life," explained Mrs. Devlin, whose portraits are unceasingly commissioned and whose talent was inspired by her older

brothers and sisters.

"I always knew I wanted to be an artist," added Mr. Devlin, who described his career as that of an "independent artist."

"Somehow, you're the one who they always want to draw in the class," explained Mrs. Devlin, adding that she felt her talent was sought out by those around her throughout her earliest years.

The Devlins, who married in 1941 and lived in Elizabeth before settling in Mountainside in the late 1940s, agreed that their enthusiasm for their creative careers has been so engrossing that they would rather do nothing else.

While most of his friends were more interested in dating or going to the movies, Mr. Devlin was busy with himself with carefully crafting model airplanes.

Mr. Devlin, who has been painting exclusively for nearly 25 years, stated: "To my great surprise, I've made a decent living at it."

The Devlins, who are as generous as they are creative, described an experience with a German reader of their co-authored book, "How Fletcher Was Hatched," who sent \$40, with a request for an autograph and inscription.

Mrs. Devlin, who was pleased and hon-

"We both wanted to be artists early in life"
— Wende Devlin

ored to provide the autograph, confided, "We sent the \$40 back."

After graduating from Syracuse University, where he met his wife, Mr. Devlin, who majored in illustration, moved to New York City with friends and illustrated stories for "pulp" magazines, which contain vivid covers and thought-provoking materials.

As a freelance artist, he also depicted wartime images for United States Army manuals prepared by *Life* magazine. Upon entering the Navy in 1942, the Office of Naval Intelligence assigned him to illustrate their materials.

During the 1950s, Mr. Devlin created some of the most memorable editorial cartoons of his time. He wrote the first chapter, "Making a Cartoon Tell the Story," for *Illustrating and Cartooning*. His cartoons were also featured in *The New York Daily News*, where he was able to develop his own cartoon ideas.

He described current political cartoons as being "hard-hitting and wonderful," while adding that every newspaper should contain these satires.

Mr. Devlin created story illustrations for magazine articles and illustrated editorial cartoons at *Collier's Weekly*, which went out of business in 1957. He also illustrated



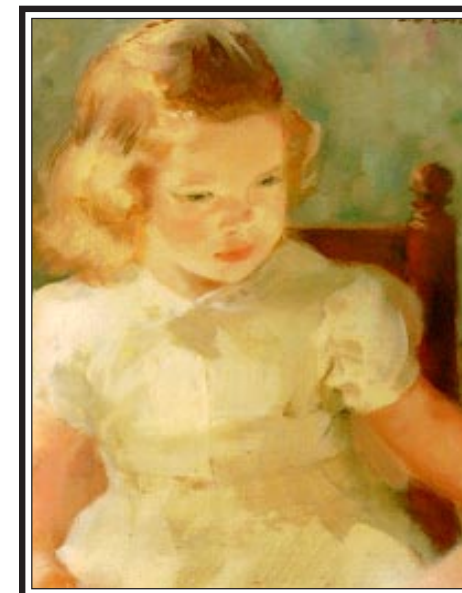
Winter Flowers by Wende Devlin

ciety, and is a lifelong member of the Society of Illustrators.

Mr. Devlin also illustrated and penned the architectural books, "To Grandfather's House We Go: A Roadside Tour of American Homes," and "What Kind of a House is That?" which were aimed at a younger audience.

When Harold Longman wrote "The Wonderful Tree House," which was published in 1962, he enlisted the illustrating expertise of Mr. Devlin.

Some of Mr. Devlin's most remarkable architectural paintings, "Cape May Antiques I," "Miller-Cory House," "Cape May Second Empire," and "Off the Yellow Brick Road," have impacted art lovers by instilling a sense of history and an appreciation



Portrait of Wende Devlin-Gates by Wende Devlin



Off the Yellow Brick Road, 1989, by Harry Devlin

stories and crafted portraits of celebrities and other notables for *Saturday Home Magazine*.

In 1954, Mr. Devlin was named Vice Chairman of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's People to People Committee. Two years later, he was elected as the President of the National Cartoonists Society. In 1988, he became the Honorary Chairman of the National Cartoonists So-

ciety, and is a lifelong member of the Society of Illustrators.

Among his collection of memorably crafted portraits of friends, family and community members are the lifelike "Bryan Gates and the Carousel Horse," a portrait of Mr. Devlin's grandson.

While displaying a wide range of artistry through his billboard designs and the board game "The Bionic Bullfrog," Mr. Devlin never forgets the beauty of his

community.

A limited edition of 200 prints which were signed and numbered, depicting some of the who's who and where's where of Westfield, were commissioned by the Westfield Chamber of Commerce.

Corporations such as Shell Oil Company, New Jersey's Public Service Electric and Gas Company, and New Jersey Bell Telephone have requested illustrations by Mr. Devlin.

Mr. Devlin presented his book, "Portraits of American Architecture: Monuments to a Romantic Mood," which was published in 1989, as his greatest accomplishment. It was written completely in longhand and involved eight years of painstaking pride and devotion.

The book was republished by Random House in 1996, but is currently out of print.

While Mr. Devlin was establishing his career as an illustrator and cartoonist, his wife was busy creating masterful portraits such as, "Portrait of Gurlie Benou."

In the 1950s, Mrs. Devlin created her own comic strip, "Amy and Margie," and wrote "Beat Poems of a Beat Mother" for *Good Housekeeping* magazine. She graciously supplied *This Is Westfield* with an inscribed copy of "Beat Poems" during the interview.

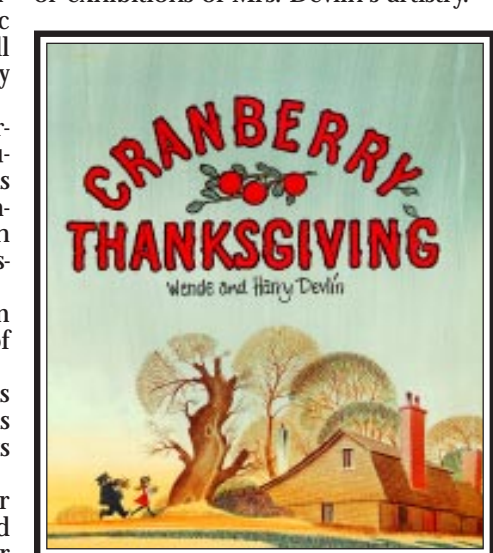
The children's books, "The Knobby Boys to the Rescue," "Aunt Agatha," "There is a Lion Under the Couch," "How Fletcher Was Hatched," "A Kiss for a Warhog," "Hang on Hester," and "The Trouble With Henriette," are some of Mrs. Devlin's most notable creations.

The New Jersey English Teachers Award was bestowed to Mrs. Devlin for "How Fletcher Was Hatched."

The prolific children's writer is a member of the Rutgers' Advisory Council on

Children's Literature and was elected to the New Jersey Literary Hall of Fame in 1989.

Midlantic Bank of New Jersey, National Westminster Bank of New Jersey, and Schering Plough have featured collections or exhibitions of Mrs. Devlin's artistry.



Cranberry Thanksgiving, Cover Illustration, by Harry Devlin

The magical collaboration between the Devlins began in 1954, when they brainstormed to create a comic strip, "Fullhouse," based on their seven children. The name of the comic strip changed to "Raggmopp" when the cast of characters was joined by a poodle, which was based on the Devlins' dog.

While some artists and writers who work together might become frustrated with opposing views, the Devlins revealed that they are "marvelous critics for each other."

Describing their relationship and col-

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The Devlin Family: An Invaluable History of Artistry

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laboration as "easy and pleasant" with a mutual respect, the husband-and-wife team added, "We do feel fortunate that we're both involved in the same things."

In 1963, a wonderful children's classic flowed from the talented hands of Wende and Harry Devlin - "Old Black Witch." Two sequels followed, over one and a half million copies were purchased, and a movie which was based on the book, *Winter of the Witch*, was released.

"I tried to write a story that I would enjoy," explained Mrs. Devlin, who added that she included a personality, color, and all of the elements which would make the story unforgettable.

The series of "Old Black Witch" books have included such notable entries as "Old Witch and the Polkadot Ribbon" and "Old Witch Rescues Halloween," which received the Chicago Book Fair Award for excellence in 1974.

The illustrations and stories which the Devlins have vibrantly featured in their books, such as the "Cranberry" series of holiday stories, have been a testament to a child's enjoyment of the familiar and the exciting.

Pointing to their prolific careers and published works, as well as those of other authors and illustrators, the Devlins observed the importance of literacy and cherishing books as keepsakes.

"Both of us have been omnivorous readers. Books were everything. Children's books are by far the most important."

The proud parents of seven children, Wende Devlin-Gates, Harry Devlin, Brion Devlin, Jeff Devlin, Alexandra Eldridge,



Cape May Second Empire, 1888, by Harry Devlin

Nicholas Devlin and David Devlin, the couple said their love for artistry has run through the veins of the Devlin family so extensively that it has inspired and motivated the Devlin's grandchildren.

Her grandchildren "paint all of the time," Mrs. Devlin stated enthusiastically. "Every one of them."

Son Nicholas enjoys creating murals, while daughter Alexandra, who resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is also a painter.

Mrs. Devlin-Gates, a real estate Sales Associate with Burgdorff ERA of Westfield, has written six books on various topics. She was also the entertainment editor of *Glamour* magazine and the Prix de Paris editor at *Vogue* magazine.

The daughter of Harry and Wende Devlin shared some of her reflections about growing up in an artistic environment. "It was a wonderful way to grow up, to be surrounded

by art. It was a wonderful little oasis up there (at home)."

Raised during the 1950s - the pre-television era when parents and their children had to use their imaginations for amusement - Mrs. Devlin-Gates stated, "We created our own sense of entertainment."

Reflecting upon her mother's talent for relating to people through humor and art, she added that her father was "a fabulous storyteller."

According to Mrs. Devlin-Gates, the Devlin children would gather around their father in the living room and sit awestruck by the tales that flowed from his imagination.



Illustration from Old Black Witch by Harry Devlin, 1963.

Mr. Devlin would then intrigue and spark the minds of his children by leaving them in suspense.

"He's an amazing man," she concluded. David Devlin also caught the creative bug from his parents, as he is employed as an art director with John Howlett & Company, Inc. of Westfield.

The youngest of the Devlin's seven children, he recalled, "All of the Devlins in one way or another were always involved in art."

David reminisced about one value encouraged by his parents that was instrumental in his life: "You've got to be creative or it's just not worthwhile."

To preserve his parents' paintings, David works with his father by creating limited edition prints of the artwork.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Devlin are members of the Literary Hall of Fame and have received the George Arents Medal for Excellence in Art and Literature, a distinguished alumni award, from Syracuse University.

Separate sparks of interest in art, which began as youngsters, later culminating into a partnership in love and in art - the world has certainly become a more creative place because the Devlins have been an indelible part of it.

Devlin Publications

Old Black Witch

The Knobby Boys to the Rescue

To Grandfather's House We Go: A Roadside Tour of American Homes

The Walloping Window Blind, An Old Nautical Tale

Aunt Agatha, There's a Lion Under the Couch

What Kind of A House is That?

How Fletcher Was Hatched!

What's Under My Bed?

A Kiss for a Wart Hog

Old Witch and the Polka Dot Ribbon

Cranberry Thanksgiving

Old Witch Rescues Halloween

Hang on Hester!

Tales of Thunder and Lightning

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Cranberry Mystery

Cranberry Halloween

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Portraits of American Architecture: Monuments to a Romantic Mood 1830-1900

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United Fund of Westfield Displays True Community Spirit

When it comes to true community work, the United Fund of Westfield exhibits more than a special interest. That was demonstrated most notably this year, as the United Fund created a comprehensive resource booklet and completed an extensive survey detailing the needs of the town's senior citizens.

Putting together WORD (Westfield Organizational Resource Directory) represented an extraordinary, time-consuming effort utilizing the volunteer efforts of a large cadre of local citizens. The directory, distributed to all Westfield residents, lists every available resource needed for townspeople of all ages.

Included are names, descriptions and contact numbers for such services as child care centers, churches, social and recreational organizations, and educational entities.

In acknowledging that "nothing of this magnitude has been attempted" previously by the United Fund, Executive Director Linda Maggio secured a committee headed by Westfielder Austin Sayre which included business owners, educators, town officials and others.

After a year in the compilation process, WORD was reviewed for content and format by a team of town residents known for their writing and editing skills.

The project operated under the United Fund's Westfield Community Council, headed by board member Joanne Santoriello.

Help also came in the form of printing/distribution funding from the Town of Westfield and the Westfield Foundation.

Reaction to WORD has been overwhelming. Few towns in the nation provide such an extensive compilation of resources, and that fact has been recognized by realtors, educators, seniors' groups, and new residents.

"Because of the efforts - often frustrating - of the United Fund volunteers, we have a product that no doubt will be mirrored by other communities," said Alan Gutterman, United Fund President.

Securing and reporting information have become a hallmark of the United Fund work of late. For example, the Community Council's Senior Citizens Task Force compiled responses from 400 seniors to a series of questions regarding their needs.

As a result, transportation was named as the top need of senior citizens. The survey indicated that seniors are willing to pay for transportation and other services if they became available. Seniors also cited the need for handyman services.

In addition, seniors reported that they have a need to secure more information about town services and resources.

"The publication of WORD should prove to be a valuable aid in that respect," said Mrs. Maggio.

Copies of WORD may be obtained at the United Fund at 301 North Avenue, West in Westfield or office of *The Westfield Leader* at 50 Elm Street, Westfield.

The survey provided demographic data and information about the respondents' living situation. In effect, it showed that a community-wide effort is needed to address the needs of the senior citizens, United Fund officials believe.

The Task Force announced that it will undertake a survey of other municipalities concerning transportation programs and other information. And the United Fund vowed to continue addressing the needs of seniors and others in Westfield, and to work with other organizations to that end.

Projects like WORD and the seniors' survey constitute just part of the work undertaken by the United Fund. The main annual project is the United Fund campaign, which this year met its \$615,000 goal, with monies to be directed to the 21 agencies funded by the organization.

The 1999 campaign will add one more agency to the United Fund family: Women for Women of Union County, located at 511 North Avenue in Garwood.

Its mission is to offer low cost, individual counseling and to provide support for women who are going through transitional and/or developmental crisis in their lives. In addition, support groups, monthly workshops and a referral service are available.

From its headquarters at the town's northside train station, the United Fund of Westfield continues to rally a volunteer force, made up of several hundred townspeople, who work diligently in pursuit of making the town a better place to live.

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