

Mecray

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career as a marine painter would involve a variety of subjects — from fishing schooners to naval battles — in less than a year, Mecray turned his full attention to classic yachts.

“What intrigued me about yachts was their power and grace,” explains Mecray. Consequently, he only paints boats underway. “If it’s not moving, I’m not interested.”

Since most of his subjects no longer exist, Mecray works from scale models to capture their intricacies. It’s the realistic details that have garnered him a worldwide following of sailing enthusiasts who appreciate the way his works accurately depict everything from the direction of the wind to placement of the cleats and winches.

His signature style — coming in close — was born after he cut off the top of the sails in his first painting. “I wanted to capture the immediate feeling of being close to these wonderful objects as they move by,” says Mecray.

He portrays the boats in a variety of views — coming, going and in profile — enabling him to paint the same subject more than once, as he did with his favorite yacht, Coronet.

And while he may have a favorite boat, he doesn’t prefer one particular painting. “I have favorites for different reasons, mostly because I associate the works with a particular period of time that holds great memories for me.”

The pieces have the same

effect on their owners. “What I enjoy most is that people buy my work to hang in their living rooms, that it evokes some response in people.”

Mecray decided early on to publish his works in print form. Today, he sells the original paintings through his agent, Marguerite Riordan, of Stonington, Conn., and Mystic Seaport distributes his limited edition prints to galleries and dealers.

Mecray says he’s lucky to complete one painting a year. The process begins with a detailed sketch of the vessel on tracing paper, which he then transfers to the canvas. He builds the work from there, working on the water, boat and sky incrementally.

“I like to keep the whole piece evolving,” says Mecray. “It all has to build together.”

His Web site, www.mecray.com, offers an insightful look at the development of his painting through a series of animations on works in progress. Mecray’s only critique of this novel feature is that it makes the process look too easy — and fast. “Hard-edged realism is time consuming,” says Mecray.

This year, the object of his focus is not a yacht but a book about his subjects to be published by Mystic Seaport in October 2006 in conjunction with a retrospective exhibit of his work.

“It follows the development of yachts in this country,” explains Mecray. But he also hopes to inject into it his enthusiasm for preserving the heritage of these vessels.

His interest in the survival and

restoration of classic yachts is Mecray’s true passion, fueled by an article he read 25 years ago about Coronet. And it’s what led him to found the Museum of Yachting in Newport and co-found the International Yacht Restoration School (IYRS). Today, IYRS owns Coronet and the organization just embarked on a massive project to restore the grand yacht to her former glory.

To date, IYRS has successfully brought back over 40 Beetle Cats, among other boats, and has trained students in a discipline that is in great demand. Mecray’s work with IYRS is not only satisfying; it’s of what he’s most proud. “In the abstract, my paintings might help save some classic yachts but IYRS is actually doing it,” he explains.

Despite his role with IYRS and his book commitment, Mecray still plans to publish another print for next summer’s busy season. He hasn’t, however, yet selected a yacht to feature. But that doesn’t worry him. “I’ll never run out of subjects.”

And does that include subjects other than yachts? “Absolutely,” says Mecray, who notes a longtime interest in seascapes. “I would love to spend a year at Beavertail and really focus on it. I’ve done two or three paintings there and would love to do another 10.”

Mecray moved to Jamestown in the mid-1980s. His work is available locally at Jamestown Designs and at Arnold Art Store and Sheldon Fine Art in Newport.

Chorus seeks new members

The Jamestown Community Chorus has planned an exciting fall program. Upcoming events not only include participation in the Watson Farm program and the traditional holiday concerts, but also in the inaugural concert of the Rhode Island Festival Chorus, “RISings.”

The chorus is looking for additional singers. There are no auditions and membership is open to all. Dues are modest, and there is a nominal cost for music. The chorus welcomes seasoned choral singers as well as those who have never sung in a choral setting.

Rehearsals are filled with camaraderie with folks who have been with the chorus almost half a century and those who have just joined last spring. Participants will be involved with a variety of music for the upcoming occasions and music director B. J. Whitehouse will be doing what he does best — teaching and directing, with knowledge, confidence, and humor.

While the first formal rehearsal season begins on Monday, Sept. 19, at 7 p.m., at the Central Baptist Church, this year the chorus will perform at Watson Farm prior to that date, on Sunday, Sept. 11, at 3 p.m. There will be a rehearsal on Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Grange/Senior Center on West Street from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., and also on Sunday, Sept. 11, from 2 to 3 p.m. at Watson Farm.

Many visit U.S. Coast Guard cutter

Activities abounded at East Ferry on Saturday, a day that included a visit by the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Tiger Shark.

The open house held aboard the Coast Guard’s newest vessel drew some 250 visitors who had a rare opportunity to go on board to learn more about what the Coast Guard does in Narragansett Bay.

The Tiger Shark is the 50th Marine Protector-class cutter constructed for the Coast Guard. Now stationed in Newport, it was commissioned at Fort Adams on July 16. The Tiger Shark is an impressive 87-foot cutter with the state-of-the-art electronic gear. It is a multi-missioned vessel and particularly well suited for search and rescue, law enforcement, homeland security, and marine environmental protection missions.

A number of local businesses put out the welcome mat for the crew of the Tiger Shark. They included Spinnakers ice cream shop and Trattoria Simpatico, but especially the East Ferry Deli which graciously provided the crew with lunch.

Donate your used musical instruments

BankNewport’s Musical Instrument Collection Drive is in its final weeks. The community is invited to “give the gift of music” by donating their “gently used” instruments to BankNewport’s Musical Instrument Collection Drive, taking place at all branch locations through Aug. 31.

What a great opportunity for people to donate an instrument hidden in their closet, not played in years. Instrument collection receptacles are currently on display in all BankNewport branch lobbies, along with special gift tags for the donor to designate the school of their choice to receive the instrument.

At the conclusion of the collection drive, BankNewport will distribute all of the instruments to local school departments throughout Newport and Bristol Counties.

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