

Memorials
In Memoriam
Irv Docktor
 1918 – 2008

PORTFOLIO



may 2008

Where artists grow.

Irv Docktor passed away in February 2008. Irv was a great friend to many and a great artist. In compiling information on Irv for this tribute, we came across many stories that indicate Irv not only loved art but loved life, his family and his friends. As an artist, he was a brilliant painter and illustrator whose work has been widely published. His paintings span the latitude from classical form



to expressionism. Encompassed within the sphere of his work are portraiture, figure study and scenic design, and all in a variety of artistic media. His love of anatomical beauty, of face and physique, and of form, texture and color permeate his beautiful creations. His feminine forms exhibit an elegant grace, and the deeply thoughtful countenances of his subjects seem to captivate those privileged to own his paintings "...with technical perfection, the mystic characteristics and pathos give his art an exquisite, aesthetic quality" as quoted in *Cavalcade* magazine.

Irv was born and raised in Philadelphia. As a youth, he realized he could get out of school assignments by doing chalkboard illustrations in class. His efforts were not wasted as he received a four-year scholarship to the Philadelphia College of Art (now UArts) where he graduated with

honors. During art school Irv performed with the Mary Binney Ballet. He was there sketching during rehearsals and the male lead had trouble lifting the ballerina. So Irv dropped his sketch pad and went over and lifted her with ease. Irv was doing a little weight lifting at that time and had developed quite a physique. Mary Binney took advantage of this opportunity and asked Irv to join the company. After art school, Irv went into the Army during World War II and was stationed with a map-making division in Australia and the Philippines from 1942 to 1945. Irv continued to demonstrate his strength as a family photograph shows Irv holding another soldier over his head with both arms extended. Irv's mother met his future wife's (Mildred's) mother at his parent's restaurant, Himmelstein's in Philadelphia. The mothers tried to get the two corresponding, but of course Irv wouldn't write until he saw a picture of Millie. When Irv got out of the service, these two gorgeous people got together and got married. Irv was also recipient of a scholarship to The Barnes Foundation. He and his wife and three children moved to Flushing, NY, where he broke into the illustration world in the late 1940's. Irv did freelance painting and illustration and pursued his own personal explorations into the fine arts of painting and print-making. Some of his awards and achievements include prizes at the Salmagundi Club, New Jersey Watercolor Society, American Artists Professional League, Hudson Valley Artists, Garden State Water Color Society, The Pastel Society of America, Philadelphia Water Color Society (Best in Show),

Audubon Art Society, Ringwood Manor Art Association and Edgewater Art Festival. Irv first joined the Philadelphia Sketch Club in 1947.

Irv also had some business interests. At one time, he and his two brothers started the National Chain of Docktor's Pet Shops. His mother and father had the original shop at 11th and Arch in Philadelphia. One of the family tricks was to let a snake or monkey loose for a short period and then report the story of "a snake crawling or a monkey running along



Arch Street" in order to get free publicity. Their pet shop in Long Island was the biggest in the country. At that time, parakeets sold in pairs as "Love Birds." They were so popular that they were in short supply. Irv found the biggest breeder of parakeets was out West, so he rented a plane and pilot and flew to the source of supply. After loading the plane, they flew back East and cornered the market on Love Birds.

In 1957 Irv found the house of his dreams with a river view in Fort Lee, NJ. He continued to do illustration work through



the 1960's. A large mural commission caused him to get a studio in New York City where he painted for the next 15 years. He also taught part-time at the Newark College of Art. In 1975 he moved back to Fort Lee and got his first-ever full-time job, teaching at the High School of Art and Design in New York City. Irv retired around 1990 and he and Millie traveled to Europe several times and enjoyed going to museums and performances. But Irv continued to do some illustrations and was teaching art to senior citizens in Fort Lee up to the week of his death. One of Irv's ideas was to have an exhibition of artists who graduated from "Broad and Pine" in the 1930's. This famous group would include Irv Docktor, Al Gold, Jacob Landau, Morris Berd, Paul Kleinbord (alias Pablo Davis), Sam Feinstein, Joe Hirsch, Irv Penn and Bill Campbell. Hopefully, this exhibition will happen someday.

Irv's daughter, Barbara, has many of Irv's images on her website. You can view them at www.bdocktor.com/irvdocktor. Our thanks to Irv's wife, Mildred; his daughter, Barbara; and our fellow Sketch Club members Bill Campbell (Irv's friend) and Vincent Docktor (Irv's nephew) for providing information for this tribute to Irv.

The mission of the Philadelphia Sketch Club is to support and nurture working visual artists, the appreciation of the visual arts, visual arts education, and the historical value of the visual arts to the community.