



CHANGE

*Puget Sound's
Newspaper of the Poor
and Homeless*

2129 2nd Ave., Seattle, WA 98121 (206) 441-3247 www.realchangenews.org rchange@speakeasy.org



Life at Sea

Local artist celebrates heroism in the fishing industry

BY TODD MATTHEWS

In the early-1980s, the widow of a fisherman approached the pastor at her Lutheran church in Ballard. She missed her husband, she said, and longed for a place to visit that would memorialize him and all the other commercial fishermen lost at sea.

Pastor Malcolm Unseth liked the idea and began the Fishermen's Memorial Committee to find a local artist to build such a memorial.

Ronald Petty was the first artist Unseth approached. "I really don't remember how they got my name," says Petty. "It could be that they saw one of my other works in town."

Petty suggested the committee make a national call for entries. "I realized this was a very monumental project," he said. "I knew it would go public anyway."

The concept intrigued Petty. It also intrigued nearly 100 artists across the United States. When the committee narrowed the competition to 15, Petty was one of those selected. When the committee narrowed it down even further, to five, Petty was still in the running. Eventually, the committee selected Petty. "That my proposal won was very ironic," says Petty. "I won it on merit, for which I have always been very proud."

The Seattle artist soon began work on what is now a city and Pacific Northwest landmark. This

area is home to some of the largest commercial fishing fleets in the nation. The scope of the project was \$50,000, a relatively small amount of money to realize some very big concepts.

Though the monument was to be a memorial for lost fishermen, Petty did not want celestial symbols of death or dying. "I wanted a human figure on the work," he said, "and I wanted that figure to represent heroism."

The figure he selected was a halibut fisherman, though the fish that his figure is landing is a composite of several species — so as not to single out one fishery in particular. Petty also wanted to represent a classic realism style in the piece. That style is clearly reflected in the monument's base, column, and capital structure.

"Lots of young widows have visited that memorial ..."

**Artist
Ronald Petty**

In order to capture a sense of realism in the work, the University of Washington School of Fisheries allowed Petty to view their extensive collection of fish — a "fact-checking" of sorts that Petty found extremely useful. Petty also looked to the fishing community for inspiration. "I had many friends in the fishing industry," says Petty, "and a social connection to fishermen." Petty himself has lived and worked in an Alaska fishing town.

The Fishermen's Memorial opened many doors for Petty. Shortly after the 30' bronze and cast stone sculpture was dedicated at Fishermen's Terminal

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A Capital Idea

Small business loans provide entrepreneurial opportunity

BY PETER BLOCH-GARCIA

When Felicia Roberts moved to Seattle two years ago as a single mother, she found it difficult to manage her work and family. She was faced with the additional difficulty of finding a daycare facility that fit her work schedule. After several months, Felicia decided to open her own daycare program. Making her business profitable has proved to be a different kind of challenge. "It's very hard," Felicia comments. "It made me want to go back to work. I take it one day at a time."

While the rising Northwest economy continues to bring record profits, not all people in Seattle share its bounty. People who embrace entrepreneurial ideals are faced with new challenges under ever increasing pressures of new economic conditions. But now there is hope for budding entrepreneurs — hope through "microlending."

Microloans are well known worldwide to help lift people out of poverty.

The loans are given to people who don't qualify for lack of collateral or no credit history. Following the success of the Grameen Bank of India, which raised many people out of poverty, committed business leaders have tried to replicate successful microlending programs in the United States. A handful of institutions have set up shop in Seattle to serve the needs of people who want to improve their economic condition by starting their own businesses.

When Street Outreach Services, a non-profit social service program, found it difficult to establish a line of credit from traditional institutions, they saw it as a reflection of the larger economy. Executive Director Chris Nyrop believes the need for microloans is vital to our local economy. "There is a growing economic disparity in the Seattle area," says Nyrop. "It is a disparity microlending tries to alleviate."

Since 1995, Cascadia Revolving Fund (CRF) has provided microloans to many disadvantaged low-income, yet aspiring, entrepreneurs. It was CRF that helped Felicia Roberts make her small business successful. Roberts was provided a low-interest loan that enabled her to expand her business operations. In addition to the microloan, CRF helped Roberts market her business. Now Roberts runs a profitable 24-hour childcare program with 22 children enrolled.

"Never before has there been a time of greater need to reverse the economic trend of inequity of wealth. If not, we'll forever be creating a poverty ridden class."

**Jim Thomas,
CEO,
Community
Capital
Development**

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in October 1998, Petty was bombarded with projects throughout Washington state.

The city of Lynnwood commissioned "Future Track," a monument at the Lynnwood Civic Center. He also designed "Salmon Dancing," a series of four bronze and cast stone sculptures located at the entrance of One Union Square in downtown Seattle. The city of Shelton hired Petty to design a bronze structure depicting a logger — a monument that serves as a tribute to timber industry workers.

In 1991 Petty became only one of three Washington State residents accepted to the National Sculpture Society, an esteemed organization dating back to 1870.

And what do people walk away with after visiting the memorial? "Children are attracted to the fish," says Petty. "When the monument was unveiled, as soon as the wrapping fell away children rushed to climb on the fish." Indeed, the monument is extremely kid-friendly, as the fish are situated at eye-level to children and invite curious hands. "I think adults like it, too," adds Petty. "I've observed people at the memorial, and I think adults in general have a good feeling about it."

While opportunities to create monumental art are few and far between, it is a medium that Petty prefers over gallery installations. Perhaps his interest in big art stems from his background in carpentry, and a long history of family members who built houses and bridges.

It seems that the woman who had longed for a memorial for her husband lost at sea has seen her dream come true. Presently, there are more than 500 names on the monument's plaque — names that represent Seattle men and

women lost at sea. "When someone walks up to the memorial," says Petty, "it's not like he or she is walking up to a gravestone. Rather, the monument celebrates life."

And Petty has seen a number of widows around the memorial. "Lots of young widows have visited that memorial," says Petty. "The fishing industry takes many young men and women." ☐



PHOTO BY DANIEL CURTAN

Book Review

The Good Doctor

WAKING UP IN AMERICA
DR. PEDRO JOSE GREER JR.
SIMON & SCHUSTER, 1999
REVIEW BY TIMOTHY HARRIS

Homelessness is too easy to get used to. The banality of misery fades into a dull everydayness, and people stop existing. They become "clients." Those of us in the trenches need to keep our sense of outrage sharp, so we can turn it to our advantage. We need to remember why we do this.

It helps to recall the first time we couldn't believe our eyes. For my friend Anitra, it was sleeping on a mat in a church basement next to an elderly woman. For me, it was meeting mentally retarded homeless people and realizing they were on their own. For Dr. Pedro Jose Greer Jr., it was seeing a homeless man die of tuberculosis in the United States in 1984.

Dr. Greer is the founder of Miami's Camillus Health Concern, a poor people's clinic that began in a back office of a homeless shelter with whatever bandages and ointments and such that he could cram into his bag. His own compassion and sense of mission spread to others, and PW-GAS (People Who Give a Shit) was formed, a ragtag group of medical students and interns willing to bind the wounds of society with nothing but time and stolen medical supplies.

Over 14 years, Camillus grew into a clinic that treats 10,000 indigent men, women, and children each year. Greer's biography, *Waking Up in America*, is worth reading not just because

of his achievement, but because he has come through the experience with his sense of outrage fully intact.

Greer describes a world most people will never see. The "mudflats" where the homeless live look like a bombed-out garbage dump. Downtown after hours looks like something out of Dickens. The flipside of wealth in America is bitter, grueling poverty, and Miami is as tough a town as any. He takes us through the anti-homeless sweeps and anti-immigrant crackdowns and looks where most people avert their eyes.

We are introduced to compassionate crack hookers, literary Vietnam vet alcoholics, and families at the tragic end of the line, and shown that writing off the entire underclass as a bunch of "screw-ups" is way too convenient. "Judge the disease, not the person," says Greer.

Yet *Waking Up in America* is much more than a series of heartwarming character sketches. It is a political coming of age story, with a lot of

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