



KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

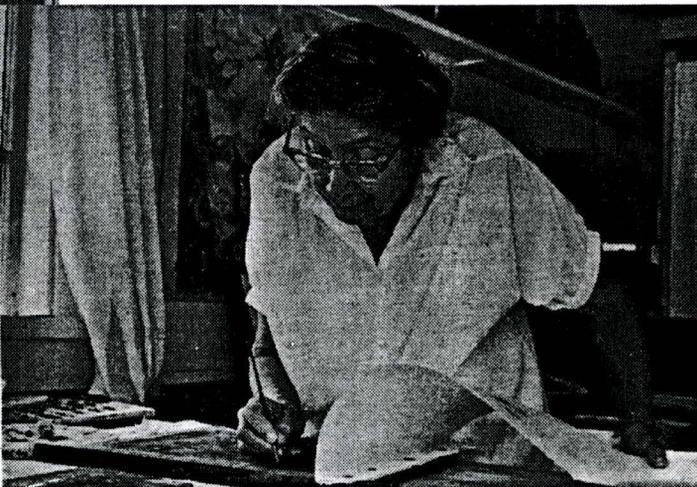
Kathi Smith, born in Washington DC, schooled in Maryland and Colorado, has a strong and unique tie to Provincetown. She returned to Provincetown summers throughout her life until she finally came to live here year-round in 1988. During childhood summers and then again in 1981, Kathi Smith came to spend time with her grandmother Ferol Sibley Warthen, exponent of an art form born and generated from Provincetown—the white line print. Kathi learned the method at age 4 1/2 from her grandmoth-



towards Provincetown. Within the large group which migrated to the tip of the Cape, a small group of six—five women and one man—pioneered, developed and realized the Provincetown white line print. They lived around Bangs Street and did much of their work in the vicinity of the Art Association. The influence of the Japanese print and the European adaptations were still fresh in their minds. War removed them from the ongoing influence and so Cape geography and American practicality pushed the method to reduce the number of blocks from several, one for each

er's guiding hands. Her mother still has the blocks. Continuing her study of the white line print with her grandmother Warthen was an opportunity few would ever have. Ferol Sibley Warthen and Angele Myrer ran a shop at 77-79 Commercial Street where they sold their prints as well as those of other Provincetown printmakers. Their work was shown at the Provincetown Art Association as well as at a joint show at the Smithsonian.

The white line print was developed in Provincetown in 1915. As WWI was breaking out in Europe, many American artists studying there returned home and many gravitated



color to be printed, to one – a solo block. B.J.O. Nordfeldt is given credit for this achievement. Teaching spread the technique. "It is an American method of printmaking. It was developed in Provincetown and it is ours. It is not obscure. It spread up the East Coast and to the West Coast," Kathi told me proudly.

Kathi knew her grandmother's work was important and she enjoyed her childhood lessons which continued with each visit. "But," she says, "I went on 'to do my thing', school for ten years and more training. I studied painting at the Art Association during my P'town summers and with my grandmother. But in 1981 I came back to spend the year. I studied with my grandmother, tapped into her resources now that I was an adult." In 1985, Ferol Sibley Warthen died. Kathi was deliberating her return to Provincetown full-time.

"In 1986 I had two conceptions, my daughter Liana, and my return to Provincetown to continue teaching and spreading the art of the white line print." And so, after a brief stay in NYC where Liana was born, Kathi returned to raise her child and to focus on printmaking. She saw teaching this unique Provincetown genre as more important than her own work and "by teaching it, in my small way I will show it's place in history." On her own initiative, Kathi gave workshops at the schools. With styrofoam meat trays from the A&P and pencils she put the grade school children through the steps. She had already taught Liana at age 3 1/2, guiding her hand through her first print, "Smiley Days". "It is a simple method—you can do it at your kitchen table. "All you need is a spoon, a knife and watercolors. You can walk yourself through the medium. It's very P'town; simple, basic, pure. A pure art form. We are in the geography of the white line print. I am continuing a family lesson. It's important to my child."

This schooling also matters to the community as Kathi continues her involvement. From the grade school, Kathi goes on to a more formal workshop at the high school where the students are old enough to cut tiles. All of this donated input will pay off next fall, with the realization of Kathi's dream to expand to a larger audience. The P.I.A.I., Provincetown International Art Institute, will open this fall at the Provincetown Art Association. "Provincetown will once again be a winter place for people to come and to learn. It will give working artists employment. While studying with top-of-the-line artists, students can earn college credits. The enrollment is open to local, Massachusetts and US residents as well as foreign students on a full- or part-time basis. The P.I.A.I. is a collaboration of Cape Cod Community College, The Provincetown Art Association, Provincetown High School and the Schoolhouse Center for the Arts. Students will be asked to choose between two core classes in drawing, design or studio fundamentals plus one elective. There are five electives to choose from. This Art Institute has been a dream of many people through the years, but it took a "doer" to get it realized. Kathi has been working towards this goal for two years with Burt Wolfman. Burt's program planning made steady progress and the dream is in hand. "He's wonderful to work with, he knows how to get things done." This is a giant step for Provincetown's art community. The dedication and selflessness involved can make you proud to

be part of this community.

The Art Association and the Smithsonian did a joint show of the white line print, first showing at the Art Association and then at the Smithsonian. In 1996 Kathi Smith curated the historical show of white line prints and in 1997 curated the contemporary show. Kathi knew she had to show at Steve Fitzgerald's "Hell's Kitchen" Gallery. "Steve had a good eye for art. He put me through such a tough interview. He grilled me, 'Are you dedicated to this art form?' I was a painter before white line and had done etchings and lithographs since 1975. So in 1985 he showed one or two of my pieces and in 1986 Steve gave me a one-person show at Hell's Kitchen. I showed there until 1993, when Steve died.

Kathi Smith now shows at The Schoolhouse Center and at Bakker's on Newbury Street. Her new work has moved away from flowers, landscapes and recognizable images. Her flowers were moving out of the square, the rectangle and spilling out for space. Now the themes include boats, water, and space. From the minute to the vast, from the particular to the possible.

Kathi has taken the gift offered by her grandmother, has made it her life's work and so it has grown and matured, continues to grow onward within her, around her and can only lead to an expansive future of enriched work. The next generation may take up the quest with daughter Liana. ("Liana" comes from the French meaning "to bond with" or "clinging vine.") Her was named for her great grandfather Lee Warthen. So the continuity has been established, the track is set!

