

Member Profile with Gail Mardfin

by Paula Pearce

Paula: So, Gail, where were you born and raised?

Gail: I was born and raised in a small coastal town in Connecticut.

P: Did you grow up with siblings?

G: Yes, well kind of. My brother and sister are six and nine years older, so I was kind of raised as an only child by the time I was in junior high.

P: Did you have any family members who were also artists?

G: Looking back, I know now that my paternal grandfather was a fabulous pencil sketcher. Recently one of my cousins sent me a whole packet of small sketches of faces of commuters our grandpa did while he rode the subway to work. My mother was also very creative and beautified our home and yard with her artistic skills. She did everything, from painting walls, hanging wallpaper, and sewing all the curtains to planting and maintaining beautiful gardens.

Comment by Paula: Those are all the same skills my family enjoyed from my mom. How lucky we were to grow up with moms like ours.

P: As a young child did you enjoy art?

G: I was often sick with asthma and I would occupy myself by drawing in bed for hours at a time.

P: Did your art interest continue into high school and later on?

G: I loved my high school art teacher and decided then I wanted to be an art teacher. I first went to Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, to major in art education, but transferred to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where I met the man I would marry after graduation. I ended up majoring in psychology, but once we moved to New Jersey, I went back to school and earned my Masters in Studio Arts with an emphasis in silkscreen.

P: What happened after that?

G: Eventually, my husband and I both taught in the art department of Purnell School, a small, girls' boarding school that focused on the strengths of each student and really supported the arts.

P: What kind of art did you teach there?

G: I taught drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, jewelry, art history, watercolor, you name it!

Comment by Paula: Wow! That is impressive, anything else you want to add?

G: Yes, I also helped with the school newspaper, yearbook, and alumnae publications, and that led me to my graphic design career later.

P: Talking about careers, what kind of art did your former husband focus on as an artist?

G: My "wusband" was and still is a very talented and prolific impressionist landscape painter and I did a lot to promote his work when we were married. I kind of sublimated my own



creative pursuits, busy with teaching and raising our kids. In those days, I would not have called myself an artist.

P: What brought you to Sonoma County?

G: I moved out here three and a half years ago because my daughter, O'Neil, lives here in Sebastopol with her husband and my granddaughter, Zaylie.

P: Once you were divorced and free, was there ever a milestone in your artistic development that you can recall?

G: Yes, in 2007 when I lived in Bernardsville, New Jersey. I put together a large, one-person show of 63 pieces! In preparation for that show I produced a lot of work, including a combination of mixed media collages and photographs with uplifting text. I also produced acrylic paintings, mostly still lifes, in a stylized technique I had developed. That art show definitely launched my career as an artist. For the next eight or nine years, I was successful in creating and selling many of my stylized paintings. I also co-founded an Artists' Studio Tour called "ARTsee," similar to Art Trails here, which is still going strong in its ninth year in New Jersey.

P: Gail, with such a wide variety of artwork you have created, can you share with us the underlying theme for your artistic passion?

G: The theme of all my work and my life is "See the Good!" I am very active in the Center for Spiritual Living (first in New Jersey and now in Santa Rosa).

P: How did you find out about AWS?

G: About a year ago Bob Hart, also a member of the Center for Spiritual Living, introduced me to AWS.

Conclusion by Paula:

Gail, thank you for accepting my invitation to be our April interview candidate. It was my true delight to have you share your life story and to be in your lovely home, surrounded by an array of your amazing artwork. Words cannot really convey the width and the depth of your artistic expression, variety of art forms, and your willingness to make art your life's desire from the get-go until now. Congratulations Gail, you are truly one of a kind.