

## MY ART CONNOISSEUR BARBER

I would like to share with you a most heart-warming story. The events that took place came to light after nearly 40 years. They are most unusual, and, to me personally, very gratifying.

Please allow me to first set the stage chronologically. In 1964, my wife, Helen D’Agnese, decided to fulfill a life-long ambition to study art and become an artist. My family of 7 children at that time was living in El Paso, Texas. Since this was the first time we could afford a live-in housekeeper, my wife decided to embark on this challenging art career.



She, like all the other art students, learned the principles and techniques of the various mediums of visual art. After her first year of training, her art teacher advised her that she had found her medium - modern primitive art, and needed to continue to develop her talents independently.



In 1968, my family and I were transferred to Atlanta, Georgia for an assignment with the *Centers for Disease Control*. After my retirement in 1981, we moved to Fernandina beach, Florida, where I embarked on a new career as an environmental health consultant on cruise ships. My wife accompanied me on many of the cruises, which gave her an opportunity to paint scenes from the foreign ports-of-call we were fortunate to visit.

My wife passed away in May 1999, leaving a large body of her artistic work. I opened a gallery featuring her art and recently developed a website ([www.dagneseartgallery.com](http://www.dagneseartgallery.com)). This web site was the start of what I consider documentation of a unique case of “synchronicity,” or déjà vu. Only a few days after the website was installed, my web consultant,

Ché Normandin, received an e-mail from a Ms. Kim Honeycutt that read “Good evening, I believe I am in possession of two paintings that must have been some of the earlier works of Ms. D’Agnese. The paintings were purchased by my father in Atlanta in either the late ‘60s or early ‘70s. Is there a way you could help me authenticate these paintings as hers?” She sent photos of the paintings in question. Both were my wife’s original oil creations, “*Maria Elena, Ama de casa,*” and “*El Paso en la noche*”, containing her large, bold signature - “D’Agnese.”

I telephoned Ms. Honeycutt and discovered that she lived in Lilburn, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. I told her that I, too, used to live in the Atlanta area only a mile from the US Public Health Service, Communicable Disease Center. She told me that her father had a barber shop in the Toco Hills shopping mall. I was surprised when I remembered that her father was my regular barber. I also recalled the details surrounding her father’s purchase of the paintings, which were not known by Ms. Honeycutt.

I was in the barber shop one day in the fall of 1969 when my wife arrived to pick me up. She was carrying a photo portfolio of her art work. The barber, Mr. Parker, asked to see some of her pictures. He was impressed and wanted to see the originals of two of the photos. He was quick to say that he couldn’t afford them at that moment. Upon viewing the originals at a later date, he was deeply moved with appreciation. Once again, he said that he loved the paintings but couldn’t afford them. My wife, deeply impressed and pleased with his reaction offered him the paintings at a greatly reduced price. He was overjoyed and told her that he didn’t have the money but asked if she would hold the paintings.

He said he would set aside all of his future tip money until he saved up enough to pay for the two paintings. Three months later, he was the proud owner of the two paintings. This was a financial sacrifice for Mr. Parker, since at that time, had a wife and two small children.

Through correspondence with Mr. Parker’s daughter, I learned that he was born in Milledgeville, Georgia in 1934 and died in 1975. I also learned that the paintings had hung in their living room and master bedroom until his death. They have been in the possession of his daughter for the past 33 years.

This whole incident came to life after a period of approximately 40 years. Mr. Parker was indeed gifted with a deep appreciation for fine art. This was confirmed to me two years ago. An art collector, Armand Gilyanyi, an internationally known sculptor, bought seven of the same type of original modern primitive paintings created by my wife.

This is a testimonial to my art connoisseur barber who, regardless of his background and station in life, possessed a keen eye for art which he truly appreciated. He acquired two original oil paintings by my wife at a financial sacrifice by saving up his tip money.

John J. D’Agnese, Sr  
June 9, 2008

Photos provided by Johnnie Sabin