

R E F L E C T I O N S

A NEW BOOK FROM CHARLES PETERSON

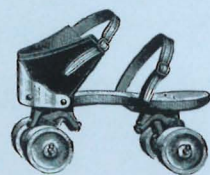
ON THE COVER

Best Friends, a signed and numbered limited edition miniature (image size 7.5" x 10") presented exclusively as a companion to *Charles L. Peterson: Reflections, Gallery Edition*.

Most of us can still remember pre-rollerblade skating; adjust the steel frames to fit your own shoes, tighten the straps across your ankles, and then risk everything on uncontrolled flight. I suspect that not even the current knee and elbow pads, gloves and helmets can eliminate all of the "red badges of courage" we wore, the skinned elbows and knees and, in my own case, foreheads.

Using a quiet neighborhood and perfect fall day, I wanted to re-create some of the ambience of our own girls skating with their friends; the pig-tailed one in the girl scout beanie wisely hooks her skate over the edge of the sidewalk and steadies herself against the tree as she waves. Her friend happily gossips as she tightens her toe clamps, and the third girl risks her precarious, high speed stability with a seemingly nonchalant wave.

— Charles L. Peterson



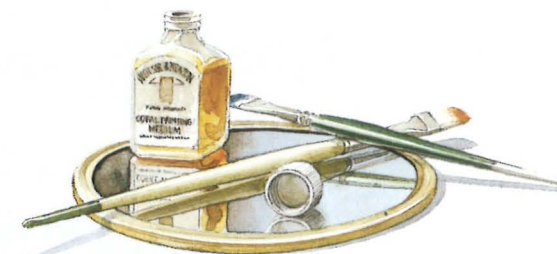
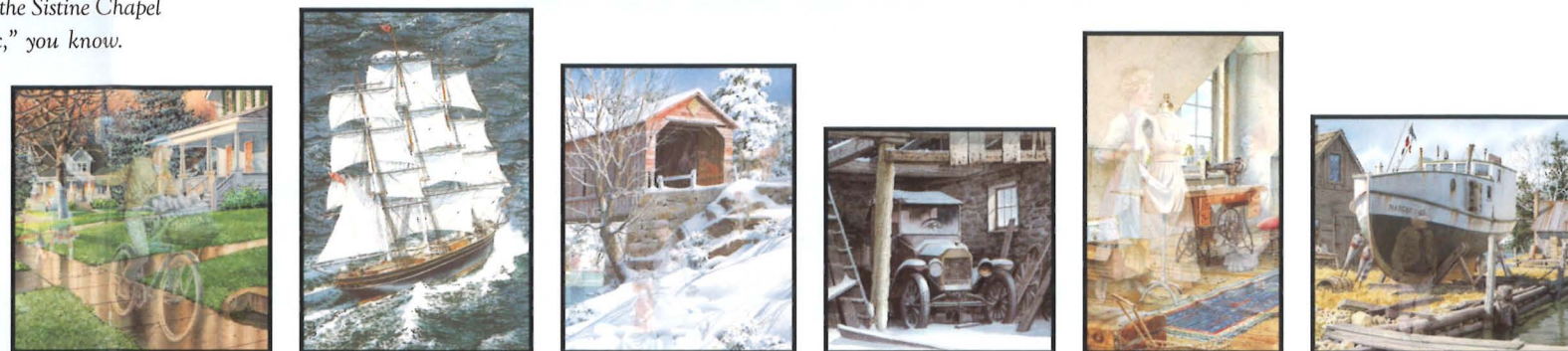
What a journey it has been, putting together our second book for this extraordinary man. Our goal was to create a book that would, in appearance, "match" the first, yet in content, offer something quite different. *Reflections* takes a more biographical look at Charles Peterson's life and a more informative look at his art. His knowledge of art, his passion for the subject matter and his ever present wit are all well represented. The following excerpts from *Charles L. Peterson: Reflections* offer a valid sampling until your personal copy arrives.

Many of the sailors were interested in my drawings. It wasn't unusual for one of them to ask for a specific subject as a favor. I remember one fellow, especially enamored with what I was doing, who really wanted a drawing of our ship. I was pleased to sketch it for him so his loved ones could better visualize where he was. I later learned that he sold it for twenty dollars. I should have been more upset than I was, but the realization that someone would actually pay money for this stuff was a kind of revelation to me.

As kids, when we were headed for each other's houses, we had to pick our way, often at high speed, through hedges and around garden patches which dominated practically every back yard in the neighborhood. In my mind, I think I could still negotiate the zigzag route home from John Stolt's house, even after dark. These gardens wasted very little time or space on flowers (though I do remember Mother's hollyhocks), but went about the practical business of feeding the family during the depression. "Home Grown" settles on a family group harvesting ripe vegetables, but taking time to sniff the flowers, too.

Though I can no longer accept commissions, a fair share of my work in the past was exactly that. Many artists resist the idea of doing commissioned work, finding it beneath their dignity perhaps, or feeling their work should grow entirely from their own private inspiration. To be fair, many simply cannot accommodate a patron's ideas or harmonize them with their own instincts. Michelangelo's example is instructive. Few personalities have been as prickly as his, and yet he was able to comply with Pope Julius II's commission for one of the great illustrations of the Renaissance. He didn't paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling "on spec," you know.

One of Dick's favorite stories from our childhood was of the time I became bored with the baseball game we were playing and began working with a big ball of mud, sculpting it into a bust of Abraham Lincoln. A couple of boys near me recognized what it was and soon most of the team was around me—for the most part, ignoring the game. Dick's adult version of the story told of the pride he felt for his little brother's talent, but what I recall is how disgusted he was with me for spoiling the game.



Living in the age of photography, we often fail to understand the implications of a painted likeness. Unlike a camera, the painter who works directly from the model (as opposed to painting from a photograph of the model) doesn't record that single, consistent instant, but rather records the mood changes undergone by the sitter during the entire time it takes to complete the painting. The vaunted mysteriousness of Mona Lisa's "smile" is surely due, in part, to the fact the Leonardo painted her over many sittings, and her moods (complicated by the loss of her child as well as listening to the ramblings of a 300 plus IQ) necessarily changed. So, he painted her eyes in one mood, for example, and her mouth in another (if you look at her you will see her mouth may be smiling slightly, though her eyes are not). A painted portrait is really a kind of summary of personality as understood by observation over time. These factors mean that a portrait can be a very rich record of the subject.

The soda fountain was a vital part of high school life during my youth; irresistible from the standpoint of both social advancement and taste delight. "Fountain of Youth" is based on my memory of one operated by an aunt and uncle where my cousin Bill and I, on very special occasions, were permitted to create our own ice cream extravaganzas. My own tended toward vanilla with hot fudge and whipped cream, studded with nuts and a cherry at the apex. Uncle Cecil stands in back of the counter in his accustomed place while Aunt Ange is out of sight in the kitchen, which she ruled with iron discipline. The furnishings and gear were researched at Two Rivers, Wisconsin, in the museum of the actual store where the ice cream sundae was invented in the 1920's - a kind of Mecca for all who remember those delights of the after school hours.

My home town was fortunate to have as its Boy Scout Executive, Carl Parlasca, an adopted Brule Sioux. He organized a very popular annual pageant which involved a program of Indian dancing and encouraged a devotion to Indian lore. Indian dance took us all over the Midwest, to the Chicagoland Music Festival, the Indiana State Fair, and for me, even to Paris. I accompanied Mr. "Par" to the 1947 International Boy Scout Jamboree as his choreographer. My job, while crossing the ocean, was to teach Lakota dances to a group of boys that included a full-blooded Blackfoot, Earl Old Person, who would later become a chief of his tribe. There's an image for you; a Swede teaching Sioux dancing to a Blackfoot on a heaving deck in the middle of the Atlantic! For whatever reason, Earl was simply unable to oblige his Blackfoot feet to conform to Lakota rhythm. We finally hit upon the happy solution of asking him simply to lead the American delegation into the arena on opening night - a great spectacle.