

Ron Hazel's Garden of Delights

By Jan Kelly

Four Center Street, like most of the buildings in Provincetown, has gone through many changes. In this case, the grounds themselves have gone through even greater change. The stroll of all tourists comes to an abrupt and then lingering stop as they find themselves within the spell of another person's dream worked into reality. So varied and dramatic is this "garden" that most people look from sculpture to statue to stone to ironwork to find

something familiar and perhaps comforting and thus they start their tour in the street. And from the street, from that point, one hears constant verbal wonderment "Oh, look at that!"—"And that!"—"Wow!"—"What a wall!"—"Oh, a crystal ball!"—"What kind of music would go with this?"—"Lovely Buddhas"—"Yikes, a snake!"—"A Devil Fence!"—"A Cat Fence!"—"Is it a fortress?"—"I'd love to see the house."

The house at 4 Center Street was once the rectory for the Methodist Church across the street facing Commercial Street—now the Heritage Museum. Mr. Kenneth, the hat man of the Mad Hatter Shop owned the house along with his friend Irwin. It did not look like a rectory then. The living room was all decorated in animal skins, black and white movie memorabilia, surrealistic paintings and draperies to dress Scarlet O'Hara. The bed was a carousel, the bedroom all in red, chatchkas everywhere. But the hymn books were still in the attic. After this occupancy, a speculator bought the building, gutted the plumbing and planned to make condos. Part of the Pilgrim House real estate deal, the place was affected by the fire and was soon back on the market. Ron Hazel, owner, operator of Shop Therapy acquired the new property.

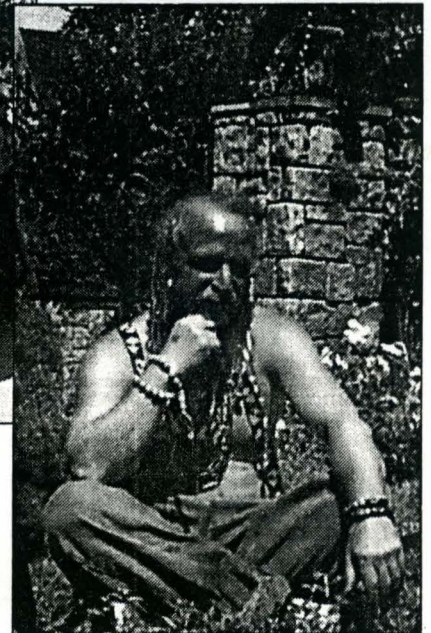
The year was 1990, and Ron had bought an empty house, gutted for condos. He couldn't move in and since there was no garden, only a jungle-like privet and weeds, the peaceful transformation would have to start with the garden. It would be Ron Hazel's first garden, his first house and his first dream.

He, with family and friends, began the removal of 15' hedges so rooted they had to use picks and methods just short of dynamite to dig out the "greenery". The trash provided another nasty matter to clear out and discard. When clear, Ron began to dream on his feet. Peter "Columbus" Annese, Jr. had done the stone

work at Shop Therapy and had taught Ron a lot about stone work, so they began to collaborate on the garden. It was the end of the crystal craze, "The Crystal Awareness," as Ron put it, so Ron fed Columbus lots of impressive crystal for the wall. Some pieces are the width of the wall—up to 18 inches—and most come from Brazil. Your eyes wander carefully and clingingly, charting out the crystals and suddenly you realize how much more there is to see.

The second year, Ron, family and friends camped in Arkansas. They camped and they mined American Crystal—all of which was hauled back for the wall. Year three, agate, lapis, citrine, rutilate, rose quartz and pyrite (fool's gold) was added. The rutilate is its very own deep red color with needles enclosed. And there are many contributions: a crystal ball, a piece of meteorite which landed in Provincetown, Carrara marble.

Two women happened by as the south wall was being constructed, and asked if Ron and Peter could please put a small brass merry-go-round horse into the wall. They had

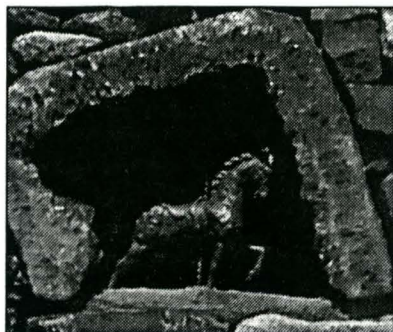


just lost a friend that weekend. This was her treasure and they would like to have it ever facing the ocean in her remembrance. Ron and I checked the horse and faced the ocean for a moment. Then we looked below and left to espy that beautiful piece of Austrian Crystal-blue as everyone should see it at least once.

Columbus continued the stone work with pillars and arches, twisted columns of stone and others of brick. Constant collaboration of Ron and Peter filling the space with work of height, width and centrifugal force.

Pierre Rich, metal sculptor from Woodstock, New York, and Provincetown, first created "The Winged Angel" for Ron, splendid

and silvery in the sunlight, hub caps and rivets turned heavenly. Nearby is a Buddha head of volcanic lava from Indonesia. Behind is a brass welcoming Buddha from India. At your feet, a boat's propeller, sandblasted and polished bright, designs cut out of its



clover shapes. Another is by the front gate, a lobster design cut out. Both propellers are the gifts of local fishermen.

An impressive brass amphora perched upon a twisted brick column catches your eye—an amphora from Silberhorn's, the column, by Columbus.

Above on the south wall is Ganesh, boy elephant god of India, god of prosperity, rebirth and new beginnings. It is the largest Ganesh most people will ever see and he belongs here in this reborn rectory garden. It took seven months to ship from India and when the statue arrived its leg and arm were broken off.

Michael Kacergis, Wonder Boy of Metal, repaired Ganesh. He was the first to teach Ron about metals. They both agreed that Ganesh had his rebirth in Provincetown. Michael's touches are all around this garden. There are two elegant "horse-shoe" chairs from Taos, New Mexico. Only six exist, and two of them are at 4 Center Street. Behind one chair is a cemetery gate dated 1834. It is from the Massachusetts-Rhode Island border, a great piece of work still in perfect condition.

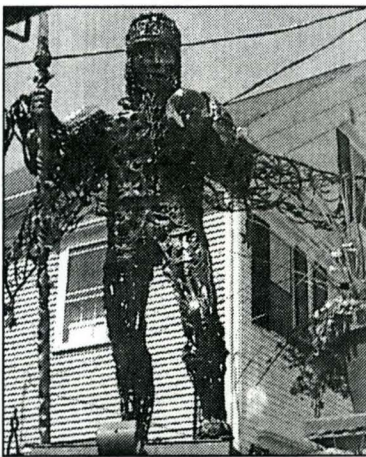


This wall put Ron Hazel on the search for as suitable a gate which reflected the 90's. After much effort, Peter Catchpole, an English blacksmith living in rural Connecticut, was Ron's choice. Catchpole has done iron-work for the Rockefellers and their ilk, beautiful work, traditional though a bit sterile by these standards. Peter Catchpole drove to Provincetown, stayed a day and a night observing the garden, the town and Ron Hazel. He agreed he would attempt the two front gates,

which took 18 months to complete. The south front gate has an ankh, ying & yang, a lengthy dragon of dramatic tale, a portly flaming sun. The north gate has the ocean and a whale as center. Both have butterfly latches, dragons and "18 hour tulips" on the gates. These are hand forged and each tulip has approximately 18 hours of hand hammering involved. Ron said he wanted strength in these gates and he got it. "Figure we're about 200 years old plus. These gates will last for 200 years. No one here will be alive as they wear on. That 1834 gate inspired me."

The back gate is a fantasy mushroom gate, 3-dimensional and so special. Carl Tasha designed and executed that gate. Richard Pepitone did the entrance railings to the house—mother, father,

daughter, son-tourist family. Pepitone also created the stained glass in the original door—glittery swimming fish. The devil fence on the north side will be moved further west. Then Pepitone will create a wrought iron "flower fence." That way his work will be all in one section. Ron has employed at least 10 local artists and they all have multiple skills and talents which are blended one to the other. Pierre Rich next created the great wizard sculpture and



then forged the gryphon bringing his contribution to three sculptures.

All through this, we are stepping over a 27' cement snake made by Scott, the sand sculptor who worked in front of the Crown & Anchor last year. Ron went to Czechoslovakia to buy the desired glass which decorates this snake. We are also passing a bathtub-Madonna shrine, which Columbus encircled in stone. I congratulated Ron,

telling him I have seen so many with the legs still on. "I can relate to that, he laughed, I'm Italian." It's a shrine to a local young lady now deceased.

Ron continued on the godfather line as we passed to the grape arbor. "My friend Frankie Deluca came down. My buddies dug and built this grape arbor for me. Then Frankie put 3 seeds in the four corners." Connotations told tales of the four winds. ...The 12 apostles... "This is my blood," came to mind. Under the arbor is the family dining table and a bench with a set of weights. Bob Gasoi's old sign "Fat Chance" hangs on the fence. Ron told me he never throws away a sign, not Gasoi's, not Charnick's—they're art. Bob Gasoi painted all the murals at *Shop Therapy*. We were most unfortunate to lose him last winter. He died of a heart attack in Mexico. Too young.

Ron finished up the garden tour by telling me the garden has two looks—day and night.

Gary Silva of Long Point Electric has "heavy-duty wired" the entire garden. Hand-wrought chandeliers or oil lamps are over the table. Indonesian wooden carvings hang within the arbor—sculptures and crystals are lit up for the night show. Ron Hazel loves his garden and is justifiably proud of it—one of a kind—a true bit of Provincetown. Ron gave me a house tour too! The building was restored and looks as it always has. Add sons, a nephew, a grandchild and others and you have reflections of Ganesh again—of rebirth and new life! We travelled all the way to the attic, where once I helped Mr. Kenneth clean out tons of tinsel, sequins and hymn books. The view has not changed. Down on the ground carrying on business, you can forget what a beautiful spot we live in. And along with the view I spied a multi-railing rooftop with plants and Bill Whitney in attendance. Is that *Shop Therapy*? Yes. Reminded me of Boston's North End where the locals carried soil each year and planted tomatoes in wooden cases so that they could have fresh tomatoes for their sauce. I felt again like I was standing next to the Godfather with a flit can. Oh yes, the sculpture garden also has plants, but that's a whole other story.... Thanks Ron, for the visit through your Garden of Delights. Your foresight and panache will live on in generations to come.