

Aarons' mid-century photos on exhibit at Boston Library

By John Hardy Wright

BANNER CORRESPONDENT

The year was 1949, and the unassuming photographer who captured two disparate working classes of the increasingly popular tourist destination of Provincetown was Bronx-born Jules Aarons. Twenty-eight years old, married and with his first son, the avocational lensman blended into the seasonal community at the tip of Cape Cod recording aspects of daily life, mainly in that pivotal artistic year. The two segments of society that interested Jules Aarons were the colorful, generations-old, mainly Portuguese fishermen and the vacationing "modern" New York artists (such as Adolph Gottlieb and Robert Motherwell), Boston artists (including Hyman Bloom and Lawrence Kupferman) and local seasonal Truro artists (Edward Hopper and Ben Shahn), some of whom painted, or engraved, among other abstract expressionist subjects, the same fishermen.

Being a "street photographer" (with his waist-level twin lens Rolleiflex reflex camera), Aarons specialized in people pictures which were taken during his career as an astrophysicist and rocket scientist, and

third floor Wiggin Gallery. Filling the walls and cases are 69 images in rich shades of black and white of unposed hard-working fishermen, posed introspective artists, waterfront scenes, and candid shots of locals along with occasional tourists. Sinclair Hitchings, the library's knowledgeable "keeper of prints," states that "Jules Aarons' photography is of high quality in a well-established tra-



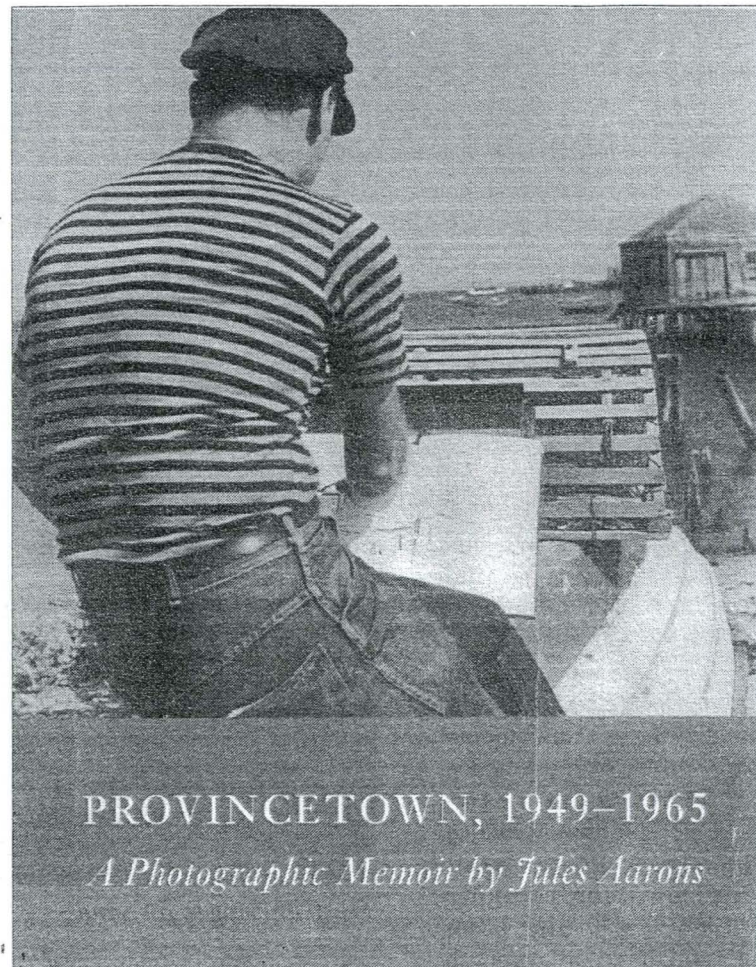
Jules Aarons in 1949.



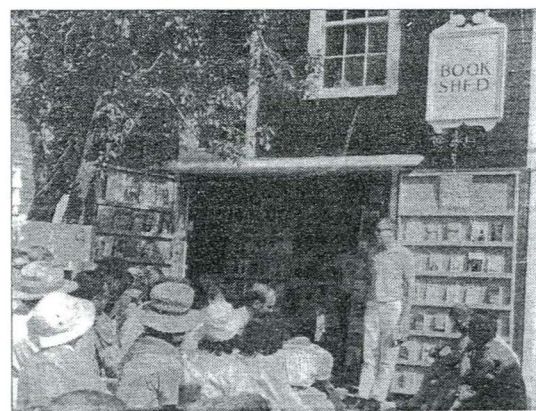
"July 4th, Before the Procession," photo by Jules Aarons.

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The cover from the catalog for the Jules Aarons show in Boston.



"Books and Arts and Tourists," photo by Jules Aarons, catches

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Being a “street photographer” (with his waist-level twin lens Rolleiflex reflex camera), Aarons specialized in people pictures which were taken during his career as an astrophysicist and rocket scientist, and later after his retirement. At the age of 80 he is professor emeritus of astronomy at Boston University.

The Boston Public Library, 700 Boylston St., Boston, is currently having a retrospective of the photographer’s original prints along with assorted colored postcards in an exhibit with accompanying catalog entitled “Provincetown, 1949-1965, A Photographic Memoir by Jules Aarons.” The exhibit is located in the handicapped accessible



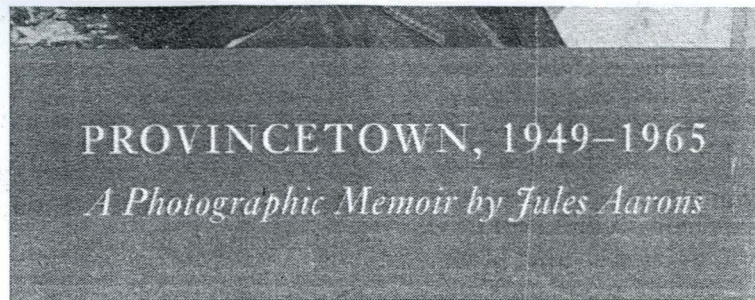
“July 4th, Before the Procession,” photo by Jules Aarons.

dition that goes back to the work of his hero, French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson.”

This evocative exhibit, which closes on Feb. 2, is the brainchild of Hitchings, and it was arranged by Aarons Schmidt of the print department, a young friend of Jules Aarons.

[Editor’s note: John Hardy Wright is a former museum curator and author of two pictorial histories of Provincetown. There is a catalog with 35 images from the Aarons show available for purchase through the BPL. Images include

fishermen, art openings and artists. The catalog contains essays including one by Aarons about his Provincetown experience. Call (617)536-5400 or log on to www.bpl.org/research/publications/ptown.htm.] □



The cover from the catalog for the Jules Aarons show in Boston.



“Books and Arts and Tourists,” photo by Jules Aarons, catches an outdoor reading.

