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The INDEPENDENT November 7, 2014 Lifestyle

Page 6

Where's Wallace? An artist's journey from watercolors to e-books

Donna Howard

Where's Wallace? To borrow an intro line from the playful children's book character Waldo seems appropriate for catching up with Carol Wallace, arguably one of the Northwest Corner's most widely-travelled artists. We recently interviewed Wallace by phone. She had just returned from another adventure, a road trip along historic Route 66.

Carol Wallace gained national prominence in 1997 for introducing her "Preserve America" art series that helps to celebrate over 400 historic buildings and sites, most listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Her watercolors and pen-and-ink sketches appear on stationery, book jackets, calendars and promotional items. That project had its roots in a trip to Vermont in 1995, where she overheard concerns that small, local country stores were losing business to major chain stores and might disappear altogether. She responded by partnering with her friend, the poet Jean Sands of Harwinton, to create a poster featuring 30 Vermont country stores. It was introduced by Governor Howard Dean and hung in every library and school in that state.

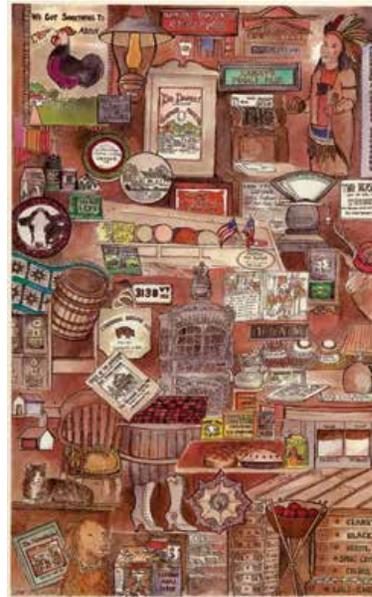
Wallace remembers, "I went 20 times to Vermont, back and forth. Business was done as a collaborative thing — on a handshake." This

work ethic felt comfortable for the Barkhamsted resident who had grown up in a small village in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Her horizons have expanded now to include "Gatekeepers of History" — people who have preserved some iconic aspect of Americana. She takes her own photos, then writes and paints their stories. She says, "When I went down Route 66 I had people lined up to interview."

But her recent exploration has also turned inward in an altogether different direction. Unafraid to try new mediums of expression, in 2012 Carol wrote and illustrated a children's e-book with 20 full-color illustrations, "Daisy's Reality Show Adventure." The star of the book is "a multi-talented rat terrier who goes on the reality show circuit. She lives in an all-animal world and starts in humble beginnings...but her wonderful voice sends her to American Howler."

Daisy is partly based upon a boxer



The poster of Vermont country stores that inspired Carol Wallace's Preserve America project.

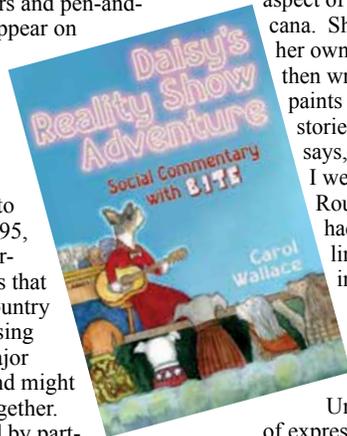
owned by Wallace's son, Rick. The boxer's face morphs into another character in the book, the filmmaker, Michael "Puggy" Pugnose. Other reality show notables appear thinly — and humorously — disguised as dogs. You can see the promo to daisy-dogenterprises.com. It features a "booming" voiceover by New Hartford resident, Greg O'Brien. O'Brien is a voice actor employed at ESPN.

Wallace says, "It's satirical for young adults...this is a statement of mine on Americana. I feel something had to be said about both Americana and reality shows. When I wrote the book I watched (lots of) reality shows. I learned a lot. It was extremely tough writing and illustrating a book, harder than other work I've done."

This e-book then formed the backbone of a richly illustrated 86-page printed novella. Wallace launched the hardcover book at two events along her Route 66 trip in late September. She did a book signing at Angel Delgadillo's Gift Shop and Barbershop Museum in Seligman, Arizona, and again at

Pink's Hot Dogs in Hollywood, famous for its long history of serving hot dogs to celebrities. In the book, Daisy visits Pink's and Gloria Pink will be one of the Gatekeepers of History featured in its own page of Wallace's website, preserveamerica.com.

Wallace has lived since 1968 near the New Hartford/Barkhamsted town line with her husband, Rick Wallace, an attorney. In addition to the Route 66 gambit, in this past year she has traveled to Beijing, Thailand, and Ha-Long Bay in the Gulf of Tonkin. She and Rick also went cross-country on the Zephyr and drove up the west coast. All nourishment for her endless curiosity and creativity.



Carol Wallace (left) displays an illustration and her new book, "Daisy's Reality Show Adventure," with Gloria Pink at Pink's Hot Dogs in Hollywood.