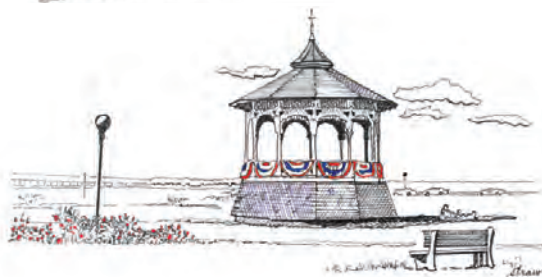
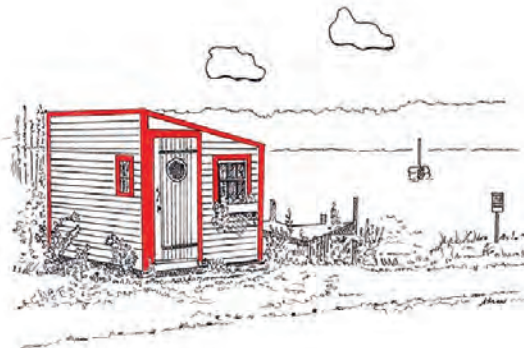
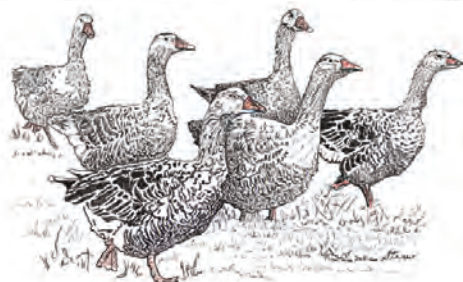
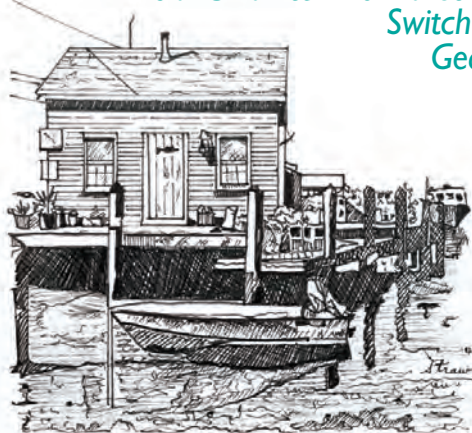


**Creating
Bite-size Treats**
Island Painter Donna Straw
Switches
Gears



One afternoon this summer I was out walking with a friend. A neighbor came toward us on the other side of the road. I called out a greeting and said, "I bet you're painting up a storm." "I'm not," she replied.

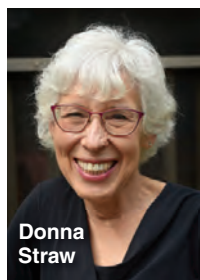
I felt that COVID caution coming on, wondering if she or a family member had suffered physical, financial, relational, or emotional difficulties during the pandemic. Before I could inquire, my neighbor began describing a new form of art she was doing and how it had brought joy and peace into her life alone with her daily 4-mile walks.

The three of us stood socially distant in the road and chatted for a good twenty minutes. I was so taken with her enthusiasm for life and art and her ability to recreate herself during a global pandemic that I had to do a story on Donna Straw.

Donna, who turned 70 in July, has lived fulltime on the Island with her husband Bill since 2008. Donna and Bill first visited Martha's Vineyard thirty-five years ago. For one day, "There was this magic," said Donna.

Work and life kept the Straws busy in their hometown of Nyack, New York. Donna taught art at Nyack High School.

She was drawn to art as a child and has since dedicated her life to teaching and creating art.



Donna
Straw

"I was the student's cheerleader," said Donna, who loved her job so much you can still hear the enthusiasm in her voice when she talks about those years and the students she had. "I grew up as a person, an artist, and an educator in Nyack's multi-cultural school system."

Seventeen years passed before Donna and Bill returned to our Island paradise. Donna and Bill were here for a week, and during that time they found a piece of property they could afford. "It only had mosquitoes and poison ivy," Donna joked.

Shortly before she retired and moved to the Island, Donna began to focus on her own artwork. She distinguished herself in hard-edged acrylic paintings. Donna's first series was eight paintings of birdhouses. After moving to the Island, Donna's next series was the Campground. She was featured at Cousen Rose gallery for seven years.

From the Campground, Donna slowly moved into landscapes and seascapes. She

transitioned her showings to A Gallery and pushed herself hard to create significant pieces and a name for herself.

If you love art as I do, you've probably been to one of Donna's openings or seen her work in one of our Island galleries. Until now. This year, 2020, is the first year Donna is not in a gallery. She finished her last painting in April shortly after COVID hit. Donna's current series, Lily Pads, is perhaps my favorite. Check them out on her website at: <http://donnastraw.com>.

As our lives were radically altered this spring, Donna's spirit could not be quenched. Her need for beauty and joy provoked something inside that she wasn't truly aware of. She had dabbled in line drawings occasionally, and "my husband loved them, but I always had paintings to do for a show," said Donna.

As COVID shut down our lives, Donna picked up her sketchbook, micron pen, and set out to find beauty and hope. "Life is so precious. COVID has shown me that. Moments matter and these drawings keep me in the moment. I wake up each day and need to draw," said Donna. "I keep pushing myself through another tunnel and light comes through."

Donna has drawn over 70 pieces since May. Each piece is 4" x 6" and only takes her two to four hours to sketch instead of a month or more to paint. "These pieces make me smile, make me happy. They soothe me," said Donna, adding with a smile, "These are my bite-size treats."

I have a few favorites in Donna's latest pieces – a rooster, a baby goat, and a calf, but her line drawing of the scallop shack was a "must-own" for me so I bought it. And, I suspect a few family members and friends will be receiving a special drawing for Christmas. **vs** – Lisa Belcastro

You can check out Donna's latest creations on her Instagram page at: www.instagram.com/donna.straw or on Facebook at: facebook.com/donnastraw

Donna is selling her line drawings and acrylic paintings from her home. You can email Donna at: artesprit39@aol.com to arrange for a private showing.