

COASTAL

Life

Capturing the Essence of New England



Light or Enlighten

CONTENTS

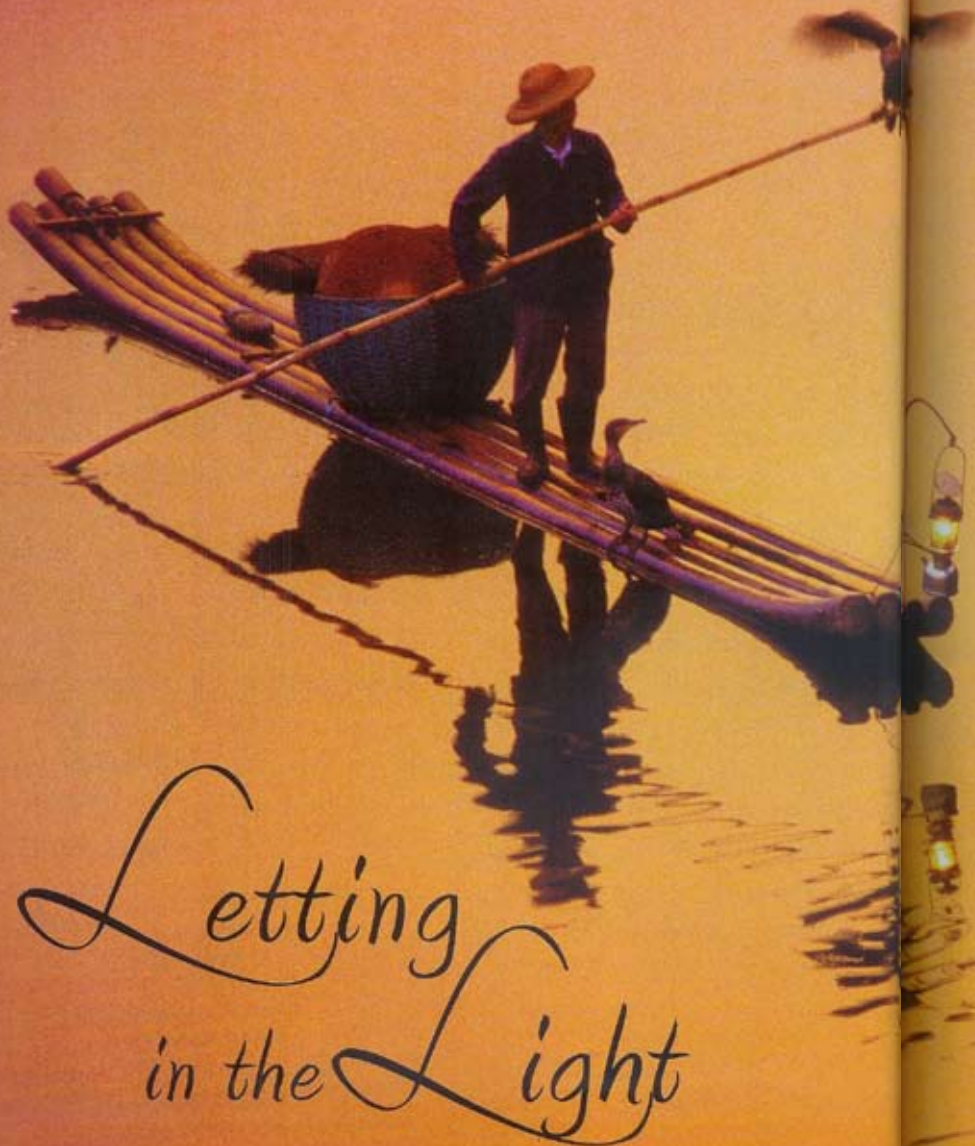
VOLUME 5 ISSUE 6

- 8 PUBLISHER'S LETTER**
- 12 FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER**
James S. Robbins
• *by Beth Perdue*
- 22 CHINA TRADER ANTIQUES**
Charlie Brown, Marion, MA
• *by Jay Alexander*
- 34 BALDWIN BROTHERS DEVELOPMENT**
Marion, MA
• *by Jay Alexander*
- 38 CARRIAGE HOUSE INN**
Chatham, MA
• *by Nicole M. Bouchard*
- 47 THE TIDES**
Baggins Guest House, Fairhaven, MA
- 52 BARKHOUSE**
Highland Craftsmen Bark Shingles
• *by Anne Roland*
- 58 HOME MARKET FEATURE**
Village Charmer, Converse Co. Realtors,
Marion, MA
• *by Nancy A. Bergquist*
- 64 ATLANTIC SUBARU**
Bourne Car Dealership
• *Michael J. Decicco*
- 74 A HOUSE TRUE TO ITS TIME**
Historic House in Seekonk, MA
• *by Nicole M. Bouchard*
- 86 GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS**
First Congregational Church, Middleboro, MA
• *by Nancy A. Bergquist*
- 92 HAPPENIN**
- 95 RESTAURANT REVIEW**
Dave's Diner, Middleboro, MA



ON THE COVER

Photograph, Red Boat, by James Robbins. See related story on page 12 of this issue and visit www.lightandshadows.com to view more of his beautiful photography.



Letting
in the Light

PHOTOGRAPHS REVEAL HUMANITY'S SHARED EXPERIENCE

STORY BY BETH PERDUE
EXCLUSIVE TO COASTAL LIFE

Take a look at the photographs of James S. Robbins and you'll find it hard not to be drawn in. Warm and inviting, the images give viewers glimpses into people and places of other cultures, emphasizing the common themes shared by all. It's like peaking through an open window to see the everyday intimacy of people's lives.

That's not surprising given the photographer's own experience of the creative process.

A former attorney who only began taking photographs around age 50, Jim's life opened in new ways when he began nurturing his creative and intuitive side. Always a strong technological and analytical thinker, the decision to express himself in a new way transformed his life.

"It was very revolutionary for me in a lot of ways," he said. "It was an opening for me that has been transformative — like a second shot at life — that's how important it's been."

Now 62, Jim balances both his careers, working to expand his photographic repertoire while continuing to practice law. His gallery of images include scenes from as far away as China, India and Italy as well as shots from the Western U.S. and closer to his Carlsle, Mass.-home.

He is a member of the prestigious Copley Society and has had numerous shows there. Locally, he has shown at Tiverton's Gallery 4 where he recently wrapped up an exhibit of his images from Morocco.

Perhaps because his decision to become an artist was such a life-changing move, Jim's work seems to walk the edge of deep emotional caverns, inviting viewers to dive down with him into qualities like compassion and peacefulness.

"I have this opportunity to open little windows. You see things that are just wonderful moments in people's lives; you see the humanity in people no matter who they are," he said.



ABOVE: Field Hand
LEFT: James Robbins
RIGHT: Devotion



"Most of my pictures have a kind of peace in them," he continued. "It's a kind of quietness. And the viewer's not aware of the noisy context in which it's being made."

That's because Jim's compositions often highlight relationship and beauty and filter out visual noise.

One example comes from his recent trip to Morocco. An image from the collection shows two older men strolling side by side

with their hands touching. The photo shows only the men's backs, as they walk away from the camera in Eastern dress.

Elderly, they carry canes in their outer hands.

The image grabs your heart as you feel the two men's friendship, and catch a glimpse of what led Jim to chase after these men in order to capture the image.

"In a sense it warmed me because we men are raised to sort of be more separate





or separated from other men," Jim said about the photograph. "We can join together around an activity; we can be a football team or a basketball team. We can go drinking...but we don't allow ourselves to show our vulnerabilities."

"And, here these two men had finally lived enough to be able to walk down the street hand in hand. It was very hopeful for me," he added.

After seeing Jim's recent work,

one woman told him, "You can see the soul of these people in these images, or maybe I'm seeing your soul."

It's a comment he found insightful.

"I think she's spot on. I think you're seeing both," he said.

"I believe minds speak to minds; hearts speak to hearts and souls speak to souls," he added.

At the same time, Jim stressed that he doesn't have a message for his audience.

For him, the experience between his photograph and the viewer is similar to a personal conversation. It's also the way he describes his own process for taking photographs, one that is fluid and dynamic, based on a deepening relationship with the subject.

"It's the conversation that gets recorded in the art work if it's successful," Jim said, adding, "You have to be open to the conversation that you're having with the world."

LEFT: Tuscan Trees

TOP RIGHT: Golden Steps

LOWER RIGHT: Returning Home



Jim's ability to embrace his intuitive, creative side did not happen easily. He was raised in a practical Jewish family in New York, and spent nearly 30 years working as a lawyer and raising his two children.

It took getting hit by a truck, literally, to get the left-brained attorney behind a camera.

He remembers the event clearly. He was on his way to court, walking, he said, with his mind elsewhere.

"I had the classic, going toward the light, experience," Jim said, "and I realize that I'm talking with God."

He remembers thanking God for a good life before adding in an innocent, almost childlike, tone, "Geez, there were some things I wanted to do and now I'm not going to get to do them."

Minutes later, after he regained consciousness, Jim got up and continued to the courtroom where a wise judge put off deliberations for the day.

But the attorney's life changed from there on.

"What a gift it was to me because what it said to me was, Jim, it's really up to you. What you will have in your life is what you bring to it and ask for in



your life, what you apply yourself to and work at, no more and no more less," he said. "It's not up to me, God. I put opportunities in front of you and you do what you need to do. I don't control all that; you pick and choose."

What he decided he wanted to do was express his creative side.

After choosing photography as the medium, Jim spent several years learning the technical aspects of the camera, studying with photographers he admired and developing his vision. Slowing he began gaining confidence in his work and showing his photographs outside his immediate circle of family and friends.

When he takes photos, he looks for three things, he said.

Light, color and gesture.

Light, he said, is the real subject of every photograph.

"You're photographing light that's bouncing off of things, you're not photographing things," he said. "It's the light that makes the picture; it's not the thing that makes the picture."

Color has been a true love since he studied studio art as an under-

graduate at Colgate University.

And, he said, "The last element is gesture. A gesture can mean a lot of things; it doesn't just mean how somebody's hand is raised. It's an element of energy. There is something that hooks you into this image and gets your attention."

One of Jim's Moroccan images illustrates this concept well. It's of a 116-year-old Moroccan man who, he told Jim, has a combined 73 children and grandchildren.

Jim met the man in Marrakesh when he wandered beyond tourist borders and was invited to join in a conversation while enjoying bread dipped in olive oil with mint tea.

"They let me join and we chatted (with some) bad French, a smattering of English and a smattering of Arabic," he said. "It was a highlight of the trip for me."

The photograph is a close-up of the man's face whose expression has a joyous, almost wondrous quality with his hand raised in front of his face as if describing something.

"Look how alive he is," Jim said, adding that he sent the man a copy of the photo.



ABOVE LEFT: Laral
ABOVE: Three Horses Running

"It was just a very, very nice moment where a guy from one culture could get to sit with a guy from another culture, share some stories, and talk as men do," he said.

Before his artistic pursuit Jim had never traveled beyond the East Coast; but, now he has been to India, China, Mexico, Europe and more. He's gotten to know a 116-year-old Arab man, fought a bull in a Mexican training ring, and watched Chinese fishermen send trained cormorants into waters to catch fish for their families.

"I feel like I inhabit my life more fully than I ever did," he said.

In a statement he wrote about his goals as a pho-

tographer, Jim wrote, he intends to "photograph how the ordinary reveals the extraordinary (and) to see the infinite openings in the world."

"That's what this is for me. It's just an utter joy," he said. "I just enjoy the process. I've gotten to travel so many places and learn so much, all because of this gift."

See more of Jim's work at www.lightandshadows.com