

Calendar

August 14-20, 2008

and Arts and Entertainment

GALLERIES

ARTISTS, OPENINGS, SHOWS, PREVIEWS

FOCUSING ON A LIFE: PETER SIMON

By Samantha McCoy

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On Sunday, August 17th,
Mr. Simon will show a retro-
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which he opened last month
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"I see my life as full of ex-
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETER SIMON

Peter and Ronni Simon in their new gallery on Main Street in Vineyard Haven.

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Over the years, the direc-
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"I'm not on the cutting
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"It's much different here.
There aren't catastrophic
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Mr. Simon has faced his
share of challenges, but feels
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understanding of life's trials.
Mr. Simon went through
years of personal turmoil and
struggling with the disease of
alcoholism.

"I didn't see the conse-
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After a year of enforced re-
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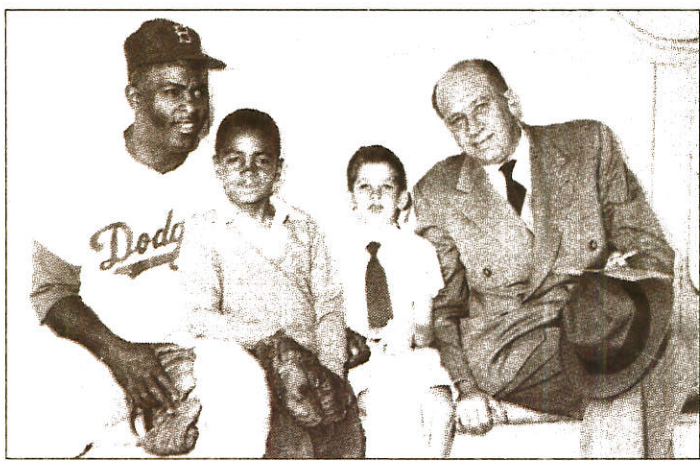
He believes that his trials

have helped his photography
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"I've come away with a much
deeper understanding of the
human dilemma," he says. "I
used to be rather superficial
in my outlook, it was very
'don't worry be happy.' Now I
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the complexities of life."

Through his ups and
downs, Mr. Simon is opti-
mistic for what is to come.
"My life is an open book," he
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Simon Gallery's Sunday
Specials series, 5-7 pm, fea-
tures Peter Simon on August
17; Linda Fairstein on August
24; and Alan Dershowitz on
August 31. For more informa-
tion, call 508-325-2242.



Fathers and sons, back in the day: Jackie Robinson and his son, David, with Peter Simon and his father, publishing magnate Richard Simon.

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Peter Simon is on the phone, singing sister Carly Simon's hit song, "Never Been Gone" to this writer: "Seagulls cry and the hills are green/ And my friends are waiting for me/ Great ambition is all a dream/ Let me drown my pride in the sea."

And then he recalls, "The line aptly describes what was going on in my head before I moved here year-round. It all made so much sense. I had been trying to make it as a photographer in New York but it didn't feel like it was true to my soul — coming to the Vineyard was."

After 20 years, Mr. Simon has become an integral member of the Island community. He is omnipresent, smiling, barefoot, with a slightly nervous flutter, a wide and friendly smile, often appearing at art shows and events. In addition to his prints, stationery, and magazine work, his yearly calendars featuring his photographs have become an anticipated offering. His coffee-table retrospective, "I and Eye: Pictures of My Generation (Little, Brown and Company)" generated national attention, and his series of three "On the Vineyard" books have become collectibles.

Mr. Simon grew up in the arts: His three sisters were all professional singers, his mother was community activist Andrea Heinemann Simon, and his father, Richard L. Simon, co-founder of the publishing company Simon and Shuster Inc..

"My father always had a camera with him," Mr. Simon remembers, "and in my childhood I noticed how he went around shooting every-

Peter Simon began emulating his father soon after receiving his first toy camera. "I inherited his passion for music, photography and documenting people and times," he states.

On Sunday, August 17th, Mr. Simon will show a retrospective of his work in his Vineyard Haven Gallery, which he opened last month with his wife, Ronni Simon.

Mr. Simon will present a lecture to accompany his photographs as part of a series of Sunday Specials- appearances that began last week at the gallery. The lecture, "Through the Lens: Pictures of My Generation," follows the story line of Mr. Simon's life as it has applied to counter-cultures: drugs and rock and roll in the 60s, generations of anti-war protestors and communal living are just a few historical events of the era. His work also depicts icons like Grateful Dead, James Taylor and Bob Marley.

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The artist, who is also a commercial photographer,



Peter and Ronni Simon in their new gallery on Main Street in Vineyard Haven.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETER SIMON

shooting family portraits, events and weddings, focuses on local landscapes, trying to capture what he describes as "the effervescence" of the Vineyard. His images are traditional representations of

beaches, sunsets, farmland and panoramic views of the Island in all its seasons.

Over the years, the direction of Mr. Simon's photography has shifted along with his personal life. "When I got married and had a kid, I realized I had to be a part of the material world," he says. "Yet, I refused to do advertising." The artist moved to the Vineyard, where he had been spending summers since childhood.

"I'm not on the cutting edge anymore," he notes about the direction his work has taken, adding, "It's much different here. There aren't catastrophic horrible things. There are no people dying on the streets. With the move, I retreated into a

comfort zone of family photography and sunsets. But I am lucky to have found a place to live that is so photogenic and where art is so supported and appreciated."

Mr. Simon has faced his share of challenges, but feels his constructive outlook has given him a more complete understanding of life's trials. Mr. Simon went through years of personal turmoil and struggling with the disease of alcoholism.

"I didn't see the consequences of my actions. I was completely warped and depressed. I gave up on life," he admits.

After a year of enforced rehabilitation for repeatedly driving under the influence, Mr. Simon began his recovery.

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have helped his photography become more multi-faceted. "I've come away with a deeper understanding of human dilemma," Mr. Simon says. "I used to be rather skeptical in my outlook, it was 'don't worry be happy.' I understand that life is about that. I have a deeper understanding of the complexities of life."

Through his ups and downs, Mr. Simon is optimistic for what is to come. "My life is an open book," he declares. ♦

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