

# Hilton Samuel's Journey with Dem Pollock



I must have been 12 or 13, when my younger brother, Keith and I decided we were going to brave it. We were going to ask her. We didn't know how to do it, but we knew we just had to do it. We didn't have a plan, no prepared speech, no script of how best to approach her. We didn't know how she would respond, but our pounding

trepidation was dwarfed by the intense desire to be able to replicate even a shabby semblance of what we saw at the exhibition.

I can't remember how we got to go to the exhibition as two country boys in town usually had no interest in fine arts. But we did witness the awe-inspiring realistic pictures by Mrs Pollock, as she fondly became known to us.

That started a fire in us. Somehow a part of us that we never knew existed was awakened and we knew that we had to respond to the call.

That day, a Thursday afternoon I think it was, we set out from our home in Parliament Street on a mission to answer the call. We walked with a sense of excitement tainted with fear of the unknown. As we walked the stretch of road past the Montserrat Water Authority, the huge evergreen tree by her house loomed into view. The intimidating 30 foot tree didn't deter us.

It was only when we got right in front of her stately house that our fears nearly forced us to abandon the mission. But we egged each other on until I finally braved it and rang the doorbell.

Too late now, it was do or die.

To our shock and horror an angry middle aged woman, with hands akimbo appeared from around the side of the house glaring over the rim of imposing glasses. She demanded to know what we wanted and we were flummoxed. Unknown to us, children in the area loved to ring the bell and disappear, so she was not happy to hear another bell in the middle of her afternoon siesta.

I don't remember how we managed but we somehow squeaked that we had seen her paintings and wanted to learn to draw. That warmed her heart and an inviting smile replaced the angry glare on her face. She quizzed us on our names and who we were. That was the entrance into the "art school", world and heart of Dem Pollock. That was the beginning of a long, beneficial and profitable relationship with Mrs. Pollock.

She took us on as sons. She even supplied all the art equipment needed and the only thing required of us was commitment and dedication. And we had plenty of that. Every week, sometimes twice a week, we went to her house for art lessons, sessions that were punctuated with long talks about life and an outside world we could only imagine.

Funnily enough, it was during some of these lessons that I came to know something about myself. She labelled my brother's paintings as realistic and mine were impressionistic. I always wanted to produce work like my brother's, but she helped me to understand that my type of painting was not only different but valuable.

This was confirmed one time when I wanted to throw away a painting I had done. It never came out the way I saw it in my mind, but she took it, sold it and gave me the money. I was over the moon. I just couldn't believe it. Somehow it really helped me to value myself and what I can produce.

She was a "mother" who introduced us to a dimension of life that we would never have known without her.



**Dem's House on Wall Street, Montserrat**