

## Island Gallery and Christmas Shop

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When Edward Greene and Richard Lacerre announced in June 2005 that they were closing the famous Island Gallery and Christmas Shop in Manteo, customers from near and far cried "say it ain't so, Joe!"

Visiting the shop had become an annual ritual of many families made up of multiple generations who had visited the store during its almost four decades of "spreading the sparkle." Christmas decorations, gift items, art and very rare and unusual antique pieces used for displays made visiting the store an adventure akin to going into a museum of oohhs and aaahhs. In 2006, several months after the store had closed, the antiques were inventoried and catalogued in preparation of what was perhaps the largest auction ever held in Dare County. But there was still much left to be done to completely clear the premises and prepare the property for a new owner. Recently, the office equipment and communications lines were moved from the property to a newly-built office at Greene's and Lacerre's home in Manteo. And, now, they will have to move it back again - they are going to put the sparkle back in Manteo.

"In the 1970s, we advertised ourselves as the store of stores," said Greene. "And this year, we will be a store of stores -- small boutiques, studios, galleries, craft shops -- all manned by new and budding entrepreneurs."

Greene said that the decision to reopen the business has been prompted both by wanting to and by practicality. "I will be 83 in May and had plans to be on the beach in Hawaii," said Greene. "But given the current real estate market, it seems that this isn't a good time to be selling the property."

It's time for the building to once again begin producing income to cover the ongoing expenses of the property, said Greene. To some, this might be a bitter sweet story but given Greene's track record with the Fates, there's sure to be sparkle on the horizon and unique surprises both for him and Lacerre, as well as the admiring public.

During WWII, Greene served as a pharmacist mate in the US Navy, a job that inspired him to go on to medical school after the war. But Fate moved in when he signed up for an elective course in modern dance. With the help of a counselor, he found a dance school that accepted the GI Bill for his tuition.

A few years later, while studying in New York City, he was approached about coming to Roanoke Island to be in a play -- The Lost Colony. After that first introduction to Dare County, although he continued performing on the Broadway stage as well as traveling productions, Greene knew he wanted to settle in Manteo. It took a dozen years, but at last he returned to buy a 1200-square-foot cinder block house and the Christmas Shop was born. With him was Lacerre who worked alongside Greene for almost the next four decades. Today, the building which has been added on to often, encompasses approximately 30,000 square feet.

In a story about the closing of the store in 2005, the Sentinel reported that "because his hasn't been a path of predictability, no one can say what his future holds, but one thing is for certain, whatever it is, it will have its own magical sparkle."

How true, how true...and we can't wait! [sandy@obsentinel.com](mailto:sandy@obsentinel.com) | 252-480-2234