



Ellen Powell Tiberino outside her Powelton Village home, the outer wall of which is decorated with art created by both her and her husband, Joe.

The Philadelphia Inquirer / APRIL SAUL

Ellen Powell Tiberino has cancer. She's fought it for 11 years — through seven major operations. "I paint life," she says, "and life is not always beautiful."

# An artist battles time

By Alexis Moore  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Her face is thin, with unlined light-brown skin stretched tautly over strong cheekbones. Her eyes are large and dark and burn with her vision of life. Her hands, large and long-fingered, with ragged nails, bear the marks of her life's work and now hold the first of many cigarettes. Fragility seems to hover about her tall frame.

Ellen Powell Tiberino, 51, is considered by many to be the most prominent black female artist in Philadelphia. Her work has spawned praise and controversy. She has won awards and criticism. Her life has been consumed by her work and her family — husband Joe and their three children, Raphael, 19, Leo, 17, and Ellen, 15.

But now Tiberino is being consumed by illness. Cancer has her in its fist, and she has been trying to shake free of it — and its complications — for 11 years. She has been ravaged by countless hospitalizations, seven rounds of major surgery, radiation. Pain is her ever-present companion. But although in the grip of the disease, she refuses to give it the upper hand.

Seated in her antiques-cluttered Powelton Village home, she talked of her work and her mission — a mission affected by her illness and her race against time.



Ellen and Joe Tiberino. He is a painter/muralist.

"When I am asked where I get my inspiration, I say it's all my life, my friends, everything I've seen and known. And I want to make it all come together and make sense and make people see. There's a feeling of joy that comes with it," she said in a low-pitched, halting voice.

"I don't think enough credit is given to the real things in life, what I base my work on. . . . Many people only want beauty around them, and I record life."

She has something left to give humanity before she leaves."

Through it all, she continues to paint and draw, exhibits her work at area galleries and teaches small classes.

"I never would have thought that I could deal as well as I have with pain. I've been naive about a lot of things, and this has really made me grow up in an odd sort of way," she said, recalling the

Her quest to make a mark has been slowed by her physical ailments. Several times doctors have told her husband to prepare for the end. Each time she has battled back — but at a cost. She easily falls victim to infections, intestinal blockages and bone-wearying fatigue.

"What she has to do just to get up in the morning is equal to everyone else's whole day's progress," said Joe Tiberino, who also is an artist, now finishing a docudrama about the art world. "The physical problems are so overwhelming that she shouldn't be able to function at all."

Steve Jones, a graduate student in Afro-American art at the University of Pennsylvania, said the report "had been that she should have been dead by now, and the point is she's not listening to it. Hers is a life-affirming presence. She has chosen to focus on this time and making the most of it."

(See ARTIST on 6-K)



A lithograph by Ellen Tiberino, who says she paints "to please no one but myself."

## Hunters aim for safety first

Before stalking their prey, young novices hear the words that can save their lives.

By Melissa Dribben  
Special to The Inquirer

Don't get them wrong. They have nothing against Bambi. But the state's fresh crop of licensed hunters — many of them children who still go to bed with teddy bears — also want to shoot the real thing. Black bears, cottontail rabbits or a prize 12-pointer — a deer with an antler branch for each candle on the hunter's birthday cake.

It's hunting season in Pennsylvania, the state that issues more hunting licenses than any other. Last year, 1,159,412 hunters were licensed to stalk the woods and fields in search of game in Pennsylvania. Twelve percent were 12 to 16 years old, the so-called junior hunters.

Given the amount of undeveloped land left, Tom McNish figures, it works out to about 42 hunters for every square mile of hunting ground. That's just one of the facts that pepper a hunter-safety course taught by McNish this season — a course that has been credited with saving lives for years.

"I don't want some yahoo out there who



Jack Dubbs of the North Forty Rod and Gun Club teaching son Timmy, 12.

The Philadelphia Inquirer / MICHAEL S. WITZ

doesn't know what he's doing," said McNish, who lives in Folsom, Delaware County. That's why we teach hunter safety. We want to get rid of the yahoos."

Whereas fishermen swap stories of mammoth striped bass that nearly were caught, hunters tell stories about hunting accidents.

Last year, the Pennsylvania Game Commission recorded 128 hunting accidents, including 12 fatalities, said Richard J. Shire, wildlife conservation officer for Philadel-

phia County. Junior hunters usually were not the troublemakers, Shire said. Most of the accidents were caused by hunters between 20 and 50 years old. Ten percent were caused by those under age 16.

In fact, since the younger hunters were required to take a hunter-safety course before hoisting a rifle, he said, they often ended up teaching their accompanying adults a thing or two about proper con-

(See HUNTERS on 7-K)

## Men who avoid making their own fashion choices

The other day I heard a radio commercial for a store that sells men's clothing. It caused me to wonder not about clothing but about men who don't know who they are.

By DARRELL SIFFORD



The commercial extolled what was described as one of the great benefits of shopping at this store. "If you're confused about whether pleated trousers are right for you or whether you should wear cuffs, you can get expert advice from our knowledgeable staff . . . on how to achieve a fashionable look."

What is a fashionable look? I suppose that the people who run the stores, write the advertising copy, go to the fashion shows, might say that it's whatever is deemed to be "in" at the moment by the "right" people, whoever they are.

A lot of men buy into this and, as a result, you see guys who in successive years are wearing flares, pegged trousers, baggies, skin-tight pants, yellow suspenders, no suspenders, shoes with high heels, shoes without heels. I see men who wear three-piece suits on 100-degree days, men who, I imagine, would sleep in their vests if the "right" people told them that it was the thing to do. A few years ago, when the Don Johnson look was in, I saw men in business suits with a day's growth of beard — because, after all, that was the way a man was supposed to look. Not long after that, when the Don Johnson look faded, these same guys were clean-shaven — because, after all,

that was the way a man was supposed to look.

All of this makes me feel profoundly sad for the men who have so little sense of themselves that they can't make a decision about what to buy or how to look without getting instructions. My guess is that these

(See SIFFORD on 7-K)

### Index



At Last makes fashionable clothing for overweight children. Although it is based in Massachusetts, it offers a mail-order catalogue. Fashion, Page 3-K.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says that after a caesarean, a normal delivery is the treatment of choice. Coping, Page 8-K.

Ann Landers 4-K On health 2-K  
Fitness 4-K Society 5-K  
Miss Manners 4-K Style 3-K



# A stricken artist is battling courageously to gain more time



Tiberino supervises Pierre Vendette and Mary Leventon as they sketch Roseanne Hornum feeding her baby.

ARTIST, from 1-K many treks back and forth to hospitals, the complexities of patient-doctor relationships, the terrifying isolation and battles against medical red tape.

There has been an "abundance of growth [in the artwork] that has taken place in the years of my illness. The greatest part of my learning has taken place over the past 10, 11 years," she said, but the key to her survival is integrity.

"I've never sold myself short. I paint to please no one but myself, and I have done more meaningful work because of it," she said in a voice grown suddenly stronger. "I paint life, and life is not always beautiful."

That was the case in 1986 when the Tiberinos collaborated on a three-dimensional relief sculpture depicting the 1985 MOVE confrontation that included the image of Mayor Goode as a mask of death. When the 7-foot sculpture was displayed at Temple University's law school, it caused controversy among students (Goode's daughter Muriel was a law student at the time) and made newspapers across the country.

The Tiberinos say they created the piece to express the pain they both felt watching the MOVE disaster. "I'm not a politician; I'm an artist. I must record what I see," Ellen Tiberino said.

The urge to create has been with Tiberino since her childhood. "Ever since I was a very small child I've wanted to be an artist first," she said. "I've been working toward that all my life." She observed people and absorbed tales of family life from such people as her Great-Aunt Lita who became inspirations for portraits and line drawings.

"I've been in art over 35 years. ... And my parents said there's nothing you can't accomplish if you want it bad enough."

One of seven children, Tiberino grew up in Mantua in West Philadelphia. Her parents, Queenie and the late William Powell, were hard-working people who "were very strong. My mother isn't well herself still, but she'll come down days when I'm not having such a good day. I see her strength, and that kind of keeps me going."

When she entered Overbrook High School, she kept her eyes open for "all opportunities" for more art education. "If it was free, I was right there," she said with a laugh.

When she won a scholarship to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, she began to stretch even more and received honors for her work. She said that this annoyed some faculty and support staff, who resented a black woman's achieving honors "or just being there. But I don't like to put things on a basis of color, or sex. People who have problems like that — they stem from their own insecurity."

She won the prestigious Cresson Traveling Scholarship Award when she was a student at the academy. Only the second black woman to win the award, she used the stipend to travel through Europe.

After her European travels, she returned to Philadelphia for a brief time before she moved to New York. At a going-away party here she met Joe, whose skill as a painter/muralist eventually won him the coveted Edwin Abbey Fellowship three times. "From my end, it was automatic attraction," he said.

It took a little while longer for Ellen; she worked in New York for six years, and the couple dated off and on during that period.

"When did we get married, dear?" she asked, adding to a visitor that "Joe is more organized than me about that kind of thing."

"1923, wasn't it?" Joe responded, with a smile and quick peck on the lips that speaks of a solid 21-year marriage.

It was on her return that she began developing a dramatic style of representational art, often focusing on black people's history in this country, including its often ugly aspects — lynchings, servitude, despair. Even so, Tiberino's trademark "pencil drawings, pastels and oils, the oils in particular, ... are just fabulous, exciting. Her work is intense, very fluid with a lot of movement but also very haunting," said Evelyn Redcross of the October Gallery in West Philadelphia, which has handled much of her work, primarily prints and posters.

Fellow artist Roland Ayers has known her since the early 1960s,

when she was a student. "I'm very high on her work," he said. "She [has done] marvelous, luminous pencil drawings; she practically digs into the paper. She's a very painterly painter. She handles paint in the way they did in the 16th, 17th centuries. The work has a feeling of light from within."

In 1977, Tiberino was the first artist to have a one-person exhibition at the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum here. Adolphus Ealey, then the museum director and now an art dealer based in Paris, called her "one of the strongest woman artists I've seen in my travels across the country. Unconquered, without causes to please, her canvases offer America a living experience in the souls of black folk."

Even when hospitalized, Tiberino continues to paint the life around her. Some of her medical experience also has come to life as art, although she does not dwell on it because "I don't like to look back. I look ahead."

She displayed a print of *The Operation*, a black-and-white drawing that horrifies in its details. Gowned and masked doctors are bending over a surgical table, with one holding a colander while another deposits a freshly removed organ into it. In the upper-right-hand corner sit two women, actually skeletons of death, gossiping as if discussing whether to take life now or spare the person on the table. Bare feet are all that is shown of the patient/victim.

"I did this when [the cancer] was first discovered, and I obviously had some strong feelings about it. I project some of this out on the work. It's funny; doctors who have seen it either love it or hate it — no in-between."

These days her subjects are more likely to be flowers, plants, women glowing with luminous colors. "My palette is getting lighter, I find," she said. "Before I got sick, I was a night person, but even then in the summer, I'd discover the joy of flowers."

"I'm a very physical painter, and it exhausts me when I'm done, but it feels so good, and I can be happy for weeks after I finish a piece I know is good," she said. She lit another cigarette, explaining that smoking "helps keep my mind off the pain, and I don't have to take as many pills."

Among those who collect Tiberino's work are film director Federico Fellini and WCAU-TV reporter-producer Edie Huggins, who met Tiberino through her work and since has become a friend. After seeing Tiberino's work at a friend's home and a gallery, Huggins decided to broadcast a piece about her, Huggins said.

When she did, Huggins "saw a childlike about her and was a bit taken aback by it. She seemed very vulnerable. Having been a nurse, I don't hedge about medical things, and she realized that there was nothing she couldn't say to me. She doesn't need anybody's pity. How she can find so much beauty in life when she has so many things pulling her

in the other direction ... I just can't see how so much beauty can come out of so much pain and frustration." Tiberino draws strength from both her family and her religion. She converted to Roman Catholicism at 13, and the Tiberinos have in their home a self-designed chapel in which she receives Holy Communion from the parish priest.

"My kids are funny about [the illness]. Leo said, 'Mom, you're like *The Terminator* — you just keep coming back.' And Joe says 'I'll be dancing on his grave,' she said, sharing a smile with her husband.

Joe Tiberino attributes to her strong constitution and strong-mindedness his wife's refusal to bend under the medical onslaught.

"During periods when they have to feed her intravenously, some doctor will say, 'Your wife will never be able to eat anything again, and I just smile because I've heard that so many times,' he said in a voice tinged with his own Philadelphia roots; he grew up at Fifth and Susquehanna Avenue. "After such a long period of time, the attitude [of some physicians] is 'Why aren't you either cured or gone?'"

As Tiberino talks, neighbors come in and out, carrying toddlers and beer and chatting. The Tiberinos are fixtures in Powelton Village, where they have lived for decades, and their happy household is an attraction to all kinds of people, according to friends who occasionally need to be protective of both.

Just like anyone else who is gravely ill, Ellen Tiberino said, "I get terrified sometimes. When I feel that way, I have friends over, and someone will fix something good to eat, and we'll talk and laugh."

"I was so used to doing everything for myself — I liked to host and cook and entertain — that it seemed really terrible when I had to ask for help. ... But I look ahead most days, and, of course, I have the major outlet in my work."

"I am grateful for the opportunity to learn how much strength I have." Currently she is preparing for a one-woman show in February at the Hahn Gallery in Chestnut Hill, an event eagerly awaited by co-owner Rosalind Hahn.

"She has a unique style, and her work spans a long time. She has a tremendous range, and that's one of the reasons why I think her reputation will grow and grow," Hahn said. When Tiberino is asked what she would like people to understand about her work, she pauses for several minutes.

"I don't know how to say this without sounding cocky. But I think my work speaks for itself. It's great. It reaches people, no matter whether the person likes it or hates it — either way it's successful. That way, I think that it's worth it. I'm thoroughly drained and exhausted when I finish a piece, but that knowledge gives me the strength to go on."

And, she said, "there's always one more piece I have to do."

Think **IGA**  
INDEPENDENTLY OWNED  
SUPERMARKETS

Prices In Effect  
Sunday, Nov. 13  
To Saturday  
Nov. 19, 1988

Quantity Rights Reserved.  
Not Responsible For  
Typographical Errors.  
Artwork Does Not  
Necessarily Represent  
Advertised Items, But Is For  
Display Purposes Only.

**1 1/2 price Turkeys**

1/2 PRICE SALE On Any IGA Tablerite Frozen Grade A - (10 To 24 Lb. Avg.)

**Self Basting Young Turkeys**

29¢ Lb.

IGA Grade "A" Frozen With Coupon

1/2 price

Based Upon An Average Retail Price of 58¢ Lb. (Prices May Vary) On Any IGA Tablerite Frozen Grade A (10 To 24 Lb. Average)

**Self Basting Young Turkeys**

29¢ Lb.

With Coupon And Purchase Of \$50 Or More Coupon In Effect Sunday, November 13 to Saturday, November 19, 1988. Limit one coupon per shopping family. Coupon good with the same \$50 purchase. (30¢ purchase does not include the price of milk, cigarettes, tobacco products and the price of alcohol.) R-23-11-000 NRC LU 750

USDA Grade A - With Pop-Up Timer-10-24 Lb. IGA Tablerite or Round Hill Fresh **Young Turkeys 88¢ Lb.**

**T.V. SPECIAL**

IN OUR FROZEN DEPARTMENT!  
SAVE AT LEAST \$1.10!

1/2 Gallon Ctn.-Asst. Var.  
Regular or Lite

**Turkey Hill Ice Cream**

\$1.89

**T.V. SPECIAL**

IN OUR FROZEN DEPARTMENT!  
SAVE AT LEAST \$1.69!

7.5-8 Oz. Pkg. -  
Fillets or Sticks

**Bunch O Crunch Fish**

BUY ONE GET ONE FREE

**T.V. SPECIAL**

IN OUR DAIRY DEPARTMENT  
SAVE AT LEAST 70¢!

64 Oz. Ctn. - Pure Premium-100%  
Pure From Fla.-Reg. or Homestyle

**Tropicana Orange Juice**

\$1.89

**T.V. SPECIAL**

SAVE AT LEAST 50¢!

13 Oz. Can -  
Regular, Automatic Drip  
or Electric Perk

**Maxwell House Coffee**

\$1.99

**T.V. SPECIAL**

SAVE AT LEAST 20¢!

4 Roll Pkg. -  
Assorted, Soft Prints,  
or White

**Northern Bath Tissue**

99¢

**T.V. SPECIAL**

Pepsi, Diet Pepsi,  
Mt. Dew, Pepsi Free,  
Diet Pepsi Free, or Slice

2 Liter Btl.

**Pepsi Cola**

99¢

- BOTTINO & HEIMS IGA
- BLACKWOOD IGA
- BRANDYWINE IGA
- BRIDGETON IGA
- CEDAR HARVEST IGA
- COATESVILLE IGA
- DUBLIN IGA
- FAMILY IGA
- FOOD ARENA
- O&O ROSLYN IGA
- GREENTREE IGA
- CASTOR AVENUE IGA Phila.
- SCHEIDEL'S IGA
- LAMBERTVILLE IGA
- MILLVILLE IGA
- MYSTIC ISLAND IGA
- NEW EGYPT IGA
- O&O PARKWOOD IGA
- WEST CHESTER IGA
- WISE OWL IGA Possum Park
- WISE OWL IGA Folsom
- WISE OWL IGA Milltown
- WISE OWL IGA Newark

## Your horoscope

By Jeane Dixon

**YOUR BIRTHDAY TODAY:** Maintain an air of mystery and you will have members of the opposite sex eating out of your hand. Your diligence at work will bring you rich rewards next month. Changes in the economy could improve your chances to move up or do more in retirement. Children show a stronger desire to learn. Concentrate on projects to help many people.

**BORN TODAY:** Whoopi Goldberg, Jack Elam, Robert Louis Stevenson.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Gather research materials that will help you renegotiate a contract or launch a lucrative project. Romance comes into full bloom. Children pose a question you may not want to answer. Play for time.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20):** Extra rest and relaxation will restore your energy. Find a book you can't put down. Fresh air and good friends boost your morale. Self-improvement activities enjoy favorable influences.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Get your personal finances in better order. Face the reality of someone's prom-

ises. Stand up for your rights as a consumer. Take a list along when grocery shopping.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** You will save money by reducing credit card balances. The time may be right to buy a car or piece of property. Take measures to cut tax payments.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** You find new enthusiasm for a relationship. Romance becomes more exciting. Do not let petty differences cause you and a sibling to lose out on a valuable investment opportunity.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** You need to review and revamp your spending habits. Reach a consensus with the rest of the family and then find ways to back each other. Move past an emotional roadblock.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Inspiration comes from worship or spending quiet time alone. Reading or meditating top your agenda. Travel will leave you tired but happy. Give romance another chance. Curb a tendency to rehash arguments.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** Your personal magnetism draws a diverse

group of people to you now. You gain strength from knowing that what you are doing helps others.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Today's events will make you smile. Time spent with children will be tiring but satisfying. You learn an important lesson about relationships. Extend the olive branch to a relative.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Change is in the wind. By accepting the inevitable with good grace, you will get a chance to boost your income. Listen to someone who cares about your future.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** Take whatever steps are necessary to salvage an important relationship. A diet and exercise program should be tailored to your particular needs. Bring your checkbook up to date and you will rest easier.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** A good day to get away from everything. Treat yourself well. Sleep in if that is what you desire. A behind-the-scenes maneuver helps solve a family financial problem.