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Painter Traces His Start to World War II Service

By Aileen Jacobson

During World War II, Stan Brodsky, then a 19-year-old soldier from Brooklyn, was in eastern France when his platoon came upon an Alsatian farmhouse that their commander ordered them to “liberate.” Mr. Brodsky, 85, now a prominent artist living in Huntington, recounts the episode, which took place in November 1944, in his new book, “The Uncertainty of Experience: An Artist’s Journey.”



ANNIVERSARY GREETING Stan Brodsky, and a watercolor he sent to his parents in the '40s.

While other soldiers made off with jewelry and silverware, Mr. Brodsky wrote, “I opened an untouched drawer of a small table in the corner of the living room.”

Inside, he found a watercolor set, “something I had never owned or been exposed to,” though he had shown talent for drawing in pencil and pen. He tucked the set inside his gas mask.

The accidental discovery, Mr. Brodsky said in an interview, changed the direction of his life, touching off “something that was still incubating inside of me, a way of looking at the world.”

Without it, he might not have become an artist, or not the artist he is, he said, painting color-infused oils that “have a feeling for the fluidity of nature.”

He started using his new set in letters home, which help illustrate his book. In one, the words “To My Dear Parents, Happy Anniversary” float over a village scene featuring a horse-drawn cart. Another depicts a church and thanks his family for packages and “the long-awaited mail.”

He used uppercase letters, a style he picked up from Aldo Rubano, a soldier from New York he met in his first barracks who was already an artist, he said. “He had his Army shoes on the floor and he was drawing them, and then he began to print, and I thought to myself, that’s a nice way to send letters home,” Mr. Brodsky said.

Several of Mr. Brodsky’s pen-illustrated letters are in the book, which he said began as a full-blown memoir before he pared down the text to an essay.

Published by the nonprofit Midmarch Arts Press (\$24), the 56-page book contains 27 images, from a drawing made at age 10 through oils painted last year, along with three snapshots of Mr. Brodsky in uniform on the back cover.

For information on “The Uncertainty of Experience: An Artist’s Journey,” call (212) 666-6990. Mr. Brodsky will speak at Book Revue, 313 New York Avenue, Huntington, on June 3 at 7 p.m.; (631) 271-1442 or bookrevue.com.