

# *Porno*

*by Artie Richard*

Once upon a time in Gerritsen Beach there was a photo of a nude young lady. This one was different from all others of its kind. This one nearly got me killed.

In 1945, after the big war, there was a severe housing shortage affecting the homecoming vets. One of the things that was done was the building of barracks, like temporary housing which would be used until more permanent houses could be built. They were built wherever there was room.

Boy did we have room! Each barrack was partitioned into four units, two upstairs and two down. The undeveloped area of Marine Park was utilized with a vengeance. The buildings were laid out to form streets and avenues. That's how I met Bobby Swartout. He lived with his widowed, vet father and younger sister who ran the place like an experienced housewife. She was thirteen.

Bobby was about a year and a half older than me and it wasn't long before he, Herbie Muldoon and I were tight as thieves. We did a lot of stuff together, mostly things only marginally legal. Even today I am not so sure if it would be safe to go public on some of these escapades. The fiasco of the "dirty picture" involved just Bobby and me.

To appreciate Bobby you really had to meet him. Small and wiry, he was loaded with kinetic energy and something now called charisma. You could not say no to Bobby. "Hey Artie, I'm gonna take this surplus bayonet I got at Jack's Army/Navy and run it through your left ear and out the right. OK ?" "Sure Bobby. Want me to hold the bayonet case ?"



One day Bobby handed me this photo and said-- "Here. Would you hold this for a while? Until I want it back." He had given me a photo. Not just a picture or drawing, or page from Playboy but a true photograph of a naked girl. She was much older, maybe 25 or 30, who knows? She was standing in what must have been a studio, totally nude except for a pair of high heels. It was a full front view and her right elbow rested on some kind of column.

She had long, dark hair and I remember being struck by how unattractive she was in both face and form. That was it; the girl and the column. By today's standards, not even true porno. The fact that she was not pretty did not matter. It was a photo. She was real. I had never before held or even seen a photo of a nude lady. He never told me where he got it.

A few months later I mentioned the photo to Bobby and he said-- "Just keep it. I don't want it." It was just as well since it was showing signs of age. Folded through the middle, it had spent some time in my wallet. Unfortunately, there was an ugly crease right through the poor girl's navel. There was plenty of room though, since there was rarely any money in there. It did gain me some status. Later it was secreted in my room and only unleashed when someone had to be really impressed.

It should be noted here that there was no kind of turn on in this for me. She was simply too homely. Far from my idea of a fantasy girl. The point was that it was expected to cause a certain reaction and so it did. Whenever I flashed it at another kid it had the same result as when I had first seen it. After a while I didn't even bother carrying it. The photo was forgotten somewhere in my room. Better it had been burned.

Ask yourself--At this point what is the worst possible turn of events ? That is exactly what happened. I came home from school one day and walked into the house. My grandmother sat in her big, living room chair. Unknown to me she had happened upon the photo while cleaning my room. "YOU DIRTY SLOB. YOU FILTHY PIG. TO THINK THAT ANYBODY BELONGING TO ME WOULD HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THIS. WHEN I TELL YOUR FATHER. (A common threat. She never did.) WHERE DID YOU GET THIS ? WHO IS THIS SLOB ?" At least she had an eye for beauty, or the lack thereof. "GET OVER HERE RIGHT NOW."



Molly Connolly Drake, 1937. Click on photo for larger image.

Well I couldn't get over there because my legs would not work. When I finally got about halfway "there" Molly reached out and dragged me the rest of the way. What happened after that is a bit fuzzy for reasons you will soon learn. I recall many blows to the head and doing my homework on the floor at Molly's feet. "Er seven times nine is...sixty five?" "NO, NO, NO, YOU STUPID SLOB." BAM, BAM, BAM. To the noggin, one for each NO. "SIXTY-THREE. BAM SIXTY-THREE. BAM SIXTY-THREE. BAM."

Well I lived through it and I don't think she ever told my parents. She never found out where I got it. I told her I had found it "over the dumps" near

Knapp St. where she knew I often went looking for treasure. Had I told the truth it would have been the end of my friendship with Bobby. Worse, it would have made me a fink. I made sure that Bobby never knew about the incident. It was important that he act natural next time he was around Molly or she would have smelt a rat. And he thought that I had been in a fight with the Ave. X Boys and lost.

As soon as he was old enough Bobby enlisted, went to Korea and was machine-gunned. When he came home something was missing.

Time about 1947