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DAVID RAPPAPORT

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE by Angela Lang & Errol Rappaport



Does life imitate art, or does art imitate life? It's a conundrum that most people have pondered at one time or another. But for David and Francesca Rappaport, life is art. Married for 63 years, David, 87, a celebrated contemporary painter and cherished humanitarian, and Francesca, 83, have created a life that is nothing short of a masterpiece. The Rappaport's everlasting bond is a breathtaking inspiration and a testimony to what can be achieved, especially when considering that they couldn't even afford to get married when they wished to...

Both David and Francesca, New Yorkers who winter in the sunny climate of Palm Desert, California, The Rappaports were affectionately known as "The Rothschilds of the Clothing Business" after David established Damon Creations in 1942, with a borrowed \$700. He designed and sold exquisite Italian knitwear and silk neckwear. Later, Francesca joined him in the business, creating a fashion line called "Francesca of Damon." "Unusual, but always in good taste," is David's succinct and ingenious catchphrase to sum up Damon Creations. It's interesting to note that Francesca was a top designer in an era when women didn't hold influential positions in the business world -- especially when the woman in question had three sons. "My friends couldn't understand my desire to work," she recalls, "because I had a husband who was doing well. But I wanted to accomplish something for my own self-esteem. At the age of 40 when I started designing, I couldn't even draw a straight line. Not to be discouraged, we hired an artist to put my ideas on paper. After some time, I learned to do it myself. If the desire is strong enough, you can accomplish anything."



Francesca's aspirations turned her into a favorite with Vogue and Harper's. All the best department stores, including Bergdorff Goodman, Sak's, Neiman's, I. Magnin and Nordstrom, as well as specialty boutiques, all carried "Francesca of Damon" designs. She made personal appearances representing her in-demand fashions. Nowhere however, is the drive to succeed more evident than in David's tremendous spirit. His rags-to-riches adventure with Damon Creations is but one shade on the palette. When he put the paintbrush to canvas, he gave a whole new depth of meaning to the term "art appreciation," with his precise and complex style and gorgeous color schemes. "Controlled excitement," David calls his art. So fascinating were his paintings, most of them an ambitious 4'x 4', that his 1997 debut, at the age of 82, was a one-man show -- not



sequestered in a gallery, but bold and glorious in the windows of Barney's on Madison Ave., exposed to and admired by potential millions. Due to the overwhelming response his works of art received, they went on to grace the windows of Barney's of Chicago and Beverly Hills, as well. When he turned heads with his Barney's exhibit, he was the artworld's "new kid on the block," receiving notoriety in the New York Times Manhattan Arts and other publications...

David's greatest triumph, however, is his miraculous comeback from a near-fatal stroke two years ago. With Francesca's unwavering support and David's own absolute determination, this exemplary man, who has given of his time and of his wealth to so many charities and individuals, has given to himself with the same dedication. In so doing, he continues to give to those around him. "Work is work only when it's work" he loves to say.

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