



Rural Intelligence

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Community

The Rural We: Maurice "Pops" Peterson

Co-owner and business manager of Seven Salon/Spa—in addition to being a supporter of numerous local charities — Maurice "Pops"

Petersen is a well-known face in the community. But slightly less known is what a truly remarkable nine lives he has lived. He has successfully embarked on numerous careers: screenwriter, journalist, singer and web designer. For years, his life has circled around the creative field and has finally brought him back to art.



Photo by Edward Acker

I was born in Harlem and raised in Queens. In 2000, my husband [Mark Johnson](#) bought a home up here for the weekends. Eventually, he wanted to own his own business and we decided this would be the perfect area to do so. Seven Salon/Spa in Stockbridge has been in business for eight years now. I love the people who come in over and over. I hug all of them! Even though I don't do the services, I love that people walk out looking beautiful. I also love giving people the opportunity to work here. I have seen so many people go from assistant to a stylist, which is very rewarding.

I was an artist as a kid. I went to the High School of Music and Art, which is now the very well known [LaGuardia High School](#). I studied oil painting until I went to college at [Columbia University](#), which is very academic so I was only able to paint for two semesters. From there, I began writing and became very successful at it before I had even graduated college! I wrote for *Essence Magazine*, *The*



Pops Peterson © 2013

Village Voice and *The New York Times*, as well as for Andy Warhol's *Interview*, where I wrote about Liza Minnelli. In addition to my writing career, I did a movie with Joan Collins, worked on plays in New York and then transitioned into an office temp before getting into web design.

Rural Intelligence

"It's like having a best friend with great taste, insatiable curiosity and a continuing delight in all that our corner of the world offers."

—Megan Whilden
Director of Cultural Development
City of Pittsfield



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Art came back into my life two years ago, when I had started a blog, an advice column, and soon realized it needed illustration, I didn't want to use stock photos. I started again with just a stick figure. But it began to get more and more elaborate and soon the blog became more about art than the writing. A client was shocked that I could do this and commissioned me to do a photo of her children, which she loved. I brought it to [Lauren Clark](#), who thought it was fantastic and wanted to show it the next month. But I only had seven paintings, so I asked if we could do it in the next year. Lauren has since moved into a big space on Railroad Street in Great Barrington and I have enough work to fill it. My show at [Lauren Clark Fine Art](#) opens [July 12](#).

This salon has been a wonderful, wonderful experience as I wouldn't have an art career without it. Clients at the salon support me as an artist and hire me, and so many people coming to the show are from the Berkshires. Art used to just be a hobby, but now it is turning into a new career, I love it and feel younger than I have in decades. I feel myself growing younger on the inside by doing things I never thought I would do. It's working out better than I ever expected.

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