

# 20 Things I Learned about Norman Rockwell from "American Mirror, The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell"

*by* Roz Warren

His middle name was Perceval.

He judged the first Miss America contest in 1922.

He saw himself primarily as a storyteller in the Dickensian mode.

He claimed to be an illustrator rather than an artist.

He disliked driving but loved to walk, and preferred walking uphill to walking down hill.

He was an excellent square-dancer.

He lived in Vermont for 14 years without painting a single landscape. His response, when a friend pointed out a beautiful vista, was "Thank Heavens I don't have to paint it!"

He drank Coca-Cola for breakfast.

To generate ideas for pictures, he had to isolate himself and then imagine boys playing around a lamppost.

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He was in therapy for years with psychoanalyst Erik Erikson.

The Saturday Evening Post once told him to remove an African American from a group picture because the magazine's policy was to only show Blacks in service-industry jobs. He complied, but later became an ardent civil rights supporter.

He had difficulty expressing anger and was only seen to lose his temper three times, once when a man refused to sell the artist his hat for a large sum of money.

He “had no difficulty finding friends who were inordinately devoted to him.”

He “required the nearly constant companionship of men whom he perceived as physically strong.”

He was compulsive about cleanliness and swept his studio 4 - 6 times daily.

He always wore shoes that were too small.

John Updike once said that Rockwell had a “surreally expressive vocabulary of shoes.”

His first wife left him for another man after 14 year of marriage. His second wife was an alcoholic. His biographer implies (but never actually states) that Rockwell was a man with repressed homoerotic tendencies who finally found happiness with his 3rd wife, a closeted lesbian.

He was friends with Walt Disney.

The record price for a Rockwell painting is \$48 million, a price about which, according to his biographer, he would feel “incredulous.”

