

# POUND RIDGE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

REMEMBERING NOTABLE RESIDENTS OF COLOR

PR  
HR  
AC



(KAI MORT SHUMAN / MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES)



(GETTY IMAGES)

## Who We Are

PRESENTED BY THE POUND RIDGE  
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

During Black History Month, we often remember iconic Black leaders like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—as we rightly should—and the extraordinary strides they made toward achieving racial equality in America. But rarely do we recognize the people of color who lived right here in our towns—icons in their own right—and the contributions they made to the rich tapestry of American life.

In this first publication of the Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC), we pay homage to trailblazing Pound Ridge residents who used music, art, journalism, and photography to tell their own stories and to capture the stories of their times. In remembering them and giving them the collective recognition they deserve, we start to redefine who we are as a community: proud, united, and committed to lifting up those who make us uniquely Pound Ridge. **#wearepr**

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(CENTRAL PRESS / GETTY IMAGES)



(POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES)



(VIA HISTORYFORSALE.COM)

**"I stayed on my own path and did not follow the herd.  
I made a way for myself."  
*Eartha Kitt (1927-2008)***

# The Most Exciting Woman Alive

BY NAMASHA SCHELLING

Eartha Kitt was born Eartha Mae Keith in South Carolina on January 17, 1927. Her mother was a Black Cherokee sharecropper and her father a white man whom she barely knew. She grew up working in the cotton fields until she was eight years old, when she was sent to live in Harlem with her aunt. She suffered a lot of abuse in her childhood and was stuck in a cycle of poverty. By her early teenage years, she was working in a factory and sleeping in the streets. Her big break in show business came when a friend dared her to audition for the Katherine Dunham Dance Company. She got in and this allowed her to escape the hardships that had until then defined her life.

Kitt began performing in the late 1940s as a dancer in New York and went on to achieve success in many mediums. Her career has often been described as having had "nine lives." She performed in Paris cabarets and on Broadway, and even had several best-selling albums and recorded big hits like "Santa Baby." She was tapped to play Catwoman in the 1960s TV series "Batman" and also acted in major films like "The Mark of the Hawk" with Sidney Poitier and "Anna Lucasta" with Sammy Davis Jr. Filmmaker Orson Welles called her "the most exciting woman alive"; she called herself the "original material girl" in reference to her string of famous romances.

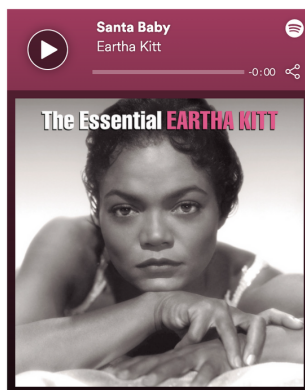
**"My recipe for life is not being afraid of myself, afraid of what I think, or of my opinions."**



(TRINITY MIRROR / MIRRORPIX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO)

Her career slowed down in the late 1960s, but in 1984 she scored her biggest hit in 30 years with the song "Where Is My Man." She was still very active in her 60s and received her second Tony nomination in the year 2000 for best feature actress in a musical, "The Wild Party." She even won two Daytime Emmy Awards in 2007, the year before she died, for outstanding performer in an animated program for her role as the scheming empress-wannabe Yzma in "The Emperor's New School."

Kitt was also known for her activism. She spoke out against the Vietnam War, most notably at a White House women's luncheon hosted by Lady Bird Johnson. In her later years, she became an advocate for LGBT rights and publicly supported same-sex marriage, considering it a civil right. Kitt died in 2008 in her home in Weston, Connecticut, but before then had lived in Pound Ridge on Winterbottom Lane.



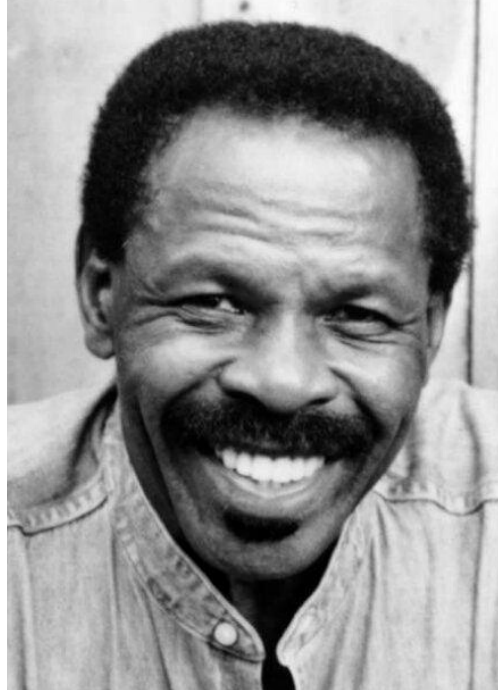
*Click the image to hear the original version of "Santa Baby" by Eartha Kitt.*



*Click the image to watch a documentary short called "Catwoman vs. the White House" released by The New Yorker.*



(MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES)



(VIA SHOWBIZ411.COM)



(MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES)

**"I have always been a lover of music and if I had to look back and do it over, I would probably do it the same way."**

*Lloyd Price (1933-2021)*

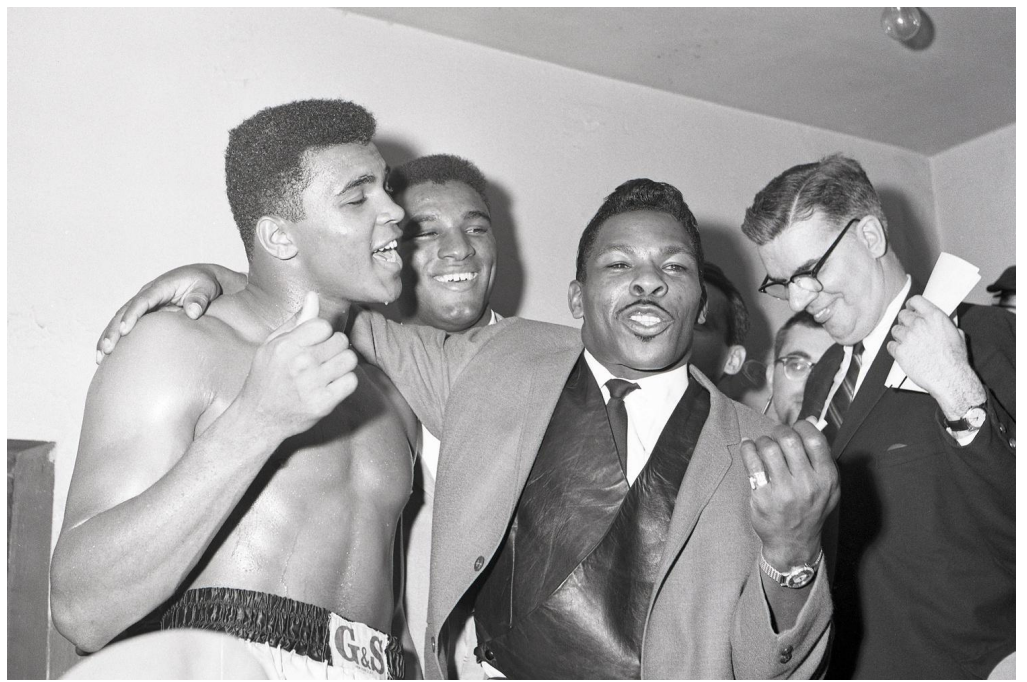
## Mr. Personality

BY ALISON MUNSCH

A man of huge energy and varied talents, Lloyd Price was a groundbreaking musician, businessman, entrepreneur, and veteran. A native of the New Orleans suburb of Kenner, Louisiana, Price was born on March 9, 1933. He was one of eleven children—three girls and eight boys—of Beatrice and Louis Price, who ran a restaurant called Fish 'n' Fry. The young Price helped out in the family business and developed his musical skills while singing with the gospel choir at the local church and learning to play the piano and trumpet. Soon, he started a band with his brother Leo and developed a relationship with a local radio station in New Orleans.

Price was struck by the catchphrase used by the radio deejay to promote the station's sponsor: "Lawdy Miss Clawdy, Eat Your Mother's Homemade Pies and Drink Maxwell House Coffee!" The catchphrase led to Price writing the hit song, "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," which was recorded with a band featuring Fats Domino on piano and renowned drummer Earl Palmer. The record topped Billboard's Rhythm & Blues chart and made history. The 1952 hit was Price's first number 1 hit on the R&B charts and was a trailblazer for rock 'n' roll. The song was one of the first records to break down barriers between Black and white audiences by crossing over onto white radio stations.

“For the first time in my life, I seen Black people and white people sitting together in the Dew Drop in Louisiana and I’m singing ‘Lawdy Miss Clawdy’ and everybody clapping; I said, ‘What in the world?’”



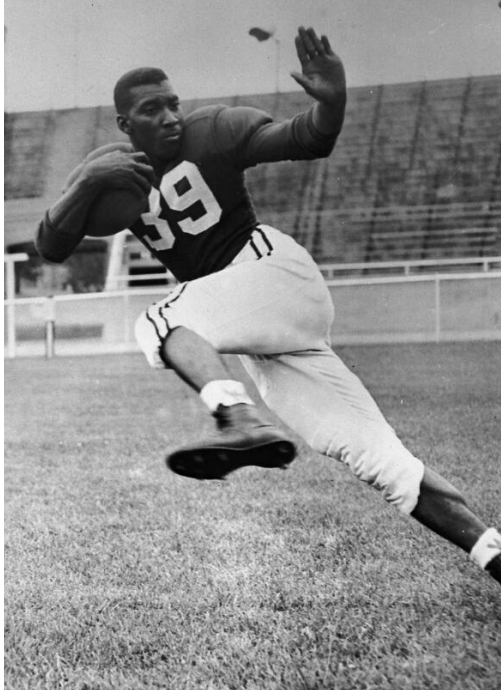
(GETTY IMAGES)

Throughout time, this song was covered by a large array of artists from Elvis Presley and Paul McCartney to The Hollies, Solomon Burke, and Joe Cocker. Major hits like "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," "Stagger Lee," and "Personality" launched Lloyd Price's illustrious career that spanned decades well beyond the 1950s. In 1993, he toured Europe with Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis and joined the Four Kings of Rhythm and Blues tour in 2005 alongside Jerry Butler, Ben E. King, and Gene Chandler. He received the Rhythm and Blues Foundation's Pioneer Award in 1994, was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1998, and in 2019 was inducted into the National Rhythm & Blues Hall of Fame.

In partnership with concert promoter Harold Logan, Price formed the music publishing company Lloyd & Logan Music, and in 1963 they launched the Double-L record label. Lloyd Price was also involved in promoting professional fights. In 1974, he helped manage the Muhammad Ali vs. George Foreman heavyweight fight in Zaire, known as the Rumble in the Jungle, with Don King. A Korean War veteran, he later formed two construction companies, moved into real-estate development, built a recording studio near his home in Pound Ridge, and launched a food products line. Price died in May 2021.



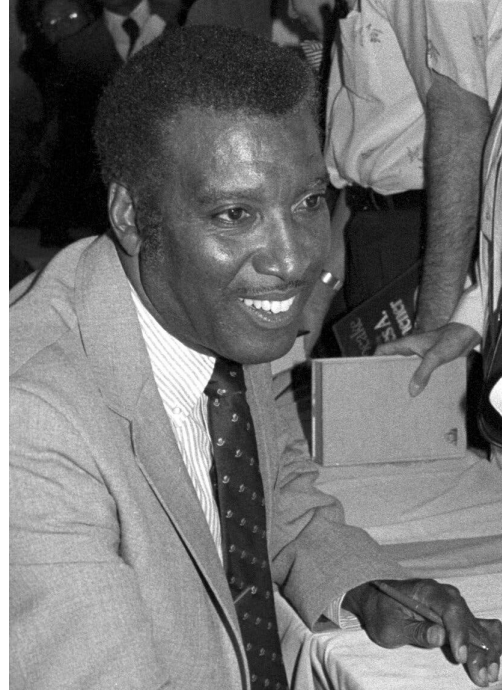
*Click the image to hear "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" by Lloyd Price.*



(AP PHOTO/FILE)



(NBC NEWSWIRE / GETTY IMAGES)



(DITH PRAN / THE NEW YORK TIMES)

**“A newscast is not supposed to be just another vehicle for peddling underarm deodorants. The public needs to know.”**

*Bob Teague (1929-2013)*

## The Truth Teller

BY STEVE KIM

Robert "Bob" Lewis Teague was born in Milwaukee on January 2, 1929. A journalism major at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Teague was also a standout football player who won All-Big 10 honors. Despite his athletic talent, he declined multiple pro football team offers to become a newspaper reporter for *The Milwaukee Journal*. After serving in the Army, he moved to New York and began working as a radio news writer for CBS. Later, he joined *The New York Times* as a sports copy editor and sports reporter.

In 1963, he started working at WNBC-TV, becoming one of New York City's first

Black television journalists. During his tenure, Teague was often asked to cover stories about racial unrest in marginalized neighborhoods. In July 1963, he was the principal correspondent for "Harlem: Test for the North," an hour-long NBC network special on the Harlem uprising.

Two notable publications he wrote are worth mentioning: first, "Letters to a Black Boy" in 1968, and second, a book titled "Live and Off-Color: News Biz" in 1982. The letters, addressed to his then one-year-old son, Adam, focused on the complexities of race in America and were meant to be read when Adam reached the age of 13.

**"Our madness  
is proof of our  
humanness."**



(FRED HERMANSKY / THE NEW YORK TIMES)

In the epilogue, Teague wrote, "Though they insult you or ignore you, it has nothing to do with anything you are or might have done. They are responding to color of your skin and the myth about blackness stamped upon their brains. But that's their hangup, their special madness. So relax. Don't let their taunts and snubs get you down. You are not the target, my son. They don't even know you are there."

The book, "Live and Off-Color," written nearly 15 years later, was a critique of major news outlets and management that favored ratings over facts. Teague shared his frustration with the concentration of power in the media business, which, he wrote, was held by a small group of predominantly white men whose priority was profit. He could not reconcile this reality with people's right to know the truth.

Teague retired from NBC in 1991 and lived in Monmouth Junction, NJ, until his death on March 28, 2013, in New Brunswick, NJ. He resided for some time on East Woods Road in Pound Ridge. His passion for honest journalism lives on with those who seek integrity today.



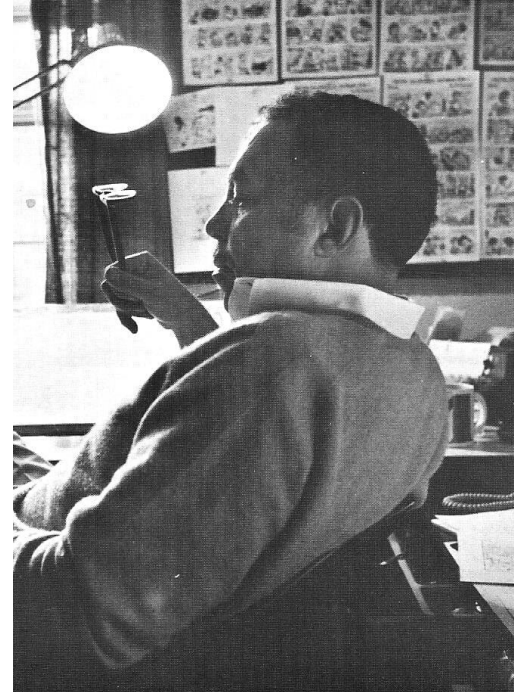
*Click the image to watch  
WNBC's tribute to Bob Teague.*



(VIA BLACKNERDNEWS.COM)



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIANNE SHEARER)



(VIA THE COMICS JOURNAL)

**"I'm making it possible for the reader to  
come to his own conclusions."**

*Ted Shearer (1919-1992)*

## In a Class Above First Class

BY SHARBARI BOSE KAMAT

Thaddeus "Ted" Shearer was born in May Pen, Jamaica on November 1, 1919 to parents Samuel and Sophie Shearer and immigrated to Harlem as an infant. He came of age during the Harlem Renaissance, a golden era of Black literature, music, and the arts that spanned the 1920s and 1930s. It was in this milieu that E. Simms Campbell—the first Black cartoonist to be nationally syndicated—piqued Shearer's interest in illustration and became his mentor.

Shearer sold his first cartoon to *The Amsterdam News* at the age of 16, while still a student at DeWitt Clinton High

School. He then attended the Art Students League on scholarship. During World War II, Shearer joined the Army's 92nd Division, the only segregated division to see action in Europe. Even while deployed, he drew cartoons about Army life and sent them to an agency for publication in the States. He was also art director for his division's magazine and an illustrator for *Stars and Stripes*.

After WWII, Shearer attended Pratt Institute to study art and began creating weekly cartoons centered on Black life, which were published regularly in a variety of outlets. He also freelanced. But his professional journey



"For a Black artist, bringing a Black youngster to the comic pages is a challenge and a responsibility. There is the responsibility of the humor which is expected by the general public and the challenge of truly portraying what it's like to be poor, Black and young."



(VIA THE COMICS JOURNAL)

as an illustrator was not without incidents of racism. There were instances when he would be promised a job or project over the phone, only to be given the cold shoulder when prospective employers met him in person.

Shearer later spent 15 years as a television art director at BBDO, one of the biggest ad agencies in New York City. He resigned to produce his hugely popular daily comic strip, *Quincy*, about the inner-city lives of a nine-year-old Black boy and his family and friends. Although he had won five art directors' awards in the field of advertising, his reason for changing career tracks was simply because he liked to draw and enjoyed the business of being an artist. *Quincy* had a successful 16-year run. Shearer then worked with his son John on *Billy Jo Jive*, a series of children's mystery books that became animated spots on *Sesame Street*.

A Pound Ridge resident, along with his wife Phyllis and son John, Shearer is remembered for exposing issues of race and class in his cartoons without telling his readers exactly how or what to feel. He also opened the door for many future Black illustrators. Above all, he was an incredibly talented artist. In an article for *The Comics Journal*, R.C. Harvey writes, "...the artwork in Ted Shearer's *Quincy* is in a class by itself—the class above first class." Shearer died in 1992.



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIANNE SHEARER)



(PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARIANNE SHEARER)

**"Phyllis was all about working across the aisle."**  
*Marianne Shearer, remembering her mother-in-law  
Phyllis Shearer (1922-2016)*

## A Life of Service

BY COLETTE DOW

While her husband and her son became well-known for documenting the breaking news and social norms of the day, Phyllis Shearer (nee Wildman), was making news and making a name for herself in Westchester County. Phyllis Wildman was born in May 1922 and by 1945 had earned her law degree and married Ted Shearer, the famous cartoonist. They settled in Harlem and started a family. Their son John, who would go on to become a well respected photographer for Life magazine, was born in April 1947 and their daughter Kathleen followed soon after.

In the mid-1950s, the family moved to Parkway Gardens, a middle-class community in Greenburgh, New York. In addition to being a mother, wife, and a practicing attorney, Phyllis Shearer was the Associate Director of the Urban League of Westchester for a number of years and served for six years as Vice President of the Greenburgh 8 Board of Education. In 1965, Phyllis was a candidate for Family Court Judge in Westchester, becoming the first black woman to seek a judicial post in the county.

**"She was the  
brains."**

*John Shearer,  
speaking of his  
mother*



(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIANNE SHEARER)

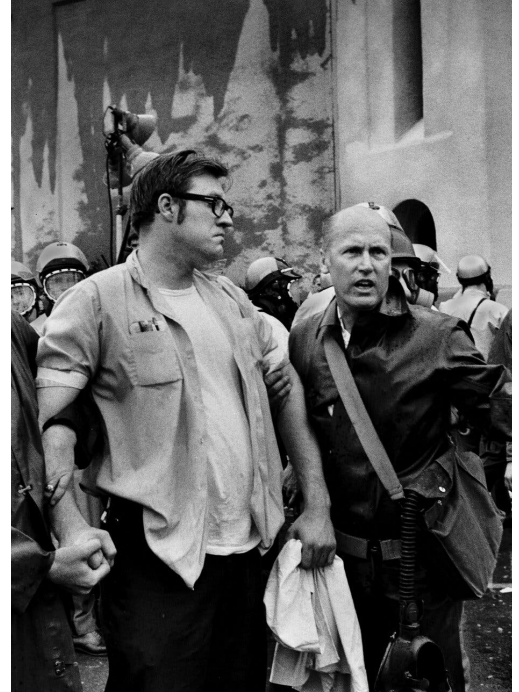
Phyllis continued her life of service to Westchester County when she was named Deputy Commissioner of Social Services for the county. During her time as Deputy Commissioner, the "Adopt a Family" program was established to support the needs of homeless families in Westchester.

According to her daughter-in-law Marianne Shearer, Phyllis was also an outspoken advocate for affordable housing.

The Shearer family moved to Pound Ridge and over time Phyllis became a regular on local Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) bus trips into Scotts Corners as well as at various events for seniors. In a 2017 article by Dana White for *Westchester Magazine*, John Shearer remembered his mother fondly noting, "She was the brains."



(PHOTO COURTESY OF NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR)



(PHOTOS BY JOHN SHEARER)

**“As a young Black kid, I really had to push hard, see people, get them interested in me.”**

*John Shearer (1947-2019)*

## Renaissance Man

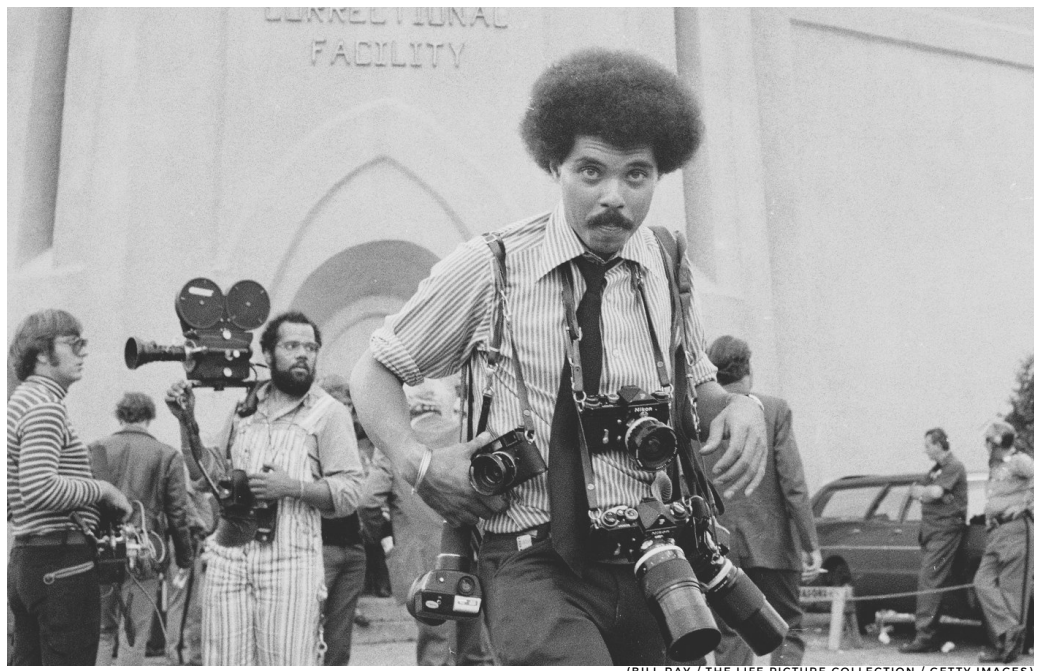
BY MARTIN ROSEN

I met John Shearer at the Neuberger Museum of Art when he presented an exhibit of his photography entitled, *American Moments*. As our friendship blossomed I learned of his artistic skills and generosity of spirit. His work spans decades of critical events in US history; i.e., his iconic photograph, taken at the age of 16 for the front cover of *Look* magazine, at the funeral of John F. Kennedy when he captured his young son extending a salute to his father; the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the historic life of Muhammed Ali; and the images of the Attica Prison riot in 1971. John was the only photographer allowed inside the prison during the assault

by New York law enforcement authorities, and which event was made a lead story for *Life* magazine. John Shearer won 175 national photography awards, including Photographer of the Year in 1972. His work has been exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

John had two other loves beyond his family and friends. He excelled in grilling and had a great passion for Cape Cod. I might add that the DNA that ran through John's veins emanated from his parents Ted and Phyllis. Ted and John were both members of a men's social club called The Westchester

“I didn’t have that much self-reflection about what I was doing; it’s just what I did. Come back with a story. Come back with a good story.”

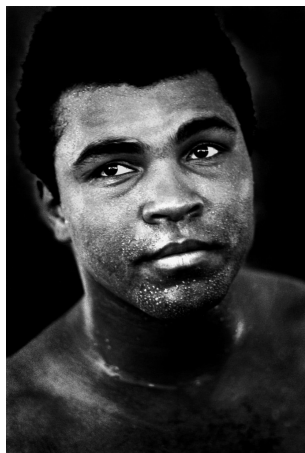


(BILL RAY / THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION / GETTY IMAGES)

Clubmen. Other notable members were Gordon Parks, Eddie Haywood and Cab Calloway. John and Ted also played baseball in an artists’ baseball league here in Pound Ridge.

John Shearer died in June 2019. I lost a dear friend, his family lost an amazing husband and a dedicated dad; and the world lost a creative photojournalist, writer, producer, lecturer, and a civil rights activist.

John was a true renaissance man and his “image” will resonate for all times.



*An iconic portrait of Muhammad Ali taken by John Shearer.*



*Click the image to read an interview with John Shearer in Westchester Magazine.*

**Special thanks to the  
Pound Ridge Historical Society  
for their partnership and guidance**



## **Our Mission**

The mission of the Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) is to provide guidance to the Town of Pound Ridge on diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies and policies that improve outcomes for marginalized populations and the community at-large. In the selection of members, the Town Board actively seeks diverse representation, giving priority and preference to individuals from varying races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, ages, ethnicities, places of origin, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The HRAC is tasked with leading the community in thought-provoking discussions and hosting events that support cultural understanding, mutual respect, and inclusivity, among other goals and initiatives. For more information, to volunteer, or to inquire about open positions, visit us at [townofpoundridge.com](http://townofpoundridge.com) or email [hrac@townofpoundridge.com](mailto:hrac@townofpoundridge.com).

### **Pound Ridge Human Rights Advisory Committee**

*Sharbari Bose Kamat, Chair*

*Colette Dow*

*Steve Kim*

*Alison Munsch*

*Martin Rosen*

*Namasha Schelling*

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