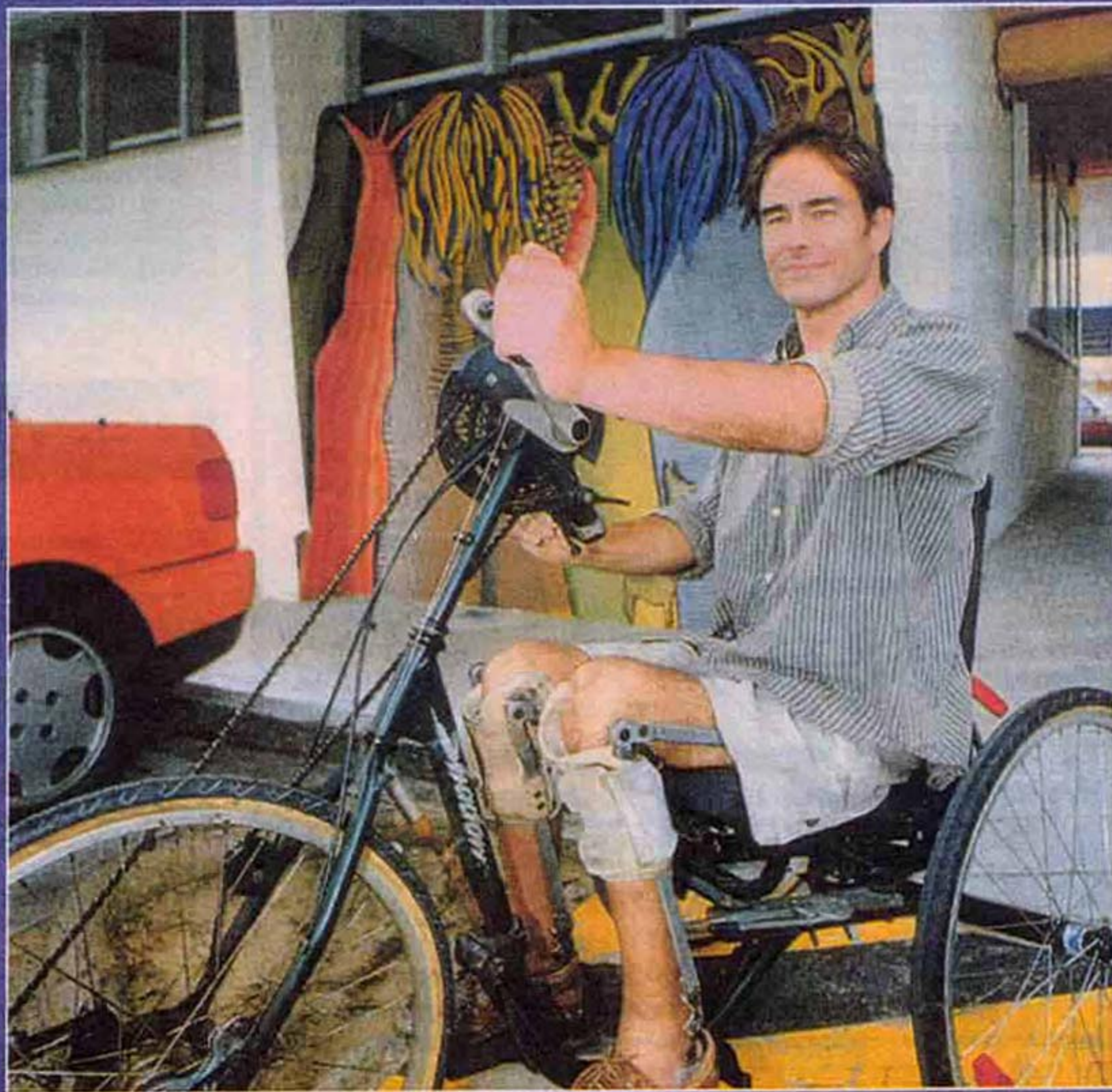


Polio artist sets out to help needy disabled



Greg Burns is a very special artist. He gave up a stable career for art. Now, the paraplegic painter wants to help other disabled artists. Meet him on Page 5

Greg burns with desire to help disabled artists

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NEWS

Paraplegic painter to put out book to raise funds

By ANDRE YEO

A PARAPLEGIC painter hopes to raise more than \$60,000 to sponsor the art courses of needy disabled artists.

Greg Burns, 41, is a full-time student at the LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts, where he is pursuing his Master of Fine Art.

The former public relations and market-

Disabled artists are also treated like second-class citizens here because of their imperfections and it is not easy to support oneself as an artist here.

- Greg Burns

ing manager at PepsiCo is working closely with Very Special Arts Singapore (VSA) to identify financially strapped students who might benefit from the scholarships.

VSA organises courses and activities for handicapped artists to cultivate their artistic talents.

Greg's scholarships will pay the tuition and course fees for artists who intend to further their studies in Singapore.

The American, who contracted polio when he was 10 months old, has been painting since he was five years old.

A member of the USA swim team at the 1992 and 1996 Paralympics, he set four world records and won six gold and silver medals.

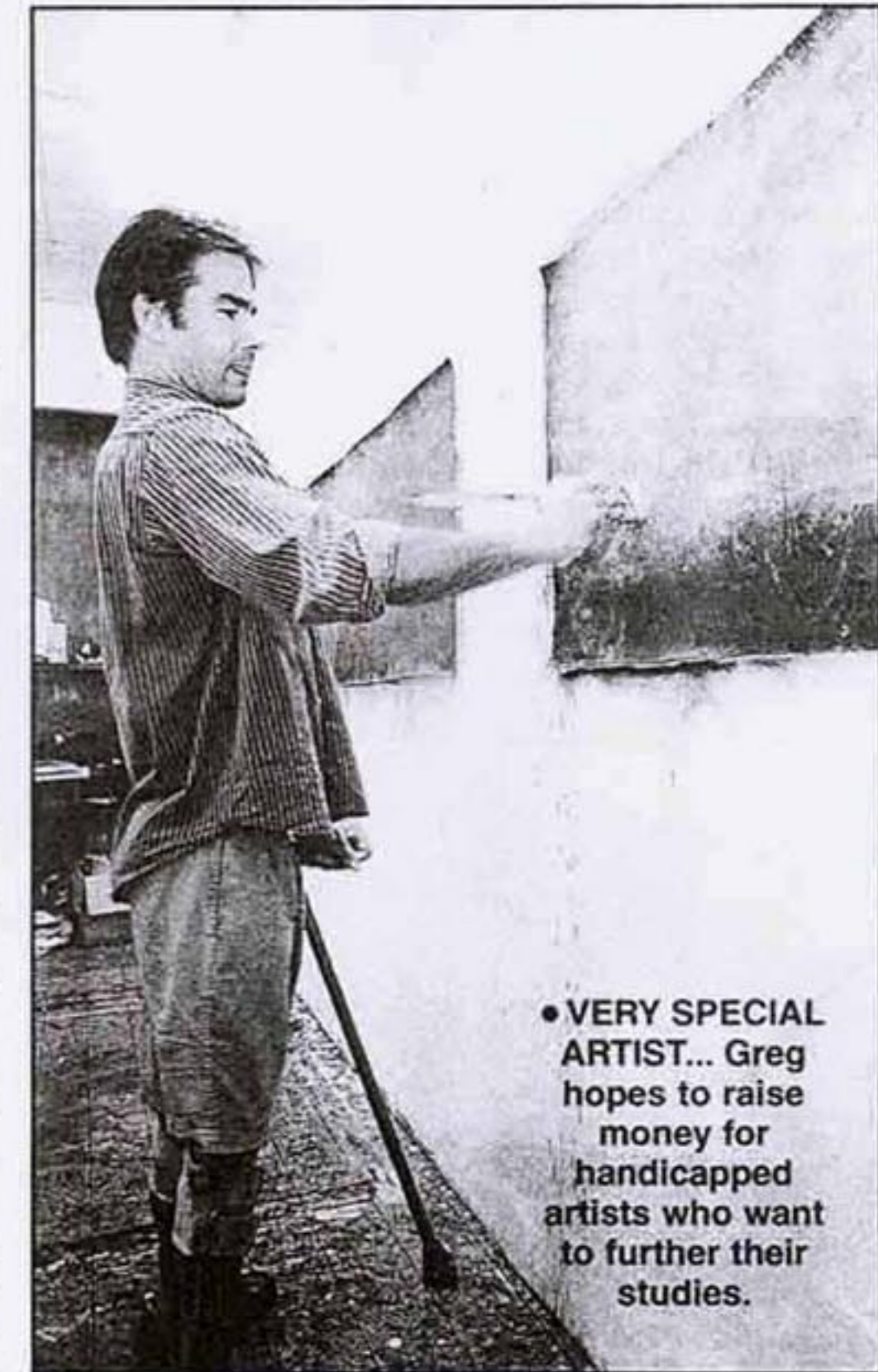
He said: "Being handicapped, people tend to have low expectations of you. They don't expect you to succeed."

"Disabled artists are also treated like second-class citizens here because of their imperfections and it is not easy to support oneself as an artist here."

"I faced a lot of prejudice from my family, friends and society so I know what disabled artists are going through."

Greg, who will graduate in July, intends to sell 2,000 copies of a coffee table book featuring his best paintings and photographs.

He hopes to raise \$60,000 from its sale, with all proceeds going to VSA.



• **VERY SPECIAL ARTIST...** Greg hopes to raise money for handicapped artists who want to further their studies.

He also plans to put up an exhibition of his paintings in July titled "Sojourn, In Search of Sanctuary" at LaSalle-SIA.

More money would be raised through the sale of some of his works and through canvassing for corporate sponsors during the exhibition.

Greg himself is the beneficiary of an art scholarship, obtained through VSA, which pays for his \$15,000

course at the college.

That is why he, too, wants to do his part to help others.

Last year, he paid about \$3,000 in course fees for a wheelchair-bound woman from Cheshire Home identified through VSA.

He said: "Besides being someone who needs financial assistance, the beneficiary must also be committed, with a strong belief in themselves and in what they do."