

April 15, 2002 Issue

## A Career In Oils

A wonderful experience presented itself to me this past week. I had the opportunity to adjudicate, along with two other distinguished artists, a grade school poster contest for the 7th annual Grays Harbor (Washington) Shorebird Festival.

The Nisqually Wildlife Refuge, north of Olympia, was the setting for the judging to take place. And, a beautiful and serene setting it is. The location was once a large farm. Located just off the I-5 freeway, access is easy and the entry fee more than reasonable. I was greeted by soft green Spring growth on cottonwood trees, from which wafted a delightful, clean fragrance. The seasonable rains had filled fields with shimmering puddles. Daffodils gone "natural" polka-dotted the fields. Around the bend in the road is the Visitors/ Conference Center, surrounded by a pond with "bloomed-out" cattails. Trails lead to visual banquets throughout the Refuge.

Before (and during) my work for the day, I saw red-winged blackbirds, tree swallows, grebes and Canadian geese, courting, nesting, and feeding in the Marsh areas surrounding the building. The banks of the marsh has been planted with native shrubs and trees which, as they mature, will be a marvelous addition to the scenery; already a delight for landscape and wildlife artists from all over. As for myself, I will return again, planning on spending the day, with paints, easel, and camera.

Next Issue: Kites In Flight

I have always considered myself a traditionalist. ( In personal matters as well as in the area of art.) Therefore, it seemed natural for me to want to paint in the classic medium of the old masters that I admired, oil painting. I went to the public libraries and local museums and absorbed everything I could find on oil painting and the masters. The styles. The techniques. I discovered "how-to" books by well known American artists, and learned from them what a "medium" was, what brushes they used to get the end result that I so openly admired. I read about the style and genre that I wanted to emulate.

The Olympia Art League, in the early 1970's, sponsored twice yearly art shows in a regional mall near my home. On one occasion, I lingered to speak with one of the members, and was invited to attend the next meeting of the group. I joined The Olympia Art League in 1972. The league

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met once a month and had a program after the business meeting. I was intrigued by the diversity of talent within the membership and the visiting demonstrators.

It was through the Olympia Art League, that I found out about a workshop being held by William F Reese, an oil painting instructor under the auspices of the University of Washington Extension Services. This was my first "formal" art education. Mr. Reese demonstrated a painting the first day, then sent us home to do a painting to bring back the following week. The next session was a morning critique, followed by an afternoon demo and we were instructed to paint another piece for the following week. This was an excellent experience for me, as I learned so very much from the critiques and doing the bulk of the work at home by myself, relying on notes taken in class. I took lessons from Bill Reese from 1972 through 1975. At the same time, there were opportunities to branch out and take classes with other artists using various techniques. Betty Mears taught the use of imagination by splashing loose areas of wet paint on the canvas, then "seeing" images emerge from the colors

and designs, then fill them in with detail. I also enrolled in an adult education night class at the high school across the street from my home. Again, it was a classic method of oil painting.

Throughout the rest of the 70's, I spent a lot of time learning my craft. The 1980's saw me narrowing my focus on seascapes. I sought out teachers who could assist me in learning the difficult task of capturing moving water on canvas. Finally came the point where I wanted to break away from learned techniques, and do my own style. I didn't want to be a perennial student, nor did I want to have my work compared to my teacher's style. So I went to the final teacher, the ocean itself.

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I began to "practice" painting waves. I strove for realism. Partly because of my being a traditionalist, and partly because there were so many wonderful details in water. There are foam patterns as delicate as lace, rocks with trickles of runoff, trees towering at the tops of rugged cliffs, all of which make a classic seascape. I tried for four years, to achieve this end.

Finally, The scales tipped! The water was WET! The waves MOVED! The rocks were ROUGH! And I began to sell my creations. I participated in mall shows, local bazaars and outdoor art and craft fairs. Galleries began to recognize my work. Things that had to do with the seaside experience were added. Lighthouses from five different states. Kite flying scenes. Shorebirds of many kinds, (but most especially those goofy, intelligent, intriguing seagulls). I was asked to paint commissioned pieces. Magazines did articles, and newspaper and television picked up on my career.

I continue to paint with oil today. I am thrilled by the brilliance and luminous glow achieved by the use of oil paints. I have added landscapes and portraits, florals and wildlife to my repertoire. It has been an extremely rewarding career these past 30 years. I am eager to see what the next 30 years will bring.



### Battery Point Lighthouse



"Battery Point Lighthouse is a Cape Cod structure with a 45 foot high tower in the center; situated on a hill off Battery Point in Crescent City, California. At high tide it is surrounded by water and becomes an island. In December of 1856, it's 4th order Fresnel lens was lit. After surviving storms, neglect and the 1964 Tsunami (created by the Alaskan earthquake) the brave lighthouse is now a museum."

### Fog Linging



"There is a low layer of 'fog lingering' at the base of the mountain as the sun begins its slow winter track across the sky. Perhaps the day will end with the fog still wrapped around Mt. Rainier's foothills."

### Winter Coast



"Tourists are few; seagulls are sheltered in quiet seclusion; and winds pick up to toss rolling waves relentlessly against dark and massive rocks. But the 'winter coast' is an awesome rewarding experience for brave adventurers who make the trek to the sea."