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Painting Can Change One's Life

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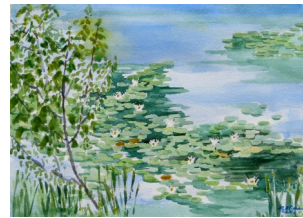
It's never too late to start...

People often ask me how long I have been painting and how I got started. They are usually very surprised to learn that art was not a primary interest of mine and that I actually didn't start painting until I was in my late 40s. And now, of course, I can't imagine my life without painting.

The story is actually quite amusing. I was chatting with a friend, reminiscing about elementary school. I happened to mention that a drawing I did of my childhood home was selected to hang in the Massachusetts State House. For all I know the whole class exhibited their drawings. My friend became very excited. "You mean you can draw?" I

assured him that I couldn't but he strongly urged me to try, saying it would "be a great hobby when I got old." He then sent me off to an art supply store with a list of necessary supplies and the rest is history.

At the beginning I resisted taking any lessons since I had spent most of my life in the classroom: first as a student and then as a teacher. And that doesn't count lessons in ballet, piano, ice skating, etc. I soon learned that I wasn't going to make much progress without some training. I found several wonderful teachers on Cape Ann who were watercolor plein air painters. I also took some adult educa-



Crystal Lake Waterlilies

tion courses in drawing. From the very beginning I really loved to paint; it gave me a lot of satisfaction. The more I worked on it the better were the results.

One caveat: it is NOT particularly relaxing. Creating is work but with the benefit of being totally engaging and a way to lose yourself and shut out a lot of everyday stress.

Maybe my story will inspire you to try some sort of art project. Perhaps you

will discover an ability that I strongly believe we all have. It might also allow you to forget the reality of Covid 19 which has kept many of us at home trying to remain safe. A good way to get started is the book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* by Betty Edwards. Let me know if you discover your hidden artist.

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Exhibit at Mass General Cancer Center

I was very honored this past spring when I was invited to submit a proposal to the Illuminations Program at the Massachusetts General Cancer Center. The proposal was accepted and an exhibit of 16 of my watercolors was sup-

posed to start in June. Of course, Covid changed all that but the paintings were finally hung in late August. They will be there for a year. Under normal circumstances there would have been a celebratory reception at the hospital. Maybe

at the conclusion of the exhibit?

Here's one of the paintings on display.



Drury's Shack

Featured Painting

In late August 2019 I set out to paint in Pigeon Cove in Rockport, MA. It's a rather secluded spot that most visitors to Rockport never find. Although there are a few pleasure crafts in the cove, most are large working lobster boats. I set up across from three of them, hoping the owners weren't planning to go out fishing that day.

Plein air painting has lots of challenges: changing light, changing tides, and, of course, weather. By noon it started to get very cloudy and rain looked possible at any moment. I moved my easel away from my original position to be closer to the car in case it started to rain. The last thing any watercolor painter wants is to have rain ruin a painting.

While I was finishing up I noticed a fellow nearby with a large video camera. He introduced himself as a photographer from

the PBS show "This Old House. He was there to gather local color shots for an upcoming series featuring a Cape Ann House. Could he film me painting? "Sure, I said," never imagining that I would be part of the show. He told me when to look for the series. What a surprise I had 6 months later! There I was during the introduction of the show working on my painting for at least 2-3 seconds. If you add up all the episodes maybe that qualifies as my 15 minutes of fame.

As for the painting.....What attracted me were the reflections of the boats in the water and the strong whites of the cabins. I struggled with the reflections trying to make them strong without being overpowering. The third smaller boat looks a little



Pigeon Cove Working Boats

bit awkward to me. I was trying to turn it slightly to add some variety to the composition. I also wonder if the boats should have been larger. Of course, I'm my most severe critic and I can always find something in a painting that I wish I had done differently. This was a challenging subject to tackle and one I would like to try again.

Teaching at BOLLI

I retired in 2011 after teaching technology and management for 26 years at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. I joined a life-long learning community affiliated with Brandeis University, called BOLLI. It is a wonderful program which offers courses in a wide variety of subjects. I really thought my teaching days were over. I was just interested in meeting new people and broadening my learning experience.

BOLLI students were often invited to give a report in class. After I presented one such report the study group leader asked me about teaching. I answered that I certainly didn't want to revisit the subjects I had taught in the past 26 years, but I was very interested in art history. "Oh, that would be great. We don't currently have any art history courses."

"It has been one of the best teaching experiences I have ever had."

I based my first course on a recently published book titled "The Private Lives of the Impressionists." Creating the course required lots of work: I did extensive Internet searching to find the images I needed and then researched what art historians had written about them. I really enjoyed doing the research and learned a great deal more than I had anticipated about the subject.

I was pretty nervous before the first class, wondering what it would be like to teach people who were my contemporaries. I found the students very motivated; they did all the reading and

brought a lot of energy and experience to class discussions. It has been one of the best teaching experiences I have ever had.

I have now created 6 different classes and taught 18 sections in the program. One of my goals is to teach people how to analyze a painting, how to see it from a painter's point of view. I encourage them to think about color, line, value (the relationship between light and dark) and the various shapes the artist chooses. I also include a lot of biographical material so that students understand the artists as individuals. An added plus is that I think the teaching and research has helped to improve my own painting!

Painting at Bullough's Pond

June 2020 was a beautiful month for painting in spite of Covid 19. I spent several outdoor sessions at Bullough's Pond in Newton. I was especially fascinated by the yellow irises which grow in the water there. One of the women from the Bullough's Pond Association told me they are an invasive plant and have to be carefully monitored. Nevertheless, they are quite beautiful especially when the light bounces off them by the water. Here are some of the paintings that I did at the pond.



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Upcoming Holiday Sale 20% discount

Unfortunately this year there will not be the annual Newton holiday fair (Celebrate Newton) which usually takes place the first weekend in December. Instead, I will be adding more items to my Etsy Shop between now and Thanksgiving and will be offering a 20% discount on most items in the shop starting the last week of November. I hope you'll take advantage of the sale to buy some gift items for the holiday season. Of course, if you want me to design a custom scarf or tile for you please contact me by email or by phone.



Hand-painted silk scarf

