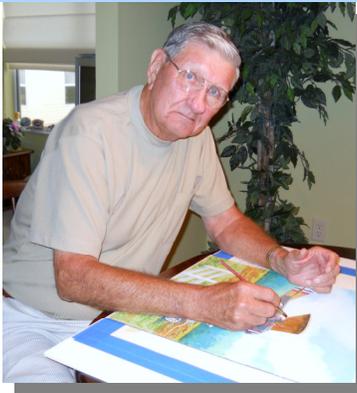


JUNE 2011 ARTIST OF THE MONTH—JOHN O'HARA



I started out early in life wanting to be an artist. I can remember drawing the characters from the Sunday comics and various comic books.

I got some serious art training from a very good art teacher in high

school. She always challenged me to be better than I thought I was. In my senior year she had me try sculpture. I used my choir director as a model and did a larger than life bust of his face and neck. Miss Anderson, my art teacher, thought the sculpture was good enough to be entered in the National Scholastic art competition. To my surprise it won.

After high school, work, part time college and other interests put my art to the sideline.



I started a career in the sign business and soon became a pictorial artist. To clarify, that was painting large murals on signs approximately 10 feet high by 50 ft long.

Eventually I became a sign designer. Back in the 60's, 70's and part of the 80's I did tempera paintings of the proposed signs in various settings. In 1978 I won first place in the National Electric Sign completion for one of my designs. In the early 1980s I also won a world wide completion for best sign design using a material called Panaflex.

The president of the company I was working for came to me with a request to design a Jim Beam bottle for the bottle collectors 1978 convention in Chicago, IL. This was



to be a national contest with the winner's design to be made into a limited edition Jim Beam bottle. I learned a short time later that my design won. I still have two of the bottles.

I came to Florida in 1985 to work for MelWebb signs. I was the art director and had several artists in our offices all across Florida. I trained several and had the great joy of seeing one of them win first place in the National Electric Sign competition in 1986.

In 1987 Federal Sign Co. Inc. bought out MelWebb and I continued on with them in design. Some of my best work was the designs I did for all of the original signage at the Disney Studios.

I evolved into project management and finished out my sign career traveling all over the world handling large graphic (sign) projects.

I moved to the Villages in 2002 and once again started doing what I loved most, (besides my wife). Art is now a big part of what I do. I enjoy the interplay



of the artists I get to work with at the various workshops. I originally was painting in acrylic and oil but was fascinated by all of the watercolor I saw being done. I always avoided watercolor because I thought it was too difficult and that I couldn't do the detail I like in my paintings.

Boy, was I wrong! Now all I do is watercolor and I think I'm getting better at it.

My thanks for the honor of being June's artist of the month for the Villages Art League.

~John O'Hara