

## Why I love to Paint

I feel that my painting gives me a way to capture and preserve those precious moments when I am awe-struck by the beauty God has created in this world. When my paintings are successful, I hope to make it possible for others to see and enjoy that beauty as well.

I think of my paintings in **three groups**:

I painted the **first group** of paintings, when our two boys were very young, mostly in the unfinished, windowless, laundry room of our home. I started painting in oils and acrylics, but found that for most subject matter, I loved watercolors more. The two exceptions are very large paintings, which are impossible in watercolor, and portraits. When painting portraits, oil paints allow me to try, try again until I achieve the effect I want. It amazes me that even though I was just learning to paint, I never doubted that I could capture that moment if I tried long enough. The precious moments I wanted to preserve were most of all our two beautiful boys, the trees outside my windows, and the little wild flowers we found on walks in the woods. That time of my life ended when my boys started school and I entered the next phase of my life as the first employee and administrator of Heisinger Lutheran Retirement Home. During the time I worked there, from 1978 to 2004, Heisinger went from an empty building to a sprawling complex with four levels of care. I remember thinking that someday I would catch up and I would have time to just paint pictures of beautiful old people. That never happened. It took all the skill and creativity I could muster to just make it through the days of my life, one day at a time. I pray that my two beautiful boys weren't too scarred by the process. I thank God for my endlessly supportive husband, Gary, who's help keeps me mostly sane and on track for the past 52 years. Most of all, I thank God for His guidance and protection, because I could never have made it without His help. I really grew to value that first group of paintings, with all their flaws, because I didn't think I would ever paint again. I could still see the beauty in this world that God created, but I doubted that after 30 years of being away from painting, I could ever regain the technical skills to capture what I was seeing in my mind's eye in order to put it in a painting.

But, surprisingly, I got another chance. When leading a class in

Chronic Disease Self-Management with my dear friend, Caryl Collier, a person in the class, Pat Brown, volunteered to teach us how to paint. She saw painting as a way to escape the problems of pain and chronic disease that we all encounter as we grow older. We found that when we concentrated on painting, and solving the problem of composition that every painting presents, all other problems faded into the background. Pat Brown moved to Florida to retire, but the group she started continues today.

We call ourselves AHA, Artists helping Artists.

We meet one afternoon a week, and we support each other in our efforts to become better artists. We sometimes have artists come to teach us new ways of painting, or we watch videos that teach us new aspects of art. Most importantly, we look at each other's paintings while in progress and try to help each other see what we can do to improve. Best of all, we have become friends.

The **second group** of paintings includes paintings of my three beautiful grandchildren, far-away places I have traveled, and the beautiful flowers and trees in my own yard. I love painting with my granddaughter Lainey, who seems to like to create paintings.

What a gift!

In the second group of paintings, I am leaning even more toward water colors, with those same exceptions. I love water colors because they are so full of surprises. I might have a wonderful idea, but frequently end up with something entirely different, which is probably better than I could have imagined.

Which brings me to the **third group**. These are the pictures I haven't painted yet. In my mind's eye I see pictures of beautiful children, far-away places I haven't been yet, and beautiful flowers I haven't planted yet. I see those pictures as being full of the happy surprises that make my eyes linger and refresh my soul.