

# Watercolorist captures innermost feelings

By MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER

This is another in a series of profiles of the Farmington Art Commission's Artist in Residence program winners.

Art was always important to Gwen Tomkow, noted watercolorist and Farmington Artist in Residence for 1988. It just took her awhile to pursue her dream.

Secretarial school, then marriage and four children intervened before Tomkow picked up her paintbrush and pursued her lifelong passion.

There's been no stopping her since. Tomkow's work appears in national art books, magazines — it even hangs in a museum in Missouri. Her work can be found in corporate boardrooms and private homes, her themes prominently feature Michigan's scenic north country.

Tomkow, who sometimes works from photographs but more often from painting right on the scene, describes her experience in "Ideas & Inspirations: Splash," a 1994 book which features the works of 105 of America's best contemporary watercolorists.

"I consider this kind of watercolor landscape one of the most enjoyable ways of capturing my innermost feelings. It's like lyrical poetry set to music. The romantic sand dunes become a concerto,

the rows of cherry trees, a grand march; and the large vistas, a soothing melody that connects me and the viewer to the wonderful gift of nature."

Ironically, Tomkow began to pursue painting as a career when she was blind in one eye (the result of a brain tumor that was successfully removed in 1977). She began to build her career under the tutelage of Ede Joppich, another Farmington artist in residence winner.

"She is my mentor," said Tomkow. "She had such confidence in me."

The two remain good friends and Tomkow sells her work through Joppich's Northport art gallery every summer.

A Farmington Hills resident for almost 30 years, Tomkow is currently having an addition built onto her sprawling two-story home, located in a wooded ravine. It will accommodate her needs for work space, with skylights and plenty of storage space for her large body of work.

"Being artist in residence opened doors for me," she said. "I've had a very active career."

In addition to painting, which

she tries to do four days a week, Tomkow occasionally runs workshops for other artists and enters her work in several juried national shows. Her husband, Mike, helps by taking slides of her work to submit to the entries.

"Sometimes it's hard to balance everything that's going on," she said. The marriage of one child and college graduation of

another are two more events keeping her busy through June.

"There are so many wonderful artists," she said. Tomkow would like to see budding artists follow their dreams.

"What I'd like to say is you don't know what will happen if you don't try. Keep on working. Be with other artists. Keep taking chances."

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## MILITARY NEWS

If you have military news with a Farmington-area connection, send it to: Military News, Farmington Observer, 3441 Grand River, Farmington 48335.

### COMPLETES TRAINING

Jeffrey Roth of Farmington Hills has completed the Army ROTC cadet troop leadership training. Kaiserlautern, Germany. He is the son of Diane and Jerrold Roth of Farmington Hills.

### HE ENLISTED

Chad Brewer of Farmington enlisted in the Air Force's Delayed Enlistment Program Dec. 20. A graduate of Farmington High School, Brewer is scheduled for enlistment in the Regular Air Force March 6.

Upon graduation from the Air Force's six-week basic training course in San Antonio, Texas, he is scheduled to receive technical training in the mechanical career field. He will earn credits toward an associate degree in applied sciences through the Community College of the Air Force while attending basic and technical training schools.

### HE'S DECORATED

Army Spec. Brian R. Ross has been decorated with the Army Commendation Medal. The medal is awarded to those individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievement or meritorious service in the performance of their duties on behalf of the Army.

Ross is a cannon crewmember in Schweinfurt, Germany. He is the son of Leonard and Valerie Ross of Farmington Hills.

### HE'S PROMOTED

Kenneth T. Lynch has been promoted in the U.S. Air Force to the rank of staff sergeant. He is an aerospace propulsion journeyman at Tinker Air Force Base, in Oklahoma.

Lynch is the son of Ray Lynch of Farmington Hills and a 1982 graduate of North Farmington High School.

### MERIT LISTS

Air Force Cadet Steven Fino has been placed on the Dean's and Commandant's Merit Lists at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo. The merit lists recognize cadets for achieving academic and military excellence.

Fino is the son of Joanne Fino of Bloomfield Hills and Tim Fino of Farmington. He is a 1992 graduate of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School.

### SILVER WINGS

Air Force 2nd Lt. Mark Mitchell received silver wings after graduating from the Air Force undergraduate pilot training program at Reese Air Force Base, Texas. He is the son of Daniel Mitchell of Farmington and a 1990 graduate of Farmington High School and a 1994 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

### ENTERED BASIC TRAINING

Army Pvt. Heather R. Wahl has entered basic military training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, S.C. She is the daughter of Stephen and Elizabeth Wahl of Farmington. Wahl is a 1993 graduate of Harrison High School.

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Please Call Cynthia at 810-848-1114 at Fax 810-848-1118 to Reserve Seating  
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