

Accentuate positive in career art goals

This is another lesson on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 16340 Middlebelt, Livonia, 522-6311. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, MI 48024.

By David Messing
special writer

"Hi! My name is David 'n' I'm gonna be a commercial artist." That was my opening line when I met someone for the first time.

"Good for you Sonny," most people would say as they rubbed my brush cut hard.

Of course most people didn't know

artifacts

what a commercial artist was and I certainly didn't either. It sure brought me lots of favorable remarks though. I think I got the idea from a career book at the school library.

I can't remember how old I was, but I was at my Grandpa Messing's house and to impress Grandpa I hit him with the old "I'm gonna be a commercial artist" line. Smiling he said, "then let's go talk to my neighbor because he is one." Excited that Grandpa cared, I remember walking a step or two ahead of him and thinking to myself "Wow . . . I'm gonna meet a for-real commercial artist."

As the neighbor stepped out of his house, Grandpa said, "this is my grandson, David, and he wants to be a commercial artist." The neighbor had a closed-mouth smile, you know the kind that doesn't register in the eyes. Come

to think of it, maybe it was a grimace.

As he put his hand on my shoulder he bent over and said, "son," and I leaned toward him to drink in every word, "get that thought out of your head and go into one of the trades like carpentry, plumbing or electrical like your grandpa here." My mouth dropped open, my eyes bugged out in shock and it felt like even my brush cut laid down flat to my scalp.

IT WAS as if he punched me in the future and still worse, he punched me in my dream. Like a bell without a clapper I stood mute and listened to this disgruntled artist. I mustered a smile, but spoke not a word, for quite some time.

I am not and was not a strong-willed person, but before the wind was completely out of my sail I thought to myself, "that's just him . . . maybe he

ain't that good and maybe I'll be better." What a precious seed is a young person's dream and what a tender reed is the first sight of its fruition.

Just last week my wife and I marvelled at how some flowers had already pushed their way out of the soil in response to the fickle spring-time sun. It just so happened that a few days later we were hit with two days of snow flurries.

When I looked at the fragile flowers they were humbled under an inch of snow. Within hours, however, the sun reappeared and melted the snow and the new plants appeared to be unaffected. Now all of the aspirations for the flower's life is in its seed and fragile beginnings of roots.

Perhaps in this light, the flowers, though on a much lower plain of existence, are stronger than ourselves. Because our aspirations tend to germinate or decay with the most recent forecast of promise or doom.

And what a blessing it is to have someone give us an emotional boost in the down times and a realistic rap on the knuckles in the up times. Be it writing or rhyming, drawing or painting,

sculpting, dancing, etc., the artist must do his or her art. Just like the flower must obey its genetic blueprint.

THE ARTIST must at some time, somehow, ventilate artistic urges to create or express. So if you are the artist then realize that there will be both ups and downs and positive and negative input in your lifetime of artistic expression. If you are the parent or friend of an artist then you supply the honest praise or constructive criticism that will help the artist do his or her work.

The artist is sometimes a "leaner" looking for support and sometimes a "lifter" raising his fans to view his or her work.

Not long after my visit to Grandpa Messing's, I was right back at the local art store with my dreams burning as bright as ever. I used to love to look at the art materials, touch the brushes, look at the papers, study the colors and peek through the glass showcase and ask, "What's an airbrush?"

Come to think of it I would probably have thrown me out if I was the owner. Not really. Every once in a while some

kid will come in my store without a cent to his name and ask a hundred dollars in questions. I have to smile to myself as I wonder how I was watched by the owner of the art store I frequented.

My dream soon changed from a commercial artist to an artist that owned an art store. My dream began to germinate when the economy was not just experiencing snow flurries. No, it was an all out blizzard.

Against all odds and advice of most people, we opened the Art Store & More in 1979, with the support of my wife and mother-in-law. Dreams require tremendous effort and support. So you support the dream with the hope that the dream will, one day, support you. With an increase in volume and an over abundance of students my dream has more than come true. In fact it's overflowing into a new store in the city of Plymouth.

So hold on tight to your dreams whatever they may be. Try to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. Learn all you can about your particular art and . . . oh yes, work . . . work . . . work.

Dance to honor Holocaust victims

By Lisa Simon
special writer

The Festival Dancers are "a troupe of mature dancers dealing with mature themes," said Harriet Berg, director. This small working company has recently transformed itself from a happy-go-lucky children's carnival troupe into a serious, first rate company.

Currently, the Festival Dancers are reviving an exceptional, well-received piece, the "Parting," known previously as "Twirling — The Twins." It will be given at 3 p.m., Sunday, May 5, at the Jewish Community Center of West Bloomfield as a part of the Celebration of Jewish Dance and Music.

The story line revolves around a young girl who visits a grave. Utilizing a stream of consciousness approach made famous by modern dance pioneer, Martha Graham, the girl journeys through a series of flashbacks brought on by the presence of the grave and death. The flashback sequence covers various instances in her childhood.

This solemn theme is one that haunted Berg for years. Irving Berg, Berg's husband of more than 45 years was a twin, emigrated from Poland to America.

THE TWIN who remained in a small Jewish community in Poland was a victim of the Holocaust. She and her whole family were destroyed by Nazi Germany. A large family portrait hanging in the Bergs' living room may be divided completely in half. One side of the photographed family lived and the other half died.

Berg chose dance as the artistic medium to portray the shadowy history of her own Jewish heritage in this century.

April 18 is Holocaust Memorial Day. It is appropriate that the "Parting" be brought back this year in honor of the

40th anniversary of the demise of the Nazi regime. Berg will employ dance as an art form to depict both the larger issue of the Holocaust and the more personal tragedy of the twins, to mark the anniversary.

In 1981, when Berg went full force with this theme, she corresponded with Sophie Maslow, New York choreographer and folk culturalist. Maslow was equally excited about the idea and quickly agreed to do the choreography.

Her creation was "perfect," according to Berg. Shortly after this agreement, Maslow came to Detroit for a 10 day scholar-in-residency at the Jewish Community Center in order to help polish the piece. She instructed the dancers herself and rearranged the chosen music with the permission of composer, Sol Kaplan.

PREPARING and presenting a finished dance is always difficult. Like many companies, perfection is the goal of the Festival Dancers. In order to prepare for the "Parting," the dancers themselves had to formalize and understand the attitudes toward the Holocaust and Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the beginning of World War II.

Berg commends the troupe for "their ability to extrapolate folk culture through non-verbal communication."

In order to make the piece universal, Maslow also stressed the "Parting's" non-verbal effectiveness.

ONE MEMBER of the troupe claimed, "the 'Parting' is an honor and a tribute — a focus on the spirits of the people still living."

Pianist Alex Resin, former member of the Moscow Philharmonic will present selected works as part of the celebration.

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