

Sepia-tone is like an old friend you haven't met

By David Messing
special writer

The time was B.C., no, I don't mean "Before Christ." I mean, "before coffee." I was sitting at a McDonald's watching the cream billow and mix in my coffee. Sitting and staring, I was waiting for some sign of life, you know, like a pulse rate, even a heart beat or two would be sufficient. Just then I was jolted to semiconsciousness when a little old man breezed by and gave me a hearty, "Good Morning." To which I slowly replied "Oh... um... thanks, I mean, yes sir... good morning to you... too."

From that time on I couldn't help but notice this gentleman every time I came back. Even when he sat at the "senior citizen-groupies" table. He still

artifacts

seemed to stand out in the crowd. Why? Because, he always carries a sketchbook and can most often be seen using it for notes or quick sketches. His brain doesn't rest for a minute.

Finally, after about eight "good mornings," I asked him to sit and share a coffee with me. His name is Carroll Wilkie and within a few coffees I realized that this guy is the tradesman and I wanted to be his apprentice.

WHAT A wealth of knowledge and experience wrapped up in his 74 years

of life. I am interested in molding and casting in different media and Carroll is a retired toy/model maker, designer, artist and you name it. Last week I had the opportunity to visit him at his shop in the basement of his home. I was in a dream world. He has lathes, kilns, saws, lightboxes, pewter casting equipment and ceramic molds, not to mention some tools that I can't even describe.

Every drawer in his basement was full of stuff and he had a great story for everyone. I learned more about casting, last Friday morning, than I did in four years of college. "Somehow in his remaining years," I told my wife, "I want to learn everything Carroll can teach me." That may be sometime yet, because Carroll's mother is 96 years old and still going strong.

Carroll is an "old friend" I haven't met before, at least until a few months ago. I pray that God will grant me acuity, energy and creativity, that I too,

may stay as well within my art as Carroll is with his.

"An old friend I never met" sounds like a paradox, but that describes Carroll and it also describes a technique that was popular long before my time.

"Sepia-tone" is the only name I know to describe this technique. It looks like a one color pastel. However, the colored paper must first be prepared. Sepia-tone prepared drawing paper has a deep rusty brownish look to it. You use charcoal pencils or graphite for the lines and the darkest areas. Then you erase or "pull out" the highlights which appear to be a rosey or flesh like color.

OF COURSE this technique is perfect for life drawing, but it is especially beautiful for still life and some scenery. So if you are tired of black and white or feel a little uneasy handling full color, then let's do a sepia-tone. Here's what you will need.

A piece of white drawing paper, vine charcoal, conte crayon, a sand paddle and a leather chamol. All of which totals under \$5. First sand about one half or three quarters of the vine charcoal evenly over the piece of paper. Then

sand about a quarter of the conte crayon, again allowing the dust to be distributed as evenly as possible. At this point your paper should look like someone spilled pepper and paprika on it. Taking the charcoal in hand begin rubbing the mixture and you will see the beautiful and classic look of sepia-toned paper. When you have rubbed the paper and have produced an even smooth color, then you are done with the preparation.

Next I would do my rough sketch on layout paper and then transfer to the prepared paper with charcoal or graphite. The reason for this step is to eliminate the need to erase on the prepared surface while developing the sketch. When transferred you can either draw charcoal, conte crayon or pencil. Lastly you can knead your eraser and "pull out" many tints of the original base, sepia-tone color. This technique has such a classic or antique look to it that you could finish the drawing today and it may look like a sketch Carroll Wilkie did back in 1930.

Try this technique and I know you will be pleased with the color and this age old look of sepia-toned paper. It is

simple, fast and can handle abstraction as well as realism. It may be, perhaps, like a stranger you have yet to greet "good morning," like Carroll.

This technique may be withholding many surprises for you. So stop by for a coffee, and if you see Carroll ask him lots of questions and tell him Dave says, "Hi."

This is another lesson on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for ten years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 16338 Middlebelt, Livonia, 422-5311, 285 N. Main Street, Plymouth, 455-1222. 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.



Mime concert announced

Jacquie Walker of Florida, a professional mime, will be the artist for the 41th annual Robert M. Critchfield Memorial Concert at 9 a.m. Friday at First Baptist Church, 300 Willits at Bates, Birmingham.

"Mime," says Walker, "is the direct transmission of thoughts and feelings by means of the body and the face. It is the language of all peoples of all ages and times. It depicts, better than words, the extremes of human emotion. It pleases the eye; it engages the heart."

Walker, who has performed both nationally and internationally, will give a varied concert featuring "Play," "The Creation of the World," "The Wins," "It's a Gift to be Simple," "Concrete Poetry" (selections from T.S. Eliot, E.E. Cummings and Don Marquis) and "Stories I Love to Tell." She will be accom-

panied by Christa Grix, harp, in parts of the program.

Walker has a bachelor's degree in speech and theater from University of South Florida, and a master's of divinity from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., with special study in Christianity and the arts.

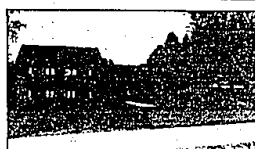
She has studied with nationally known mime performers and also studied acting, circus and pantomime at the Chabot Conservatory of Mime, Hayward, Calif.

Walker is founder and director of the board of Fools Rush In Inc., a professional mime and drama organization offering performance and consultation services to colleges, churches and professional groups.

In 1980, she was selected as one of the Outstanding Young Women in America.



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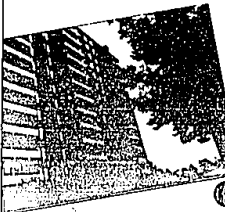


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