

The gift of leisure can untap hidden talents

Our time gives us the gift of plenty of leisure, or of a long old age, and many of us use these hours and years to develop the special artistic talents and interests we might have, no matter how modest. People join choirs or little theatre companies, or they might decide to learn a craft, or they find a spot somewhere in the house, where they can paint or carve or print their own photographs.

We are living in the age of the amateur and a whole industry caters to their needs, providing them with books of instructions as well as the vast array of materials and tools that are needed for these activities. These half-tutored arts and crafts were once called "folk art".

In the 19th century the label "naive art" was invented for them, since most of these creations are made by urban people now, not by rural folk anymore.

Because we engage in things, it does not follow that we are good at it. We spend huge sums on arenas, exercise fields, and swimming pools, but only a very few people become outstanding athletes. Likewise the activities of countless amateurs in the arts do not amount to much beyond the pleasure and sense of purpose

individuals engaging in them might feel. Very rarely does an amateur develop into a professional or into a truly naive artist with a vision all his or her own.

Today I want to point out to you two amateurs who have, in my opinion, the power to bring their vision across, if not always, then most of the time.

The first is Emil Beck, a retired carpenter from St. Agatha, Ontario, who has moved his paintings to the Gallery of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre, where they will hang to Saturday, September 7.

Emil Beck decided 10 years ago to chronicle the life of the Mennonites, and he does it with affection and with a quick and graphic style of some skill.

The paintings show the Mennonites working the fields, sapping trees for maple syrup, or returning from church in their horse-drawn buggies. The Mennonites are a communal people, who feel they are the stewards of their farms and of each other, and this communality is nicely expressed in Mr. Beck's paintings. Their stubborn insistence in a way of life that served them and their communities well, and which is, most likely, superior to our way of life, is illustrated by



Ideas and The Arts by John Sommer

Mr. Beck's art work and by a story he told me.

The artist has a friend who talked always in a rather indignant way about the Mennonites. "These darn people with their buggies," he used to say "they always drive so slow and so close to the middle of the road. I would like to hit them with my car."

It came to pass, that a fierce summer storm one year destroyed this man's barn. A few days later, a whole neighboring Mennonite community came rolling into the storm victim's farm yard "with food and everything you can think of for a barn raising" to help the stricken neighbor. Needless to say, there is one person now who has changed his mind about these exceptional communities in our midst.

As always with exhibitions of this kind, there are about 10 paintings too many covering the walls, and leaving the protective cardboard corners on the frames, is to say it mildly, a droll idea. Our noble Gallery space is not a bargain basement, nor are the paintings served well by this treatment.

The second amateur artist I want to talk about is Keith Wellstead, a retired police officer from Georgetown. His work can be seen in the showcases of the Cultural Centre lobby all through August.

Mr. Wellstead is a carver of birds and fishes and other animals. He is a meticulous craft-

smen and his output is small. Some very small pieces on exhibit are the first he did when he started to carve years ago. These have a simple charm. His later pieces however, are highly finished and often quite complicated in design. I like his unpainted carvings in particular, but I have to admit that the painted ones are striking and memorable, and almost scientifically observed.

The Halton Hills Camera Club

invites all regional photographers to a one-day photo competition called "Capture the Hills '91". This competition is a co-operative venture with the Halton Hills Recreation Department. You have to send an application form to the Recreation Department to be able to participate.

The deadline for registration is September 27. I suggest that you register early, because the competition is limited to 100 photographers only.



Martin's Meeting House

Kitchener artist Emil Beck (left) and Herald Arts and Ideas columnist John Sommer meet at the artist's three week exhibit scheduled from August 12 to September 7, Tuesday morning at the Art Gallery in Halton Hills Cultural Centre. Emil Beck's work reflects stewardship of the land, the people and their lifestyles, with brush and acrylic colors. The artist and columnist stand in front of one of Beck's paintings entitled 'Martin's Meeting House'. (Herald photo)

Credit Valley Artisans planning fall courses

Another great line-up of courses has been assembled by the Credit Valley Artisans with the first scheduled to begin on September 24, 1991. Registration by mail can begin immediately and there will be an opportunity to register in person at the Cedarvale Cottage on Saturday September 7 from 10 a.m. until 12 noon.

The courses available this Fall include:

Weaving for beginners - Wednesdays, Sept. 25, Oct. 2 and 16, Nov. 6 and 13 evenings 7 p.m. until 10 p.m.

Marquetry (picture-making with wood veneers) - Thursday evenings, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 10, 17, 24 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Tole and Folk art painting - Tuesday evenings, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Pottery for beginners - Wednesday evenings from 7 p.m. until 10 p.m., Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Nov. 6, 13.

A Calligraphy workshop - Saturday, Oct. 19, 9:30 a.m. until 4 p.m.

A Basketry workshop - for intermediate and beginners Sat. Nov. 2 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

An intermediate to advanced

course in Stained Glass (lead came method) Monday evenings from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Nov. 4, 18 and 25.

There will also be two courses specifically designed for children aged between 7 and 10 years. These will be on Saturdays as follows:

Children's Pottery - Oct. 26 and Nov. 9, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Children's Drawing - Nov. 23 and Nov. 30 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

These courses are all held at the Cedarvale Cottage at Main St. and Maple Ave. in Georgetown. The classes are small so students get close attention from the instructor. The courses are filled on a registration paid basis with first come first served. Some courses fill quickly so prompt registration is advised.

Registration forms are available at the Library in Georgetown and also at the Halton Hills Recreation and Parks Department. You can also get information on the courses by calling the registrar - Frank Anthony at (416)877-5856 after 6 p.m. daily. The Credit Valley Artisans will also be on hand at the Georgetown Fall Fair to answer questions and hand out registration forms.



Wildlife wonders

These creatures of wonder and beauty were created by artist Keith Wellstead and are on display in the foyer of the Halton Hills Cultural Centre from August 13 to 31. Retired from the Ontario Provincial Police two years ago, Mr. Wellstead has been creating detailed wood carvings of wildlife for the past 12 years. Keith creates about a dozen different pieces each year. (Herald photo)

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