

Communicating through art

By DEBORAH QUAILLE

Bev Didur has a life that encompasses more than just art.

She studied nursing - "One of the best things I ever did," - has run a boarding kennel for many years on the Eighth Line in the Drumquin area, teaches art classes, and volunteers at Bethel United Church... but her passion is creation.

Mrs. Didur has been imagining and putting her hands to artistic tasks "all my life, and probably always with a vengeance. In school it was always important (to me)."

Born in Manitoba, she received a training program through the government in various techniques - sculpture, fibre arts, pottery, children's arts, painting and more.

Eventually, after marriage and a move to London, Ontario with her husband, in 1977 the family moved to a heritage Georgian-style brick home in the Drumquin area.

Raising three children while husband Len was frequently on the road for business, Mrs. Didur began the boarding kennel and continued creating at home. She touched on all arts until her mother died, when she was left with a diary - "the most mundane diary I ever read. The phrase 'I didn't do very much today' was repeated throughout the pages."

Women's honest work of washing, cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing was not well respected, yet she was not convinced that the simple, everyday routines could not be celebrations of the way women lived. Gathering aprons from friends across Canada and incorporating them into

new works, she made images of the everyday.

"The pocket of the apron became important - it was somewhere to put their dreams," Mrs. Didur relates.

As well as the diary, she was left with photo albums from the 20s and 30s, with images of her mother and friends - "the aunts," she adds with a smile. These photos of chummy young women in another age have been transferred on a great deal of her work, and the concept has proved so engaging that she hasn't "felt the need to stop yet."

"I want to have exhibitions that make people think," she says. "My last exhibition was at the Art Gallery of Mississauga, In the First Person, about western Canadian women. I'm really issue-orientated. I don't produce to sell, but I'm too adamant about my theme to give it up."

"Art is communication. My work is a voice expressing voices not heard - inner, everyday and universal voices. I present a diary of concerns and reactions to events; personal statements visualized in colour, texture and form."

Mrs. Didur is also making sculpture books, handmade books that work along a theme.

"Art is part of every day - part of the news, the paper, everything you read or hear - usually the books come out of something that concerns me."

Another topic under the Women's Work theme came from the women of Bethel United making tea sandwiches for a party, the small

rolled and filled dainties that were more popular in the 50s, 60s, or even prior. Local women's photo images were transferred to the sandwich filling - delightful ribbons of orange and cream cheese that roll the people, place, time, and event into a memory.

"An idea pops up and I follow it," Mrs. Didur notes, and from the idea comes a new and fascinating way of looking at the seemingly ordinary. In another mixed media mono print intriguingly titled *www.windrows* with-grace, the fields are reminiscent of quilts. The threads of the past from mothers are also evident in stories, recipes, textiles, and other portions of everyday living.

Mrs. Didur is currently working on her tribute to Japanese artist Yoshitoshi's *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon* with her own exhibit of 30 Aspects of the Moon, although her work is "completely abstracted."

There is an immense body of work in many forms of media that Mrs. Didur has produced, and numerous solo and group shows or juried exhibitions across the country. Yet it's the incredible enthusiasm and dedication that are the draw to Mrs. Didur's career.

Once inspired, she must follow a project through and see where it leads, which inevitably opens a new doorway.

"It's amazing how following your heart leads to more work and projects... you never know what's going to come back. If you're not doing any work, you're not going anywhere. As long as you keep pushing it

out there, things will happen," she says.

"There are things I can't not do. It's the way to express yourself - whatever pops into your head, follow it or

else it's a missed opportunity. And if you're facing in the direction you want to go, you'll keep on your path."



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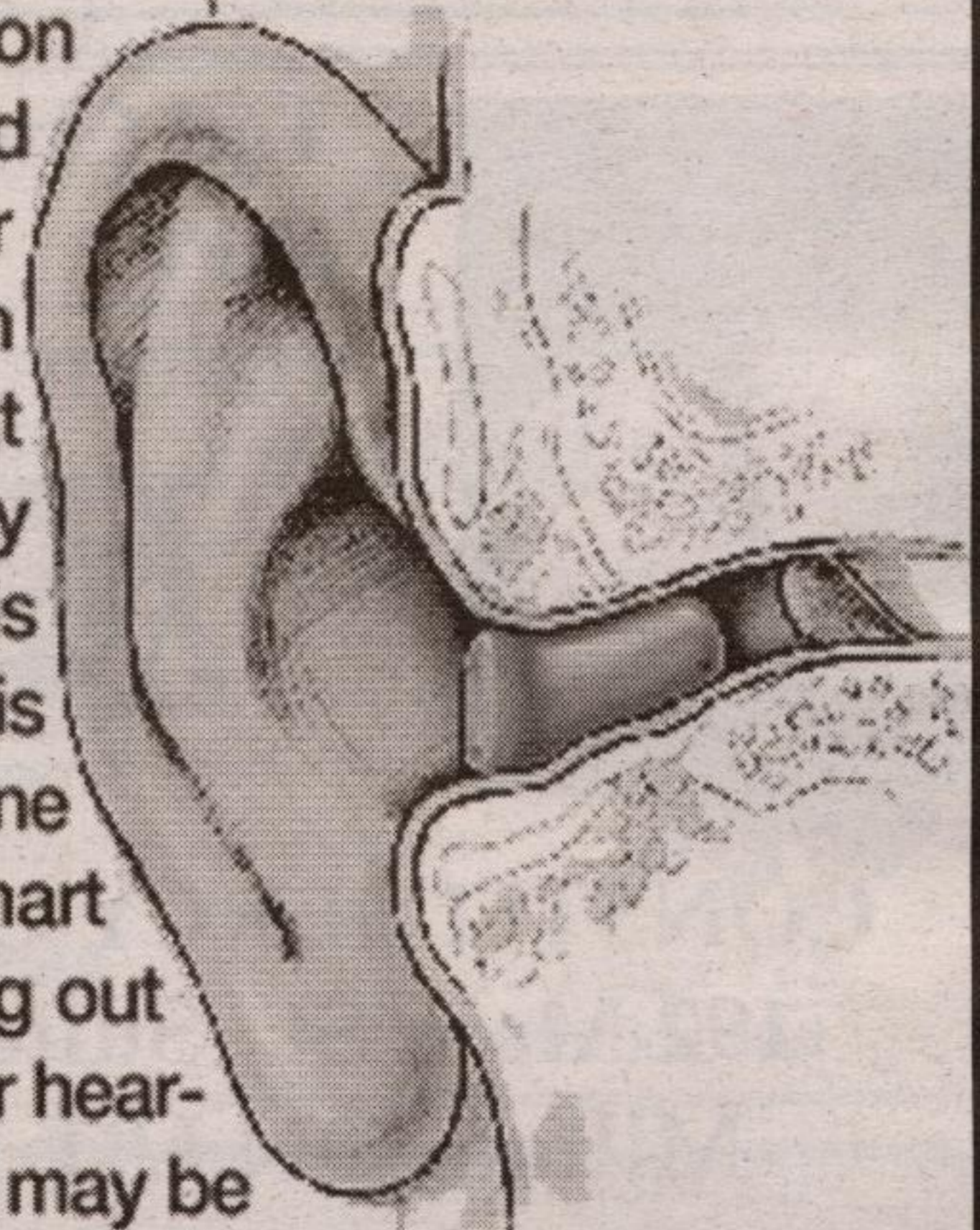


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