

SANDPOINT

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2014

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Interview with Former Spy and Bank Robber Christopher Boyce, Sages of Sandpoint, Remembering Patrick Orton, New Hand at the Panida, Bakken Oil Field Commuters, Blogger Allie Brosh, Whale Warrior Katie Adams, Calendars, Dining, Real Estate ... and yes, even more!

Unleashing an artist

Patti Ragone releases a lifetime of pent-up creativity

By Teresa Pesce

A popular book entitled, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” was true for local artist Patricia “Patti” Ragone, 72.

At a parent-teacher meeting, a kindergarten teacher told Ragone’s mother that her daughter was artistic. The proof? Ragone drew the usual childish stick figures with tapered arms and legs. That remained in Patti’s mind long after her mother had forgotten it.

True, her father and uncle were ink sketch artists, her father pursued the art of photography, and her mother was a concert pianist, but the high school aptitude test decreed that Ragone was destined to be an architect! This conclusion was echoed years later when her children were older and she resumed college, where another test indicated a medical degree was in her future.

“I didn’t want to be 50 when I graduated,” she said, so she chose to follow the left-brained prophecies as an operations analyst with a degree in information systems management. True, she filled every elective with art classes, but they were indulgences rather than goals because, “You couldn’t make a living at art.”

So the years slipped past until retirement made time for the deep streams of creativity to bubble up.

“A friend invited me to paint with fellow local artists, and I fell in love with watercolors,” said Ragone. That was the unstoppable force that finally dislodged Ragone’s practicality. “Watercolors are magic! Just put them on, and look and see what happens!”

What happens for most people is a sodden blur of best artistic intentions, but for Ragone, wonders occur.

“I started painting, then doing shows, then branching out into things like note



In only six years, Patti Ragone has excelled in art, illustrating books and exhibiting in New York City.

PHOTO BY DION NIZZI

cards,” she said. She honed her craft via a merit scholarship to Scottsdale Art School. “Anyone can paint – they just need to be taught,” she said.

The note cards became her ticket to an art show in New York. “I sent some of the cards to a friend in New York as a thank you for being invited to her party, and she said, ‘I’d like to sponsor you to display your art in the National Arts Club,’ ” said Ragone. The venerable and prestigious club has art exhibits in several galleries, upstairs and down.

“I told her I’m just a little old grandma from North Idaho who paints –

I’m not ready for New York!”

But her friend replied, “If you wait until you’re ready, you’ll never be ready.” Remembering the joy and angst of the moment, Ragone said, “So we did it!”

The “we” refers to her husband, Ron Ragone, a leading Sandpoint presence on stage and in film production, and CEO of 7B Productions.

“He is very supportive,” said Patti Ragone. “He drove all the way to New York and back to transport over 30 pieces of my art.” Because the weekend of her show was in November 2009 during Hunger & Homeless Awareness



From far left, samples of Patti Ragone's paintings include "Invisible Citizen #2," watercolor on cardboard; "Silent Vigil," oil on wood; "Umbria," alcohol ink on ceramic tile; and "Yippee!" watercolor on watercolor gallery wrapped canvas

Week, and because Ragone is able to produce astonishing works on a moment's notice (unaware that this is phenomenal), she e-mailed Denmark photographer Jacob Holt, whose subjects are homeless people all over the world. She asked him if she could incorporate his photos into her art.

"He said 'Go for it!'" Her composites surrounding these studies in humanity were rapidly purchased.

"The whole experience was serendipitous," she said, recalling the gift of an empty parking space in New York, twice – in front of the National Arts Club for her to unload for the show and when they pulled up to their rented apartment in the Tudor district. Not only was the universe bestowing free parking spaces, Patti Ragone found she and her husband standing beside a charming Italian art dealer named Fausto Ricci as they all

waited for a taxi.

Ron gave Ricci a ticket to Patti's art show. Ricci attended and bought his daughter a painting, and then did one more thing: He urged Patti to branch out. He promised to send her his easel but admonished, "You have to paint oils on it!" In giving her this legacy gift, the elderly gentleman changed Patti Ragone's creative life.

"I found painting with oils to be like

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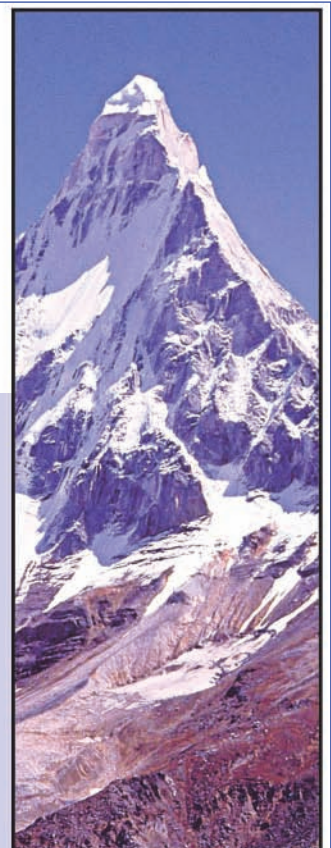
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painting with toothpaste – sticky and stiff, and it takes forever to dry! So I decided to take the step in between watercolor and oil, which is acrylics,” she said.

Acrylics bridged her onto a path that led to many artistic avenues, transforming her into a prolific artist without boundaries.

Her studio is a garden of creativ-

ity, with each section blooming a single aspect: watercolors, oils, acrylic, pottery, pen and ink, stained glass, furniture, all in their Sagle residence, surrounded by walls of windows overlooking lawns sloping to a river.


She gives a circular tour of the work stations with a child's delight, lingering at one devoted to alcohol ink, where two koi insinuate themselves in yin-yang balance. “You can put alcohol ink on ceramic tiles, glass, metal and wood,” she said, as creative ideas popcorn into the air around her. She explains her idea for frameable coasters, customized as gifts. The tour takes in personalized mailboxes, wooden furniture and game tables, painted with imaginative designs and scripted in encouraging words and phrases.

During the past six years, as pent-up creativity flowed like a swift, wide river, Ragone became an established local and not-so-local presence. She had a juried booth at the POAC Arts

& Crafts Fair and participated in the exhibit “Expose Yourself to Art” at the Bonner County Fair. She is a member of the Transparent Watercolor Society of America, and the American Watercolor Society has asked her to start a chapter in northern Idaho.

She qualified as a featured artist at Art in the Park in Boulder City, Nev., and the piece that earned her the honor was “Yippee!” – a rooster cavorting in pink tennis shoes – that Ragone painted in celebration of a friend who beat breast cancer.

Her credits include exhibits in juried art shows such as the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture Exhibit in Spokane and the Scottsdale, Ariz., ArtFest. Her works have been featured in Artworks Gallery and Artists' Studio at Schweitzer and online at FineArtAmerica.com.

Six years are obviously not enough to decant all the creativity within artist Patti Ragone. 

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