

THE POWER OF POSITIVE PERSISTENCE



Jacqueline Bilodeau (back row, second from left) with violin teacher Denyse Dufresne Thibault (far left) and chambre music students.

Marcelle Blanchette was destined to be an artist. As a child, too young to know what "art" was, she was fascinated by shapes; as a young teenager she borrowed books on Japanese brush paintings from the library so that she could practice copying them.

First in oils, then in acrylics, and now in water soluble paints, Marcelle has developed a style which captures the essence of certain fleeting moments in nature. Luminous and fluid, her watercolours stir the imagination and acquire new meaning with every viewing and mood.

Although most countries have an art community into which you can move, not all countries have the materials and services that are readily available in Canada. While in Tunis, Marcelle had to order paper from Italy, watercolours from England, ink from Germany and frames from the U.S. Forward planning became essential to production.

Her works hang all over the world — Piraeus, Montreal, Tunis, Washington, Athens, Calgary — in galleries, private collections and corporate lobbies. A prolific artist, she exhibited in nearly 30 solo and group shows between 1977-1984.

"I think moving probably gave me more time to paint than if I had stayed in Canada. It allowed me to see more things, to experience more."

Ana Iriondo de Bryson trained in interior design, but has been interested in painting since her childhood in San Sebastian. Three postings and four little boys in ten years has meant adjusting her career to these constraints.

As a result, Ana does mainly, but not exclusively, commissioned portraits. Her clientele include Canadians, other expatriates at the post and host nationals who like her clear, honest style.

One of the most difficult aspects of developing as an artist has not been moving from post to post, but resisting the lure and excitement of each new country. The temptation to get sidetracked by new ideas, or by the demands of raising children, is always present.

"It requires great self-discipline to continue to work at home. It would be easy to work less."

Barbara Barker is an artisan, a sculptor in papier mâché. Although she always makes figures from the Christmas manger tableau, she has to work throughout the year to fill all the orders. The figures of people and animals range from a half to nearly two feet in height. Some are all gilt; some are decorated with daintily painted flowers, mirrors or glitter.

She works on commission and sells all she can produce without having to tap the retail outlets.

Others, like **Margaret Chandler**, **Maree Sigurdson**, and **Joyce Drake**, are sculptors in clay.

Margaret recently had a solo exhibition in Lisbon, Portugal, sponsored by the British Council; Maree is an accomplished caterer as well as a sculptor, and Joyce studied and assisted at the "Torpedo Factory" Art League in Alexandria, Virginia for seven years. All three are members of the Ottawa Guild of Potters.

Have you ever thought you would like to share yourself with others through the written word? Or tell a story? Or tell it like it is?

There are successes to lend encouragement and show the way.

The distinguished Canadian poet, P.K. Page, is really **Mrs. Arthur Irwin**, now living in Victoria, B.C. **Lilliane Jenkins** wrote two books inspired by postings in Pakistan and India.

Karleen Bradford has published six books to date and is working on a seventh. Each is based on fact, thoroughly researched, and appeals to a specific age group from between 8 to 18.

The Other Elizabeth weaves an intriguing tale around Canadian historical facts in the 1880s. *Lady Jane Grey* was researched on a Canada Council grant as Karleen spent one month in England visiting key landmarks and scouring archives and libraries. For the book she is currently working on, she lived in a lighthouse in Newfoundland for two weeks and explored the surrounding outposts.

Besides writing, she has given numerous workshops and courses, to both adults and children, on various aspects of creative writing.

It took eight years for **Louise Reynolds** to complete her first book, *Agnes: the Biography of Lady MacDonald*. She began her research in Ottawa. Then, posted to Ethiopia, she collected her material on microfiche and took it with her to finish reading. When Ambassador Reynolds attended a Conference in Geneva, she continued her research in London and her reading in Geneva. The actual writing was done in Costa Rica; the rewriting was carried out long distance between Costa Rica and the U.S. Undaunted, Louise has another historical biography underway.

Another Head of mission spouse, **Sondra Gottlieb**, has three novels, one cookbook, and numerous articles for *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to her credit. Her autobiographical novel, *True Confections*, won the Stephen Leacock Medal for humor.

Sometimes an author has to be an entrepreneur, too. **Gail Schioler's** *The Non-Drinker's Drink* book was published in 1981. When her publisher went out of business she got back the rights to her book. Instead of letting it die there, Gail has decided to market her book herself. As a result, she is travelling in both Canada and the US giving demonstrations to bartenders and restaurant owners. "It has turned into a full time job. It was a book before its time but now, with the new drunk driving laws and emphasis on non-drinking for health and safety, its time has come."