



Saraf With Portion of Current Exhibit at Art Association Gallery

Staff Photo by Steve Bisson

Philip Saraf Turns Talents Toward Watercolor Painting

By KRYS KELLER
Staff Writer

Philip Saraf has frequently appeared in newspapers for recognition of his cooking ability. But this native Savannahian is a man of many talents, and the current display of his watercolors at the Savannah Art Association is yet another example of them.

More than two dozen pieces are now on display in the association's headquarters gallery on Abercorn Street through the end of the month. Most of the scenes depict what Saraf himself terms a "disappearing rural Georgia."

"Many of the things I've painted are already torn down," he adds.

His studio is in his car. "I drive around, I look. I've even painted in the rain. People have often asked me where it is I find the things I paint, and when I show them, they are invariably disappointed. As a painter, I feel it is my responsibility to find the everyday object and make it beautiful, even in its simplicity. You can always find beauty if you look for it."

Although he would like to be a full-time, professional artist, Saraf has been a dental lab technician for 24 years. "I've always wanted to be a painter, though," he admits with a smile, "and even if it has not become my profession, it is for me a release for emotion and a way to express my love for everything beautiful."

As a result of a bout with Scarlet Fever when he was two, Saraf has impaired hearing. "I learned to be very observant. I listen with my eyes. In fact," he laughs, "I have the luxury of turning off my hearing aid whenever I want and can have the bliss of silence."

Other than occasional classes

through the association, he has had no formal art training. In 1953 when he was in Atlanta for a dental tech course, he saw a tube of paint at Rich's, finally gave in to his desire to paint, and has been experimenting ever since. "I've tried every medium, but watercolor is my favorite. Many people are afraid of it, they say it's too difficult. But it's not really hard. It's a happy medium."

Many of his pieces include hens and chickens, fowl for which Saraf admits a delight. "They mind their own business, don't have any worries and have such beautiful plumage." He collects items that feature the birds and even has a huge, stuffed rooster in his living room.

Saraf is a devotee of Van Gogh, and that artist's influence is readily apparent in the Savannahian's work. There is that same vitality, bright col-

or and feeling. Most of his works have been inspired by rural scenes in Effingham County, although he does local scenes and ones taken from St. Simons Island.

One of his paintings, done during the Savannah Symphony Orchestra's recent Forsyth Park outdoor concert, was chosen for inclusion in the annual Savannah Art Association Members Show, currently up at Exhibit A Gallery. "It was completely a spur of the moment thing. I was so inspired, I simply placed my drawing board over a garbage can and drew. It was so hasty, I was shocked it was chosen with 23 other painters' work out of 116 entries."

"Not everyone likes how I paint," he says, "but like I tell everyone who is thinking of starting to paint, 'If you can't accept criticism, don't even start.'"

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