

## **A GOOD AGE: Senior art director: At 91, he nurtures students' creativity**

By SUE SCHEIBLE

Among the images playing through Jim Hooley's mind are colorful illustrations on attic walls in Belgium and Germany. Hooley created them more than 60 years ago when he was in the Army Airborne during World War II.

"I wasn't much of a soldier, but I was a good radio operator," he said. And a budding artist.

Hooley spent two years in the Army (the 17th Airborne and 82nd Airborne), and as a radio operator he logged a lot of time sitting around in attics. Someone sent him a box of 36 crayons and he quickly set to work creating attic scenes. For two lucky weeks, he also managed to draw pin-up girls by each GI's bunk before a superior officer caught him.



**Jim Hooley, 91, of Canton teaches a weekly art class at the Milton Senior Center. (LISA BUL/The Patriot Ledger)**

By 1946, Hooley, then 32, was back home in Boston, working in the printing business and winning local art association watercolor awards. Today, at 91, he continues to create new work and every Thursday morning teaches a watercolor class at the Milton Senior Center. He turns 92 March 2.

One recent morning, 13 students, many in their 70s and 80s, watched as Hooley demonstrated filling in the colors on a drawing he had done of a lighthouse in Maine. "Put a little shadow in the highlights," he said as he painted. "Now take a little cadmium red for the top of the lighthouse and the chimneys ... now back to the cobalt blue, this time, real strong to do the water."

During the demonstration, Pat Sullivan, 65, a retired school bus driver, watched as Hooley executed quick, sure strokes. "See, he seems to do the strokes all in one direction," she said.

Every week, Hooley brings in 12 partly finished watercolor scenes he has done at home of the subject for that week. The students spend an hour doing a pencil drawing of the same scene themselves. Then, after he demonstrates adding water color, they work on their own paintings.

Hooley's teaching style is very laid back. He doesn't walk around peering over shoulders and making comments; instead, he makes suggestions if students ask.

"This is the most relaxing class - you forget everything that bothers you and get totally immersed," said Sister Angela Maciag SCCF, 78, a retired nurse. "He's the gentlest man, and he brings in gentle music to play for us while we work," said 67-year-old Leah Mitiguy. Viola Massenzio, 88, the oldest student, was working on her own project - a portrait of a dog.

Hooley has been teaching the class for four years for free. "I felt I owed the senior center something for all the time I've spent there," he said. Every week, he and some buddies use the center to play whist. He has been retired for 30 years as a pressman and paper cutter in the printing business. A widower, he lived in Milton for 30 years before moving to Canton to live with his sister, Ellie Ford, 78, but they both are about to move back to Milton to The Meadows at Fuller Village. He has no children.

He began teaching watercolor in 1969 for the Milton Art Association and the Quincy adult education program. "I had no art training, but I always liked to draw in grade school and as a teenager, I started painting on my own," he said. He became friendly with many professional artists and has sold about 40 watercolors a year for over 20 years.

"My most productive scene is the swan boats on the Public Garden - I've sold 50 of those," he said. Another favorite subject is the former Boston Elevated Railway, constructed in 1895. This spring, he is donating a 27-by-37-inch watercolor of the old EI to the Channel 2/WGBH auction.

"Every painting is a challenge - no two are alike," he said. "And I get a kick out of teaching."

Ruth Albanese, 70, a Quincy widow, began the class four years ago. "It's become a social club - we all know about each other and have a good time, but we do paint and I've seen a big improvement over time in everyone," she said.

**WISDOM OF THE AGES** - The Dec. 20 column about reconnecting at the holidays brought this update from Amy Ford of Quincy:

"I wrote to you three years ago, shortly after Sept. 11. I wanted to volunteer with the seniors at their housing community at 1000 Southern Artery, right down the street from my new home. I wound up volunteering with their Monday night Bingo and am still there. I can't tell you how much personal enjoyment and satisfaction this commitment has brought me.

"No matter how long or tiring my days are at work, I know I can always count on having my spirits lifted by the seniors. Compliments, good advice and common sense are often dispensed my way, and I'm always cheered by the applause I get upon my return when I do have to miss a session here or there. I've become close with Ruth and Bill Knowles, who run the Bingo, along with Jack and Bill, the other volunteers who live there as well.

"I'm amazed at how this group, despite their challenges of aging - health issues, the passing of friends, slow loss of independence - continue to remain positive and optimistic. They are a wonderful influence on me."

**ALL HER MARBLES** - There was recently this report from Linda Goldman of Randolph:

"You did an article on my Mom, Muriel Rubin, and how she kept a bag of marbles on a door knob in her apartment to remind everyone that she still had 'all her marbles.' Mom is currently residing at Baypointe (a nursing home) in Brockton. Her health is deteriorating; however, her mind is still sharp as a tack. She actually still has her marbles hanging on her bulletin board in her room, next to her bed."

**CAREGIVER SUPPORT** - The Family Caregiver Educational Support Group will meet from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Thursdays from Feb. 3 through March 3 at the Weymouth Council on Aging, 182 Green St., in Weymouth. South Shore Elder Services is a co-sponsor. Call 781-848-3910 Ext. 335 or 303 to reserve a spot; prior sign-up required.

**A HAPPY RETIREMENT** - "Looking Forward: An Optimist's Guide to Retirement" by Ellen Freudenheim is a new paperback geared to help baby boomers think ahead. The advice is to invest your time and energy in social networks, fulfilling activities, exercises and a positive attitude. You could start a second career, go back to school, volunteer, or explore a spiritual path, travel, theater, gardening and athletics. The book costs \$15.95 and is published by Stewart, Tabori & Chang of New York.

*Reporter Sue Scheible can be reached at 617-786-7044, by mail at The Patriot Ledger, Box 699159, Quincy, MA 02269-9159 or E-mail at [sscheible@ledger.com](mailto:sscheible@ledger.com).*

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