

SHARON PETERSON – The Ride of a Lifetime

Sharon always knew where her heart was and what she wanted to pursue “when she grew up.” As a child, Sharon was forever filling up tablets with sketches and would paint on anything and everything. Her father, who was a self-taught pen and ink cartoonist, encouraged her to sketch and paint. He kept her supplied with the largest box of crayons and ample paper and paint to continue to sketch and paint. Growing up in Minnesota, stunning examples of the beauty in nature to sketch and paint surrounded her and she made the most of every opportunity to do so.

Sharon always loved to take art classes, whether those unofficial classes in elementary and middle school, or official classes in high school. Art was always her favorite subject in school so it was natural for her to continue with art-focused subjects in college. After acquiring her degree in commercial art, Sharon worked with a large advertising firm in St. Paul, where her focus was graphic design. She was able to continue to work independently at home as well, surrounding herself with creating artwork of a variety of forms. Sharon was able to explore and experiment with variety of mediums and art forms, which she later incorporated into her own unique and breath-taking style.

Sharon married her high school sweetheart and began her family. She raised her children, a son and daughter, who became her main focus for the next 20 years. She left her position at the advertising firm in order to be a “stay at home Mom” and raise her children. While Sharon considered this to be her most important job in life, her heart was still filled with a passion for the arts. She shared this passion with her children by engaging them in play with crayons and paper. While her own desire to create was put on the back burner for a bit, she found another way to satisfy her creative urges. She started a very successful custom clothing design company, creating unique and unusual bridal party gowns, bride gowns and formal event gowns. Sharon was able to work at home, while her children were in school and still continue her most important job as a mom. Sharon was surprised at how successful her company became, but it was apparent to her customers that her designs were incredibly unique and stunning. Her success and popularity as a designer and creator of these pieces came as no surprise to her customers.

When Sharon and her husband, a successful executive with Ford Motor Company, became “empty nesters,” over the objection of her customers, Sharon took the opportunity to resume her passion, creating art, a full throttle speed. In order to refresh and rejuvenate her skills, Sharon began a feverish search for workshops by local & national artists. These workshops gave her a renewed technical base that she began to apply to her paintings. Sharon then worked with five high profile watercolor artists as mentors for her over a period of the next 18 years, focusing on watercolor.

Her passion for horses became a focus for her work, which quickly garnered acclaim and many collectors. Sharon would take a yearly break from painting and head to a ranch to ride for a week. Her passion for horses was satisfied at the ranch. She could ride to her heart’s content or simply relax in the beauty of these magnificent animals. In the art world, horses are considered to be one of, if not THE, most difficult subject to paint. Sharon is able to not only capture the form of a moving horse, but its spirit is evident in the way she is able to paint each horse’s eyes. Looking at her work, no two horses within any piece have the same expression in their eyes. She succeeds in capturing their unique spirit in each piece.

Sharon’s work became recognized in Minnesota. She entered countless shows and was awarded numerous ribbons and prizes on her work. Her work became highly sought and she acquired many collectors for her work. Her success as an artist surprised her in much the same way that her success in her clothing design and creation surprised. However, anyone who acquired her work was not surprised that she was successful. Sharon developed a unique and recognizable style that reflected her passion. Her tremendous love of horses was and continues to be reflected in her representational and abstracted representational pieces. Sharon continued to experiment with different mediums and different types of paints and substrates. She began to experiment with abstract acrylics, incorporating textures created by a variety of methods and mediums.

Unfortunately, Sharon’s husband, Rich, suffered a round of cancer and several other major health issues. Her daughter had moved, with her husband, to the Phoenix metro area. In 2013, Sharon and Rich moved from Minnesota to a home in San Tan Valley, making Arizona their permanent home. The weather was much more conducive to Rich’s health and Sharon feel in love with the beauty and grandeur of the American desert and the wild horses of the Salt River. With Rich fully retired, Sharon was able to focus on her painting. As with all things that Sharon tackled, Sharon soon became involved in several art organizations in the

Phoenix area. She developed several friendships, and with those friends, began showing her work in exhibits throughout the metro area. Sharon also began doing outdoor art shows. Her unique style, incorporating watercolor on Masa paper, with her ability to capture horses, soon kept her in the studio painting, trying to keep up with the demand for her work. Soon Sharon was forced to limit the number of exhibits to which she would submit in order to spend more time in her studio.

Unfortunately, Sharon's success was interrupted again when Rich's health took a turn for the worse. They had gotten through so much together and they had found peace and happiness in Arizona. Sharon felt she was in heaven and then Rich's health began to fail. Sharon found herself once again spending time with her childhood sweetheart in a variety of hospitals. Rich's deteriorating health became Sharon's focus, assisting her husband with whatever she could to help make him comfortable. Sharon rarely had time to spend in her studio and she gave up exhibits and shows altogether in order to spend time with Rich. Unfortunately, the new peace and happiness that they had just come to enjoy was not destined to last long. Sharon's childhood sweetheart's suffering ended and his passing left Sharon in a daze. Sharon again returned to her studio, looking to reclaim the peace and happiness she had always found there. She again became a sought after artist, with clients visiting her studio and purchasing her work off the easel. The sales of her work, and the appreciation for her unique style expressed by her collectors, helped her through her loss. Sharon was able to regain her passion and move forward with her painting.

Sharon believes that she has been blessed with friends and family who encourage and support her in her work. She is humbled by her success and feels that she was given a gift to share. Sharon says, "Art is inside me, wanting to be painted on a canvas, board or watercolor paper. People ask me how I decide what my painting will be. I don't always know. It just happens. However, I feel that I am not complete without creating artwork. It's the ride of a lifetime!"