

4/9/64
STARTED DURING ILLNESS

Says Portrait Ability Is a God-Given Talent



PREFERS PORTRAITS—Although Joe Wheat does various types of painting, he says he prefers portraits. He is shown with a painting of his daughter, Kathy, above, and of former Michigan governor, G. Mennen Williams.

BY MRS LEO J. HANSON

One of the friendliest persons in the Village of DeWitt is an engaging young fellow by the name of Joe Wheat. He has made quite a name for himself in the last few years as a portrait painter.

He was born 37 years ago in Gleason, Tenn.; one of the younger members in a family of nine children. His father died when he was 8 and at the age of 10 he went to work in the fields picking cotton and digging potatoes. He says he had to work much harder than he does now. He worked behind the soda counter in a drug store to put himself through high school.

bed. He did some painting while convalescing. A few months later he was stricken again and this time was confined to his bed for six months. It was at this time that he came to realize how many friends he really had. Joe says he wouldn't trade a small town and its friendliness for all of New York City.

THE WHEATS are members of the St. Therese church and Joe painted a full length portrait of St. Therese for the Women's guild of the church. He also painted a black panther on the high school gym floor, the DeWitt Athletes being known as Black Panthers. He does some mural work and some scenic work but prefers

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IN THE 1940's he spent two years in the US Army. One of those years was spent in Oahu, Hawaii as a Military policeman. After completing service in 1948 he returned to Gleason. Being unable to find work there he came to Lansing where his older brother, Calvin, lived.

He was always interested in drawing but as a child he never had the time or money to do anything about it. In 1954, he took a course in Commercial art and began to draw in earnest. He said his talent is something God has given him and he intends to use it to the best of his ability.

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HIS WIFE, Elizabeth, is a native of Hastings. They have five children, Mark, 10, Lisa, 9, Jeffery, 7, Cathy, 6, and baby Julie.

Five years ago Joe became ill with rheumatic fever and had to spend five months in

bed. He did some painting while convalescing. A few months later he was stricken again and this time was confined to his bed for six months. It was at this time that he came to realize how many friends he really had. Joe says he wouldn't trade a small town and its friendliness for all of New York City.

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THE WHEATS are members of the St. Therese church and Joe painted a full length portrait of St. Therese for the Women's guild of the church. He also painted a black panther on the high school gym floor, the DeWitt Athletes being known as Black Panthers. He does some mural work and some scenic work but prefers portrait work. Some of the better known people that he has painted are G. Mennen Williams and Rev William Koenigsknecht.

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FIVE DAYS a week he paints signs for Central Sign Company in Lansing.

This young artist is mostly self-taught but he has a "spark" that any number of years of study couldn't give him.

DeWitt's 'Grandma Moses' petite dynamo of energy

BY MRS LEO J. HANSON

DEWITT—DeWitt has its own answer, and we think a superior one, to Grandma Moses, in the person of Mrs Nellie Boyd.

At 88, Mrs Boyd is a 96-pound bundle of energy. She is not only a very talented artist and sculptress but does all her own housework (she lives alone), has a garden and beautiful lawns and flower beds.

SHE DESIGNED and sculpted the World War I soldier Monument on the lawn of the American Legion hall at Effingham, Ill. It is a 6-foot figure of a kneeling soldier holding the flag staff of an American Flag. She also sculpted an angel monument to mark her only son's grave in the DeWitt cemetery. She has done many smaller pieces of sculpture which have been used for lamps, bookends and other items.

Mrs Boyd was born in Mt Vernon, Ill. and started painting in oils at the age of 12. She had painted in pastels long before this.

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WHEN I called on her she was



Mrs Nellie Boyd does a little reminiscing as she stands before a picture she painted when she was 15 years old—73 years ago. The canvas shows its age with checkmarks but the picture is still colorful and attractive.

busily sketching pictures of Mule-deer that she plans on using in a painting she is doing of Colorado. Her last painting, an 18 by 24 inch scene of Arizona has been purchased by Mr and Mrs Lee Rummell. It took 166 hours to finish.

Every detail in a Boyd painting must be perfect. She spends hours on one leaf or one flower and she constantly uses reference books to be sure that the animals in her pictures are native to that part of the country and that every detail is correct.

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OVER THE years, she has given away 123 pictures in oils, pastels and plaques besides the many she has sold. Her biggest problem is that of never having any of her later work on hand as someone always talks her out of it. Of each new painting she always says "This one I am going to keep for myself." But it never happens.

Mrs Boyd lived on a farm in southern Illinois with her husband, John, until they retired 16

years ago. They came to DeWitt to live because their son was an instructor at Lansing Business University and they wished to be near him. Both Mr Boyd and the son died several years ago. Mrs Boyd has one grandson, Durwood Boyd, of East Lansing and three great-grandchildren of whom she's very proud.

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SHE IS A faithful member of the DeWitt Methodist church and many of her paintings are of a religious theme.

She finishes many of the frames she uses on her paintings herself.

When I left her she was making plans to plant turnips, parsnips, radishes and rutabagas in the full of the moon.

Mrs Boyd is truly one of the "Grand Little Ladies" of DeWitt.