

# GOOD SPORTS

DR. GARY GAUTHER



Nicki Horn



Nicki Horn's art work

IF YOU VISIT CALDWELL PARK ON any given day, you are likely to see Nicki Horn. She is a regular participant in tennis and plays several times a week.

Charles Kelly, who plays tennis with Horn three times a week said, "Nicki and Audrey Thomas are the only women who will play with our group of old men! Nicki is so energetic and is an excellent tennis

player. She is usually the first one to arrive and the last one to leave. She is very competitive, but is pleasant and fun to play with or against. She's the anchor of all we do. Plus, she makes a great black-berry wine cake!"

Carl Ralston also plays tennis regularly with Horn. "Nicki is so talented. Not only is she an outstanding tennis player, but she is a very good artist. All of us will attest to her cooking skills, too, and look forward to the days when she brings us Cowboy Cookies!"

Horn has sandwiched her love of tennis and painting around a career in teaching. "I was the type of child who was always into mischief, forever looking forward to the future and never experiencing the moment. My father decided that tennis might keep me out of trouble, and it did. I played competitively throughout high school and in college at Appalachian State University. During my senior year,

I observed a trainable special needs class and immediately knew my life's calling. I put down my tennis racket and went to work teaching exceptional children. My students were wonderful to me and I was honored to accompany them on their life's journeys for a short period of time. I had no hobbies because I was totally consumed by my charges."

About a year after leaving teaching, Horn took an art class taught by Edrie Knight. "I found out I can paint," she said. "I also decided to recapture my youth and play tennis after a 30 year break. The other players made me feel welcome and put up with my game until it progressed. It has taken me 54 years to realize that we don't travel along one road but many, and at times you pass yourself coming and going. Through the kindness of others, you find your way. I found my way through the camaraderie of my friends on the tennis court and in my art class."

Edrie Knight praised her student. "Nicki is a very good artist," she said. "She learned the techniques and applied them to painting. She especially likes to do whimsical animal watercolors and brings out the personality of each animal she paints. Her feelings come through in her painting and she always finishes what she starts, which many artists can't do. Nicki is good at anything she tackles and isn't afraid to tackle anything!"

A native of Florida, Horn is glad her travels led her to North Carolina. "I have so much to be grateful for," she said. "Home is where your friends are. I have lived in Statesville for the past 18 years and truly consider this my home!"

*Dr. Gary Gauther, a Statesville dentist, has been involved in local sports for more than 20 years.*

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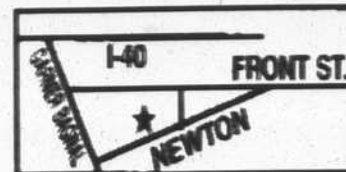
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