



Sculptor Sidney Simon works on a black-walnut statue in his studio as two of his seven children look on. Simon, 68, is the youngest of 14 artists whose work was displayed in a recent show at the National Council on the Aging in Washington, D. C. "The

older you are, the more options you have," Simon says. He and the other exhibitors, whose ages run as high as 95, share a continuing zest for their art, despite their advanced years.

Calendar Fails To Diminish Vitality Of Older Artists

By MERCER CROSS

National Geographic News Service

"What's special for me now is feeling a new sense of respect for myself," said 73-year-old Mary Hackett. "It took years of analysis to get to this. I'm enjoying saying what's really on my mind. My head is in the best shape it's ever been. I'm busy living."

Her words hung on the wall of the small gallery, beside her photograph and one of her oil paintings. She was one of 14 artists whose works were displayed.

All of the exhibitors, 13 of whom are living, are recognized artists whose paintings and sculptures have been seen in some of the country's major museums.

But what set them apart in this particular show, besides their summer residences in Provincetown, Mass., was their age. The oldest is 95; the youngest, 68.

Facility Unique

The exhibit was held recently in the Washington gallery of the National Council on the Aging, which claims to have "the nation's only exhibition facility devoted exclusively to aging and the creative accomplishments of older Americans."

The art, a mixture of styles and media, reflected the skills and experiences born of long years of dedicated effort and often of privation.

Equally eloquent, however, were the accompanying words of the artists, who explained in interviews their feelings about themselves and their work.

One fact shone through: While their bodies may be running down, their mental vitality is going strong. As Mary Hackett put it, "My physical self isn't in great shape. People are always helping me walk straight. My balance is off, but I'm not retiring; I've just started really living. My old-age afflictions are nothing compared to the suffering of growing up at all."

The enthusiastic producer of the exhibit was Priscilla McCutcheon, director of the council's National Center on Arts and the Aging. Among her goals is a continuous run of art shows by the elderly in an improved exhibition hall.

"I feel that for people who either pursue a life-long creative interest, or take it up after they've retired from another field, it's a life-giving activity," she says. "It's a constant discovery. You're always looking for a new way of doing things."

Mrs. McCutcheon also would like to see more studies on the life-imparting quality of the arts. She likes to quote two aging actors. One said, "I ache

every minute that I'm not acting." The other said, "If it weren't for my drama class, I'd be dead."

These sentiments were underscored by the comments of two 85-year-olds in the exhibit. They are painters Raphael Soyer, the oldest survivor of a family of illustrious artists, and a woman, Shelby Shackelford.

'No Time To Waste'

"I have no time. Time is precious," said Soyer. "I'm in good health; I'm lucky. Sometimes I'm depressed by how many of my artist friends are gone, especially my two brothers. Perhaps it's not that I've slowed down, but that I waste less time. When I was young, I would often waste weeks dreaming. Now I concentrate on working, not on fame and wealth. I have enough."

Mrs. Shackelford admitted being slowed down by cataract operations, arthritis and two hip replacements. "But now I feel better and am anxious to work," she said. "I'm experimenting with soot as a medium...I'm feeling happier all the time."

At 68, sculptor Sidney Simon was the youngest of the show. "The older you are, the more options you have," he ruminated. "The more options, the greater the decision. Play it safe, cop out, or take a chance — even if you fail."

Another sculptor, Chaim Gross, 80, said: "I still put in a day's work every day. I draw, I carve. Maybe it's a shorter day, not 10 to 15 hours plus teaching at night, like I used to. I don't always have the energy. Many days I feel no more than 40. I still like to look at young girls."

"Age gives one more depth, better judgment," said painter Sally Michel, 81. "It's a change for the better. It's impossible to remain stagnant; one's ability keeps evolving...Starting a painting is like taking a trip — all sorts of exciting things happen along the way and I'm always sorry when the journey's over and I can't wait to start a new one."

Mischa Richter, 74, a longtime cartoonist for The New Yorker as well as a serious painter, concluded: "When you start, you think everything you do is the best that ever was. As you age, while you don't lose confidence, you see yourself in relation to others. Your ego is contained."

And the 95-year-old? Ferol Sibley Warthen makes wood-block prints. "I've always been painting, since I was a young girl," she said. "I had a lot of energy; I don't have as much now...I was so serious. But now that I'm old, it doesn't make so much difference. Life of necessity slowed down."

Paperwork, Outside Activities Concern Of Tar Heel Teachers

Too much paperwork, too many non-teaching duties, and a lack of commitment among students are the three most significant barriers to educational excellence in North Carolina schools, say the state's teachers.

A total of 40 percent of those responding to a statewide survey by the North Carolina Association of Educators ranked "too much paperwork" as the number one barrier to excellence in public school education.

Another 34 percent of the respondents ranked

"time spent on non-teaching / non-administrative duties as a barrier while 31 percent ranked lack of commitment or motivation among students as a major barrier.

"We are not surprised at the results. We have been telling the people of this state that teaching conditions must be improved if we are to attract the best young people to the profession," said Gladys Graves, NCAE president.

Graves said it is her opinion that the "barriers" uncovered by the survey contributed to the fact that 38 percent of the respondents say they would not choose teaching if they had it to do over again and 23 percent are "unsure" about such a choice.

The survey also found that 14 percent of those responding would highly recommend teaching as a career.

"In recent years, the state and nation have begun to respond to the need for higher salaries in teaching, but the

response to providing better conditions has not been good," Graves said.

The NCAE survey, which included 136 questions, went to members and non-members alike, Graves said. She said more than 14,368 surveys were returned.

"We feel this is the biggest total survey of teacher opinion yet made in North Carolina," she said.

Other highlights of the survey:

—Seventeen percent of those responding to the survey say they plan to teach 20 years or more, but 24 percent plan to teach only five years or less.

—Lack of a local salary supplement (40 percent) and "inadequate facilities (36 percent) headed the list of specific barriers to educational excellence."

Graves said the typical teacher responding to the NCAE survey is white, holds a bachelor's degree, has 11-15 years of experience and is teaching in a large rural or county elementary school.

Bank Employees Receive Awards

Two employees of First Citizens Bank in Warrenton have been recognized for their service to the bank and its customers.

Recognized for 10 years of service was Leon Cheek.

A pin designating five years of service went to Mary Fulghum Roberts.

Researchers have found that careful shopping can trim as much as 15 percent off the family food bill.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

DISPOSITION OF WARREN GENERAL HOSPITAL

The Warren County Board of Commissioners will make a decision on the disposition of Warren General Hospital at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting to be held on Monday, December 2, 1985, at the Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, N. C. The meeting will commence at 9:30 a.m. The public is invited to attend this meeting.
This the 18th day of November, 1985.

EVA M. CLAYTON, Chairperson
Warren County Board of Commissioners

Promoted

Sandy M. Alston, son of Sandy and Dorothy Alston of Rt. 3, Warrenton, has been promoted in the U. S. Army to the rank of sergeant.

Alston is a cannon crewman with the 72nd Field Artillery Brigade in West Germany.

His wife, Lisa, is the daughter of James P. and Bertadean W. Baker of Rt. 3, Warrenton.

He is a 1982 graduate of Warren County High School.



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