

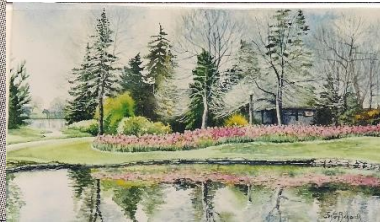
LIVES WE LEAD, Judith Fenton Richards, Watercolour Art Teacher, by Judi Coulter, A 2014 Newsletter



Judith, April 2014



Judith, with a painting done in Iran



Tulip Time, Ottawa, 2000

Judith Fenton was born in London, England, and that possibly set the tone for a future exotic adult life as a world wanderer. Her mother was from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and her father hailed from England. They had met during World War II. When Judith was seven, the family moved to Pointe Claire, Quebec. Eventually Michael would be born, followed by youngest brother David. However Judith always enjoyed her status of being the eldest and the only daughter.

From a very young age Judith was interested in colouring and drawing and painting. In the fifties and sixties there were still many vestiges of British colonialism in Canada. In grade 11 she entered an Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) Art competition and won first prize. She sold her first painting at a Church Bazaar. This was particularly memorable because two people almost came to fisticuffs when both wanted to buy her same painting.

Judith contemplated going to Art College but opted instead to become an elementary school teacher. She attended Macdonald College, (part of McGill University but situated closer to home, in Ste. Anne de Bellevue), to obtain her Teaching Diploma.

She began her career in Thorndale Elementary School in Pierrefonds and taught grades two and three there for eight years. During that time she married Daniel Richards in 1968. It wasn't long before Daniel's career as a Purchasing and Expediting Manager would take them all over the world. Jason was only seventeen months old when they moved to Iran. They lived near the Caspian Sea and had a visitor-turtle that would visit them every day. Perhaps this "turtle friendship" was what inspired her Neptunian love of painting underwater scenes. (At any rate, Jason would remember his special turtle friend long after the family moved back to Canada and was keen to relate the story at Show and Tell.)

Although their two years in Iran were before the Revolution, even so, the political situation became untenable. A friend advised them to move back to Canada after three Americans were murdered. (They found out later that although the Americans had posed as business men, they were actually CIA.)

Back in Canada the Richards' second son, Kevin, was born. The family moved to Peterborough where Judith was kept very busy with her two little munchkins. Still, she found time to take ongoing Art Lessons, painting in oils. They moved again, this time to Edmonton, in 1981. In each city Judith took more lessons with new techniques and moods soon to be reflected in her paintings. She would quickly join an Art Institute, show her work at Art Exhibits, and teach Art classes, mostly to children.

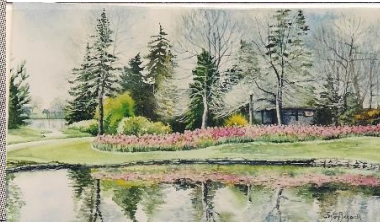
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Another move back east in 1984 brought the family to Saint John, New Brunswick. (Her household was moved so often that Judith became an expert in packing up the family's belongings in record time.) In Saint John she discovered the renowned artist and teacher, Ray Butler. (Butler was renowned, among other things, for painting the downtown Saint John mural of a Second World War Ship, as well as large paintings marking the 150th anniversary of the Irish famine.) It was his influence that caused Judith to switch to painting in watercolours.

A move to Ottawa in 1987 was followed by a year back in Pointe Claire. Then there was a move to Washington State in 2002 where Judith, like Georgia O'Keeffe, was inspired by desert shades and colour contrasts. In 2009 they moved to Orleans so let's hope they are "here to stay". The rest of North America's loss is Ottawa's gain. Daniel has continued to take contracts in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran (again). More recently he has commuted for work from Orleans to Labrador City and Kitimat, British Columbia.

In the Ottawa area Judith taught Roman Catholic School Board Continuing Education classes, taught sessions for the Cumberland Parks and Recreation Department, and was Coordinator for the City Gallery of Cumberland before Cumberland amalgamated with Ottawa. Among other venues, she competed in many Art and Photo competitions at the former Gloucester City Hall.

Judith's two sons have happily contributed to Judith and Daniel having four adorable grandchildren. The most recent "star attraction" is wee Mia, born in February 2014.

Judith's work reveals her interest in natural history and her paintings hang in many private and public collections. She has been especially inspired by Alan Bateman (Robert Bateman's son) and recently met Alan when she arranged to meet him at his house to see his paintings. He paints in a similar manner to the late American artist, Andrew Wyeth, whose paintings and technique Judith loves. She likes to paint in a realistic style the wild flowers, colourful landscapes, and water pictures that explore the tantalizing aquatic life beneath the water surface.

Judith began teaching art at GSAC "way back" in 1993 and loved it. She had to give GSAC up when the family was off on its various "away from Ottawa jaunts". However when the position became available again in September 2013, she was very pleased to come back. She teaches Watercolours to beginners Monday mornings and to the intermediate level Wednesday mornings. There is plenty of room for more students. So be adventurous and come and join a class. Perhaps you may find that inner artist that has been part of the human spirit since cavemen (and perhaps even cave-ladies) scratched pictograms on rock walls?