

Back Tracking

by

Max GREINER JR.

This column provides a historical look back -
Years: 1957-1961 (Ages 6-10)



Max's favorite toys allowed him to design and build things.

The years of my life from age 6 to 10 are remembered fondly by me. This was the time I found a personal relationship with God and the artistic gifts He gave me. Looking back 50 years, I can see that the course of my life was set at that formative time.



Max's first permanent sculpture was a ceramic eagle made from clay.

Thankfully, I had Godly parents and grandparents who trained and encouraged me. I realize now how truly blessed I was.

Because generations of my family, on both sides, were followers of Jesus Christ, we were all able to live under the "blessing", instead of the "curse." Looking back, our family had challenges like all families, but since our foundation was on the "Rock", we withstood and prospered through all the storms. God has been very good to the Greiner family!



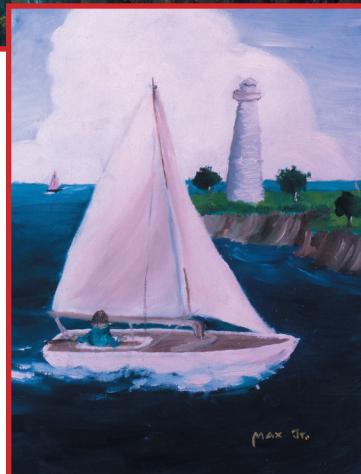
Max created numerous oil paintings during art lessons after school.

At age 7, I made a public profession of my faith in Jesus Christ during Bible School at **Calder Baptist Church** in Beaumont, TX. I was later baptized in water on September 6, 1959. I didn't have a lot of sin to confess back then, but I do remember making a promise to God that I would pray once a day!



Art teacher, Rita Allen taught Max how to use professional art materials when he was 8 and 9 years of age.

It was at this same time that I became clearly aware of my God-given artistic gifts and my natural interests. My love for the outdoors, hunting and fishing began at this time, which was encouraged by my dad, who had been an **Eagle Scout**, a honor I too would one day achieve. I remember making my first bow and arrow out of a sapling, when I was in the first grade, I think. My love for archery and bowhunting would last my entire life.



It was during my early elementary school years that I realized one day that God had made me an artist. There was no “mid-life discovery” for me. This epiphany occurred when our first grade teacher asked all the students to draw something, a horse maybe. When all the drawings of the children were compared, I discovered my horse looked more like a horse than all the other drawings! From then on I was recognized by my peers and teachers as the “artist”!

My mother, dad and grandmother Greiner especially encouraged my artistic interests. Mother always said I was never board playing by myself. My favorite toys were paint sets, “**Lincoln Logs**”®, “**Erector Sets**”®, the “**Etch-a-sketch**”® and my “**Lionel Trains**”®. I was always making (designing) something from wooden “nail boats”, to clay objects and forts made from trees, which I should not have cut down with my handy hatchet!

I made my first “fine art” during the third grade in Port Arthur, TX. My mother wanted me to take piano lessons with my younger sister, Carol. However, I eloquently explained that God had made me an “artist!” I agreed to take art lessons, not piano lessons! Thankfully, my parents had the wisdom to encourage all four of their children to pursue their God-given talents and natural interests. (I don’t think I ever figured out what to do with a football, even though my dad had been a famous football star at **Texas A&M University**!) So, while most children were catching baseballs, I was catching turtles and making art!

My mother located a “real” artist named Rita Allen of Groves, TX, who taught me how to use professional artist mediums like charcoal, pastels, watercolors and oils. I took 90 minute classes from Mrs. Allen, once a week for about 16 months. I learned the basics of drawing, painting and the fundamentals of design and perspective. At age 9 and 10, I was actually creating oil paintings on canvas while other children my age were still using crayons! My first sculptures were made of “**Ivory Soap**”®, wood and clay. The soap is long gone, but my first permanent sculpture of an eagle, which was “fired”, is still in my collection today. It is interesting to note from the very beginning, my favorite subject matter was wildlife and nature.

Fortunately, my mother (who saved everything) kept all of my early works of art. These included my first watercolors and oil paintings, that were created at age 8 and 9. I grew up making both two and three dimensional art, never realizing until years later at college, that mastering both disciplines was very rare!

As I write this column, I am 57 years old. By the grace of God, the support of my parents, my wife and thousands of people who have bought my artwork since 1978, I have been able to live the wonderful life of an artist! I am truly grateful and blessed! Thank you for helping me live my dream!

Now, some advice that is worth at least what you paid. It is never too late to encourage the “artist” in you, or others! God is the one who gives creativity and talent. He never leaves out anyone. However, it is up to you to discover and use your gifts. God won’t force you. The gifts may be in art, music, writing or drama. They could be in athletics, mathematics, science or thousands of other areas of endeavor. Hidden inside every child is a God-given destiny. Our job as parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors and friends is to encourage this special aptitude to be revealed and lived out.

Please take the time to encourage others around you, especially the young. Help them realize how special they are, and that they are the most precious “artwork of God”. Help them strive for excellence, while realizing that mistakes and failures are part of the process. Use your time and words to love others and lift them up. Help them find and live their destiny. The shortest path to discovering your own destiny is to ask Jesus to show you what it is! You may also find your destiny by helping others find theirs!