

Splendido resident painting a 12-foot by 25-foot mural

RANDY METCALF
The Explorer

Art Dahlstrand said he has only volunteered for two things in his life, once when he joined the Marines at the age of 17 during World War II, and a second time when he volunteered to paint a 12-foot by 25-foot mural.

Since October, the Splendido resident has been painting the mural on 4 by 8-foot sheets of Masonite that will later be pieced together and mounted on the outside of a ramada at the Tucson Country Day School.

His typical paintings are done with either oil or watercolor and depict everything from Sedona, Arizona, to the sun coming up over the Rincon Mountains. He has done portraits of people and completed paintings of bobcats roaming through the desert.

For the 89-year-old, the desert landscape is something he is familiar with, but working on such a large scale with exterior house paint has proven to be a challenging obstacle to overcome during the past few months as he has spent a day here and there at the school working on his mural.

"I have never done something as large and I'm trying to make it as real as I can and still not spending the kind of time I need to spend on

something like that," Dahlstrand said as he pointed to one of his paintings on his wall above his television.

He also noted that the paint is a lot thicker than what he is used to painting with and it dries fairly quickly – sometimes before he can get it off the brush onto the canvas.

The 300-square-foot mural depicts a northward view from the school toward the south facing Santa Catalina Mountains. In the foreground, there are cacti, shrubs, bushes and desert animals such as quail and prairie dogs.

Beyond that, Dahlstrand has painted the soccer field that lies beyond where the canvas will be displayed on the school's campus. The grassy green field frames the letters TCDS, which is spelled out by using an array of school-colored flower formations. The mountains stretch up above the soccer goal, which has the words, "Home of the Champions" written on it. And on either side of the mural, he has painted the American and Arizona flags.

Dahlstrand plans to have a few elements, such as the lettering on the goal and a hot air balloon in the sky, to be cut out and placed on separate canvases that will later be mounted on the mural to add some depth to the artwork.

He jokingly admits that the most difficult thing for him has been fin-



Photos by Randy Metcalf/The Explorer

Splendido resident Art Dahlstrand has been working on a 300-square-foot mural that will be displayed at Tucson Country Day School.

ishing it; he has held his personal standards accountable while painting.

Dahlstrand's formal painting lessons are limited to a class or two he took when he was a young teenager one summer. Other than that, the Northwest resident has taught himself everything else he knows, when it comes to painting.

"It has been just a personal hobby – for relaxation," he said. "I've done more painting, since I retired than I had previous to that."

Dahlstrand "tried to retire" in 1997, but still likes to keep himself busy, and that has usually been through the form of a side job here and there. One of those includes helping his foster brother Richard Cooper build some buildings at Tucson Country Day School. Cooper is the President, CEO and founder of the school, which opened in 1968 as a private school and has since become a charter school.

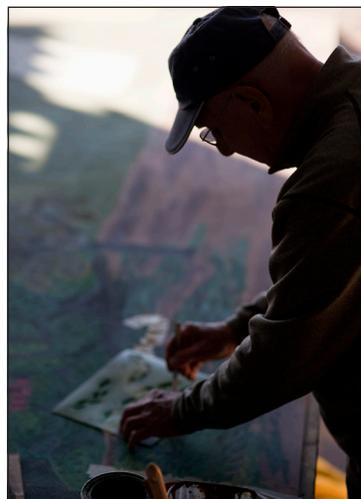
"It's going to be lovely, just lovely," Cooper said. "It's just unbelievable what he can do. The guy is amazing."



For hours on end, Art Dahlstrand paints his mural on the Tucson Country Day School campus. Once it is completed, the numerous panels will be mounted.



Splendido resident Art Dahlstrand has been working on a 12-foot by 25-foot mural that will later be mounted on this blank wall at Tucson Country Day School.



Off and on since October, Splendido resident Art Dahlstrand has been meticulously painting a mural of a desert landscape.



The mural is painted with exterior house paints to help the mural stand the test of time against the elements.



Attention to detail is one of Art Dahlstrand's strong points as he has sprinkled desert life in and around his mural.

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