

CLASS OF 1957 FIFTIETH REUNION

Autobiographical Outline

BILLY RAY CURRY (just call me Bill, or Curly)

1701 So. First Street, Tucumcari, NM 88401 505 461-4515 Home
505 461-2070 Gallery
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Married to Juanita L. Mitchell Curry (she prefers Nita)

We have been blessed with two wonderful children, a daughter and a son, and four beautiful grandchildren.

Upon graduation, my passion and desire was to attend a quality Art School, to study and develop my God given art talent. Unfortunately, because of several situations that occurred in my life, I wasn't able to attend art school or college.

I went to work with the New Mexico State Highway Department as a Draftsman in 1958, surveying the Interstate Highway System across New Mexico. I joined the New Mexico Army National Guard, and eventually retired from the U. S. Army with 23 years of service, obtaining the rank of Major.

On August 31st 1959, I celebrated my 21st birthday. I was free, white and 21 for one day and on the next day, September 1st, I married the love of my life Juanita Mitchell in Amarillo, Texas. We moved to Santa Fe where I worked in the Design Section with the Highway Department, and lived there until 1961, at which time, we moved back to Tucumcari and went to work for my father on the ranch west of Tucumcari. That same year, I enrolled in a 3-year correspondence art course, called the Famous Artists School, where one of the instructors was the great illustrator, Norman Rockwell. The art course, as it turns out, was one of the best art courses available at any art school in the nation. I truly value the art training and instruction I received during that time, and I continue to use the "lessons learned."

I was employed for a few years with the City of Tucumcari as City Engineer, then I took a position with The First National Bank of Tucumcari.

During the early years of marriage, raising a family, career changes and the military, my dream and passion for art always stirred within me. In the mid 70's, I was working days and painting nights and Nita and I were traveling to art shows all across the western United States. Making shows on the weekend and back to work on Monday. Working, painting, traveling and "paying my dues" was tough, but it eventually paid off. I had always wanted to become a sculptor and with that desire continually hounding me, I finally was able to pursue the art of bronze sculpture. That road was definitely not easy because no one would share with me the techniques of the "lost wax process." So, I did the next best thing. I went to a bronze art foundry and ask them how to get started, and they were more than willing to "show me the ropes." Since then I have been ask to teach sculpture and have taught at the college level. In fact, a fellow artist and myself set-up and started the foundry program that is currently being offered at Mesa Lands Community College.

In 1983, I decided, along with my wife, to quit the banking business and go into business for ourselves. With a lot of hard work and moral support from my wife, we opened the Sundowner Gallery and Frame Shop. After being in business for ten years, another banking opportunity came up, so I decided to go back into banking and work for Tucumcari Federal Saving and Loan Association until I reached retirement age.

Something really crazy happened to me 2004. I decided to run for a Quay Commissioner position, and was elected that year and began serving a four-year term. It has been interesting, to say the least.

I must "give credit where credit is due," and that is to thank the Lord for giving me a lot of talent that I don't deserve, and to my mother, my wonderful wife and several teachers, that encouraged me both academically and artistically. I had the privilege of being in class with some of the great and wonderful teachers, such as Mrs. Woodall, Mrs. Gertrude Suggs, Mrs. Evelene Cupp, and the disciplinarians of all times, Mary K. Babcock and Mrs. Iris Chew, (World Literature and outstanding Art teacher). One of my deepest regrets is that I never took the time to tell those wonderful teachers how much I appreciated their guidance, encouragement and how they developed a desire in me to become the artist I wanted to become. I have certainly been blessed and fortunate to know a number of art patrons that have given me the confidence and encouragement that I needed to continue doing what I love to do.

I particularly want to thank my class mates of 1957, for their continued support and encouragement, as well as all the Tucumcari High School graduates that return each year to celebrate the THS Reunion. It is truly an honor for me to have pieces of my art displayed in their homes all over the United States.