

Marion artist commissioned for centennial Scout piece

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It was Robert Baden-Powell, a British army officer who created the Boy Scout movement with his Boys Bri grade in 1907 in England. It was 100 years ago on February 8, 1910, that Chicago publisher William Boyce created the Boy Scouts of America. Scouts across the country will celebrate Boyce and his organization this coming Monday and will continue with celebratory centennial events throughout the year.

Last fall, Anita Munson, fund development director for the Hawkeye Arts Council of the Boy Scouts, asked Marion artist Barbara Jones Prall to create a painting to celebrate the anniversary.

“We wanted a recognition gift for donors to the Scout endowment program,” Munson said, “And we through Barb would create just what we wanted, and she has. She really put her heart into it. Barb is a very talented artist. She has created a nostalgic collection of camp scenes painted to inspire memories of favorite Scouting experiences.”

Prall has operated her “Barb’s Fine Art” Studio on 788 6th Street in Marion for the last 21 years. She paints, teaches, and does custom framing. For the Boy Scout painting, she and Munson went to the Howard H. Cherry Boy Scout Reservation in Center City in September.

“We went out to the park and took pictures,” said Prall. “The paintings turned out to be probably the hardest thing I’ve done. I’ve tried to mesh it all together. It was challenging. But it’s not fun unless you’re learning. And you never know enough.”

“I wanted to make sure we had all of the important sites on it, like the two fire rings where so many important events and ceremonies have taken place,” said Aruta, the mother of two grown Eagle Scouts. “She was really good to work with, and we appreciate what she’s done.”

Prall was born in Cedar Rapids, graduating from the old Franklin High School. She married and had children and said she didn’t start painting until the 1960s. She was divorced and having four teenagers, needed a job. She went to Kirkwood and graduated with an art education degree in 1975. She began teaching art and opened Barb’s Art Barn in Delhi, eventually having 100 students from Manchester and Dyersville. Prall later went on to graduate school at the University of Iowa.

She and her second husband, Cliff Prall, lived outside Central City and operated Pinrucon Acres Fine Arts Farm before coming to Marion. Cliff died in 2004.

“He was a great guy,” said Prall. “He left me be me and that’s the best anybody can do for anybody.”

Prall looks back positively on her 21 years in Marion. She teaches sex art classes a week, with students ranging in age from 5 to 89.

“[My shop’s in] a great location and I’ve met so many wonderful people,” she said.

As of last week, Prall said she still wasn’t finished with Boy Scout painting, and she was still making some final adjustments. However, was unveiled on Friday, Jan. 22 at the annual Scout recognition dinner.

“The reaction we got was tremendous” Munson said. “They just love it. It brought tears to one person because the camp means so much to her.”

The Hawkeye Area Council will make an initial run of 200 signed numbered prints of paints, and will award them to those making gifts of \$1,000 or more, the money will go to the Council’s growing endowment fund. For further information about the painting, contact Anita Munson at anita.munson@scouting.org.

Samples of Prall’s work are available online at www.barbprall.com.