



## Dream Deferred: Joyce A. Young took more than two decades to finally become the artist she always wanted to be.

At first, it may not seem that the field of dental hygiene and the creation of art with watercolors have anything in common. Not so for Joyce A. Young, owner of Twin Birch Gallery and Studio in Hutchinson.

"Working with my hands was real important. And, I had to learn some people skills and teaching skills. I think dental hygiene taught me those things: people skills and the use of visual arts. I can show you some of the things that I made and how I used my hands."

Young walked over to a glass case 3 feet high and opened the doors, revealing 4-inch-high models of teeth made from clay. She also showed smaller models she had carved out of ivory. Included in her dental supplies are paintbrushes and the "lost wax method of casting bronze," which is used to make fillings. A newspaper clipping of Joyce and fellow students also sits on the shelves, as well as the mandatory cap as part of her uniform.

**"I know not many people keep the things they made in dental school ...," she said, but she showcases the pieces just as proudly as she does her paintings.**

Young's present gallery, studio, and classroom used to be a barn that housed animals. Afterwards, it became a storage place for junk. Young's family recognized that this space was a viable replacement for running her art business, which she had been operating out of their home for more than 10 years. The horse barn was remodeled in 1999 and had its grand opening in October of that year. The area, about the size of a three-car garage, now has shelves for Young's artwork that adorn all four walls. Three open stalls have files upon files of pictures she uses as subjects. Additional artwork, including her grandchildren's, decorates the short walls. "Dangling 'articiples" — her framed artwork on 3-by-3-inch and 3-by-5-inch matts hung on ribbons — are for sale, as well as cards and various framed pieces. >>



**Raised in Hutchinson,** Young found an early interest in art with the discovery of the J. J. Audubon cards her neighbor had. But when she visited a high school counselor, only three options were available for females: teaching, homemaking, or nursing. In the middle 1950s, she never thought art could be a career.

A guidance counselor directed students to write a letter to a fictitious person in a field, asking about a job. Young wrote to a real person, instead: her dentist, Dr. Ross Sheppard. He invited her to work for him when she was a freshman in high school; she sat at the desk Saturday mornings to answer the phone and make appointments. At the time, since dentists taught the assistants, she also learned other dentistry skills, such as sterilizing equipment. But it was the composite mixture for impressions and the amalgam and mercury for fillings that had her work with her hands. And though science classes in school proved difficult for her, she managed to get good grades on projects that demonstrated her knowledge of dentistry, which grew in the four years she worked for Dr. Sheppard.

[continued from page 25]



Because nursing school was a four-year program instead of two, sounded too technical, had sporadic hours, and because Young had learned so much from Dr. Sheppard, she turned to dental hygiene. More importantly, she says, "I never wanted to be like everyone else."

Young's first year of the dental hygiene program was packed with science: chemistry, physics, biology, even mortician classes. Again, these courses proved to be challenging, so she decided to step back her second year and take more general education courses and electives, such as Introduction to Art and History of Art. She did not take any hands-on art courses, admitting that she still didn't have any confidence. Art classes she had taken in high school still affected her, like the time she was supposed to make a fish out of a bar of Ivory soap. Thinking this was too easy of a task, she made a squirrel, instead, but only received a C+.

**"I just couldn't do anything too repetitious, or if it's already been done, I couldn't do it, so I wasn't a very good art student," she admits. "That carried over into college."**

Despite this, when classes required the hygienists-in-training to create visual aids about teeth and visit public schools with the information, Young completed the assignments with artistic flourish. She still has the flip chart she used for the fourth-grade class she visited. "I still use the flip chart

idea. With all the computer things and all the modern technology of e-mail and Web, for people to see an old-fashioned flip chart is just fine."

Years later, Young felt the college art classes and the book *The Story of Art* by E.H. Combrich, which she still has in a bookcase in her gallery, were turning points for her.

Originally hired as a receptionist in a Hutchinson dental office, she finally practiced dental hygiene. It also was during this time that she began taking community education classes, such as rug braiding and oil painting. In fact, the 12-by-15-foot oval rug that lies underneath the classroom table in the middle of the gallery was her project. She also realized that she did not like oil painting because "it was always too stark, too colorful, and not really flowing."

When back problems and the burn-out of dental hygiene forced her to leave after 20 years, she took the opportunity to go back to school. This time, she went to an 18-month program for her Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Management and Communications at Concordia.

Young then worked two years as the office manager of a lumber yard. When her boss hired her, he said, "All that piece of paper tells me is that you're trainable."

The degree, however, did give her the "permission" to pursue and accept leadership positions in art groups. Most notably, she was with the small group of people who started Crow River Arts, a > >

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