

Wilson Hurley Honored As State's Cultural Treasure

Wilson Hurley, the 1984 Prix de West Pur-chase Award winner, was recently honored as one of Oklahoma's Cultural Treasures in ceremonies at the State Capitol during the Governor's annual Arts Awards program.

The Oklahoma Cultural Treasures program is patterned after the Japanese Living Treasures program, which recognizes artists over 70 for major works and contributions.

Hurley was recently profiled in an article in *Arts Oklahoma*, a publication of the Oklahoma Arts Council.

A resident of the Sandia Hills in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Hurley and his family became summer residents of Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1936. Hurley's mother arranged for him to spend part of his summers working in the studios of some of the finest artists in the area.

"If I simply washed their brushes or helped them size canvas, I was

happy," Hurley said.

In 1942, at the age of 18, he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point and graduated in 1945 as a second lieutenant. Having earned his wings before graduation, he spent the next three years primarily in an air-sea rescue unit flying in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Always quietly supportive of his interest in art, his mother sent him his first set of oil paints while overseas and he began to paint.

When he returned to the states in 1949, he attended George Washington Law School, graduated in 1951, and was admitted to the Washington, D.C. Bar, and in 1952, to the Bar in New Mexico, where he practiced for 13 years.

He also served as a pilot in the New Mexico Air National Guard and in 1968, was recalled to an 18-month tour of active duty flying in Vietnam.

In 1958, unfulfilled by the practice of law, he decided to work in a

scientific laboratory. When this, too, lacked the challenge he needed, he tried to become a professional painter. Pressures from his family life led him back to law after a year.

In 1964, when drafting a will for a young doctor who had learned he was terminally ill, Hurley reached a turning point. He closed the door of his law practice and began to paint. He painted for five years before he sold a single painting.

Hurley's early paintings and drawings in the Philippines serve as a record of a wide range of interests: history, the sea, ships, airplanes, clouds, military engagements.

But it wasn't until he returned to New Mexico in 1952 that his overpowering interest in vast landscapes became evident in many of his paintings.

"A man must be a little arrogant to try to paint," Hurley said. "Nature does it so beautifully." He also believes "Art lets us live many lives."

Hurley, who is also in the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the Tulsa

Historical Hall of Fame, recently completed four landscape murals for the State Capitol Rotunda.

Titled *Visions of the Land*, the "Centennial Suite" paintings are each set in different locations in Oklahoma and their titles reveal the site: *Spring Morning Along The Muddy Boggy*, *Autumn Woods North Of Tahlequah*, *Sunset at Roman Nose State Park* and *Storm Passing Northwest of Anadarko*.

The four murals are a gift from the late Roger M. Dolese, a longtime admirer of Wilson Hurley's art work.

Hurley also recently painted *Soft Rain*, as a gift to the Oklahoma Governor's Mansion by Oklahoma Arts Council member, Milann Siegfried and her husband, Ray.

Among Hurley's most famous works are the five *Windows To The West* triptychs on display in the Sam Noble Special Events Center at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. Dolese was also a major contributor to this project. ♦

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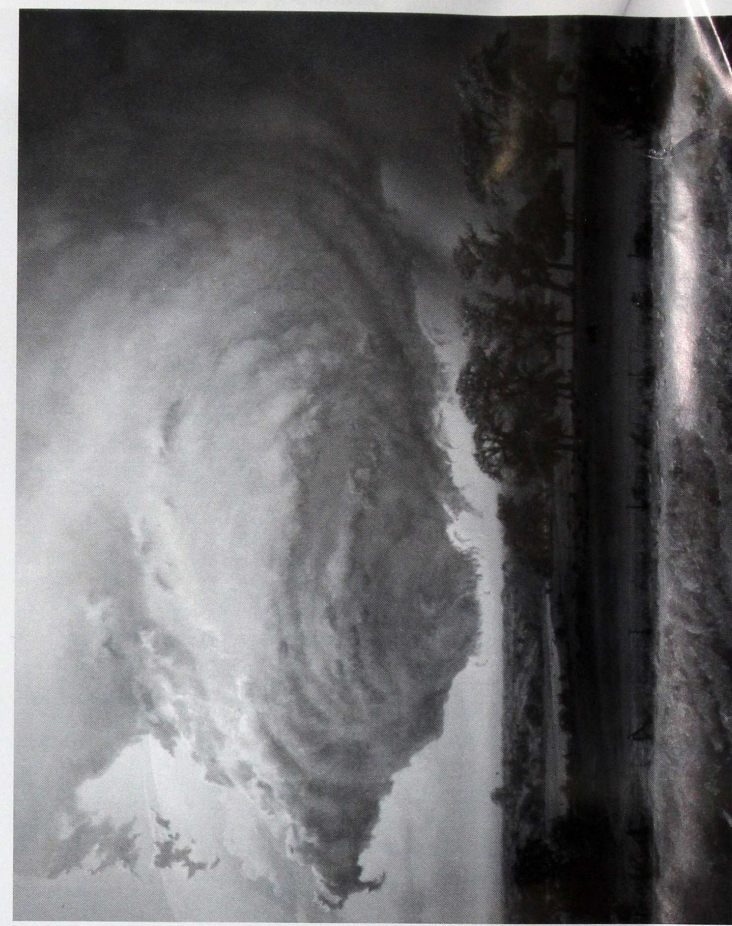
Autumn Woods North Of Tahlequah



Spring Morning Along The Muddy Boggy



Sunset At Roman Nose State Park



Storm Passing Northwest Of Anadarko