



Artist
Margaret
Wright
Kemmerer

Former Olympic horse trainer
turns love of nature into art

By RICHARD JAMES
West Branch Life

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argaret Wright Kemmerer is an artist and a musician, who loves to play her violin and paint in the mornings in her well-lit studio in Montoursville — and she happens to be a descendent of Frank Lloyd Wright, too.

Kemmerer and her husband, Jim, live in a cozy, 200-year-old renovated log cabin. Massive wood beams and worn floorboards provide the rough-hewn counterbalance to the richly appointed decor of her home. Almost every wall boasts of a compelling image celebrating life in all its forms — and every painting has a story.

Kemmerer is “a people person,” whose works include portraits of people from all walks of life. A girl from Russia, a local woman from the neighborhood and a man from Saudi Arabia are in various stages of completion.

“Yes, Maggie is a people-person,” said Jim, a retired aircraft industry employee. “She could have a long conversation with a total stranger at an airport. And when I would ask her, ‘Who was that?’ she would say ‘I don’t know.’ ”

Her charm and a beguiling Georgia accent meld into an outgoing, welcoming personality that can put anyone at ease; think old school sophistication with a down-home earthiness.

Kemmerer’s watercolors, acrylics, pastels and oils echo the era of Impressionism, but they also have a modern photographic quality that gives the viewer’s eye just enough detail without being bogged down in detail.

A tour of Margaret’s home reveals her love of life, especially nature. “I saw two red foxes playing on the creek bank just outside my window the other day. They were beautiful,” she said. She is a woman who, although not native to it, loves central Pennsylvania — even in the dead of winter. She and her husband can be found cross-country skiing in frigid temperatures and loving it.

“I hate when people complain about the area. This country is beautiful,” she said.

Whether it is a flock of Canadian Geese feeding on a snowy cornfield or

the icy Lycoming Creek, she is thrilled to be living among such natural beauty.

However, Kemmerer’s love of horses takes center stage. She spent many years training horses and riders in the U.S. hunter-jumper show circuit and spent several in Japan as well, training riders for international competitions. During the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, one of her students, Takeshi Shirai, rode in the finals as the youngest competitor in the games.

Although she doesn’t ride anymore, her adoration of the equestrian form is undeniable. She appreciates the beauty of horses and seeks to capture their magnificence on canvas

and paper. From the prehistoric cave paintings to the majestic four horses at St. Marks Cathedral in Venice, Italy, to the farm workhorses in her painting, “Here Comes the Boys,” Kemmerer’s fascination stems from her riding and teaching days. Her paintings of horses can be quite large, giving the animals a degree of immortality.

“Yes, I want to put a bit of its life in my paintings,” she said. “It is what I know best.”

Kemmerer likes to use different substrates, including painting on wood or slabs of shale. As with many artists, she is not comfortable with business side of art. The Internet and social media are daunting, but she knows that she has to market her work. A young man who lives nearby helps with her website and she manages to keep abreast of her email but she prefers painting in her



studio. “I am not tech savvy,” she confessed.

Kemmerer also holds figure study classes for members of the Bald Eagle Art League in her studio, where even the most reluctant artist can be persuaded by her charm.

“She has a way of getting her way,” her husband said.

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Opposite page, artist Margaret Wright Kemmerer works on a painting at her home studio in Montoursville. Kemmerer, a member of the Bald Eagle Art League, also has worked in many unique fields, including training horses for Olympic competition in Japan. Kemmerer also is a relative of the late world-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright.