

Sharon Treadaway-Local Artist

The Art of Preserving Memories

By LYNN MACHON



Photos by Stephanie Smith

A childhood passion has become a life's work for Serrano resident Sharon Treadaway.

WHEN SHARON TREADAWAY WAS JUST a little girl, she loved to paint and draw, and would sit for hours doing anything art related. "My favorite toy was that great big box of Crayola crayons with the pencil sharpener built right in," she readily admits.

With a family full of artists, it seemed only natural that Sharon would follow her creative destiny. Yet as she grew older, rather than pursue her true passion, she opted to follow a safer, business-focused career path.

Luckily for her future clients, Sharon's interests changed when she and husband Dennis moved from Placerville to Serrano in 2000. Finding she had more time on her hands, she remembers wondering aloud to her husband one day, "Maybe I should take up painting?"

For Christmas that year, Dennis surprised her with everything required to follow her dream — a full easel, and all the paints, canvases and supplies she needed.

Inspiration by Amy

Sharon's first large painting was that of their blonde Cocker Spaniel, Amy, who has

since passed, but truly lives on through her portrait above the living room mantel. "It brings me such peace to see her every day. It's like she's looking down on me."

In fact, Sharon's beloved canine muse, whom she dedicates all her work to, was indirectly responsible for pushing her artistic talent to the next level.

One afternoon, a visitor from Australia, who studied as a photographer under the late Ansel Adams, admired Amy's portrait. He praised Sharon's talent and unique style and encouraged her professionally to broaden her artistic horizons.

Inspired, Sharon began painting portraits for friends and family out of the small computer room in their Greenview home. Back then, as it is now, most paintings were of pets, because of her love for animals.

When total strangers started requesting portraits, Sharon's aunt, who is an artist, told her, "Never give away your art. Always charge people, because they will respect you more if you make them pay something for it."

Heeding her aunt's advice, five years ago Sharon officially launched her own business, Puppy Paintings by Sharon. Why puppies? She says she particularly loves to paint dogs because they have such expressive eyes. "I can capture the whole the essence of the animal, their personality, through their eyes alone."

The Artist's Studio

When the Treadaway's youngest daughter got married and moved away, Sharon turned her room into full art studio overlooking the 6th green at Serrano Country Club.

These days, the light and airy room boasts immaculate hardwood floors and white cabinetry that houses cups full of brushes and tubes of paint. She sheepishly reveals a closet full of assorted frames she has collected over the years. "I just couldn't resist them."

Partial to painting in the morning light, Sharon typically opens the French doors onto her balcony and watches the golfers while she works. Some days, she sets up her easel on their back brick patio and paints outside, with dog Sadie by her side. As Sharon says,

around the neighborhood

"There's something so relaxing about painting outdoors."

Working primarily with acrylics, Sharon uses a technique called "gridding", a process she learned in a high school drawing class she took as a teenager. Sharon explains, "It's the easiest way to get pictures exact, especially when doing a child's face or a puppy's face."

She routinely first gets inspiration from a photograph and once she has the dimensions right, she "just goes for it." She typically paints on a 20 x 20 inch canvass, and most portraits take her approximately two weeks to complete.

The result is a beautiful, lifelike portrait that captures the personality and every precious detail of her subject. To date, Sharon estimates she has completed more than 25 portraits for customers, many of whom live in Serrano.

Word of Mouth Advertising

For Sharon's birthday last year, her daughter and son-in-law created a website, www.puppy-paintings.com, to help showcase her work. Yet, she says the majority of her projects come as referrals from happy customers.

Local neighbor Renee Waters is one customer who isn't shy about shouting this artist's praises. "Sharon is absolutely fabulous and she has such soul and power," says Renee. "She is a blessed painter and I don't think she actually realizes how talented she really is."

Renee commissioned Sharon to paint a portrait of the Waters' late black and white Shih Tzu, as a surprise Christmas present for her husband. Renee says still today the painting brings joyful tears when they admire it. "She captured Teddy's eyes perfectly, and it looks like he could just talk to us."

Sharon recognizes that many of her customers are people who have lost a pet. An animal lover herself, she understands how pets often become an integral member of the family. When they pass, the portrait provides a welcome tribute to help mourners remember their loved one. "That's why it's so important to me to be able to paint them to

look just like they are remembered."

Although Sharon's portraits are showcased in many homes throughout Serrano, her work also can be seen on display at Bark Avenue, a dog grooming and boutique in Town Center. In fact, Sharon painted the mural that adorns the shop's main wall. And after owner Robin's dog, Spencer, passed away last year, Sharon created a majestic portrait of him that hangs in the boutique, where he watches proudly over all.

Children Are Portraits Too

While the majority of Sharon's subjects are four-legged friends, she loves to paint children as well. In addition to portraits of her own two daughters, one of her favorites was done for Serrano residents, Judi and Roger Reynolds. One night, when the Treadaways were guests for dinner, Judi showed Sharon a profile photograph of their little grandson, Merrick, who lives in Colorado. As Sharon says, "He was just a doll, a little angel." So Judi asked Sharon to paint him, and when she the final portrait, she says, "My heart just leapt."

This fall, Judi plans to have Sharon to paint Merrick's little brother, Micah, in a similar profile, so the two boys' portraits can face each other. Even though the Reynolds try to visit their grandkids four times a year, Judi says, "It's really hard when they are so far away." Having the life-like portraits make them feel closer.

Every Princess Needs a Castle

As pleasant and bubbly as Sharon's personality is normally, she becomes perfectly giddy when discussing the new home she and Roger are designing on the 12th fairway.

One possible reason could be that a key feature of the home will be an entirely separate art cottage for Sharon and her amazing portraits. In addition to providing a magical oasis for all her art supplies and equipment, the hideaway will feature a covered deck for year-round outdoor painting, and have its own bathroom, shower, sink and fireplace.

What was once Sharon's childhood passion has become her life's work. And many families will be forever blessed because of it. 🐾



Artist Sharon Treadaway receives her inspiration from photographs of her subjects, many of which are Serrano area pets and children.