



From left: Larger than life murals adorn the Traders Printing Company building at Springfield. Muralist Jim Veronee's work can be seen at Springfield's Queen City Cycles.



NO CHANCE TO BE FORGOTTEN

SPRINGFIELD MURALIST JIM VERONEE LEAVES A LITTLE SOMETHING TO REMEMBER HIM BY | *By Nancy Dailey*

“GET A BUILDING!” That’s the advice Jim Veronee gives young people.

“You can talk about art; you can show a portfolio, but until other people see you working ... find a building, even if you have to paint it at your own expense. It will propagate more work. Stop painting on canvas right now and get a building.”

Jim got his start around age twenty at movie studios in California where he watched people paint houses and backgrounds for movie sets.

“I can do that,” he thought. He was already doing the same thing on smaller canvases.

He joined the Painters Union and joined the people working on canvases so huge that the artists had to walk the length of the canvas to paint it. Once, busy painting mountain scenery, he asked what production it was for, and someone answered, *Gunsmoke*. That was a television show set in Dodge City, Kansas, in the 1870s.

Gunsmoke? Kansas? Mountains?

“You can’t see mountains from Dodge City,” Jim says. “None of them had ever been there; they didn’t know. But the storyboard called for mountains so we painted mountains. That’s show biz,” he says with a quick laugh.

Jim’s biggest challenge was a sign, high up on the Landers Theater at Springfield.

“I thought in the beginning I could just use a big boom truck,” he says. “Well, it wouldn’t fit in that alley with all those high tension wires located right next to the building just below the work site.” He found a company from Kansas City that would put up a cable with a small cage that ran up and down the cable. But it wouldn’t fit between the building and the wires, so he couldn’t go from the bottom up.

“Well, I’m not a young man,” says this energetic senior who admits to being seventy. “I had to go up inside the theater, up a ladder—the fire escape was kind of loose—then

climb over a five-foot retaining wall on to the backside of the theater. Then I had to get into a harness, lie down on the roof, and swing out over a twelve-inch gutter hoping my feet would hit the railings of the cage; and then get into a position to paint.”

Jim has painted murals, both inside and out, from California to South Carolina. A perk for him is people who stop to visit while he’s painting. His eyes twinkle as he tells one of his many stories, especially if it involves word play.

“Murals increase the value of a building,” Jim says, “and they give you the opportunity to leave something behind. Otherwise people forget you. When you’re forgotten, you’re dead. Being dead’s worse than unemployment, you know. Longer hours and less pay.”

Laughing, he gets back to painting. He’s finishing Traders Printing Company; next comes more bicycles for Queen City Cycles.

For more information, call 417-890-5196.