

This book is a mixture of very near truths to not very near truths, history, philosophy, pictures, and a recipe or two, even Papa Hemingway would have had trouble toying that. Nothing said, seen or heard in this tome should be taken seriously. This book is dedicated to my wife Sherol, for being my best buddy, helpmate, nurse, sidekick; and my Ole dad for whom words just aren't capable of describing. What else can I say?

Notes by Texas Painter Steve Russell



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Artist Preface

One reason that I am an artist today probably stems from my being an obnoxious little boy. Adults would often give me a piece of paper and tell me to go draw a picture. This would insure that I did not make much noise for a while, as drawing is not a loud pursuit. Adults still do this to me today, although fifty years or so have passed and I still do it and then happily take it to them and hope that there will be a little oooing and awwwwing as a result. This book is a spin-off of that same dynamic.

This project started off as a little experiment and has grown in scope to the point of eating up my life. Most of my little experiments have done the same thing. I gladly become a slave to these seemingly random events. Some have actually made a little money although most do not. I have shown this project to many people to get a little feed back and almost all have summed it up with the comment that they would buy one.

There have been many generous folks that have helped me along in my artistic quest. There are too many to list here but two of the greatest influences were my first and second art teachers--Mrs. Dinger who took me in to her home and let me use her garage as a studio and William Brigl whose work I rode many miles on a bicycle to view,.Both of these teachers opened a world for me that is too beautiful for words.

The paintings in this book are done in Watercolor, (both transparent and opaque) oil, pastel, acrylic and then there are the pencil sketches. The question frequently arises on which of these mediums is my favorite. In reality there are certain subjects that I feel more comfortable doing in one media or another and even then I mix them up for excitement or to push the envelop a little. Watercolor is easier to travel with for several reasons, so that is what I take on trips that involve air-travel, although when the destination is reached , I almost always wish for some pastel or oil. I had studied and worked in oil for many years before the watercolors “snapped in for me”. My mentor, Mr Brigl, said that oil was a tried and proven media whereas the “frivolous acrylic and watercolor” had not passed the test of time. So when word got back to him that I was working with these demon media, he had my name struck from all monuments and I was banished to the desert. We made up years later before his death, but by then I found that I liked it in the desert.

The painters that I like most are the ones that acted as a lens through which we could look at any subject and see it in a new and exciting way. Seeing light and shadow idxed with wonderfuol colors and arrqanged in beautifuol cojposition is a styole that i chose to emulate. My work is a compilation of the influences of many teachers and my own life experiences. It is possible that I have learned as much from my students as I did from my teachers in the long run. The people that I tried to teach made me think in ways that greatly stretched my abilities.

The craft that I practice is nearly the one considered to be the “oldest profession”, in so far as there are things that I do for love and things I do for money. It is not known for sure whether my predecessors that painted on cave walls did it for monetary gain, but in my opinion, it was most likely a love thing. The similarity with those long ago painters and ones of today are that they all wanted to mark their passage on this earth with a few images painted on some handy surface. (I also have this strange compulsion to manufacture stone tools, a trait I might mention that is not shared with other modern painters.)

There are some short stories included in this book. Many people are thankful for the short part. These are included as an additional bit of color that could be considered as little word pictures to go with the paintings. I threw in a few of my favorite recipes so that there would be some “bang for the buck spent on this book”.

**I hope you enjoy..
Steven Russell**

Foreword

Steven Russell is a different kind of guy--very different from anyone else you've ever met. I should know—he's been my friend for fifty years—since first grade. Over those fifty years, Steve has had a breadth of experiences that have seen him grow from a typical small town Texas kid to an accomplished artist, sculptor, storyteller and major league raconteur.

Steve and I grew up in beautiful Rockport, Texas which used to be kind of a sleepy little coastal town with shrimpers, sport fishermen and bird watchers in about equal numbers. Except for a four year stint in the US Navy, Steve has never lived anywhere else and his understanding and feel for the Texas Coast is deeper and truer than most any other artist who attempts to interpret this picturesque area. His talent in painting coastal scenes is what first brought him recognition and success as an artist. There was something in his interpretation of these scenes that was just “right” and obviously from the heart.

When I say that Steve is different, I mean in a lot of ways. Many assume that his laid back demeanor and quick wit make him just another “good ole boy” who can paint. Nothing could be further from the truth. While most of us couldn't wait to get out of town and go make our fortune, Steve stayed home and concentrated on the only real thing he had ever wanted to do—be an artist. He wasn't motivated by material wealth—he wanted skill and knowledge.

You will seldom see such focus and concentration as you will when Steve is pursuing a new artistic endeavor. His every waking moment is dedicated to learning everything he can to enable him to pursue his art. His concentration on this is so severe at times that he isn't very current on the rest of the world. I remember vividly when I bought a painting from Steve in 1976. I was checking my day timer to see when I had to be at a meeting the next day as Steve was signing the painting. He turned to me and asked, "what year is it?"

I don't mean to imply by the above that Steve has been a homebound scholar all these years. He's been a rounder with the best of them. He has enjoyed life a lot and maybe sometimes a little too much. I don't know anyone with more friends. His home in Rockport is always a hub of activity with people coming and going constantly. Steve's lovely wife, Sherol, is the ringmaster of the daily circus of visitors which includes people from every walk of life. When it became known that he was writing a book about his observations and experiences, many calls ensued to seek assurances that, "You're not going to tell that, are you?"

Professionally, Steve has received many awards and much recognition. His most important influence was an early teacher and important artist in his own right, William Brigl, who painted and taught in Rockport in the 1960's and 1970's. A show of his work in Rockport in the early 1960's inspired young Steven who wanted to be able to immediately match Brigl's dramatic seascapes. After becoming Brigl's prized pupil, Steve taught art with him and later became a

well known and appreciated teacher on his own and has taught hundreds of aspiring artists over the past twenty-five years.

Steve's work has expanded from his early scenes of Rockport. His painting has received wide acclaim and marketability as a wildlife artist and depicter of the American outdoors, especially the Southwestern United States. A trip to Europe a few years ago has given inspiration to a whole new series of works featuring European scenes, especially Venice, which captivated Steve as no other place since his home town. In the past decade Steve's work has included, in addition to traditional paintings in oil and water colors, metal sculpture, painted and fired ceramic panels, glass blowing, and related glass art incorporating metal sculpture, cast bronze sculpture, Japanese gardens and koi ponds, knife making and wood carving. For each of these mediums Steve immersed himself in research and did it almost always "the hard way". He built his own glass blowing furnace and related equipment as he did for ceramics and much of his sculpture.

Steve has been very generous with his support of art, outdoor organizations and the like. Very few South Texas fundraisers over the past two decades have been without an original Steven Russell piece of art to auction, which has brought thousands of dollars to these organizations over the years.

I think you will enjoy this work which showcases some of Steve's work as well as his witty, knowledgeable and insightful commentary. I've known ever since Steve beat me out to become the knot tying champion in Boy Scouts, that he was a formidable talent.

Hugh M. Morrison



Personal Notes



Russell has a studio that took him four years to build. Because as he said, “I brought a ton of ignorance to the project”. It is large enough to entertain in and is often used to host music gatherings complete with bar-b-que. He actually paints in it sometimes and offers new works for viewing.



Copper fountains were an obsession for a while and the only thing they had in common was that they all sprayed water all over the floor.

Part of a group Russell has painted with in the American West, Mexico and Europe. Grant Redden, Gerold Fritzler.



Old friend Jack Cowan and Russell at the opening of a show of “Sporting Art” at the Rockport Center for the Arts.



Metal Sculptor Bill Richardson and Russell (Electra Texas)



Conservation Show for Ducks Unlimited and the GCCA at the Museum of South Texas 1990. Group being interviewed for television. Clay Mcghouy, Al Barnes, Kent Ulberg, Kathryn Childers, Jack Cowan, Herb Booth and Russell (Corpus Christi)



Almost the same group of artist 13 years later in a show “Texas Most Wanted” in Rockport. Sam Caldwell added on right.



**Russell with the Steel
Tree that he made.
(the gods of rust took it
away.)**



**The Russells in the “Valley
of Mexico, Steve “shorty”
and Sherol**



**Interlude from
painting,
Steve and Sherol
making a living
from the sea
(but not for long)**



**Andy Morrison, possibly the most enthusiastic
fisherman on the Texas coast, giving his father and
the artist a little “lesson” on catching large trout.**



**Russell and son Joe
with a “mess” of Black
drum, all weighing forty
pounds.**



**Artist in quest of ducks and
picture material down
in the Guadalupe delta.
Al Barnes, Russell, Lannie
Holingshead and
Lonsome ole Herb Booth.**



**Three Russells on
the beach
Son James and
grandson Austin**



**Hospital Corps School
San Diego, California**



**Russell with brother
“Jimbo” Viet Nam**



**Standing in the door of a CH 46 helicopter.
He was a Navy Corpsman for four years and
three of those years were with the Marine
Corps.**



Above, Baby Russell with mother and father on a shrimp boat. Below... one of the sail boats built by his father and brothers that they took on long trips up and down the coast in the late fiftys and early sixtys.

