

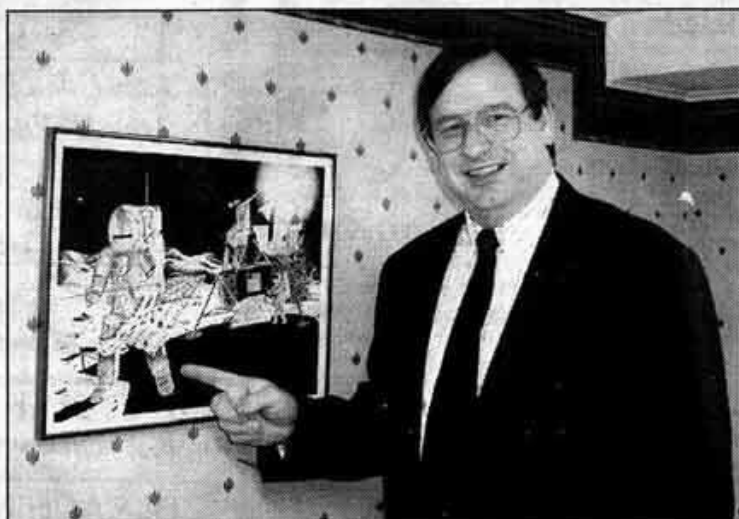
Local attorney combines art and law

by Linda Lyman

The art career of Attorney Robert V. Bickers, Jr. got an early start when he discovered his sixth grade classmates would give him nickels for the spacecraft and race car sketches he loved to draw.

Although he continued to be involved in art in some form through high school and college, it was only after he had finished law school and entered into practice with his father that he got back into oil painting. He attributes television artist Bill Alexander's enthusiasm as his inspiration to spend time practicing at night and on weekends. He also took several art classes at Memphis State University. When he began to win awards in local shows, his career as an artist took on a life of its own.

After relocating to Murrysville in 1992, he found



Bob Bickers points out details of pen and ink sketch he did after the Challenger shuttle disaster. The last lunar lander, also named "Challenger," was his inspiration for this memorial piece.

the commute to his position with a downtown law firm ate into his time in front of an easel. This past summer, he formed a partnership with his wife, attorney Diane Landis

Bickers, and began working out of their office in Murrysville.

Bickers works in several art media, including oil, pen and ink, acrylic, and gouache (a water paint wash). He finds his inspiration in many places. Along with more formal commissioned portraits, he has painted many casual portraits of his children.

He says that children are harder to paint, since their features are subtle, and the artist must be careful not to overdo them. He also points out that children don't like to

be still, so he likes to paint them doing something that reflects their personality.

His long interest in the space program also provides him with a wealth of topics to capture on his canvas. As a 13 year old with a passionate interest in the topic, he watched the first moon landing on television surrounded by maps and models. While painting pictures based in space requires a good imagination, Bickers says that he also needs as much technical background as he

can get in order to make the paintings as believable as possible. He says space paintings should encourage us to let "our imagination take us to places we haven't been before."

Noting that much space art is "uninspired", Bickers dreams of one day publishing a history of the twentieth century space program illustrated with his own art work.

Closer to home, Bickers also has a passionate interest in Mississippian cultures. He says he cannot drive by an Indian mound without stopping to look through the museum. He points out these civilizations had a "wonderfully artistic culture" that has been overshadowed by western cultures. He uses many of the culture's artifacts as the basis for still life compositions.

He has also created landscapes of western ruins as they might have looked before they were restored. Working from a turn of the century photograph, he adds details and color to depict what it might have looked like when the first white person came upon the scene.

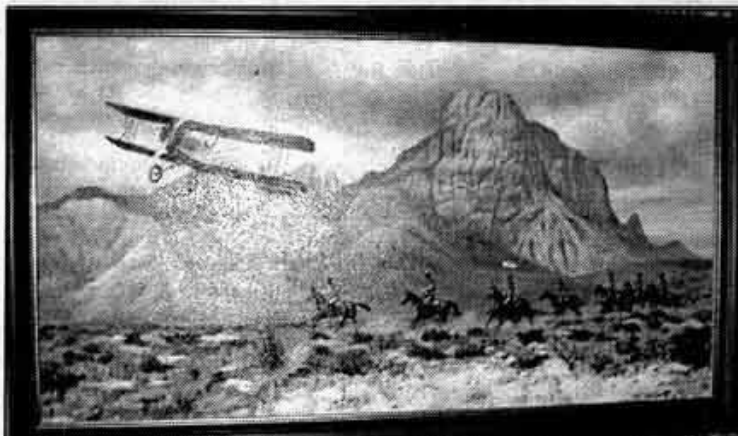
When traveling, Bickers keeps an eye out for scenes and artifacts of

interest. Once he finds something that he wants to capture on canvas, he makes a quick sketch, jots down some notes, and takes a few pictures. With this research, he is able to later recreate scenes in his home studio.

"I enjoy both art and law," said Bickers. He went on to add, "Both fields blend into each other. The creative impulse is helpful to an attorney, and the logical attention to detail needed by an attorney is also needed by an artist." He admitted that knowledge of the technical side of art - how colors react to each other, etc. - gives him the freedom to be creative.

Some of Bickers' work is on display at the Murrysville municipal building through the end of December. While he devotes his work week to law, painting only at night and on weekends, he would like to acquire enough commission work to be able to devote one full weekday to art.

Even if his art never provides any supplemental income, he will continue to paint for the "sheer pleasure of it." After all, he has many friends and family willing to give his work display room in their homes.



Picture entitled "Border Patrol". At the turn of the century, the border patrol had begun to use airplanes for reconnaissance, but still relied heavily on mounted patrolmen. However, they had no radio communications. The plane would fly over and drop a square of yellow material, with a lead weight tied onto one corner, on which orders were written. The cavalry would ride out to collect their orders. This picture, composed in Big Bend National Park, depicts just such a pick-up.