

SOCRO attorney claims fame as artist in Memphis

By Bonnie Bajorek
SOCRO Claims Attorney Bob Bickers doesn't unwind by reading the newspaper or watching television—instead, he picks up a paintbrush.

"Painting helps me relax after handling suit files all day," says Bob, who joined Nationwide in 1986.

His artistic talents have paid off. Last fall, one of his watercolors earned first place at the 1988 Annual Mid-South Fair Art Show in Memphis. At the same show, one of his oil paintings won the People's Choice Award for Favorite Artist.

Bob won his first art awards in 1983—a first place for a pen and ink drawing and a third place for a wood carving.

But his paintings are most successful. "Most of my paintings are landscapes or wildlife in oils or opaque watercolors," says Bob, who exhibits and sells his work at the Spencer Gallery in Memphis.

Although Bob took art in high school, he didn't pursue formal art studies. He decided instead to study political science at Memphis State, and lost touch with his art.

After graduating in 1977, he joined an adjusting firm in Memphis. He later took night classes at Memphis State College of Law. After earning his law degree, he worked two years in his father's firm, and eventually found time to pick up the brush again.

Later this year, Bob plans to enter the third annual "Art in the Parks" contest judged and sponsored by the National Park Foundation and National Park Academy of the Arts.

Entries must be unsigned, be on an 18" x 24" canvas, and reflect the contest theme—national parks and monuments. The strict format ensures judging is even, says Bob. Each year more than 2,500 artists compete for a \$100,000 purse.

The top 100 entries are reproduced



Bob Bickers' landscape of rock formations in the Southwest earned him the People's Choice Award as favorite artist at the Mid-South Fair Art Show.

as prints, postcards and stamps for a one-year exhibit shown in cities around the country.

Although Bob is an award-winning artist, he plans to take an oil portrait painting class to expand his horizons.

"I'm slowly building experience," he says, noting that he would be embarrassed to shown anyone his first painting. "I learn more with each painting I do."

Is the life of a professional artist in the cards for him?

"If I could make a good living at it," he says. "Maybe it will be a second career after I retire."

Bonnie Bajorek is a Public Relations intern from The Ohio State University.



Clockwise from above: Bob has done drawings for SOCRO, such as a pen and ink drawing to promote the SOAR program. Another drawing was an eagle program cover for regional retirees. Western scenes are some of Bob's favorite subjects.

