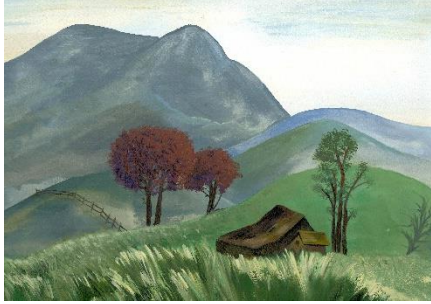


I was born in Portland Or. and have lived here all my life. I grew up in Tigard, and bought my house in Sherwood as a single mom in 1993 and have lived in Sherwood since then. I have always enjoyed creating things, I have had hobbies that included crocheting things, drawing as a teenager, painting Christmas ornaments, woodworking home improvements and anything where I could be creative. I really enjoyed making things that made people smile my whole life.

I married my husband Mike Boljat in 1997. I worked full time at the Fred Meyer corporate office. I worked there until after I had my daughter in 98 when my husband and I decided to take a leap of faith during my maternity leave, we decided I should stay home and raise my daughter, although money was tight. When my daughter was just starting to stand we began looking for a church here in Sherwood so we could raise my daughter with God in her life. Both my husband and I believed in God and wanted our daughter to have this belief as well. We visited Woodhaven (now Epic House) many years ago when the church was only a few weeks old - meeting at Middleton Elementary here in Sherwood. We still go to Epic House Church to this day.

The relevance of this information is that although we went to church for my daughter to get closer to God, both my husband and I have seen transformation in our lives. In one of the study groups I was at we were reading the book "The power of a praying wife". My prayer request weekly was for God to lead my life and to please show me what I am supposed to be doing.

It was at this point I took notice and asked a friend of mine in the Bible study (who happened to be a successful artist here in Sherwood) how she created her acrylic paintings that she would sometimes bring and show us at group. Although I was not too interested, more just curious. She said I was welcome to come to her studio sometime and paint side by side with her, and as these things usually go it took a year or so before I actually went to her studio for the first time to attempt painting in 2004. I sat at one corner of her studio and she at the other and occasionally she would come look over my shoulder to offer suggestions. The first attempt to create a painting of the Badlands SD went in the round file after months of work on it, I did not think I could salvage it. My artist friend Teri Walker Thomas suggested I try to copy work from an artist that she had a book about. For the fun of it, I tried painting a picture in the book. When I thought I was finished with my landscape she said "you need a barn or some kind of building in that painting" to which I replied "I don't do barns". She said try! What I learned was I do paint barns. When the painting was all finished, I thought to myself hey this is ok, I am ok with this painting. I remembered my grandmother loved pictures of old barns and had prints them decorating her home in CA. I then thought I will send this to her to brighten her day, and called and contacted my grandpa only to find out he had been coordinating putting Grandma in hospice, she was so ill and he was in the process of contacting the family to let us know. After my uncle suggested it, I emailed the scanned image (of the barn) to him and this printed out copy of my barn painting hung over Grandma's bed the two weeks before she died.



When my family drove to CA for Grandma's memorial in July 2005, I was asked by my uncle to interview my grandpa (at midnight before the memorial) about my Grandma's life. I was already tired, but jotted down things people felt were important to say at Grandma's memorial, when my aunt interjected, "be sure and put down there that grandma always wanted to paint". I thought, Paint??? She never said a word to me about this. She would share of how she was raised and what family life was like back then, but

I never had a clue all her life she was interested in painting. My grandpa told me he thought it was that she did not know where to begin, but had always wanted to try. It was when we returned home in July that was my turning point, I think God was answering my prayer. It was at that point after the long drive home I remember I sat watching my husband set off fireworks, that 4th of July and looking into the sky I said Ok God, I'll be an artist. Before retiring to bed I announced to my family I was going to paint for the rest of my life. I was just going to do it. It upset me that my grandmother died never really trying what she had curiosity and a drive to do, and this feeling was exactly what I needed to push me forward. Painting was what I think I was being shown I am supposed to do. My mom painted when she had time as a hobby when she was alive but it was not what she thought she could do as a job. She went to college graduated as a nurse and died shortly after that from cancer. One of her beach paintings hangs in my home now and I cherish it.

I continued to meet with Teri a few times a month and painted my second painting I finished it and my best friend loved and said "Can I buy that from you?" I gave it to her. The next one I finished in November of 05 and was planning to donate it to my daughter's private school auction. I needed to somehow be able to paint but not burden my family with the cost of my new passion to paint.

I showed my uncle (who is a doctor) the painting and I actually thanked him for asking me to interview grandpa, because I really feel that the timing was impeccable, and I told my uncle "Hey check it out, here is a painting I finished. I am donating to my daughter's school and I wanted you to know I think I will just paint for the rest of my life - what do you think?" Well my uncle ended up buying the painting from me he liked it so much, he was not worried about price, he wanted that painting and since the donation amount for the auction was \$400. that is what I charged for my first 16x20 and so it was in the beginning of 2006 I became a professional artist (after my first most important current job of course of wife and mom).

As a professional artist I set up a website in 06 (www.dkboljat.com) and planned art shows. I won ribbons and ended up selling original paintings in 2006. All the while I have tried to connect with other women who do not know where to begin but are interested in painting. I led a painting group (Sherwood Artist Guild) for four years in Sherwood where women could come and paint for a couple hours. In 2007 I sold 5 originals.

I supported the arts by being very involved volunteering in both the Sherwood Foundation for the Arts, and the Cultural Arts Commission here in Sherwood. I volunteered at schools and Girl scouts and church early in my career, I have led camps in the summer focused on teaching painting techniques, to help people of all ages, who may enjoy painting as much as I do but just not realize it. If I were to go back to 2003- you could not have told me I would be a professional artist today.

I can remember when I started telling friends and showing them my work, I would frequently hear "Wow- I did not know You could paint like that!" My response was "neither did I"! My life has had so much more joy since I have started painting. I teach classes to help the people that want to try but don't know where to begin, or they have started and get stuck.

This was from 2006 Oregonian Newspaper.

Passions | Darla Boljat

Sherwood artist delights in lighting up a canvas

Landscape | A woman has been tapping her talent since last July and has two local shows

By **KATE TAYLOR**
THE OREGONIAN

For most of her life, Darla Boljat has been content to admire the light in clouds, on lakes and on mountaintops.

But a couple of years ago, the 42-year-old Sherwood woman decided she wanted to re-create it in her landscape paintings. The mother of two began tentatively, studying other artists, including the works of a close friend, Sherwood resident Teri Thomas.

She tried a few pictures, throwing them out and beginning again when the light seemed off or when something else about a piece didn't work. But in July 2005, she set down her brush and saw that she had done a pretty good job painting an old barn.

Since that picture, which she gave to a beloved and dying grandmother, she's been painting non-stop. She has an exhibition in Portland and an upcoming show at the Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts. She also displays and sells paintings through a Web site: www.dkboljat.com.

Among other aspects of her art, she loves the feeling she has when she's creating. It's as if she's not working alone.

"I feel like God is directing me to do this," said Boljat, who co-hosts a free painting gathering with Thomas at Woodhaven Community Church.

Since January, when her 21-year-old son left to serve in Iraq as a Marine, prayer and painting have given her comfort and hope, says Boljat, who paints in her son's room. "It's helped me tremendously. I know he is proud of me and



Photos courtesy of DARLA BOLJAT

Darla Boljat, who began painting in earnest in July, gravitates toward landscapes. She says her art has comforted her since her 21-year-old son left for Iraq in January. "I know he is proud of me and what I've done, and that means a lot," she says.

Darla Boljat's paintings

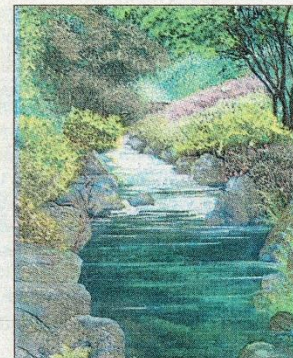
- On display at the Art of Change Gallery, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette building, 619 S.W. 11th Ave., Suite 300, Portland
- On display June 23-25 in the 43rd annual Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts. For information, go to www.lakewood-center.org.

what I've done, and that means a lot."

She wants to help others learn about art because she knows she's not the only one with a long-undiscovered talent, she says. "If

God has given them a gift to create art, then I would like to give them an opportunity to practice it."

Kate Taylor: 503-294-5116;
katetaylor@news.oregonian.com



"The Bridge" by Sherwood artist Darla Boljat

What's your passion? Are you deeply committed to a subject or activity? Tell Kate Taylor all about it at 503-294-5116 or by e-mail at katetaylor@news.oregonian.com.

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