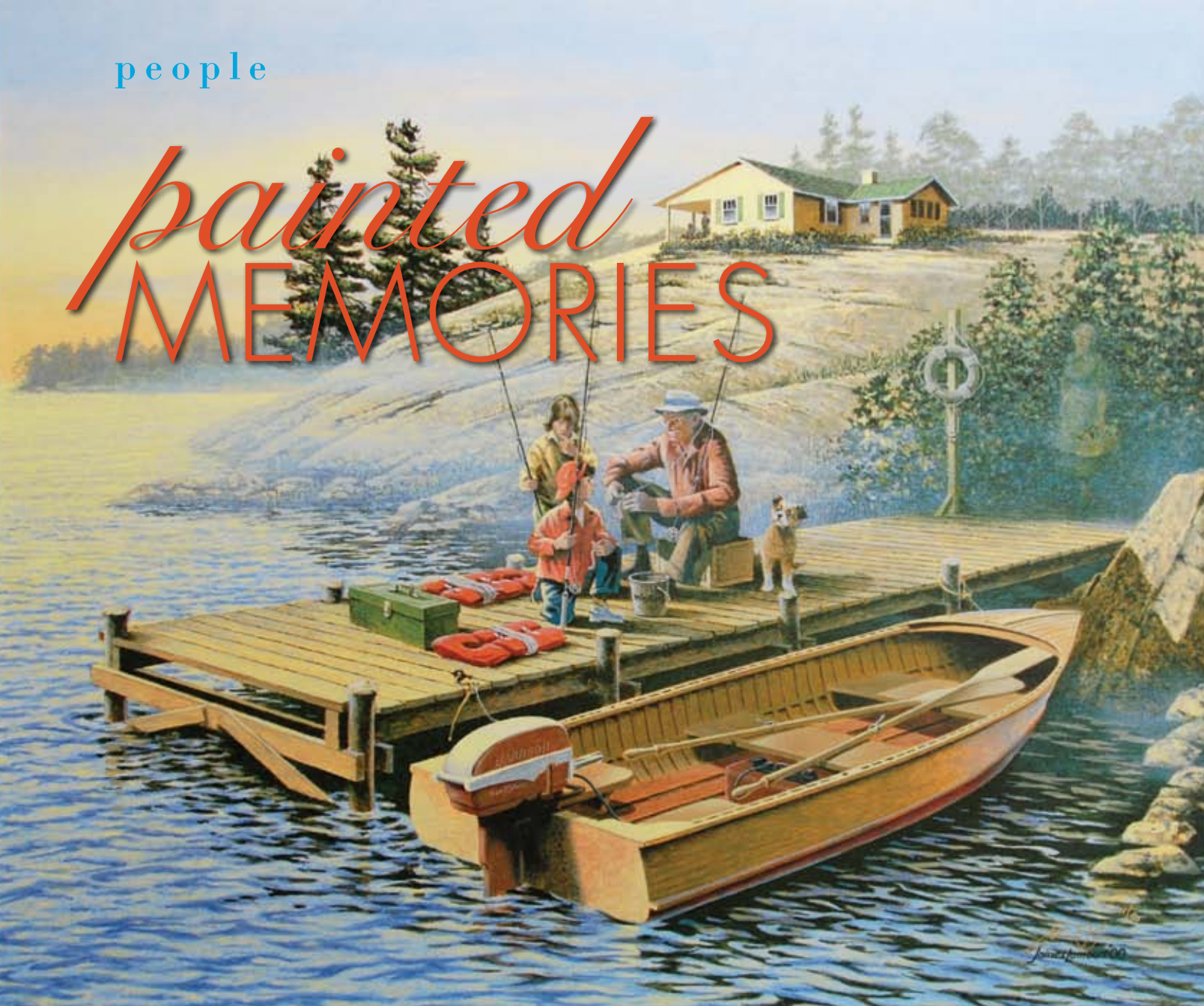


Painted MEMORIES



BY SHELBY HILSON // PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

One of Canada's most recognized painters lives right here in Grey Bruce.

After spending years in the North painting polar bears, wildlife and Aboriginal Peoples, James Lumbers did portraits of some of the world's greatest sports heroes, including Wayne Gretzky, Gordie Howe and Joe Montana.

He has painted people across the spectrum of society from Prime Minister John Diefenbaker to those in everyday life.

Having lived here for 14 years, his affection for the region is evident in his work. "I'm starting a series of paintings that reflect the lives of the people who live in this area," says Lumbers. An example of what's to come is his latest painting, titled "A Good Story," a scene in the Desboro Tavern. He is working on a painting of the Keady Market, a tradition known far and wide in the area. *Continued on page 54*



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What gained Lumbers international recognition in the 70s was a style that he continues today – what he calls his “memory paintings” – bringing the past and present together in a very realistic style. This technique was inspired after he sketched an abandoned house on an island in Georgian Bay, and then later developed negatives, from more than 60 years earlier, found in an old diary under a floorboard that held images of people sitting on the same porch he sketched. He painted the present-day porch with the memories of long ago and uncovered a true passion and talent.

“We are products of our memories and traditions,” explains Lumbers. “We must fight in our own way to preserve what we have.”

His own memories are rooted in the beauty of nature and wildlife, which is how he got his start as an artist. After becoming acquainted with well-known wildlife artist Terry Shortt, he became inspired to pursue his art, rather than industrial design, and was offered an opportunity to travel in the far north for 10 years. In that time he observed and photographed polar bears and other wildlife in their natural habitat around Hudson Bay, expanding his reference file to paint from later.

He illustrated the lives of Aboriginal Peoples and was elected a Fellow of the Explorers Club of New York.

It's this love of nature that ultimately brought Lumbers and his wife Dalma to Grey Bruce – to live in this beautiful part of Ontario.

His paintings are displayed in several galleries in the area, including Fotos & Flowers in Meaford, where OUR HOMES met with Lumbers for a photo shoot and interview. “I use acrylic paint because it dries quickly and I paint by adding one layer over another,” he says. “It’s a technique widely used by the old masters that creates a luminosity otherwise unobtainable.”

Several of the artist’s most recognized paintings are inspired by Ontario locations and pastimes, with many portraying Georgian Bay, Muskoka and the great game of hockey. “I’m very interested in Canadian history and traditions, incorporating them into a lot of my work,” tells Lumbers.

Although he’s best known for his paintings, Lumbers also enjoys sketching with charcoal. He has just completed an autobiography titled “Echoes” that he’s been working on for the past four years and expects to have published shortly. He shares many incredible stories of his artistic and personal travels through life and has included about 140 never-before-seen charcoal sketches.

It’s evident that Lumbers’ passion for creating beautiful art hasn’t dwindled over the years. He’s full of new ideas and exciting plans and shows no signs of slowing down.

“I’ll paint for as long as I can remember where my studio is,” he smiles. **OH**


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