

She Paints Nature



HARUKO MONIZ

(Olympian Photo By Brian Saunders)

By **GLENDA HELBERT**
Personal Side Writer

Through good times and bad, Haruko Moniz has stuck by her art.

Haruko, whose delicate watercolors are currently on display at the State Capitol Museum, took her first formal training in art school in Japan.

It was wartime, and her studies were interrupted often when she and the other art students were sent to work at various government jobs to help support the war effort. Eventually school was closed down when Tokyo came under intensive bombing attacks.

But after the war, she finished her studies and was invited to teach art. That would have been the no risk, secure thing to do. Post-war Japan was a harrowing place, and money to keep body and soul together was hard to come by. But Haruko was young and full of the courage that comes from not fully comprehending the realities of life and decided that she wanted to become a professional artist.

And so she found jobs here and there, painting neckties, decorating souvenirs, teaching art to kindergartners in the morning, work that paid a pittance but allowed her time to paint and to continue to pursue her art studies.

When summer vacation came at the kindergarten and her income came to an abrupt halt, she began doing freelance art, sketching pictures of the American soldiers and their families. One of those soldiers, Laurence Moniz, was more interested in the artist than her art, and eventually asked Haruko to marry him.

Laurence brought his new bride to the United States in 1954, following his army career, and a period of time began in Haruko's life when there was no time to work at the career she had sacrificed so much for. Their three youngsters were born and her time was taken up in providing for the needs of her young family.

For Haruko, it wasn't possible at that time to be both wife, mother and artist. "I wanted it all, marriage, family, career," she reflected, "but I have a one track mind!" When she approaches a task she must concentrate all her efforts on that task and not be diverted by anything else, she said. Thus Haruko threw her entire talent into being the best homemaker she knew how to be.

"I didn't touch a brush until

my youngest was six," she said.

When she started to paint once more, it was like starting all over again. "Painting is like playing the piano. To stay good at it you have to practice every day," she said.

Haruko eased into it gradually, setting up shop on the corner of the kitchen table, enabling herself to paint and also to keep up with her household duties. Eventually she turned a spare room of the house into a studio, and has been busily at work creating her special brand of watercolors ever since.

Because of her need to be close to home to attend to the needs of her family, and also, she admitted, because of a bit of timidity that comes from not speaking English as well as she would like to, Haruko's subjects are what she observes in the world at hand, the beauty of nature right in her own backyard. A favorite method of hers is to pick one subject and study it intensely. A moth she found in her kitchen became the subject of several paintings.

Haruko's depictions of the natural world around her show her desire to capture not only the features and the spirit of her subject, but also her personal reaction to it. The watercolors glow with the personality of the gentle spirit who captures the beauty of a flower or a blade of grass forever with the stroke of a brush.

Haruko spoke appreciatively of the support her husband and family have given to her to return to painting. She is encouraged to paint by that support, but also by her need to use the talent that has lain fallow for so many years.

It is a hard calling. "In order to paint something I must be inspired by it," she observed. And inspiration is not something that grows on trees. An artist without a subject can be a tortured soul.

She hates with a passion, she said, the time that passes between the last brush stroke of one painting and the first brushstroke of the next.