

ATMOSPHERE PEOPLE

Painting and Weather – a perfect blend for this Meteorologist

When not on shift duty at the Ontario Weather Centre, meteorologist Phil Chadwick, spends the winter months in the basement of his house in Schomberg, Ont., about 50 kilometres north of Toronto, painting large oil canvasses of memorable outdoor scenes he has sketched or photographed earlier in the year.

Not surprisingly, Phil says one of his favorite artistic subjects is weather. "In painting, weather means portraying skies and clouds. In Canada there are so many fascinating types of weather to choose from". He adds that, among other things, he has painted fog, thunderstorms "from the inside out"... snowsqualls, sunsets, weird or chaotic skies full of virga, anvil clouds, 'tadpoles' and half a dozen varieties of stratocumulus. He is particularly fond of deformation zones which remind him of "unstirred cream in a coffee cup."

Phil, born in Kingston, Ont., developed a passion for both science and art while in his early teens. He felt both were equally important for learning what was really going on in the world around him.

After graduating from high school, he went on to study nuclear physics at Queen's University, Kingston. But once he had obtained his B.Sc in 1976, he realized his best chance of landing a job was with AES. After taking the Met. Training Course, he was posted for two years to the Canadian Forces Base at Shearwater, N.S. He later served in both the Maritimes and Alberta Weather Centres, at the Canadian Forces Forecast Centre in North Bay, Ontario and with both Training Branch and the Weather Services Directorate at AES Downsview.

Wherever he went, Phil discovered new subjects for his paintings . . . landscapes, harbors, old dwellings, railways . . . and of course weather.

He says that painting gives him total relief from his job. He is somewhat of a perfectionist and completes only about half a dozen canvasses per season. "I continue on a particular painting", he adds, "until I feel I am beginning to

overwork it . . . when more detail looks like clutter and the colors become muddy." He paints "under the stairs" because his work gear takes up too much space and the oils and varnishes are messy and pungent." Ideally, he would like to attach a studio to his house.

Listening to boisterous music by such performers as Jimmy Buffet, John Cougar Mellancamp and Gordon Lightfoot while he paints, Phil has now completed enough paintings to



Meteorologist Phil Chadwick with two of his recent skyscapes! "Rideau Depriation" (closest to him) is one of his favorites. The other one, "Stratocumulus" looks northwest from Schomberg at sunset, demonstrating that even the humblest of cloud types can be spectacular.

cover every wall in his house. And this is after he had achieved a complete sell-out of his works at the Foyer Gallery in Edmonton a few years back. He has recently been selling limited edition prints of one of his favorite paintings.

One thing Phil insists on is that his paintings be accurate. "This does not mean that my works are photographic copies. I have been called everything from a surrealist to a realist. No matter how I am labelled, I am very conscious I am painting real places that people might well visit. They expect the objects in the painting to correspond with those in the real world."

Phil admits it is harder to paint "accurate weather". But he says his cloud configurations must ring true.

Throughout his career, he has managed to keep the artistic and scientific sides of his nature fairly separate. But because of his good grounding in physics, he thoroughly understands the scientific properties of light. In a two-part article in *Chinook*, (The Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society magazine), he guides "budding meteorologists through the galleries of realistic art so that they may see the light — as it was meant to be — and understand why!" He then explains the meaning of such terms as attenuation, scattering and absorption and how they affect color and shading in land and waterscapes. Explaining some of these concepts, Phil writes: "Molecules scatter blue light best in all directions. Larger particles scatter red light best, mainly in the forward direction. Absorption increases as the surface approaches that of a black body and as the optical path-length in the medium increases."

Phil summarizes his situation by saying that when he is working his shift at the Ontario Weather Centre he is the pure scientist, but that when he is at work on a canvas, seated at his new, oaked "super-easel", given to him last year by his father as a Christmas present, he is the total artist.