

# CANVASSING THE WEST

THE PAINTINGS OF  
JIM WILCOX



FOREWORD BY B. BYRON PRICE  
INTRODUCTION BY MARK WILCOX

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to artist friends and colleagues who have provided example and direction, to clients who have made it possible to continue an exciting career, and especially to my wife, Narda, who is the reason both the book and the career exist. Her courage, support, and faith as we embarked on this career path that led to unknown destinations were necessary for both comfort and success. Her good judgment has improved many paintings, and her love and sustaining influence have made this artist and our seven children exceptionally happy. She is the light in my paintings and the sunlight in our lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Mark Wilcox (our 6th child) for photos, book design, and content, to Jeff (our 1st), Eric (our 7th), and Mark for putting our best foot forward in the galleries. Thanks to all our children, including Scott, Natalie, Ross, and Todd for doing a good job of encouraging and tolerating their resident artist (as well as providing some wonderful grandchildren), and to our special talented friend, Byron Price, for making this book better and more important.

JIM WILCOX ←





***Cover painting in progress***

"Reflections of Home"

Oil painting of Mt. Moran at sunset in Grand Teton National Park, WY by Jim Wilcox.

30" x 48"

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Publisher: Design-Art, Inc.  
Design, production, and layout: Mark Wilcox  
Editor: Mark Wilcox  
Photography: Jim, Narda, Jeff, and Mark Wilcox

First edition

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2008903394

ISBN 978-1-60643-177-1

Cover painting:  
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Oil painting of Mt. Moran at sunset in Grand Teton National Park, WY by Jim Wilcox.  
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Distributed by Wilcox Gallery  
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## FOREWORD

BY B. BYRON PRICE



Among the 142 paintings and sculptures exhibited by 51 artists at the National Academy of Western Art Show and sale in Oklahoma City in 1987, one sun-drenched landscape stood out from the rest.

It was my first NAWA show and my first year as executive director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, sponsor of the exhibit. Although I had never met the artist who produced the stunning canvas titled “Three Last Minutes of Glory,” Jim Wilcox’s ability and creativity were evident in every line and brushstroke. The committee that awarded the work the prestigious Prix de West gold medal and purchase prize shared my enthusiasm for the painting as did most of the several hundred art enthusiasts who attended the opening. The day after the awards ceremony, the art critic of *The Sunday Oklahoman* affirmed our collective judgment calling the work “artistic without being pompous.”<sup>1</sup>

My wife Jeannie and I met Jim and Narda Wilcox at the show that weekend and we have been friends ever since. After the 1988 NAWA opening, we invited the Wilcoxes to join us in the Texas Panhandle where we introduced them to the unexpected beauty of the Palo Duro Canyon near Amarillo. Jim took his paints and easel along and did some field sketches while I peppered him with questions about his art and video taped him at work.

Although the Palo Duro offered some grand vistas along its rim, the blistering heat and the absence of a breeze drove us to more intimate settings on the floor of the yawning chasm, where the light and shadows played hide and seek with each other in ever-changing patterns. Only a few days before, Jim had told an Oklahoma City newspaper reporter, “Sunlight is the most exciting subject there is in Western painting – everything else is just something for the light to shine on.”<sup>2</sup>

In the two decades since winning the Prix de West, Jim Wilcox has continued to turn out landscapes of beauty and resonance. Although he paints with more confidence, skill, consistency, and acclaim than he did in the 1980s, success has yet to spoil him. The same gentle spirit guides his brush. Such recent triumphs as “Fiery Farewell,” his vivid Frederic Remington Award winning painting at the 2007 Prix de West Art Show, are proof that he is still learning, still excited, and still finding inspiration in the everyday rhythms of nature. Old or new, his work represents the optimistic worldview of a diligent artist filled with joy in the present and faith in the future.

B. Byron Price  
Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West  
University of Oklahoma

<sup>1</sup> John Brandenburg, “Cowboy Hall Visitors Treated to Art Display,” *The Sunday Oklahoman*, June 21, 1987, Travel and Entertainment Sec., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Nicole LeWand, “Western Art Exhibition Sale Set at Cowboy Hall of Fame,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 10, 1988, Weekend p. 3





Jim painting on location with a local in Glacier National Park, MT. The goat curiously approached Jim as he painted its native landscape.



Jim Wilcox's interests are diverse. That's what has led magazines and newspapers to call him such things as artist, innovator, Renaissance man, inventor, architect, and dreamer.



I just call him Dad.

**GROWING UP ON ART**  
By Mark Wilcox

#### INTRODUCTION

"Just a little bit farther," Dad yelled. The distance between him and his two sons he was coaxing onward was already enough to make him hoarse.

"Is this far enough?" one of them yelled back after scrambling over some rocks.

"No, I need you in the perfect spot to paint you in," Dad said. "Get on top of that rise and stand still!"

My two oldest brothers, Jeff and Scott, raced each other up the hill. Jeff, the oldest, got there first and immediately went rigid so Dad could paint his portrait. Scott soon after took up his pose.

Up until Dad suggested painting them into his mountain landscape, the two boys had been



On location near Denali National Park, AK.



running circles around his easel, throwing rocks into his brush-washing water, getting in water fights, and generally being obstructions to productivity. Dad grinned at Mom while he started – and finished – his sons’ portraits by dabbing a red dot and blue dot onto the top of the painted version of the distant ridge where the boys now stood motionless.

Dad continued to paint unbothered while his sons waited patiently to see how good they looked in paint. Only the occasional, “Are you done yet?” wafted across the distance separating them. Finally, his plein-air work done, he called the boys back from their prison without walls to see their masterpiece.

“I thought you said you were going to paint us, Dad,” Jeff said, disappointed.

“I did.” Suppressing a grin, he pointed to the blue, then the red dot. “There you are, and there’s Scott.”

That’s all it took. After that they smiled and talked about how cool it was to have their portrait done and expressed their happiness that they had managed to stay still the whole time. The person who later purchased the painting enjoyed the story of the colored dots.

This same portrait technique later sold a painting. Dad was doing a demonstration for the Prix de West Society when a collector friend of his wandered right into his subject matter. One spectator suggested Jim should paint the man into the painting. Without missing a beat, Dad dabbed an orange and blue dot into the field he was painting and indicated the portrait was finished. Someone in the crowd then said, “Uh-oh, I think Everett just bought a painting!” Sure enough, Everett did buy the painting.

From then on, whenever Dad saw Everett, they referred to the painting as “Everett’s portrait.” Later, Everett thanked Dad for “catching the twinkle” in his eye.



Jim’s children, left to right: Scott, Eric, Ross, Natalie, Todd, Jeff, and Mark. Jeff, Mark, and Eric run the Wilcox Gallery and Todd runs Soltek Easel.

## HISTORY

I can’t honestly say that growing up Wilcox was normal, especially since I am only one of seven siblings. Most of what I remember from my childhood involves the back of our huge beige Chevy van. We went on a lot of road trips so Dad could seek out new subject matter.

As fun as these trips were, Dad is a very safe (read slow) driver. We would all watch as the needle hovered almost exactly at the 55 mph speed limit on the highways and freeways while people whizzed by us, passing zone or not. We later found out the speedometer was off and we had driven at 49 mph all the way to California – three times. And that agonizing little needle would stay at 55 mph for hours on end until – *screeeeech* – Dad saw a painting. All of us in back would shift our weight and grab our “Go Fish” cards as we jerked forward. Sometimes he hadn’t braked hard enough (could have fooled us) for the ideal vantage point for whatever scene he had noticed, and we found ourselves backing up down the highway shoulder.

When Dad found the perfect angle, he would step out of the car, take several pictures, and return to the driver’s seat and a carload of frustrated children.

“Man, it’s beautiful out there,” he would say by way of explanation. We saw rocks, sagebrush, and trees. We could never quite figure out what he was seeing. Sometimes, he couldn’t stand to not paint something he saw right then. So the paints came out and we made the best of the situation by exploring and playing while Dad painted plein air.

Upon arrival at our destination, we would be paraded from one gallery to the next. Sometimes, we would beg to be left in the car rather than constantly being told not to touch anything. Besides, all the galleries looked the same after a while.

“ ‘Man, it’s beautiful out there,’ he would say by way of explanation. We saw rocks, sagebrush, and trees. We could never quite figure out what he was seeing. ”

Looking at those painting trips thinly disguised as vacation, I guess you could say Dad is a bit of a workaholic. Who wouldn’t be when work and play are almost identical? However, his work trips took me and my siblings to places we never would have gone otherwise: Hawaii, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Europe,

and all over the West. The trips also brought us together as a family.

Despite the fact that Dad’s job is most people’s idea of retirement, his choice of profession didn’t come easily. His diversity of interests made it surprisingly difficult.

Even in his chosen profession, I watch him move from project to project tirelessly. His studio becomes a think tank. One moment he is painting a showpiece for the Prix de West Show, the next he is machining a new part for his easel. Soon after, you'll find him deep in the design of his new house. One thing is sure, though: the brushes get put away when the natural light is gone for the day. And when the weather is right, the best natural light is outdoors, where he loves to paint plein air. He gathers lunch, his easel, a swimsuit, and a fishing rod and goes to work at his preferred office – Grand Teton National Park. After he's fished, hiked, swam, and eaten his lunch while waiting for the light to get just right, the easel comes out.

His own upbringing has much to do with his array of interests. He was born in Salt Lake City, UT in 1941, but his family moved to Durango, CO in 1949, where he learned to love camping, fishing, and the beauty of nature. His parents would never buy him comic books, which were hugely popular in that era. Instead, they set aside money for him to pick up *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*.

His parents would never buy him comic books... Instead, they set aside money for him to pick up *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*.

Consequently, he wound up greatly interested in cars, design, and invention. While he stimulated his left brain with these interests, his right brain received plenty of help during school.

Dad sketched horses while his teacher lectured.

While most people draw to escape the lesson, Dad drew to engross himself in it. To this day he sketches while he watches TV. One day, his third grade teacher grew frustrated with his inattention and said, "Jimmy, pay attention!"

To his teacher's dismay, little Jimmy kept drawing and responded, "I am paying attention."

She decided to teach him a lesson and began to grill him on her lecture. He answered correctly

in every instance. She began directing questions his way when he seemed particularly engrossed in the horses, yet he always knew the answer. So she became the pupil that day. From then on, she didn't bother Dad when he drew in class.

His love for design also deepened when he won his first awards in high school. He entered the Fisher Body Contest, a national model car design contest sponsored by General Motors. Both years he entered, the model cars he designed and built took third place for the state of Colorado.

Heading toward college, he had to make a decision about which of his interests would become his career. He began thinking about where his career choices would take him. After some heavy thought, he came to the conclusion that architecture or car design would probably land him in some smoky office in Detroit or another large city, whereas art would hopefully land him under a tree watching the clouds go by.

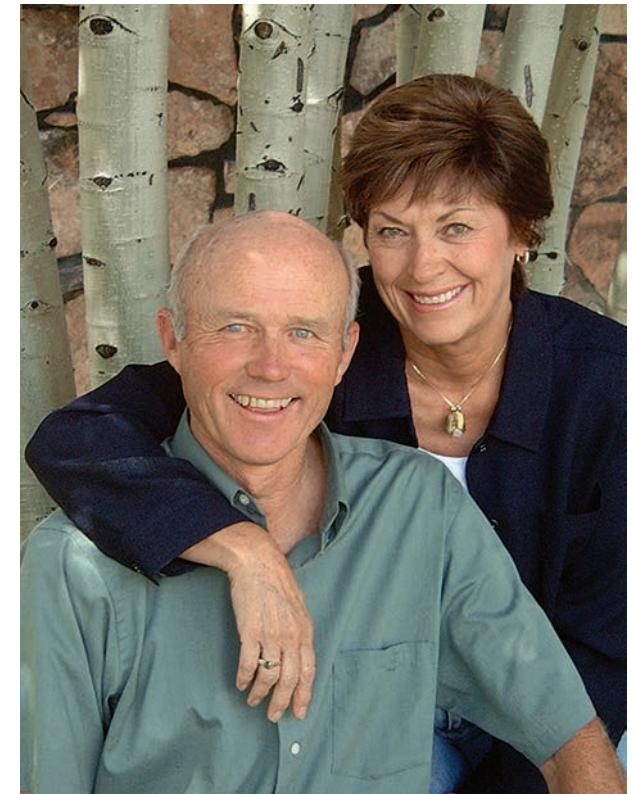
He chose the natural clouds over the clouds of smoke and earned his degree in art from Brigham Young University. But what really set his career path was a summer job at Jackson Lake Lodge. He made the decision to work there within about 30 seconds. The effects of his decision set the course of his life. He fell in love with Grand Teton National Park, in awe at the breadth and depth the Teton Range had to offer.

His senior year at BYU, he found someone worthy of sharing Jackson Hole with. In 1966, he married Narda Loveland, who to me is Mom. The summer they were married, they moved to Jackson to work together at Jackson Lake Lodge. They lived in separate dorms until they were married. Then Dad swapped out his roommate, who had been a longtime friend, for his new wife. He grinned while telling his friend, "You know, you've been a great roommate, but my new one's a big improvement." His roommate had to grudgingly agree.

Near the end of his time at BYU, his professors tried to encourage practicality and diversity in subject matter, but all Dad wanted to do was paint the Tetons. He earned his teaching certificate as a practical means to support his family at the urging of his academic advisor.

Starting into his chosen field, he took a job teaching high school art in Bothell, WA. He spent two years teaching there before he decided it was time to move on. The experience had been good, but his Jackson Hole summers still called him back.

Even while in Bothell, my family packed up during the summers and returned to Jackson Hole. During those summers, Dad experimented with his art, painting as much as was possible and gaining exposure by renting a conference room for a couple of weeks at Jackson Lake Lodge to use as a gallery. He had enough success in the endeavor to be encouraging.



Jim with his wife and best friend of more than 40 years.





The main Wilcox Gallery addition in construction phase in 1978. The stairs on the porch no longer exist, though at one time they provided the only access to the building.

In 1969, my parents decided Jackson should be more than a summer residence. After discovering it was more difficult than expected to get into one of Jackson's few galleries, Dad naively decided opening his own would be a good idea. The Jackson Lake Lodge experiment had been modestly fruitful, so why not?

With that mentality, my parents rented out a tiny building (sometimes trading paintings for rent) near the Jackson Town Square and called it the Highlight Gallery. The name came from the idea that it would be the "highlight" of anyone's trip to Jackson. The bare-bones atmosphere of the gallery

that had formerly been a bus depot only became a highlight of my parents' lives – and then only to look back and laugh at it. But it once again encouraged the young artist, bringing in enough money to scrape by.

The earnings from the Highlight Gallery became the foundation of The Four Seasons Gallery which they opened up in the Pink Garter Plaza in downtown Jackson. Though less modest than the former gallery, it was still no more than a stepping stone. Dad would man the gallery, painting until people came in. Then he became the salesman. Dad hates selling his own work. Not because he's sad to

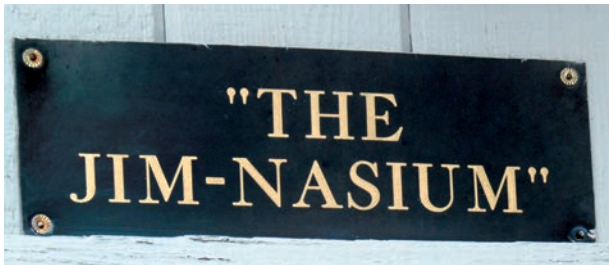
see it go or doesn't know how to sell, but because it's more natural to promote another artist's work. Nowadays, three of his sons – Jeff, Eric, and I – run the sales floors of his two galleries, leaving him free to tackle his many other responsibilities.

After a few years in that location, they built the Wilcox Gallery a mile north of Jackson as a home and business. It was basically an experiment to see if a gallery outside the core of town would work. It started as a small building – the whole house doubled as the gallery. Every morning when the gallery opened, everything had to be cleared and clean to be presentable for customers. This was no



small task for a family that had five small children at the time.

The experiment paid off and they sold the town gallery soon after. As they were able, they added to the building, which is now the largest gallery in Jackson. Everything from a recreation room to an enlarged studio (the plaque over the door calls the enormous space the “Jim-nasium”) were added. Dad designed each segment himself, his love of architecture evident whenever a new addition was in the works. The resulting building is an interesting mix of home and business – unique angles, passages, and connections. First-time visitors often feel they are walking through a maze.



The plaque outside Jim’s studio in Jackson, WY.

As children, my brothers and I took full advantage of these qualities and played epic games of hide and seek. Sometimes, we would play a joke on the hider and go off to play outside while he was hiding. Meanwhile, the hider began thinking he had the ultimate hiding spot in some cramped space in the house.

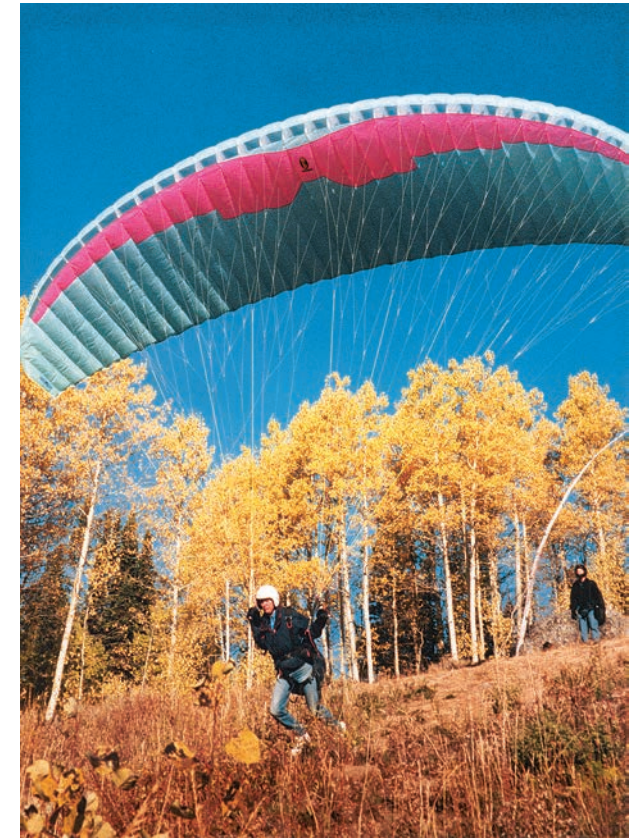
It wasn’t just these games we played. My siblings are all very close, tied together by family vacations and infinite ways to play together. Some people say they are grateful to their parents for teaching them how to work. We are grateful for the work ethic we learned, but we’re most grateful they taught us how to play. It comes naturally to a family whose father’s job consists of swimming or sitting under a tree in the most beautiful places on earth until the light is perfect for painting.

Dad even gets into adventure sports a little. For years he daydreamed of flying. He was always on

the lookout for something that would make him akin to eagles with their freedom and 360-degree views. He looked into piloting everything from a helicopter to a microlight without finding exactly what he was looking for. It was on a drive up Curtis Canyon near Jackson when he found his ticket to the skies – paragliding. He saw a man soaring above the hills. At first, he expected the man to land soon, thinking it was a parachute he was using. Dad soon realized the man wasn’t coming down on gravity’s terms. He waited there to speak with the pilot to find out what the sport was. Before long, Dad and his oldest son, Jeff, became certified paraglider pilots themselves. It is a sport that has since spread through much of the family. Jeff has even taken it upon himself to paint tiny hidden paragliders soaring over the Tetons into several of Dad’s paintings, some of which have been exhibited in museums.

Besides being a paraglider, Dad is also certified for SCUBA and loves to raft, kayak, and water ski. Gliding across or through the water is the next best thing to flying.

Dad’s penchant for play doesn’t mean he’s a stranger to hard work. In 1999, he released the Soltek Easel, a portable plein-air easel made from space-age materials. He spent eight intensive years designing



Jim launches his paraglider on Teton Pass to get a better view of fall.

the easel between painting commitments. The funny thing: he did it all because he’s lazy (ask him if you don’t believe me). He had always struggled with how difficult it was to haul around and set up his traditional French box easel.



Wilcox demonstrates the versatility of the Soltek Easel, which he designed and produced, by painting like Michaelangelo.



The designer in him was constantly striving to improve the situation. Ideas began to come to him on how an easel could be made better as early as the 1970s.

Armed with years of ideas, Dad set to work designing the Soltek in the early 1990s. What resulted was better than he imagined. It was lightweight, compact, quick to set up, versatile, and sturdy. Eight years after deciding he wanted to set up his easel in 20 seconds, he did – and it was very much his easel. Since then, thousands of Soltek Easels have been sold worldwide. Keeping with the family business theme, his son Todd now runs Soltek Easel.

### THE BIG PICTURE

Dad is not content to wallow in a single career path. However, every career path he has chosen he excels in. He equally manages to be left brained and right brained, allowing him to be both an engineer and an architect on one side and an artist and a perpetual tourist on the other.

Looking at his career accomplishments in a compacted list becomes a somewhat surprising exercise:

### CHRONOLOGY

1967 thru 1969: Teaches high school art in Bothell, WA.

1969: Opens Highlight Gallery in Jackson Hole as salesman and artist.

1970: Opens Four Seasons Gallery in better location.

1973 to 1974: Designs, builds, and opens the Wilcox Gallery north of Jackson as a unique combination of home and business.

1978: Sells Four Seasons Gallery as Wilcox Gallery proves it can be successful.

1978: Designs and adds on the main gallery addition to his home/business. This makes the Wilcox Gallery Jackson's largest gallery.

1980s: Designs and builds a working prototype of a folding bike with his own constantly variable gear system and reciprocating pedals.

1986: Wins his first major award from the Western Rendezvous of Art.

1987: Wins the Prix de West Award with "Three Last Minutes of Glory."

Late 1980s thru 1990s: Wins an unprecedented seven awards from the National Arts for the Parks exhibition.

1990: Establishes the Jackson Hole Art Academy to teach workshops in Jackson Hole.

1990s: Begins design of what becomes the Soltek Easel.

1994: Wins the \$50,000 grand prize from the National Arts for the Parks Show.

1999: Puts the Soltek Easel on the market.

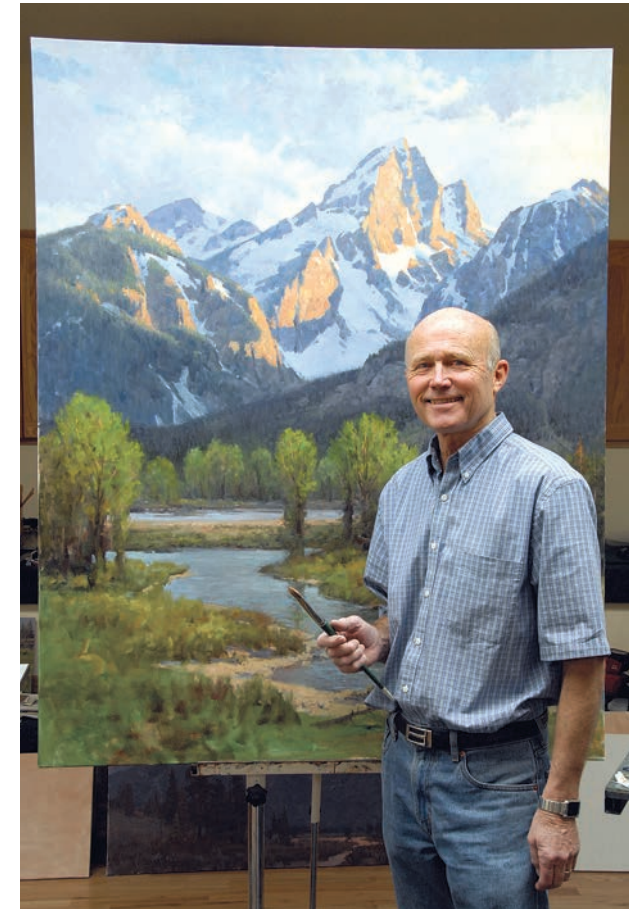
2001: Jim participates in the Gilcrease Museum's four-man Rendezvous Show, where 47 of his paintings are on sale and display.

2002 and 2007: Wins the Frederic Remington Award at the Prix de West Show.

2004: Publishes the "Artist's Book of Excuses" working in conjunction with illustrator John Potter and Narda, who really made it happen.

2006: Releases "Painting from the Outside In" and "When You Can't Paint Out," his two instructional DVDs.

2006 to 2007: Wins six major awards from five consecutive major shows.



Jim at his studio easel finishing up "Season of Renewal," (pg. 161).

Looking at this list, not only do you get a good idea of how entrepreneurial Dad's life is, but you also notice an acceleration in the quality and frequency of his achievements. To me, that shows that while some men speed toward retirement, he is speeding away from it, always filling his plate with more worthwhile projects than he can handle. Dad's the busiest lazy man I'll ever know.

Even seeing his major career accomplishments doesn't quite show what his life is about. His career is not synonymous with his life. Venturing outside of those accomplishments provides a wider view: Dad served a 2 ½ year mission in Uruguay for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of 19, graduated from Brigham Young University with an art degree, married way out of his league, raised seven





Jim bids farewell to a perfect day in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

children, has 15 grandchildren, and continues to be active and offer service within his church.

Dad's optimism, friendliness, and sense of humor keep him chugging along through all the obstacles he comes across. As a shy, introspective child, I remember feeling embarrassed whenever Dad would make friends with random strangers in a restaurant, in the park, or wherever else he happened to run across someone he didn't know. Now I find myself doing the same sort of thing, and it embarrasses my wife.

I know how she feels.

### CONCLUSION

The funny thing about art is that it creeps up on you. I grew up in the unusual circumstance that it was not uncommon for me to meet some of the world's best artists. A lot of the people calling me a hyperactive child were many artists' heroes. I took it for granted. I grew up in a beautiful gallery. I took art for granted. I grew up with an artist for a father. I took his talent for granted.

It wasn't until I left home and began to experience what other people called art that I realized I grew up with something special. This point was driven home even more when I returned to Jackson to work in the gallery myself. I began to see people getting excited about Dad's artwork. People often expressed surprise when I told them I know the artists I know. I began to realize how special our setup was. As a kid, having the Wilcox Gallery downstairs from the house only meant that I got in trouble if I chased a brother around during gallery hours. With hindsight firmly in place, I can see what a great set of circumstances I grew up with – a gorgeous valley to live in, an incredible gallery beneath my feet, and an amazing artist for my father.

In short, art crept up on me. Now, hardly a day passes when I don't check to see what Dad has on his easel. I love to watch him paint – to see how he combines images or strengthens Mother Nature's compositions. One of his paintings was even called "Narda's Lake," because Mom told him there needed

to be some water in the foreground to strengthen the painting. She was right, as she often is, so he named the fictional lake after her.

And the thing that floors me is how effortless he makes it look. I once watched him paint a wave onto an otherwise flat ocean. With a few deft strokes, the wave took on a dimensional quality that mirrored life while adding a compositional element that was needed to perfect the scene.

Being around someone who can do that, you begin to think you should be able to do it just as well. That, coupled with the fact that the number one question I get from clients is, "Are you an artist, too?" made me think I at least needed to try. So finally, my wife and I borrowed some of Dad's paints and brushes and went on a painting date. I mixed my paints while looking at a sunset on Schwabacher Landing and painted the outline of the mountains. I felt pretty good about it – the outline actually looked like the Tetons.

The problems came when I began to fill the rest of the canvas with paint. I couldn't mix a color right, I couldn't figure out how to make the water transparent, my foreground looked like a mottled heart attack, my spring aspens wound up a hideous orangey green, and my sky was a dark morass of nastiness. My wife met with slightly more success than I did, but I was finally forced to add a big smiley-faced sun over the mountains to try and convince myself it was a kindergarten art project gone wrong.

My respect for what Dad does shot through the roof that day. It was the reminder that I should stick to selling paint rather than spreading it on a canvas. Growing up with art does not make one an artist, though in the long run it has helped me recognize good art.

I think I'll leave the brushes in Dad's capable hands where they belong.

The art world ought to thank me for it.







# MAJOR AWARDS

“A medal glitters, but it also casts a shadow.”

– *Winston Churchill*

## MAJOR AWARDS

### A BOLSTERING EFFECT

“Starving artist” is a common term. Many young artists choose this field idealistically and find they have a hard time paying the bills. In fact, my wife’s parents were somewhat skeptical of my own ability to support their daughter and our growing family.

Awards are often what make it possible for an obscure talented artist to become something more. With major awards, a struggling artist sometimes overnight becomes comfortable and recognized. It is these public accomplishments that can move an artist past the invisible barriers imposed by the label “starving artist.”

Besides the public attention that comes from these awards, it becomes a personal milestone. Not only does an artist’s sometimes faltering ego gain a much-needed boost, but this can spur the artist into even greater accomplishments.

### POTENTIAL PITFALLS

The reverse can also be true. It can become a matter of providing “proof” that one was worthy of an award, which can lead to a case of trying too hard to please. When an artist is extrinsically motivated by awards or monetary rewards, sometimes the reason he began painting to begin with gets sidelined, and his best work may suffer for a time.

For this reason, major awards can become a pitfall as well as a boost to the artist. Juries aren’t perfect. There are many awards in the following pages that easily could have and perhaps should have gone to other deserving artists. Being aware that the award could have gone to anyone (sometimes depending on the weather or what the jurors had for breakfast) keeps artistic ego in check while still allowing a proper appreciation and healthy pride in the accomplishment itself.

That said, I can honestly and appreciatively say that the awards that follow changed my life and my career.

### *Cottonwood Creek Blaze*

36” x 60”

1986

#### **Award**

Winner of the 1986 Merit Award from the Northwest Rendezvous of Art in Helena, MT.

**Location** Cottonwood Creek, Grand Teton National Park, WY.

#### **From the Artist**

The Cottonwood Creek Blaze combined nature’s fireworks with a favorite view of the Tetons. The fire renewed the area and at the same time made a stunning show for many who stopped to watch.

One night, my wife and I parked our car in a line with many other locals and watched the sparks fly underneath the Tetons. We were in awe of the beauty and yet worried by the implications of the fire at the same time. We thought our view might never be the same.

Since the blaze, we have learned of the renewing power of nature. Our family frequently hikes into Taggart Lake, where we have been pleased to watch a new forest spring up in place of blistered and charred earth. These young trees now dwarf every member of the family, including the 6 ½ footers among us.

When I painted this, I had recently been welcomed in as a full member of the Northwest Rendezvous Group in Helena, MT. I was rewarded with this Merit Award, which was my first “real” award from any major show. With it, I was able to cross one of those invisible barriers that so many artists face.

Initially, I had planned to do a night scene with the fire, but it seemed as though the mountains should be more visible and important, so it became dusk instead.













***Three Last Minutes of Glory***

36" x 60"

1987

**Award**

Winner of the 1987 Prix de West Award at the National Academy of Western Art (now the Prix de West Show) at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, OK. Now part of their permanent collection.

**Location** Sheep Mountain (Sleeping Indian) across the National Elk Refuge from my studio in Jackson, WY.

**From the Artist**

I believe that God occasionally gives us a painting that just falls into place and is beyond our current capability. Such was the case with this painting. It was one of those special cases where the painting falls off the brush.

In 1977, one of my paintings was rejected from the NAWA show for having competing subject matter. So in 1987 I set out to make sure there was a single definitive subject in my main painting. Our home sits across the valley from Sheep Mountain (the Sleeping Indian), and I had watched countless sunsets from the dinner table. Watching these sunsets, I recognized they had one subject alone: the blaze of light hitting the cliffs making up the Sleeping Indian. When I painted the scene, I further subdued the foreground and sky to make the mountain stand out as the star of the painting.

The Prix de West Award has changed the lives of artists who had much more experience than I had at the time. It changed mine, too. A special award can create a bit of a tailspin and an updraft at the same time. I have been grateful to feel both.



***Summer of the Red Sun***

18" x 24"

1989

**Award**

Winner of the 1989 Merit Award from the Northwest Rendezvous of Art in Helena, MT.

**Location** Yellowstone National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

When much of Yellowstone Park was burning, the sun was often a red orb in a leaden sky. While I didn't see the red sun and this spectacular area near the mudpots together, I combined them because the combination seemed logical and striking. One of the great advantages we have with a paintbrush is the ability to move things around. It is easy, and it can result in wonderful combinations that no one, including the artist, has ever seen.



***Fall Aspen at Willow Flats***

20" x 30"

1990

**Award**

Winner of the Wyoming Centennial Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Willow Flats in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

No matter how many times I see it, fall color always leaves me more than a little bit awestruck. Some have suggested that artists should avoid painting obviously spectacular subjects. While I applaud excellent portrayals of the mundane (which I sometimes attempt myself), I disagree. Why should we ignore beauty just because we find it easy to notice? It would be a shame if no artist painted pretty girls, flowers, the Taj Mahal, or the elegantly beautiful mountains and canyons that cover the earth.





***Receding Winter at Taggart Lake***

20" x 30"

1990

**Award**

Winner of the 1990 Region III Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Taggart Lake in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

When I began this painting, I was determined to make every stroke one that wouldn't need to be modified. I wanted to have an obvious focal point with the greatest value contrasts, strongest colors, and most interesting parts all in the same place. It was initially painted in a day, but it was so close to being the very best I was capable of painting that I convinced myself it needed two more days of slight modifications.

One of the beauties of the Taggart Lake outlet is all of the logs, sticks, and stones under the water. They became a subtle but important part of this painting







***A New Day***

20" x 30"

1993

**Award**

Winner of the 1993 Region III Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Sunrise tips the mountains with color that gradually spreads downward, losing intensity as it progresses. It is always worth getting up early to witness the transformation.





### ***Eagle's View***

24" x 24"

1993

#### **Award**

Winner of the Grand Teton National Park Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Above Oxbow Bend in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

#### **From the Artist**

Not being blessed with wings or a plane, I painted this painting with the help of a topographical map. I later flew over this very spot and found the painting to be reasonably accurate, except the Oxbow Bend (loop in the river) should have been larger, even at this distance.

In 1996, I became a certified paraglider pilot. Paragliding allows me to have an "Eagle's View" of the areas I love to paint. Unfortunately, you can't take off or land within Grand Teton National Park. That makes it difficult to get this particular view from a wing with no motor. Though paragliding is the closest to wings I'll ever have, it would still be nice to have the wings of an eagle without sharing its diet.





***Home of the Beaver***

20" x 30"

1994

**Award**

Winner of the \$50,000 Grand Prize in the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Small beaver pond on Signal Mountain in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

The year I entered this painting in the Arts for the Parks contest, it was the only one of my four entries that was made part of the Top 100 in the show. Since that was the poorest percentage of acceptance my work had received in that exhibition, I thought the judges, who changed each year, just didn't care for my work very much. I was certain there would be no awards for me that year – I was \$50,000 wrong, much to my delight.

Here is a case of a subject that is noticeably less striking than many others, yet it still turned out all right.







***Sparkle of Spring***

20" x 30"

1996

**Award**

Winner of the 1996 Region III Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Near Blacktail Ponds Overlook in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

The abstract patterns found so often in a meandering river are constantly changing, and they can be recorded as is or modified for design reasons. I took some liberties with them in "Sparkle of Spring." I believe it is the artist's duty to try to make the best painting possible, which often requires some changes – not to better nature, but to better the painting.





***Jewel of the Valley***

16" x 20"

1996

**Award**

Winner of the 1996 Jurors' Choice Award from the National Arts for the Parks Show in Jackson, WY.

**Location** Yellowstone National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

The many hot springs of Yellowstone's thermal areas are among the most colorful and jewel-like subjects I know. The contrast with rough calcium deposits and varicolored algae adds to their beauty.











***Canyon Frosting (Opposite)***

30" x 36"

2001

**Award**

Winner of the William Weiss Purchase Award from the Buffalo Bill Museum's Art Show in Cody, WY. Now part of the museum's permanent collection.

**Location** Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and Lower Falls in Yellowstone National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Yellowstone Canyon is neither as vast nor as well organized as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, but it is equally colorful and exciting, and winter makes it more so.

***The Fifth Season (Right)***

48" x 36"

2002

**Award**

Winner of the 2002 Frederic Remington Award from the Prix de West Show at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, OK.

**Location** Outlet of Taggart Lake in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

"The Fifth Season" occurs between winter and spring, when the change of seasons is releasing the streams and lakes from their icy winter home. The sun's return warms the air and the soul as it enhances colors and increases comfort and opportunities. I have found that it is the best time to paint winter outdoors – you can sometimes paint plein air in this "Fifth Season" in a short sleeve shirt while standing atop four feet of snow.

I had done a 16" x 12" study of this painting which I immediately removed from my gallery and placed in the Jim Wilcox Permanent Collection when I found out the large version won the Frederic Remington Award.





**Granite and Crystal (Below)**

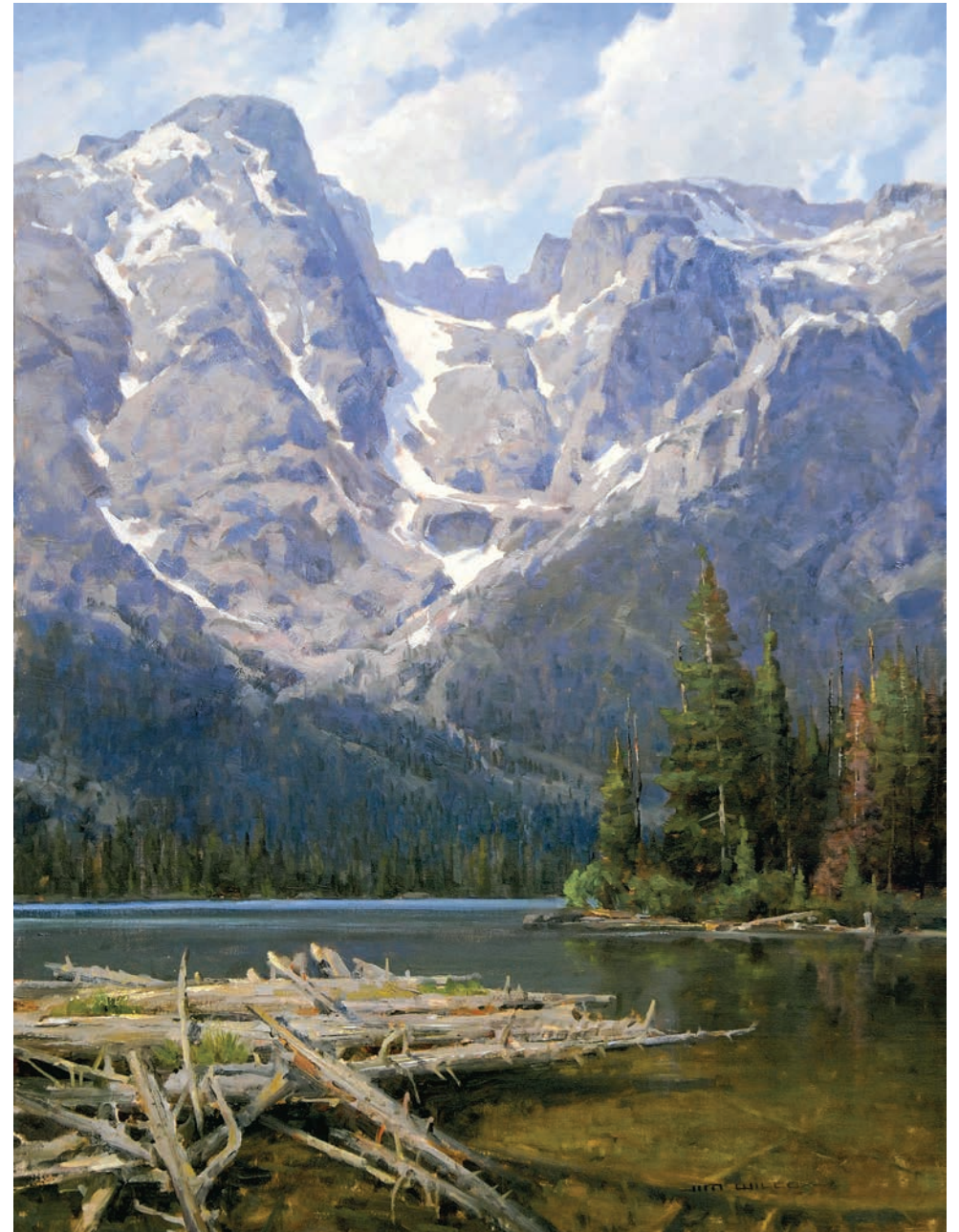
40" x 30"

2006

**Location** String Lake in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Below is the studio painting from my instructional DVD, "Painting from the Outside In." This illustrates how changing snow patterns can make the same location feel unique. While the painting on the opposite page was done in June, this one portrays July, and the mountains have disparate personalities in each. These "unchanging" mountains change constantly, making for fresh subject matter every time I paint them.



**Hanging Canyon (Opposite)**

30" x 24"

2003

**Award**

Winner of the 2003 Artists' Choice Award from the Buffalo Bill Museum's Art Show in Cody, WY.

**Location** String Lake in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Home of elegant snow patterns, especially in the spring, this previously unnamed hanging canyon (I adopted it and call it Wilcox Canyon) perches high above String Lake. It is a spot that begs to be painted periodically, and is also the subject for the paintings in my first instructional DVD "Painting from the Outside In" (*seen to the right*).







**Winter Frosting (Opposite)**

30" x 48"

2006

**Award**

Winner of both the 2006 People's Choice Award and an Award of Merit from the Western Rendezvous of Art.

**Location** Gros Ventre River in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Influenced by the painting I did in my second instructional DVD, "When You Can't Paint Out," (*seen to the right*) as well as by several photos that all made contributions to the final result, this view of a frosted winter wonderland shows how beautiful our world can be when temperatures are a bit extreme. I like to observe and photograph this kind of subject and then return to my 70-degree studio to paint it. Digital photography makes it possible to begin a painting in my studio ten minutes after I study it on location.

**Fifth Season Frost (Below)**

20" x 30"

2006

**Location** Gros Ventre River in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

This is the studio painting I did for my instructional DVD "When You Can't Paint Out." I felt this painting needed to be done larger when I painted it, and that's how the second one came to be. When you paint larger, you can achieve effects that might not be possible on a smaller scale. Besides, it's just more impressive to see a sizeable painting.

Notice the similarities and differences between this and "Winter Frosting" on the opposite page. I strive to never reproduce a painting for the sake of reproduction, but make each painting an individual with elements all its own.









***A Frosty Sunrise***

24" x 30"

2006

**Award**

Winner of the 2006 Artists' Choice Award from the Buffalo Bill Museum's Art Show in Cody, WY.

**Location** Gros Ventre River in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Graceful curves of the river can combine with the lacy patterns of frosty decorations to outclass any man-made decorations I have ever seen.

When you have good subject material, you use it. The photographs for these frosty sunrise photographs mostly came from a single morning. My son Eric was on his way to work early that morning and woke me up with a phone call to tell me I needed to see the Gros Ventre River and the hoar frost on the trees.

He was right.

That morning's wake-up call has provided material for two award winners, an instructional DVD, several other show pieces, and more to come.











***Reflections of a Perfect Day (Opposite)***

48" x 72"

2007

**Award**

Winner of the 2007 Southwest Art Award at the Autry Museum's Masters of the American West Show

**Location** Heron Pond in Grand Teton National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Some spots are so perfectly designed and organized that I can think of no way to improve them at all, even to make a better painting. This is one of those spots. During outings on our boat, and sometimes on hikes, I stop at Heron Pond and Half Moon Bay to paint. If my paintings of this area seem more similar to each other than most of the spots I often return to, it is because of the perfection of the spot.

***Fiery Farewell (Right)***

48" x 36"

2007

**Award**

Winner of the 2007 Frederic Remington Award from the Prix de West Show at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, OK.

**Location** Yellowstone River in Yellowstone National Park, WY.

**From the Artist**

Done from a small photograph taken during the Yellowstone fires of 1988, I didn't see a painting in the photo until last year, when the combination of the singing sun and the design of the trees screamed, "Paint me!"

I'm glad I listened.

If I can make the viewer squint because of the intense light in a painting, I feel extremely successful and pleased. After I painted the sun into this one, I felt like I needed a brimmed hat so I could shield my eyes. I grinned while painting the balance of the painting.











***Winter Glow***

24" x 48"

2007

**Award**

Winner of the 2007 Award of Merit from the Western Rendezvous of Art in Helena, MT.

**Location** Sleeping Indian (Sheep Mountain) in Jackson Hole, WY.

**From the Artist**

We can see the Sleeping Indian from our home and gallery that overlooks the National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole, WY. Even after living in this house for 34 years, I never look across the meadow without feeling a surge of gratitude for the beautiful world God made for us, and for our good fortune to be able to enjoy it so thoroughly and so often. My family and I never tire of the multiple moods this mountain has to offer.

Plus I get voluntary royalties in the form of chocolate from a good artist friend whenever he sells a painting of "my mountain."





*GENERATIONS:*

*Light and shadow dance around each other in the quiet of the forest, each respecting, then overtaking, the other's space. Moments like this are the stuff of fairy tales, speaking of the past and the future in a single breath. In a beautiful cycle, past generations of forest patriarchs become the fuel for the next. We could learn a lot from the silent wisdom of the forest.*

*— JIM WILCOX*

ISBN 978-1-60643-177-1

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US \$95.00