



**By Carolyn Lee**

***The Imperial Republican***

A reluctance to split up her paintings among family members at this time has led to a new endeavor for Lee Moreland of Imperial. Her watercolors are now featured on note cards that the public may also enjoy.

Moreland, 84, began painting in watercolors when she was 65.

"I always thought it would be fun to know how to do," she explained of her later-in-life endeavor. "I couldn't put two sticks together" before.

At the urging of friend Gladys Hoffmeister, she attended a seminar on painting. "I was so intimidated because there were kids in first and second grade who could draw better than me," she laughed.

Moreland was drawing and then painting a vase with a rose in it. Moreland was about to throw it away in disgust when the teacher, Muschie Mues, held it up as a good example.

Moreland began taking classes from Mues, driving 100 miles one way to Holbrook for instruction. She and Mues would eat breakfast at Barney's Cafe in Holbrook, leading to one of her first watercolors, a painting of four men gathered around a table in the cafe. That painting is one of daughter Patty Schoenfelder's favorites.

"You've got that guy looking pretty big," Mues said of one of the men. Moreland replied that he was that big. "We hit it off and had a good time," Moreland said of Mues.

Since then Moreland has painted an enormous amount of subject matter. Some of her favorites are flowers and scenery. Many times she takes a picture of something she'd like to paint, then paints at home.

"I don't like bugs and heat," she laughed. "I get too distracted" while painting outdoors. "I like to be in a little place."

She also said painting from a photograph keeps her dimensions accurate. Once, however, husband Gene had to help her get a roof line straightened out in a painting. He draws, too.

Many paintings are taken from pictures of trips the Morelands have taken. They've visited 26 countries during their life together.

The Moreland home walls are filled with her work. There's a painting of a "scraggly tree" that she saw in a National Geographic magazine that she liked.

Gene's favorite painting is one of the Frenchman River. Lee's is "Rushing River," which won a first at a show. Moreland has exhibited with the McCook Art Guild, at Champion Mill, at McCook Community College, the Lied Imperial Public Library and more.

She's modest about the number of awards she's received, claiming she doesn't know how many she has.

Moreland has sold some of her paintings. One was even sold when a customer at Moreland Realty in Imperial, son and daughter-in-law Mike and Jane Moreland's business, noticed it in the firm's restroom.

The note card idea was Schoenfelder's and sister, Kerry German's of Cozad. "This way she can share them and we can have them in our homes. They're so perfect and beautiful," Schoenfelder said.

There are 12 different cards available for sale at present. They are packaged in sets of six, and there are also two different variety packs.

They're sold at Fine Things Jewelry and Gifts for \$7.50 a pack. A web site is also being set up, and Schoenfelder said she's also done some mailings.

She plans to reproduce more of her mother's paintings, such as the ones unframed and stacked along the walls in the basement.

"I'd better get started painting again, hadn't I?" Moreland laughed.