

To those who are supporters of Jim's Legacy work:

From Alex Hamil - Jim's youngest son

My father was fortunate to have blossomed into one of those rare success stories. It required a life-long commitment to his craft in studio art after leaving a 15 year tenure at Hallmark back in the early 70's. Numerous publications of his original watercolor works and the prints that followed (and there are still so many..), serve to remind others of what it means to be dedicated to one's passion. As a regionally recognized watercolor artist, Dad's love for the Midwest reflected in his countless works for this place he called home.

Dad was always there to provide his wisdom and his sense of professionalism to fellow artists. According to fellow artist and curator at Buttonwood Art Space, Jamie Lavin, "He (Jim) was Kansas City Royalty, but enjoyed belonging to us all. He gave artists true hope. His life was an inspiration; his work, a benediction." I couldn't have said it better, myself.

BIOGRAPHY (updated 12/30/2022)

JR "Jim" Hamil first became a resident of Kansas when the family moved from St. Louis in 1951. Jim's father, J. Harold Hamil, took a position with then Consumers Cooperative (eventually Farmland Industries) as a Senior Vice President of Communications. Jim attended Shawnee Mission (now North) High School. Upon graduation in 1954, at 16 years of age, Jim was proud to say he was the youngest senior graduate from Shawnee Mission until that time.

At 17 Jim headed to KU, with the initial goal of being an arts educator, but quickly shifted his graduation plans in order to focus more on commercial art; effectively supporting his tuition during his 4-years at KU by illustrating over 35 original pen and ink works and multiple prints of various KU landmarks including (a) then KU Student Union and the original Frasier Hall. ([50 Years of KU](#))

Immediately after graduating KU in 1958 with a BFA in Visual Communications, after a short interview and review of his collegiate portfolio, Jim was offered a position at Hallmark Cards as a 'stylist' and for over the next 15 years he would create nearly 200 published watercolor illustrations for cards, books, wrapping paper and advertising illustrations for the company. Jim was already building his reputation with the public through corporate commissions, participating in various regional art fairs and consigning with galleries across the region. There were numerous opportunities for travel and study while at Hallmark, including California, New York, Spain and France that prepared him for a travel adventure that spanned from the Canadian to the Mexico Borders. ([Time Served / A Watercolor Lesson for Eisenhower](#))

By 1973 Jim had firmly established his own studio practice in the backroom of a small gallery near 45th and State Line, a precursor to the former American Legacy Gallery. Over the next few years, along with his father, Harold, who was then shifting gears toward an elected position on the City Council, there would be multiple road trips as both were interested in developing an illustrated book of the rural Midwest that would be in part sponsored by Farmland Industries. Eventually the duo would publish "Farmland USA" (1975 Lowell Press). Their compilation of nearly 100 paintings and supportive captions by Harold sold over 15,000 copies soon after it's 2nd printing along with the

multiple thousands of lithographs of those original watercolors. This unique approach to generating lithographs made Jim's art more affordable to the average individual and along with the book's success would establish JR 'Jim' Hamil as a renowned regional watercolor artists. ([Farmland U.S.A.](#))

In 1977 Jim would marry Sharon Hide, my stepmother; the two built a studio on the back of their Prairie Village home and started work on a book of 100 original watercolors entitled "Return to Kansas" (1984 Southwind Press). Jim and Sharon would travel regularly to Colorado over the next several decades where they maintained a Steamboat Springs (CO) condominium Jim had co-purchased in 1974. While in Colorado, Jim would conduct and develop workshops, and approach to watercolor classes in addition to developing paintings from these 'working vacations' that would build content for their final book, "Colorado Treasures" which was eventually published in 2010 (Lowell Press).

(From 2009 Article) "On July 8, 2009, Jim experienced an Arterial Venous Malformation (AVM). Similar to a stroke, the AVM affected Jim's ability to walk, talk and function independently." Courtesy of the Rehabilitation Institute, Jim received physical, occupational and speech therapy to regain his lost abilities. Mostly having to work with his non-dominant hand, the numerous works that resulted certainly reflected his knowledge of the medium acquired in several decades of work. Over 30 original works remain in our collection for display.

Jim's accolades throughout his 60 year career as a studio artist started, while as an artist at Hallmark, in 1968 during the "7th Annual National 'Watercolor U.S.A.' Exhibition" at the Springfield, Mo., Art Museum. Of the 169 paintings accepted, Jim's painting won a \$250 prize from the Springfield Community Service league. Jim received the Kansas Governor's Visual Artist Award (1990) promoting his timeless watercolor "Flinthills Morning". Jim was judged the "American Royal Western Artist of the Year" (1992) and voted Kansas City's "Best Local Artist" in 2003 (Best of KC). Also in 2003, Jim was the recipient of the Johnson County Library Foundation's "Pinnacle Award for Excellence in the Arts".

Jim delivered well over 100 in-school presentations to elementary and high school students throughout his career. Countless commissions and donated original works to the communities surrounding his home were generated during Jim's studio career. Many of these works include framed prints and originals that are currently on display and for sale via our website in an effort at preserving his Legacy as one of the most well-recognized regional watercolorists of his time.

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ONLINE LINKS INCLUDE:

Jim's online presence can be found at jrhamilwatercolors.com.

A Watercolor Lesson for Eisenhower: <https://kcstudio.org/a-watercolor-lesson-for-eisenhower-and-a-memorable-day-for-kansas-city-artist-jim-hamil/>

Jim Hamil Obituary (1/14/2022): <https://www.kccremation.com/ObituaryDetails.aspx?id=35381>

Jim Hamil Highlights on KCUR: <https://www.kcur.org/arts-life/2022-01-16/artist-j-r-hamil-famous-for-his-watercolors-of-kansas-city-landmarks-dies-at-84?fbclid=IwAR1VzrZL3YVBxZ-Zy0I6GuSbUEDzIWeF8WJlyb2Y8ohwWJuFZqX52rrnmU>