

An Interview with Lone Citrin by David M. Cambridge

I read in your Portfolio that you are a native of Chicago. Now you live in California. How long did you live in Chicago? Why the move to California?

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and moved to Chicago when I was only a few months old. Because I've never visited Omaha since my birth, I guess we could say Chicago was my real home. I lived there until 1984 when I decided I needed a change of scenery. My husband died very tragically, and I couldn't bear the memories. I needed a fresh start, so "Go West Young Woman, Go West"....The land of "Milk and Honey". I picked Southern California because I went to school here, (Pasadena Playhouse), and began my acting career here, and loved it dearly then. This was a natural choice because of my familiarity with the area and the beautiful weather and surroundings. I started a whole new life here, fell in love again, (forever the romantic), remarried a widower, and happily discovered I could express myself in the visual arts besides the performing arts.

Your Portfolio also says that you are a "former television star." Can you tell us more about your involvement in TV?

After a career in films and television here in L.A., I moved back to Chicago when I married. Chicago had no "serious" film or television production, so I started doing radio and television commercials. I discovered I had a bent for various voices and impersonations, (a female version of Mel Blanc), and my voice-over career grew with these different voices, i.e., children, old ladies, cartoon characters, impersonations, etc. I did recordings of all types for radio, television, educational films, sales training films, etc. I also did jingles, and my voices ran on many network accounts for years. V-8, Kleenex, Raid, United Airlines, Secret, etc., etc.

You've also been in film, radio, and theatre. Please tell our readers how you were involved in these different activities and to what capacity. Were these separate careers that you pursued?

My television show was on the ABC local TV station, WLS-TV during 1969 through 1976. I was on live every morning, 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. as the kooky hostess of the morning movie; "Prize Movie with Lone". I still maintained my commercial recording sessions the rest of the day and continued to do my commercial work long after the show was replaced by "Good Morning America".

What was Prize Movie with Lone all about? How many years did it stay on the air?

It was a morning movie. It was number one in ratings for the seven years it was on the air. I was a "kooky" movie hostess. I did "shtick". I would do comedic take-offs on the movie, interviews with film stars either in person or on the phone, and there was a quiz game to guess a song which we played with callers. The show was live and very popular.

What made you decide to get into the visual arts?

I got into the visual arts after I moved to L.A. from Chicago. I was desperately looking for something to expend my energy on, and tried various endeavors from charity work to docent work to even office work, but nothing felt right. One day a friend invited me to her home to paint. She even offered me her supplies, since I was so reluctant. Upon her suggestion, I brought a picture of a landscape found in a magazine, and attempted to reproduce this photo. At the end of the long day, my paintings looked just like the picture. We were both shocked. I went back the next week with another picture, and the same thing happened again. Gee whiz! I'd found my calling!

That is extraordinary. Judging from some of your artwork the impression is that you're an expert who has been painting for many years. When you paint, do you ever consider subject and design or do you just let your imagination lose? What determines subject selection?

I let my imagination fly. I know I have to produce in a series of a minimum of 8 pieces, so if I begin a landscape, I know I will do seven more. The initial piece is the "prototype", so to speak. I let my imagination fly on the first piece, and the subsequent ones have definite ideas, or visualizations, and stem off of each other. I finish one and then I think, "Gee Whiz", a fall scene would look good after this, and so on.

So, you are really more like Gauguin than van Gogh; Gauguin painted in a symbolist style and frequently painted from imagination. Van Gogh, on the other hand, disliked working from his imagination, preferring to paint from nature. Do you paint entirely from the imagination or do you use pictures as reference?

I paint mostly from my imagination, however, if I'm doing traditional or representational work, then I will sketch it out or refer to photos. However, I don't stick exactly to the photos or sketches, I work with the piece, (painting or sculpture), creating as I go from the original idea.

Do you do all your pieces in series of 8? Why?

Sometimes I do them in a series of 6, sometimes more than 8. It seems galleries and publishing companies like to see a similar reoccurring theme throughout a body of work rather than a hodgepodge of different ideas.

Have you ever done plein air painting? Tell us about this experience.

Yes, I do plein air painting. I find it very difficult because of the set up and weather conditions, but I do do it. Mostly I like to photograph specific areas, bring the photos back to my studio, and elaborate of them. I'm very fair, and cannot take the sun.

Where does this strong urge of self-expression (to create art) originate, do you think? Were you brought up in a highly-charged artistic family?

My strong urge of self-expression has been my bent ever since I can remember. It's just the way I was born. I've always been "different". I've felt this difference my whole life, and have just recently begun to accept it and realize that that's what makes me "special" and able to have done the things I've done and continue to do.

I know we are all unique as individuals. Everybody has a certain talent. The question is, how does one know she has that talent or specific quality? How can a person achieve the point where she realizes she has this uniqueness and then exploit it? How did you do realize you had this personal talent?

It all stems from desire. If I like something, and it feels good to me and to others, I proceed with it. I don't like too many things, that's why when I fell in love with visual art, I knew I had a pathway. I'm very consistent once I get started on something. I loved performing at that time in my life, and proceeded with that course of endeavor for many years. Now, my creativity spans over to the visual arts.

Were your parents artists?

No, they were all just nuts. I come from an extremely dysfunctional family and have been self supporting since the age of 17. My success proves that hard, diligent, unwavering work and goal setting will win out. Talent is only 2%. The rest is determination and perspiration. I never wanted to be like my family, so I reinvented myself to where I envisioned.

Do you have any brothers and/or sisters?

No, I am the only child.

You seem to be a very multi-talented woman, having whet your appetite in the fore-mentioned performing arts and then plunging into painting, sculpture, collage, and perhaps other things, too. What came first for you, painting or sculpture?

Painting came first for me, as mentioned above. From paintings my curiosity and imagination forced me to go into collage, then into sculpture. I continue doing mixed media works, assemblage, collage, and work in all painting mediums; airbrush, oil, pastel, acrylic, watercolor. I love to draw. I love to make art. I shall make art forever.

What do you mean by "forced"? You were compelled, without a choice in the matter?

I believe when one is driven by an "inner force" to do something, it is their "bent", and they should follow their muse whatever that must be. To have a passion in life is all fulfilling and satisfying. I need to expel all these ideas and visions I have one way or another, and art is it for me at this juncture.

How old are you now, lone?

65, (ye gads!)

And I'm assuming out of all these mediums you don't have a preference?

I have no preference. Each medium brings out something new and different to me. Each one is special in its own right. Everything is wonderful.

Do you paint big or small? What is the preferred size of the paintings that you do?

30" X 40" seems to be a good size for me. Nothing smaller than 24" X 28". However, I hope to go into murals one day or very, very large paintings. But right now, the largest I've ever done is 90" X 40".

How difficult is it working in Air Brush? What tools do you use?

Air Brush is a royal pain to learn to operate and be creative with. Once you learn it, it can produce beautiful effects. I use the IWATA HC airbrush, and incorporate it within whatever medium I'm using. I find it most effective with watercolor or acrylic, but will shoot oil paint through it when I want that effect in a particular oil painting. I will not do an entire painting with air brush. I want my brush strokes to show, air brush has a "commercial" feel to it when an entire piece is done with it, so I use it only for "special effects".

Judging from your vast experience both in the performing and visual arts, one is lead to the conclusion that you must have had an extensive, academic arts education. Is this so? Which arts institutions did you attend?

I am self taught. I occasionally take workshops and/or individual classes when I desire to learn something specific. Otherwise, I just plunge in, go for it, fly by the seat of my pants, etc., etc. I'm signed up for a welding class at Otis this summer. I have a desire to work in metal and need to learn welding. Everything in art interests me. I feel like a kid in a candy store.

That is a great attitude. But wouldn't the saying, "jack of all trades master of none" apply here? How could you master any one medium, for example, if you use so many? On the other hand, painters of several hundred years ago did use many mediums and were, in fact, encouraged by their mentors to dabble in as many aspects of the arts as possible.

I don't follow any "saying". I dance to my own drummer. I enjoy various mediums. Each one is a challenge within itself. Each one brings out something different in my work. I use each one for various projects. I find oil very wonderful for traditional, representational work, whereas the mixed media and acrylics are better for abstract work. Pastels are great for portraits and soft, soft landscapes or florals., etc., etc.

Who have you taken workshops and individual classes from? What are the names of the instructors?

Brentwood Art School, Bob Cunningham Sculpture School, Santa Monica City College Art Classes.

Have you benefitted from these experiences or was it all a waste of time?

I've benefited from everything I've ever done.

You've been to India, Africa, Asia, Europe, and other countries. Can you tell us a bit about your world travels? Why have you travelled so much? Is your travel experience always related to the performing and/or visual arts, or....?

I began traveling with my first husband when my TV show went off the air. Plenty of money. No kids; tired of doing the commercial work; hated the Chicago winters; so we left for many months following our muse all over the world. I think I've been almost everywhere at this point. With my new husband I continue to travel. However, I don't have that lust for travel anymore. I'm afraid with all the terrorism, etc. It's just not safe anymore, and since my thirst was satisfied, I don't have that strong desire, especially for third world countries. So, I recreate my experiences through my art.

Can you share anything your world travels have taught you? Any significant insights on the state of humanity?

Yes. Human beings are wonderful the world round. Smile and they will respond. I've never met any of the stereotypes of the various peoples around the world, and so I believe everyone operates on the same needs and desires as I do. I want respect, firstly. I try to give everyone that simple honor, and they respond accordingly.

I cannot figure out how the world has gotten into such ugliness, wars, torture, terrorism, murder, genocide, etc. I guess homos apiens are capable of tremendous good and evil. Greedy governments and politicians chart the murderous course of history, but the basic peoples of the world are lovely, kind individuals. If they are mean, it's because they have mental problems and cannot adjust. Remember that "awful person" was someone's infant, just like you.