

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: MAE BARKLEY

Walk into her home on B-2 and you'll think you're in an artist's studio—as indeed you are. That's because Treemont resident Mae Barkley has been deeply involved in art of all kinds since early childhood. Her paintings line the walls and her sculptures fill the window sills, while the books and artifacts on her tables reflect her varied interests.

Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mae at an early age showed remarkable artistic talents, which her parents wisely recognized and rewarded with the best art teachers available. At the age of 8 she was enrolled in an adult art class, where her works sometimes excelled over the adult class efforts. She laughs over one memory of working with a nude model. Too shy and embarrassed to lift her eyes above the model's feet she concentrated on painting just one big toe, and won the award for "originality and careful detail."

After graduating from Louisiana State University, Mae continued her education at the Traphagen School of Fashion Design in New York City. In her twenties she met and married a young geologist named Stewart Barkley and embarked on a married life of travel and adventure far from Baton Rouge.

They began married life in Venezuela, and three large oil paintings hanging over her sofa today reflect the breath-taking beauty and at the same time the isolation and loneliness she must have undergone as a bride. One is of a nearby village with narrow streets and colorful tile roofs, but the other two show the view from her windows of mountain after mountain, with not another house in sight. Always resourceful, she saw a need and filled it by starting the first English-language newspaper in her area, the CARACAS JOURNAL.

From Venezuela they moved to Portugal, and then to Mexico City. In Mexico she had the privilege of working with the

socially controversial but artistically gifted artist Diego Rivera on the twenty-foot mural he had been commissioned to paint at the Mexico City Airport. She also developed her gifts as a sculptor. A striking example of her work of that genre is a giant grasshopper showing every whisker and muscle and cast in bright brass.

Tragedy invaded her life when their one child was two years old. At age 41 her husband Stewart suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died instantly. Asked how she endured such pain after only twelve years of marriage, she replies simply, "I've always been a woman of faith, and I prayed a lot."

Moved by her own need for adult contacts as well as the necessity of filling the financial void left by her husband's untimely death, Mae turned back to her Traphagen roots in fashion design and began an advertising agency to provide art work for newspaper ads for stores like Neiman-Marcus and Everett-Beulow along with other major accounts.

Coming to Treemont six years ago, she has found pleasure, contentment and delight here. Asked what she enjoys most about being here she instantly says "being near my son and his wife and college-coed daughter" and "the loveliness of Treemont itself—its beauty and convenience, and especially the warmth and friendliness of the staff and residents."

Nor does her artistry lie dormant. Even with limited space she still manages to write and illustrate children's books! She also does small sculptures including classical adult figures, with some whimsical ones as well revealing her versatility and humor.

The Treemont Tattler salutes Mae Barkley, a southern lady with a sweet smile, delightful sense of humor, and a true gift and love for art.

Lois McCall