

Retirement Can Bring Fulfilling Years

Former Engineer Does Research On Glazes

By MILDRED ANN SMITH
Sentinel Women's Editor

Retirement is what you make it—it can be a time of withdrawal from the main stream of life or exciting and fulfilling years.

The Fred Hamiltons of Monterey Bay Heights subscribe to the latter premise and there never are enough hours in their busy days.

A retired mechanical engineer with a life-long interest in art, F. W. K. Hamilton has been a full-time student at San Jose State College for the past 10 years and during that time has taken every course offered in art and ceramics. Because of his research on crystal glazes, he now is a consultant in the ceramics department.

His wife, Celia, a nurse for 30 years, also is an artist with more and more honors coming her way.

Hamilton says he did his

first painting at the age of 5, perhaps following in the footsteps of his great-great-grandfather, an artist of note in Virginia.

However he also leaned towards mathematics and science and, in training to be a mechanical engineer, attended Stevens Institute of Technology, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Columbia University and MIT. Following college, he spent 35 years with a major oil company, retiring as a senior engineer in 1955.

Looking ahead to his retirement years, and with an increasing interest in art, Hamilton began attending night school at California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco.

A crystal glaze pot done by Dr. Herbert H. Sanders, head of the ceramics department at San Jose State, sparked Hamilton's interest in crystal glazes.

"I was intrigued with the how, the why, the what and the where," he recalls, "and began delving into its history."

And the history is lengthy, with the first use of crystal glazes lost in antiquity, although it is known that the Chinese were the innovators.

The art was taken up by the French when Royal Porcelain was made in Sevres around 1700 and Hamilton was interested to learn that one of his ancestors on his mother's side was technical director of this factory which was subsidized by the French crown.

The long and difficult method used when he began working with crystal glazes was to turn soluble materi-

Calculator is useful tool when Fred Hamilton figures mathematical formulas during research on crystal glazes. At right, examples of retired mechanical engineer's ceramic art are decorative addition to divider which separates dining and living area of Hamilton home in Monterey Bay Heights. Included are hand-thrown pottery and porcelain as well as vases with crystal glazes. A display of his glazed pots will be in the Main Library foyer through September.

Formulas used by craftsmen in creating crystal glazes are available, he notes, but not available are the firing schedules which he says are of prime importance.

Because the firing technique is so important, Hamilton wrote his own specifications for his kiln which is electrically fired. He says he has absolute control of the temperature—something that has never been done before.

pots which have a translucent quality.

In developing the mathematical formulas for his glazes which he works out in molecules (altogether he has 57 workable formulas but works mainly with 10) he saves time by using a calculator.

The finished products are outstanding, even though he says he is still perfecting his technique. From cobalt he gets blue; from copper—

ple, and from rutile—gold or brown.

One of his prize pieces is a pillow vase which has blue, green and pink crystals, done in one firing, and all a part of the same glaze.

In addition to crystal glazes he also is working on copper red glazes and agate glazes.

Hamilton formerly painted too, but now he's leaving that to his wife. He says he has enough to keep him

From Nurse To Artist

While her husband, Fred W. K. Hamilton, works with his ceramics, Celia Hamilton is busy with painting or with her serigraphs.

Celia Hamilton, a registered nurse for 30 years, actually attended Chicago Art Institute for two years before entering nurses training.

"You might say I was a sparetime artist," she says.

Following World War II when she served as an Army nurse, she returned to the Chicago Art Institute, graduating in 1949.

Mrs. Hamilton also studied art at San Jose State and Chico State Colleges as well as with many outstanding artists, including Richard Yip and John Gill.

She has had exhibits at Chico State College, Los Gatos Art Association, Santa Clara Artists Guild, the Aptos Art Gallery and at the Rob Roy Gallery, with which she is affiliated.

She has won awards in juried shows in Chico and Los Gatos, last year received the first award and "best of show" at the Santa Cruz County Fair and this spring took an honorable mention with a serigraph in the Santa Cruz Art League's State-wide Show.

Each of the Hamiltons has a studio at their attractive home on Jigger Drive. Following a morning of concentrated work, they share their luncheon and their interest in birds by watching the flocks which come to feast on the suet always waiting for them in the branches of the pine tree right by their dining room window.

The Hamiltons take their bird watching hobby seriously enough to have purchased a book on California birds so that they can identify their visitors. And they were elated the day that I was there to welcome pigmy



Serigraphs, art form created with the silk screen process, hang on clothesline to dry in Artist Celia Hamilton's studio. Mrs. Hamilton also paints in oils but enjoys doing the serigraphs which take a number of stencils. This particular one when completed will be a colorful sailboat scene.

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als into a form of glass called frit, and then to grind it to a powder and mix with other ingredients to make the glaze.

The scientist in Hamilton told him that this method was antiquated and he set out to use modern, commercial, locally available materials to eliminate fritting.

His unusual success, he attributes to the use of the scientific method and copious notes on each experiment. To date his research has been going on for seven years, and he feels he has at least 10 more years of work.

He also makes the molds and fires his porcelain test

green, blue and red; from manganese — brown or pur-

busy with his research on ceramics.

white-breasted nuthatches. —M.A.S.

YOUNG SET

LAYAWAY

'Boomer' is Taking it Easy

By MARGARET KOCH
Sentinel Staff Writer

"I was what you might call a 'boomer telegrapher,'" Rodney Soth said the other day.

He wandered into The Sentinel and stayed awhile to talk. The days are long for him now; he lost his wife awhile back.

"I worked 12 hours, into the night, about 84 hours per week—about 360 hours per month—and my pay was \$52.50 per month," he said. "I figure I made about 10 cents per hour."

So the "good old days" weren't always so good, at that.

He never fought off any Indians or got held up by bandits or anything that exciting. But once he fell down a well alongside the railroad track.

He was walking down the tracks with three telegrapher friends when they dared him to go down into the well which had just been dug.

"I went down, hand over hand, on the rope. Then I came back up the same way. But near the top I got my hand on a piece of machinery that released the rope. I slid down all the way and burned my hands something fierce."

His hands were so bad he couldn't climb up the rope. For awhile he had visions of being trapped there in the bottom of that well out in the desert—for that's where it happened.

But his friends came to his rescue and pulled him out after several hours.

"Ever try to pull dead weight up out of a deep

well?" he asked. "It isn't easy."

Mr. Soth went to telegraphers' school at Valparaiso, Ind., to learn his trade. He also graduated from Oregon State University (it was Oregon Agricultural College then) with a bachelor's degree in science in 1916. Two years ago he went back to attend his 50th class reunion.

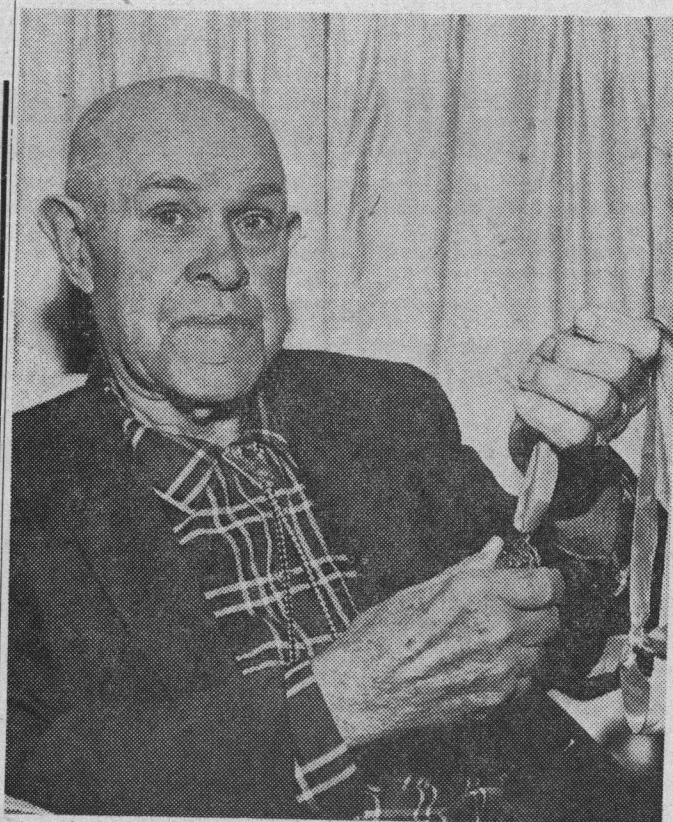
"They gave me a gold medal. It's a pretty nice medal," he commented.

Regardless of his degree, a settled life never appealed to him and that's why he ended up as a "boomer telegrapher." Translated, that means he traveled footloose and fancy free, all over the country.

"I've worked on almost every railroad line in the country," he said. He finally ended up at Watsonville on the Southern Pacific line, just before he retired. He's 77 now.

When he quit the railroad he even tried farming for awhile. He had acreage and apples, chickens, sheep and orange trees out near Corralitos. But now he makes his home at 126 Sherman Street and lives a quieter life.

Even "boomers" have to call a halt, sometime.



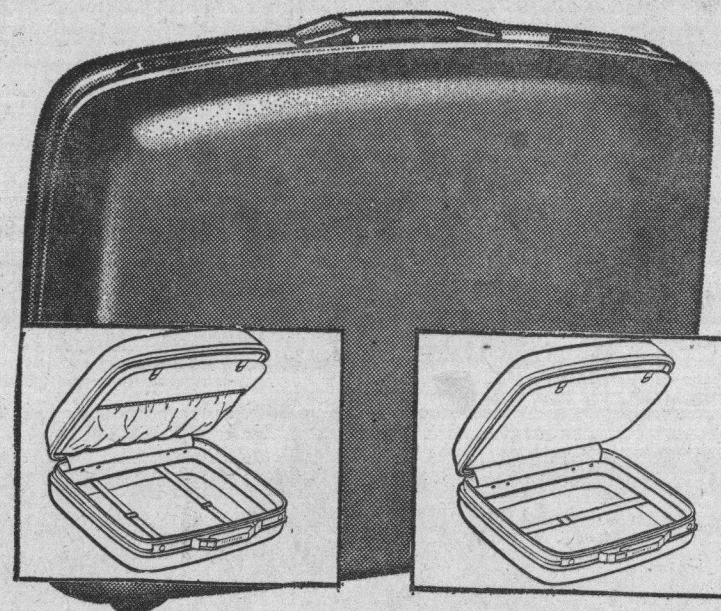
Rodney Soth and his gold medal.

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