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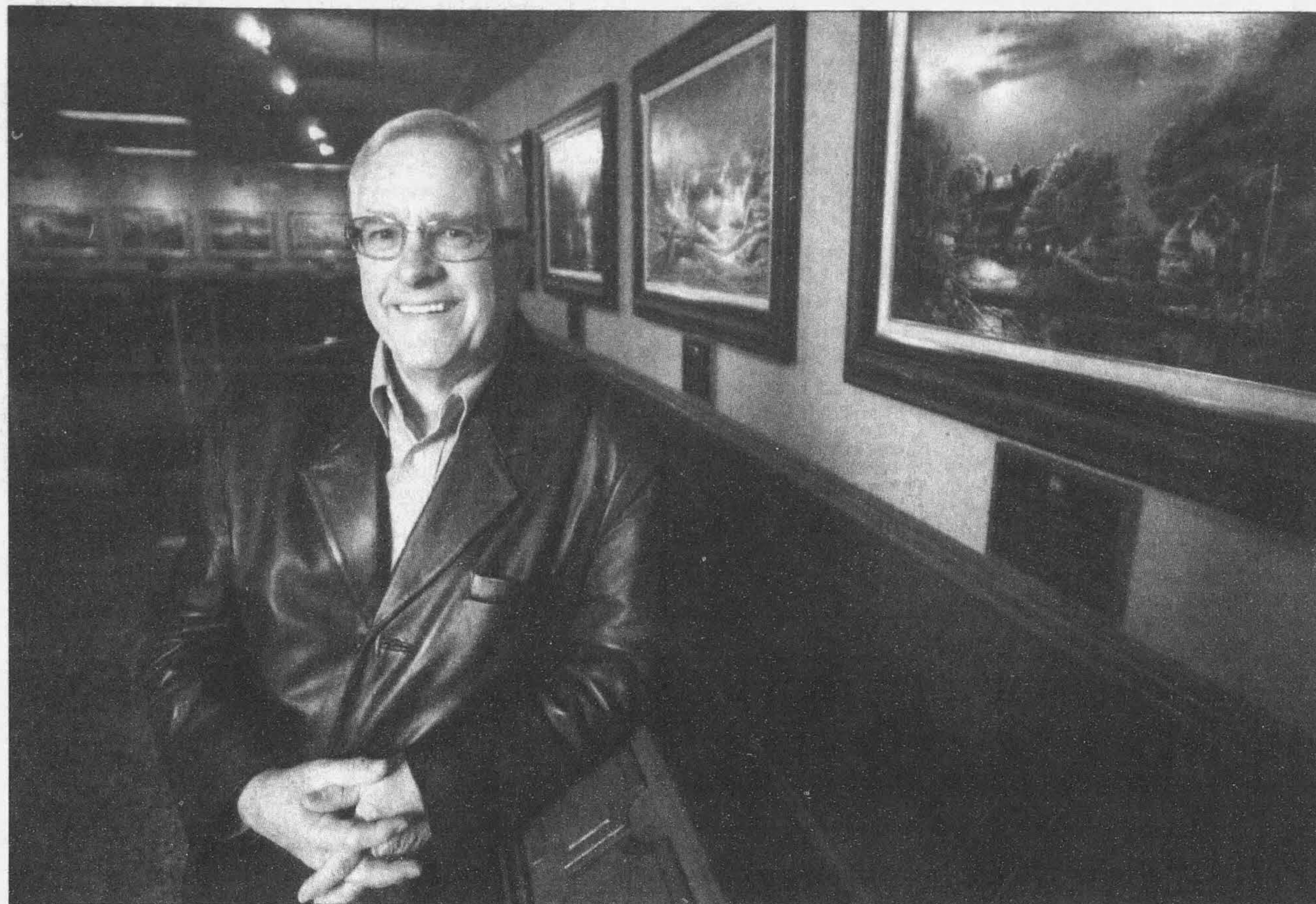
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Acclaimed painter thrives in Watertown



Terry Redlin's namesake, the Redlin Art Center in Watertown, is a \$10 million showcase for his original oil paintings.

VAL HOEPPNER / ARGUS LEADER

Terry Redlin's empire of art

Learning 'to do it all' creates marketing savvy

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON
 Argus Leader

WATERTOWN - Fumes seeped from the floorboards inside a sweltering room topped with a tar-coated roof. They carried the overpowering scent and sluggish texture of ink from the printing press downstairs.

Particularly dejected by being stuck with "a job no one wanted," one worker found relief only in his tools. Aiming an unarmed airbrush, he shot a continuous, cool blast up a pant leg. "Cards and calendars, the low-end section," he says now, decades removed from his spot as an art director at a Twin Cities printing firm. "No air conditioning. Man, I really hated that job some days."

Terry Redlin shakes his head at the memory, but the distance between "then" and "now" has taken the bitterness from it. In that time, he's become a national force in the art, gifts and collectibles industries. It's an open-season playing field that Unity Marketing, an independent consulting firm for discretionary spending, targets at more than \$35 billion a year in the United States alone. As one of the biggest names in the business, the 64-year-old Redlin paints, publishes and licenses his own work and now has started to print and distribute it, too.

Yet he recalls vividly and candidly the ups and downs that built his success. "You know, it's the best thing that could've happened," the painter says of the jobs along the way, "because I learned how to do it all."

The Watertown native isn't waxing philosophical. He's simply practical.

It took time and work and inking sweat to reach the man-made plateau on which his \$10 million museum rests. Along the way, a motorcycle accident took one of his legs, forcing the teen-ager to adjust his dreams of becoming a conserva-

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Key business ventures



"Always Alert" is a 2001 Terry Redlin painting.

ARTWORK: Terry Redlin no longer sells his original paintings. Licensed, limited edition prints are the backbone of his business. The print here retails for about \$275; with an edition of 9,500, its sales will gross \$2.6 million. Redlin is now at work on a new seven-image series.



COLLECTIBLES: Redlin's art is licensed to Hadley House Art Publishing for sales of items such as coasters and mugs. His collectibles include knives, candles and clocks.



MUSEUM: The Redlin Art Center holds more than 130 of the artist's originals and is the largest tourist draw in northeastern South Dakota with 230,000 visitors last year.

INSIDE: Redlin's \$250,000 donation boosts a Glacial Lakes learning center, PAGE 7A

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON
 Argus Leader

Hometown hosts new print center, top tourist spot

The Redlin Art Center is the first glimpse of Watertown that northbound travelers see from Interstate 29. From the north or the east, the building's four stories of brick and granite appear on the horizon second only to McDonald's elevated arches. Now, and at least until the city reaches further, Redlin Arts Inc.'s new printing and national distribution center is one of the first sights to greet visitors from the west.

The center, which sits along a stretch of Highway 212, went up quickly late last year. Already producing prints, the center represents a new facet of acclaimed artist Terry Redlin's business, as he takes on his own printing and distribution. The application for building permit, filed last September with the city of Watertown, estimated construction costs at just under \$1 million. That figure doesn't include a necessary piece of equipment: the color press itself, which industry sources say could cost anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000 or more.

No one, not even the artist, can predict how his latest Watertown venture will pan out.

What is certain: Redlin's business interests have helped shape not just the architecture but the economy of his hometown.

Having welcomed its one-millionth visitor in 2000, the Redlin Art Center has become the northeast region's top tourist attraction, and it creates a ripple effect. Those who walk through the galleries, which are free, also are likely to spend money on gasoline for the trip home, meals at restaurants and maybe a trip to the mall or an overnight stay at one of the town's hotels.

But the \$10 million museum, built entirely with revenue from Redlin's

See HOMETOWN, page 7A

Morrell weighs \$400M decision

BY ROB SWENSON
 Argus Leader

"Only an act of God" or an unforeseeable event would force the closure of the John Morrell & Co. pork-packing plant.

So said a top executive with Smithfield Foods Inc. in 1996, the year after the Virginia-based company acquired the Sioux Falls plant.

"I don't think we should have bought the company if we thought we were going to close Sioux Falls," said John Nielson, Smithfield's president and chief operating officer at the time.

Nielson is no longer with the company, and unfore-



Tim Johnson John Thune

Campaigns must juggle rural, urban interests

BY DAVID KRANZ
 Argus Leader

The high-profile exchange over the future of the John Morrell meatpacking plant in Sioux Falls presents an unexpected political puzzle for the candidates in South Dakota's U.S. Senate race.

Incumbent Sen. Tim Johnson's proposal to prohibit meatpackers from owning, feeding or controlling livestock for 14 days before slaughter has drawn public criticism from Smithfield

ANALYSIS Foods Inc., the company that owns Morrell, and economic development officials in Sioux Falls.

With Johnson facing a spirited challenge from Republican Rep. John Thune and with control of the U.S. Senate at stake, there is inevitable chatter about political opportunism.

Observers question both the timing of Johnson's proposal and a full-page ad purchased by Smithfield in the *Argus Leader*, chastising the senator.

Issues of meatpacker concentration and the viability of traditional family farmers step outside the political party structure, however. That was evident last week when farm groups from across the

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in the city and region.

About 3,200 jobs in the plant and nearly 6,000 spinoff jobs elsewhere in the community would be in jeopardy if Morrell closes. Closing would eliminate \$200 million the company spends annually in the region for payroll and services and another \$500 million it spends buying hogs across the Upper Midwest.

Or, Smithfield might decide to spend \$400 million to upgrade its 91-year-old plant here. Its favored option - building a new, state-of-the-art plant - would cost even more. Either would invest in the region's future for years to come.

The option it chooses has become inexorably linked with an amendment to the federal farm bill offered by Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D. The controversial amendment, which pits small farm-

See MORRELL, page 8A

Will Enron's Lay talk this time?

BY MARCY GORDON
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The man who sat atop Enron's "house of cards" is to be grilled this week by lawmakers who say they have strong evidence of illegal activity surrounding the company's collapse. Whether they manage to crack Kenneth Lay's silence remains to be seen.

Lay, Enron's former chairman, could testify at a Senate hearing Tuesday, a week after he pulled out of two scheduled Capitol Hill appearances.

Two committees have issued subpoenas compelling Lay to come. So far, he has not given Congress notice of any plans to invoke his right not to answer questions.

A House investigative subcommittee heard hours of conflicting testimony last week from Jeffrey Skilling, who was Enron's chief executive officer, and other top company officials.

Lay, who resigned Jan. 23,

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was the most powerful symbol of the failed company. He has yet to speak publicly about the calamity.

Enron had nearly 4,000 partnerships, which kept \$500 million in debt off its balance sheet and hidden from investors and securities regulators.

Testimony and documents so far perused by lawmakers have pointed them to disquieting conclusions.

"There is strong evidence of more than just negligence, more than just scamming or deception - there's evidence of securities fraud here," said Rep. Billy Tauzin, R-La., chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.



BULLIT MARQUEZ / AP
 More than 300 Taliban fighters await their release at the presidential palace in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Afghan officials hope to nab fugitives

BY LOUIS MEIXLER
 Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan - Elated by the reported surrender of the former Taliban foreign minister, Afghan officials said Saturday they believe other Taliban figures may give themselves up.

Still, they warned that holdouts of the one-time ruling militia and the al-Qaida terrorist network continue to threaten Afghanistan.

Mullah Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, who served as foreign minister until the Taliban were driven from power, turned himself in to Afghan authorities Friday in

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Kandahar, according to U.S. military officials.

"This is a moment that we have been waiting for - to make sure that these individuals face trial, either in Afghanistan or outside Afghanistan, for their actions and deeds in the past," said Omar Samad, a spokesman for the Afghan

Foreign Ministry.

"It's about time that a known Taliban figure who held a position of authority is turning himself in, and hopefully others will be caught later," he said.

Foreign Minister Abdullah said it was important that Taliban figures were in custody and "not allowed to undermine the stability of the interim government of Afghanistan."

Muttawakil, the highest Taliban official known to be in custody, was regarded as a relative moderate within the organization.

Muttawakil could provide

important information about the movements of Mullah Mohammed Omar and al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden.

Mostly sunny
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Redlin: 'If I retired, I'd be dead within the year'

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tion officer. Instead, he went to the St. Paul School of Associated Arts on a scholarship from the state of South Dakota. Later, he bartered his talents as an illustrator for free advertising space in magazines.

He and his wife, Helene, paid for prints as they could afford them, framing and matting the pieces. Together, they raised children and built and left homes. Quietly, they endured both criticism of Redlin's work and jealous speculation about his commercial success.

His originals range in value from \$35,000 to \$90,000 apiece, but the last of those hit the open market in 1984. That's the year his son Charles urged him to stop selling the paintings themselves and instead license the images for use on prints and other items.

Redlin's bread-and-butter has become the individually signed and numbered print, often produced by the tens of thousands. "Always Alert," one of Redlin's 2001 releases, for example, sells for about \$275 and stands to gross more than \$2.6 million in sales from its edition of 9,500 prints. There are several releases each year. His images are licensed for reproduction on everything from mugs to candles to hunting knives, adding to his popularity and his sales.

The original paintings - done in the privacy of a studio at his home on the north shore of Lake Kampeska - go directly to the museum, where more than 1 million visitors have seen the collection.

Mere months before the Redlin Art Center completes its fifth full year along Interstate 29 in Watertown, the artist who's filled its showcase halls still is learning what sells, what doesn't and above all, what makes him happy. One of the nation's most widely recognized living artists, he also seems to be one of its most genuinely content.

"I'd say he's painting more than ever before," says Jim Adams, a retired printer himself. He met Redlin in the late 1980s while chairman of Watertown's Ducks Unlimited chapter. Redlin credits the national wetlands and wildlife organization with garnering all of his early exposure and a healthy share of his sales throughout the years.

"There are quite a lot of good artists in South Dakota," Adams says, "but Terry and his wife are very good people, too."

Hometown influence

Few people in Watertown would disagree, if asked.

The nearly 20,000 residents of the town, built around Lake Kampeska, are proud of Redlin's accomplishments. They share in them in ways both altruistic and opportunistic. Watertown is a protective, connected community, but it's also full of business owners who stand to benefit from the art center's draw, which approaches a quarter-million visitors a year.

Named "America's Most Popular Artist" eight years in a row by a poll of 900 galleries, Redlin belongs to *US Art* magazine's Hall of Fame. The National Association of Limited Edition Dealers, a trade group, has several times honored the artist's works with "Lithograph of the Year."

"If I was in another community, I don't know what I would offer to get an individual with the status Terry has to come to a community this size and build this facility," says Richard Benda, president of Focus Watertown. The organization is an economic development and marketing arm for the community. He says the art center gives people a powerful reason to take I-29 exit 77, Watertown's main



VAL HOEPPNER / ARGUS LEADER

Visitors to the Terry Redlin Art Center in Watertown browse in the gift shop that is filled with everything from Redlin's prints to wooden boxes, coffee mugs and marble knives emblazoned with Redlin images.

route, and that benefits the city.

Still, some debate whether the art center or Redlin's fame has done much to advance the local art culture in his hometown.

"People come in and say, 'Oh! I could buy a Redlin for that,'" says artist Sandy Ellyson, a member of the Signature Art Gallery cooperative in uptown Watertown. "I'm not sure they understand that those pieces aren't original art."

Prices at the Signature gallery range from tens to thousands of dollars, with most pieces in the \$200 to \$350 range. Some co-op members create prints as well, though attitudes toward the authenticity of prints as art are mixed within the group. Regardless, Ellyson doesn't think the art center has inspired people to seek out original art elsewhere in the area.

"We've had visitors from all 50 states and from a number of countries," she says, "so they're hearing about us somewhere. We do have information at the Chamber of Commerce, which has its office at the art center."

Other artists are more critical. Scott Ehrisman, a Sioux Falls painter, graphic artist and Western Printing employee, disagreed openly with the naming of a Sioux Falls elementary school in Redlin's honor in 1998. Clippings from his letters to the *Argus Leader* are framed in the art center's main lobby along with those in support of Redlin.

"I'm not opposed to artists making money or making prints," Ehrisman says. "But the numbers are ridiculous. I feel bad for those who do own some of his early originals or low-numbered signed prints because they can go to a friend's house for coffee and drink out of a mug with the same picture on it."

Ehrisman accuses Redlin of using his South Dakota roots as a marketing tool. Redlin left the state to work in the Twin Cities area before returning permanently to Watertown about six years ago.

"I don't feel like building a museum for yourself is giving back to the people or to the artists in the state," Ehrisman says.

Commercial success

Redlin, who's appeared on the shopping network QVC four times, sees it differently.

"I'll do one large, main, signed and numbered edition of 10,000. Same thing for the conservation prints that go to Ducks Unlimited and the other groups," he says. "The smaller pieces can get up to 29,500, but those are for people

new to the market. The postcards and such are really advertising for the bigger, limited pieces."

Some have compared the width and breadth of Redlin products to those of Thomas Kinkade. While Sioux Falls gallery owner Larry Rehfeld agrees that the two are the country's leading licensed artists, he believes Redlin has shown more discriminating taste. And, he says, the influx of large print runs in past years hurt the limited-edition market overall.

"It has dropped off, not just with Terry's work but in general," says Rehfeld, whose 41st Street location carries Redlin prints and collectibles. "There used to be a time when people had to have everything by a certain artist, and we're not seeing that as much. People are buying more for what the piece says to them instead of dealing with the collectibility issue."

That line of thinking fits in with Redlin's own: "Buy what you like," he advises.

But he makes no attempt to downplay the business aspect of his art. When part of the city's power supply was knocked out during one of his recent visits to the art center, he descended from a dark gallery and was pleasantly surprised to see the gift shop still lit.

"Well, that's the important part, anyway," he said with a half-grin.

Private entrepreneur

Redlin is a private man who insulates himself with family, long-trusted friends and business partners who've proven themselves in the past.

Perhaps that cautious streak can be traced to the hard lessons he learned during his two years at Brown & Bigelow, a St. Paul firm that he says was discreetly infamous at the time for hiring "rehabilitated" criminals.

"I was saving money up to buy a camera and told the guys, 'Another week, and I'll have it,'" Redlin recalls. "Sure enough, the next day, it was all gone. I went to my boss, and he said, 'You kept money here?'"

Helene keeps the books, working from a corner of their kitchen. She uses much the same system for Redlin Arts Inc. that she did when RAI was just two married kids trying to earn a buck.

"She always called or wrote to thank us for an order and then called or wrote to thank us again when they received the check," says Tal Lockwood, the Ducks Unlimited employee who "discovered" Redlin for the organization.

"We'd buy 10 or 20 at a time, at about \$10 or \$20 each," Lockwood

fellow there by the name of Jim Redlin - a cousin of Terry's - was on the committee. That first one I saw was 'Winter Snows,' snow geese flying over a fence. I thought, 'I've been in that scene before.' Terry had it in him to bring that out. And I'm sure that's what other people feel when they see his work."

Branching out

During roughly the past decade, Redlin has unveiled both an ambitious series illustrating the lyrics to "America, the Beautiful" and a completely new subject. He'd launched his career with wildlife scenes, added nostalgia-inducing human figures with a style he calls "romantic realism" and worked through to landscapes dotted with cabins and farms.

But his latest efforts focus on fictional golf holes that are familiar enough to be found on any course in the United States. "Spring on the Greens," his latest best-selling print, is the first in this vein.

"Sure, it's generic, but that's the idea," Redlin says. "I'd painted one like this, and the distributors refused to touch it because they thought it had to be a famous hole. I repainted it because I just knew it would sell."

Redlin, who sold his first works almost exclusively through farming magazines, has a knack for knowing his niche in the market. "There's no way you're going to get a farmer in a hoity-toity art gallery," he says.

He had no desire to try to change those perceived opinions. He worked from what he knew, drawing on his firsthand knowledge of life in the Midwest. His audience saw their own back yards and wild, secluded areas in his paintings.

Redlin tells his own hunting stories about piecing together camouflage fabric to cover his coveralls ("That's before you could buy camouflage anything") and tracking game with a straight bow ("That's before they had the compound variety").

"I was always the guy who got stuck asking permission from the landowner," Redlin says. He's already cracking up, anticipating the punch line. "And I remember this one farmhouse out in the boonies, and this 18-year-old answers the door and busts out laughing. He was an Indian, and here I am, some white guy he's never seen before, standing on his doorstep with a bow, a quiver full of arrows and a face full of paint."

Yet, Redlin seems startled when asked about his last hunting trip. "I bet I haven't hunted in the past 30 years," he says, after a pause. "You get lazy. You don't want to be hauling decoys and gear around in the water at 5 in the morning. I paint it instead."

Quiet routine

His routine doesn't involve waders any longer, but it doesn't begin much later than did his hunting expeditions. He insists he

experiences a "mental shutdown" after noon and after lunch takes on the "mindless" task of signing his limited-edition prints. With the television on as background noise, he can get through about 300 a day. He's never considered hiring on a gifted forger or, worse yet, having a stamp made of his signature.

"I started with my name on these things out of pride," Redlin says. "So I've kind of got to stick with it."

He has and more, painting so many new works that last summer, the art center renovated office space on the second floor to accommodate a second-floor gallery. One wall is partially blank, waiting for a seven-painting series to come. *Watertown Now*, the quarterly magazine of the local chamber of commerce, describes it as scenes in the life of a boy, from childhood to adulthood.

Redlin, however, is more secretive. He says not even Helene is allowed in the studio while he's painting, and only his son sees works in progress. To be fair, he doesn't consider painting to be work. "It's a hobby, is what it is."

He doesn't show signs of slowing any time soon, though the art center holds more than 130 of his original oil paintings. "If I retired, I'd be dead within the year," he says.

And while he has never actively sought out the originals he sold from 1977 to 1984, the foundation did purchase 15 from a single owner at an auction in 1999.

Redlin dismisses the idea of going door-to-door, trying to buy back the rest of his early paintings. "They wouldn't know this old man. They'd say, 'I bought this from a struggling young kid.'"

In some ways, Redlin doesn't feel much has changed since then. He talks of being 18 years old, freshly graduated from Watertown High School and heading to Las Vegas to "take the town by storm" with two buddies. Steady girl Helene Langenfeld, whom he'd marry the next year, waited at home.

"We pulled up to the Sands in our Ford Custom, and the valets - all dressed in tuxedos - started laughing," he says. "Well, we crawled back home with our tails between our legs and about three weeks broke."

They left their pride and returned to Watertown with tattoos. Redlin's right shoulder still bears the blue-ink outline of a hawk.

It could be that he brought back something else, something unseen. The memory of what it felt like to start back, empty-handed. Maybe the stinging taunts of those Sands valets still motivate him all these years later.

Or, it could've been something as small as the remembered stickiness of a print shop in the summer, and the silent promise that one day, he'd sit on his own patio and enjoy the lake breeze off the exact spot he'd fished as a boy.

Reach reporter Jennifer Sanderson at jsanders@argusleader.com or 575-3629

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Sioux Valley Women's

Vision of water learning center nears reality

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON
Argus Leader

Redlin, Watertown pull together funding for project to educate about wetlands

Terry Redlin is a planner, a cautious conservationist whether the topic be the environment or his own business ventures.

A decade ago, he saw an opportunity to bring both together in a new way. He envisioned a water systems learning center that would be equally accessible to visitors and to scientists.

Today, his "seed money in the bank" has grown to \$250,000. Other partners - federal agencies among them - have signed on to the project, and the city of Watertown helped purchase private land northeast of Lake Kameska that will become the site of the Terry Redlin Fresh Water Center.

"Teaching needs to be a big part of it," Redlin says. "They could bus in school kids to learn about pollution and water quality, which are the same problems we have all over the state."

The educational center will sit on 100 acres of wetlands barely a quarter-mile from Redlin's home. The city picked up \$225,000 of the \$265,000 price tag, according to City Council President Brad Johnson. He believes the center could fill a role similar to that of The Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls but focusing on wetland ecology.

Ducks Unlimited contributed

\$10,000, while the homeowners of the Lake Kameska Water Project District gave \$20,000. And because a portion of the land is highly flood-prone, the project qualified for a \$30,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"We quickly put together a grant application to the Environmental Protection Agency, which awarded us \$59,000 to develop a wetlands education program for the state of South Dakota," Johnson says.

"Part of that also will begin to develop a wetlands management plan for the area immediately

north of Watertown."

Johnson calls the site along Highway 20 an ideal location, combining visibility with natural wetlands. Within the next two months, he says, a coordinator will be hired to "crystallize the vision into exactly what we're going to build and to bring the partners together."

That could include help from the National Audubon Society, which sent two of its senior vice presidents to Watertown last fall to study the proposal.

"They want to build education centers across the United States because everyone is realizing that

more than raising money to preserve the land, we have to educate people so they can protect what we already have," Johnson says.

Redlin hopes the water center will be a "biological institute" of sorts, incorporating wildlife and human usage issues. One solution would be to contract with a university or other lab to perform tests at the site, and Johnson says at least one state school, South Dakota State University in Brookings, already has been contacted with the concept.

Johnson, who is a member of the Upper Big Sioux Watershed Advisory Committee, says the

center fits into a \$2 million ongoing project.

"We go to landowners and offer them, in many cases, 90 percent cost-sharing to build animal waste systems and improve pastures," he says. "It's all geared toward making water cleaner, from cleaning up fertilizer from lawns to runoff from streets."

"Watertown and South Dakota have incredible water resources, and we haven't destroyed them as badly as some other states have," Johnson says. "Terry's commitment of \$250,000 has given a tremendous shot in the arm to try to pull something like this together."

Reach reporter Jennifer Sanderson at jsanders@argusleader.com or 575-3629

Hometown: Ties to artist ripple through city

Continued from 1A

sales, has had its share of controversy. Some question its elaborate design, while others disagree with the restrictions the city has placed on businesses within close proximity of the site.

Still, the impact of Redlin's business on the town is clear beyond the art center's towering presence.

"It really is hard to overstate its importance in a community striving to take off and grow from a town to a city," says Richard Benda, president of Focus Watertown, a community economic development agency.

Barry Wilfahrt, president and CEO of the Watertown Chamber of Commerce, calls the addition of the print and distribution center an "exciting facility for the city to have."

Printing business

The "linen line" items in production at the new center feature a fiber-pattern finish to more closely resemble an original work. They are created using a color-fast and UV-resistant ink and are available at Redlin dealers for \$29.99 and up.

The series is the first and so far only line to come from the 44,000-square-foot factory. Redlin says he wants to begin with one or two products so as not to complicate the transition to his own printing. The shift began when Watt/Peterson-Cimarron Printing of Plymouth, Minn., went out of business, leaving Redlin Arts Inc. without a printer. The Minnesota firm was the only printer he'd worked with since the late 1970s, when the company got too big for him and his wife, Helene, to handle themselves.

Redlin was left to find a new printing company, one that could maintain the quality of his products but whose owners could sit across the table from him and see something besides dollar signs.

Eventually, he and his son Charles decided Redlin Arts Inc., which has always published Redlin's work, should take on the printing as well.

"Charles and I talked about how we wanted to expand, and we decided a vertical move was the right way to go," says Redlin, who hopes the printing and distribution center can be a viable solution. And, officials in the city's planning department say, when Redlin Arts Inc. purchased the land for the printing center, the company also bought all the land owned by the same private owner in that area. The acreage could provide ample room for a growing business, should the printing center prove a success.

Redlin Arts Inc. Publishing, or RAI Publishing, currently is registering its linen line printing process with the U.S. Patent Office.

"We're trying to keep it pretty secret for now," says Charles Redlin, who oversees many aspects of his father's art business.

But the color presses are purchased and rolling at RAI Publishing. The company's Web site, www.raipublishing.com, is online, if sparse, and the office phone connects to a dial tone.

From the outside, the printing center's symmetrical design echoes the museum's own. Familiar cupolas top the industrial building, and a bridge similar to the many on the grounds at the museum is in the front yard.

Watertown's growth

In addition to creating jobs - the Redlins won't say how many just yet - the printing center fits into the city's effort to balance expansion. In recent years, the greatest commercial growth has taken place along Watertown's east side, which borders Interstate 29.

"Wal-Mart came in 1990, with Target in the early '90s," says Wilfahrt, whose chamber offices are within the Redlin Art Center along with those for the town's convention and visitors bureau, economic development group and non-profit community foundation. "The hotel at Stone's Inn is converting to a Holiday Inn, and they'll double the number of hotel rooms. It continues to move east."

Redlin's influence surrounds Watertown

Terry Redlin Fresh Water Center

- Educational and research site for study of water quality in the Glacial Lakes area; will sit on 100 acres northeast of Lake Kameska along Highway 20.
- Jump-started by \$250,000 gift from Redlin and \$225,000 in city money.
- Partners include Ducks Unlimited (\$10,000), Federal Emergency Management Agency (\$30,000) and homeowners of the Lake Kameska Water Project District (\$20,000). The Environmental Protection Agency awarded \$59,000 for a wetlands education program.

RAI Publishing

- Publishing arm of Redlin Arts Inc.
- \$1 million, 40,000-square-foot national printing, framing and distribution center along Highway 212 west of Watertown.
- Now producing its first items in the "Linen Line" of small-scale prints with a linen-fiber finish. RAI Publishing is securing the process with the U.S. Patent Office.
- Web site: www.raipublishing.com

Terry Redlin Game Production Area

- 1,050-acre parcel 11 miles west and 3 miles north of Watertown bordering Long Lake.
- Funded by Ducks Unlimited and the state Game Fish & Parks Department, which maintains the area.
- Public walk-in hunting area with waterfowl, upland game and big game.
- Established and named in Redlin's honor in April 1997.

Source: Argus Leader research

Redlin Art Center

- \$10 million facility opened June 6, 1997; houses more than 130 of Terry Redlin's original oil paintings.
- Paid for by Redlin and managed by the Redlin Art Center Foundation, a private nonprofit agency. With more than 230,000 visitors in 2001, it was the region's leading tourist attraction.
- Includes a gallery, office and gift shop as well as a domed theater/planetarium and a separate 100-seat amphitheater on a 30-acre park with seven gazebos, waterways and walking trails.
- Web address: www.redlinart.com

Voni Hansen / Argus Leader



A family looks at recent original oil paintings by Terry Redlin on display at the Terry Redlin Art Center by Interstate 29 at Watertown. The center attracts more than 230,000 visitors a year.

But on the west side, the print center soon will see more neighbors. A \$5 million convention center, discussed since Wilfahrt took the job 16 years ago, finally will take shape. Meeting rooms, exhibition space and a theater will be added to the existing Best Western Ramkota Hotel on west Highway 212. The city will own the addition and lease the space back to the Ramkota in exchange for management services, Wilfahrt says. The Ramkota also will get a Minerva's restaurant as part of the expansion.

Art center's draw

Already, the Redlin Art Center has surpassed Fort Sisseton State Park as the leading attraction for South Dakota's northeast tourism region. The center's 230,000 visitors a year come nowhere near matching 2.5 million visitors annually for Mount Rushmore or the nearly 1 million at Badlands National Park. But state tourism figures place the Redlin galleries as South



Dakota's No. 3 site east of the Missouri River. Only the Lewis and Clark Recreation Area near Yankton, with 1 million visitors, and the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science, with 293,000, rank higher. The private, nonprofit Redlin Art Foundation manages the center, led by a full-time executive director and a part-time advisory board. Admission to the galleries is free, but money from domed theater admissions and gift shop sales goes into the center's \$1.1 million annual operations fund. At the close of 2000, the most recent year for which tax information is available, those two revenue sources generated more than \$600,000. All but \$23,000 of

that amount came from gift sales. The center also gets interest from a \$15 million trust set up by the artist to support its operations. In all, the Redlin Art Center and its assets - original paintings, 30-acre park, contributions, investments and other funds - were valued at more than \$28 million. The board that governs the art center and its nonprofit, private foundation has just three members. Charles Redlin serves as president without compensation, while the remaining members received \$1,500 each in 2000. Foundation vice-president David Oyan is a family friend; secretary/treasurer Robert Wagner is a former city attorney who helped

the Redlins secure 30 acres of land along Interstate 29 for the art center's construction and grounds.

Tal Lockwood, a Ducks Unlimited employee who has known Redlin for years, acknowledges that some in the community questioned the size and prominence of the 52,000-square-foot building.

"I thought, and so did my wife, that it looked somewhat extraneous for the area," Lockwood says.

"I was sure it was going to be great, but it didn't look like South Dakota," he says. "I've had that comment from other people, too."

The center's overwhelming design, four-stories of granite and pillars juxtaposed against the prairie, hasn't slowed visitors.

Executive director Julie Ranum says the numbers have exceeded expectations. "We were shooting for 100,000 a year," she says. "But we'll get 40,000 a month in the summer."

Redlin himself jokes that renting office space in the center boosts the public's perception. "Even on a slow day, there's cars in the lot."

Regional attraction

The art center's very presence encourages spreading the wealth, says state tourism spokeswoman Mary Stadick Smith.

"They are a huge draw in that portion of the state and for that region," she says. "Places like the Redlin Art Center are easy to promote because the name has immediate, national recognition. It's our job to make people aware of the hidden treasures we have in our back yard that no one knows about."

She says it's more beneficial as a whole for the South Dakota Tourism Department to "sell" a region, not an attraction.

"The northeast portion of the state has so much to see and do in terms not only of outdoors activities, but also in terms of historical and cultural opportunities. While the Redlin Art Center certainly fits under that, there's enough other things to keep you busy for a number of days," she says.

State tourism numbers reflect that Watertown's home county, Codington, saw a 20 percent increase in visitors from 1996 to 1997, the year the art center

opened. There's also some indication that the art center has helped balance out the numbers, giving Codington County a higher, more dependable baseline. In the decade prior, visitation fluctuated from 6 million to 12 million. But from 1997 through the end of 2001, Codington County visitors remained between 13 and 16 million.

Business impact

The addition of the print and distribution center could add a curiosity factor and even more numbers. According to preliminary plans, the largest single area of the factory, more than 13,000 square feet, will be dedicated to framing the pieces created within.

That doesn't worry Randy Schliesman, whose Art & Frame Connections on West Kemp Avenue does much of the framing for gift items sold at the art center.

"Ducks Unlimited and Redlin are a large part of our framing business, but the biggest portion is limited-edition prints by Redlin and other artists," he says. "I don't foresee (the printing center) starting to do the gift shop or custom framing. They're basically wanting to frame the linen line personally, in-house, before shipping them."

Schliesman's gallery is one of three independent, licensed Redlin dealers in Watertown. The town draws from a trade area of about 75,000, according to chamber president Wilfahrt, but Schliesman believes the city of 20,000 has so many shops simply because it's Redlin's home town.

"Their distributor sets the standards for how many galleries there can be in a certain size town," Schliesman says. "I've heard there won't be any more added. Terry's very gallery-oriented, and he wants the individual businesses to do well."

Redlin also wants to protect his own interests and his intellectual property - the images he creates. The design on each print, mug, coaster and plate is copyrighted, but that doesn't stop people from trying to cut in on his earnings.

"The day we opened the art center, a couple out-of-state guys set up a shop across the road," Redlin says. "They had all kinds of stuff with my paintings on it, and they had one of those lighted, highway detour signs that said, 'Redlin work sold here.' Now, that's a bit much."

Unknowningly, those entrepreneurs had violated a Watertown city ordinance. Redlin had anticipated just such a spectacle even before the art center was built. He went to the City Council with a proposal, and its members agreed.

City protection

The chapter of the city code governing that highway commercial district reads that "no art museum (except those sponsored by the public entities), art gallery, art publishing house or artist studios and galleries" shall be located within one mile of the Redlin Art Center.

The ordinance not only protects Redlin's products, it also effectively bars unrelated art shops from operating nearby.

"We were here before they passed that," says Brenda Boettcher, who works at a Redlin dealer and framing shop in the same city district. Expressions was grandfathered in and allowed to continue selling Redlin merchandise.

"Sure, we were a little worried, because while competition is good in any business, it keeps everybody in check," Boettcher says. "Watertown is big on supporting its local artists, and maybe someday a group of them would've liked to get together and put something out there by the interstate. Now, they can't do that."

Depending on who's listening, though, some would say one of them already has.

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