



It's never too late for new aspirations

By Nancy McAllister

Winston Churchill is known for his leadership, his political and military strategies, and his oratory. But many people don't realize that at one of the lowest points in his career, at the age of 41, he took up painting.

According to The Churchill Centre Web site at www.winstonchurchill.org, the outcome of World War I weighed heavily on the leader's mind. "I had long hours of utterly unwonted leisure in which to contemplate the frightful unfolding of the War," Churchill wrote. "At a moment when every fiber of my being was inflamed to action, I was forced to remain a spectator of the tragedy, placed cruelly in a front seat. And then it was that the Muse of Painting came to my rescue—out of charity and out of chivalry, because after all she had nothing to do with me—and said, 'Are these toys any good to you? They amuse some people.'"

It was his sister-in-law Goonie who introduced Churchill to painting. She sketched in watercolors and invited him to give it a try. From that point forward, painting became an integral part of Churchill's life; he painted whenever he could wring a few hours from his crowded

schedule. He was always modest about his painting accomplishments, and so was surprised when he won first prize in an amateur art exhibition in 1925 (a contest in which his entry was anonymous). Churchill continued painting for the next 40 years—churning out more than 500 pictures. Late in his life he wrote, "When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the subject."