

Resident of the month

He's still the painter of the seas

By Farley Egan
NEWS Staff Writer

Ask Arthur Beaumont to relate his most exciting memory.

"Well," he muses, "falling through a crevasse and nearly losing my life... But the whole operation at Bikini was the most amazing in sight and sound and experience and danger."

The English-born Beaumont has witnessed some of the milestones of the twentieth century, and captured them on paper with his artist's brush. Known as the "Artist Laureate of the Fleet," Beaumont has blended the life of the artist with the life of the sailor, and maintained a distinguished career with his paintings of the people, the ships and events of the United States Navy.

Now living on Avenida Sevilla in Leisure World, Beaumont has been named Leisure Worlder of the Month of August by the Rossmoor Corporation.

Beaumont says he was born an artist. His first painting of the sea was completed at the age of four, a painting which unfortunately has become lost over the years.

Brought up in England, the son of an artist mother, Beaumont is quick to point out that he is an educated artist not a "self-made" one. After moving to the United States at the age of 16, Beaumont studied at Berkeley. He then attended the Los Angeles School of Art and Design,

and studied with private masters in Los Angeles before taking off for further study in Europe.

In 1925 to 1927, "If you hadn't been to Paris you hadn't been anywhere," says Beaumont. In Paris he became a member of three academies, Academy Julian (life member), Academie Colarossy and Academy Grand Chaumiere.

While in Paris he also came in contact with some of the well-known American expatriates. He knew Picasso and Gertrude Stein, "A big, sloppy girl," who was always very kind to artists.

After further study in Holland and Belgium, Beaumont enrolled in the Slade School of Art at the University of London, then, as now, one of the toughest art schools in the world.

Beaumont recalls an instructor telling him, "if you draw incorrectly we will teach you to draw correctly. If you continue to draw incorrectly we will ask you to step out the door."

His education trained Beaumont as a portrait painter — and a very good one if the samples of his work on display in his second-story studio are any indication.

How did he make the transition to becoming a first-class painter of the sea?

After heading home, Beaumont joined the U.S. Naval Reserve at the urging of an officer whose portrait he had just completed.

"The Navy? What

would I do in the Navy?" asked Beaumont.

"You'd be surprised," came the reply.

"I've been surprised ever since!" says Beaumont.

With the Navy, Beaumont painted both the North and the South poles—mixing his colors with alcohol to prevent them from freezing.

At the South Pole Beaumont lived for four months in bunkers which were constructed 30 feet under the ice.

It was there that he almost lost his life, when he fell through a "snow bridge," and was saved by a New Zealand naval officer.

Aboard the U.S.S. Glacier, Beaumont explored the Arctic, painting pictures of Eskimos in their villages.

Changing extremes of temperatures, from 30 degrees below zero to 110 degrees above, Beaumont waited on a boat six miles from Bikini atoll in 1947, and painted the test atomic blast set off by the United States there.

Beaumont also accompanied cruises to the Orient with the Seventh fleet during World War II, often sketching under fire. On other cruises he explored Korea and China.

Beaumont's paintings have been shown all over the world—in the White House, the Naval Academy, embassies, state capitols and other public buildings.

He was honored with a one man show at the Na-

tional Gallery in Washington, D.C. His paintings are also in numerous museums and private collections, including President Roosevelt's collection at Hyde Park.

During the month of December, 147 of his paintings will grace the walls of the Laguna Beach Museum of Art.

In 1968, Beaumont and his wife, the former Dorothy Dean, moved to Leisure World. But Beaumont has by no means retired from his work. His commissions come in via letters, and through word of mouth. He has never needed an agent.

Beaumont paints almost exclusively water colors. Why? "Because I'm lazy and I don't want to wash all those brushes every night!" he jokes.

Currently on his drawing board is the beginning of a water color in honor of a prominent Navy man who is to be memorialized soon in San Diego.

By his own estimate, Beaumont has painted "hundreds and hundreds and hundreds," of paintings about the sea.

Does he ever grow tired of the subject?

"Oh no, I love it!" says the Artist Laureate of the Fleet.



Arthur Beaumont