

MY JOURNEY TO **ART CENTER** and Beyond...



Emerson Terry, Artist



I was born in Columbus, Ohio In 1925 to Theodore M. Terry and Nettie Kersey Terry. When I reached the Age of 6, a man by the name of Tinker Adams in Los Angeles, California was starting an art school, Art Center. That was about 1931. In hindsight as I matriculated in Elementary School to the 5th Grade some of my teachers took notice of my art ability and paid me a small amount of money to draw on their blackboards in colored chalk, for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. I did not realize at the time that I was a commercial artist. One of my teachers in Elementary School signed me up for a scholarship at the County Art Museum in Columbus, Ohio where I took classes on Saturday.

As a young boy, I use to go to the main library in Downtown Columbus, Ohio in the summertime to get books on How to Draw Cartoon Characters. I had a lot of fun doing that but I still did not think of myself as an artist. It was just fun. The country was in the middle of a Depression that started in 1929 and ended with the beginning of World War II.



IN ALASKA WITH THE US NAVY

I was drafted into the Navy in 1943 during World War II. I went through boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Station just outside of Chicago, Illinois. I then to the Aleutian Islands in the Northwest Pacific Ocean. Adak, Alaska was my first stop in the Aleutian Islands. Adak was closer to Japan than the United States. Next stop on my journey was Dutch Harbor where I was assigned to the USS ARD6, a giant floating repair dock ship.

On the base at Dutch Harbor I took some art classes. The Instructor teaching the class received orders to return home to the States and he asked me to take over and teach the class in his place. My foresight was blind and I could not see myself teaching the class. I declined the offer. Very soon after our ship the ARD6 was assigned to Kodiak, Alaska which was closer to the United States mainland. I received my discharge orders and returned to the United States. First stop, Chicago and Great Lakes Naval Station and then home to Columbus, Ohio.



FROM COLUMBUS, OHIO TO DETROIT, MICHIGAN

I was only in Columbus for a month or two and then I decided to go to Detroit where two of my brothers were living after they were discharged from the Army. I had three brothers in the Army and they had served in Europe, and North Africa. In Detroit, I got a job working on the assembly line of 1947 Chrysler Automobiles. The job only lasted a few months and then the Union went out on strike for higher wages and better working conditions. The Union was controlled by a racist individual but the cause of higher wages and better working condition was a just cause. A strike was called and the plant was shut down.

I had been taking art classes in the evening at the local community center and the art instructor suggested that I take some of my art samples to the unemployment office in downtown Detroit to see if I could find a job doing some type of art. I did so and I was given the name and address of a studio that needed a artist. I made an appointment, and showed up early the next day for an interview. While sitting in the lobby with the receptionist, I could hear people talking over the partition separating the lobby from the work area. Their vociferating torrents of vituperous abuse on people of African American descent was appalling but expected in a climate of segregation and racial hate. When the art director walked from behind the partition to interview me. I could see the shock on his face to see a man of African descent sitting there. I smiled and introduced myself and told him that I had been sent from the unemployment office about a job that was listed. I think he was still in a state of shock but he collected himself and looked at the samples that I had with me. He said "well your work is fine, but I could not hire you, because some of our clients would not like it and they would take there business else where". I assured him that I would not mind sitting in a back room out of site, if I could just have the job, because I needed that job. I did not get the job. That was cold! And so was Detroit. Cold, very cold in middle of winter 1946.



CALIFORNIA HERE I COME

When my brother Carl and I were young, we used to go to the freight train yard where they unloaded freight cars from California with oranges in wooden crates. On the end of each crate was a illustration of oranges on the trees and the beautiful snow capped mountains in the background. With this image in mind, cold, cold Detroit weather and the climate of segregation and racism, we thought California looked pretty good.

We found a used car dealer who needed drivers to drive cars to Los Angeles from Columbus where there was a big market for used cars. Because the auto industry was just getting started up again after World War II, and with all of the Union Strikes the demand for used cars was up. Carl and I left Detroit and went back to Columbus to spend Christmas at home. On Christmas night, we left Columbus driving in a snow storm headed for Los Angeles. What happen on that trip is part of a much longer story in my autobiography,

We arrived in Pasadena on Route 66 New Years Eve, 1946 to find the streets lined with decorations and people sitting along the side walks. It was night time, but warm, unlike the ice and snow that we left back in Detroit and Columbus. I did not know anything about the Rose Parade that was to take place on New Years day. I did not know why all of the people were out on the street. We drove through Pasadena into Los Angeles and then to East Los Angeles our destination.



SIGN PAINTING LED TO ART CENTER

I went to work for a George Lopez in East Los Angeles. He was a great guy and a great sign painter. I worked for him for a while then Carl and I moved to the Central Avenue District of Los Angeles. In 1947 Central Avenue was the West Coast Harlem. A wonderful African American Community full of life and vigor. It was dynamic! Carl and I ran out of money. We had 75¢ between us so we walked the streets looking for business that might need a sign. We found one, Sid's Cafe. We purchased two small cans of paint at the 10¢ store for 15¢ each and two brushes. We borrowed an extension ladder from the people we were staying with and carried it to Sid's Cafe, about 15 city blocks away from where we lived. We painted the sign on the front of his Cafe. We receive \$15 and that was the beginning of a sign painting business that allowed Carl and I to acquire a 1936 Terraplane car. We painted a sign for a mechanic on his garage. We got the car and \$50 dollars for painting that sign. We acquired a pick-up truck, a store front sign shop and new living quarters later.

ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN...Where do I sign up? I got the bright idea to go to UCLA and study art. When I got to UCLA, I was told that I did not have enough credits to enroll and I should go to Los Angeles City College to get the necessary units to enroll at UCLA. I signed up at Los Angeles City College, got into art classes, made many friends and met the girl that I would later marry, Gloria Simmons. I met another art student that I had not seen in a long time, and he told me about Art Center College of Design. This Friend took me to Art Center on West 3rd Street where he was enrolled. I was very impressed by the quality of the work that the students had produced and I said "Where do I sign up?"





Bill Moffett



Stanley Reckless



Audubon Tyler

ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN

I signed up at the 3rd Street Campus in 1949. When I got to Art Center there was some diversity in the school. African American Veterans came in on the G.I. Bill. Yes, there were service men and women signing up. There was about 5 of us African Americans, a few Mexicans, a few Japanese and many White veterans signing up with the G.I. Bill. One of the African Americans was Bill Moffett. Bill told me that when he applied to Art Center, he was told by Tink Adams, that he could let him sign up as a student but "what would you do with the training?" I do not believe you could get a job in the advertising industry. Bill said he told Mr. Adams, "Let me get the training I'll figure out how to use it." Tink Adams said ok and enrolled Bill Moffett. After Bill graduated as a Graphic Designer, Bill got into the new technology of solid-state devices such as transistor and semiconductors. Working with this new industry, Bill Moffett did very well for himself. Back to Art Center, it did not feel like a conventional school but a place where you were treated like adults with adult interaction between instructors and students. Some of those Instructors were as follows.

Stanley Reckless who taught head drawing and showed me how to think before applying the pencil to the paper. How to see in three-dimensions while drawing in two-dimensions. For me, he was the best at what he did.

Audubon Tyler, a painter of the Old School, taught portrait and still life painting and how to work with oil paints. It was a great experience that served me very well in later years when I started to make documentary paintings for the US Air Force, the Civil Rights Movement and the African Cowboys. Tyler tried to get me a job at MGM movie studio where he was working as a portrait painter.

Virginia Legakes and Mary Vartikian, taught logo and product design. Years later, this proved to be extremely important to my career.



Virginia Legakes

Reynolds Brown, a very shy man but a wonderful conceptual illustrator who helped me sharpen my idea of storytelling and composition. I arrived at a position in my career, where I was designing movie posters for the entertainment industry, and concept art for CBS Movies of the Week, and NBC print media.



Reynolds Brown

Donald Putman was a class mate of mine in Reynolds Brown's illustration class. Don went on to become a great painter and later returned to Art Center to teach.

Edward A. Tink Adams, Founder of Art Center, served as a substitute instructor when Reynolds Brown was ill. Mr. Adams had a different concept of approaching Illustration than Reynolds, or Harold Kramer who believed in taking a photo of the model and drawing from the photo. Tink Adams thought that you should draw from a live model. Another instructor, Lorser Feitelson, was a great draftsman of the human figure and an abstract painter. Paul Souza, taught a class in head painting using a Burnt Umber technique.



Edward A. Tink Adams

Joe Henninger was not teaching at Art Center when I matriculated there but we became friends later when we were both working for the west coast studio of Steven Beone Decico Studios where Ren Wicks and Joe Henninger were top Illustrators.



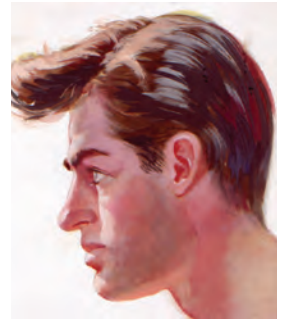
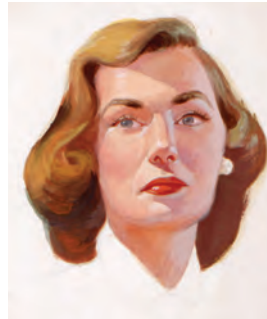
Joe Henninger

Some of the other Instructors at Art Center were Harry Carmean, Nina Novinska and Midge Quenell.

These pencil drawings were produced in Stanley Reckless's head drawing class with a very hard HB, 6, 7 and sometimes a 9 lead pencil.

Mr. Reckless, would say, "Take two good looks and then apply your pencil to the paper!"

After pencil drawing we learned to paint heads with Winsor Newton watercolors. These are a few of my paintings from Stanley Reckless's 1952-53 classes.



This was a study painting light on Cason paper with Winsor Newton colors from Harold Kramer's class.



ONE WEEK BEFORE GRADUATION, THE SUMMER OF 1953

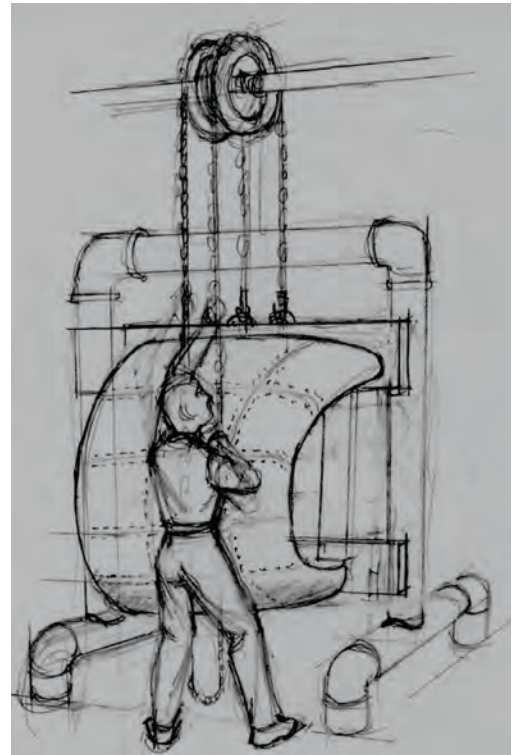
When I looked at the list of people who were graduating my name was not on the list! I got worried and went to the office to see what the problem was. That's when I found out because I had changed my major from Advertising Design to Illustration, I did not have enough credits to graduate. I would have to go another semester. At that time my G.I. Bill ran out and the tuition was more than I could handle. The only thing I could do was to drop out of school and get a full time job to pay for my last semester.

During my first year at Art Center I had life drawing, fashion drawing, and advertising design classes. After that first semester, I came to the conclusion that I did not want to be a designer. I wanted to be an illustrator. I wanted to draw and paint so I changed my major from advertising design to illustration, which came back to haunt me when it came time to graduate.



This was a study painting light on Cason paper with Winsor Newton colors from Harold Kramer's class.

I not only got one job, I got two. I got a job at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica on the graveyard shift from 12:30 am until 7:30 am working on the Douglas DC6 Cargo plane. In less that a week, I heard that North American Aircraft, a few blocks away from where I was living, was hiring for the day shift. I applied and got the job. I would go to work at Douglas Aircraft in Santa Monica, work all night, get off at 7:30 am, rush home where my wife Gloria would have breakfast ready, my lunch packed and my badge for North American Aircraft. I had about fifteen minutes to eat, grab my badge, lunch and run out the door. I had just enough time to make it to the next job. I did this for about two or three months until one morning...



I forgot to change my badge. I walked into North American Aircraft factory with a Douglas Air Craft badge on and the guard stopped me, so I reached into my pocket and pulled out my Douglas Badge, put it on and kept right on going. Working two jobs finally caught up with me when I was working on the nose cone of the F86 Saber jet pounding rivets in the metal skin while it was in a jig. I had to pull on the chain to lift the nose cone out of the jig and I fell asleep while I was pulling on the chain. The next thing I knew the supervisor was standing there calling my name and said "whats wrong with you?" "You have been falling a sleep too much lately and someone said you are working at another job. Are you?" he asked. I said yes. The supervisor said I have to let you go. Boy that sure was good, I didnt want to quit, but I knew that I could not keep doing both jobs, because it was killing me. I made enough money to pay for my last semester.





Gloria and I had a 1952 black Plymouth that we purchased when we were still living on Cochran St. in Los Angeles. While working in the aircraft industry, I had made enough money to pay my tuition for my last semester at Art Center and take a vacation. Gloria and the kids, Ramona and Riea and I took our first vacation in that '52 Plymouth.



We went to the Redwood Forest and San Francisco. In the picture to the left, you will see me, holding Ramona and Riea in my arms in front of the Giant Redwood Tree that a automobile can and does drive through. Our son Ricky, (Emerson Jr.) was born 1954 just before I graduated from Art Center and while we were still living on Cochran Street. By the way, the Santa Monica Freeway now runs right through Cochran Street where our house was.



Back to my story. It was early in the morning when Gloria woke me and said its time to go, we had to drive across town from the Westside of Los Angeles to the Eastside where White Memorial Hospital was located. It was very early, the sun was just coming up and the traffic was very light on Olympic Blvd. When we got to the hospital I let Gloria out at the emergency entrance and I went to find a parking place. Before I could get back, baby Ricky was born and Gloria was already in her room. Rick had a headful of bright red hair.

I re-registered and completed my last semester at Art Center and graduated in 1954. I was now ready to out and get started in that big bad advertising world.

AFTER GRADUATION FROM ART CENTER

I worked for Douglas Aircraft Technical Publication, George Cooper Publications, Canon & Sullivan Publications, Ben Bronson Art Studio, Steven Beondi DeCio Studio and Film Designer Inc.

At Film Designers I produced illustrations for educational films and background illustrations for animated films.



One of the animated films that we produced for Film Designer, was a Lockheed SST animated film, and a project for JPL / NASA Deep Space Network. Steven Beondi Decico Studios, Russ Hart Studios, Filmation Inc. (where we produced cartoons for Saturday morning kids television shows on ABC, NBC, and CBS), Revell Toy Company, Tidewater Oil Company, Mattel Toy Company, Western Publishers Childrens Books, Gospel Light Publishers, Hanna Barbara, Seiniger Advertising Inc., General Dynamics Aerospace, Diener Hauser Bates Advertising Co., Cornerstone Display Group Inc. A documentary painter of the African Cowboys. The US Air Force History. A documentary painter of the Civil Rights Movement. I called it (Non-Violence in a Violent Society).



GENERAL DYNAMICS AEROSPACE



I won an award for designing a security poster series.

These are some of the products that General Dynamics produced and that we displayed in their brochures. Ship launched rockets, hand held rocket launchers, air to air missiles, ship board automatic canons, and hovercrafts.



PORTFOLIO SAMPLES



I created this piece to pitch Honda Motor Bikes.



I created this piece while working at General Dynamics

The year was 1953, and I was in my last semester of school. I had to go one extra semester, because I had changed my major after my first semester at Art Center not aware that it would make a difference when it came time to graduate. So I had an extra semester to work on my portfolio. That was when I thought it would be great to get a automobile client. That is why I created this Buick Illustration. Also, I just wanted to illustrate a scene like this.



Art Center Portfolio piece

BOOK COVER ART



Painting front and back cover for "Inside Black Hollywood" in my studio, Pasadena, Ca.

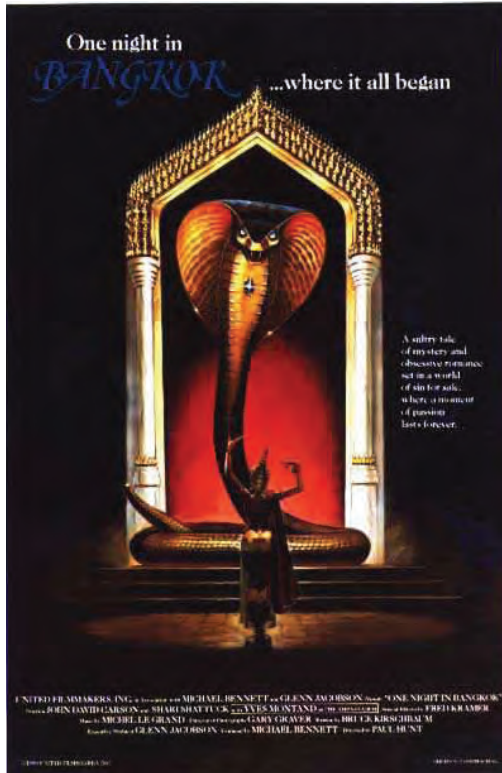


This was a cover produced for Pinnacle Pocket Books of New York City. I had a number of models for this painting. A couple of my kids modeled for this painting, I also used a few people from the advertising agency where I was working at the time.

I illustrated a childrens book that was written by comedian and television star Redd Foxx. It was a fun project to work on.



MOVIE POSTERS AND BOOK COVERS



Independent Production Company



Cover Art for Pinnacle Pocket Books

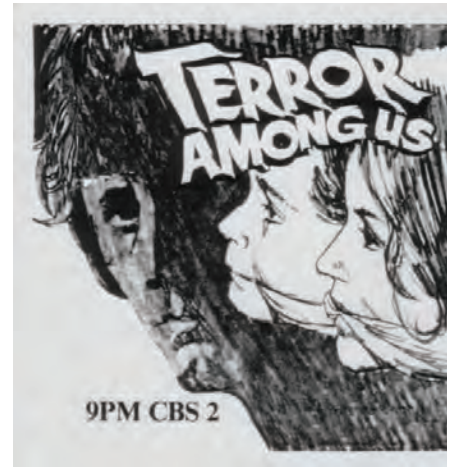


Painting for the US Air Force



Independent Production Company

CONCEPTUAL SKETCH ART FOR NBC & CBS



Movie of the Week



AFTER DEINER HAUSER BATES

I got a job freelancing with Seiniger Advertising Inc. the top creative shop in Los Angeles producing One Sheet Movie Posters for all of the Major Motion Picture Companies in Hollywood. I was hired to do the same thing that I had been doing for DHB (Diener Hauser Bates) but instead of being paid \$18 dollars per hour I was paid \$45 per hour.

I got a Call from DHB and the Art Director wanted me to do more concepts for the Movies of the Week. I charged them \$45.00 per hr. which they gladly paid. The Art Director, Vince Anino told me that if they had me on staff now, they would have to pay me at least \$35.00 or more per hour. That was strange since I had always been a freelance artist, even though I worked on the premises. I was being paid a flat fee of \$700 per week and happy to get it, since I had been working for General Dynamics for \$250 per week just a short time ago.

I continued to freelance until I heard about a job at NBC TV print department, I applied and got the job. It was quiet a bit like what I was doing for DHB, which were concepts for TV guide ads and newspaper ads. I worked there for about a year or so and then went back to freelancing.

READING ON THE FRONT PORCH

When I turned 62 years old, I took an early retirement but continued to freelance! I also continued to read and expand my consciousness and awareness of history, cosmology and Kemet. At this time I became a prolific reader and I would spend all day sometimes just reading and trying to absorb as much information as I could. It was a broadening and expanding period in my life. I always had a book in my hand. I read in the car while Gloria was shopping, I read when I went to the bathroom, I read on the front porch and I figured out how to set my book up so I could read while riding the stationary bicycle.



It is amazing how much reading you can do if you take advantage of all of the spare moments that you have when just standing around waiting to do something, or waiting for some one. It is so rewarding. A few of the books that I have read since I retired are: The Collected Works by Dr. Richard King, Black Dot, Black Seed, Uraeus: From Mental Slavery to Mastership, Esoteric Factors of the Cress Theory, The Eye of Heru, The African Origin of Biological Psychiatry; The Invisible Man By Ralph Ellison, The Los Cities of Africa by Basil Davidson, Precolonial Black Africa by Cheikh Anta Diop, Yurugu by Marimba Ani, The Falsification of African Consciousness by Amos N. Wilson, Africa Must Unite by Kwame Nkrumah, Ancient Future by Wayne B. Chandler, African Intellectual Heritage by Molefi Kete Asante, Mdw Ntr, Divine Speech by Jacob H. Carruthers, African Origins of Western Religions by Yosef A. A. Ben-Jochannan, Introduction to African Civilizations by John G. Jackson, Ancient Egypt The Light Of The World by Gerald Massey. Many of these books are in the garage because I have no room on my book shelves for them at this time.

THE BLACK MALE FORUM AND THE PASADENA CITY ART COMMISSION

I joined a local group in Pasadena called the Black Male Forum. We met once a week to discuss issues in the community and tried to bring some kind of influence to their out come. After becoming known to some of the Local city officials, that I was a Artist living in the community, I was asked to serve on the Pasadena Art Commission. I accepted the appointment and served until I saw how the system worked and that the independent artists only got the crumbs when grant money was being given out. I resigned the commission, because I found that I could not make changes to the system that would be fair to all. I felt it was a waste of my time and I had much better things to do.



IN 1996 I GOT MY FIRST COMPUTER

It was a Mac, with 40 MB of ram and 64 MB of memory. I had been getting more and more interested in what the computer could do and all of it was new to me. My daughter Riea was working with a studio that brought in computers a few years earlier. She purchased one of the early Mac computers. Before long, between work and home she acquired skills in Photoshop, Illustrator, and Quark. By the time I got my computer, Riea was able to help me learn some of the applications.



FREELANCING IN THE DISPLAY BUSINESS

Collin Bedding was the Art Director at Continental Graphics in 1990. I was introduced to him by a young man named Chuck Johnson, whom I met at Art Center College of Design where I was asked to lecture about the African Cowboy paintings I had produced. I did a number of jobs for Collin. It was a different part of advertising. It was display design and fabrication. I worked in the display industry for a number of years.



BACK TO SCHOOL

My friend Al Strange told me that he was taking a class in photoshop at Glendale Community College. He said "Why dont you come and join me." I signed up and started the fall semester of 2002. It was a great experience. I learned so much in a few short months. After Glendale College, this computer stuff got good to me. I signed up at Pasadena City College and took Photoshop, Illustrator, Painter and Dreamweaver. I am still in a learning mode.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have achieved any success that I might have gained without the help of my wife, Gloria Ramona Simmons Terry, my mother and father in-law Nellie and Herbert Simmons. My brother in-law, George Simmons Attorney-at-Law. Our children, Gloria Terry Mushonga Roberts, Riea Terry Owens, Emerson R. Terry Jr., Sharon Terry, Anthony Terry and Kimberly R. Terry. And many others including none family members.

My Mother in-law, Nellie Simmons and Father in-law Herbert Simmons, provided a floor under Gloria and I while I was still a student at Art Center that kept us from falling thru the cracks. They gave us our first car, it was a used car, but it sure was great. We stayed with them most of the time while I was still in school and for a short time after I graduated from Art Center, Gloria and I lived in Aliso Village, in East Los Angeles. Nellie was in Real Estate, and her son George, the lawyer was a real estate broker. So, between them, my mother in-law found our first house and helped us get financing for it. We still live in it to this day.

I would like to also acknowledge some other friends and alumni of Art Center.



Bob Smith, Designer/Illustrator who has written a book detailing his experience at Art Center and in the Advertising Business.

Chuck Johnson, Designer

Jeybona Appiah, Ghana, West Africa. After graduation he returned Ghana to teach at the University of Ghana in Kumasi. Jeybona has one son who is now a designer working in England, another son who is a Architect in Ghana and a daughter who is a doctor in Philadelphia.

Gloria R. Terry Mushonga Roberts modeled for many of my illustration projects, as a child. As an adult, Ramona raised a daughter and two sons. She received a B.A. degree and taught classes at Cal State Northridge while working on her masters degree.

Riea Terry Owens has three sons. She studied Fashion Design in college but decide that she would like to work in advertising. I helped her get her first job working for Sears Department Stores in their Advertising Department. From there she went to work for Thompson Recruitment Advertising. Next a string of entertainment advertising companies that included, Deiner Hauser Bates, Paramount Pictures and Warner Brothers.

Emerson R. Terry Jr. modeled for many of my illustration projects including my Cowboy paintings. His thing is model cars and trucks. He went into the car rental business and became a car rental manager.



Sharon Terry modeled for many of my illustration projects. She became a painter and illustrator. She likes to write and illustrate her own stories. Sharon went to Art Center for a few semesters. She worked at Thompson Recruitment Advertising, Diener Hauser Bates Advertising and Scott McPhee Advertising to name a few. She has a son.

Anthony Terry modeled for many of my illustrations including Mattel Toys, Stamps-Conheim and Whitehead, a newspaper clip art service and my cowboy paintings that document The Old West, and much more. He has two daughters and two sons.

Kimberly Terry is the Baby, and no matter how old she gets, she's still my baby even though she now has two children of her own, Terrence and Imani. Kim loves to draw and paint on glass. My Mom used to do that.



Thank you

for joining us in our

JOURNEY TO **ART CENTER**

and Beyond...

Emerson is an accomplished
illustrator who came up
through the advertising ranks
in 1950's when there were very
few African Americans
in the field.

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