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The Art of Forensics

—By SANDRA MCINTOSH

Suzanne Baldon is an artist.

She creates fine art in oils, acrylics, watercolors and pastels. She's made a name for herself in the field of forensic art as well. "Forensic art has nothing at all to do with painting a portrait. It's not fine art," Suzanne said. "Forensic art is the practical application that gets the job done in the identification process."

As senior secretary and lecturer of the sociology and anthropology department at the University of Texas at Arlington, Suzanne knows what she's talking about. It's an art form that piqued her interest when she was a stay-at-home mom back in the mid '70s. She paused for a moment in front of the TV one particular day to watch a portion of an episode of "Quincy." She never dreamed the hands she saw during that show would be the same hands that, one day 20 years later, would teach her the

techniques needed to be successful in forensic art. "Quincy was in the desert when he came upon a bunch of bikers. One of the bikers had a skull hanging on his handlebars," Suzanne remembers with a laugh. "Quincy offered him \$50 for the skull. The biker took the money and Quincy took the skull back to his LA office. He wanted to know who the skull belonged to."

What caught and held Suzanne's attention that day was the actress playing the part of forensic artist Betty Pat. Gatliff. It was years later that Suzanne learned the hands on the screen were not the hands of an actress, but the hands of Betty Pat., the woman who today is not only one of Suzanne's teachers, but a mentor and friend.



In 1982, Suzanne decided it was time to return to the classroom. She earned her bachelor's degree in art with a minor in psychology in 1986 from the University of Texas at Tyler. She went on to work in Dallas at a national company as a private investigator.

In December of 1994, Suzanne earned her master's degree in anthropology and went on from there to take several workshops pertaining to forensic art. It was during one of these courses that she met Betty Pat., and the rest is history – or part of Suzanne's ever-growing resume. "The workshops were spread out over a couple of years," Suzanne said. "I always learned something new and usable in each and every workshop."