

James B. Skidmore: photographer, artist and finishing carpenter

James was born in Louisiana and grew up in Texas. He graduated from high school in 1934, and then studied fine arts at the University of Houston. His talent as an artist was demonstrated at the age of 7 when he won first prize at the Houston State Fair for a detailed pencil drawing of a dog. Later he developed a love for woodworking, air flight, and model air planes. Mr. Skidmore described one of his model wooden airplanes in the October, 1944 issue of *Model Airplane News*. He had built a 1/6th scale model of the *Knight Twister* known for it's 15 foot wing span and ability to fly at 130mph.

As an artist, Mr. Skidmore's talents extended photography. He served his country as a Naval Aerial Combat photographer during WWII. As a charter member of the National Press Photographers Association, his young career as a press photographer for the *Houston Chronicle* began before World War II until 1952, when he purchased property in Evergreen, Colorado. He moved his family to Colorado and took a job 20 minutes away to work the redesign of the Buffalo Bill Museum in Golden, Colorado on Lookout Mountain. The museum structure had extensive woodwork throughout made up of massive old growth timber.

While employed at the museum, Mr. Skidmore took on a four-year construction project building mountain-chalet style home on his property. However, James Skidmore relocated his family from Colorado to Escondido in 1958 so that his wife Marguerite could be close to her family. Mr. Skidmore was employed by the Weir Bros. Adobe Company as a wood finishing carpenter. His projects included working on adobe homes in Rancho Santa Fe, Pauma Valley, and Escondido from 1964-1978. James documented some of the construction work with photography. In his color slide collection, photographs frame views of beautiful wooden open beam ceilings, massive handcrafted doors, staircase railings, cabinetry, and often custom designed furniture. What he brought to life by his own hands would be enjoyed for years to come, and to become a part of the fabric of the history of San Diego's North County.

At the age of 62, Mr. Skidmore retired from wood design and returned to his love of painting and drawing. He created 40 plus watercolors from his 3000 plus photographs in his collection that he had taken from 1958-1995. A few views works of art were based from what he saw on his trip to Hong Kong in 1982. James B. Skidmore passed away in his sleep on July 30, 2004. He had a role of film in his camera. When the film was developed, there were four last pictures, self portraits, fantastically simple, brilliant.

James B. Skidmore

b. 10-23-1916 Shreveport, LA

d. 07-30-2004 Escondido, CA

m. 03-17-1945 Marguerite

Source: Detailed biography and set of photographs of adobe home projects submitted by daughter, Margaret (Peggy) Skidmore, January 20, 2016. Edited for Adobe Home Tour website, Escondido History Center.