

# Neighbors

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## People



Chris Crewell/Neighbors

Charlseay Cartwright of midtown, sitting in her living room with her dog, Alice, specializes in painting cats and dogs for clients who commission the work.

Being the Picasso of Sacramento's pooches and pussies does not mean one works in the Milk Bone and Kitty Litter medium.

But it does mean having to indulge some fairly unconventional requests. Like painting someone's Airedale as the great Waldo Pepper.

For midtown artist Charlseay Cartwright, such a request came from a particular master who wanted her pup and husband depicted as pilot and copilot of an airplane. (For the record, the Airedale was the co-pilot.)

"I painted them flying over farm country," Cartwright said. "Luckily, the client had a good sense of humor and knew her request was unusual."

Cartwright began hobnobbing with the kennel set about seven years ago. She was taking courses in watercolor painting when fellow students began asking her to paint them posing with their pets.

Clients liked her work and a commissioned artist was born.

The artist herself is master and housemate to two cats, Tuna and Sissy, and a 1-year-old Australian shepherd, Alice. (Any connection with Alice Springs, Australia, is purely coincidental, Cartwright informs.)

As for which of the species, dog or cat, she likes best, Cartwright isn't biting.

"I like both equally," she said. "The real enjoyment I get is watching the relationship between a pet and its owner."

Before putting brush to canvas, Cartwright meets the dog or cat and talks with the owner to get a sense of the relationship between master and pet. She then takes photos of the subjects in various poses and looks at the client's taste in art to determine what style to paint in.

Only after these preliminary steps does the artist retreat to her home-studio to paint.

"There is a lot of emotion wrapped up in my work and if the client doesn't like the painting they don't have to buy it," she said. "I feel a lot less pressured that way."

Cartwright, who works as a manager for the state's Employment Development Department, said the Airedale-as-pilot piece was rare and that most clients want the more traditional sitting poses. For her

painting's backgrounds, though, she can let her imagination run wild.

"If I'm painting a cat I might have the background be fishes and birds," she said. "I like to make the background into what may be the animal's fantasy."

A native of Marin County, Cartwright has lived in Boulevard Park for 15 years and once served as that neighborhood association's chairwoman.

Lately, Cartwright has branched out into making and selling jewelry and photographic prints. Her work can be found in several area stores, including Reigning Cats and Dogs in East Sacramento.

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