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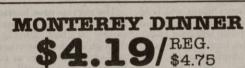
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Local

State artist focuses on animal kingdom

By LISA SURMAN

Battalion Reporter Jim Johnson of Bryan has focused his work on animals as a veterinarian, a federal researcher and now as a professional artist. Johnson, who received his doctorate in veterinary medicine from Texas A&M University in 1969, in May was named the Texas Artist of the Year for 1982-83.

"I don't actually become the state artist until April or May of next year," he said in a recent in-terview at his home, "so I'm still getting a lot of attention when I'm really not the state artist yet.

Johnson, who has been painting professionally for three years, said the state artist committee selects two artists each session for the award. The committee, which meets once every two years, is composed of three state senators, three House members and three members of the governor's staff. The artist spent three years in

his practice in 1972. "I was work-

ing by myself ... and did every-thing," he said. I was the recep-professional. "You have to really tionist, the kennel-boy ... and at that time really tired of it.

'I had had this interest, or at least I thought I did, in research. The opportunity came along to do it and I accepted it," he said. Johnson did toxicology research, which studies the effects of insecticides on animals, for the U.S. Depart-ment of Agriculture until 1978.

The decision to paint profes-sionally "was totally my decision," Johnson said. "My friends and relatives thought I was crazy. I didn't want to continue working in research anymore. I didn't like it. When you work for the bureaucracy of government, you see a lot of the problems and do a lot of things that have no point ... It was that kind of work — a lot of busy work." The artist, originally from Midland, said he is totally self-taught.

"I did a lot of sketchings and draw-ings when I was little, but never was interested in it enough to go to private veterinary practice. was interested in it end Johnson said he decided to quit school for it," he said.

Johnson said he was painting a

professional. "You have to really work hard at developing it. It's not something you just dive into and not have any experience with ... It's a very competitive and cut-

He said, "Being a veterinarian helps me with the animal's ana-tomy. Everything I paint I'm in-volved with to some degree. That's the only way I can really paint with confidence."

paint with confidence." Seventy-five to 80 percent of his paintings are oils and the rest are water colors. Johnson said he is primarily commissioned by a client who specifies what he wants painted and the price he will pay. Johnson's prices range form \$75 to \$10,000

The price sets the limit as to the size and how complex it is," Johnson said. "Otherwise, everything else is left totally up to me.

Johnson said he's not the only artist in his family. His aunt, Margo Clark, was a professional artist whose work is included in the pri-vate art collections of Bob Hope,

Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis and Red Skelton, he said. Johnson said Clark influenced him greatly but never knew it be-cause she died in 1966, six years before Johnson first tried to paint.

Johnson said good artists are constantly improving. "I can do a painting and three months later ... wish I could do differently," he said

said he reserves October to De cember for getting new material and clients. "I may not be actually painting, but I'm still creating something in my mind," he said During the rest of the year, Johnson said he spends six to 10 hours a day, seven days a week,

paint

the next year. As state artist, he will have a show in the Capitol Rotunda

An exhibit showing some of in the world that we needs Johnson's work will be shown in the lobby area of the Former Stu-When asked to sum up to dent's Association from mid-April until mid-May, Jim Reynolds, Di-rector of the Memorial Student Center said. He said the exhibit will be sponsored by the MSC Arts Committee and the Former

at his Bryan studio.

Texas Artist of the Year, Jim Johnson, demonstrates hism

Student's Association. Johnson's wife, Jocille, said she is always amazed with her husband's work. "I never know what he's going to create," she said. "He says there's enough distortion

tant to remember, there going to be a lesser and a than you are. Just about the you think you're pretty there's somebody around the ner who's a lot better... main thing is just to keep r bering what you do, hav fidence...and continue to be best that you can — event else will take care of itself.

About 150 seats for the

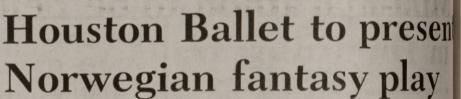
are still available in the sen

balcony, Debbie Murray, R

Box Office employee, said la day. The tickets are \$6 for \$

dents and \$7 for non-stude

Johnson said, "It's always



The Houston Ballet, sponsored by the MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society, will perform fortune. "Peer Gynt," the story of a wanderer's adventures, tonight at 8 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

Based on the Norwegian fan-Tay play by Henrik Isben, "Peer story and this had always tugged at Gynt" is one of the largest touring me," he said. "I've mostly done Gynt" is one of the largest touring

young man as he falls in love, bat-tles monsters and gains and loses a

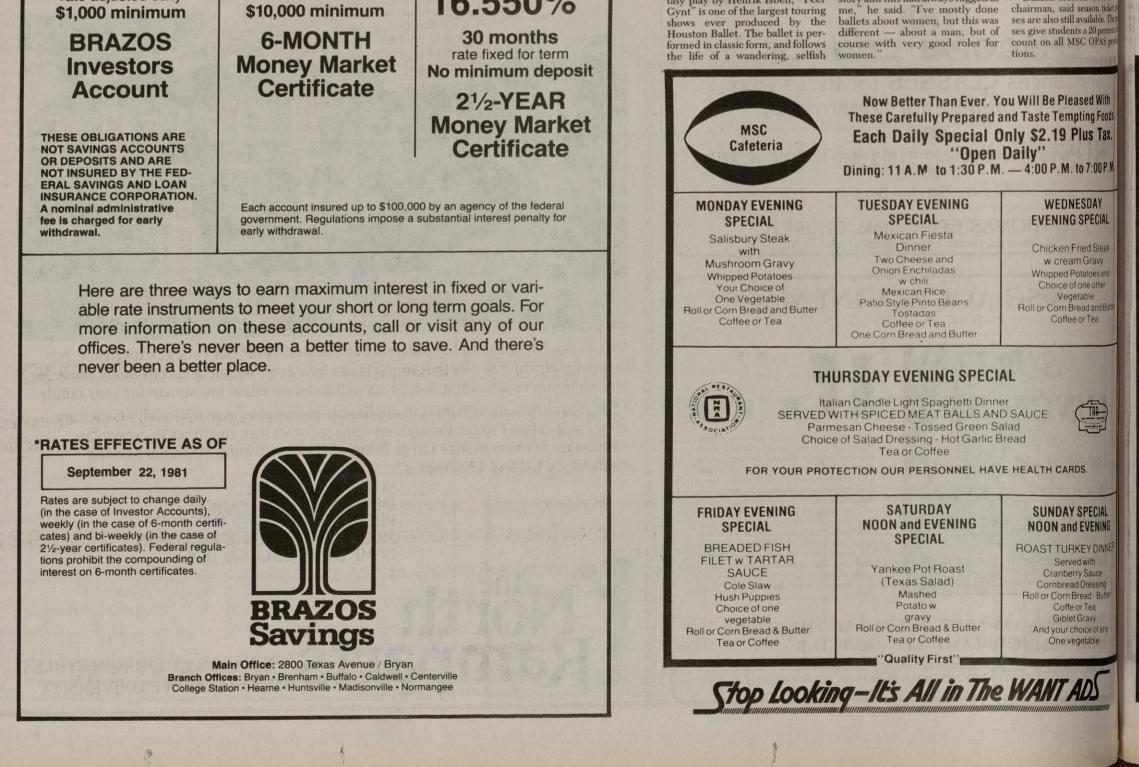
The ballet took director Ben Stevenson seven years to create. "I'd wanted to do a ballet with a

Damon Crenshaw, MSCO

Johnson, whose paintings have been sold all over the country, The most expensive painting Johnson has done was a 30 by 40 inch painting of the daughter of Secretariat (the 1973 Triple Crown winner), he said. It sold for \$10,000 and took seven weeks to raint Johnson said he will be concen-trating on shows and exhibits in

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