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# Vero Beach

FEBRUARY 2022

## Magazine®

*This VBHS teen is*

# Galloping to Glory



"Game Day," acrylic on canvas, 30 x 48 inches

# Palette, Palate & Polo Mallet

TWENTY-YEAR VERO BEACH RESIDENT DR. JOHNSON HAGOOD  
HAS FOUND SUCCESS IN BOTH ART AND DENTISTRY

BY JULIA DOUGLAS



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©

J. Hagood

In his famous poem “The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost contemplates two roads diverging in a yellow wood. As we all know, he chooses the less traveled one. Unlike Frost, Dr. Johnson Hagood was able to take two roads simultaneously, deciding early in life to become accomplished in two fields: dentistry and art.

Windsor has selected Hagood’s painting “The Match,” a dynamic image of four polo ponies in action, to become the commemorative poster for its 2022 Charity Polo Cup, the sixth biennial such event since its inception. The painting will be displayed prominently and auctioned off at the event this month.

Hagood has attained comparable accolades in his other career path; his dental practice, Vero Beach Art of Dentistry, was chosen in 2018 to enhance the smiles of both Miss Florida USA and Miss Florida Teen USA. He is one of fewer than 500 dentists worldwide to have earned accreditation from the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.

Hagood is a visiting faculty member of the Pankey Institute in Key Biscayne, and he lectures and facilitates workshops for dentists from around the country. His artistic sensibilities serve him well as he teaches such subjects as dental photography, smile design and restorative dentistry.

As a lad of about 5 years old, Hagood was constantly doodling and fiddling with his primary-colored Crayolas. This overt obsession continued until he was 10 or so, at which point his parents signed him up for lessons with an instructor from the local high school in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The



Dr. Hagood displays his art at his dental office, the Vero Beach Art of Dentistry, for his patients to enjoy. This painting of the Vero Beach Country Club golf course was the first piece he ever sold. A recent creative trade brought the painting back to his office.

instructor, Mr. Parker, became an integral part of the boy’s life, helping to set him on an artistic path.

Hagood says, “I distinctly remember painting an apple in oil, over and over, until I finally got it right.”

After his parents relocated the family to Laguna Beach, California, when Hagood was 13, he took art lessons from a neighbor, an artist who taught him to use a Rapidograph pen and to create pictures made up solely of dots. One of his pictures of a dirt bike rider was accepted into the Laguna Beach Arts Festival.

When the time came for college, Hagood decided on a career in medicine. As an undergraduate premed

major at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, he took as many elective art courses as he could fit into his schedule.

At one point, he realized he was gradually losing interest in attending medical school; then he had an important conference with his academic advisor, who made a magical connection between art and dentistry that was to affect Hagood’s life path: “Johnson, I know you love art and you are interested in health care. Have you considered dentistry?”

He hadn’t, but this new possible connection between his two interests resonated with him as he realized he could use his artistic talents as a dentist.

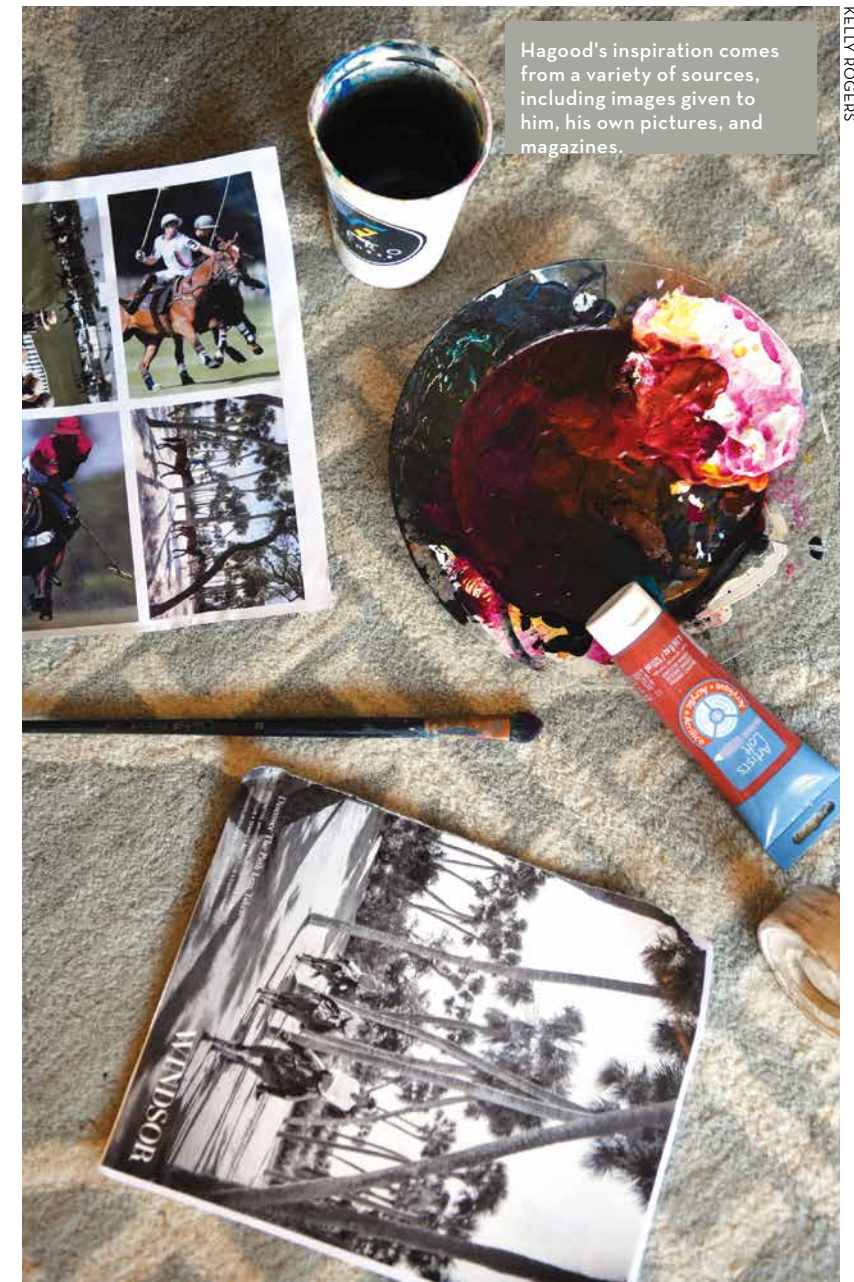
In planning the next phase of his life, Hagood chose one of the top three dental schools in the country, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He graduated in 1991, mostly eschewing art while he concentrated on dentistry.

Several years after graduating, he landed in Virginia Beach to practice dentistry. He took a series of lessons from a local artist who encouraged her pupils to copy their favorite painters. Hagood chose some of the greats: Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, Pierre Bonnard and Vincent Van Gogh.

Hagood says, “I eventually lost interest in taking art lessons, preferring to experiment on my own. I liked painting the pho-

“I eventually lost interest in taking art lessons, preferring to experiment on my own.”

- JOHNSON HAGOOD



Hagood’s inspiration comes from a variety of sources, including images given to him, his own pictures, and magazines.



"The Match," acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 inches, appears on the 2022 Windsor Charity Polo Cup commemorative poster.

**"My garage is my studio. It's nothing fancy, but it suits me fine."**

- JOHNSON HAGOOD

tographs I was taking as well as photos from magazines. I enjoyed this freewheeling approach rather than being pigeonholed in formal classes."

He adds, "After I'd moved my practice to Vero Beach, I started hanging my paintings in the office as well as in my house. Subsequently, Penny Aliyetti, a patient and a member of Vero Beach's Artists Guild Gallery on 14th Avenue, asked me to exhibit there."

This was a real turning point in Hagood's artistic career. After exhibiting at the Artists Guild Gallery several times as a guest artist, he was asked to become a consignment member. This inspired him to produce more paintings, as he needed a minimum of 12 in order to exhibit.

Asked how he ended up in Vero Beach, Hagood says he discovered the town during college spring breaks while driving through the area in search of excellent surf spots. When he and his wife, Dana, decided to relocate to Florida, Vero Beach was the first place they looked.

They agreed it was an ideal small city, one in which they could envision living and bringing up a family. Dr. John Ashby's dental practice happened to be for sale, and they immediately made plans to purchase the practice and the building.

Hagood's office on Ponce de Leon Circle has a homey feel to it. Many of his friends and patients incorrectly assume it was originally a house and was later converted to

a dental office. Actually it was built by Ashby to be a dental office in 1958.

When Hagood mentions his dental team, his tone is downright reverential. "I have been blessed to have found these people who make up my dental team. We are like a family and I treat them that way. My hygienist has been here 17 years. My office manager has been here 12 years, and my assistants have been with me for seven years and two years. We moved into this office building 20 years ago, and I am now writing a special personal thank-you note to all my patients who've been here the full 20 years."

One of the more recent major influences in Hagood's painting career has been Dutch artist Frits Van Eeden, a well-known and



Hagood works in his studio in the garage of his Vero Beach home, surrounded by hanging surfboards and works in progress.

KELLY ROGERS

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"Spicy Orchids," oil on canvas, 14 x 11 inches

highly respected artist in the U.S. and Europe. Over the last couple of years Hagood has attended several workshops conducted by Van Eeden.

Hagood says, "I have taken several workshops from Eeden where he would demonstrate a specific technique and then critique and modify his students' work. He taught a new technique to me dating back to the medieval era. It was the use of heavy gesso as a foundation with watery acrylic added to it and finally heavier acrylic added

with brush and palette knife. This ancient process was used by Giotto in the 14th century as well as many old masters like Rembrandt. I also studied with two local artists, Sheila Lougheed and Suze Lavendar."

A close friend and patient of Hagood's is John Walsh, criminal justice television star and longtime host of "America's Most Wanted." In his private life, he is an inveterate and skilled polo player, along with his son Hayden. Both are frequent



"Thunder Cell," oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

participants in Windsor's Charity Polo Cup.

Hagood asked Walsh to lend him some action photos of him and his son on their polo ponies. From this group of images, he created a number of polo pony paintings, including the now-famous Windsor winning poster. He had hung them in his office, where they were spotted by members of the Polo Cup committee charged with finding the 2022 commemorative artist.

Hagood's dual careers are just part of the rewarding life he and Dana, a pharmacist and fitness instructor, have carved out for themselves in Vero Beach over the past 20 years. As active parishioners of Trinity Episcopal Church and longtime members of the Jungle Club, now Vero Fitness, they have found their first impressions of the town to be more than accurate.

Even the surfing that originally brought Hagood to the area continues to play an important role. The couple's boating excursions with their pug, Violet, have engendered a deep appreciation for the ocean and the Indian River Lagoon, so they are particularly pleased with the charities Windsor has chosen to



"Indian River Sunburst," oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches

benefit from this year's Polo Cup: the Ocean Research & Conservation Association and the Environmental Learning Center.

Hagood's association with Artists Guild Gallery has led to the sale of a number of paintings. He even worked with an interior designer who sold three of his paintings to the same client.

Despite his artistic success, Hagood says he's happy to be painting as a passion and not trying to make a living as an artist. When asked about his studio, he shrugs and says, "My garage is my studio. It's nothing fancy, but it suits me fine." ☼



"Reflections," oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches