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Bob Moody: Jack of All Trades

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even in '65, I knew that the real push in space was over. I was 20 years ahead of the rest of NASA, and I could see what was going to happen."

At first glance, these seem like bold words from a retired interior designer born and raised in Boaz, Alabama. Rest assured, however, for Bob Moody knows his space.

Hired by NASA upon its inception in 1959, Moody worked in Future Projects for 7 years as a graphic artist. Using slides, models, and old-school animation (imagine 7,000 drawings per minute), he helped to conceptualize the Apollo program, including the lofty task of designing the now-renowned lunar landing capsule. As Moody jokes, "we [Future Projects] probably cost the taxpayers billions trying to figure out what to do with that third man."

The son of two schoolteachers, Moody knew early on that he wanted to do something creative. "I really wanted to be a

es," he explains, "and it's the only curriculum I know of where you'll have a major in art and a major in mathematics. It's just a good background...and we've got too many lawyers."

Only recently has Moody closed his interior design office, settled down with his wife Rebecca in their quaint Scottish revival home near English Village in Mountain Brook, Alabama, and returned to his first love—watercolor painting. Along with Rebecca and Luke, he traveled around his home state painting more than an hundred early Alabama churches, a series he self-published with his wife's help in *Gifts of Grace: Alabama Churches in Watercolor*.

"We learned how to market a book, go to book signings, and so on," Moody says. "It [self-publishing] is not something I'd like to try again, but it was great fun, and it was also very successful."

Oddly enough, a copy of *Gifts of Grace* found its way into the hands of London's Historic Preservation Trust, who then commissioned Moody to do a book on early English churches as a fundraiser for the organization's intended restoration projects. "After all," Moody jokes, "they've got 56,000 churches that no one goes to."

In the end, Moody, again with Rebecca and Luke in tow, produced a book that was far less successful than its Alabama counterpart, due mostly to poor overseas marketing. Nevertheless, *The Church Triumphant: English Churches in Watercolour* did attract at least one notable fan, the Queen of England. In a special ceremony, the Moodys met with the Queen and presented her with a copy of the book before returning home to their own English Village, of which Bob says, "I'd rather live right here than anywhere else in the world."

Exactly how does a watercolor painter at heart wind up working for NASA, spending decades as an interior designer and historic renovator, and publishing his own book, all with a remarkable degree of success?

"I could conceptualize things—that was always my strong suit," Moody admits. "Anywhere I worked, I could make a presentation, and I could sell something."

Whether discussing his books, his building projects, or even his aircraft manuals, he always comes back to this point: "Everything you're going to do in life is selling...you've got to sell something. Just figure out what it is you would like to sell."

“Everything you’re going to do in life is selling...”

painter," he says, "but I didn't know any painters who made a living as artists." He pursued a B.A. in Interior Design from Auburn University's School of Architecture because "interior design was more practical and related to people."

Moody packed his bags shortly after graduation for a move to Dallas, hoping to eventually work for the famous George Dahl in his interior department. In the meantime, he worked first as a technical illustrator producing manuals for Chance Vaught Aircraft and then as a commercial artist for R.G. LeTourneau.

After five years in Texas, Moody was ready to move on, NASA came calling, and the rest is history. "I knew I'd better get back to what I went to college for," he says.

Conveniently, a friend from Auburn had risen to the top of Charles H. McCauley & Associates, a Birmingham architecture firm, and hired Moody to start an interior design department.

"At the time, I was moving around, you know, trying to pick up another \$200 a month," he remembers. "By then, I had three children and had to support a family. I had to find something that wasn't just fun but that I could also make a living in."

Thus began Moody's long and illustrious career in interior design, one that came to include frequent historic restoration and renovation projects as well. Forever indebted to his degree and, more importantly, his experience at Auburn, he advises teens, including his 14-year-old son Luke, to "get a degree in architecture [as opposed to law] and then figure out what it is you want to do. You have to take a lot of art cours-

tools of the trade...

In such cozy surroundings, Bob Moody's artistic endeavors thrive.

