

A paraplegic's journey

Author with local roots tells his life story in photos, paintings

By RAY SAUL

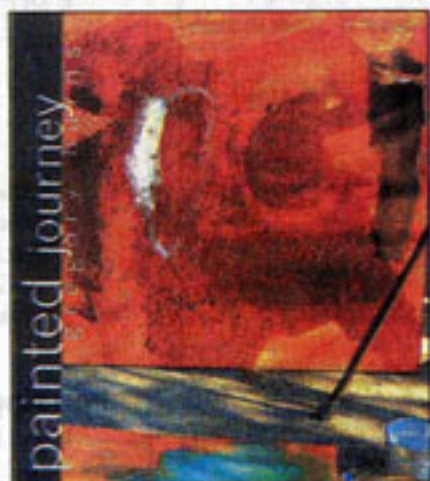
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Being paralyzed from the waist down since early childhood hasn't prevented Gregory Burns from leading a remarkable life of one notable achievement after another.

His latest accomplishment is authoring and publishing his own book of paintings and photographs of people and places across the globe.

Burns contracted polio as an infant and has needed crutches and braces since then to be mobile. He is a son of the late Ruth Tomasick Burns of Hazleton Heights and Robert Burns, now of Santa Cruz, Calif.

Painted Journey is a 200-page, full-color hardcover book that includes scenes from California,



Singapore, Nepal, China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, India, Hawaii and Europe. The reproductions of the paintings and photographs are accompanied by text written by Burns, which adds to the reader's enjoyment.

In reality, the text is the author's incredible life story.

His father's assignments with the U.S. Foreign Service exposed Burns to other cultures while the family of six lived in Jerusalem, France, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

The family also resided in Cupertino and Los Altos, Calif., prior to moving to Santa Cruz.

"His profound yet lyrical take on reality is an ethereal task based on landscapes and cultural artifacts in places where we unconscious walkers seldom venture," anthropologist Dr. David Blundell of UCLA wrote in the book's foreword.

"... Gregory Burns has sought and achieved a view of the world painted in broad strokes. Dwell with the artist in his paintings for a resounding celebration of the

moment, and then linger in contemplation of the experience that created it."

Burns said the book "has been gestating for 30 years."

During much of his youth, Burns lived in Europe, where he was tutored in art. It was in the United States, however, where he attended his first art class as an adult, at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster.

His paternal grandfather's relationship with President Dwight D. Eisenhower permitted Burns to enjoy swimming in the White House pool and to whet his appetite for enjoying competitive sports.

Eventually he would hike long distances, engage in rock climbing, compete in marathons and

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Gregory Burns wears the swimming medal that he won at the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta.



Greg Burns, left, and a friend, Donald, pose on a street in Nepal while visiting the country.

Journey

(Continued from E1) win five swimming medals in the Paralympic Games in Barcelona (Spain) in 1992, Atlanta in 1996 and Sydney (Australia) in 2000. He set four world records.

"I excelled in competitive swimming and traveled to meets around the country and then to competition abroad," Burns said. "Water had become my anchor and I would be submerged in it for much of the next 27 years."

I have known Burns since his childhood days. His achievements never cease to amaze me. His book is truly a beautiful collection of reproductions of his paintings and photographs.

Burns' maternal grandparents were the late John and Mary (Potash) Tomasick of Hazleton Heights. John Tomasick was a longtime member of the Hazleton City School Board.

The book, printed in Singa-



Greg Burns, center, is shown with his family, from left, brother Scott, father Robert, mother Ruth (now deceased) and sister Roberta. He also has a brother, Chip.

pore, was self-published by Burns. The text, paintings, etchings and drawings are all his. Assisting him were editors Ben Munroe and Miki Garrison, and art director, designer and photographer Tan Hsiao Hsing Angie.

The book is dedicated to Burns' parents and to Brother Joseph McNally, a fellow artist.

Burns has a bachelor of arts degree in communications

studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. He completed graduate studies in Chinese painting and calligraphy at Cheng Chi University, Taipei, Taiwan, and was awarded a master of fine arts degree in painting at R.M.I.T., Melbourne, Australia.

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