

E.L. 'BUSTER' KENTON

Visual Arts-- Oil on Canvas; Watercolors; Ink Sketches, Leather, Carving
5/1/1920 – 3/20/1991

Location and Length of Florida Residency

Buster Kenton spent almost all of his life (1920-1991) in Kissimmee, Florida excluding school and military service. It was a "family secret" that Buster arrived in Kissimmee at the age of six months when his parents joined other family and that he was not born in Kissimmee. At the time of his death, his place of birth was not printed as was customary. My Dad was a true Floridian and most of his art legacy reflects his love of Florida and especially the cattle, horse and ranch culture. Buster Kenton really does deserve recognition in the Florida Artist Hall of Fame as both an artist and a Floridian.

Significant Artistic Achievements in Florida

Kenton's art legacy includes cartoons and caricatures, which enhanced more than one or two editorial pages in local presses. Kenton's most notable (and favored) cartoon caricature, Cowboy Jake was created in 1948 for the Kissimmee Jaycees and appeared on postcards and promotional materials for Kissimmee. Jake (modeled after real Cowboy Pete Clemons) graced billboards greeting all with a "Welcome Pardner" as they entered Kissimmee City limits. The Kissimmee ambassador was later transformed to Kowboy Jake and still serves as the mascot for Osceola Senior High School of which the artist was a graduate. Kenton's work was found in many Florida homes and businesses, as well as on magazines covers including Florida Cattleman, South American publications and the Silvers Spurs Rodeo News. Kenton also illustrated "Old Tales and Trails of Florida" by Myrtle Hilliard Crow. Kenton has been recognized by the City of Kissimmee and the Osceola County Board of Commission with both entities declaring Buster Kenton Day. The Buster Kenton Room is a permanent tribute at the Osceola County History Center. In 2019, some of Kenton's work was featured at the Albin Polasek Museum in Winter Park, Florida.

Significant Artistic Achievements Nationally

Kenton's art has transcended the Florida state line through the purchase of his art which has an appeal to residents of other states. Though I am not aware of any specific national attention or awards he received, I am confident that he has inspired other artists and that his love of Florida has been represented well through his art in and outside of Florida.

In addition to military service, Kenton spent some relatively brief periods of time studying art outside of Florida and entertained a professional position in New York City. However, his love of Florida, the ranch and rodeo life pulled him back to his roots. Florida, the backwoods and the ranch were his passion and his talent allowed him to share this love with others in a profound manner.

Significant Artistic Achievements Internationally

Kenton's art appeared on the covers of locally printed South American agricultural magazines.

Though not of international acclaim, Buster Kenton's interest and knowledge exceeded well beyond the Florida boundary, deeming him somewhat of a renaissance man. Not only did he design and build his home, he constructed the large glass windows allowing for the northern light to shine in his studio. He spent time as both a rodeo participant and announcer as well as working in radio. He trained security dogs and was a special deputy for Osceola County primarily in the capacity of a pasture deputy. Kenton held a patent for a citrus harvester and was working on a helicopter design prior to his death.