

Edward John Hughes by Lori Treloar

E.J. Hughes was born February 17, 1913 in North Vancouver but spent the first nine years of his childhood in Nanaimo. For over 70 years he painted the landscapes of Coastal British Columbia. He died in January 2007 at the age of 93.

As a talented young man Mr. Hughes was the first recipient of the Emily Carr Scholarship. This scholarship allowed him to study in Vancouver under the stewardship of at least one of the Group of Seven artists, Frederick Varley. Over the years he accumulated many prestigious awards including the Order of Canada, the Order of British Columbia and an Honourary Doctorate from the University of Victoria.

For six years during WWII Mr. Hughes worked as an official war artist. During this time, he produced over 1000 drawings and 30 full paintings. Many of these works hang in the Canadian War Museum. Many other works hang in the National Gallery of Canada.

In 1951, Hughes was discovered by Montreal art dealer Max Stern who arranged to buy all of his paintings. This arrangement enabled Hughes to have the financial freedom to paint - which is the only thing he wanted to do.

E.J. Hughes lived at Shawnigan Lake for over twenty years until he found it too busy and noisy (circa 1970). Hughes's last studio, in a modest house in Duncan, was a spare bedroom, with a table and an easel set close to a single north window. He painted there, in the afternoon, six days a week. Sunday was his day off.

The vision of British Columbia, and particularly Vancouver Island, painted by E.J. Hughes is full of charm and vitality. He loved Shawnigan Lake and painted many memorable images of the area. He also provided the cover drawing for the Shawnigan Lake community history (1966). Although he is often mentioned in the same category as Emily Carr, it is the opinion of this writer that his pieces appeal to a greater audience and his work holds its own among the best of any Canadian artist.

In 2004, his painting *Fishboats Rivers Inlet* (1942) sold for \$920,000 and set a Canadian record for a living artist. People who knew Mr. Hughes hasten to describe him as the most modest of artists and a real gentleman. We take delight that such a man is woven into the history of Shawnigan Lake.

