

De Jong says so long

By KATHARINE SEALEY
Special *Peel Biog.*

The time has come for Gerry De Jong to say good-bye to some old friends.

The celebrated local artist is stepping down from his role as the chair of Visual Arts Mississauga (VAM) because he's leaving town. He's marking his departure with one last art exhibit & sale, Wednesday at the Springbank Art Centre.

After 35 years in Mississauga, De Jong and his wife Alice are opting for a quieter life in Kingston.

"It was a difficult decision," he said. "But I wanted a more relaxed lifestyle. We want to get away from the rat race."

The move to Kingston brings the couple closer to their children.

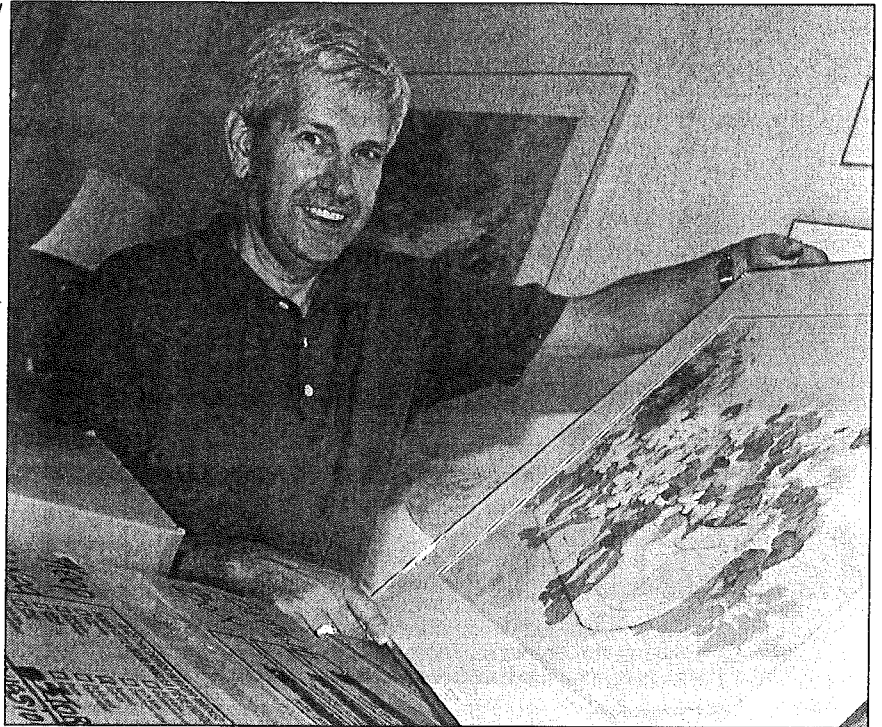
"There is lots of arts culture in that area, and it's nice and small the way Mississauga was when we first moved here," he said. "I want to give myself more time to follow my art."

De Jong has long been a fixture of the local arts community and has been actively involved with VAM since its inception in 1977. De Jong first became the organization's chair in 1980 and has held various positions on the board ever since, returning to his role as chair in 1996.

VAM operates Springbank, which is home to art workshops, group meetings, children's art camps, fine art exhibitions and craft sales throughout the year. De Jong has chosen Springbank to host his one-day sale, which sees him parting with pieces from his personal collection.

"I'm trying to clean out my studio," he said. "When we move to our new home in Kingston, we're going to have substantially less wall space, so we thought this would be a good opportunity to let people who seem to like the way I put watercolor on paper have a chance to own an original 'Gerry'."

From 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., fans of De



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Gerry De Jong is moving but before he goes he wants to leave a little of himself behind. The well-known artist, a resident of Mississauga for some 35 years, is holding a moving sale.

Jong's work will have a chance to purchase more than 50 framed and unframed works.

"The sale will mostly be my own works, the majority being watercolors with a few of my earlier works in acrylics and oils. There will also be a few by other artists," he said. "Our new condo simply doesn't have the space to display them all."

The paintings on sale have been marked down for a quick sale, with prices ranging from \$35 to \$500.

De Jong will be present throughout the sale and hopes to say good-bye to many people he's met over the years.

"It seemed appropriate to hold the sale at Springbank, where I've taught almost continually since we opened our doors in 1981," he said.

De Jong said that while he has many wonderful memories of Springbank, he is looking forward to the change of scenery.

"Springbank will always be very close to my heart," he said.

He said he's touched by all the warm wishes he's received and is surprised at the fuss the arts community is making over his departure.

Springbank located at the corner of Dundas St. and Mississauga Rd.