

May 15, 2002 Issue

Mount Rainier, A Looming Presence

It is that season again to make my semi-annual journey to the California coast. Actually, I have put it off for too long. I am anxious to cruise the coastal highway, with its winding, inundating, narrow invitation. I long to linger on breathlessly high ocean overlooks. I want to delight in seeing a flash of red, yellow, and white wildflowers tucked demurely amongst waving grasses. It is time to renew friendships I have made in remote communities nestled snugly deep in the redwood forests, and situated high on windswept bluffs. The farms and fields that I have driven past so often beckon me once more. I will begin my trip from Olympia on I-5, and make a stop near Grant's Pass, Oregon to research some old windmills, ending up at Willits, Ca., where one of my favorite restaurants still serves family sized meals of chicken fried steak and homemade meatloaf and gravy. Leaving the interstate highway, it is a "watch out for your own rear bumper" hairpin road through the coastal range to Mendocino, where I have a gallery-gift shop that carries my work. Point Arena, and Fort Bragg are also locales where I do business. Here is where the beautifully sculpted cypress trees dominate the scenery. (See my web page on prints, landscapes, click on cypress shadows) I look forward to rounding that particular bend in the road and coming upon acres of rich farmland dotted by sheep or cattle, fenced in by the unique California style wood fence. So, as I pack for the week long "working" vacation, I must be sure to include several boxes of 3.5 inch floppy disks for my Sony digital camera. Although I am visiting an "old friend" I know she will be wearing a new Spring dress, and I don't want to miss any opportunity to discover California's wild side.

Next Issue: Seeing Seabirds

We, here in Washington State, live in a world of beautiful contrast. There are vast evergreen forests, numerous lakes, winding picturesque rivers, mile upon mile of cultivated farmland, great multicultural population centers, and snow bedecked mountain ranges slicing through the geography from end to end, north to south. There is Mount Baker, the most northerly peak in the Cascade range. To the south we find Mount St. Helens, and Mt. Adams.

However, the most observable mountain of them all is Mount Rainier. Sometimes shrouded in fog, other times gracing the panorama as a dowager matron, there is no mistaking the effect this mountain has on the landscape, and its admiring inhabitants. Poets, writers, lyricists, photographers and artists pay homage to her. I am no exception.

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When I moved to Washington with my family, we settled in the Olympia area. Mount Rainier was clearly visible from dawn to dusk on those rare clear and sunny days. When we traveled north to Seattle, glimpses of the mountain winked at us between tall trees and tall buildings. As we went southbound, there she was, long after we'd spotted mount St. Helens. Through the passes of the Cascade mountain range, Mount Rainier was the landmark to locate. From the fruit lands of eastern Washington, the compelling ness of the this immense entity was unavoidable. Her moods are as predictable as the seasons. Her moods are as varied as Washington's weather. Is it any wonder that I would be drawn to paint this captivating eidolon?

I have had the wonderful opportunity to observe those many moods of "The Mountain". I have seen lenticular cloud formations drifting above the mountain as if there were a mysterious "mother-ship" hovering there. She has caught the setting sun with a luminous glow reminding me of sherbet ice cream. Mount Rainier frequently sparkles with a freshly donned coat of pure white dazzling snow. I have seen her in Spring, Summer, Autumn and deep in Winter's snowy grasp.. I have

research material of the sun rising just behind the peak of this magnificent natural monument. One morning at sunrise, I saw her shadow cast upward onto brilliant red clouds. So, those moments became paintings. When I began to paint in oils, I realized that to capture the rugged enchantment of Mount Rainier, I would need to use a palette knife. The knife gives me the texture of thick paint that best portrays the deep cragginess I wanted to convey. I began with small (8" X 10") canvas boards, and eventually did a 24" X 48" piece. Some were in blues and greens, some in fall colors, some in greys. I chose various views. The way I see Mount Rainier from Olympia, differs from the scene observed from Seattle. The configuration of the peaks and crevasses are totally different from the east side of the mountain.

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To say that I have enjoyed my painting experience of Mount Rainier would be an understatement. It is a challenge to accurately render the features of this dominant monolith. It is truly delightful to paint the colors at different seasons under different weather conditions. The infinite variety of this enduring titan will always be appealing to me. I will return again and again to the valleys where the scenery is dominated by the looming presence of Mount Rainier.



Featured Artwork

Fog Linging



"There is a low layer of 'fog lingering' at the base of the mountain as the sun begins its slow winter track across the sky. Perhaps the day will end with the fog still wrapped around Mt. Rainier's foothills."

Fall Beginning



"The day is bright and a warm Autumn breeze stirs. We can almost see the colored leaves of 'fall beginning' to turn, on a high Mount Rainier meadow."

Strawberry Sherbet



"The last rays of a winter sun illuminate the snow fields on Mount Rainier creating a 'strawberry sherbet' glow. This tremendous mountain is the centerpiece of scenic views in west-central Washington State."