

March 15, 2003 Issue

It's All About People



We are gearing up for gardening here in the Pacific Northwest. Between showers of rain and hail, the glorious sunshine encourages us to prune, transplant, and pull or hoe weeds. Lawns already need to be mowed due to the mild winter which encouraged exuberant growth. In some cases, it is already too late to prune. Flowering shrubs, such as the forsythia and witch hazels should be left now until late fall or early winter.. However, there is plenty to do. Some trees can be successfully transplanted (as long as they are staked against the March winds.) Weeds have established strong root systems and luxuriant tops, some already going (or gone) to seed. Nature knows the wild sparrows need to eat! There is, however, still sufficient time to sit and leisurely peruse the many seed catalogs that arrive almost daily. (The date of the "last frost" in my area is May 30th.) This leaves plenty of time to order those wonderful new hybrids I want to try in my yard. I need to get out and rearrange those planters.....Wait! Here comes another rain shower.....!

Next Issue: By Land Or By Sea

Are you a people watcher? I am. I think most of us are; artists even more so. I am continually delighted to observe humans going about their daily lives. We ride our bicycles; take the bus. We fish; dig for clams. We walk our dogs; groom our pets. We work and play. We dance and jog. We swim. We ski. We marry and raise children. People are solitary. People are social. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There is never a moment when a human being is not terribly interesting. Even when a man, woman, or child is asleep, there is a quality there that appeals to the artist in me. In faces and postures you can read a history of mankind. That is why I paint people.

"They come in a variety of shapes and sizes."

Traveling around the Northwest, I have had the opportunity to be at the right places at the right times to watch fishermen, who harvest the bounty of the ocean, as they clean their catch. I have been in small communities when they celebrate a local festival. Dressed in colorful costumes they exalt with much joy in music and dance. There have been occasions to glimpse athletic men and women who extend the limits of their physical endurance in cross country bicycle tours or marathon runs. People linger in long lines to attend a special event, exchanging pleasantries with each other as they patiently wait for admittance. There has been the camaraderie of folks who have hobbies in common, such as kite festivals held in small towns and large cities along the coast. The vibrant colors of these moments are enchanting to see (and to paint!).

And the children.....! Ah the innocence and beauty of the children! Would an artist not be intrigued by the softness and gentle demeanor of a baby? Would one not

want to paint the mischievous twinkle in the eye of a toddler? Resist if you can the wise-beyond-her-years lift of the chin of an adolescent girl. Can the don't-bother-me now attitude of a pre-teen boy be captured on canvas or paper? Try to catch the elusive young people as they rush from scene to scene bursting with barely bridled energy! Then, again, they have their quiet times. While reading, sitting at a computer keyboard, or practicing a musical instrument, a child in repose is worthy of the time it takes to capture them with photograph or sketch. Sometimes you can even coax them into posing for a formal portrait.

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When I began to paint people, I acknowledged that I should start with the ones I knew the best. So, I chose to portray my family. (They were willing and available) Then I branched out to include my children's circle of friends. Before too long, I was set up in the local mall with a table, two chairs, a pad and charcoal, doing instant sketches for a minimum fee. When my confidence increased, I hired models and did oil portraits. What a rewarding experience! There was no pressure to obtain a likeness, or complete a studio portrait in a required time frame. Today, with the addition of gouache and pastel to my repertoire, I am enjoying a resurgence of the delight in painting people.

Carol Thompson

Featured Artwork

Fishin'



"It is a quiet morning on the river that runs past a sawmill in western Washington State in Aberdeen. A seasoned angler is patiently "fishin'" for the perfect catch."

**Watering
Gramma's Flowers**



"Visiting Gramma's house is always so much fun! She lets me play with her stuff and when she works in the garden, I get to help by 'watering gramma's flowers'. I think she likes the dandelions as much as I do."

Clamming In The Bay



"The hardy people of the Pacific Northwest are spending time to go 'clamming in the bay' at Newport, Oregon. From Senior citizens to young children, this is a healthy family activity."