

# The Artist's Almanac

July 2004

July is a month to celebrate.

We mark it in song, pageants, worship, family parties, readings of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and that phrase which never fails to stir us: *The Fourth of July!* If any holiday is to be celebrated with thunderous fireworks, let it be this one.

We've been here almost four hundred years, over half of them as Americans. In four centuries we've become a unique people. The idea of Liberty – *a people governing themselves* – is one so unique to our world that even those most jealous of us seek to come and live here. I'll try to keep steady Sunday as we sing *America The Beautiful*.

There is much to celebrate this July. Tomatoes are in, and I believe figs will ripen this year. Annual gardens are shoulder high and climbing, with phlox, shasta daisies, and bee balm setting new records for colorful exuberance. Corn is tasselling high above us, the streams are flowing, and fish are biting.

Abundant rainfall, cooler days, and the prettiest summer I ever remember. Driving up Station Camp Creek from Hendersonville through Cottontown to Bugg Hollow this week I saw dozens of scenes Constable would have envied, with the creek whispering alongside, the green hills and meadows reflecting sunlight, the full trees luxuriating with sparkling highlights, and designer clouds parading and gathering for the afternoon's shower. So many scenes, so little time.

Asked to define eternity, a child responds, "*all summer long.*" Officially it began June 22, when the sun paused and turned from earth. Yet as the days grow shorter and the sun cooler, our weather grows hotter and hotter. Earth is a solar battery, returning into our lives the radiation stored from the sunlight of springtime. Hoses, swimming, picnics and patio cookouts celebrate the season, and in summertime, we are all children.

The confluence of the giants who gave us Liberty with Law, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Marshall, Franklin, Hamilton, and Washington, together with the rendezvous of De Grasse's fleet with the army of Rochambeau at Yorktown within a two week window of time and weather just before the execution of French royalty: this could not have been an accident.

John Adam's last words as he died on July 4<sup>th</sup> were, "*Thomas Jefferson still lives*"

Indeed.

Let the fireworks begin.