

The Artist's Almanac

November 2006

*Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always To be blest.*

Alexander Pope

November, and reality sets in. The last roses have bloomed, the brilliant leaves mulch underfoot, and we see distant things - such as Caribbean beaches and Arizona sunsets, in travel photos. We have worked hard and really do deserve a break from driving to and from work through dark cold drizzle and heavy traffic.

Two years ago we took one, at a famous Louisiana plantation with the magnificent avenue of Live Oaks. The azaleas were bursting and we had a nice cottage on the grounds. But we were miles from nowhere, there was no restaurant, and, after taking the tour of the mansion and photographing gardens and trees from every angle, there was nothing to do.



Twilight at Oak Alley Plantation – Bill Puryear, photographer

Then, just at twilight fell, we heard from down river the distant horn of an approaching boat. There was just time to run to the landing and climb up the high levee to the river. There, plowing the mighty current, passed a parade of laden barges, lights port and starboard, propelled by a huge towboat, wake churning, set grandly against the evening sky. It was the most vivid memory of our vacation.

Home next week, I was startled just at candlelight time by the deep note of a boat horn and the deeper thrum of a passing barge tow. Looking down from my library window I watched enthralled as the lights passed slowly upriver beyond the screen of trees. It took a trip from home to recognize the beauty of the daily.

Much of our time is spent in fretting ourselves about world politics, our work, or in planning the next vacation to escape these. Glossy travel brochures fill our mail and our imaginations. Tomorrow's pleasures blind us to the grace of today.

While we may today travel more or less at will, relive the past or anticipate the future, we can live in but one place, and in one time – here, today. When I take inventory of where I live I find within a one mile radius the river and the spring branches which feed it, ancient white oaks sheltering pioneer traces and old cedars handsome as redwoods, turkey and deer, fish and bald eagles, ducks and geese, sparkling sun and fogs rising from hidden valley, distant blue hills and creeks flowing from them, well-worn friends and loving family. Winter brings beveling snows and in summer we have towering storms filling the horizon with awesome clouds and thunder to quicken the pulse.



Safe Harbor – Bill Puryear, Artist

Those who serve us we scarcely note and seldom thank. What of the linemen, out at all hours and all weather to restore light and heat to our homes? Do we even think of the plumbers, electricians, garbage collectors, grocers, firemen, police, mechanics and military who keep the machinery of our civilization purring? Gas utility and telephone workers are a call away and hospital staff stands ready around the clock to serve our emergency needs. These are paid, to be sure - but rarely thanked.

Our society has ease and pleasures aplenty. We describe the thrill of a pleasure as a *rush*, and so it is. Giving thanks is more than just taking inventory – it is the mother of all good pleasures, for it makes all things good.

May Thanksgiving give you a great rush this November.

*Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: "You are my God.
My happiness lies in you alone."*

*He has put into my heart a marvelous love
For the faithful ones who dwell in his land.*

*O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
It is you yourself who are my prize.
The lot marked out for me is my delight:
Welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!*

*And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
Even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead*

*You will show me the path of life,
The fullness of joy in your presence,
At your right hand happiness for ever.*

Psalm 16

Venues

**Fine Art in Brentwood – Show and Sale December 1-3 2006, Brentwood Academy
219 Granny White Pike, Brentwood, Tennessee 37027**

**Junior League of Nashville – Decorators’ Show House, December 1-3 2006, 6123
Hillsboro Pike, Nashville, Tennessee**

ArtSumner Annual Show, Gallatin City Hall, November 3rd –30th.

**Currently appearing on *Tennessee’s Wild Side*, Episode 1208 currently showing on
selected public television stations throughout the state. Segment available as
streaming video this website @**