

left, *The Centurian*, oil on canvas, 36" x 24"  
above, *Autumn River*, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

## Elusively Capturing Glorious Nature

written by Nadia Tersigni

The first inspiration

"The very first time that I recall really looking at a piece of art, I was about 7 years old. My parents were visiting some casual acquaintances in their East Vancouver home...I found myself staring at an oil painting our hosts had hanging in their living room. It was fascinating to me how real it looked from afar, yet upon closer inspection how carelessly the paint seemed to be applied in what appeared to be a sloppy manner. To me it was both beautiful and haunting... Since that moment in time I have always been interested in looking at paintings whenever or wherever I could find them."

Ron Hedrick's inclination to be a dreamer has always been a part of who he is. Irrespective of life's challenges, whether it be his struggle in forming friendships during elementary school or the divorce of his parents followed by his ensuing decision to quit school in order to assist with contributing to the living expenses, Ron always had his dream.

At the age of 17, his independence soared as he moved to Calgary, Alberta, living on his own. In short time, his girlfriend, Teresa Vecchio, followed suit from Nelson, British Columbia, and they married in 1960. Within one year's time, their son Tracy was born, followed by their daughter, Debi. With a focus on building a solid family foundation, including the desire to purchase their first home, Ron became employed at a plastics plant. However, following a layoff, a decision was made to sell their home and move to Vancouver where Ron worked as a printer. Once promoted to night shift supervisor,





above, Lac La Jeune, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"  
right, Manning Park Autumn, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

Ron decided it was time to entertain the idea of pursuing art classes in a serious way. Much to his dismay, Ron soon found himself once again jobless due to a company fire and without any expertise or skills, and little education to speak of, the dreamer began to dream, yet again.

Dabbling in the restaurant business for a short time, Ron became good friends with a customer who managed a truck repair shop and he was offered a job rebuilding rolled over transport trucks. He sold the restaurant and began his new career as a major damage truck rebuild. Shortly after, due to irreconcilable differences, Ron's first marriage ended in 1975, but the road still to be travelled made its debut.

#### Artistic beginnings

By 1980, Ron had married to Sandra Swain and their journey began with a move to Kamloops, British Columbia, where he worked at a large transport truck dealership as a repair technician. His dream, however, began to take shape - art was calling.

"It was during this period in Kamloops that I took a renewed interest in oil painting," says Ron. "I hadn't touched a paintbrush in almost ten

years. I began visiting the library and discovering artists such as the French Impressionists and the Group of Seven. I would take as many books home as the library allowed and devour every image in them."

Living in a modest home on Paul Lake in Kamloops presented Ron with the convenience of being able to fish at the lake – and dream. "As I was fishing I would look at the intricate and harmonious colours of the shoreline and my imagination flourished just by being out in nature," says Ron. "It was something about this idyllic setting that gave me a relentless urge to paint again. With me out fishing and my wife baking bread at our new home with our newborn daughter, Jessica, I replenished my art supplies and began to rediscover myself as an artist."

#### Acceptance

The coming of 1983 brought with it Ron Hedrick's first art show at a mall and his joining in the Federation of Canadian Artists - both experiences providing him with ample opportunity to paint and engage in discussions. As he recalls, one particular artist, Len Beamish, had painted







left, Birches, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"  
above, Fall Birches, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

under Sergei Bongart and greatly influenced his painting style and technique. Having encouraged Len to show some pieces in Harrison Galleries in Vancouver, Len's work was accepted and sold quickly. Sadly, Len passed away shortly thereafter from a brain tumor.

"Around the same time," Ron says, "I put a few of my best pieces together and I took them to The Peters Gallery in Kamloops to see if they would be interested in showing them. They accepted three or four paintings and agreed to display them in their gallery for a short time to see what would happen. Within a few days they sold two, and they phoned to give me the good news and ask for more. I had my first gallery show within a year."

The thought that someone would pay for his paintings thrilled Ron as this presented a myriad of possibilities yet untapped. The next six years brought with it the realization that anything was indeed possible. A move to Langley, British Columbia led him to the Kent family and a job. "The Kent's played a big roll with my becoming an artist. They understood my dream and supported me in any way they could. In fact, even when I quit and couldn't quite make it financially as an artist, they welcomed me back without penalty and still encouraged me to keep trying to live my dream."

#### Rejection and the road to further studies

Following a setback at displaying his landscape works at Harrison Galleries, Ron's test of tenaciousness, strength and the will to forge ahead was to shake the very foundation of his world. His lesson, which has served to catapult him to the calibre of painter he remains to date, includes his deep introspection that "I would simply go by instinct and had no real discipline in my method of putting a painting together. This often led to disappointing results...I wanted to try to develop my own artistic voice and needed further structure and guidance."

Requiring what he defined as "more training in the finer aspects of colours, values and composition", he began lessons with Ron Lucas, a Seattle area artist, a master painter. Impressed by Ron's teaching methods and philosophies, Hedrick began the long weekly cross border drives, and slowly but surely he began to notice that the number of paintings which he would classify as successful outnumbered those he did not.

Life, for Ron, continued with great vision for an idealistic future. In 1992, with his career in full swing, he and Sandy purchased a 2.5 acre property in Mission, British Columbia and built their own home which included a special designed studio space. Sales were now becoming consistent and painting on a daily basis a reality.









previous spread, Mill Creek Road, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"  
above, Fraser River after Storm, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"



right, Sun Valley Stream, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

"I had come to realize, that to make it as an artist, I had to treat it like a job with a steady schedule regardless of my mood and inspiration." says Ron. Once I got started, I was in another world with nothing but my paint, brushes and canvas."

"One day, however, while I was painting in my quiet solitude, I got a phone call that would plunge me into a deep despair. My son, Tracy, had died suddenly and violently. My son and I were very close and spent much time together fishing and watching hockey games. I remember once him telling me in my new studio how proud he was of me and by the fact that I had managed to elevate my life through my art." Ron continues, "I tried to keep painting, anything to escape the despair of losing my son. It was the only way I could find some relief from my inner torment. I adjusted very slowly, but over time I was able to live and function as before."

#### Close friends in the business

The 1990s brought with it the opportunity for Ron to teach art, and so, his garage became home to this phase of his journey. He fondly recalls the sense of camaraderie as well as the teaching experience itself as being a very satisfying one eventually leading to teaching at various venues and a stint as artist-in-residence at the Robert Bateman School.

With the meeting of Sid Terpsta, an art appreciator who opened his own gallery and an avid collector

of Ron's art, a new studio emerged which Ron affectionately dubs "a happening place". It became a hub spot for painting, teaching and hosting workshops. Eventually, classes became popular and to this day are filled with a wait-list. Studio classes also brought with it a position as acting President of the Stave Falls Artist Group, founded in 2002 by Ron himself and a small group of artists. With a vision to unite forces in developing and promoting artwork, the group of 10 members meets monthly to critique and share information with the goal of success for all and notoriety and acceptance in galleries.

#### Surroundings of inspiration

Much of his inspiration for painting comes from the largely angelic and ideal part of the world in which he currently resides. Enjoying the afternoon light – its warmth and casting of deep long shadows – Ron finds that the tenets of composition and colour harmony unite beautifully. Early morning excursions with its semblance of fresh dewy air also provides much sought after "crisp lighting conditions".

"On less than suitable days I paint in the studio. I've compiled a large library of photographs to work from indoors. On these rainy, dreary days I try to really bring myself back into the space from when I took the photographs. I try to remember what it was actually like, the lighting, the sounds, the wind, etc."

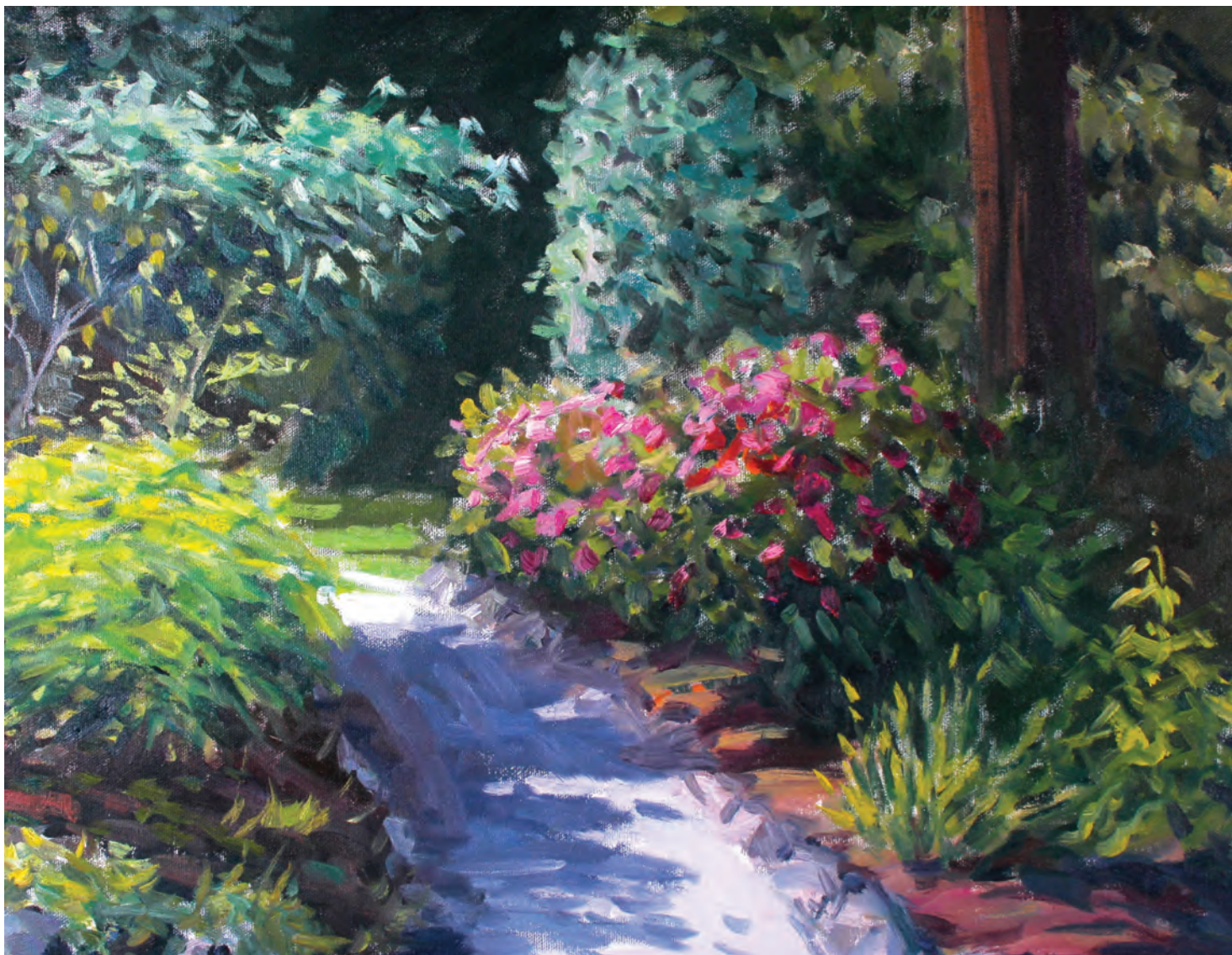
A glimpse into the studio space reveals pottery





left top, Lavender Farm, oil on canvas, 30" x 48"  
left bottom, Park Walkway, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

above, Giverny Lane, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"



and sculpture, still life props, model set-ups, a collection of art books, and a variety of art magazines. His space is complete with a coffee maker and beautiful classical music in which to tap into inspiration at its finest.

Impression and inspiration for Ron is also supported by what he terms three qualities exhibited by artists which he feels best impresses him: "their technical abilities with their medium, such as the way they handle colours, values and texture; the style and subject matter they opt to go with; and, the very fact that they can make a living in such a competitive field."

Artists such as Min Ma, Craig Yeats, Kevin Bielfuss (American), Carolyn Anderson, his own student, Wayne Bissky, and Robert E. Wood, have served to epitomize for Ron the markings of a great artist. Ron muses, "I think what makes my work different from other artists is the fact that I like to incorporate people and nostalgic things in my subject matter, such as my beach scenes, garden and winter scenes, such as outdoor hockey games. My brush work and colours also are part of a signature 'Ron Hedrick' painting."

#### Technique of brilliance

Hedrick is the first to admit that years of experience have perfected and evolved his unique technique. He begins with a blank canvas and a very rough sketch of the composition using

a burnt umber dry brush. Standing back to ensure the composition works, he will re-work with no hesitation to ensure it is as his mind's eye sees it. The process continues with roughing in the larger areas of dark and mid-toned sections, moving into the lighter and more chromatic colours next. This part of the procedure aids Ron in coordinating values and colour temperatures.

It is at this point in the creative process in which he will revisit once again the whole canvas and proceeds to refinish the brushwork commencing with the background and expertly moving into the foreground. The end culminates in the adding of the darkest darks and lightest lights. Lastly, as Ron explains, "I use the largest brush available to create interesting brushwork and refine the painting. I am constantly jumping around the canvas and standing back to make sure that I am moving in the right direction and not 'perfecting a mistake'. I want to keep the structure and composition accurate, the colours harmonizing and the contrast fairly strong."

#### Suggestions – as the artist sees it

"The hardest thing about creating my art is finding new subject matter that I feel will work: Does it have correct lighting? Am I able to work with the composition? Do I feel moved by the subject matter? I am very productive and constantly looking for new things to paint. And, of course, it's hard to maintain creativity on a daily basis."





above, Stroll with Daughter, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"  
right, Woman Wading with Children, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

following spread, Mission Valley, oil on canvas, 20" x 30"

"For people that are exploring painting as a living I would like to give these suggestions: 1) Treat painting like any career. To succeed you must put as much effort as you would any other career. This means many hours of study and dedication. 2) You must be self-driven with good disciplined daily routine, dedicated to production. 3) Look to other artists that you admire for inspiration. Take workshops when you can."

When speaking of commission works, Ron is pleased with the experience. He expresses that the experience provides him with a unique opportunity to connect with people in a very personal way, bringing into his life many friends, and he revels in the appreciation he receives when a client is pleased with the artistic piece he has created.

Relaxing and "the" life

Balance is defined as weekend enjoyment with great friends, dining, working in the garden, fishing and traveling. But he does muse that art is embedded in his soul. "Art has become my life. I live, breath and think about it constantly. I feel so blessed to have the opportunity to express my time on earth in this way and hope that I bring something of value that I can leave behind."

Visiting my galleries and viewing both my work and that of other artists is a constant inspiration as well. Every so often my wife Sandy and I like to spend the day in Vancouver taking in the sights and we stop by to visit Rendezvous Art Gallery. Like all my galleries it is a cheerful place and being located next door to the cruise ship port and in the heart of Vancouver you never know who you will meet.

To view more of the works of Ron Hedrick visit [www.rhedrick.com](http://www.rhedrick.com).

