

# Waxahachie **NOW**

M A G A Z I N E

JUNE 2014

## Gift of Detail

At the tender age of 2, Anne Weary knew what she wanted to do in life

## A Good Day All Around

At Home With Thomas  
and Melissa Swedoski

An Unconventional Couple

Out of the Shadow

Wagging Tails

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Anne Weary finds inspiration  
in her outdoor studio.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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# Gift of Detail

— By Sandra Strong



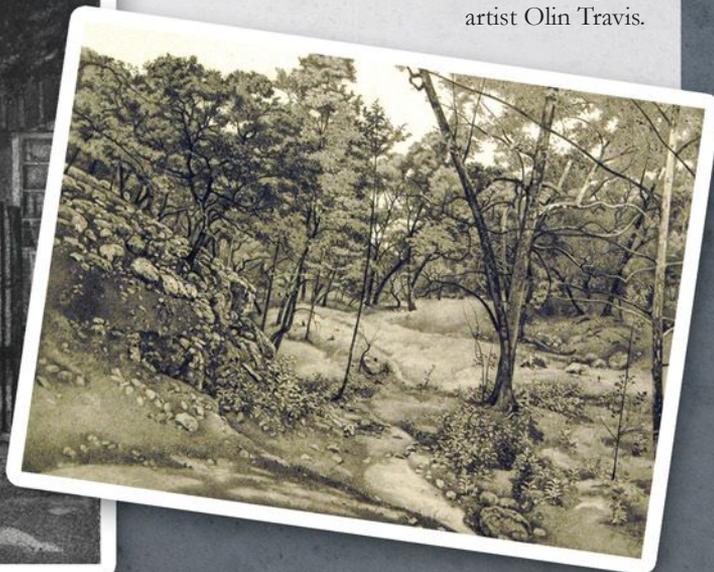
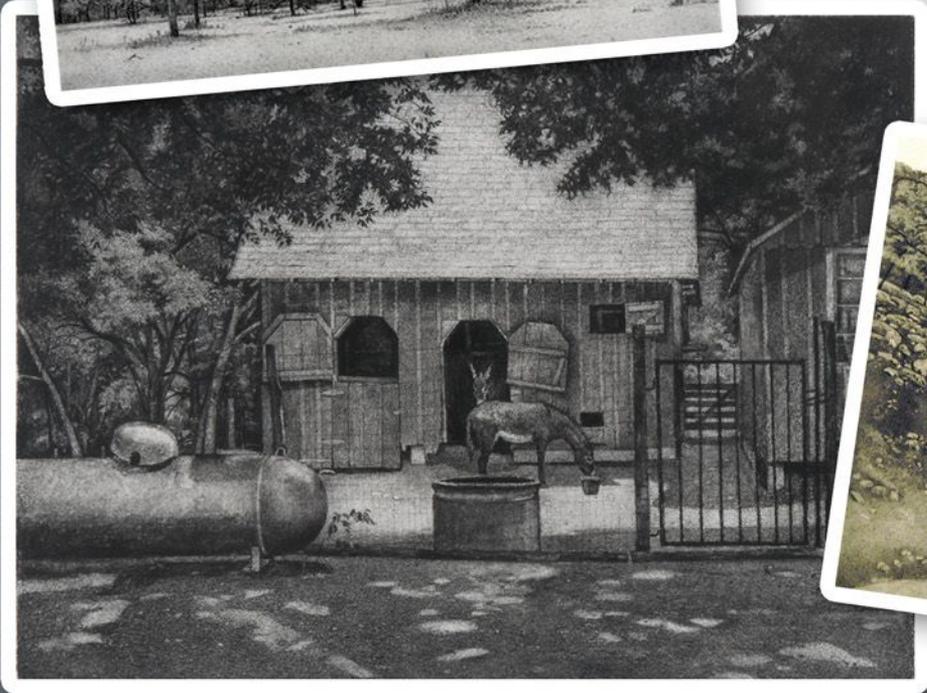
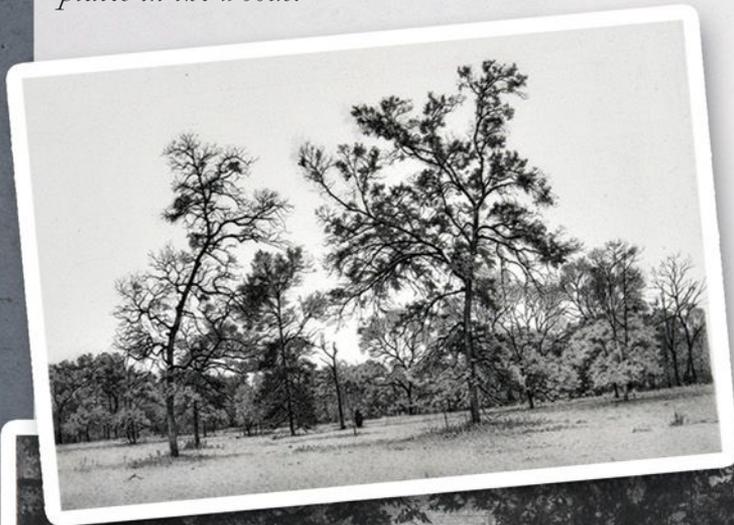
*The sun comes up as Anne Weary collects her supplies for charcoal drawing. While some artists would venture to their indoor studio, Anne pulls on her boots and makes the trek into the woods behind her home. The 10-minute walk leads her down a foot path to a rustic, weather-worn card table and matching metal chair. “This is my studio in nature,” Anne said, with excitement for what the beautiful summer day brings in way of inspiration. “I have lots of favorite places in the woods.”*

Her inspiration comes from all aspects of the wooded area and creek that runs the length of her 136-acre ranch in Italy. The wild animals that flourish around her as she creates include white-tailed deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and families of pigs wallowing in the mud along the edge of the creek bed. “I purchased this place because of the natural woods. I was homesick for large oak trees,” Anne explained. “Nearly 80 percent of the land is unspoiled by man. This land is what inspires me to draw.”

To fully comprehend the depth of Anne’s love for capturing nature in its most untouched form, you must travel back to the time when she was just a toddler on horseback. “I grew up on a horse exploring the countryside in a very special place,” she shared, remembering Casa Del Sol Ranch, the 100-acre family farm in Garland, Texas. “The farm had a beautiful forest along Spring Creek. The creek was lined with magnificent white limestone cliffs.”

Anne grew to love the woods and the animals that made their homes there. The woods were a rare hardwood forest with trees dating back 500 years. The uncut trees, trout lilies and violets intrigued Anne. Her goal early on was to preserve and protect the woods and the animals she loved from vandalism. “All I ever wanted to be was a professional artist,” she admitted. “From my love for and experiences growing up in the woods, I came to have a strong love for nature and animals. In fact, I much prefer the solitude of nature and animals to people.”

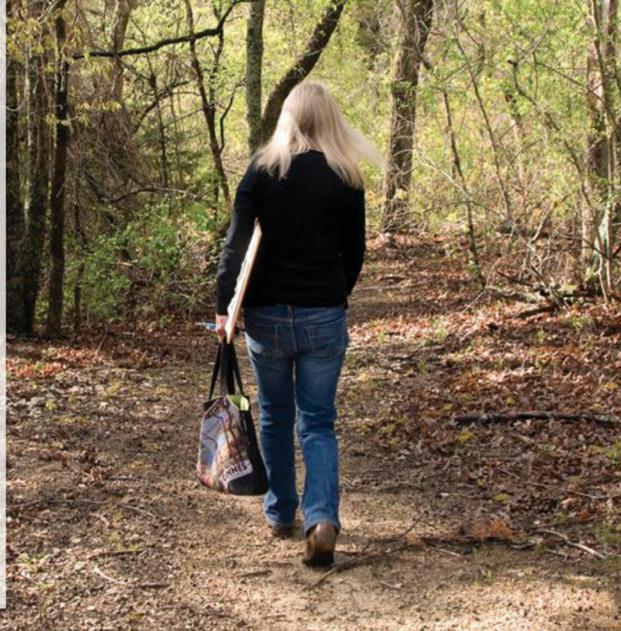
As soon as her artistic aspirations were verbalized, Anne’s parents became her strongest supporters. Her professional training began when she was 12, under the tutelage of artist Olin Travis.



“It’s almost a *spiritual* thing  
for me. Through my *drawings*,  
I really want people to see how  
*beautiful* a bending tree is or  
the peak light of noon on a  
Texas summer day.”



**“Anne’s eyes are always framing another drawing. She’s always the artist. She never stops looking, thinking and seeing. She has the gift of detail.”**



The pair studied still life, portrait and landscape painting. “Olin would paint outside with me,” she said, referring to the art of plein air painting. “We worked several days a week at our ranch painting the woods.”

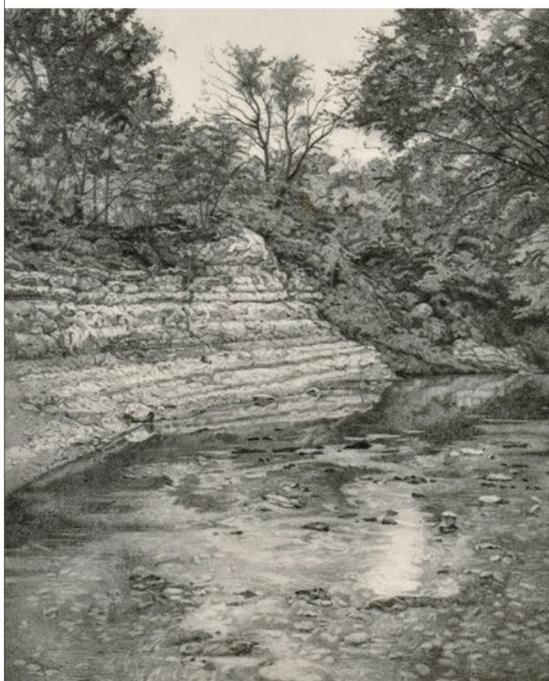
In the late 1960s, Anne also worked closely with Donald Vogel, founder of Valley House Gallery in Dallas, the same gallery that represents her artwork today. “Don was my mentor,” she confessed. “After seeing my work, he encouraged me and helped me grow.”

As a young adult in the '70s, Anne attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in Philadelphia, the oldest art school in the country. The academy’s focus was, and still is, on traditional techniques based on realism. Anne worked with Lou Sloan, a teacher and plein air landscape painter, who took her and several of her fellow students to paint at the Pocono Mountains, Catskill Mountains, Delaware Water Gap, Lancaster County and Maine. During her time at the academy, while on a trip to Yale University to view a drawing exhibit by British artists, Anne’s choice of artistic medium changed. Her epiphany inspired Anne to put the paints down and pick

up pencils. “I felt I was released to use drawing as my medium. Paint no longer seemed natural to me, but charcoal did,” she admitted. “The drawings captivated me with the small amount of color. I could actually feel the color.” Anne graduated with a four-year certificate in 1978 and was given two prestigious awards for excellence in drawing.

After graduating, Anne returned to her home in Garland to draw Spring Creek with its limestone cliffs and natural beauty, as life continued to move forward around her. Land taxes increased dramatically, forcing the family to sell the farm. Thankfully, Anne was able to work with the Nature Conservancy in Texas to save some of the untouched land she’d worked so hard to preserve in life and in





her artwork. “I was able to save forest along the creek,” she explained. “It’s now known as the Spring Creek Forest Reserve.” She relocated to Medina, Texas, where she built a small home in the Hill Country. Fifteen years later, she began to feel her home, six miles off the paved roads, was a little too remote, thus she moved to Ellis County.

Her life experiences have taught Anne how to create the illusion of color in charcoal and pencil. Her works today are intimate drawings that show perfect attention to the details around her. Each tree branch is captured in its entirety, as are the animals she adores. “I love trees and animals so much,” she explained. “It’s almost a spiritual thing for me. Through my drawings, I really want people to see how beautiful a bending tree is or the peak light of noon on a Texas summer day.”

Bringing the things she loves in nature to life in her drawings is what Anne does best. In the summer months, she draws in the great outdoors. In the wintertime, she climbs in her car and drives to a spot of her choosing. She turns on the heater and begins to sketch. She’s drawn on a boat in Arkansas, while a huge alligator swam in the waters beside her. She’s moved her table and chair to the creek bed running with fresh rainwater in hopes of completing a drawing she started in the middle of a dry spell.

The commitment Anne has as an artist is evident in the completed works she has on display in her home and at Valley House Gallery in Dallas. “Her work is autobiographical. It shows the ease with

which she lives in tandem with nature,” said Cheryl Vogel, Donald’s daughter-in-law, and curator of the gallery. “Anne’s eyes are always framing another drawing. She’s always the artist. She never stops looking, thinking and seeing. She has the gift of detail.”

A day for Anne isn’t complete unless she’s had a drawing pencil in one hand and a pencil sharpener in the other. Anne is currently working on a series of drawings inspired by Brushy Creek, found in her immense backyard. “I’m working my way down the creek,” she said. “The giant trees are why I bought this property.” The woods are Anne’s beautiful “cave haven” in the summer, as leaves sparkle like crystals amidst the sunlight. This natural setting is definitely where Anne does her best work. **NOW**