

Jim Shackelford

Story & photos by Paul M. Howey



Working in the field of automobile and truck leasing was financially rewarding, but it left Jim Shackelford's creative bank account woefully underfunded. He was 52 years old when he walked away from the transportation business in 1989 and decided to devote his life to painting.

Jim has been making art for nearly as long as he can remember. "I would draw, almost daily, on the brown paper the laundry was returned in," recalls Jim. "Each year, Santa Claus would bring me a child's watercolor set. So my mother must have realized that I had artistic talent and this was her way of helping me develop it."

He grew up in central Georgia and studied business at Georgia State University. But he gained on his own the broad knowledge he has of painting. Throughout the years, he dabbled in art and tried to become serious about his painting during the mid-1960s. "But it just didn't work out, and I put the paintings away.

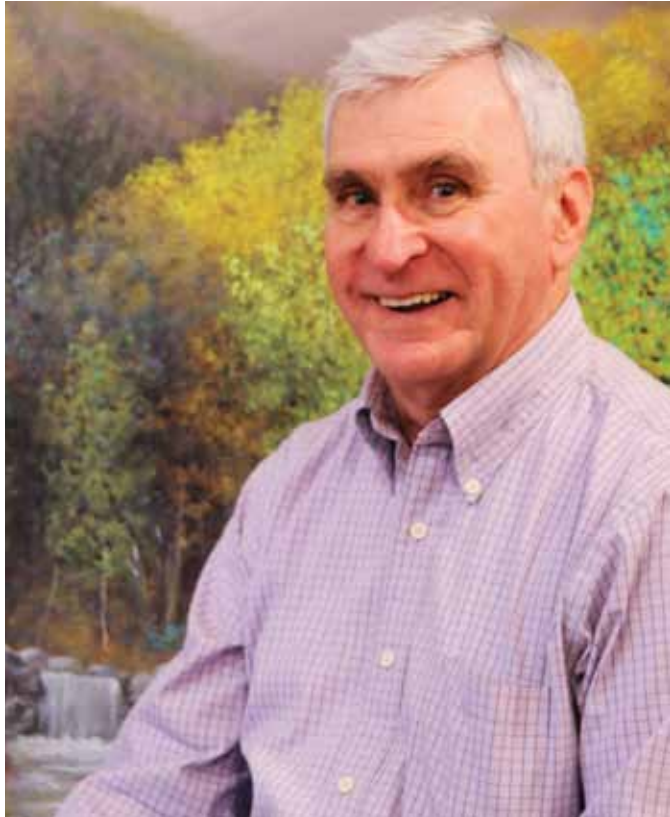
Jim gave it another shot in 1975. He says it was a Sunday afternoon, one he remembers vividly. Seeing the paintings

of an artist at work in Canton, Georgia, sparked his interest and imagination. "I just knew I could do this," he says. So he bought a book on how to paint landscapes and began again. Meanwhile, he continued in the business of leasing vehicles.

“*The painting seems to appear on the canvas as though I am guided by my brush or palette knife. I am sustained by what I see on the canvas at the end of the day.*”

By 1989, however, he'd had enough. "I had really burned out in the business. My heart was no longer in it." And so he quit. He says realizes now he was being compelled all along by his muse to paint full-time.

When he had enough to show, he loaded up his paintings



and began calling on frame shops in the area around his home in Macon, Georgia. He was about to find out if he could make it on his own. The reception was good, but he needed more. To help supplement his income, he began selling witticisms he'd written, illustrated, and framed.

By the fall of 2001, after his wife Jeanette took early retirement from Wesleyan College, where she'd been chair of the music department and the executive director of the arts program for the college, they moved to Saluda. He has continued painting and showing his award-winning works throughout the Southeast, New York, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. He creates all of these paintings in his home studio.

"A creative spirit within my being churns," he explains, "and I cannot ignore it. I can't wait in the morning to get down to my studio and begin."

He uses no sketches, no photographs, and—at least, initially—no idea of what the painting will contain.

"It's absolutely amazing what you can see in a blank canvas," he says. "I stare at it for a long time and soon my

mind begins to transfer thoughts, and then I start." These thoughts may have roots in a word, a musical piece, or a scene he's taken note of while driving. "Classical music also inspires me tremendously, he adds.

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He works in both realism and impressionism, deftly applying acrylics to create sometimes subtle, sometimes bold, paintings that never fail to evoke in the viewers the emotions contained in the images.

"I am pleased to be able to paint in a variety of styles," says Jim. "I enjoy creating pastoral landscapes, florals, seascapes, and street scenes. In addition, I really enjoy painting abstracts. Changing styles keeps me engaged in the creative process!"

His works can be seen at Twigs & Leaves Gallery, 98 N. Main Street in Waynesville (twigsandleaves.com). For more information about the artist, visit jshackelfordstudios.com.