



Vol. 5: Land That We Love

BY BECKY BAUER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANTHONY SCARLATI

We're more than midway through our journey down the Natchez Trace Parkway, as we land in a region called by its chamber of commerce, "A Great Place to Spend the Day." We agree that this rich morsel of southern Middle Tennessee, otherwise known as Lewis County, boasts big treasures in a small town. The Buffalo River, an elephant sanctuary, Amish crafts, a center for holistic ecology, a cool coffee shop... Where to start?

The county was named for Meriwether Lewis of the exploration duo Lewis and Clark. Lewis was killed and buried near Grinder's Stand under mysterious circumstances. His enduring travels across US soil were consequential to our country. A memorial and park sits just off the parkway where a very moving funeral occurred last year to honor the bicentennial of his death.

Mile Marker 391 at US Highway 412 leads to the town of Hohenwald and a main street of past and present.

The Strand Theatre, circa 1938, is imprinted with memories of Grand Ole Opry stars and film reels of WWII soldiers. Today, after a full restoration, Hollywood classics are brought to life on the screen, accompanying an adjoining art gallery and a natural history museum flavored with artifacts and exotic animals.

We spend the spring day with the owners of Amber Falls Winery, Judy and Tim Zaunbrecher, and their special neighbor, William Brewer. Located high on the Hampshire Ridge, an

area surrounded by lush timber, we enter the family owned and operated vineyard through rows of grapes that line the drive to the tasting room. Part of the Natchez Trace Wine Trail, the set-up is rustic, yet classy and inviting.

The Zaunbrechers moved here from Michigan four years ago. Judy admits they're at an age when others are planning retirement, but they love working hard at a family business that they know they will pass on to their children.

Savoring the sweet and citrus tastes of Blanc Du Bois, we enjoy the warm company of the couple and their staff and learn a little more about the locals.

Judy takes us down the road to meet Brewer, 85, who has lived on his family farm since his parents built it by hand. Brewer and the Zaunbrechers are friends and fishing buddies.

A gravel driveway leads up a hill where an old farmhouse sits in a cove among other weathered buildings covered in chestnut lumber. A beautiful spring runs over a rock bed descending down the hill. Another spring is gravity fed into the house. This is the heart of the 800-acre spread.

We meet Mr. Brewer, a former taxidermist. He's a slender man wearing a plaid shirt tucked into his faded, hole-ridden Levis. A tattered ball cap covers his short gray hair and wide spectacles lay on his nose. He speaks with a kind voice and a

delightful laugh. He is sharp as a tack and fancies himself a good judge of character.

The last to survive among his three siblings, Mr. Brewer has never been married nor does he have children. "I don't know, that may be the worst thing I ever done," he says. "Somebody's got to keep this land." While no immediate family lives, he does enjoy visits from cousins and grandnephews.

This homestead is where his father, a sawmill worker, farmed to keep the family fed. The '56 Farmall Super A still sits close by as does a '46 International pick-up truck. Both are rusted out and quiet but screaming of tales to tell.

We stroll the boisterous display of sights and sounds that is the Brewer farm – flocks of roosters and hens, among them varied Leghorns and New Hampshire Reds (a lighter-in-color cousin to the Rhode Island Red, I learn) who are absorbed in their own conversation; colorful peacocks, with their blue-green plumage spread, cooing for a mate; goats and cattle grazing the acreage. One dog, Mojo, is sprawled out sleeping while the other, which Mr. Brewer simply calls "Dog," doesn't leave his side.

Mr. Brewer has seen a lot of change in his lifetime. "I've seen change since horse and buggy, and the people have changed here."

"I remember working on the farm with my daddy," he remembers, "and seeing

something orange fly overhead. It was the after burn from Sputnik."

This man of nature can often be found "heading to the woods" for some hunting and fishing. So how has life treated him? "I've enjoyed every minute of it," this Tennessee gentleman assures us.

I listen as Judy and Mr. Brewer exchange their culinary preferences: he cures his own meat and loves poke salad and squirrel stew with brown gravy; she describes her roux- based gravy, gumbo and crawfish pie – evidence of her Cajun roots. There's wine made to vineyard standards and a wine made to Mr. Brewer's standards. "Mine is a little more potent, and with no rules," he says, with that delightful laugh of his.

These two might be citizens of different worlds, but what matters to them does not differ at all: friendship and family, preserving the land, enjoying the fruits of your labor. It's best said that whatever keeps us moving, keeps us living.

We hate to leave, but we must. Mr. Brewer gives us a witty, "Why?" We'll catch you again at feeding time, Mr. Brewer.

Rebecca Bauer and Anthony Scarlati are the publishers of Nashville's TraceJournal.com, an artistic and historic portrayal of the 100 miles of the Natchez Trace Parkway in Tennessee.

SOUTHGATE STUDIO
& Fine Art
 THE FACTORY AT FRANKLIN



Art Classes & Workshops for all levels

Workshops

- Introduction to Oil
- Intermediate Oil
- Portrait Painting

615.599.3360

230 FRANKLIN ROAD • FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE • 615.599.3360

WALTON'S
 ANTIQUE & ESTATE JEWELRY



Professional & Honest
GOLD & JEWELRY BUYING
 Graduate Gemologist

Why would you sell anything to anybody without knowing what it's really worth?

Since 1974 Wed-Sat 10am-5pm
 410 Main St. Franklin, TN 615.790.0244

