



A 75 Year Retrospective

with Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt

Or

How a young girl from the 1950's found science and the arts
in a small upstate NY town

Early years in upstate NY - Watertown



- I was destined to be a Texas Aggie from a young age – 6 years (1956) My dad was Class of 1944.
- I was never an artist, but I did love the arts:
 - Piano lessons for 10+ years
 - Choir – plus I accompanied junior choir on piano
 - Loved musical theater – was in Camelot, The Music Man, The Sound of Music, The Mikado and in college, the Pirates of Penzance
 - Small towns are great that way
 - I was in charge of bulletin boards in 7th grade...
- I excelled in the hard sciences – particularly chemistry
- Art was never in my radar



What shaped me as a “boomer”?

- Political assassinations: my senior year in HS – 1968
Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy
- Vietnam War, the draft & draft lottery
- Cesar Chavez who cofounded the United Farm Workers union with Dolores Huerta and their Delano grape strike and boycott from 1965-1970
- The hippie generation – peace, love, non-violence and personal freedom, leading to environmentalism, civil rights, women’s liberation and other movements. Many rejected hypocrisy and organized religion.

Folks like Rosemary Gladstar “Godmother of American Herbalism” and Margi Flint started a renaissance of herbalism in the United States – I have taken classes with both. (more later)



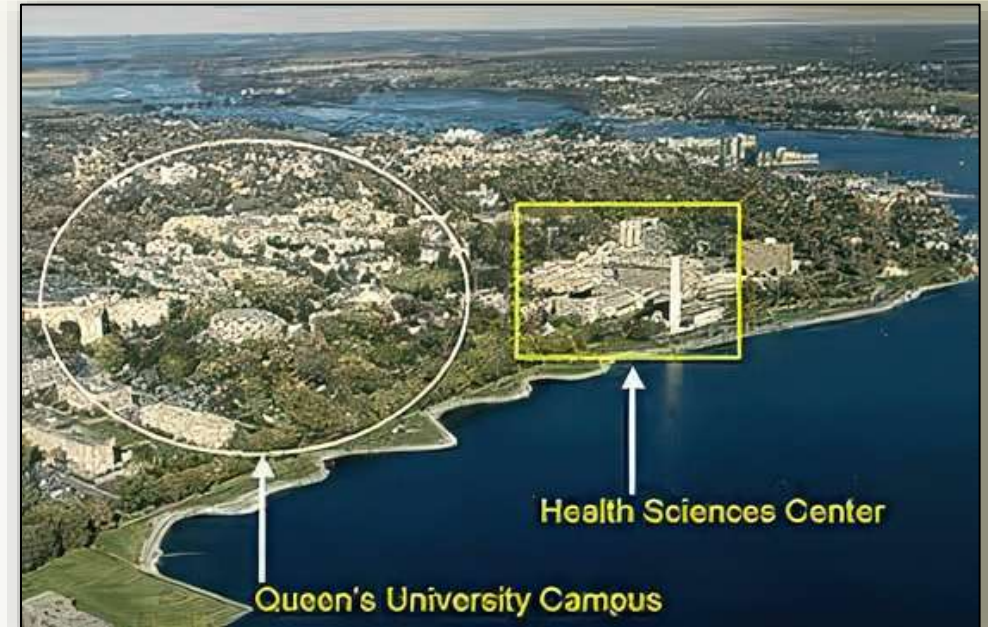
University years 1968-72

- Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario home of 1976 sailing Summer Olympics
- 60 miles from home
- Chemistry major, math minor (all I took was math, physics and chem for 4 years except for philosophy, scientific German and 1 year of art history – telling....)
- 2 publications

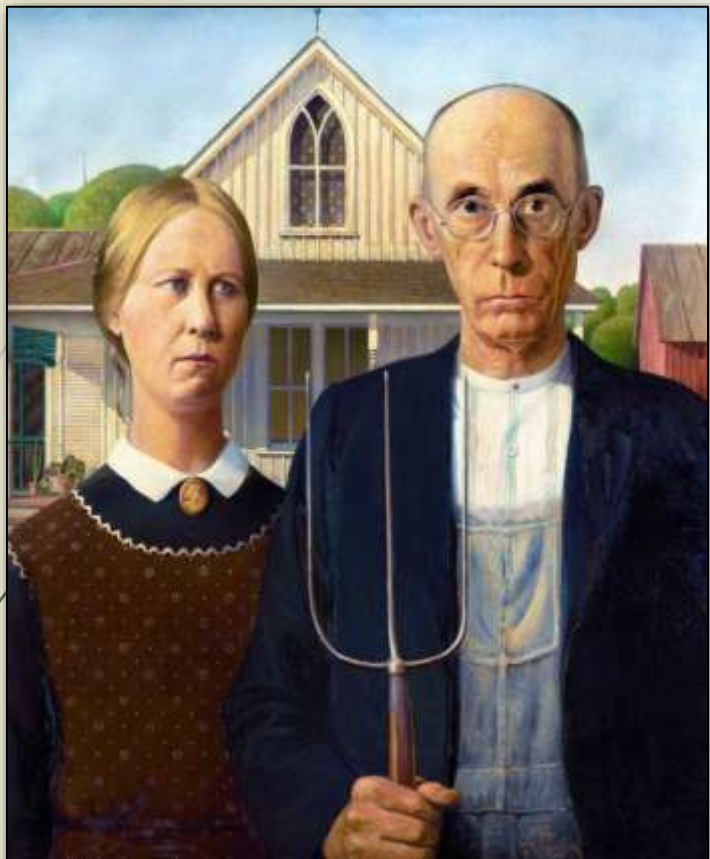
Then from 1972-3

VISTA – Volunteers in Service to America

- During the Vietnam War – doing my part
- Sent to Osceola, Iowa – where my Dad's people were from
- Helped develop nutritional centers for senior citizens
- Taught Sunday school to adults with intellectual disabilities by reading Bible stories and having them illustrate them. They were wonderful!



Fun Fact



- American Gothic (as you all know) by Grant Wood
- The models are Grant Wood's dentist, Dr. Byron McKeeby – my 2nd cousin 2x removed - and the artist's sister, Nan. The house still stands in Eldon, Iowa.
- I thank Ancestry.com for helping me verify a family story.



Back to Queen's for M.Sc. 1973-4



- My master's thesis was "The determination of some trace metals in *Cladophora glomerata*." Samples were obtained from Lake Ontario with a catamaran!
- I rented a piano and had it placed in the Chemistry Dept, so I could practice.
- 2 more publications including the thesis
- Got married to a Scot – didn't last very long.
- Set off in a Volkswagon camper bus after graduation for a 6 month trek. We started down the East coast to Key West to College Station.
- Decided to apply to TAMU in oceanography. We continued through Mexico, Belize and Guatemala, took the GREs in Mexico City, and ended up here!



PhD in Chemical Oceanography & Post-Doc 1975-1984

- Worked hard – I changed disciplines and had to learn how the world worked – oceans, rivers, atmosphere
- Spent 89 total days at sea (Gulf of Mexico) mostly on TAMU's RV Gyré
- Dissertation: The geochemistry of trace metals in the Brazos River and the Brazos River estuary (in a Sears rubber boat)
- 8 more publications
- More fun facts:
 - Played women's rugby for 2 years (on first TAMU team)
 - Took jazz, tap and ballet lessons to deal with school stress
 - Got divorced! Met Chuck in 1975, married in 1981!
 - Here is Chuck in Antarctica. We've been together 50 years. He took me to all 7 continents visiting his Antarctica science community as president of Scientific Community of Antarctic Research (SCAR); 46 countries; advise the Antarctic Treaty



Chemistry Lecturer/Prof 1985-2015

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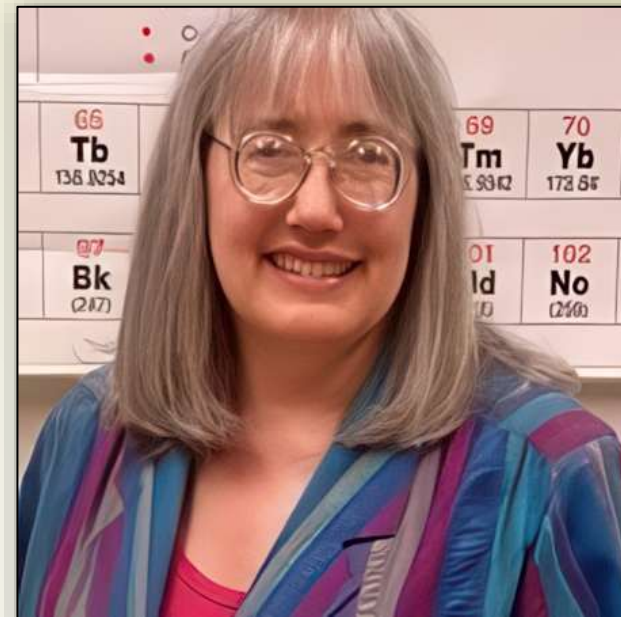
Highlights

- Associate Director, First Year Chemistry Program (FYP) for 18 years & taught over 25,000 students
- Webmaster, FYP for 10 years (content only)
- Member of the Chemistry Road Show for 20 years
- Coordinator of Chemistry Open House for 13 years – ever pack 1000 goodie bags? I raised the funds & had our mole mascot made – [Professor Molenium!](#)
- TAMU Master Administrator, Calibrated Peer Review (an on-line writing/reviewing program) for 13 years
- Co-Founder of an organization to bring rights to non-tenure track faculty on campus, 2004-2012. It took that long to fight and win! I am so proud of this!
- Worked part-time at GERG (while full-time teaching) for 2 years when the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill happened (1989). I ran a lab managing about 10 folks, analyzing oil in water and rocks.
- 5 grants including 3 NSF grants
- 36 papers (including 7 solution manuals) and many talks.



Major Awards

- Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence Award (2009)
- Piper Professor (2010)
- Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt Endowed Lectureship for First Year Chemistry
 - <https://artsci.tamu.edu/chemistry/about/giving.html>



Working in the Virtual World of Second Life (Merging Science and Art)

- For the last 2 years of teaching, I worked half-time because my final NSF grant "Evaluating Students' Learning and Attitudes in a Virtual Chemistry Laboratory" was time intensive.
- Here's a 5 min overview of the project.

The Drax Files: World Makers

Episode 19: Virtual Chemistry

<https://youtu.be/twAi73JCXOM?si=mjGjCewntpPM2S01>



The Sacandaga Herbalist story

- About 1990, my health was in decline
 - I was working 2 jobs (prof & lab manager) & been exposed to all kinds of toxins – radioactive compounds, heavy metals, etc.
 - Many symptoms but the doctors couldn't help
 - Story is on wendytheherbalist.com
 - Found an herbalist who has become my long-term friend; I began a strict herbal regimen
 - Never looked back
 - Few antibiotics, take prescriptions as necessary
 - For years I had an herbal business helping others as an empath and intuitive
 - Now do occasional card readings and sell my Dr. Wendy's herbal skin cream on-line, at Village Foods and Love Downtown Local.



Where does art come in?



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- I wanted something artistic to do as I went into retirement – Mom was an artist.
- I picked watercolor because it was difficult and being an oceanographer by training, it spoke to me.
- Started to watercolor at 62 with Hailey Herrera in 2013. Took live classes with Monika Pate, Chris Wilson, Robyn Glass; online with Birgit O'Connor, Jean Haines and others.
- I seem to want to study the world through light, investigating reflections, shadows and water. I love how magically one can turn 2-D paper into 3-D images. It's all about observation.
- I am not one to paint every day. I have to be in the right mood and not stressed. I do think about painting every day.
- For me, watercolor is so versatile – there are many different techniques to create the essentially the same image. It can be overwhelming to me, especially when starting a new piece. Teaching watercolor helps spur me to get on with it and learn new techniques to share.

Earlier pieces were still lifes & pretty tight:

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I explored shadows:

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Portraits:

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Flowers & Plants:

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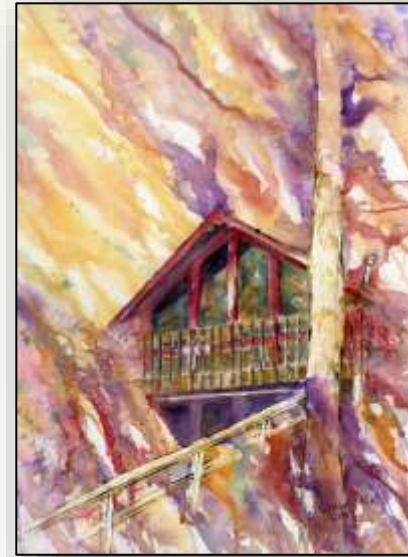
Animals:

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Landscapes & Architecture:

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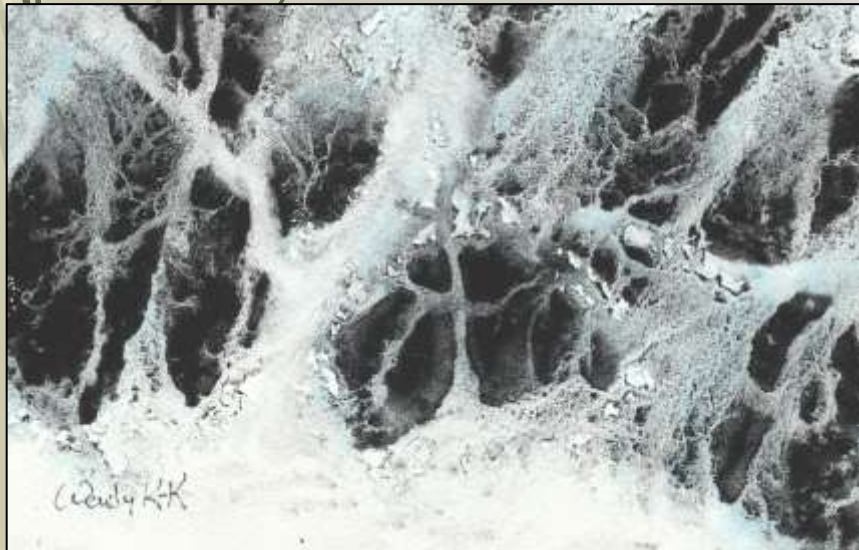
Sky and other phenomena:

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Abstracts:

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And Water:

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And more water:

22



Brazos Watercolor Retreats



- ▶ Monika Pate, Robyn Glass and I started this little business in 2019.
- ▶ We ran it together until covid, but they soon had other ventures and now I run it alone.
- ▶ I give classes once a month and open studio during the summer. I also give private and group lessons.



Brazos Watercolor Retreats

- BrazosWatercolorRetreats.com
 - Only 5 miles outside College Station city limits on 6 wooded acres & pond
 - ADA compliant, parking for 6-7, bathroom, kitchen
 - Small adult classes - 8 maximum



Examples of Recent Classes

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- ▶ I pick topics that both beginners and more advanced painters can do in 4 hours and feel good about their painting.
- ▶ You can see that many of my paintings originate from my classes



Introduction Project



Tree Portraits



Hake brush & Cling Film



Ocean Sunset



Your Home in Watercolor



Spring Roses



Examples of Classes

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2 Tone Portraits
(Notan)



Mystical Landscapes



Lighthouse in Rough Seas



Winging It: Cardinals



Forest Light



History with the Visual Art Society

Member of the Brazos Valley Art League/VAS since 2014

Treasurer 2016-2023

President 2023-present

Project leader, Aggieland Art Trail

Thanks for listening!
Any questions?

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