

# Consilience: Beth D'Aubigne

By Erika Paleck

Consilience (remember that word from the last column?) can be described on one level as developing our own world mythology. The symbols and values that are at our core are the basis for our actions in life. As we mature and become more conscious, we begin to decide for ourselves what our values must be. We come to respect ourselves enough to understand that we have innate gifts that must be used to honor our own creation as a human on this planet, and there is an authenticity within us dedicated to the higher good. Two characteristics frequently found in the Upper Nehalem River Valley that resonate in our local mythology of self-reliance and independence are quality and creativity.

How often have you heard it said that so-and-so has an eye for quality, be it in picking out livestock for breeding or the most expensive painting at the show? Or how about your neighbor who doesn't have two bucks to rub together to make a fire but can decorate a room in her home so beautifully that it is a delight and treasure to a lonely heart? We all know these people, and when we need their talents we unhesitatingly turn to them. Often we don't know why, but we trust their innate gifts; we're glad they share them with us. They are our region's treasures.



One such hidden treasure in Birkenfeld is Beth D'Aubigne (pronounced Doe-bean-ya). Raised in Southern California, she escaped to Colorado where she home-schooled four daughters. As her domestic situation changed, she went back to college at age forty-five earning her B.A. in art, graduating two weeks before her oldest daughter graduated college. Until then, the irrepressible urge to create had popped up in advent calendars and clothing and even working in stained glass.

I visited her in her home in the woods off Fishhawk Road. Paintings

and drawings, baskets, a spinning wheel and ceramics—it's easy to see she is driven to create and at last has the time to do so. I asked how art and craft fit into her life. "Life blood," she answered without missing a beat.

It's that power of creation that rules her home, from the kitchen almost finished being remodeled to the delicious home baked cookies and the attention to detail that speaks directly of the importance of quality. This wasn't chaos at work; this was the force of creativity harnessed for beauty and nurture.

Beth has been sharing her creativity with our local community in courses offered through the Vernonia Community Learning Center, both ceramics courses and basket weaving. Basket weaving? This is not for those with a short attention span. Her first course ran three hours, and in that time all her pupils were able to finish weaving their own individualized basket. To me, that means tedium. To Beth and others, it is a relaxing and productive way to spend your time composing your thoughts, writing a letter, or meditating. In Buddhism they say, "After enlightenment, do the dishes." But wouldn't weaving your own basket do as well?

If you are being present in the moment, if you are being here now as so many great spiritual teachers admonish us, what better way of being than to create something that is beautiful in its elegant simplicity, functional and long-lasting? Isn't this a basic facet of quality? On her website I found this quotation from William Morris, a pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement that celebrated handicrafts and encouraged the use of simple forms and natural materials: "If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to

be beautiful." That certainly describes her home and the crafts that she teaches others so that they may make their own objects of quality while being present in the moment.

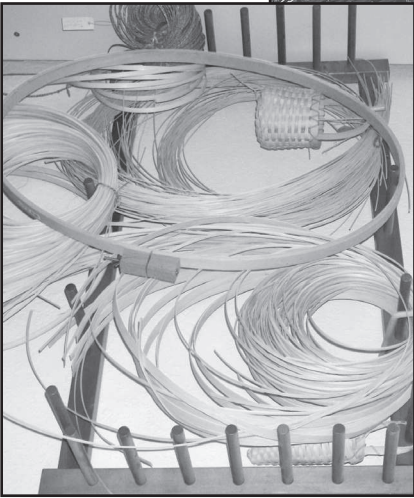
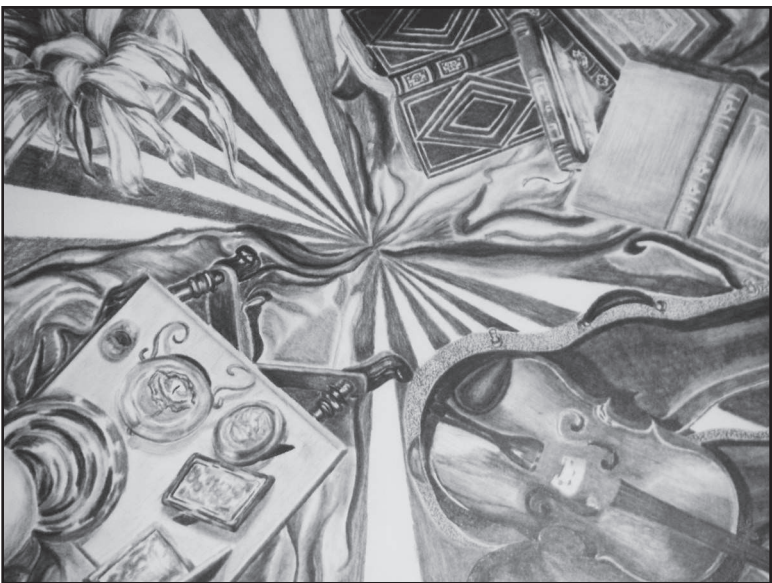
Who says that which is beautiful is not practical? Or vice-versa? A thing of beauty can bring joy into a darkened heart when nothing else can. And if beauty isn't practical, then what is? It is a necessary ingredient of life in the woods that much of what we own has more than one value, and perhaps this is a test of quality, too. Things of quality have

no fear of time. If you feel drawn to craft your own heirlooms, check out Beth's website for items she has for sale: simplybeautifulthings.com. If you want to see some of her work in person, she'll be at the Art, Craft, Photography, and Hand-made Gifts Show during Jamboree weekend (August 2nd and 3rd) at the Grange and at the First Fridays to come (September 5 and October 3).

Or if you are ready to expand your own horizons and put your hands to work at the Learning Center, Beth will be teaching these classes: Hand Painted Pottery, Making Your Own Garden Pots and Creative Basketry.

(The Learning Center will also be offering classes in Recycling, taught by Mark Lemay. Registration and further info is available at City Hall.)

If you know anyone who might have stories and talents to share about life here, please contact me at: epaleck@gmail.com or at 503-429-0898. If you want to participate in the Art, Crafts, Hand-made Gifts and Photography Show (whew!) at the Grange this Jamboree weekend, contact me.



## In Vernonia – Did You Know...

- The Oregon Employment Department in St. Helens has interview rooms in which a business can conduct interviews of potential new hires. They provide resume writing assistance.
- Bits and PCs is now Agalis Computer and Internet Services and offers black and white and color copy services. They are cheaper than Kinko's plus you save the drive.
- The Old Saw Mill Eatery at Vernonia Lake has ice cream for those hot summer nights. Oh, coffee, too, for those cold summer mornings.
- Art Attack can make signs and banners custom made to order locally and personally delivered.
- You can cure your chocolatecravings at Annabelle on Bridge St.? Drop in for a truffle and check out the antiques.
- You can find Jamboree information on the Chamber web site and plan your weekend for August 1, 2 and 3.

For further information about these businesses, check out the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce website at [www.vernoniachamber.org](http://www.vernoniachamber.org)

## St. Mary's Annual Quilt & Crafts Fair

**SEPT 18-21**  
**THURSDAY–SUNDAY 10 AM – 4 PM**

*Quilt Fair Admission (still only) \$1 per person*

**Unique Craft Bazaar**  
**Lunch Served Daily at 11:00 am.**

**"Star of Bethlehem" Raffle Quilt-Tickets: \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00**  
**\*\*\*NEW\*\*\* SINGER211A Sewing Machine (with carrying case) Raffle**  
**ONLY \$5.00 per ticket!**

**Information:** St. Mary's Church (503) 429-8841  
[stmarys08@agalis.net](mailto:stmarys08@agalis.net)

**Vendors Call:** Willamae (503) 429-7871  
Mary D. (503) 366-8014  
Pat K. (503) 429-5641

**17 miles North of Hwy 26 on Hwy 47. Follow the Signs!**

960 Missouri Ave  
Vernonia, OR 97064



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