

# Life and Art as Poetry

## *From Hollywood to Wood County*

**B**onnie Lee Sir Kegian is a California-born scholar who graduated cum laude from USC with bachelor's degrees in both English and education. Now she's a Texan, a bed and breakfast proprietor, an accomplished photographer and sculptor, a writer and journalist, and a poet. And, it's interesting how she got from there to here.

Looking way back, you could say her story begins in 1862 when her great-great grandfather, A.J. Ross, settled in Cornersville, just around the corner from what's now known as Winnsboro. As his family grew, along came Bonnie's grandmother, Bonnie Viola Rushing, who married Ed Horne. The Hornes then had four girls. The adventuresome one, Marie, who'd been modeling in Dallas, decided she wanted to be a beauty queen in Hollywood. One of her sisters, Alta Maye, went along for the ride. Once in California, Alta Maye got a job in a soda shop, where she met her future husband, Albert Sir Kegian. The couple then settled

in Los Angeles, where Al went into partnership with his brothers as an owner/operator of the only west coast Indian Motorcycle sales and service shop. Then, along came little Bonnie Sir Kegian, who became the only grandchild to Bonnie Horne and the only niece to her three Horne aunts.

During her California childhood, Bonnie lived with her parents in Newhall. The house, she says, was just down the road from a western movie town now called Melody Ranch in Placerita Canyon, where famous names such as John Wayne, Gene Autry, Elvis Presley and James Arness made movie magic in films like "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" and "Annie Oakley" and TV's popular "Gunsmoke" series. Of her years growing up, Bonnie says she and the other neighborhood kids loved to go hang around "movie town" to watch production and see who they could catch a glimpse of. But just as interesting, Bonnie said, were her frequent trips with her parents back to Cornersville to visit family and the farm that she would one day own.

Upon graduating high school, Bonnie attended the University of Southern California and then began her career as a kindergarten teacher. She followed that with jobs as publicity director for a department store and a columnist for a local paper, as well as a stringer for McClatchy Newspapers, including the Modesto Bee. During those years, Bonnie met and married, and also became the mother of a daughter, who's now Marisa Lee Miller. But also during those years, Bonnie had a terrible fall that left her incapacitated for four years until she finally met a surgeon who was able to repair her injuries. The injury, though, had taken a toll on Bonnie's first marriage. So when she was able, she made a move to Newport Beach, California, where she later met and fell in love with her husband of 23 years, Donald White.

Orange County is also where she met and fell in love with another of her passions—stone sculpting. Bonnie said, even though she was a writer, a novelist and a photographer, "I had never thought of myself as an artist."

One day, while she was doing some volunteer work as a docent for the Hortense Miller Garden, another docent recommended that Bonnie go view a sculpting class at the Art Institute of Southern California in Laguna Canyon. She was taken by the medium almost immediately. She signed up for a class and began with general lightweight carvings. As her interest in stone carving grew, she happened to read an article about a town called Marble, Colorado, that is located on a marble quarry. She just knew she had to go. When she did finally tour the town, she said, "You could not be in Marble, and not see marble. It was everywhere you looked.



**In her studio at Hunter's Moon Farm near Winnsboro, Bonnie Sir Kegian displays a work in progress that is as much a journey for her as it is a creation.**

And marble was accessible. It got me excited about carving.”

Later, after she and Don officially retired, they spent several years living in their mobile home and traveling around the U.S., Canada and Mexico. In the meantime, Bonnie had also been bequeathed the family property near Winnsboro. It became a home base of sorts. So when Bonnie and Don made a return trip to Marble, she bought her first piece of marble and she and Don brought it back to the family farmhouse near Winnsboro, to what is now called Hunter’s Moon Farm.

She said that 700-pound piece of marble sat there for a year, because “I had to commit myself to it.” Also, she said, she needed to start acquiring the specialized diamond cutting tools she’d need to work on it. She’d only before carved alabaster and limestone, which are a little softer and less demanding.

In the meantime, Bonnie and Don were also working on their property, building onto one small cottage to make it their home and also converting an outbuilding into Bonnie’s studio. Then they began converting Bonnie’s grandmother’s farmhouse into a bed and breakfast.

“That was a two-year restoration project,” said Bonnie, who added that they performed most of the work themselves, working to keep as much of the house original as possible, then furnishing it with the pieces original to the house and other family heirlooms and also complementing with purchased period pieces. Throughout, there are artistic touches, including some of Bonnie’s photographs and sculptures. The results are warm and welcoming.

Between construction projects, Bonnie also found time to work on some of her imaginative and beautiful sculptures.

“All of my work has symbolism,” she said. “The stone moves me in the direction it wants to be.” She says she studies each stone first and contemplates the choices. And in all of that thinking, she readily slips back to her other artistic nature of writing, and her love of literature and poetry, and then she says, “The stone just speaks to me.”

For example, as she talks about one of her masterpieces, South Sea Maiden, she said she just knew that the aqua and white marble bespoke of the sea. Subsequently, a T.S. Eliot poem, which she can readily and lyrically quote, whispered in her mind: “I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each... I have seen them riding seaward on the waves combing the white hair of the waves blown back when the wind blows the water white and black.”

This poem, running through her mind, began to help her see a girl of the sea. But not just any girl. She thought of



**Diamonds have been called a girl’s best friend, and for Bonnie, that’s never been more true, with an exception. She likes hers in the form of diamond blades that help her create her art.**

the “ama,” or female pearl divers of the South China Sea. She thought of the tropics and the famous painter Paul Gauguin and his paintings of island natives in tropical locales. She also thought of the natural forms of windswept sand, coral and shells, tropical flora, the prow of a ship and the intricately carved feminine mastheads that led sailors of yore on journeys abroad. The disparate yet symbiotic images and poetry led her to create an exotic and lovely moon-faced tropical maiden that invokes them all.

“This piece of marble just felt like it should be a mermaid,” she said of that work. “It became what is inside of me.”

All of her works seem to be a melding of her past experiences and passions of mythology, archeology, adventure and the wanderlust of her spirit. Her works also seem to tell her something about herself when they are complete. For example, she says with wonder, “I did not know I loved the pearl divers until this piece came to life.”

With carvings as accomplished as hers, one would think Bonnie should be able to draw, but she says she can’t. She plans her works in her head and with her hands, feeling her way to the result. Reducing, bit by bit, and then smoothing and polishing. Another artist told her once, she says, “The reason I cannot draw or paint is because my mind works in three dimensions.”

Anyone who meets her would have to agree that Bonnie Sir Kegian is certainly not one-dimensional, and it’s anyone’s guess, even her own, what new work of art lies underneath a block of stone for her to uncover.

When asked how she thinks of herself, Bonnie says, “I think of myself as retired, but most assuredly I have something to do every single day, all day long. I am a sculptor. I run a bed and breakfast. I garden.” And after a pause, “But mostly, I just love to carve stone. I think about the words. The process always begins with me telling a story. I love the fact that it’s stone, and it takes a lot to make it permanent.”

At Hunter’s Moon Farm and the B&B there is art in progress, but also a firm expression of the joy of living. To see some of Bonnie’s work in person, visit the Shoppes on Main and The Winnsboro Emporium in Winnsboro.

Hunter’s Moon Farm is served by Wood County Electric Cooperative and is located at 7739 Farm Road 3019, Winnsboro, 75494. Potential B&B guests and those interested in studio space rental for an event, artistic gathering or workshop can learn more at [www.huntersmoonfarmhouse.com](http://www.huntersmoonfarmhouse.com), by calling (903) 365-2801 or by e-mailing [huntersmoonfarm@gmail.com](mailto:huntersmoonfarm@gmail.com).



# Youth Tour 2011: Visit Washington, D.C., on Us!

**W**ood County Electric Cooperative is calling all eligible teens (high school students enrolled as sophomores, juniors or seniors and are a dependent of a WCEC member with a permanent resident status in the co-op's service area) to apply for the 45th annual Government-in-Action Youth Tour. One lucky teen will win an all-expense-paid trip to our nation's capital to experience a guided tour of Washington, D.C., June 9-17, 2011. The trip will include airfare, transportation while in Washington, hotel rooms, food costs, and tours of many exciting, educational and inspiring sites. Parents or guardians will be responsible for transporting the teen to and from Irving.

It's simple to enter. Candidates must submit a 450- to 500-word essay (about 1 typed page), which will be judged by an independent panel. This year's topic is devoted to the cooperative principles. Essayists should pick one of the seven cooperative principles and write about what it means to them. The essays will be judged on composition, neatness, originality and knowledge of the subject.

The winner will travel with students from across Texas. This group, upon arriving in Washington, will join approximately 1,500 Youth Tour participants from across the country. This tremendous learning opportunity will include tours of Mount Vernon and the Smithsonian museums, a boat cruise on the Potomac River, and other historical sites and memorials. Additionally, one day will be dedicated to touring the House and Senate chambers and the Library of Congress and meeting with Texas representatives.

Those wanting more information about the tour should visit <http://youthtour.org> to see pictures and videos from past annual tours.

## 2011 Eligibility and Rules

Submit an essay not to exceed 500 words, which describes what one of the seven cooperative principles means to the essayist.

Essay entries should be mailed to:  
Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Attention: Youth Tour 2011  
P.O. Box 1827  
Quitman, TX 75783

Entries must have arrived at WCEC on or before February 25, 2011. Entries received after that date will be disqualified.

Entrants must be:

- A high school student enrolled as a sophomore, junior or senior.
- A dependent of a Wood County Electric Cooperative member with permanent resident status in WCEC service area.

No name should appear on the essay. On a separate cover sheet, the contestant should include: Student essayist name, name and address of parent/guardian who is a member of WCEC, contact telephone number and WCEC account number.

Reference materials from various sources including libraries and the Internet may be used, but the essay should be in the student's own words.

## The Seven Cooperative PRINCIPLES

*Wood County Electric Cooperative was founded on seven principles that guide us in making decisions to reflect the best interests of the consumers we serve.*

### Voluntary and Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

### Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

### Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

### Autonomy and Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

### Education, Training and Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

### Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

### Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

## It's Lights Out for Familiar Incandescents

By this time next year, the federal government will have turned the lights out on the familiar A-shaped incandescent bulb.

Starting January 1, 2012, the traditional 100-watt and 150-watt A19 incandescent lightbulbs will not be sold any more. The following year, the familiar 75-watt incandescent will also be history. And in 2014, Americans will wave goodbye to their beloved—albeit energy-inefficient—60- and 40-watt A-shaped incandescents.

The result: Most people will switch to more efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs or to the brand-new, high-efficacy halogen bulbs that manufacturers have introduced in response to the “lightbulb law” within the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

You might grumble about the considerably steeper price of the alternative bulbs—in the \$2-per-bulb range versus the 50-cent incandescent. But you could notice a difference on your electric bill once you make the switch: CFLs last around five years and use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescents, which burn out after about seven months of normal use.

A heads-up: Starting in July, lightbulb packages will carry a Lighting Facts Label, which will explain how bright the bulb is, how long it will last and how much energy it will use. Instead of saying how many watts the bulb is, it will give its lumens—a measure of light output.



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