

October 31, 2009

## William Tweed: Celebrate our land and arts

*William Tweed*  
*Our Natural World*

Here's a question for you: How many of you either work outside or have a job with a window that actually allows you to watch the out-of-doors?

The answer, I suspect, is that aside from the dwindling number of local residents who farm, very few of us have much daily connection with the world of nature. For many reasons, this is our loss.

Even if we largely ignore it, the natural world we occupy in Tulare County is one of rare beauty.

Our oak-studded Valley landscapes, resting at the base of one of the most impressive mountain massifs in our nation, define something unique.

Californians who savor landscapes instantly recognize paintings and photographs of our Kaweah Delta country. Nowhere else quite matches it.

Because of its surpassing natural beauty, the Kaweah River country has a long history of inspiring art.

Not only painters and print-makers, but also prose writers, poets, storytellers and musicians have found inspiration within our native landscapes.

Most of this work goes on quietly, seen by only a few. But next weekend, thanks to the Sequoia Riverlands Trust, we will all have a rare opportunity to enjoy some of the many artistic works that our landscape continues to inspire.

The event next weekend, formally the Kaweah Land and Arts Festival, stretches over three days and includes happenings at several venues.

A Friday night reception at Arts Visalia will set the stage. Matthew Rangel, an emerging artist from Dinuba, will display his stunning lithographs of local landscapes, while local writer and photographer John Spivey shares his powerful, landscape-based interpretations of Tulare County. The reception runs for two hours beginning at 6 p.m. at the Arts Visalia gallery at 214 E. Oak Ave.

On Saturday, the festival moves outdoors to the Kaweah Oaks Preserve on Road 182 just north of Highway 198. Beginning at 11 a.m., visitors to the preserve will find lots going on. At two performance stages, musicians, storytellers, poets and local writers will provide free presentations.

Numerous booths will present opportunities for experiences and learning. Nature walks will explore the preserve's oaks forest. The fun lasts until 4 p.m.

In alphabetical order, a list of some of Saturday's presenters includes: local painter Paul Buxman, poet John Dofflemyer, naturalist Rob Hansen, poet and performer Tim Z. Hernandez, folk musician

Rob Jefferson, print-maker Matthew Rangel, poet and illustrator Sylvia Ross, author John Spivey, author and musician Trudy Wischemann and many more. I'll be a part of the program, as well.

Saturday evening, at College of the Sequoias, the festival continues with a Land and Arts symposium featuring formal talks by many of the artists and writers listed above. The symposium will focus on how our local landscapes have defined the creative lives of many local artists.

On Sunday, additional events will occur, providing an opportunity for more in-depth presentations. Details will be available Saturday about who, when and where.

All this is made possible (and free to everyone) not only by the Sequoia Riverlands Trust, but also by event supporters, including the California Council for the Humanities, Southern California Edison Co., Kawneer Corp., Arts Visalia, Valley Public Radio, Reedley College and College of the Sequoias.

Quite honestly, I'm truly excited by the potential of this event.

I hope you'll come out next weekend to join me in celebration of both our beautiful landscapes and our local arts. This is going to be fun.

- Three Rivers resident William Tweed writes about the natural world of Tulare County. His column, copyrighted and printed by permission, appears every other week in Living.
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