

A Reluctant Artist



by David Baugher

D'Anne Gastorf Weber recalls well walking through the park one fine day in 2007 telling a friend about how she'd been selling artwork for someone.

She was a bit stunned when her friend remarked what a shame it was that Weber, a talented salesperson, was so good at selling other people's art, but too scared to sell her own.

"I thought, only someone who loves me a lot could be that mean and cut me off at the knees," remembered Weber with a big laugh. "I pretty well took it as a challenge at that point and did a painting of the Kirkwood train station in the snow."

For some, life really does begin at 50 and that painting was a new beginning for the 50-year-old Des Peres resident and self-described "most reluctant artist ever."

Today, Weber's work graces the shelves of Bed Bath & Beyond outlets in 35 markets across 16 states and one Canadian province where she captures a metropolitan area's beloved landmarks for localized paintings and photographs to be sold to the public.

These days, Weber, now 56, has so much business she's opened up a

D'Anne Gastorf Weber at her production facility in Fenton. Her creative works are in Bed Bath & Beyond outlets across 16 states.

photo by Max Bouvatte

People Can't Resist Pampering Their Pets pages 16-17



For D'Anne Gastorf Weber, life as a successful artist began after age 50

2,000-square-foot production facility in Fenton. Last year, her company, Weber Made, grossed more than \$300,000. She used to travel, paint and take photos for fun. Now, however, the North County native jokes that her hobbies have become her career as she visits locales from Toronto to Topeka, from Boston to Baton Rouge, from Denver to Detroit, snapping pictures and



D'Anne Gastorf Weber captured the moment in this painting when the Cardinals clinched their 11th World Series.

putting brush to canvas for the fashionable retailer which now buys an average of 650 prints a month from her.

Often she simply wanders into a local coffee shop and strikes up a conversation.

"If I'm in Chicago, I'll say, 'If you had to be transferred tomorrow morning from Chicago what would be the one view of the city that would bring you to your knees?'" she said. "People will tell me what's really in their heart, what's iconic, what they love so much about their city."

cont. p. 8

Artist D'Anne Gastorf Weber

from page 1

Sometimes it's not the obvious choice. In Cincinnati, she found that Skyline Chili, the oldest chili bar in town was a favorite choice.

"New Orleans is a huge venue for me," she said. "I have these wild and crazy paintings of people in the French Quarter as well as the New Orleans Saints. They are testing those now."

Closer to home, she's done places like Busch Stadium and other local venues. The historic Kirkwood train station was a favorite too. Weber used to live in the town and her husband Vince still works there. She's also an ex-Webster Groves resident.

It's been a long road for Weber who graduated from Central Missouri State University with a degree in fine arts only to pursue a career in sales after "six months of being poor." But her friends didn't give up on her dream. They'd sign her up for art sales and then tell her after the fact, essentially forcing her to paint. They'd even work shifts to "babysit" her during the sale.

"My husband never left my side because I think he thought I was going to run away," she chuckled.

But soon it began to pay off.

"All of the sudden I was getting orders from people I didn't know," she said. "That gave me enough confidence to do my work with Bed Bath & Beyond."

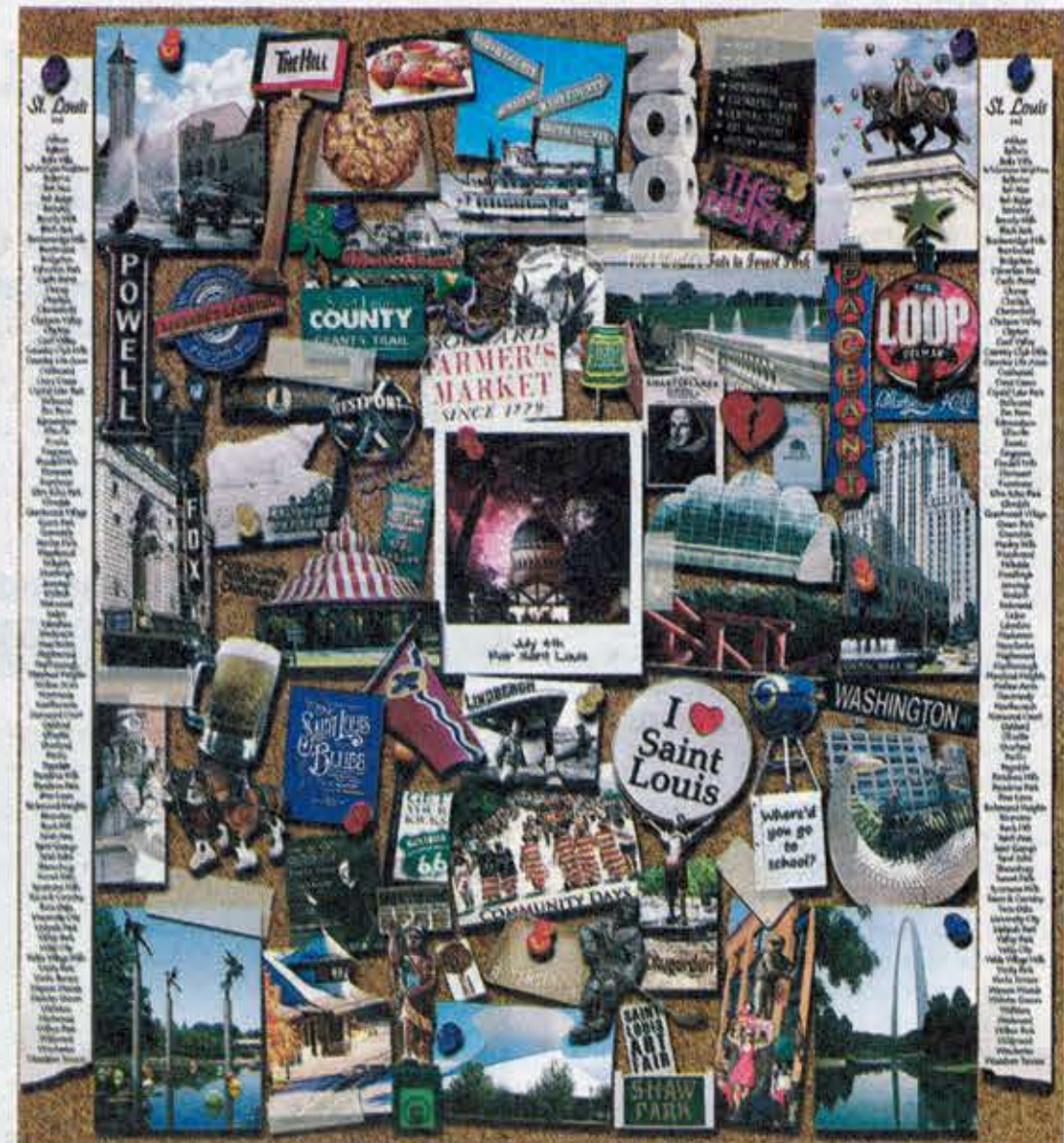
Though it didn't quite give her the confidence to claim that work as her own - at least not at first. After staying up until the wee hours of the night to paint so she could show her wares to reps from the furnishings chain, she simply described a "crazy woman" who had stayed up for the better part of two weeks to complete the works - which dried less than an hour before the buyers' arrival.

"They said keep that crazy woman painting," she recalled. "Finally, I had to admit it was me."

It proved to be a good move. Her repertoire continues to expand as her business grows. She's been trying out collages of late and Bed Bath & Beyond is now test marketing coasters and clock faces with her artwork on the front. Her factory now employs one full-time and six part-time employees and she is considering taking on more square footage.

She gives all the credit to her husband and friends who pushed her every step of the way.

"It's just bizarre how I got here and



"I Love St. Louis" shows D'Anne Weber's favorite places and events, including the Kirkwood Train Station, The Magic House and, of course, the Webster Groves July 4 Parade.

"To us, it just looks like a street scene or a Cardinal baseball game. She finds a new way to look at it from an interesting angle."

I'm grateful every day that this came about," she said.

Kirkwood resident Phyllis Ravensberg has known the artist for more than 20 years. She said she's proud to see her friend's work at her local Bed Bath & Beyond. "She's an amazingly creative and talented person who has an ability to look at the world differently," she said. "To us, it just looks like a street scene or a Cardinal baseball game. She finds a new way to look at it from an interesting angle."



D'Anne Gastorf Weber's photograph of the Kirkwood Train Station in autumn.