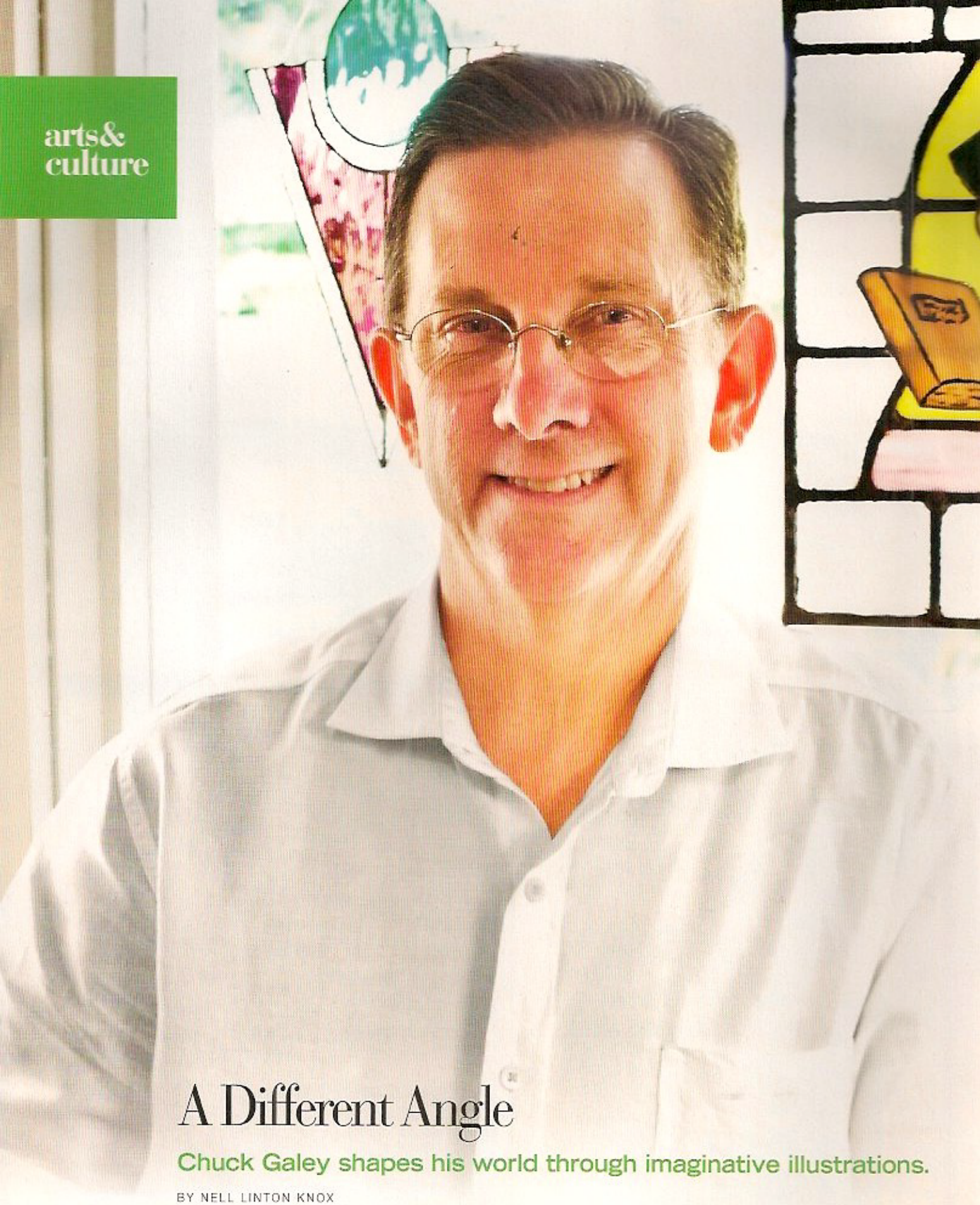


A Different Angle

Chuck Galey shapes his world through imaginative illustrations.

BY NELL LINTON KNOX
PHOTOS BY DAPHNE NABORS

Chuck Galey insists that children need the bond of sitting down with their parents to read a book, despite the convenience of the iPad and computer.



ABOVE: After illustrating seven books for other authors, Chuck is now telling his own stories.

Chuck Galey is a man who longs to see the world from a different angle. An illustrator, author, storyteller and artist, Chuck was born in the landlocked town of Greenwood, Mississippi.

"As a little boy, I used to make boats and set them off in the Yazoo River on an adventure," he reminisces.

He fell in love with the romance of the ocean, and as a teenager he learned to scuba dive in backyard swimming pools. His goal was to become an oceanologist, but he discovered he has crippling seasickness.

"My fear of seasickness was on a visceral level… it implied everything you don't want to do but are forced to do," he explains.

Forced to reevaluate his career path, Chuck took his commercial art degree in the ultimate creative direction. He began a career as an illustrator of children's books, using the romance, adventure and escape that he once found in the ocean to fuel his storytelling.

"That theme of adventure and escapism is something I use in my work," says Chuck. "I keep my car radio station set on Maragaritaville."

When he first broke into the world of illustrating, Chuck's publishers gave him manuscripts and told him to create illustrations for the stories.

"Publishers have files and files of illustrators," he explains. "They match the tone of a story to an illustrator, and the author only sees the art when the press book is released. I read the stories, and I thought, 'I can do that.' It hit me. Being an author and an illustrator is where it's at."

After illustrating seven books for other authors, Chuck is now telling his own stories.

"I like being the director of my story, designing the scene, the characters. I am writing for myself," says Chuck. "I don't think about kids when I am writing. As Maurice Sendak once said, 'I am writing what I want to write. It's just the way I think. Someone else has said it's for children.'"

> Children's books are best when the words and pictures are well designed.
>
> -Chuck Galey

Chuck wants his books to capture the same timeless nature of Sendak, as well as his other personal heroes including Eric Carle and William Joyce. The goal of his stories is to reveal a freedom to dream, because dreaming is what inspires his own creative process.

"The characters I create are frequently based on people I've met or find interesting," he says. "I'm always looking for characters. I meet someone and I think, 'I can turn them into a character.' A man who loves working on sailboats, for example, might become a young rabbit who is sailing to Mexico. I am always thinking, 'How can you take the readers and engage them in the story?'"

For Chuck, creating a children's book is an art form.

"I never considered myself a gallery artist," Galey says. "I consider the book an art form. The book stands alone. The illustrations are what make the book. I approach my books thinking of myself as a movie director."

The creative process begins with simple sketches.

"The magic—and the hardest part—is coming up with the doodle," he says.

The doodle gives way to the characters, illustrated with watercolor paintings, which Chuck feels reproduce with the most integrity. When he's not creating his books, he's teaching others about the creative process.

"I teach workshops and visit schools to talk about reading...we draw together during workshop sessions; I show them how to draw characters based on shapes and how shapes overlap, and how to tell a story," he explains. "You have to have tension or else you wouldn't have a story."

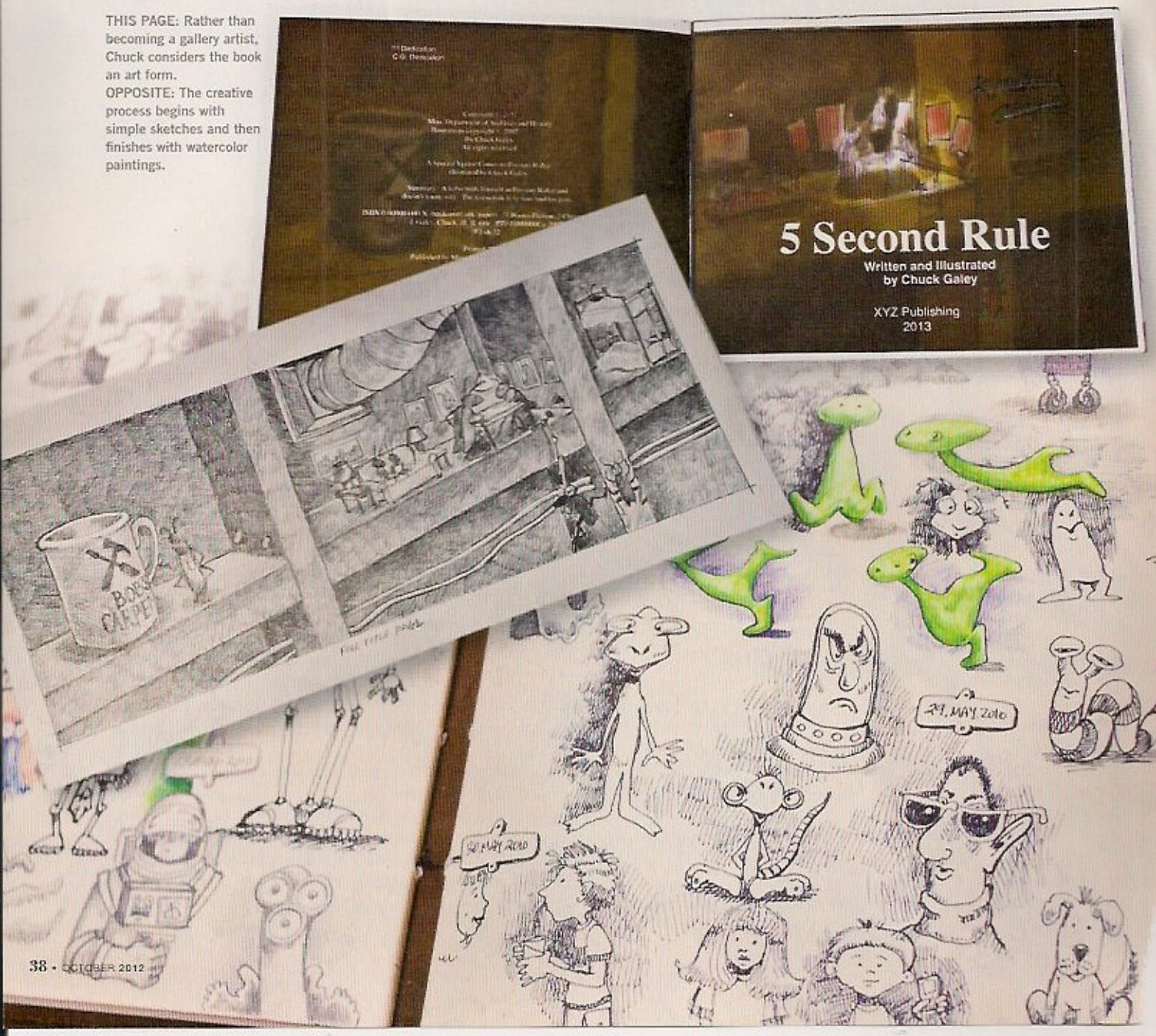
Instead of "bad guys," the story's tension may come from the weather or from other factors, such as a character's inability to get something that he or she wants.

"I'm not saying that life is easy," he says of the happy resolutions that mark his stories. "Sometimes, you only get 75% of what you want. But you got something."

Chuck realizes that in this digital age, children are accustomed to immediacy, so he focuses on creating books that are beautiful, quick and fun.

"Kids today have the computer and the iPad, certainly," he says. "But they need that bond with their parents, with adults. And what better way to bond than to sit down and perform a book, let kids see that story," he concludes. "Books will stay around. E-books are coming on strong but I think an actual book—especially for a child—is so tactile, something great to hold on to."

THIS PAGE: Rather than becoming a gallery artist, Chuck considers the book an art form.
OPPOSITE: The creative process begins with simple sketches and then finishes with watercolor paintings.





"Sometimes, you only get 75% of what you want.

But you got something." - Chuck Galey

The Fondren Express

more than just a trolley

Classically Styled Trolley for Charter

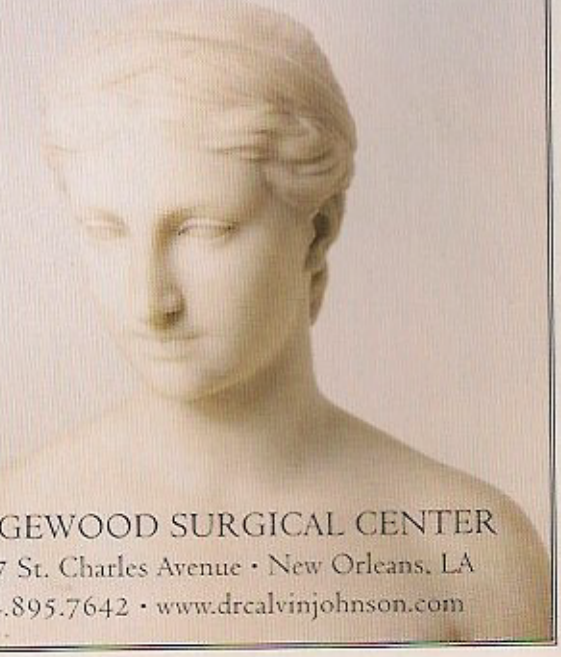
Birthdays • Progressive Dinners • Weddings
Business Events • Parades • Convention Shuttle
Tours of Jackson • 20 to 33 passengers
Onboard CD/DVD Stereo and Video Screens



Call 601-213-RIDE
FondrenExpress.com

ARTISTRY + EXPERTISE.

Calvin M. Johnson, Jr., M.D. FACS
Thomas H. M. Moulthrop, M.D.
Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery



HEDGEWOOD SURGICAL CENTER
2427 St. Charles Avenue • New Orleans, LA
504.895.7642 • www.drcalvinjohnson.com