

Subject: Labor Day
September 1, 2022

Sallie and I labored this past weekend, along with about 60 other artists and craftspeople, by participating in the Highlands Arts and Crafts Exhibition at Founders Park. While I had not participated for over 8 years, we set up a tent and display in both shows this year, the one in June and this past weekend. It is sheer hard work to be in such an event.

I want to salute Cynthia Strain who has been the organizer of these exhibits for many years. She announced her retirement from the exhibitions during this past weekend. She has been a faithful advocate for area artists and craftspeople. I also want to thank the Mountain Top Rotary Club for their sponsorship of these exhibitions. Their cadre of volunteers and the money they generate to nonprofit causes make these events special.

But, as an artist/craft person for nearly 60 years, I want to thank the exhibitors that make this community event possible. As we approach the Labor Day Holiday, I really want to recognize those people that exhibited at the show this past weekend. From my first-hand experience, it is a labor-intensive experience. Some might say it is a, "labor of love." But I think it is more than that. So many of the artist and craftspeople depend on these exhibitions as a meager livelihood. They work in home studios, as do I, and then travel throughout the region to art shows to sell their work.

It reminds me of the statement of the Renaissance artist, Raphael, who mused that "artists are mere peddlers of beauty." I might also add that artists and craftspeople use their hearts, minds and sheer physical labors to create objects of value and beauty.

I am reminded of a lecture my late friend and professor of art at North Georgia State University, Bob Owens, once delivered. During the lecture Bob put on the podium a small pot that a North Georgia potter had produced. He asked the audience what was the value of the pot? Bob responded that from a monetary view, it was only a few dollars at best. But Bob stressed that from a cultural and humanistic perspective of someone shaping and forming that vessel, there was an intangible value that is ascribed to enterprise, devotion, and creativity.

So, on this Labor Day Weekend, I hope we can come to honor those laborious acts of everyday labor that in the long run enhances all of our lives, even though we might tend to not ascribe high monetary value to that work.

I recently observed one of our town sanitation workers collecting garbage in my neighborhood. What struck me was that the worker had to drive a big truck skillfully to maneuver it through the street, Then the driver would get out and walk around collecting and emptying the trash cans in the back of the truck. I told him that it seemed he did a lot of walking. His response was that he used a digital tracking device one day this past summer and discovered he walked about six miles every time he ran the route.

I hope on this Labor Day Weekend we pause to honor and appreciate all those skilled laborers we depend on to do hard work every day so everyone can enjoy those services that we tend to take for granted.