

## RICH KLEIN JULY 2022 ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Rich Klein is one of the newer members of the North Augusta Artists Guild, although he isn't new as an artist. Like many of our NAAG members, Rich remembers being creative as a child, but putting art aside for a time as an adult, in order to make a living. His education is in science, gaining him a Doctorate in Biology. During his career, he worked with General Electric and various environmental consulting firms, as well as Aiken Technical College.

For his love of art, Klein has had no formal training, other than a few classes with Joe Kameen, Associate Professor of Art at USC-Aiken. Klein watches video classes on YouTube and learns from talking with other artists, as well. And he is not afraid to try new techniques and mediums. He has tried many art forms, including woodworking, furniture making, gardening, woodturning, stone carving, and cooking ("which, yes, can be very creative"). Out of those, he has chosen three favorites — oil painting, graphite, and charcoal. He has recently added watercolor to his repertoire and is enjoying its exploration.

When asked how often he works in each medium, he responds, "Which one I work in depends on my thought processes on that particular day and time. I usually pick what I am going to do on any particular day after a cup of coffee in the morning." He continues, "I gravitate towards figure work, portraits, still life, and landscapes as far as genres."

His art is growing in scope as he hones his talent and continues to learn. He has won no art awards yet. But he says, "Just this year I have started entering more shows and exhibits and I am greatly enjoying that." Beyond his art, he is most proud of his two daughters and two grandchildren. He calls them his "better awards", as he puts family before art. He is also proud that he continues to be curious about many things. "I consider that my main accomplishment." Klein offers this advice to developing artists. "Practice and exploration are the key to growth as an artist. I am constantly experimenting and trying new ideas, subjects, techniques, and modes of expression."

Although Klein has lived in Aiken more than 30 years, and has known about NAAG for quite a while, he has only recently joined the group. "Life and career — making money got in the way of me joining until recently." Now retired, Klein doesn't make a living with his art. So why do it? "I make art because I cannot not be creative in one way or another. Creating gives me meaning and purpose." His current most rewarding job is playing with his grandkids, taking them to the park and out for ice cream. When asked his favorite thing about NAAG, he responded, "The diversity of artistic endeavors that everyone engages in and the diversity of styles and modes of expression. I have learned a lot listening to the speakers and learning about everyone." Then he continues, "Now I wonder why I didn't join 20 years ago."

