

Carolina Colors

Catching Up With
Bob Timberlake

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIN CHOINIERE

TEXT BY J. WESLEY KNOWLES



Bob Timberlake and photographs featuring The Bob Timberlake Gallery in Lexington, NC.



My first encounter with Bob Timberlake was a chance meeting at Whitley's Barbecue in Lexington, North Carolina. I was having lunch with Austin and Juanita Harrison and their family in 2010. Austin noticed that Bob Timberlake was standing at the counter waiting to pick up an order and urged me to speak to him. I garnered my courage and walked up to introduce myself. A big smile spread across his face, and he shook my hand. He was friendly and engaging. After speaking briefly, he was on his way.

In comparison to young athletes meeting their professional sports heroes, the encounter was extra special for me. I had been influenced as a young artist by Bob Timberlake's paintings. I poured over his works in a book entitled *The World Of Bob Timberlake*, which featured a collection of prints of his early paintings. Vivid watercolor paintings that featured simple everyday objects were fascinating to me. Timberlake's photo realistic depictions of Bald Head Island and the landscape around his studio in Lexington served as the perfect muse for practicing my illustration skills.

The moment I shook his hand that day felt like a milestone. Inspecting his watercolors in that book, it had never occurred to me that one day I might have the opportunity to meet one of North Carolina's most recognized and celebrated artists.

Bob Timberlake is an internationally acclaimed realist painter and designer from Lexington, and his bloodline has over 270 years of history in the area. He

married Kay, his childhood sweetheart and "Better Three Quarters", in 1957. Together they raised three "amazing children" and seven "incredible grandchildren". He is extremely proud of all their achievements, vocations and aptitudes, and is always delighted to share stories of their successes.

Bob Timberlake has quite a list of achievements. Selling out the famous Hammer Gallery in New York numerous times and being the only Southerner in modern history to have a one-man exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. are among them; yet he is certain that his children and grandchildren are his greatest achievement, above and beyond his artistic, charitable and humanitarian contributions.

Timberlake has very few regrets. Not having a camera backstage during "The Germans" dance concert in Chapel Hill was the only thing Bob Timberlake could recollect when asked. Assisting backstage with his then girlfriend and future wife, Kay, they suddenly found themselves standing together and laughing with Louis Armstrong. The regret Bob expressed seemed to be more about missing the opportunity to capture a photo of Kay in that precise moment than of taking a photograph with Louis Armstrong. Bob seemed nostalgic as he recounted the experience. "I can still see them now. Kay's carefree laughter with Armstrong holding his famous horn in one hand, the other arm around Kay's shoulders holding a white handkerchief while laughing. They both had big smiles on their faces," Timberlake recalled.





Bob Timberlake began his professional career as a painter in 1970 after attending several art shows that inspired him. Meeting Dr. Margaret I. Handy in Pennsylvania in 1968 created an opportunity that would profoundly affect his future. From this chance meeting camaraderie over the art world arose.

Dr. Handy knew Andrew Wyeth personally. She later introduced Bob Timberlake to him. Over the years that introduction became an enduring friendship. Bob was certain of his own abilities as an artist but was concerned about maintaining the same standard of living for his family while pursuing this passion. Encouragement from Andrew Wyeth was the spark that he needed. Wyeth confirmed Bob's suspicions, and the rest is history.

His life has been a series of opportunities. Bob believes that his strong faith and convictions have helped him achieve success. One early occurrence was winning an award in the National Industrial Arts Competition in 1952 sponsored by Ford Motor Company. Timberlake submitted a furniture chest that he built and painted. Often reflecting on that moment he wonders what those judges saw in his entry. "They saw something in that fifteen year old boy of what may have been a promise of the future", he said, "I still have that piece in my gallery." Timberlake believes that he didn't recognize all of the profound opportunities or their worth at the times they occurred. Only in reflection does the path that led him to where he is today seem clear.

In 1990, Timberlake launched *The World of Bob Timberlake*® furniture collection. In 2000, industry critics and analysts said that this was the most significant introduction of a line of furniture in the last 40 years. It is touted as the most successful in the history of furniture. The line added personality to furniture by creating furnishings and accessories that shared a common aesthetic rather than matching. This gives the impression that the same person collected the items over many years.

When challenged with opting for cheaper labor and materials overseas, Timberlake insisted that production of his collection remain in America and in the Carolinas. A descendant of a long line of furniture fabricators, this year marks Bob and his family's 101st year in the furniture and accessory business.

Mr. Timberlake and his family love traveling to Blowing Rock. The area holds countless memories for them. Bob was honored to create, along with his talented colleagues, a beautiful Inn nestled in the midst of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The Bob Timberlake Inn at Chetola Resort, an eight room bed and breakfast in Blowing Rock, opened to the public in September 2004. The Inn and the complex offer an exceptional Spa, fishing, outdoor activities, singular accommodations, and superb dining at Timberlake's Restaurant.

Beautifully appointed, this restaurant offers additional waterfront dining on Chetola Lake. Timberlake's Restaurant was formerly the elegant home of

J. Luther Snyder, also known as "the Coca Cola King of the Carolinas." Snyder and his wife purchased Chetola Estate in 1926, where they held frequent parties that were the talk of Blowing Rock. These lodgings reference a glorious time in the past while maintaining the comforts of the present.

In his lifetime the works of Bob Timberlake have been at the forefront of memorable campaigns (Duke Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Duke Children's Hospital, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and Keep America and NC Beautiful). Not only has he received awards from governors, senators and presidents, he has enjoyed successes in numerous ventures throughout his career. His charisma and charm are primary ingredients that lend strength to his endeavors. Faith, humility and determination are admirable qualities that still persist. At the end of our conversation he invited me to Lexington for the Barbecue Festival in October and told me to stop by the gallery so we could "enjoy a plate together".

This is a Southern gentleman. He is a humble artist, best known for his unique watercolors with their intricate attention to color and detail. His works have been endeared to millions of admirers around the world. It is remarkable to comprehend that without any formal art education or training 2014 marks Bob Timberlake's forty-fourth year as a professional artist. There is one detail that is certain, Bob Timberlake has made an indelible impression on this North Carolina native. That memory is forever filled with the bright colors of a warm and sunny, Carolina afternoon.

For more information on Bob Timberlake, please contact The Bob Timberlake Gallery, 1714 East Center Street Extension, Lexington, NC 27292. Phone 800-244-0095 or 336-249-4428.



THE BOB TIMBERLAKE INN AT CHETOLA RESORT

Where a little R&R will make you warm and cozy all over.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY HEIDI BILLOTTO

If one of your resolutions this year was to take better care of you, then plan to treat yourself this season to some rest and relaxation, fine dining (and maybe a spa treatment) at Chetola Resort's Bob Timberlake Inn – the place to go for a wonderful getaway from it all.

The historic Inn, the resort with lodge rooms and suites, and a choice of larger resort condos are all nestled in the Blue Ridge mountains in Blowing Rock, a short and easy drive from the Queen City.

The Bob Timberlake Inn is a bed and breakfast in the original Manor House estate home at the resort, and is beautifully appointed. The décor is that of a cozy and comfortable mountain lodge, set back in time to Chetola Resort's roots of the late 1920s, '30s and '40s. Each of the eight private rooms in the Inn sports a fireplace and period furnishings with many Timberlake appointments and accessories, and all include a King or Queen sized bed, rich linens, flat screen televisions, whirlpool tubs (most large enough for two), DVD players, in-room safes, and robes for each guest. Each of the rooms is named for one of the estate's previous and current owners and several prominent locals.

The Luther Snyder Room was named for James Luther Snyder, touted as Chetola's most celebrated owner. Snyder owned the estate from 1926 until his death in 1957, at which time the Inn remained in his family until 1972. This charming room includes all of the amenities listed above in addition to a wonderful private balcony overlooking the patio at the Bob Timberlake Restaurant and offering a beautiful view of Chetola Lake. A perfect little nook for in-season reading and resting, it is a wonderful place to start the day, enjoying the Inn's beautifully prepared room service breakfast.

No matter which room becomes your final destination, your stay begins with a lovely personal tour by the Inn's proprietress, and upon arrival in your room, you will be greeted by a complimentary bag of made-in-house sweet and slightly spicy granola – a chef's specialty at the Inn.

A serve yourself coffee and ice cream bar is available exclusively to Inn guests 24/7, and in the upstairs common area library, the Inn offers a late afternoon wine and cheese reception. Downstairs in



the Manor House is Timberlake's Restaurant and Headwaters Pub, with a beautiful patio and several small intimate rooms in which to dine.

During your getaway be sure to book a treatment or two in The Spa at Chetola Resort, or lavish yourself with a day-cation spa treatment package. While the



spa facility is smaller than some, the relaxation room with fireplace and bar, like the rooms in the Inn, is beautifully decorated with soft lighting and the same historic lodge decor of the rooms in the Inn. Services include expertly executed massage and facial treatments. Guests also may book nail services and have access to the pool and exercise room.

In season, Inn guests will delight in enjoying the Inn's paddle boats for a fun and slow paced "self-propelled" tour around the lake with the Inn's family of swans. Occasional wellness dinners, trail hiking, fishing, tennis and year round camps for kids are among the many other offerings to be enjoyed.

Visit Chetola's website at Chetola.com for a host of vacation packages, information on booking conferences, meeting and weddings at the Resort, and for Timberlake's breakfast and dinner menus. *