



Kim Rody-Kopp

Story by PAUL M. HOWEY

A log cabin halfway up a mountain in Fairview during the warm weather months. A sailboat in the Bahamas in the winter. This idyllic life is reality for Kim Rody-Kopp and her husband. It's a dream life that began, and continues, as the stuff of Hollywood movies.

Kim, born and raised in Miami, Florida, had been living in Texas (she refers to it as being "exiled") for 21 years where she built a highly successful career as an agent for State Farm Insurance. Then came a life-changing epiphany.

"I was at a seminar in Chicago to learn how to sell more insurance," she explains. The participants were to told to visualize themselves several years in the future. "This is what I saw: I was going to be a little 80-year-old lady swimming in the ocean every day, with a beautiful garden, living in a bungalow on the beach ... and painting canvases." That was news to her, she says. But she felt the information was not to be ignored.

"So I went back to Dallas and started taking a painting class at the community college ..." That course told her everything she felt she needed to know about her life. After three years, she quit her job, let her insurance license lapse, and made art her vocation.

Wild and crazy? Perhaps. But she comes by it naturally. "Everybody in our family has some sort of wild creative streak," she says. "My dad made everything from palm frond hats to

turned bowls. My little sister raises bees and is a blacksmith. My mom would completely redecorate the house every three years. My big sister has a gift with languages and with a sewing machine." Still, she says, her parents "nearly had heart attacks when I told them I was going to 'retire' at 40 and become an artist."

A self-described "boatie" her entire life, Kim bought a 31-foot powerboat that she moored in Hope Town harbour in the Bahamas. "That way, I could fly back and forth ... to Stuart (Florida) whenever I ran out of clean clothes and had to do laundry. It was like my floating apartment." That little trickster fate was about to make an appearance in this seemingly perfect existence.

At the next mooring in the harbour was Spirit, a 41-foot Tartan sailboat captained by Mark Kopp, a retired Coast Guard chief. "He made fun of my big-engined, gas-guzzling boat," she says. "He pestered me for four years. I finally caved in and we got secretly married in the little Methodist church in Hope Town. I sold my gas guzzler and moved onto his (our!) 'blow boat.'" But how did she get to North Carolina?

"I spent six summers at Camp Crestridge in Black Mountain during junior and senior high," says Kim. Her parents ended up building a log cabin here that was in their family for about 20 years before being sold. Her parents eventually became ill and so Kim and her new husband would trek north to be with them. It was during one of these visits that Mark found, and bought, the log cabin in Fairview where this interview took place.

"We spend a little over five months here," explains Kim. The couple then loads Spirit with provisions. "Do you know that 11 cases of wine will not last six months in the Bahamas?" she interjects, adding they enjoy doing a lot of entertaining. "Fourteen is a much safer number!" They then sail to the Bahamas, generally arriving there by Thanksgiving. They rent a little bungalow on the beach where Kim paints. She paints both of her different worlds, most always selling them where they're created. An avid scuba diver, Kim paints "all things fishy" and often dives for lobster and conch for dinner. "We see wild sea turtles on practically every dive ... a subject I dearly love to paint." In North Carolina, her paintings are of the forest scenes that surround their cabin—trees, mountains, flora, and fauna. "I have about 15 paintings in my head at any given time."

She adds, "I believe there is some truth to the notion of an astrocartograph. Put simply, some places on Earth are better than others to pursue dreams."

In Kim Rody-Kopp's world, it's obvious that she's found two such places.

To see more of Kim's work, visit rody.com. Her paintings are at the Design Gallery in Burnsville, at 32 Broad Gallery in Brevard (through October), and Mountain Made in Asheville carries her notecards and giclées. Also, there will be an exhibit of her work at Seven Sisters Gallery in Black Mountain beginning in November. You can reach the artist at kim@rody.com.

