



Article by Maria Duncalf-Barber / Photographs by Darren Lum

Gail Dempsey spreads her wings in art and business

Opposite: Drawing inspiration from the natural beauty of Muskoka, Gayle Dempsey writes and paints.

Top: Dempsey is a versatile artist working with water colours, print-making and acrylics along with writing. She had her first solo exhibition this summer, titled "Turning East," and owns the Muskoka Place Gallery.

Gayle Dempsey is the quintessential artist with soul. She lives and breathes art with a passion. She loves to be creative as it's in her bones. She likes to share her talent with people of all ages.

As well as painting she has published articles, stories, books, papers and is a sought-after speaker. She has also been interviewed on radio.

Dempsey says: "I have learned so much about the arts in the past few years and about the healing qualities of art. In my first watercolour workshop, I learned about soul in painting and the technical quality of the drawing isn't as important as the soul in the piece.

"And that when you paint from within, your heart and soul shine out of your piece. I felt the relationship between art and spirituality."

Dempsey's journey towards her artistic essence of who she is today was helped by her reading of many books. Her favourite is *Learning By Heart - Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit* by Sister Corita Kent, and her's is a creed Dempsey also lives by:

"Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us. To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is to fit together and we all do this every day. There is an energy in the creative process that belongs in the league of those energies which can uplift, unify, and harmonize all of us. In a way, the artist gives us a small taste of that larger art - the new world we are trying to build - a world in which each person, each country, lives in harmonious relationship with each other person and country."

Dempsey is a fourth generation Muskokan and feels a deep connection to the spirit of the land, the lakes, the natural beauty and the peace that is Muskoka. She is passionate about preserving, protecting and promoting the beautiful rich culture and heritage.

Her family members were boat builders and steamboat captains, serving the tourists and summer residents and they had great respect and sensitivity for the land and the lakes.

Their pioneering spirit and sensitivity live with Dempsey who says, "My father was a boatbuilder, romantic, great philosopher and visionary. He taught me to walk gently, to live lightly and to seek truth.

"My mother is a very active 'older person' who loves dancing, painting, travelling, gardening and has a great passion for cooking and life in general. She taught me to seek joy, to share and to live fully."

Gary Froude is Dempsey's partner. She met him 11 years ago when he came to Port Carling from Costa Rica for a winter friendship festival; his background was in music management.