MICHIGAN

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MICHIGAN'S LAKESTYLE MAGAZINE

SUMMER ISSUE

The Good Life

Michigan beaches a reason to smile

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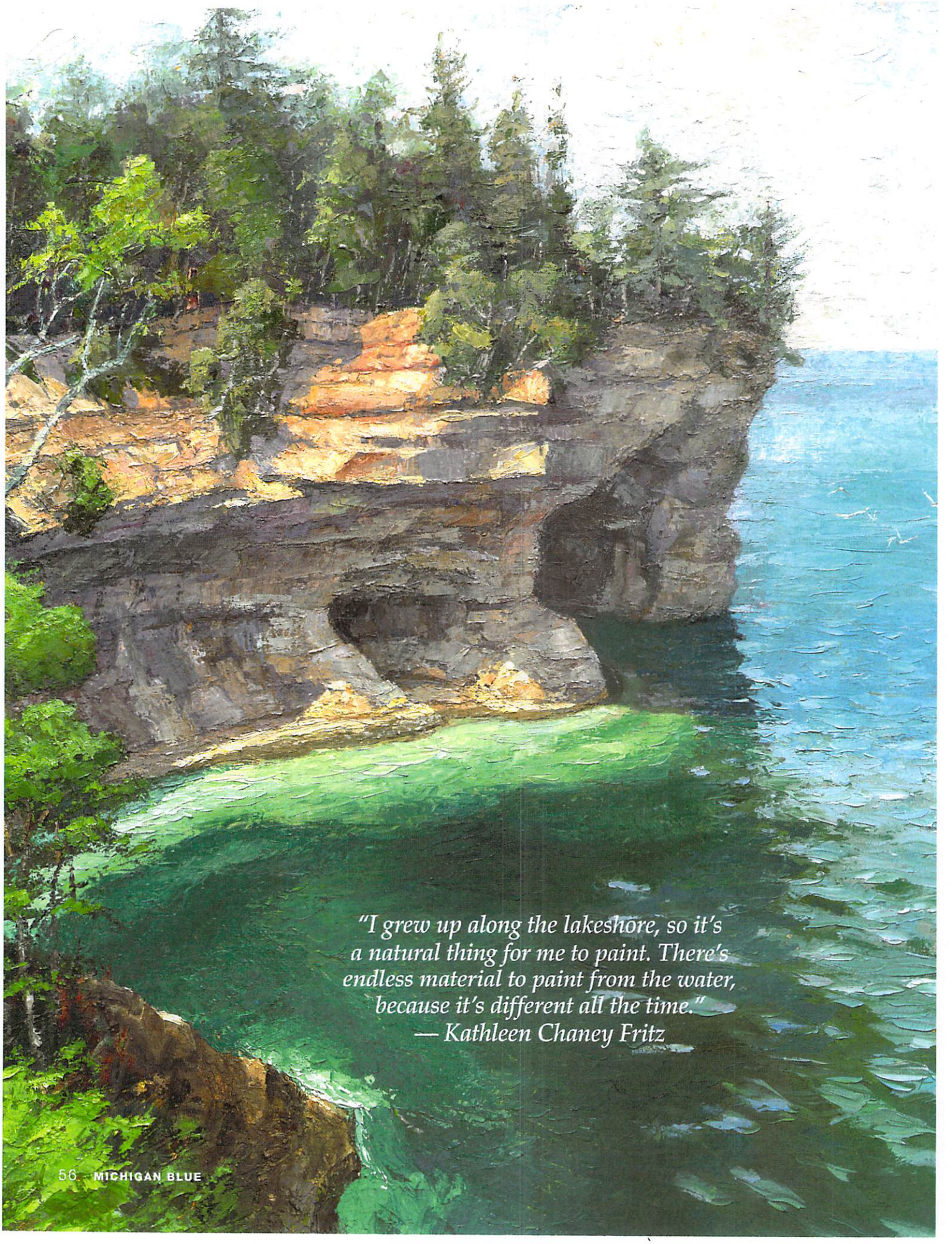


"I grew up along the lakeshore, so it's a natural thing for me to paint. There's endless material to paint from the water, because it's different all the time."
— Kathleen Chaney Fritz

BY LYNNE MEREDITH GOLODNER

Inspired by water

Michigan artists, poets and writers find water awakens the senses and the stories within.

Whether writing about the water outside our homes, singing lyrics inspired by the meandering Detroit River or the tumultuous East Bay in a late autumn storm, plenty of Michigan artists call water their muse. Chris Dombrowski, a Michigan-born poet, author and fly-fishing guide living in Missoula, Montana, reflects that water is "... an inspirational force, and millions of artists have been inspired by it, but it doesn't often get talked about ..."

Michigan is a water wonderland. With 3,288 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 26,266 inland lakes and 120 major rivers, water influences the life we live. Come visit with four Michigan artists who find that water very much inspires their work.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY JOHN FRITZ

Kathleen Chaney Fritz, painter

After a steady and successful career in Grand Rapids as an illustrator for advertising agencies, Kathleen Chaney Fritz fulfilled a lifelong dream and switched to painting. Her representations of West Michigan landscapes and waterscapes grew quickly enough to prompt her husband to quit his job to manage her art career, and for the past several decades, that's how they've supported their life.

"I grew up along the lakeshore, so it's a natural thing for me to paint," says Fritz, who lives in Ada with her husband John. Her studio there is open by appointment, but her work can be seen at chaneyfritz.com. "There's endless material to paint from the water, because it's different all the time."

Fritz's painted images spring from childhood memories on Duck Lake north of Mus-

Isle Royale
Source: Great Lakes Island Escapes

kegon; commissioned pieces depict customers' cottages, boats and lakeside landmarks preserved on canvas. A graduate of Kendell College of Art and Design, Fritz spent 25 years painting watercolors and, now, exclusively works in oils. Her works are displayed at prominent art venues, such as Saper Galleries in East Lansing, Stafford Gallery in Petoskey, Art & Soul Gallery in Traverse City and J Petter Galleries in Saugatuck.

"In the early years, I was around the water a fair amount, and I would travel and take reference photos," Fritz says. "But I've painted the water so long, and even the places I paint, mostly western Michigan, I know these places so well" that she now can paint poetic water portraits from memory.

Fritz's art spans the ethereal magic of a misty morning on the quiet beach to the energetic, rolling waves of late-day sun magnetic off the Great Lakes. No two paintings are the same, even of the same places and scenes.

That's the thing about painting water, she says. "It's always different, depending on the time of day, what kind of sky there is, it's just endless what you could paint."

Maureen Dunphy, writer

Sitting on a Mackinac Island porch one summer day in 2009, during an impromptu happy hour of wine, goat cheese and crackers with her husband, Maureen Dunphy reflected on the eclectic mix of people strolling along Main Street. She wondered aloud about the crowd they would find on Pelee

Island, a western Lake Erie isle where the pair had a cottage for 25 years.

"Those two islands are in the same system of water, and they're so different," Dunphy recalls. At the time, they'd visited 10 Great Lakes islands and mused there probably were more and perhaps visiting them all would make a great retirement journey. Dunphy promised to find a book to guide future travels.

None existed. So Dunphy, a lifelong writer and teacher, decided it was time for such a book. Her husband gave her the gift of a two-year sabbatical, and she set out to travel to as many Great Lakes islands as possible and then wrote "Great Lakes Island Escapes: Ferries and Bridges to Adventure" (Wayne State University Press, 2016).

A fiction writer by trade, Dunphy considers the nonfiction tome as much personal journey as political platform to build awareness of the beauty and fragility of the Great Lakes. "One of the best ways to fall in love with the Great Lakes is to be surrounded by the Great Lakes," she says. If the book can inspire people to visit, perhaps more will care about the fate of the waters.

From May 2013 through August 2014, Dunphy visited 136 islands, accompanied by 25 friends. The daughter of a fine artist who contributed 11 watercolor maps to her book, Dunphy grew up summering at lakeside art shows. Lakeshore living has been an essential part of her life.

"Something you imagine to be Providence leads you to water," Dunphy writes. "There are gusty winds ... 10-foot waves. ... You gain freedom only by giving up control and riding the wave of what happens next. ... You have to cross the water, you need to pay more attention to the weather, and your choices are, at once, both more limited and more rich, like tea steeped one cup at a time."

Michael Delp, poet

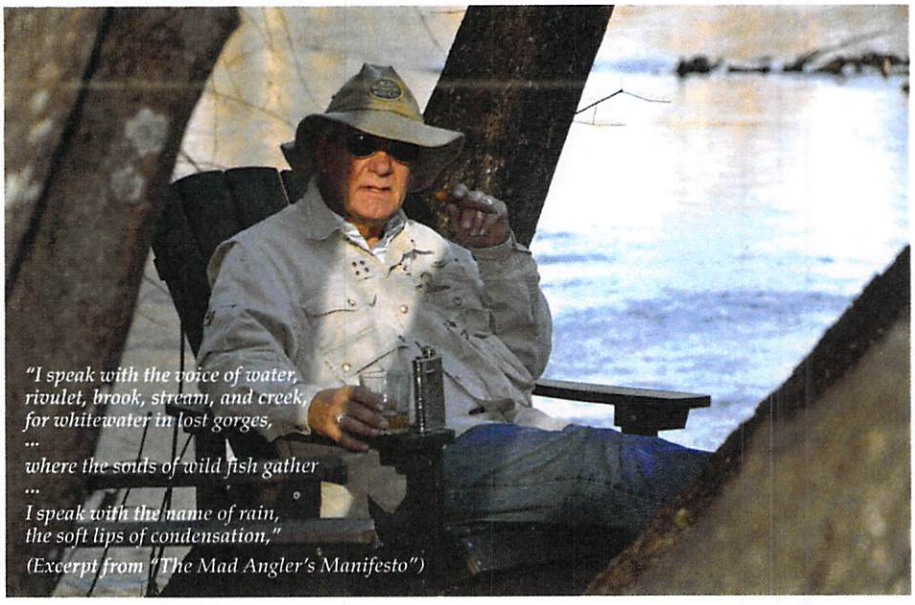
"Think of every poem as water," writes Michael Delp in the first line of "The Mad Angler's Writer's Manifesto," a poem in his new collection, "Lying in the River's Dark Bed: The Confluence of the Deadman and the Mad Angler" (Wayne State University Press, 2016).

The latest collection of the Interlochen-based writer, who is co-editor of Wayne State University Press' Made in Michigan series, is a flip-flop book of two characters, the Deadman and the Mad Angler, pouring out their hearts in verse.

Delp's life has long been inspired by water, dating back to his grandparents' cottage outside Greenville, where he summered until he was 16. "I grew up on the water; I had complete freedom and access to the lake every day," says Delp, who led Interlochen's creative writing program for 27 years.

An "obsessive fly-fisher," Delp is in the river every chance he gets, despite proximity to lakes.

"There's a physical connection because there's so much water in us," Delp says. "When I'm in a river, I literally am standing in water, and there's water standing in me. That's almost an atomic attraction for me. I prefer the river because it never stops moving. The river doesn't freeze, it never stops. When you're standing in it, you look upstream, all that water coming toward you is old water. You're in a bed that was carved out by a glacier. It's a great reminder of how



"I speak with the voice of water,
rivulet, brook, stream, and creek,
for whitewater in lost gorges,
...
where the souls of wild fish gather
...
I speak with the name of rain,
the soft lips of condensation,"
(Excerpt from "The Mad Angler's Manifesto")

old things are and, yet, how impermanent everything is."

Delp's poetry speaks to his love of water, his need to live beside it and in it, and his passion for protecting it. "It's why we're here," he insists. "We own this water in common; it's ours, the citizens; one thing that ties us all together as human beings is water."

Jeff Karoub, musician

An Associated Press reporter by day, Jeff Karoub is a dedicated musician every chance he gets. The Dearborn father of three started playing violin at age 3, inspired by his own father, who played French horn for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Karoub plays guitar, mandolin and fiddle and writes music that is a folksy recollection of existence, legacy and love of life.

"The idea was that I could find a way to tell stories, for the day job as a journalist and through my music," Karoub says. The two mediums inform one another — "thinking about the cadence of a sentence, the rhythm of the words, the story's crescendos, swing and groove."

Karoub's lyrics are melancholy and hopeful, often inspired by his proximity to water. "I love the fact that (in Michigan) you're never far from water," he says. Three of his extended play recordings form a loose trilogy, with cover art paying homage to the Detroit River waterfront.

Intentionally and unconsciously, he sees the influence of water in his music, which portrays "all the ways water can be a metaphor." Much of Karoub's musical storytelling contemplates the journeys through life, especially those of refugees and immigrants, who cross large bodies of water for second chances, for safety.

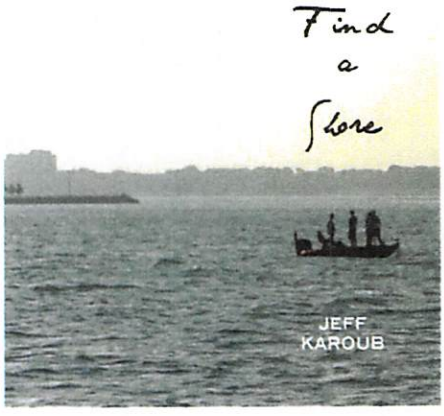
"The water is what connects us," Karoub says. "It's the vehicle, oftentimes literally, and I'm thinking about all you have to give up, the people you leave behind."

In 1912, Karoub's grandfather emigrated to Michigan from Lebanon, near the Syria border, instilling the journey story deep inside his descendants. "A lot of this is lost to history," he says, which informs his songwriting.

In "Home," Karoub journeys over the Atlantic, contemplating the dark vast ocean below. "Find a Shore" tells the story of migration from the perspective of the person who does not leave, who is left behind.

"Water has this hold over me," Karoub says. "It keeps finding its way into my writing process. I don't know what it would be like to be land-locked. I don't know what it would do for my creativity. These Great Lakes, they connect us to the world." ≈

Lynne Golodner is a writer and CEO of One Earth Writing, a nonprofit bringing teens together across racial, religious and socioeconomic divides to find connection through writing.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY BERTINI (BOTTOM RIGHT); COURTESY JEFF KAROUB (CENTER); WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS (TOP)