

albemarle moment



*IN THE GLOAMING*

Painting by William Van Doren  
Sunset from Stony Point, Albemarle County, Va.  
Oil on watercolor block, 13 x 19.

[www.veryrichhours.com](http://www.veryrichhours.com)

Go to page 48 for more information on  
William Van Doren and "The Very Rich Hours."

# The Very Rich Hours

Artist William Van Doren

Bill Van Doren started painting the sunset in 1995, after he rented a farmhouse in Stony Point with a good view of the sky over the Blue Ridge. “At first,” he says, “it was really just a way to get outside, paint, and get it done right then, instead of working on it forever, like I was used to doing.”

Also, he admits, “I think I just wanted that time of being with the sunset, a kind of meditation. It’s become a kind of ritual for staying in touch with a larger reality.”

In 1997, he decided to paint the sunset every single day, which he did through 1998. Then on New Year’s Day 2006, he started again ... and he’s now in the seventh year of that series.

Bill calls his collection *The Very Rich Hours*, a name inspired by the famous 15th-century illuminated manuscript *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*.

As Bill explains, “Most of these paintings come from the same place” — that same farmhouse. “Otherwise I paint the view from wherever I happen to be. Even if I have to do them later from a sketch, these paintings are *alla prima* — wet in wet without later revision or overpainting — and are done in around the same time it takes to watch the sun go down.”

Bill was born in Leesburg, Virginia, and grew up in Lorton, which he says at the time was “a forgotten rural pocket of north-

ern Virginia.” Having received a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins University, he studied history and English and earned early election to Phi Beta Kappa, but also immersed himself in a study of painting. Completely self-taught, he began selling his work during his last year at Hopkins.

After graduation Bill worked in a New York literary agency while painting at night, then began freelance ghostwriting of books and film in Los Angeles, still pursuing his art. During his time in L.A., he published original posters and then an experimental publication, *The Wall Paper*, in a poster-size format. Novelist Steve Erickson, reviewing *The Wall Paper*, said, “The Word and the Image are one. The word is the image and the image is the word.” His employment ranged from day labor, to copy-editing magazines such as *Popular Hot Rodding* and *Wild World of Skateboarding*, to adapting novels for film, to interviewing such figures as B.B. King and Don Cornelius for *Soul* magazine.

When he moved back to Virginia, Bill was hired to edit and design *albemarle*, which he did for the magazine’s first year and a half before going freelance. He had several art exhibitions in Charlottesville before launching *The Very Rich Hours*. In 2011 he exhibited all of the sunsets of 2010 in one big space at the Baker Gallery at Woodberry Forest.

Bill Van Doren lives with his wife, Laura Sutherland, their rescued foxhound, Flint, Flint’s feline sidekick, Pi, and twenty-year-old alpha cat, Stokey. He posts his work every night on the website [veryrichhours.com](http://veryrichhours.com) and on the Facebook page *The Very Rich Hours*.



“Snowset” *Snowing at Sunset*,  
February 19th, 2012



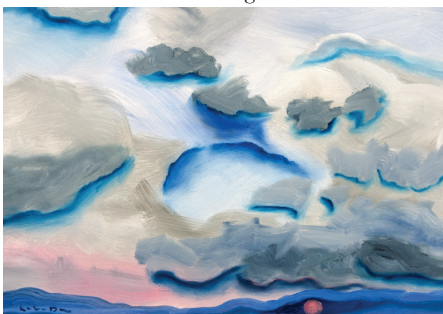
“Thunderball” *Sunset with lightning over Piney Mountain*, May 16, 2011



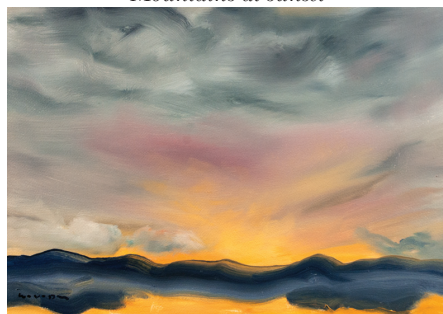
“Heavy Metals” *Sunset*, October 2, 2011  
looking at the Blue Ridge past Piney Mountain  
on the right.



“Blue Moon Rising”  
August 31, 2012 moonrise over the Southwest  
Mountains at sunset



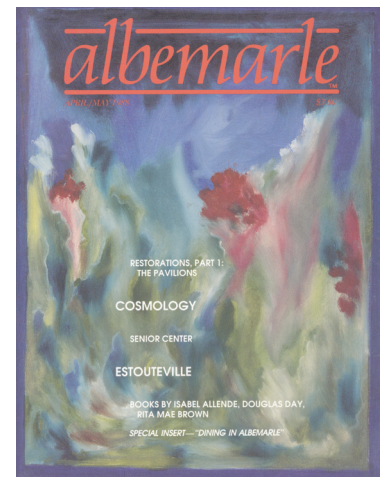
“Flat Sky Society” *Sunset*, March 18, 2012



“Out From Under” *Sunset*, April 21, 2012



Bill Van Doren



## We go way back

The April May 1988 issue of *albemarle* magazine featured one of Bill Van Doren’s paintings.