

Voices of Hope

Mine has come from my brother, who lives on New Zealand's south island. An accomplished artist, Tom paints out of his gallery, a former cheese factory, closed to the public until recently. Each day, he hangs one of his huge oil paintings outside for the locals and tourists who travel on Speargrass Flat Road. (Years ago *Lord of the Rings* filmed on this very road.) He's been sharing his daily offerings with me, a sister who for years was not a part of his life. We email frequently now, sharing his art, its story, and my reactions. We remind each other to stay well. To pass along greetings to each other's spouses. I share stories of cousins he's not seen in fifty years and often forward them his paintings. He tells me about the trout he'll try and catch before winter sets in. We visited Tom in 2000 – carrying my dad's oil paints, brushes and palette amongst our luggage. I see my father in my brother's work. I feel our family's love and power through my brother's talent. When I click to open the day's painting and message, I forget my current fears and worries. And my hope is that for days and years to come my brother's and many others' art will bring joy and beauty and healing to all who encounter it along whatever road they travel.

Betsy Holmquist