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## Grandmama's Garden Gate

*By Rhonda Whitehurst*

**Artist Statement:** The title of my piece is "Grandmama's Garden Gate". My Grandmother had an old rusted garden gate to keep the chickens out of the garden. The flowers she grew in her garden were special to me. In the mornings, when the dew covered everything like a silk scarf; I would sit on her swing looking through that gate. The sun seemed to make the leaves and flowers sparkle like precious gems hidden in a sea of colors. I could see her spirit and feel her spiritual connection to the land and the special bond we shared for growing things.

**Artist Biography:** Rhonda Toler Whitehurst was born in Greenville, North Carolina. She has been involved in the arts for over fifty years. Her mother was an artist (oil paintings) so she was exposed to the arts at an early age. She entered her first art exhibition at the age of fifteen where she won first place with an acrylic painting. During the summers, she was allowed to take art classes at the Community College by special permission. After high school, she continued her art education at East Carolina University until she met and married her husband, Henry Whitehurst. Soon after, her painting took a back seat but she could do needle arts and quilting as she stayed at home and raise her two daughters. After their second daughter was born, Rhonda began teaching needle arts classes at night for the Community College. She taught night and weekend classes in arts and crafts for the Greenville Parks and Recreation for both children and adults. It was through these that she became involved with the local art community and the Greenville Museum of Art.

Rhonda did return to college once her youngest child started school. She received her degree in Paralegal and worked in that profession until her children finished their education. Even then, she continued to develop and broaden her skills by taking classes and workshops in many forms of art including watercolor, oil and ink, acrylics, pastels, decorative painting, stain glass, pottery and jewelry making. She has taught classes in various mediums throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. She has served as president and held many offices in guilds and organizations throughout the years.