

he was an important member of the group of artist-preservation-ists who "saved" the Vieux Carre, the "Old Town" or French Quarter of New Orleans. He documented the historic buildings and made the public aware of their value to the city through his charming paintings. Also, many of the images along the River Road on both sides of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans had these visions not been captured by the brush of Robert Rucker.

After finishing art school, Robert had to work at various drafting and illustrating jobs to make ends meet. His primary job at the time was as a medical school illustrator at Tulane University Medical School. He also worked as a textile designer, in advertising and motion pictures, and as an art instructor for the City of New Orleans Recreation Department for several years. Robert met his wife to be, Margaret Evans, in 1956; "*I met her on the bus. We rode the same bus every day for four or five months until she caught me.*" The next year they were married and their first child was born a year later. They were to have three daughters, Lynn, Janet and Yvonne.

Tragically, his eyesight began to fail. In 1995, he had his first cataract operation, after which he said that he "felt like a teenager." He had four other eye

operations, during which period he continued to paint, attaching a "one-eyed Jack" stamp on the back of each of his paintings. But shortly after his last eye operation, he died of a heart attack, March 7, 2001.

His favorite subjects were riverboats and he painted dozens of them. While he was not a riverboat captain or pilot Robert Rucker knew and portrayed the river and the southern scenes in a manner few have been able to emulate. As Mark Twain wrote in *Life on the Mississippi*, "There is only one way to become a pilot and that is get the entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C."

Robert Rucker did just that – in his paintings.

Genealogy: Robert<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Rucker, Edward<sup>7</sup> Augustus Rucker Jr., Edward<sup>6</sup> Augustus Rucker, John<sup>5</sup> Alphus Rucker, Lewis<sup>4</sup> Dawson Rucker, John<sup>3</sup> Rucker, John<sup>2</sup> Rucker, Peter<sup>1</sup> Rucker.

Sources: Most of the information in this article was obtained from the paperback book *Down on the Levee*, published by the Jean Bragg Gallery, 600 Julia Street, New Orleans, LA 70130; phone 504.895.7375; jmb@nocoxmail.com. A copy of this beautiful 44 page full color book that contains dozens of illustrations of the works of Robert Rucker may be purchased from the gallery for

\$25.00 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

Also, thanks to the staff of the Jean Bragg Gallery for their input and, most significantly, to Robert's widow, Margaret Evans Rucker.

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## In Memoriam

**Bettye Maddux Green Payne** passed away on April 14, 2007, in Marietta, Georgia at the age of 79. She was born July 11, 1927 in Falkville, Alabama, the daughter of the late Henry Grey Maddux and Inez Johnson. She is survived by her husband Ronald F. Payne of Marietta, GA; six children; four stepchildren and a combination of twenty-eight grandchildren (one is deceased) and twelve great grandchildren. She loved her family and friends and treated everyone as family.

She was buried at Union Hill Baptist Church Cemetery in Eva, Alabama.

From *The Decatur [GA] Daily*, 16 Apr 2007, submitted by her husband, Ron Payne. Ron's lineage: Ronald<sup>10</sup> F. Payne, Youmbert<sup>9</sup> C., Joseph<sup>8</sup> S., Joseph<sup>7</sup> S., William<sup>6</sup>, Nancy<sup>5</sup> (married to Moses Payne) Rucker, Colby<sup>4</sup>, Peter<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, Peter<sup>1</sup>.