

## **THE RIVER INSIDE**

**In August of 2003, I left my farmhouse in Franklin, Tennessee, walked down to my creek, boarded a canoe, and paddled 1,200 miles to the riverfront banks of New Orleans.**

**This journey to a forgotten geography was an attempt to return to somewhere inside myself. At a time when our society aspires to anything but vulnerability, I was pulled toward the interdependent nature of early community life, where one met other humans as equals and one's life literally rested in a stranger's hands. After thirty years as a commercial photographer, where I worked in advertising using every clever ploy to make people want what I was shooting, I must have felt the need for some sort of redemption.**

**With our nation's economic survival dependent on economic growth -- no matter what is destroyed in the process -- and the born-again being absolved of all responsibility for past misdeeds, I found myself wanting to live within a self-sustaining economic system and yearning to align myself with a universal morality. These I found on the river, where I met people at all stages of life and peered into a cross-section of river microeconomics. I learned that everyone has a story and that meaning comes only from having experienced. Hard work made me healthy, danger relieved my stress, and risking my life a time or two seems to have alleviated a lot of the fears that I used to carry with me. These photographs are my outward placeholders for the river inside me.**

**For the next 9 months I went into the darkroom and printed my images the way I had learned over three decades ago, thus continuing my river sutra.**

**--John Guider**