

# TOWER **TIMES**

MAY • JUNE 2015

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TOWER ERECTORS

*Almost Home*



**Tower Family**  
FOUNDATION

Painting by Joanne Shellan

# Almost Home

**As you cross the varied and wondrous landscape of the United States, you notice towers.** They are a part of your life's work and they make you proud of what you do to feed your family. Some spring up new and others have stood as landmarks across the decades well worn by the sheer potency of weather. People outside of our world don't usually view these amazing structures with affection, but we know better. We have seen countless images from tower tops that defy description. Those images cannot be translated by mere words; they are experiential! Even the best camera could never duplicate what we see, because it cannot feel. To be warmed by the rays of the sun after climbing through a cloud deck cannot be adequately given a narrative. It must be experienced in order to be understood.

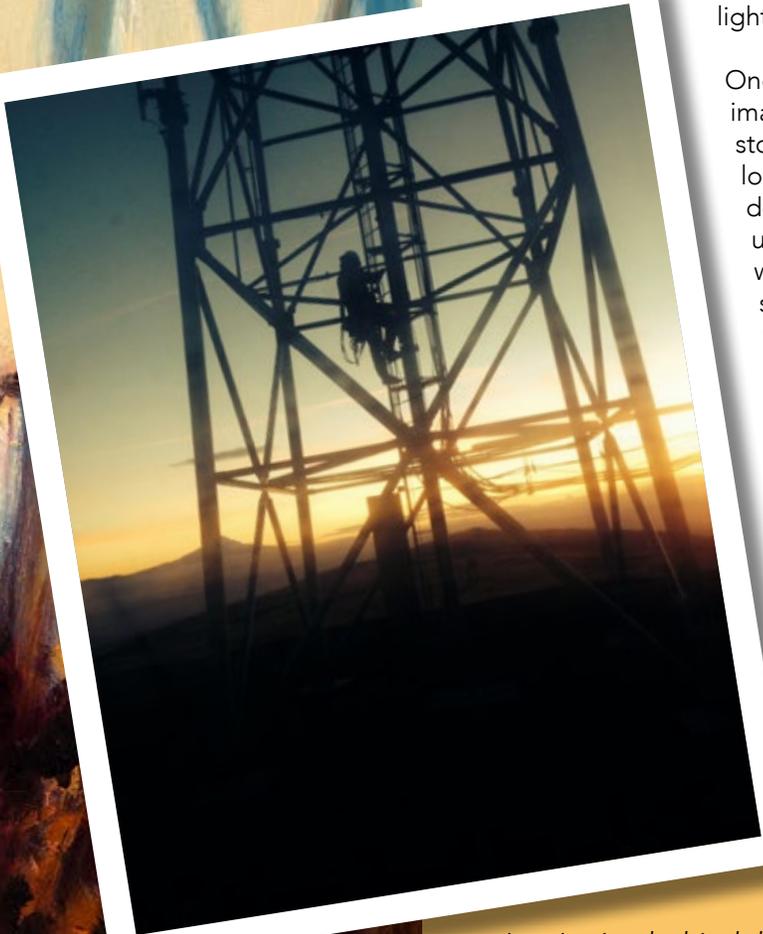
Jacob Shultz fully understands those views. He has climbed towers in all four seasons and in every type of weather. Whether it be fair or foul, he has kept rolling up the pegs until the job is finished. Jacob is blessed to be part of a crew that roams multiple mountain ranges including the Rockies. Their rural work is politely different from the urban tower hand.

Traffic woes are more likely to be elk crossing the road than red lights marching into the night.

One evening, Jacob captured an image of a coworker that really stood out. It was at the end of a long day and Colby Gagnon was descending a lattice tower after upgrading a microwave network. As the last glimpse of the sun's rays dawdled and wound their way around the tower's legs, Jacob snapped a still photo with his phone. This sight is relatively common to a tower technician. But Jacob, in freezing the moment in time, helped many people to actually see that the tower climber's regular view is extraordinary for the rest of the world.

Without much thought or fanfare, the photo was

*Original photo taken by Jacob Schultz that was the inspiration behind the "Almost Home" painting.*



placed on social media. He wanted to simply share a beautiful portion of their day, at the end, when they felt like they were almost home. The post went viral, and everyone marveled at the beauty of the image.

Colby and Jacob were on a crew near the end of a nice day and simply ready for some time at home. Prior to touching down, the colors of this sunset were remarkable. But that is not the picture. One can almost sense the fatigue in the climber approaching the ground. You can somehow appreciate the satisfaction in a day's work well done. The labor that they perform is intensely physical. The colors are merely a testament to the tower worker's craft. The colors may enhance it, but they do not define it.

After seeing the response from the social networks around the office, some questions began to arise. Is there more that can be done with this?

How can we better share this image? How can we express Jacob and Colby's imagery in a way that helps people understand?

Enter Sarah Tracy, whose vision was to help create a piece of art that honors the skills of the tower climber. Her insight pushed the envelope of thought. She wanted to change the notion that towers are an eyesore to the landscape. She wanted us to see the towers and their builders as a beautiful thing. Grabbing ahold of this image she met with an artist who would eventually share her passion to see towers and tower workers appreciated.

Sarah collaborated with renowned painter Joanne Shellan to paint or recreate the experience of a tired tower climber. A painting might convey the beauty captured through Jacob's camera lens. The two chose an acrylic medium of impressionist art to try and convey what Colby experienced.

Shellan, the famed Seattle artist, accepted the commission knowing that the tower world would be a harsh critic. Nevertheless, she forged ahead trying to recreate the moment's reality without sacrificing the magnificence.

In the meantime, the Tower Family Foundation was seeking auction items for the noble purpose of raising funds for hurting tower families. When the first look images of the painting emerged, everyone

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*A snapshot of the painting as it was emerging from the canvas. The name "Coming Home" was changed to "Almost Home" to better reflect the feelings of the tower climber.*

involved knew that we were on the verge of something special, perhaps very special.

After seeing the first peek of the painting, the sponsor for the effort donated the work to the auction and the name "Coming Home" was selected as the preliminary title. After talking with several people who actually climb towers, it became evident that when your feet hit the ground at the end of the day and your muscles begin to relax again, it almost feels like you are back home. From there the title naturally transformed into what the climbers felt at day's end; it was renamed "Almost Home".

Because a single piece of art may be expensive, the market developed a method of sharing an artist's work. The lithographic print is a way to let virtually everyone share what was created as brush strokes on a single canvas. Joanne and Sarah worked in concert with Jamie Mercer who formulated a plan to make this wonderful work available to all tower climbers. They would work with a fine art firm to have the painting recreated on a fine art print, suitable for framing in your home, office, or lobby. Then they had the logo of the Tower Family Foundation inserted into the lower left hand corner and set about getting all of this ready for a February auction of the original painting.

When NATE members assembled in Lake Buena Vista, Florida for the annual conference, an auction was held to raise money for the Tower Family Foundation. One of the many items for sale on the auction block was the original painting. Auctioneer Jim Tracy worked with a very enthused crowd and the painting was acquired by a private collector for ten thousand dollars.



## About the artist...

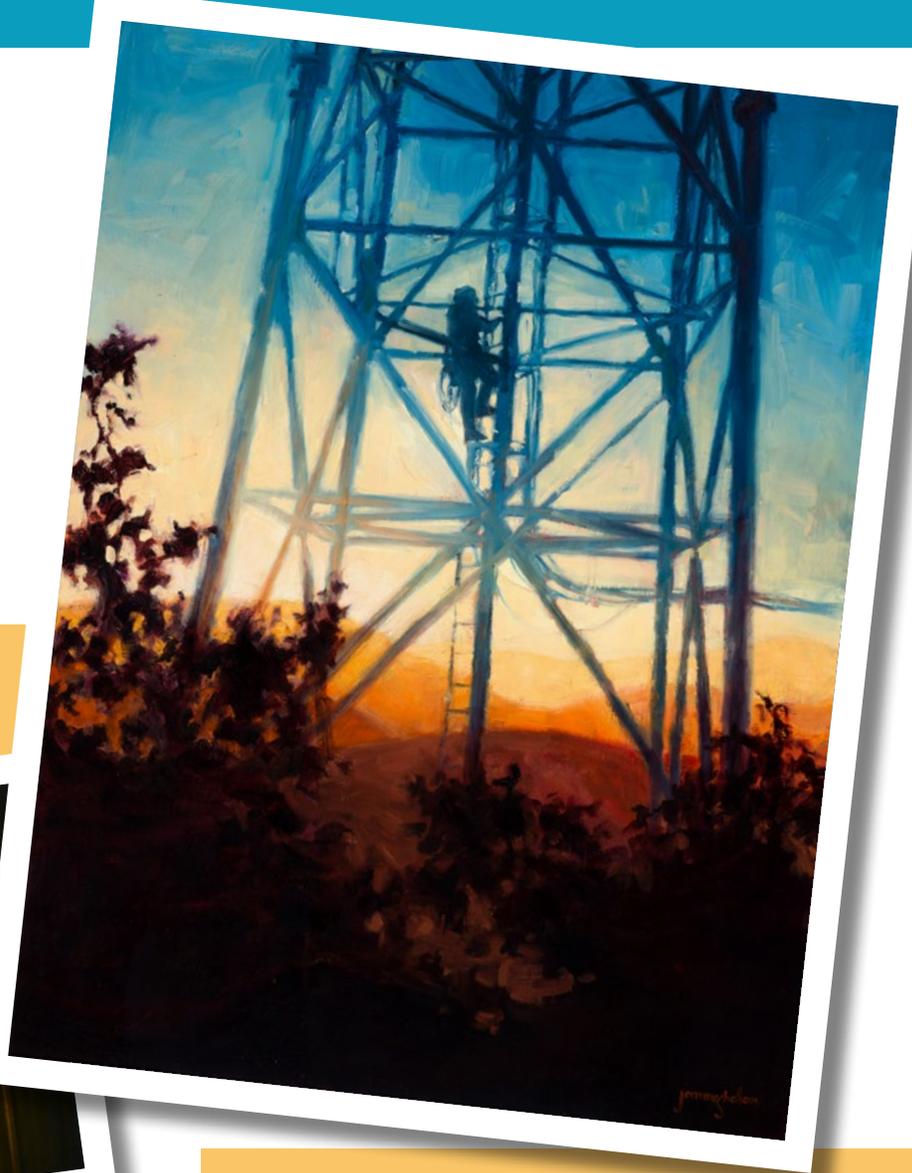
**Joanne Shellan**, born in Bremerton, Washington, has studied and painted full-time for over fifteen years in Kirkland, Washington. In that time, she has explored a variety of mediums mov-

ing from watercolors (in which she received her Signature Membership in the Northwest Watercolor Society) to oils and is now working in acrylics and collage. She has studied and been mentored for the past three years by master painter, Liana Bennett of Bothell, Washington.

Over her career, Shellan's paintings have won dozens of awards including a first and second place award this past summer. She has been in over three dozen group shows and had almost two dozen solo shows. She was chosen to represent Washington State in a year-long solo show at the Governor's Mansion in Olympia, Washington in 2012-2013 and had a featured painting in the Seattle Museum of History and Industry's Shalom! Open for Business exhibit. Her work is part of the permanent collection at Evergreen Hospital (Kirkland, Washington) and she is represented by several fine art galleries. Shellan co-started the Kirkland Artist Studio Tour which is now entering its tenth year.

All funds raised by the total effort of "Almost Home" (with the exception of shipping costs) will go directly to families who have been affected by tragedy. The limited edition print can hang in your home, office, or lobby to remind all that towers and tower workers are beautiful. The painting serves as a reminder that if you tie-off 100%, you can get to the bottom of the ladder at the end of the day. When you end your day, at the last peg or last ladder step, you are Almost Home. ■

At auction, the "Almost Home" original painting raised \$10,000 for the Tower Family Foundation.



"Almost Home"  
by Joanne Shellan

The constant theme of Shellan's work, throughout her changing mediums, has been to push the boundaries of color, emotion and design beyond realism. Shellan is an avid photographer and her current work has been to embed parts of her photographs into the layers of paint pushing her work deeper into a mix of abstraction and realism. To see more of her work, visit her website, [www.joanneshellan.com](http://www.joanneshellan.com).

Limited Edition Lithograph Prints, that are signed and numbered by the artist, are available exclusively from the Tower Family Foundation and are suitable for framing for display in your home, office or lobby.

ALL proceeds from the "Almost Home" print sales (with the exception of shipping costs) will be donated directly to support tower climbers and their families.

Visit [www.towerfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.towerfamilyfoundation.org) to order "Almost Home" today!

