



C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM

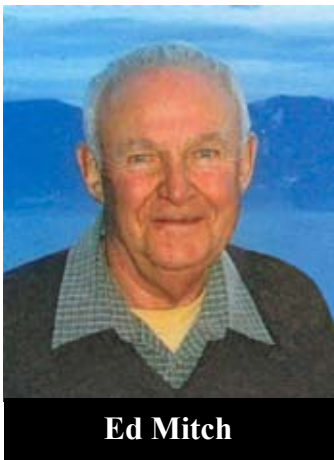
400 13th Street North Great Falls, Montana 59401

MUSEUM RECEIVES GIFT OF SCRIVER BRONZES

GREAT FALLS – The C.M. Russell Museum has received over 50 bronzes created by the late Bob Scriver. A gift of the Ed and Shirley Mitch Family, the exhibition “Bob Scriver: Montana Renaissance Man” will open to the public at noon on Sunday, April 15 at the Russell Museum. Ed and two of his three children will be on hand for the event. In addition to honoring his family, Ed sees this exhibition as a wonderful way to honor Bob Scriver, who passed away in 1999. “Bob worked for years to establish some sort of Scriver Museum here in Great Falls, and it just never happened,” Ed said. “I think he would be very pleased if he knew this was happening.”

Not only are the bronzes a remarkable collection of works, but the story of how the Mitch family acquired the pieces is also remarkable. Ed Mitch remembers driving through Browning as a kid and stopping to look at the wonderful displays at the Museum of the Plains Indian and the Scriver Taxidermy and Bronze Facility. He fondly remembers all of the wonderful dioramas Bob had in his facility. “I was fascinated by his work,” Ed said.

What started out as a childhood fascination of Native American life developed into an adult appreciation of art, not to mention a wonderful collection of Bob Scriver bronzes. And it’s all because of a grizzly bear.



Ed Mitch

As a young man living in Cut Bank in 1954, Ed shot a grizzly bear (which was legal at the time). There was no doubt about who Ed wanted to mount his bear; he knew he wanted Bob Scriver. Ed asked Bob, who said yes. Bob mounted Ed’s bear, and the beginnings of a beautiful friendship were born. Years later when Ed was more established he bought his first Scriver bronze. The year was 1968.

In 1970, Ed met Mick Morin, the owner of the foundry where Scriver’s work was cast. Ed was asked by Mick and Bob to sell their bronzes. But instead of taking a paycheck for his commission, Ed worked for art. As time went on, Ed’s personal collection of art, in particular Scriver bronzes, grew. So did his entrepreneurial spirit.

Ed knew he had many potential customers who liked the work he sold, but couldn’t afford it. So he suggested that Bob create some smaller bronzes at more affordable prices. Bob took his advice and created the “Coffee Break” series of five smaller bronzes, each of which sold for \$450. “It was a hit,” Ed said. “I sold over 100 sets of those bronzes!” In appreciation of his insight, Bob personally gifted several of those bronzes to Ed and his wife, Shirley.

Ed and Shirley were married for 41 years, until her passing in 1990. Shirley understood and supported Ed’s fascination with Scriver’s work. In fact, it was Shirley who suggested they buy not one but two of Ed’s favorite bronze: “The Winchester Rider.” “We were at the foundry and saw the cast – I don’t think it was even patinaed yet – and I said ‘I’ve got to have one of them.’ Shirley, who was normally very conservative, spoke up and said, ‘don’t you think we should have two?’ So we bought two.” Ed ended up selling both bronzes when the family fell on hard times. He was eventually able to buy one of them back.

After collecting his last bronze, “His First Real Arrow,” in 2006, Ed decided it was time to do something with the wonderful collection of art he had acquired over the years. “Most of these bronzes were in storage,” Ed explained. “My kids like them and have some of their own, but what were they going to do with 50 bronzes?” Ed talked with Charlie Abernathy and Barb Moe, both former board members of the C.M. Russell Museum. Charlie and Barb set up a meeting between Ed and Museum staff members Anne Morand (CEO) and Kim Smith (Registrar). After discussing what could be done to highlight the collection, Ed decided to donate it to the C.M. Russell Museum in honor of his family. “The Russell Museum and Bob Scriver are one in the same to me,” Ed said. “It just seemed right that the collection should be there.”

In addition to Scriver’s bronzes, the exhibition will also include a taped interview of Bob Scriver, facilitated in the mid-1980s by Del Gage, Jim O’Day, and Ed Mitch. “I knew it was important to preserve Bob on tape, so we could appreciate his life and talent even after he was gone,” Ed said. DVD copies of the interview will be sold exclusively at the C.M. Russell Museum.

While Ed still occasionally sells bronzes, he is mostly content with sitting back, relaxing, and enjoying retirement with his wife, Gwenevere. As for his foresight to accept bronzes as payment for his hard work, Ed is humble. “I was just awfully lucky to get these bronzes,” he said. “I am excited for them to be on display at the Russell Museum so everyone can see them and enjoy them.”

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Ed Mitch by the Bob Scriver bronze “Explorers at the Portage,” located at Overlook Park in Great Falls. Ed helped finance this project.