

COMING HOME

By Mary Nelson

In July, Sandy Scott brought home a beautiful, new Penny, a gift from her sister Nancy in Oklahoma. She's wanted one ever since the early 1990s, but for whatever reason never got around to making the purchase. But, now, here it was and she was thrilled. Penny is an 8-week-old Brittany spaniel, a hunting dog and the third in Scott's canine menagerie.

When we caught up with Scott, the worn-out pup had collapsed after first having worn out her owner. "In the early '80s, Rebecca Gray from *Gray's Sporting Journal* visited me on my farm in Maine," Scott says, gazing fondly at Penny, splayed out on the deck of her Colorado home. "She brought her Brittany and ever since I hunted with that dog I knew that someday I'd own a Brittany. Penny's a well-bred, beautiful dog, and boy she's a handful."

Sculptures of dogs figure largely in Scott's repertoire. In fact, just prior to getting Penny, she had completed a Brittany sculpture, one of several dogs she planned to unveil at a fall show at one of her galleries in Texas. Scott's earliest, and some of her fondest, memories are of racing with her family's hunting dogs to get in the truck fast enough to go hunting with her father. "If I could load with the bird dogs, meaning if I could get in the truck



In the Orchard, bronze 7" high

"I owned a farm in Maine in the early 80's which I used as a design studio. It was a wildlife lover's dream: moose, deer, geese, ducks, grouse and woodcock to name a few. At one time it had been a commercial apple orchard & this little bronze reminds me of the wonderful times spent there."

as quickly as they did, I'd get to go hunting with my dad," she says, then segues into why animals are the subject matter for her sculptures. "I've always chosen animals. I grew up in the country, and my dad raised quarter horses. I was always around animals—dogs, cattle—and that's my interest."

In fact, Scott purchased three homes—one in Lander, Wyoming; another in Fort Collins, Colorado; and yet another at Lake of the Woods, Ontario, Canada, each with its own studio, because of their proximity to wildlife. All three homes

influence her art, particularly the home in Canada. Lake of the Woods had been a favorite family vacation spot and, in the '70s, Scott purchased a small cabin on an island there, where she spends several weeks each year working in her seasonal studio, where she creates smaller works.

"I know the lake so well that I get in my boat and, if I want to go see nesting Canada geese or mallards, I know where to find them," Scott says. "It may sound corny, but this [island] really is a source of inspiration to me. It keeps me so connected to my subjects."

Scott always knew she'd be an artist, never even questioned it. Yet she still marvels (and is grateful) that she makes a living sculpting the animals she loves. Encouragement was forthcoming from both parents, and her high school art teacher, a member of the American Watercolor Society, took Scott under her wing. "She groomed me and assisted me in putting together a portfolio that I submitted to the Kansas City Art Institute when I was a senior," Scott says.

As a result, Scott entered the renowned art school in the early '60s. However, one summer she was recruited to be an artist for Calvin, a motion picture company in Kansas City, where she worked as a back-



Red-tailed Hawk at Sappa Creek, bronze, 42" high

"I started modeling a red-tailed hawk over eight years ago. During those years, I would occasionally tweak it, but the desire to finish the work was not there. All of that changed recently while visiting with my friends Marlies and Howard Terpnig. In his book I had read about his painting Digging in at Sappa Creek and asked about his research. He explained that a Cheyenne holy man, whose spirit guide was the red-tailed hawk, was killed by army troops at Sappa Creek and that every afternoon the holy man's spirit came back to the site in the form of a hawk. Howard has visited the site in northwestern Kansas and described his intense feelings as a hawk kept calling and circling around him. The story captivated me. Energized, I, too, visited Sappa Creek. As I surveyed the lonesome site, I heard a breathtaking cry as a red-tailed hawk circled above me. At that moment I was compelled to complete the work."

ground artist and illustrator in the animation department. On weekends, she worked as an architectural delineator. Scott felt that she had arrived; she was making money working as an artist so, instead of returning to school in the fall, she stayed on at Calvin.

"I always thought I'd go back and get my degree, but I just got involved in the art department at Calvin, and all those intentions of going back for the degree fell by the wayside, because I loved working on the professional level," she says.

Scott pauses for a moment and reflects on what she calls her good fortune. "I think I have been extremely lucky," she says. "There are a lot of tremendously gifted artists whose work may never be seen by the public for



Above Timberline, bronze, 14" high

"This is the maquette, or study, for an over-life sized monument that was commissioned for Colorado State University. I'm influenced by the 19th century French and American animaliers, as well as the simple, yet strong, works of the Egyptians and Greeks. Monuments require clarity of the overall shape, and the sculptor must determine what shapes are important for identification and assemble the larger shapes first."



North Fork Descent, bronze, 18" high

"Early one fall morning while hiking along the North Fort River canyon rim, I glassed an enormous head of elk in a meadow below me. I watched them in the brilliant sun as they slowly descended the valley and moved into the timber. Lost in thoughts of the beautiful scene, my sculpture was before me. The style sentiment and spirit were derived from the subject."

one reason or another. I've met good people, good galleries, good collectors, good museum people. I've had the uncanny luck of being in the right place at the right time."

Today the name Sandy Scott is synonymous with sculptures of wildlife. During the '70s, etchings and prints of wildlife had garnered her a loyal following of collectors and galleries. Classes in college had given her well-rounded experience. "I was introduced to not only sculpture, but to original print-making in the form of stone lithography and patio etching," she says. "That introduction stayed with me, but the emphasis was on the rudiments of design perspective, color, composition, drawing, and all the different things that I'm sure are still taught today."

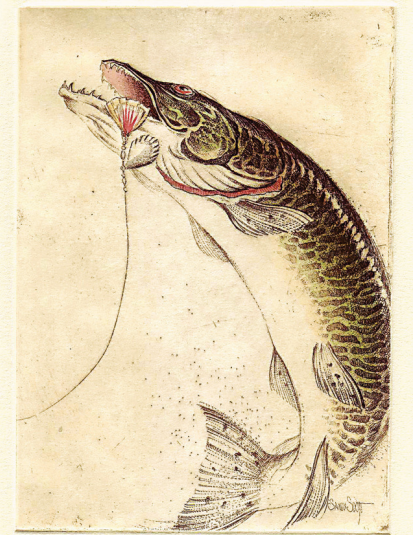
But sometime around 1980, Scott's perspective changed. "I had established a name and had gallery connections for my print-making and etchings," she says, "but that medium was not being accepted in the bigger shows." In 1981, while on a trip to China with a group of artists that included Glenna Goodacre and Fritz White, the light went on:

Scott's career path lay in sculpture.

Upon her return from China, Scott dabbled in sculpture, dipping into it slowly. "I was encouraged by acceptance of my early attempts," she says. "My galleries loved it, I loved it, and, most importantly, my collectors loved it." Although she has never abandoned etchings and painting, something about sculpture felt like coming home.

"Bronze sculpture is a good fit for me, because there is immediacy about working in clay," Scott says, adding that sculpture depends on so many people, not the least of which is the foundry staff. "I know, when I'm in the studio and have that clay box on and that warm clay, it opens a world of opportunity and it's something that is immediate."

Even though she shifted gears, Scott never strayed from her subject matter. Wildlife has always been, and probably always will be, her inspiration. Like many wildlife artists before her, she is adamant that to love the animal is to know the animal—really know it. A plethora of files of animal drawings, photo-



Gray Sporting Journal '83 - Etching



Tailhook, bronze, 22" high
"I have spent priceless days in the field—sketching, modeling, photographing, hunting, fishing, observing, or just blissfully being there. Watching bears emerging from water in Alaska gave me the chance to see and understand anatomical features normally obscured by thick fur. In this stylized interpretation, I attempted to capture the forthright nature of the grizzly, while designing fur patterns around bones and joint articulation."



Great Horned Owl - Etching

graphs, notes—some going all the way back to her childhood—still can be found in her studios. She immersed herself in learning everything she could about any animal she encountered. In that knowledge, true artistry was spawned.

"I tell my students sculpture is 80 percent knowledge of your subject—knowledge of the anatomy, how the bones articulate, how everything moves and operates," Scott says. "Not even as much as 20 percent is the actual act of sculpting the subject itself." She asserts that's true

for all wildlife artists, but even more so for sculptors. "[A sculptor] has to know so much to present a subject three-dimensionally," she says. "It's a form, something that actually sits in space, whereas painting, as beautiful as it is, is an illusion. A painter creates an illusion with color and perspective and whatnot. A sculptor has to present the subject as it is in space." That's her story, and she's sticking to it. Argue it if you want, but you'll never change Scott's perspective.

When asked, "Well, what if you want to do something more abstract or take liberties with your subject?" Scott seems amused. She explains that a sculptor can be a slave to the anatomy of the subject, but then why not just be a taxidermist? No, in order to make a statement about the animal, to bring the deeper meaning that inspires the artist to sculpt a certain creature, the artist needs a point of view.

"Sometimes that takes exaggeration or emphasis, and you can't do that without knowing so much about the subject—what you can eliminate, what you can edit, what you can simplify," Scott says. With more than 40 years of experience under her belt and a loyal following, it's hard to dispute her perspective.

Complacency has no place in Scott's life. Her career is and always has been a work in progress. Teaching became a surprisingly evolutionary experience for her. "Sometimes you just do things [by] rote; you don't know why," she says. "But teaching has put me in a position to explain why I do something and has made me a better artist. I have more confidence in my decisions now




Red Willows, bronze, 21" high
"I believe wildlife artists should be 'in the field' to accurately present their subjects to the viewer. While moose hunting recently in the Canadian wilderness, we encountered a big bull with his massive head thrown back, feeding in a willow thicket. Long, gangling legs, big humped nose, mule-like ears, and enormous antlers—we watched him for several minutes before he got wind of us and took off. I eventually filled my cow tag, but the powerful image of the big bull lingered long after the venison was eaten. This piece is the result. The name moose originated from the Algonquin Indian language meaning 'twig eater,' and the animal is foremost among the subjects that connect me to the wild."



because my work has become more personal." Scott admits to being a lifelong learner. "Every artist is a student, if you're a good artist," she says. "You are constantly learning the mysteries and the spirit of the artist endeavor. You're forever challenging yourself about these different qualities."

As her own life and perspective have changed, Scott has begun to savor the simplicity and elegance of the Art Deco and the French beaux art styles, because she's more in touch with her sense of design and style. Those are elements she wants to offer her collectors.

Maybe in the beginning, when there seemed so much to say and learn, cramming everything into one piece seemed more important. "The French have a word, *tormente*, meaning you can almost torture your viewers by trying to freeze a moment, making them look at something so active that it becomes difficult to see," Scott says.

Now the simple elegance of form is what speaks to her. Scott says it's become more important to create quiet, simplified designs. With a twinkle in her eye, she says, "I don't want all hell to break loose." 

Mary Nelson is a writer living in Minneapolis, Minnesota.