



“Anhinga”



“Hollyhill Puppies”

**F**or one thing, the nationally recognized Tallahassee artist doesn't do that much painting any more. And his repertoire has stretched far beyond game fowl in flight. Not only are his larger-than-life bronze sculptures installed in such prestigious venues as the Roosevelt Room of the White House, the Polk Museum of Art in Florida and the World War II Monument in Dallas, TX, but recently “Seychelles” – one of his astonishingly realistic pieces of a gracefully stretching nymph – was honored by the National Sculpture Society with its top award for realism.

Not bad for a guy who claims he never took an art lesson in his life.

A member of one of Tallahassee's best known business families whose fortunes were made in automobiles and fuel oil, W. Stanley “Sandy” Proctor doesn't know where he came by his artistic talent. But after graduation from Washington and Lee University and several unhappy years in the world of commerce, he decided to risk it all on his innate skill with a brush and palette.

“Actually, I had always wanted to be a Navy pilot. But I flunked the eye exam,” he recalls. “My next choice was to be an illustrator, like Norman Rockwell, because I love figures. I can do figures in my sleep.”

Unfortunately, most of the magazines interested in Rockwell-type illustrations were shutting down. So Proctor began dabbling in sporting art, selling his first watercolor at the age of 30. Ten years later, with a wife and three children and, at best, only marginal prospects as a commercially successful artist, he left the oil company for good and has never looked back.

“At the time, it was the worst decision I could have made,” he says. “But I took one of my paintings of some bird dogs to an art gallery in New York, and the man said, ‘I can sell this.’ That was the start.”

Eventually, Proctor was painting mostly bird art “as fast as I could” for sale through high-profile galleries from Texas to Oregon and along the East Coast. His paintings of ibises and egrets, pileated woodpeckers and great blue herons were included in exhibits at the Smithsonian, British Museum of Natural History and other major institutions.

“It was exciting and gave me lots of credibility,” he says. “But it wasn't fine art. And I wanted to be a fine artist. So I started entering other types.”

And the awards kept coming. Buyers lined up for his painstakingly accurate landscapes and wildlife in their native habitats. His goal, he says, has always been to capture birds as he had seen them in the wild, and to share that experience with others. Despite his growing reputation among art collectors and museum curators, Proctor still wasn't satisfied.

Eventually, he switched to three-dimensional stonework. Now, he's a full-time sculptor, carving figures in Styrofoam and coating them in clay before they're bronzed at a foundry in Salt Lake City.

Incredibly realistic and meticulously researched to capture the essence of their subject, the stand-alone sculptures of children playing on a log, tugging on a rope, running barefoot in the grass and playing with their favorite pets, have captured an audience that Proctor could never have reached with his birds in flight.