February/March 2015 $3

Etown MAGAZINE

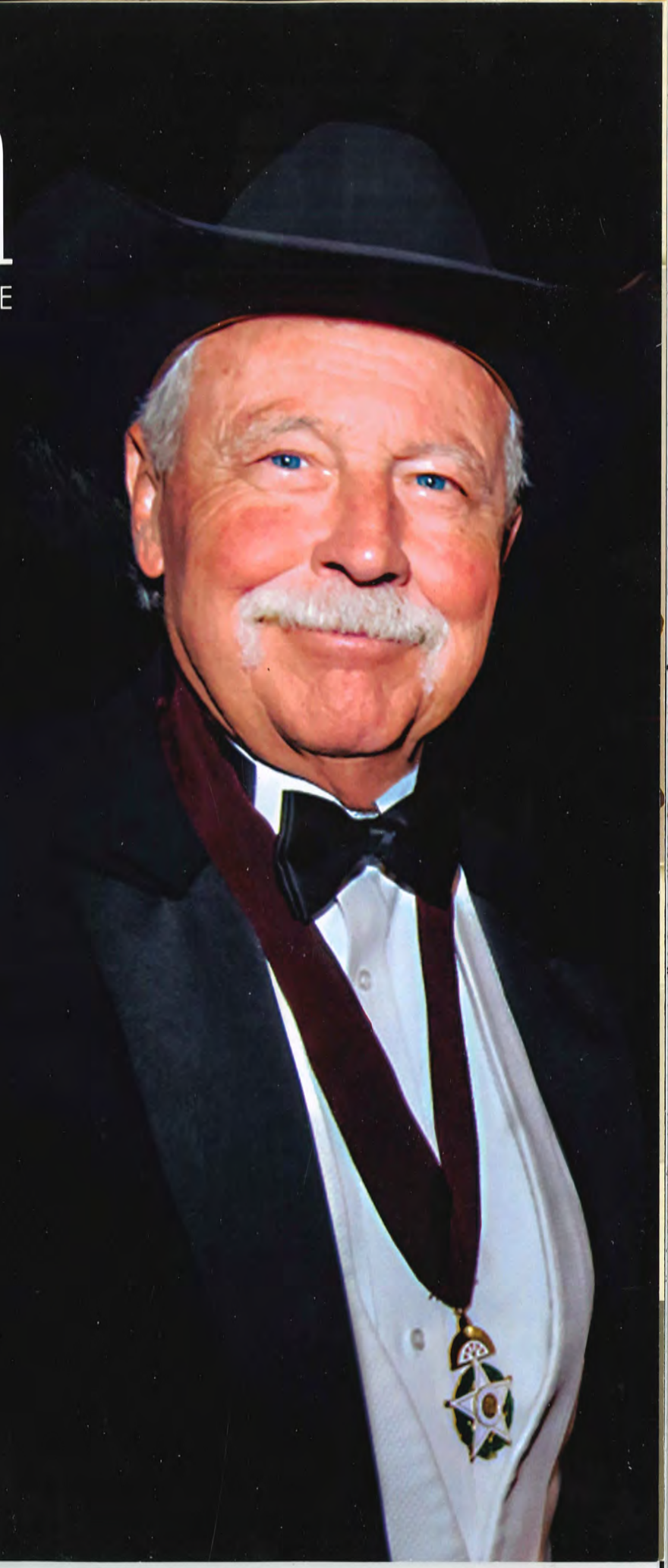
CREATIVE EXCHANGE

H. Holden Oklahoma Hall of Fame Inductee

Miss Rodeo OKLAHOMA 2015

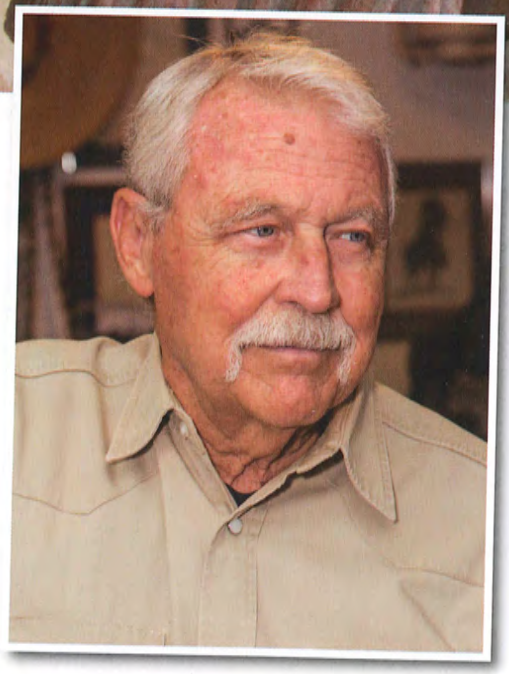
ETUNES

Sylvan Reynolds



PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2000
Oklahoma City, OK

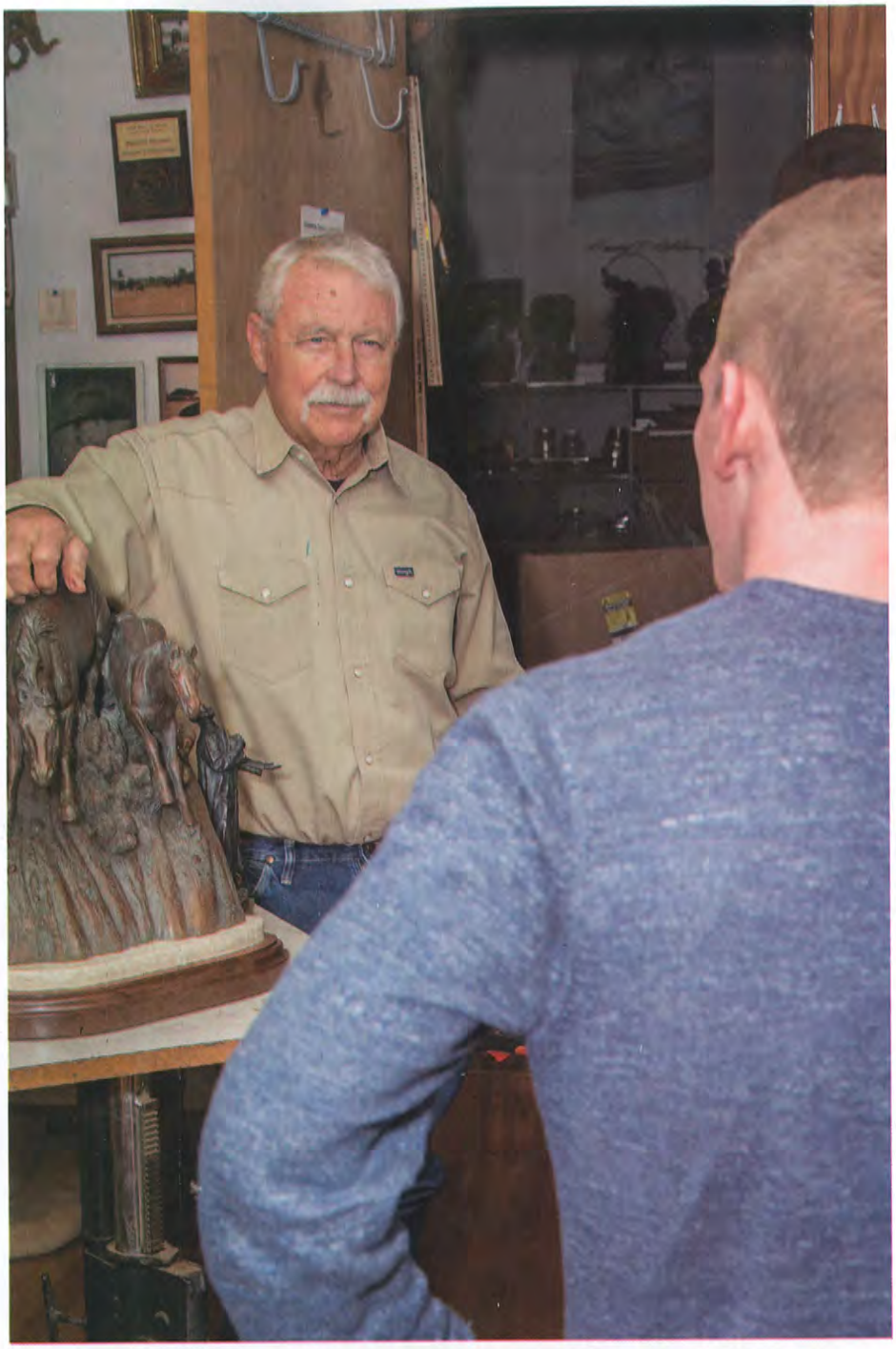
Etown • 227 W. Broadway • Enid, OK 73701

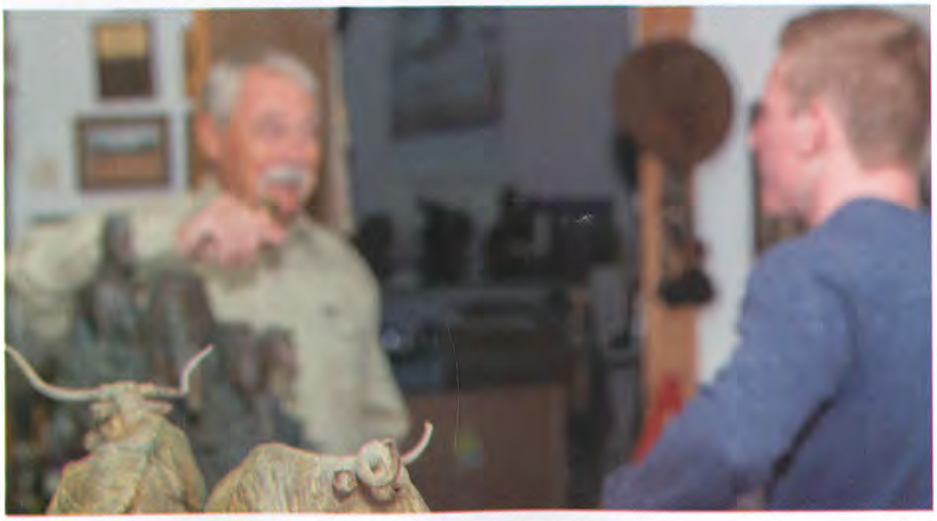


CREATIVE EXCHANGE

Oklahoma Hall of Fame painter and sculptor Harold T. Holden mentors a new generation of aspiring artists through his role with the Pioneer Cellular Smokin' Red Dirt Art Fest

By Candace Krebs Photos by Kayla Waldrop





For prototypical solitary working artist and man-of-few-words Harold T. Holden, a tailor-made opportunity to mentor aspiring young artists has taken shape in recent years. As the honorary judge for the annual Pioneer Cellular Smokin' Red Dirt Youth Art Show, held in conjunction with the community-wide barbecue fest in April, he attends an opening reception, meets the participants and mingles with their teachers and parents.

"It's a great program," he said.

This winter Holden went a step further, agreeing to meet with last year's best-in-show winner for a special evening of one-on-one "art talk" inside the cozy garage studio at his rural home near Hillsdale.

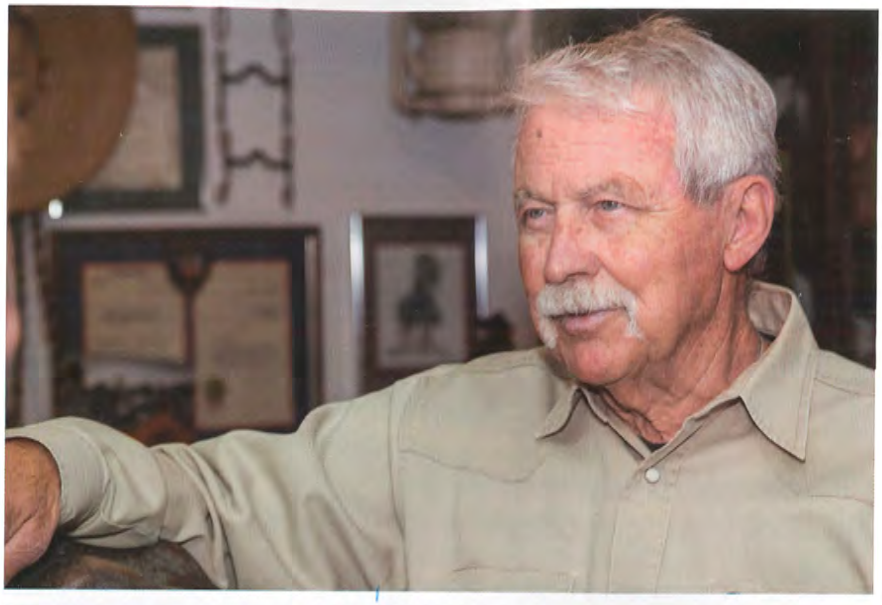
The budding artist who came to visit was Clay Jacks, an Enid High School wrestler who likes history, reading and "military stuff." For last year's Red Dirt Arts Fest, he entered a sculpture depicting a bust of Abe Lincoln on one side that transforms into the face of a slave on the other.

Holden, of course, needs no introduction as the prominent Western artist behind 20 monuments in four states — including the iconic statue of a cowboy racing to stake his claim in the land run, an image now synonymous with Northwest Oklahoma — along with countless smaller pieces and untold numbers of paintings. His most recent and arguably biggest honor came when he was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame in November.

"That old grouch with the twinkling eyes and gifted fingers," is how personal friend and former Cowboy Hall of Fame executive director Chuck Schroeder described Holden as he made the introduction during the ceremony. Holden shares "his heart through his hands," Schroeder said, bringing ranching traditions alive for generations of Oklahomans who otherwise would lose touch with their rural heritage.

Accompanying Clay to the meeting with Holden was his father, Don Jacks, an independent petroleum engineer. Also present was Holden's wife, Edna Mae, a local oil and gas attorney. Their conversation ranged from how to establish an art career to specific tools of the trade to changes brought about by the digital age.

One of the things Clay wanted to know was whether Holden had started out working "regular" jobs to get where he is today. Holden talked about his early years doing commercial artwork for a silk screening company in Wichita, where he was responsible for creating the little fiberglass man who once crowned Pizza Hut restaurants. He later moved to Houston where he was the art director for Horseman



magazine. "I always wanted to do cowboy art," he said. "I was raised on a horse."

Holden also acknowledged the influence of his famous grandfather, George E. Failing, who is best known for inventing the portable drilling rig back in 1930 and for founding the highly successful Enid manufacturing company that still bears his name. Lesser known is that Failing studied art before going to work in the oilfield and later became a fine art collector.

"I grew up knowing what good art was," Holden said.

Is it getting easier or harder to make it as an artist these days? Holden wasn't sure.

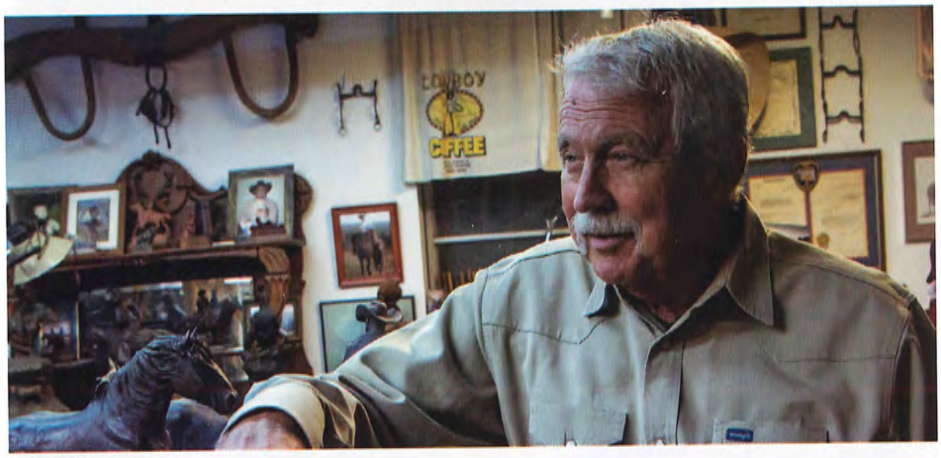
"It's hard to make a living at fine art, but it is easier now too in some ways, because of all of the publicity, the magazines and the galleries," he said.

The visit actually gave Jacks exposure to more than one model for how to live the creative life. Holden pointed out that his wife Edna Mae is a talented Western singer-songwriter in her own right, producing three albums and performing live on occasion, despite working full-time in the legal profession.

Don Jacks, who is engineering manager for Maverick Brothers Energy LLC, also dabbles in artistic pursuits. "My dad has done a lot of wildlife carvings, and I took inspiration from that," Clay said.

The senior Jacks took up wood carving in his 30s after watching a friend make an intricate bird-and-prey piece, which later sold for $7,500 after six painstaking months.

"I quickly did the math and decided maybe I'd keep my day job and do art as a hobby," the senior Jacks said with a chuckle. Still, he's continued to indulge his creativity and hopes his son will do the



same, regardless of where life takes him. "I just want him to keep going with it," he said.

Jacks said his son exhibited artistic talent from a very early age. "From age 5, Clay, you were drawing pictures, and the pictures would have a three-dimensional depth to them," he said. "I've saved some of those pictures through the years."

"I've been sketching things since as far back as I can remember," Clay said.

Even so, it came as "quite a surprise" to Jacks to learn that his son had entered a sculpture in the Enid show, crafted to fit the theme Lincoln: Liberty and Freedom. It was the first sculpture Clay had ever attempted.

Like Holden, Clay Jacks prefers depicting three-dimensional figures to landscapes. Over the years his subject matter has included The Beatles and the Lord of the Rings trilogy. When he mentioned history was one of his favorite subjects, the Holdens lit up, describing the countless hours of research that goes into insuring the historical accuracy of their respective artwork. "The history of Oklahoma is unlimited," Holden said. "You could spend all of your time just painting stories about that if you wanted to."

One unique distinction of Holden's work is that it grew out of being a cowboy first, an

artist second. "It was the subject matter that drew me in, not the other way around," he emphasized. For Clay, finding a focus for his artistic gift is more of a challenge. He was uncertain what direction his future artwork might take but was obviously impressed by Holden's strong affinity for his subject.

"That's what I'm trying to think about is what do I want to do on a daily basis?" he said to Holden.

Despite a lengthy career, Holden said he's still learning and has yet to feel like he's "made it" as an artist. One major undertaking still on his bucket list is the opportunity to create a life sized monument of Oklahoma State University mascot Pistol Pete. (Among his many awards, Holden was chosen OSU's Distinguished Alumnus in 2005.)

After more than two hours of visiting, Clay and his dad both appeared a little star-struck by the encounter as they said their goodbyes and stepped out into the cold night lit by clanking oil wells and the blinking red lights of a nearby wind farm.

"This is a gift to my family," Don Jacks said. "It's huge. I'm not sure whether all of the stars will come together for Clay to pursue his art, but the important thing to me right now is just recognizing and encouraging his interest."

Oklahoma Hall of Fame 2014 Inductees and Presenters

Photos by Ownbey Photography

Chuck & Kathi Schroeder, Ken and Mary Ann Fergeson and Edna Mae & H Holden (at OHA reception). Chuck was H's presenter and Ken was instrumental in getting H inducted.

Edna Mae, Dr. Nazih Zuhdi and H

H and Alfre Woodard

H, R. W. Hampton and Chuck Schroeder

Blake Shelton, H and Chuck Schroeder

H and Leona Mitchell

Former Governor Frank and Kathy Keating, Edna Mae H

H and his homeboys Donnie Dennis, Raymond Hayward and Bill

Bob Moorhouse and H

H and Governor Mary Fallin

H, Edna Mae and Coach Doug Sauter

Mary Ann Fergeson, H and Ken Fergeson

Alfre and Edna Mae

H and grandchildren Payton Meyer and Morgan Meyer