

Sisters author honored for Russell work

By Craig Rullman
Correspondent

A native of Plentywood, Montana, Sisters resident Larry Len Peterson fell in love with the works of Charles M. Russell as a young man in his father's hardware store.

"On the plains," Peterson says, "God is Charlie Russell."

Dr. Peterson's early interest in Russell has led him to become an acknowledged expert on the art and art history of the American West, an achievement for which Peterson has recently been awarded the prestigious Charles M. Russell Heritage Award, given annually by the Russell Museum for "significant contributions in interpreting and documenting the legacy, culture, life, and country of Charles M. Russell's West."

Peterson has written several books on Charlie Russell, helping to cement the legacy of the master artist and introduce new fans to his work.

"Charles M. Russell, Printed Rarities from Private Collections," frames the artist's life in a blend of biography and full-color reproductions of rarely seen works.

"Charles M. Russell, Photographing the Legend," uses hundreds of photographic images of Russell, telling the fascinating story of Charlie, his wife Nancy, and their family, as the artist made his transition from cowboy to celebrity artist in the early 20th century. The book, at once elegant and gritty, focuses on the critical role of photography as it was used to shape Russell's public image.

Peterson's other works include "Charles M. Russell: Legacy"; "Philip R. Goodwin: America's Sporting and Wildlife Artist"; "L.A. Huffman: Photographer of the American West," and most recently "John Fery: Artist of Glacier National Park and the American West."

Among his own publications, Peterson's personal favorite is "Philip R. Goodwin, America's Sporting and Wildlife Artist." A stunning biography, filled with hundreds of color photographs and illustrations, the book charts the course of Goodwin's life and art, from his early success as the illustrator of Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, to his work for *Field & Stream*, and his numerous illustrations for the Winchester and Remington firearms companies.

Goodwin's work is synonymous with the American outdoor experience, and even readers who may not be familiar with his name will instantly recognize his works, which are experiencing a renaissance in interest from collector's and scholars.

Peterson dedicated the book to his father, who introduced him to hunting and fishing as a young man on the plains of northeast Montana.

Putting together books of this magnitude is a complex undertaking, requiring the help of museums, collectors, and scholars. Larry cites friendships and contacts he has made over the years as critical for the meticulous process of research and compilation.

"I have a concept of how I want the book to look before

I do it, an idea of where I'm going, but it takes a lot of help," he said.

In addition to his most recent award, Dr. Peterson is the winner of two Western Heritage Awards for best art book, the High Plains Book Award for best art and photography book, and the Will Rogers Gold Medallion Award for best photographic essay.

As perhaps the world's leading authority on Russell's work, Peterson's personal favorite by the artist is a bronze sculpture entitled "Spirit of Winter," originally created in 1926. Featuring a man coming back from the dead, bent on revenge and surrounded by wolves, the piece depicts a Blackfoot legend, and is a reflection, Larry says, "of our finite time on earth."

Dr. Peterson's interests aren't defined by his career as a dermatologist, where he saw almost 225,000 patients, or his awards for scholarship and publications in Western art. He was also the coach of two AAU State Championship basketball teams for junior high school girls, when he and his family lived in Lake Oswego.

Dr. Peterson donates all of the proceeds from his books, and he has given to the Montana Historical Society, The Russell Museum, Glacier National Park, and the Nature Conservancy, among others.

Reflecting on the

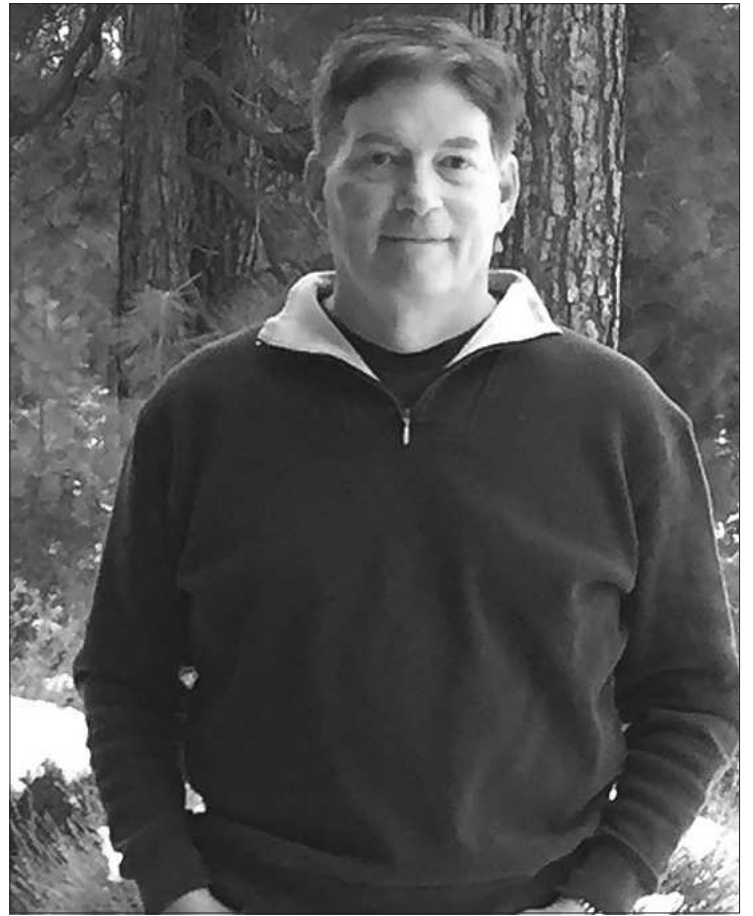


PHOTO PROVIDED

Larry Peterson is being honored for his work with the legacy of Charles M. Russell, *The Cowboy Artist*.

significant contribution he has made to world scholarship and the appreciation of Western art through his impressive books, Peterson says: "It's all about friends. I like to learn, myself, and share the information with other people who can enjoy it. Friends are drawn to the same truth, they share it, and that's true for these books."

Dr. Peterson's books are available locally at Len Gratteri's Old West

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