

A New Masterpiece for Lucky Three Ranch
By Helen T. Hertz

Last year Meredith Hodges commissioned a work of art from one of the finest sculptors in the West. When the finished piece was delivered to Meredith's Lucky Three Ranch, this spring Meredith couldn't believe her eyes.

"It's the most unbelievable—the most beautiful—thing I've ever seen," she later exclaims.

The thing she's talking about is a life-size bronze depicting her champion mule Mae Bea C.T. pulling a meadowbrook cart with Meredith aboard. Acclaimed sculptor Robin Laws worked with Fort Collins, Colo., artists John Taylor and Tim Joseph to create the masterpiece. The final product was produced at Tim Joseph's Fort Collins-based foundry in what was truly a collaborative effort.

"This is the largest, most challenging and the most rewarding work I've done," says Robin. "The harness alone took more than a month to create working 11 hours a day."

Robin is best known for her ability to capture the characters of the animals she sculpts. Her favorite subjects are the mules, donkeys, chickens, pigs and other critters on her own Cheyenne ranch. She loves to study the small nuances of their behavior and individual personalities.

Meredith has several of her works on display at her ranch and last in 2005 she commissioned Robin to do a life-size bronze of herself astride her champion dressage mule Lucky Three Sundowner. That piece showed at the Loveland Sculpture Invitational Show before it was installed permanently at Lucky Three.

Robin and her team completed this latest work in March and it debuted at Wickenburg, Ariz., at the Desert Caballeros Museum exhibition "Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West." This summer it went on display in downtown Cheyenne during Cheyenne Frontier Days, and at the Loveland Sculpture Invitational Show, and now will be permanently installed at the ranch.

"Meredith is great to work with," says Robin. "She'll tell you exactly what she wants and then turn you loose to do it."

For this one Robin needed Meredith's complete confidence as well as her own.

"When you start any new project you have a vision of what you want it to look like and when you come to the end, you can't quite believe you did it," she says. "In this case, I'm really delighted with how it turned out, and I never couldn't have done it without John and Tim's help."

John Taylor has a talent for sculpting finely detailed human figures. He first worked with Robin on the Lucky Three Sundowner piece and again with this latest work, his focus was the figure of Meredith. A piece this size is truly a collaborative effort. Even Meredith endured long sittings in order to help John Taylor capture her likeness in clay.

Tim Joseph put his own skills to work on the cart—an incredibly complex piece. He also put his foundry staff to work producing the piece. The ancient and arcane process is mind-boggling in its complexity. First the artists produced a miniature of the piece called a maquette. Then, with Meredith's approval, they began work on the life-size sculpture working in clay. The clay figure, broken down into myriad pieces, was used to create a mold for the bronze. The bronze components of the sculpture were then finished

and assembled to create the finished product. In all, the work took the better part of a year to complete.

Now that is done. Meredith will put her talented team of artists to work on their next masterpiece: a life-size bronze of Meredith sidesaddle on another Lucky Three Ranch champion, Lucky Three Ciji.

For more information about the Lucky Three Ranch Longears Sculpture Park and tour information, please visit, www.luckythreeranch.com or call 1-800-816-7566.

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