Art, Wildlife Are His Life’s Work
Clark Paints With a Purpose: ‘I Must Capture Right Idea… So Others Will Know Magic Of Great Outdoors’

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WOODLAND, Summit County – A doe, soft and gray as the morning, steps from the oak thicket and quietly sniffs a faint breeze. Assured of safety, she leads a speckled fawn to drink at the river’s edge. Hungry rainbow trout ripple the surface where the current runs deep, momentarily annoyed by the long, restraining fingers of wild fern and rose bushes.

A quail, jaunty and important, signals “go” to the flock of quarrelsome hens and chicks, then continues a stern outlook while they breakfast on dried berries. A ruffled grouse pecks energetically under a hawthorne tree, morosely eyeing the rabbit scurrying by.

This is Woodland on the Provo River in summer’s early dawn. This is the world of Clark Bronson, wildlife artist. The scene unfolding is no trivial thing, although he has sent it many times before. This is his life’s work. Sketching deftly, catching the movements of his wild friends, he will later transfer them to canvas with true authenticity, interpreting them to others.

“I PAINT with a mission,” he said simply. “Each picture is a different mission. I must put the right ideas on my canvas so others can know my subjects, their personalities and the magic of the great outdoor world!” this has been a compulsion, a driving force since Clark was a very small boy.

A life-long resident of Kamas Valley, he specializes in drawing and painting only wildlife, a difficult and overcrowded field. Despite the long list of specialists in this field, he has distinguished himself, brought refreshing newness, artistic beauty and authenticity to his work. His charm, both in personality and on canvas, is his simplicity.

Now, at the young age of 24, having scored with success on the local scene, he is rapidly gaining national prominence. A recent issue of National Wildlife Magazine carried three full-page color reproductions and a biographical sketch titled “National Wildlife Visits Clark Bronson,” by Dick Kirkpatrick. Paintings shown are a good cross section of the covers he has done for Utah Fish and Game magazine…a bull elk and his harem, a flock of Canadian geese, and a leaping brown trout.

“CLARK BRONSON is the finest new talent in animal art in America in the past 40 years,” said artist Arnold Friberg, widely-acclaimed painter of the Northwest, the
Canadian Mounties, and religious art. “This man knows the woods, the mountains, the animals. Art comes from living, and this has been Clark’s life…hunting, fishing, hiking, working in the timber. His work is also remarkable in that his figures are so small, usually about the size of an actual 10-inch magazine cover. Yet they are correct in every detail, each minute character perfect with the lifelike attitude. They don’t appear little and sickly.”

Staff artist and illustrator for Utah Fish and Game Department since 1961, Clark also does state magazine covers for Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, South Dakota, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Branching out, he has produced illustrations for other publication, including “Children’s Friend,” “Western Outdoors,” “Sports Afield,” “Home,” “U.S. Forest Service;” also work for calendars and for advertisements, chiefly for Browning Arms Company and several trout companies.

He also illustrated animal drawings of the lesson book for Art Instruction, Inc., and for the past two years has won top awards in annual competition. At the 13th annual lithographic awards competition last year, the Utah Fish and Game cover, illustrated by Clark, received one of the top six awards from a field of 2,600 national publication entries.

“THERE IS LITTLE mistaking Bronson’s style, especially in his paintings, which are done in a striking vignette with a bare suggestion of environment against a white background. His muted – and therefore, very realistic – colors are another trademark,” writes author Dick Kirkpatrick.

Working primarily with water colors and pencil charcoal, Clark captures the animals in lifelike poses. Everything must be authentic. He refuses to build up a scene with unnatural color.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Guy Bronson of Kamas, Clark has followed his father, local fish and game conservation officer, through the rugged Uinta mountain country since he was a toddler.

“They tried to keep me home, but couldn’t,” Clark laughed.

Father and son have been close friends, and the young artist knows the wilderness and its inhabitants as his father does. He is aware of how a porcupine turns to face his foe, where the hair ruffles up in preparation for battle. He knows how close he can get to a bear without getting into trouble. He knows how waterfowl flying in V formation turn simultaneously on some unheard communication…how the coyote travels a selected route, making his rounds every few days, and may often follow his same tracks on the trail. He has studied the calls of blue jays and pine squirrels warning other mountain creatures of approaching danger. Every pine, aspen and scrub oak of this vast region is a signpost.

“The outdoor world is not always as people imagine,” he smiles. “For example, an eagle is majestic to see, but most mischievous when you know his true character. These natural hecklers dive from the sky, light on a deer’s back and drive those sharp claws in, holing on while the deer runs, frantically trying to escape. My father has seen an eagle dive, hit a bull elk and knock it down. Just last year an eager eagle came swooping down into our yard, scooped up our pet duck and attempted to carry him off right before our eyes.”
Because he likes activity and the outdoors, Clark found Scouting important. He became an Eagle Scout at 15, and remains active, “hoping to develop more outdoorsmen.”

**THIS TALL, QUIET**, personal man appears even younger than his 24 years. After seeing his work, experts are amazed at his youth, at the fact he has been a professional illustrator for only three years, and that he has had relatively little formal education in art. In high school, he had only basic training. During his senior year he enrolled in a two-year correspondence course which he finished in nine months. Mr. Friberg, as well as Charles Schulz and other nationally known artist, was a director of the school.

“Always prodding, the instructors usually write students to send in more art, work harder, etc. With Clark they’d write, “Please Slow Down!”, Mr. Friberg says.

After high school, Clark enrolled at the University of Utah and remained two quarters. He spent his spare time at the Friberg studio.

Mr. Friberg recalls how eager Clark was:

“The boy asked to work around my acreage in exchange for any professional help I could give him. The first day I sent him to clean ditches in the grape arbors. In two hours, he had accomplished more than most men do in several days.’

But, Mr. Friberg warns, Clark is facing an uphill climb in a limited market.

“Today, photographers of animals are used in place of illustrations,” he explains. “If it were 30 years ago, he would be famous.”

**CLARK MAINTAINS** the most important influence in his career was the training and criticism of Arnold Friberg.

The young artist and his petite wife have not intention of moving from this scenic community. Their pioneer ancestors settled here and they plan to continue remodeling their old farmhouse and remain. ‘This is living,’ they agree.

“I never get over the glory of the mountains,” Clark says. “Spring is the best time of year...everything is fresh, new and alive and the birds return. Summer is great because you can get back into the high country to fish in the lakes. Did you ever stand on a mountain after a storm and look down on the clouds lying against the valley floor...then watch them rise and drift into the sky? It’s something you’d never forget. In Autumn it’s the color...the deer, pheasant and duck hunts are one. It is especially wonderful in this rugged, rocky, open country. In winter the canyons are closed, but there’s a stark, real beauty then, especially when the pine and fir branches are heavy with snow.

**WORK, FAMILY**, friends hunting, fishing, and the beauty surrounding them. This is enough. “We’d probably be more successful in a large metropolitan area, but we’re happy here.”

This is one of many covers Clark did for wildlife magazine.