



Dave McGary

## McGary Sculpture “The Providers”

**Focuses on Role of Bison to American Indians**

By Marilyn Bay Wentz

Since discovering art, and specifically sculpture, as a teenager, Dave McGary, now 52, has become one of the nation's top Western artists. His work is on display as part of the permanent collections of such prestigious museums as The Smithsonian, the Buffalo Bill Historical Museum, The Hubbard Museum of the American West, and the Autry National Center of the American West. Two of his bronze sculptures are part of the permanent collection in the Old Executive Office building at the White House Complex in Washington, D.C.

McGary's monuments stand in a wide range of locations such as the Houston Astrodome, Ruidoso Downs and in downtown Santa Fe. The commissioned monument of Chief Washakie was unveiled in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda and now can be seen in the permanent collection of the National Statuary Hall.

"I'm very proud of pieces displayed in public areas because a lot of people see them, and it is a way for me to teach them about our nation's history," McGary said.

Former NBA Chairman Mike Duncan's family owns McGary's work and believes it is outstanding. "We love it. The attention to detail and historical accuracy is amazing."

After nearly ten years of research and over six months of sculpting, McGary recently unveiled his latest work, "The Providers." The artist was born and raised on a cattle ranch outside Cody, Wyo., and is excited to present his latest work to members of the National Bison Association.

"I am a student of Native American culture. I have had the great privilege to be invited to many ceremonies and celebrations. Many families have shared their histories and stories with me. I am so grateful to these families, like the Long Soldier family of Pine Ridge, S.D.,

and the Red Elk family who later adopted me. They have been very supportive of me and my work and saw me as someone worth educating about their culture."

Known for his life-like work, McGary's "The Providers" does not disappoint. The bronze, painted sculpture consists of three buffalo and two Indian braves mounted on their fine hunting horses. The explosive energy and danger of the hunt is depicted with only five of 20 hooves touching the ground.

"This was a complicated piece to cast," he said. "I really wanted to capture the proximity of the animals and the intensity of the hunt."

McGary noted that buffalo are so anatomically different with their big shoulders, small hips, hump and hair texture, that he worked hard to study and then depict them accurately. Encouraged by Daniel Long Soldier to create a piece sharing the importance of the buffalo, the two took a trip to Custer State Park. Here Long Soldier showed McGary the buffalo of his ancestor's time with their unique coloring, explained how all parts of the buffalo were used, and offered stories of the hunt, its preparation ceremonies and celebrations.

Bronze sculpting is a long and involved process. McGary explained that first he builds an armature from steel wire welded together. He bends and moves the wire until he achieves the shape he wants. This acts as a three dimensional sketch for him. Then he softens and sculpts very hard, oil-based clay around the armature, working with his hands to fashion it and using tools to add details. On the original clay, he fashions a rubber mold backed by a fiberglass material. He casts the small, detail pieces, such as feathers and horse tails, individually, and welds them onto the main sculpture later. There are over fifty separately cast pieces in "The Providers" masterwork. The final steps include sand blasting, applying a patina finish to oxidize the bronze,




and hand painting to achieve the desired finish. Much of the work is placed outdoors. To protect it, a weather-proof finish is applied.

“I created the combination of patina and hand painting 30 years ago, and it has become one of the trademarks of my work,” McGary said. “My first bronzes were not painted, but after spending time with Native Americans, I felt

I was missing something by not using the vibrant colors they use to paint their horses and in their own regalia.”

As with most of McGary’s work, “The Providers” is produced in limited editions. Thirty masterwork editions are available, 40 sculptures at 2/3 scale called maquettes, and two study forms; a duet of one hunter and one buffalo and a second study of a single buffalo. Life size bronzes will be created upon request.


When commissioned to create tributes to the legendary Shoshone Chief Washakie, McGary and his wife Molly, began to donate a percentage of the proceeds of the two sculptures, “Chief Washakie” and “The Battle of Two Hearts” to the Washakie Foundation, which is dedicated to extending the chief’s belief in the importance of education. Over the past decade, this has helped raise over \$400,000 for scholarships for Native American students to attend the University of Wyoming.

McGary has a production studio in Ruidoso, N.M., and galleries in Scottsdale, Ariz., and Sun Valley, Idaho. He and his family split their time between their homes in Scottsdale and Sun Valley. To learn more about his art, visit: [www.davemcgary.com](http://www.davemcgary.com) or call 800-291-3026 

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