

ERICA

One day I received a call from a woman asking me if I would be able to sculpt her son and how much it would cost. As the price I quoted seemed to be acceptable I suggested that she and her husband visit us at Agecroft with the boy. The appointed day arrived and a big silver Mercedes drove into our courtyard. Erica, her husband John and two children got out, a boy of four and a little girl of two.

Erica was a very attractive young woman, and she soon told us that she had been a leading model in London before marrying and had also acted in several minor films. She did indeed move with the grace of a model. After showing them around the garden, looking at children bronzes on the way, we sat down to one of Margie's special studio lunches and started to talk about the possible sculpture.

Imagine my surprise when Erica announced that actually John wanted a sculpture of her and the two children. *Fine*, I thought, looking at Erica, *I would love to try and capture her face.*

They told us that they had bought a large Victorian mansion in the Midlands and were creating a garden for the house. They had purchased a classical water feature for the centre of the lawn to match the Roman Temple they had already built against a backdrop of old beech trees. They would like me to visit the garden and suggest poses for the sculptures.

My son Peter had started sculpting in the studio at about this time so I suggested that he should come with me. We fixed a date and drove north armed with a camera, tape measure, pencil and paper, and our clubs because I was going through a golf phase. Our appointment was not until after lunch so I thought Peter and I could steal time for a few holes beforehand, as I had noticed on the map there was a course near the house.

As we unpacked our clubs from the back of the car a pucker English colonel-type walked past and said, "Players are not allowed to wear blue jeans!" Peter was wearing jeans so we had to buy a pair of trousers in the pro-shop before hitting off. Peter tells me that he still wears the trousers, so it was worth buying them, but I am still laughing at the snobbery.

I have never been able to master the driver or cure my slice. I allow for this by aiming to the left of the fairway knowing my ball will land on the right. I hit off and watched the ball swing away in its usual arc before hearing an almighty crash. I walked off to see what I had hit, cursing because it probably meant I had lost the ball. We arrived at a tractor to find the driver sitting on the front wheel rolling a cigarette and looking rather white. "Seen a ball?" I asked. He pointed at the shattered windscreen of his cabin. "First time that has happened," he said, holding up a golf ball. I apologised, hurried away and after playing a couple more holes went to a pub for lunch!

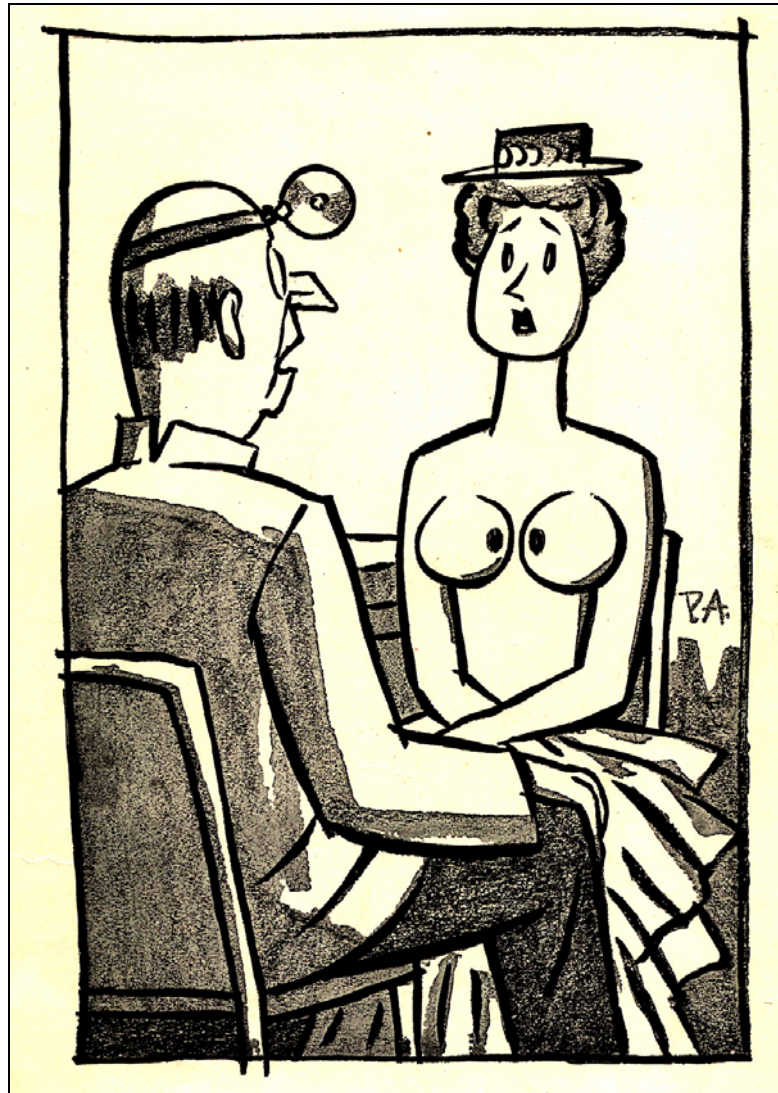
After lunch we found the house and it was as enormous as Erica had warned. In its heyday it must have been amazing, but now it was a rundown Victorian mansion and gone were the dreams of grandeur. If Erica and John planned to return it to its past glory, they had a gigantic task ahead of them.

They had started by walling in a vast area of lawn in front of the house. Right in the middle of this expanse was a rectangular stone pond. Erica had decided that she should be sitting on the back wall of the billiard-table sized pool, so I suggested that her son could be fishing on one side, and the little girl standing beside her mother. Having agreed on a plan we were led into the dead

house, past workmen fixing a leaking roof, and followed Erica into an immense room that had been the library to take the photographs.

I had brought a large sheet of brown paper that I put down on the floor in order to pencil round Erica when she took up her pose. When everything was ready I asked her to do just that and in a flash off came all her clothes! I took a quick look at Peter and then started to fiddle with the camera. Erica's body matched her face. She was a very well put together young lady. Having regained our composure, as they say in the novels, we began discussing the position of the legs, arms and angle of the head. Being an ex-model and having no sense of shyness, she soon found a pose she felt comfortable with and we went to work.

I took the job of using the tape and Peter had to put up with jotting down the measurements! One of the most important measurements for a female nude is of course the separation. Get that wrong and you are really in trouble! As I stretched the tape between Erica's nipples I could not but help think of a wonderful cartoon by Peter Arno from the *New Yorker* magazine. When I was a boy my parents subscribed to the magazine each month just to see their favourite cartoonist.



"Have you tried an oculist?"

Outlining the body onto the paper was intoxicating and then I took far too many photographs, as I couldn't see there being a repeat performance. As you can imagine Peter and I had plenty to talk about on the way home!

I worked away at the three clay figures and pretty soon was ready for the first sitting. Erica arrived and I spent the morning working on the children. After lunch they were put down for a rest in the house with Margie while Erica and I went back to the studio. Off came all the clothes again and I set to work. She really did have a very good figure! It is surprising how detached one becomes when working with a live nude. The eyes and hands work together concentrating on the edge of the model, going round and round, while slowly the clay figure takes shape.



'Erica' taking shape in clay

A final visit was arranged when I had gone as far as possible without another live sitting. Erica and John arrived to inspect the children who were finished and they approved what I had done, but Erica thought I needed to do some more work done on her as she wasn't satisfied with her bosom!

The husband sat reading the paper while we worked. Suddenly she said, "Would it help if you felt?" A very loud, "Erica, that will do," came from behind the paper. Erica winked at me and we continued to work as before!



'Erica and the Children' in place

The sculptures turned out pretty well and when I set them up on the water's edge, everyone was pleased. So ended my only live female nude modelling class! It had been an enlightening experience and I really got to know Erica and liked her immensely. The story of her life that unfolded as I worked was fascinating. I often wonder what has happened to all the children I have sculpted, but most of all I wonder what happened to Erica. She was a really nice girl.

Margie and I have met some incredibly kind people and had many fantastic adventures with them. I would go and take photographs and measurements of children all over the world and then do the sculptures at home. Sometimes the child would not be able to come to the final sitting, so I would have to take the head to them. I remember one child with great affection, as she was one of the sparkiest little girls I have ever met. I took the photographs of Lilly in Florida, sculpted her in England, had the final sitting in Toronto and shipped the sculpture back to Florida.

There was no way the whole of the clay sculpture could go over to Toronto for the final sitting so I only took her head. I found that the best way to transport heads was in Pop Begg's top-hat case! I don't know how I came into possession of the case but it was just the thing for carrying the clay head through Customs and on to the aeroplane. I should have taken a photograph

of the officer's faces at Toronto Airport because it was a treat to watch them when they opened the lid, and tasted the clay!



Lilly in Florida and finished in bronze

Lilly insisted on helping me sculpt her own head. It was a joy to watch the little fingers and her utter concentration. She now drives a car!



Lilly helped to sculpt her head

Another wonderful commission was for my old friend, Michael Ball, who had bought a sheep station near Bowral. The property is on the road from Sydney to Canberra and situated in beautiful gum country. Michael has had an eventful life, ending up with four sons by two wives. He asked me if I would sculpt his two youngest boys, and their dog. Tim I did climbing a tree while Nick chased after the King Charles spaniel.

Michael then asked me to sculpt his two older sons and his horse! I had never really been interested in sculpting animals, but the challenge of a horse was too much to resist. I asked the foundry if I could sculpt the horse in one of their studios and a young friend of mine called Willie Newton to help me. I had met Willie when Julyan, the Hazlegrove headmaster's wife, asked me to give sculpting lessons to her art class.

At the time Willie had two ambitions in life, one was to become a jockey and the other was to sculpt horses. He was very successful as a jockey but eventually gave up riding to become an even more successful sculptor. Michael had taken some photographs of his horse and when I showed them to Willie he took me to see a similar horse to take correct measurements.

We then set about making the horse out of foam on a steel armature, and when we had the basic shape right, we gave the foam a coat of chestnut coloured plasticine. I couldn't have done the job without Willie's help. I was getting pretty good at human anatomy, but horses were a whole new world.

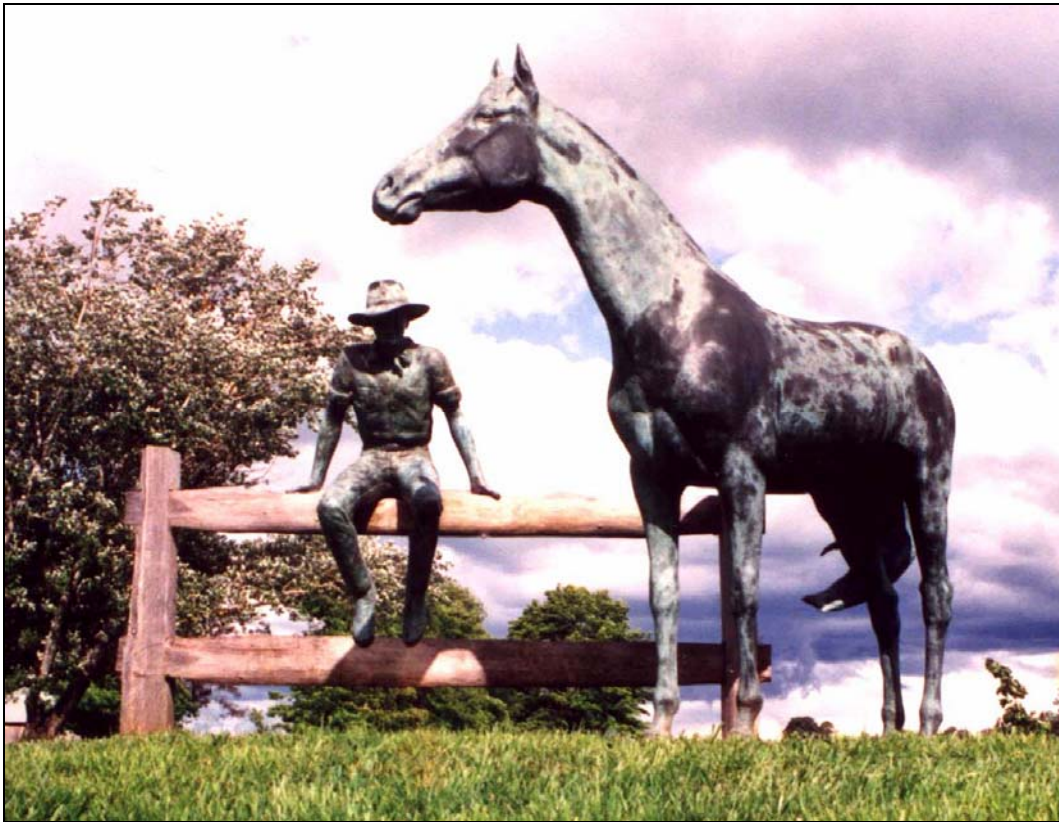


Michael's stock horse in plasticine

I finished Michael's two older boys and Roy came to take the moulds at Agecroft. One of Michael's boys was called Joshua, and as he was working at the time as a cowboy, I decided he should sit beside the horse on a real fence.

On my last visit to check the sculpture at the foundry I shaped the horse's tail as a ladder so children could climb up on its back. When I had

finished the tail I left Willie to clear up the foundry and headed for home. I was really very satisfied with our joint efforts and thought that Michael would be pleased.



Joshua and the Stock Horse

As I was quietly driving home thinking about the next project I came upon two tractors going the other way. Because they were travelling very slowly a queue of cars had built up behind them and unfortunately the last car was exactly on a blind corner. As I came level with the end of the queue a small car shot round the corner and the driver, seeing a blocked road in front, swung right and drove straight into the front of my car. The joint impact must have been well over 100 mph so the small car hurtled right over my bonnet and roof with a horrendous noise. There was no time to think of anything except that I was going to die!

My car came to a standstill and I was still alive. I couldn't believe that I had survived such a fearful head-on crash. I had swung to the left immediately I saw what was going to happen and watched the accident as though it was a slow-motion movie. When my car stopped I looked over my shoulder at the other car and was just in time to see it land on its roof and then bounce back onto its wheels!

Surrounded by a mess of junk from the glove box I sat there silently thanking the inventor of seat belts. An ambulance arrived and I walked over to it, thanking God I was in no pain and wouldn't have to spend another six weeks in traction! The other driver was a girl and talking, so was obviously all right as well. We arrived at the hospital and I was taken into Outpatients. By now I had recovered from the shock and when the sister told me, "All you

need is a brandy.” I said, “Yes please, I would love one.” “Not here, when you get home,” was her answer. So much for the sympathetic National Health Service!

I rang the foundry and asked if Willie had left. Luckily he hadn’t so was able to collect me and drive me to Agecroft, where I did have a brandy. Now, when I look at the photograph of the finished horse, I think it could very easily have been my last sculpture. I could have been killed or ever worse crippled, which was a terrifying thought as Margie and I had just seen a play in London called, *Whose life is it anyway?* in which a young sculptor had lost both his hands!

The following year Margie and I were able to go and see Michael and I must say I thought the sculptures looked very original. On arriving at the property we found that since our previous visit the front gate had been moved. This was a pity as originally the house had been approached down a lovely avenue of mature silver poplar trees. The gate had been moved because the Highway Authorities had decided to upgrade the main road by raising it 20 foot. Michael was very upset about this as he was left with a beautiful avenue that ended with a colossal embankment.

While I was listening to Michael’s tale of woe my mind started to think about another problem I had concerning an enormous Carrara marble sculpture sitting in Italy. On one of our trips my interpreter, Pam Launari, asked me if I could come with her and look at a sculpture belonging to one of her students as she wished to sell it and needed advice. Pam was my right arm when it came to checking up on the Italians at the Mariani Foundry in Pietrasanta, but earned her living by giving English lessons. Her student had told her that the sculpture was a Rodin, which I doubted, but agreed to have a look to please Pam.



The Chini 'Danaide' by Rodin

We arrived at the house and were taken into the sitting room by a middle-aged woman. As soon as I saw the sculpture I exclaimed, because it definitely was by Rodin and called the *Danaide*. We had just seen an edition of the sculpture in the Musée Rodin in Paris. I examined the sculpture and found it to be a signed plaster cast that had been painted to look like terracotta.

We sat down to listen to the extraordinary story behind the sculpture. The woman's grandfather, Galileo Chini, had been born in Florence in 1873 and made his living as an avant-garde potter and painter. In 1901 one of his vases had won the *Grand Prix della Ceramica* in the Brussels Exhibition and he had gone there to accept the award. On the journey he had passed through Paris, called on Rodin, and done a pen and ink drawing of the famous man.



Rodin by Chini, 1901

In return Rodin gave him a plaster of the *Danaide* that Chini took back to Florence where, as a potter would, he coloured it with oil paint to look like terracotta. Rodin's method of working often involved experimenting with the original clay on different bases. Obviously the plaster cast he gave Chini must have been one of these experiments that he had rejected. Rodin was 43 when he worked on the *Danaide* and he used his mistress, Camille Claudel, as the model. She was 33 at the time and also a sculptress.

We took the sculpture outside and photographed it from several angles. The woman then asked me if it would be possible to sell it for her as one of her sons wanted to buy a bookshop and the other to rent a strip of beach and hire out umbrellas to the summer tourists. I pointed out that she would not get very much for the one plaster and suggested that instead, because the family

owned the copyright and it was unique, she should have a mould taken and an edition of eight cast in bronze. In this way she would be able to keep her grandfather's original, give copies to her sons, and make much more money. I offered to ask my friends if they would be interested in buying an edition of the bronze before she did anything. To cut a long story short I managed to place several editions for her, so I presume the bookshop was bought and the beach rented.

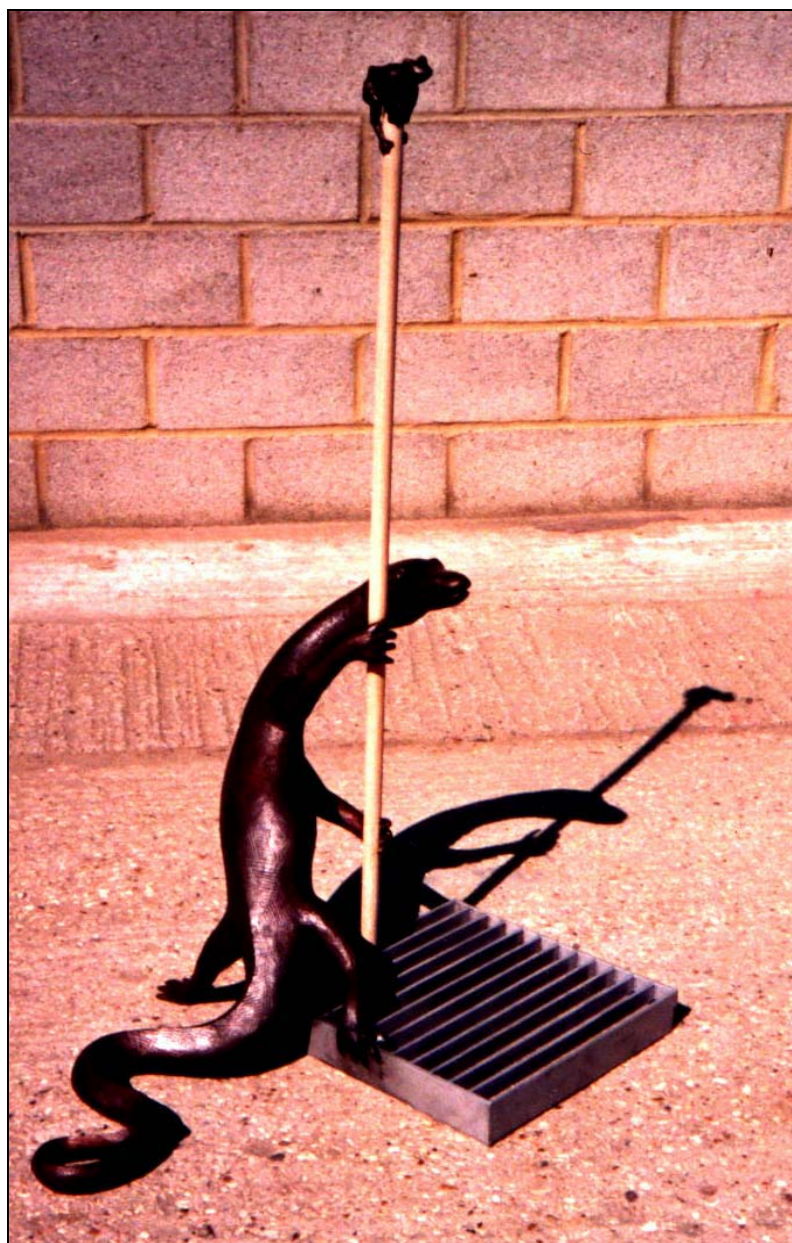
Damon de Laszlo took an edition and then asked me if I could arrange to have a copy carved out of marble one and a half times life-size as he wanted a fountain for his garden in Hampshire. When the carving was finished we flew down to Pietrasanta to inspect it. I shall never forget his words when they unwrapped the white Carrara figure for us, "It's too big!" I reeled back saying, "No, this is the size you ordered." His reply was, "No, I mean it is too big for the pond in my garden. I need a smaller one." "What are we going to do with this one?" I asked. Damon said, "Sell it. Can you find a buyer?"

So here I was walking down Michael's Australian avenue that went nowhere but which was the perfect site for a copy of a large white sculpture by Rodin. I explained about the *Danaide* to Michael and luckily he thought it sounded a wonderful idea. Soon the marble was on a ship bound for Australia and it now looks incredible in its new surroundings with the 20-foot high bank behind it planted with daffodils. It has become a landmark for the truckers as they drive down to Sydney from Canberra, because from their high cabins they can look down on the backside of a beautiful naked woman!



Michael's 'Danaide', one and a half times life-size

The last sculpture I made for Michael was a boot puller. He said I could do anything I liked, so I did. The heel of a boot fits in the last curve of the goanna's tail as he tries to reach the frog on the handle!



Goanna and frog boot puller

Having survived the crash I continued to sculpt for the rest of the Seventies and would moan and groan when it was necessary to take time off once a month to handle the necessary office paper work.

During the school holidays I was able to stop work and organise adventures for the boys so it was not all work and no play. We took the boys to Scotland, camping in the Lake District on the way. We climbed over the Welsh mountains and rode terrible horses up the Brecon Beacons. In the summer we played family tennis and croquet on the lawn at Agecroft and in the spring took the boys by car to Venice and Florence via Paris. In the winter

holidays we introduced them to skiing in Switzerland and in the autumn made trips to London and the theatre. They were very happy, carefree days.

One of the holidays in Scotland with the boys led me back to Kincardine Castle. It was here that I again met Nané Brennen, the sister of my mother's closest friend, and the woman who had organised my first ever exhibition in Seattle. She wanted to present a trophy to the Canadian Shorthorn Society in Toronto. The idea was that I should visit her friends who farmed near Edinburgh, take photographs of their best Shorthorn bull and sculpt it. When we arrived at the farm I was shown two bulls; one apparently had a superb chest while the other had a superb rump. I personally couldn't see the difference, but dutifully took photographs of both animals, promising to join the two good halves together in a one-foot long bronze.

I sculpted the creature in red wax as Enzo had taught me which enabled me to give the surface plenty of texture. When I had finished it we went up to Scotland to show the wax to the farmers and as they approved how the front of one bull had been successfully added to the backside of the other, I gave it to the Meridian Foundry to cast.

On the way back from Scotland we decided to go and have a look at Hadrian's Wall, which we had heard about all our lives but never seen. Living in a 500-year-old house had made us very aware of English history, besides which we could see Camelot from our orchard and often walked around the earthworks of the Iron Age fort that the Romans had occupied during Hadrian's time. From Camelot you can see across to Avalon and the Mendip Hills where the Romans had vineyards and shipped the wine back to Rome.



Romans re-occupy Hadrian's Wall

We arrived at the Wall on a cold bleak day, climbed up through the remains of the soldiers' barracks and nearly dropped dead as walking towards us was a Roman Centurion talking to a Senator. Thank goodness I had my camera and could take a photograph. They were well wrapped up in furs and as we approached we saw that they were fortifying themselves from what looked suspiciously like a small bottle of whisky!

When I reported that the Bull had passed inspection and I had taken it to the foundry for casting, as Nané had ordered an edition of six, four of which she wanted for herself, giving me two to sell. I had no idea where I would be able to sell my two copies, but thank goodness I did take them as one was sold through Malletts in Berkley Square, which opened an amazing door to another adventure and a friendship that reached from New York to Miami. The other was bought by friends in our village so I often see it, which brings back many happy memories.



The 'Canadian Shorthorn' trophy for Best Bull

Nané asked me to take two editions of the sculpture over to Toronto and give them to the President of the Canadian Shorthorn Society, one for him and one for the Society. I did this and took the opportunity to visit Fred and Marg Helson as they had purchased a child sculpture and were thinking of buying another so had kindly asked me to stay. As it turned out they lived only a few miles from the cattle breeder and knew him well. They very kindly suggested that I couldn't go home without seeing Niagara Falls. I was thrilled about this as of course I had seen photographs of the famous scene and read all about people going over the Falls in a barrel.

This all took place in February when the countryside was covered in snow a foot deep and the temperature was well below freezing. The edges of the pavements in Toronto were piled with three-foot high walls of frozen snow and the gutters were full of slush. As we drove down to Niagara through a snowstorm in a well-heated car, I could not help but admire Fred's driving skill as the roads looked lethal to me. Being totally out of season we were able to

park right beside the viewing terrace, which meant only a ten-yard walk to the rail and the 167-foot drop.



Niagara Falls

The mist rising from way below us was like dry ice. Within seconds my ears were frozen solid and, by the time Fred had taken the mandatory photograph, the rest of my body was as well. The noise of the water cascading over the edge of the cliff only feet from where we were standing made speech impossible. I had a movie camera and tried to capture the scene between shivers so I could share the experience with Margie. I have never seen anything so awesome in my life and could feel the force of nature tearing at me as I stood by the edge of the Falls.

The reason that some of my bronze maquettes were being shown in Malletts was due to my childhood friend Belinda, the girl who had allowed me to photograph the *Hammer Thrower* in front of her house. Belinda had shown her collection of maquettes to one of the Directors of Malletts and he kindly agreed to my leaving a few dotted around on his incredibly expensive furniture. One of the sculptures I left with him was the *Shorthorn Bull*.

One day a young American couple went into Malletts to buy furniture for their apartment in New York and the *Bull* caught the husband's eye as he thought it would look good on his desk on their horse farm in Florida. He bought it and asked Malletts for my name, address and telephone number.

When Dr John Weber read that I lived in Somerset he rang me, told me he had bought the *Bull* and said that he and his wife Charlotte were going to be visiting an orchid farm near Castle Cary and staying at the George Hotel. He asked if we happened to live anywhere nearby, and if so, could they possibly call in and visit the studio.



Agecroft Studio

I of course agreed and asked him if they would like to have dinner with us as we lived only a couple of miles from Castle Cary. He said that they would be delighted to after they had visited the orchid farm. John and Charlotte arrived around six with the biggest bunch of orchids for Margie that you have ever seen in your life. After I had showed them around the studio we settled down to one of Margie's famous meat stews. By sheer coincidence she had made some vichyssoise soup as a first course and when serving it apologised for it not being as white as the one Campbell's soup made. This caused Charlotte to laugh and then tell us that she and her brother owned Campbell's! We had a very happy meal and they asked us to come and see them in New York when we were next passing through.

A few months later I was again summoned by Ron Beaver in Canberra so decided to go via New York and try to see the Webers. I wrote warning them that I was on my way and John replied that he would be delighted to see me, although unfortunately Charlotte would be in Florida with the children.

I arrived in New York and after booking into a hotel near his apartment on Fifth Avenue I walked around to the hospital where he had asked me to meet him. He took me into the Common Room for a cup of tea as by now it was late afternoon. In those days my entire portfolio fitted into a small black plastic photograph album. As John thumbed through the pages I confess I very much hoped that he would be tempted to buy the *Acrobats*! Instead he stopped at *Le Corsair* and asked the price!

For some reason I was really surprised by his choice but I certainly wasn't going to try to change his mind. I was absolutely thrilled and totally amazed as he had given no indication that he was actually interested in buying a sculpture. John invited me to come to the apartment around eight that evening and join him for dinner. I walked back to my hotel along Madison Avenue on cloud nine.

In an effort to pull myself together I had a long hot bath before walking around to the Fifth Avenue apartment. A doorman let me in and guided me to the smartest elevator I have ever been in. John met me at the door and after pouring me a drink took me for a tour of their fabulous collection of paintings

that included a beautiful Van Gogh, two stunning Corots and over the fireplace in the dining room the most impressive Modigliani that I have ever seen. I was dumbfounded by the collection and the beautiful antique furniture. I don't think I have ever seen such a display of superb taste.

We had a very good meal at a local restaurant and although I learnt a little about John, he found out much more about me. We got on very well and when the meal was over he kindly walked me back to my hotel as in those days New York was a pretty risky place at night, especially Central Park. What a day it had been. There was something about selling a sculpture to a couple with such taste in a city like New York that made the day miraculous.

Le Corsair was cast by Morris Singer and shipped to Live Oaks Plantation in Florida. John wrote when it had arrived and suggested that I should fly over at his expense and help him install it in the garden. This suited me as I was due in Sydney for an exhibition of my maquettes. I flew to New York to join him and then we flew down to Orlando together. I shall never forget the trip as when the pilot switched on the speakers he said, "Welcome aboard folk. Take off seems to have gone okay, but I now have to read the manual so we can land, so don't expect any more chat for the next couple of hours!" Can you imagine a pilot saying that today!

The pilot made a perfect landing and we set off by car to the farm arriving in time for dinner. We were joined by the horse vet's wife for a beautiful meal and a quite superb wine. John took me down into his cellar to choose a bottle and I have never seen such a treasure of red wine. The following morning we did a tour of the gardens and he showed me where he had decided to plant *Le Corsair*. There were several strong men ready to bury the steel supports that kept the sculpture from falling over, and the job was soon completed. It was a great change to have an ample supply of muscle available rather than just Roy and myself struggling alone.

Having finished our work, John took me for a tour of the estate that was beautiful, like an English parkland planted with fine specimens of Live Oaks, all dripping with Spanish moss, that grew in profusion around the rolling countryside. The Homestead and Stables were based on the English architecture of Newmarket Race Course. Everything and everywhere was 'high maintenance' and a joy to look at. When he took me to the farm office I was delighted to see the *Shorthorn Bull* sitting on his desk.

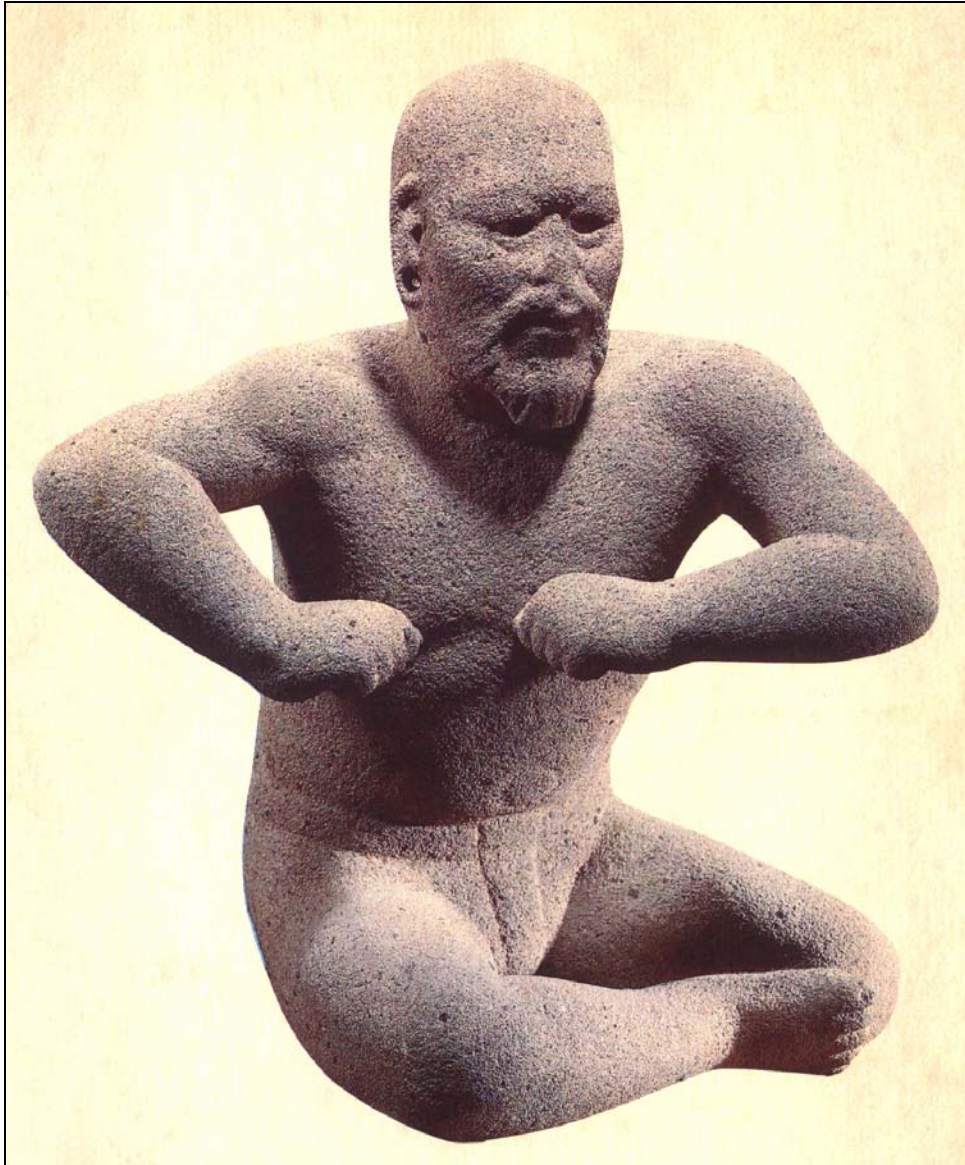
The vet's wife returned after lunch and the three of us set off for Hobe Sound Island, arriving in time for dinner after an easy four hours' drive through very flat country. The island is a private club with its own police force and golf course. The Webbers' home was big and airy and right beside the pounding surf. It was a paradise peopled by Charlotte's children.

Next day I spent the morning taking photographs of the children and swimming in the pool. In one of my conversations with John we had talked about Mexico City and the Pyramids. I told him that I had studied the Aztecs at school, had written a paper on their history and ever since then had dreamt of names like Montezuma, Tehuantepec and Popocatepetl.

"Why don't you change your ticket and fly to Australia via Mexico City so you can spend a couple of days there at my expense?" Being with someone like John gives one confidence, so I picked up the telephone and within minutes had changed my ticket. I said goodbye to John and Charlotte, climbed into a taxi and headed for Miami Airport and within hours I had landed in Mexico City all due to John's generosity.

On arrival I checked into a hotel near the cathedral and the following day took a tourist bus out to Tenochtitlan. I climbed the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon and marvelled at the scale of the whole complex. I had to buy an Aztec terracotta god on the way out of the grounds as a souvenir. The god now sits at the back of the Agecroft inglenook where the soot of many winter fires has made it look very old indeed!

I spent an incredible afternoon in the National Museum and admired many amazing sculptures. One in particular was a quite incredible carving that had left me breathless with admiration. It was called the *Wrestler* and was labelled as being Olmec, but looked incredibly Chinese.



The Olmec Wrestler

Before going out to the airport to catch the flight to Sydney I went for a walk around the Cathedral Square and happened to pass a little shop that sold Olmec sculptures. I found several little three-inch high terracotta figures similar to the ones that I had seen in the museum and couldn't resist buying four to celebrate John Weber's purchase of *Le Corsair*. The *Supplicant* is my

favourite and is a superb sculpture. Although it looks in proportion, the arms are of different lengths, as are the legs. The imagination behind this sculpture belongs to a genius. Years later when I visited the cave called Trois Frères in France to see the painting of the *Sorcerer* I stole a tiny bit of clay from the trampled floor and rolled it into a ball and keep it in the *Supplicant's* bowl. I like to think there is a link between the Mexican sculpture and the French painting.



Drummer



Teacher



Oracle



Supplicant

I still have these figures in my study and although they are probably fakes, it doesn't bother me. I find them remarkable. It had been a breathtaking experience to visit Mexico City and one for which I shall always thank John.

On the 14-hour flight to Sydney I found myself sitting next to a teenage girl. I learnt through her tears that she was emigrating from Brazil, having won an Australian Government lottery passport. She had left behind her family and was quite alone and adrift in the world. She had already been travelling for 36 hours and was absolutely exhausted and near collapse.

We arrived in Sydney late at night. Because I was travelling on my Australian passport I was quickly through the barriers, but while waiting for my luggage, I saw the tiny girl being escorted away between a couple of very large Customs officers. I followed them and asked if I could be of any help. The men told me that the girl had no money and no address, so she would have to spend the night in police custody. I explained that I had sat next to her on the flight and asked if it would be all right to give her a lift into town and leave her at the Young Woman's Club. "Fine, sign here!" We collected her luggage and walked through the Exit to be met by Margie's brother, David. We drove into town and, as David knew where the YWCA was, we soon had her inside. The episode made a deep impression on me and since that experience I have often thought of the plight of migrants. I never heard from her, but I hope she found happiness and a friend to share life with.

I had returned to Sydney for the opening of an exhibition of my figurative sculptures that was being held at a gallery in the suburb of Woollahra. I had shipped out a dozen or so maquettes for this show and hoped that I wouldn't have to ship too many home! Fortunately this wish came true as the gallery sold most of them. The one sale that made the whole thing worthwhile was a two-foot long bronze I had done of a *Mother and Child*.



Mother and Child

The Mother and Child theme is a universal one that fascinates me. When I was in New York with John Weber I had happened to pass a gallery and saw a Picasso print that I couldn't resist and still enjoy.



Picasso



Desiderio da Settignano

When I first got to know Margie's mother in Melbourne she showed me a postcard of Desiderio da Settignano's *Madonna and Child*. This beautiful carving is in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. When I went to England to look for Marwood, I visited the V&A to look for it, eventually finding it tucked away in a corner. The postcard-size white marble low relief dominates the room. I copied it recently in clay and had it cast in rose glass.

When I tell the story of how we took a mould and made an aluminium cast of the *Dabous Giraffe* in the Sahara, you will find out why my son, Peter, and I were in a tiny mud town south-west of the Air Mountains. Suffice to say, before leaving the town to return to England we had to visit the local souvenir market. The shop was tiny and stuffed full of objects and people. I quickly backed out leaving Peter to bargain as he tried to exchange a battery-driven CD player we had brought with us for a Tuareg sword!

I escaped outside but was immediately surrounded by another group of vendors trying to sell me a mass of things that I definitely didn't want. Suddenly I saw a man holding up a wooden sculpture of a mother and child. Again I couldn't resist it and am glad I didn't. She sits feeding her child on my windowsill watching me very intently as I type.

Our next encounter with John and Charlotte was a night to remember as they gave the party to end all parties in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. They had just donated the Chinese Room to the museum and they asked Margie and me to the inauguration. What an evening we had as much of the museum was open to their many guests to wander through at will on their way to the Greek Temple for a private dinner dance. The Temple is surrounded by

a water-filled moat that Charlotte had filled with floating pink candles. It was quite the most elegant and unforgettable evening we have ever experienced.



Tuareg 'Mother and Child' from Agadez

When we went to Orlando to talk about sculptures for a new hotel, we wrote to Charlotte to ask if she was going to be at Hobe Sound at the same time. Luckily she was there with her friend, Gloria Garfunkel, and asked us to stay for a couple of days to make up a golf foursome. Margie and I had taken to playing nine holes each week to get me out of the studio. Margie always managed to beat me but then she had been Captain of Hockey at Clyde School and in the tennis team!



Gloria, Charlotte, John and Margie

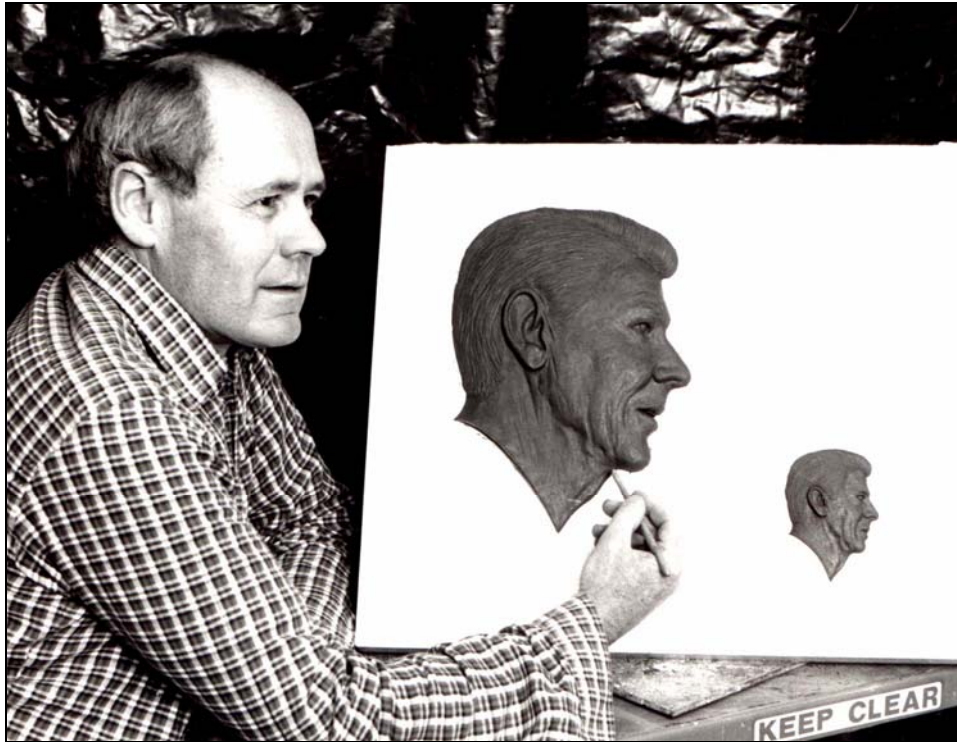
The private golf course on Hobe Sound has to be seen to be believed and the fun we had playing on it was amazing. This may be due to the fact that being a very hot day every time we went past the Golf House we would pick up another round of Margueritas on crushed ice! There are a lot of water hazards on the course, which I suppose is to be expected, as it is jammed between the sea and the inland canal that runs the length of the east coast of Florida, and I think we visited all of them. When it rains in Florida it pours, but luckily only for a few minutes although long enough to soak one to the skin. We didn't take our game very seriously that day! I don't think any of us have ever laughed so much.

Playing golf in Florida reminds me of one other game that we had on an island near the city of Mobile, Alabama. This happened when I was working for the President of the United States Sports Academy, Tom Rosandich. He had lent us his holiday house on Dauphin Island for the weekend, so we hired some golf clubs and buggies and set off around the course, which also had many water hazards. The fairways were flattened sand dunes and running parallel to them were lagoons that had a tiresome habit of collecting our balls. On about the third hole my ball stopped just short of the water so I walked down to hack it back towards the green. Staring at me from the lagoon's edge was the largest alligator I have ever seen! When we had left the Club House we had seen a notice, *Please do not feed the Alligators*, but had ignored the warning thinking that it was a joke. We later discovered that they had learnt to follow the players on the off chance of collecting a sandwich!

Tom is a dynamo of energy. He founded the USSA to teach sports coaches around the world. He wrote to me saying that he was looking for someone to do some relief heads of Sporting Heroes and asked if I would be interested. To cut a long story short I did several of these heads, including actor Ronald Reagan. Each plaque had a large edition for the Academy wall and a smaller version as an award. I did the heads in clay and then had the foundry cast them in bronze. It was fun working for Tom and we had several great times going to his award ceremonies. Margie was thrilled at one dinner because she was seated next to Perry Mason in his wheelchair.



'Ronald Reagan', President of the USA



'Ronald Reagan' Sports Medal

One weekend when we were staying with Tom and his lovely wife, Sally, on Dauphin Island, he suddenly said to me that he would like to buy an edition of the *Pathfinder* for the quadrangle of the building he had just bought. Tom was a tough negotiator and said, "Give me a price that I can get excited about!" The following year we went out for the unveiling ceremony.



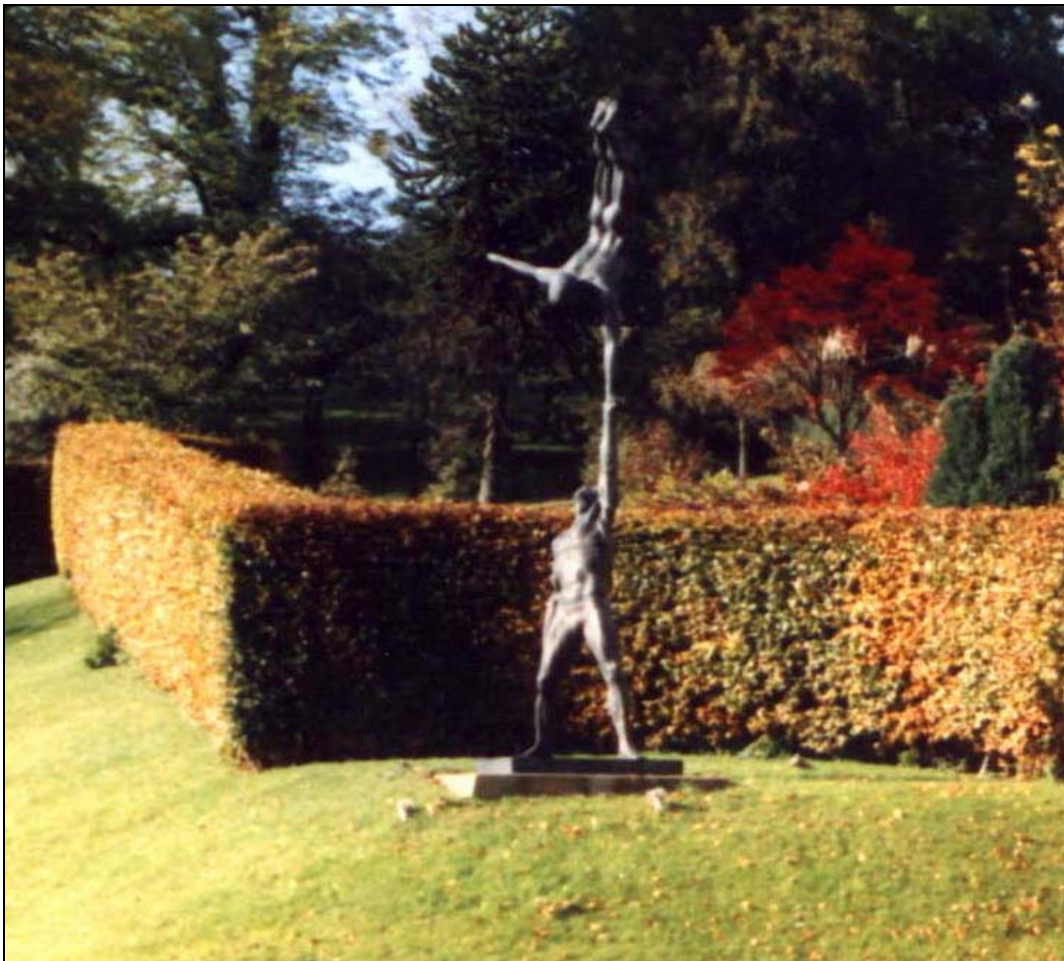
The 'Pathfinder', United States Sports Academy

I made Tom some gold-plated maquettes of the *Pathfinder*, but I don't think anyone really appreciated what they were getting when they received their awards. I keep one in our sitting room, where it still gives me a thrill every time I look at it.

Once again back in England I was rung by a woman with an amazing request. She told me she lived in a large house near Bristol that, until a recent storm when one had blown over, had been graced by two beautiful beech trees. She went on to say that she had seen the *Acrobats* when I had showed them at Wells Cathedral and wondered if I had one available as she thought it would replace the fallen tree and be a nice present for her husband's 70th birthday and at the same time!

I told her that we had the original in our garden and asked if she would like to see it. The following day a bright yellow sports Jaguar swept into the drive and a tall blonde woman in a leopard skin coat climbed out. In a total state of disbelief I walked her up the garden to look at the *Acrobats*. She made several circumnavigations and then turned to me and said, "That will be fine."

The *Acrobats* left again for Basingstoke to be cast by Morris Singer and when they were finished I let the owner of the yellow sports Jaguar know so we could arrange a date for the delivery, having warned them that they would need to hire a very large crane to reach the spot where the tree had been.



'Acrobats' filling in for a tree

At the very first exhibition of my figurative maquettes in Seattle when I had sold Margie's head as *Joan of Arc*, I had also sold sculptures to Peg Newman and she commissioned me to sculpt her two grandchildren. Over the following years Peg became a great friend. Because she loved the theatre she would come every year to London and then stay with us for a weekend. She was a wonderful character and one of the kindest people we have ever met.

If Peg was in town and I was going to the Meridian Foundry under the railway arch to inspect a sculpture, she would ask if she could come along for the ride. She was fascinated by the casting process and loved to see the molten bronze being poured into the moulds, especially when one day they had a breakout that caused a flood of molten bronze across the floor! One of these trips out to the foundry was to inspect John Weber's *Le Corsair* that was going to Florida. While I talked to Jack Crofton about packing and delivery I saw Peg walking round and round the sculpture so I presumed she must have liked it, but when on the way into town she said, "I think we should have one of those outside the Seattle Opera House," I was completely taken aback!

I rang Jack and asked him to please cast another edition straight away, which he did, and we shipped it out to America. Peg organised an unveiling and asked us to come for an opera night. Margie couldn't go but I did and had a grand evening with Peg and her aunt watching a superb ballet performance before the unveiling. The tragedy was that the sculpture was unprotected and only lasted a week before vandals had ripped it from its base. I think the mindless action broke Peg's heart, for over the next ten years she didn't mention the vandalism and the sculpture was never repaired.



'Le Corsair', Seattle Opera House

Seeing the Webers' Modigliani was the motivation to read about the artist and study his paintings more closely by trying to copy them. All through my years in England I have now and then dabbled with brushes, as without doubt the best way to understand a painting is by copying it.



Tim, Mark and Peter being teenagers



The 'Swiss Family Robinson' crossing the Alps!