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# STATE

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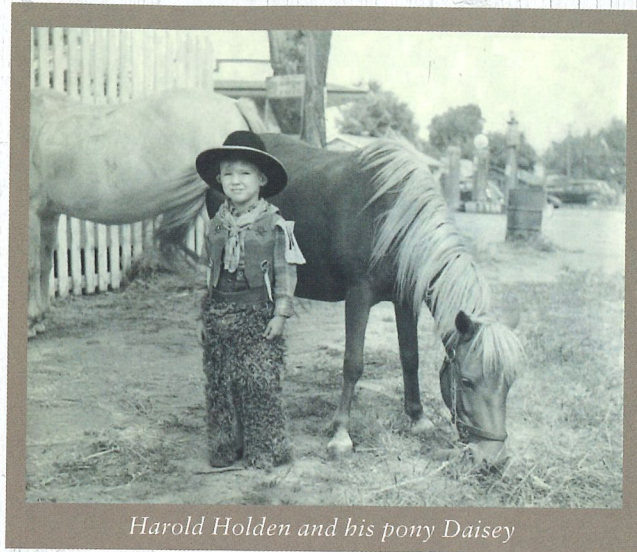
PHOTO / PHIL SHOCKLEY

# C a s t i n g a COWBOY

**OSU alumnus hopes to honor the legend of  
childhood hero Frank Eaton with final monument**

BY KAROLYN BOLAY





Harold Holden and his pony Daisy

*Anyone who has been to an Oklahoma State University football game to cheer on the Cowboys knows the familiar face and antics of Pistol Pete. But many may not know the true cowboy, Frank Eaton, who inspired the university's mascot.*

**H**arold Holden wants to change that. An Oklahoma artist, OSU alumnus and a real cowboy himself, Harold is the perfect man to create a monument to honor Frank Eaton — the real Pistol Pete.

Harold actually has a unique history with the gun-toting mascot, having met Eaton when he was a child.

Harold entered and rode his pony in the Cherokee Strip Days Parade in Enid when he was 5 years old. He performed a move familiar to any cowboy — rearing up his pony in front of the judges — and won a \$5 check and an opportunity to sit on Frank Eaton's lap and hold his gun, which Harold remembers felt like a cannon to a 5-year-old.

This memory has stayed with Harold throughout his career. For years, he has dreamed of honoring his childhood champion through his art.

"Well, it means a lot to do this monument because I've been thinking about it for so long," Harold says. "And you know, I wasn't sure I would ever get to do it."

Harold studied at OSU for a year before attending the Texas Academy of Art in 1961. The OSU Alumni Association recognized the talent and achievements of Harold by naming him a Distinguished Alumnus in 2005.

Harold, or simply "H" as many know him, is a self-taught sculptor who has been capturing the spirit of the West in sculptures and paintings for over 35 years. He has completed 22 monuments for placement in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas and Arkansas over the last 20 years.

After being diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis in 2007 and undergoing a lung transplant in 2010, Harold decided he wouldn't start any new monuments after he finished those in progress.

But he also decided that if given the opportunity to sculpt one of his heroes, he would be honored.

"H will probably never retire, but he has wanted to do this piece for almost 30 years," says Edna Mae, Harold's wife. "Other projects have always gotten in the way, so he is thinking now is a great time to make this happen."

Harold was recently inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum — the first Oklahoma artist to receive the honor.

"H is a very humble man despite his accomplishments and talent, and he always feels there are those more deserving or talented that should be recognized," Edna Mae explains. "But, having said that, he is very appreciative, particularly when it is recognition for a lifetime of work chosen by such a prestigious organization."

This isn't the first time Harold has given back to the Cowboy family. He was honored to be the artist chosen to sculpt the "We Will Remember" monument in Gallagher Iba Arena to remember and honor the 10 men lost in a plane crash returning home from a basketball game in Colorado. The monument holds a special place in the hearts of the Holden family members as they reflect on the their own loss.





"When they told me about it, I knew exactly how those parents felt because I had lost my grandson recently back then," Harold explains. "I felt like that. I just fell to my knees when I found out."

The sculpture is also special to Edna Mae.


"Our friends Zane and Ann Fleming lost their son Nate in the crash," Edna Mae says. "It was such a tragedy for so many people, but H was able to take his own grief and channel that into the 'We Will Remember' piece, not only as a way of dealing with his own loss but hopefully as a way to validate the grief of the families and the OSU community for their losses as well. It is a piece we both wish had never had to be done, but we are grateful that H was allowed to do it."

The creation of this new sculpture is an opportunity for fellow alumni, friends of the university and fans of Frank Eaton to honor a cowboy and his OSU legacy.

"[The monument] would be a constant reminder, especially to newer generations of students, that there really was a man behind the mascot," Edna Mae says. "He isn't a caricature but based on a real historical figure with an interesting history."

The monument will literally be larger than life at approximately life and one-quarter size when it is finished. It will take 18-24 months to complete the monument from agreement to dedication.

"This monument is a great opportunity for the OSU community to have a one-of-a-kind piece of art created by an alumnus that honors an OSU legend," says alumna Gwen Shaw, a donor for the monument who is also the head of the fundraising efforts and a close friend of H and Edna Mae.

A certain amount of money must be donated before Harold can begin his artistic magic of bringing the Frank Eaton monument to life. Those interested in donating or for more information on the project can contact Gwen Shaw at [etta1218@aol.com](mailto:etta1218@aol.com). 

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— EDNA MAE HOLDEN

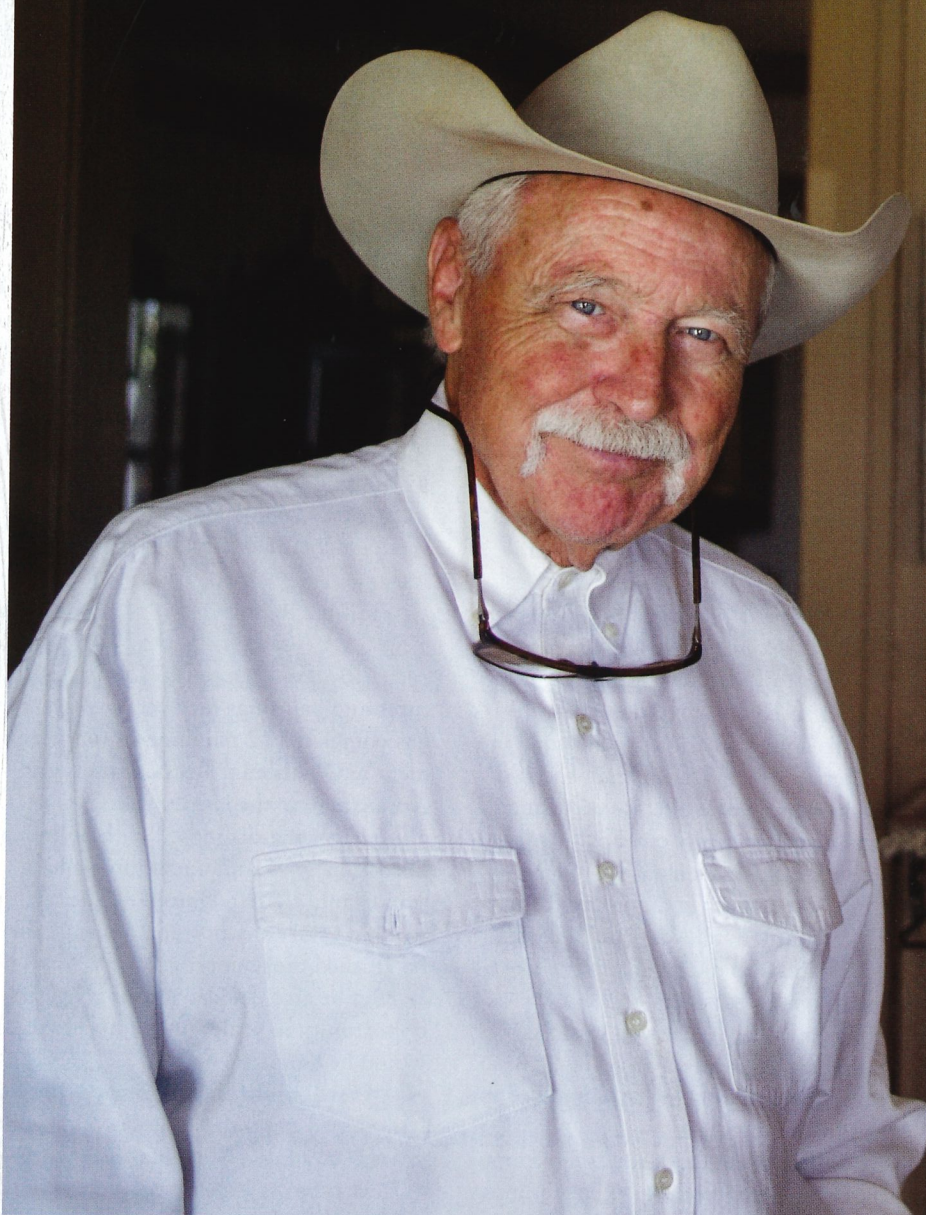






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