

This artist answers call of the wild

By Paula M. Davenport

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Wildlife artist Dick Seymour's studio resembles an Alaskan hunting lodge. The walls are covered with hunting trophies: the head of a big horn sheep, a 7-foot-long russet-colored caribou hide and a bearskin rug — with head.

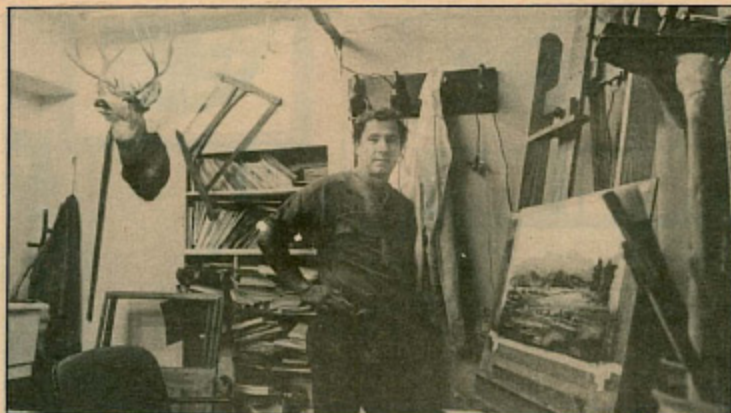
Seymour doesn't hunt much anymore. But he grew up traipsing along behind the hunting parties his father guided over the hills and hollers of DeSoto, Wis., once home to Blackfoot Indians.

Today he re-creates the landscapes over which he has trekked: the expansive plains, looming mountains and wooded trails.

"I don't try to create historical paintings; I paint the way I envision it might have been," Seymour said, motioning to a scene with Indian teepees pitched along a river bed in late fall.

His works capture the majesty of the land and its creatures.

"I start with a good landscape painting first and add wildlife, Indians or other nostalgia," Seymour said. Oftentimes he will use the trophies in his studio as models for the wildlife in the paintings.



Dan Rice/The Times-Advocate

Artist Dick Seymour uses the great outdoors in his paintings.

"I've painted those mule deer over there several times," he said, nodding in the direction of two stuffed trophies.

"The Indians were free from everything but the food chain," Seymour said, a fact that likens them to the big game animals he loves.

Fifteen years of stalking big game provided him with a deep respect for wild animals, their life cycles and habitats. A strong conservationist, he can talk knowledgesably about elk, wolves, deer, ducks, and wolverines.

"I don't shoot much anymore," said Seymour, who added that even today "animals do need to be hunted" as a means of

thinning their herds and preventing their starvation.

He now hunts only with his camera. It is this camaraderie with nature that is evident in Seymour's paintings. He strives to give the viewer more than just a pretty picture.

"When I paint, I create a feeling that there is someone there, that the (Indian) camp is alive," he said.

He leaned close to his drawing board, his short-sleeve blue shirt covered by a red and navy striped chef's apron. With paint brush in hand, he applied color to the mountains on the canvas before him.

"I've been working on this for days try-

ing to cast the right light," he said, easing back for perspective. "I think I'm gettin' closer," he smiled, relieved that a weekend's worth of work was taking shape.

Using the softer, cooler colors of the spectrum, his paintings are detailed and delicate. One canvas depicts an Indian's buckskin teepee along a stream. The saplings are devoid of leaves as the early morning sky reflects the pastel pinks and blues of early fall. White flowers bloom along the shore; a path from the water to the teepee provides a clue that this camp is a well established one.

Though he graduated from college with a fine arts degree, he didn't begin life as an easel painter — and his dad advised him to take a steady job on the railroad.

Instead, "I majored in history and fine art, and minored in sports administration," Seymour said. This led him to a career in teaching industrial and graphic arts while coaching football at a Minnesota high school. He later became a carpenter and served as a general field supervisor in Rancho Penasquitos for eight years.

Today, though Seymour owns the Del Mar-based Raven Construction Company, he prefers to leave the firm's day-to-day business to a relative so he can devote all of his time to painting.

He plans to release his first limited edition print this year.

"Each time you finish one (painting) up, you think it's better than the last one. I'm still working on the one I think is my best," he said modestly.