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CONTACT: Julie Moser, Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator  
The North Carolina Arboretum  
jmoser@ncarboretum.org  
828-665-2492 (x236)

## **Family of Nationally Renowned Bronze Sculptor with Asheville Roots Donates a Major Work to The North Carolina Arboretum**

### ***“Oh Great Spirit” Installation Celebrates Artist Nell Banister Scruggs***

ASHEVILLE, NC – Bronze Sculptor Nell Banister Scruggs knew she would celebrate her past during her Lee-Edwards High School Reunion on May 30, but she had no idea her childhood home would celebrate her – until, that is, she attended a reception in her honor at The North Carolina Arboretum the next day.

Scruggs, who grew up in Asheville and has become a nationally renowned bronze sculptor, thought she was simply paying a visit to a favorite destination when she visited the Arboretum. Instead, she became the honorary guest of a special reception to unveil a bronze sculpture donated to the Arboretum by her family.

The 12-and-a-half-foot-tall piece, entitled “Oh Great Spirit,” was installed in the entrance plaza of the Arboretum’s Education Center. “Oh Great Spirit” celebrates the sensitive connections between people, plants, medicine and health that Native American Indians first discovered and honored.

Scruggs began sketching at an early age. For years her work focused on oils and pastels, with her subjects varying from seascapes to portraits. She spent many years in art classes, primarily studying with Hal Reed, who is recognized in “Who’s Who in American Art.” She learned anatomy, perspective, composition and color, before touching on her current passion, sculpture.

“I felt that my clay figures evolved, seemingly without effort. I knew I had found my medium in sculpting,” Scruggs says.

A student of well-known western sculptors Elie Hazak and Grant Speed, Scruggs also had the good fortune of studying with world-renowned Italian sculptor, Bruno Lucchesi.

“I try to show the feelings we all have and can relate to, whether the subject shows the grace of a ballerina, the power and wild energy of a horse, the tenderness of a mother toward her child, the toughness of a weary cowboy or the spirit of a native American Indian.”

Scrugg’s bronze sculptures have been recognized by the Golden State Sculptors Association and by Loveland’s Art in the Park: the two largest sculpture shows in the United States. Her sculptures have been or are currently exhibited in fine art galleries across the nation and her pieces are also in private collections across America.

***The mission of The North Carolina Arboretum is to cultivate connections between people and plants.***

*The North Carolina Arboretum is located next to the Blue Ridge Parkway entrance at Milepost 393. From I-26, take Exit 33 and follow Blue Ridge Parkway signs for two miles to the entrance ramp. Arboretum grounds are open 7 days a week. Property hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., November-March and 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., April-October. The Baker Exhibit Center, Education Center and Bonsai Exhibit Garden are open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. Parking Fees: \$6 per personal motor vehicle, \$25 commercial vans and \$45 tour buses. No parking fee applies for Arboretum Society members. All day Tuesday, parking is free for all visitors. For information call 828-665-2492 or visit [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org)*

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