

# *First President* **GLORIA SAAF BILOTTA**

Edited partially from an article by Nancy Sanderson of The Western Horseman

Gloria Bilotta was widely known for her horse portraits, action-filled western scenes, and sensitive works on the Indians of the American Southwest. Born in Illinois, Gloria moved to California as a child and has been a confirmed westerner ever since. Until that time, most of Gloria's horse drawings had been products of her imagination, but upon arriving in California, she soon met neighbors with horses and was able to study her favorite animal up close.

She won a scholarship to the Art Institute of Chicago while still in grammar school. After high school, she attended the Los Angeles County Art Institute, also on scholarship. Classes at Chouinard's followed, as well as individual studies with several well-known artists.

Gloria's work spanned the media from oils to pencil sketches, but her themes were mainly of the West. She researched the southwestern Indians, and her authentic paintings reflected her study. She traveled throughout the Southwest and talked with members of various Indian tribes, as well as reading nearly everything about their culture the library had to offer. She found ancient ruins especially fascinating, and used them for mystical backgrounds in some of her paintings. Some of her finest paintings are of the rodeo she loved—cowboys, horses, and cattle in competition. She wanted a painting that told a story: realistic but at the same time artistic; not a carbon copy, but an artist's view of the event.

"I sketched ideas as they came into my head," says Gloria. "I might see a cowboy in a particularly interesting pose, or a clown coming to the rescue just at the right moment. If I didn't have a sketch pad handy, I drew on just about anything—rodeo programs, envelopes, whatever. When I got home, I put those sketches into one of my notebooks. Then, if I got an idea for a painting, and I needed something special, I had the drawings to refresh my memory."

She was the first president of WAOW (then called the Women Artists of the American West.) "We spent about two years planning before the club became a reality," says Gloria.

Gloria Bilotta is a woman with a thousand more stories at her fingertips, stories she likes to share. Her sense of tradition and history, combined with her love of horses and all things western, inspired her work and made it grow. She spent her life filling the bucket of creativity, and helping others get their start.

*And the story continues...*



"The Heart-Line Pot" Mule Deer Stag  
28 x 36 pencil drawing by Gloria Saaf Bilotta for the 10th  
WAOW Anniversary Exhibit ( 1982 Santa Ana, CA)



"An Honest Try" 30 x 37 pencil drawing by Gloria Saaf Bilotta

