Rocky, the Final Chapter

Many of you will be aware of the “Rocky Horse Story” that I posted 2 years ago. This follow-up is the epilog to that tale.

I have struggled with how to sell a medium-sized rocking horse that has a real value of approximately $4300 - a price that was confirmed on a UK site advertising a similar horse. My thoughts about this took the following lines:

1. What is such a project worth based on over 400 hours of work (much more, actually if you include the work done by Douglas Davies prior to his death)?
2. Who on earth would pay such a high price for a child’s toy?
3. How do I maximize the final sale price in order to provide at least $3000 for the Nanaimo Hospital Foundation - based on the last wishes of Douglas?
4. Crafters rarely receive full value for their work since knock-offs from mass productions overseas tend to provide cheaper products.

The months (and now 2 years) since I completed Rocky have passed, and I was coming no closer to a resolution of how to proceed with the sale of Rocky. Although I received many kudos on the work to complete Rocky, I was not getting any closer to a suitable approach that would ensure the highest value for the sale and subsequent donation to the NHF. I had approached a number of people, mostly family and friends, who might have marketing and sales ideas. A cousin in the Fraser Valley made one interesting suggestion, and for some months, I had hopes of putting Rocky in an auction at the Thunderbird Show Park (equestrian centre) near Aldergrove. Apparently this event is even attended, on occasion, by Bill and Linda Gates! COVID-19 killed that hope!

Finally, about a week ago in early November, I received a text message from a very dear friend of mine whose wife had recently died. Two years ago when I completed Rocky, both David Shepherdson, and his partner, Brenda were extremely complimentary about the completed work and the peculiar events that had resulted in my undertaking to become a carver of such a large first project. They were also very supportive of my efforts to find a sale for Rocky and offered suggestions for a number of potential approaches that might solve my dilemma. In that recent communication,

my friend, David, said that he felt strongly that it was time that I should resolve the disposal of Rocky. To that end, he laid out his suggestion:

- my responsibility would be a requirement to donate Rocky to any charitable organization that could make use of Rocky.

Having done that…

- David would donate $4000 to the Nanaimo Hospital Foundation - in the name of Patricia Davies. (Patricia Davies was the wife of Douglas Davies, the originator of the Rocky project. She had benefited from the care provided through the funding of Nanaimo Hospital Foundation.)

Stunned and amazed by this very generous offer, I immediately discussed the potential destination of Rocky with several people, including my brother-in-law, Steve Hancock. We discussed possible charitable options in which we both had interest, and then the discussion led to an event that happened last Spring. Another friend from my University days, Barbara Smith, a member of the Silver Spur Riding Club in Coombs, had invited me to bring Rocky to Coombs' "February Family Fair".

At that event, Rocky was set up next to the Silver Spur display as I sat nearby carving small figures. During the several hours that I was there, a steady stream of families with young children stood in line to have a chance to ride on Rocky.

After I recounted this, Steve suggested that perhaps a situation like this would be the appropriate future for Rocky - being regularly available as an experience for young children at a local fair - either in Coombs, or perhaps in Nanaimo at Vancouver Island Exhibition. The light bulb went on!

I contacted both the Silver Spur Riding Club, and Vancouver Island Exhibition. Barbara pointed out that the Silver Spur Riding Club would have no storage available, but that if VIEX would accept Rocky, Silver Spur would look into the potential for borrowing or renting Rocky on occasion. An email to Michelle Solloway at VIEX resulted in a very quick and enthusiastic response to let me know that the question would be put to the Directors at a meeting the very next day. Two days later I received a positive agreement to accept Rocky. I contacted my very generous friend, David, and within minutes, a donation of $4000 had been made to Nanaimo Hospital Foundation in memory of Patricia Davies. A few days later I

delivered Rocky to the offices of VIEX in memory of David's wife, Brenda Prosken who was also a very dear friend of both my wife, Sandy, and I.

Thus, the tale of Rocky concludes happily! Nanaimo Hospital Foundation has a most generous donation, Douglas Davies' final wishes have been honoured, I have learned how to carve and accomplished a piece of art of which I am very proud, and Rocky has found a most appropriate home where he will hopefully entertain many children for years!

Many thanks to all who have made this possible, and especially to David, my wife Sandy, and those folks mentioned here.

Tony Dobson November 20, 2020.