

#101 Spring 2012

PREHISTORIC TIMES

ARTIST
CHARLES R.
KNIGHT
A CELEBRATION

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The PT Interview with Richard Milner, author of “Charles R. Knight: The Artist Who Saw Through Time.” By Mike Fredericks

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Richard Milner is an author, anthropologist, and historian of science, an Associate at the American Museum of Natural History, and contributing editor to Natural History magazine. His latest book is "Charles R. Knight: The Artist Who Saw Through Time" (Abrams, 2012), which follows his magnum opus "Darwin's Universe: Evolution from A to Z" (University of California Press, 2009.) Milner has also created a one-man musical, "Charles Darwin: Live & In Concert," and performed it all over the world--including on a cruise ship in the Galapagos Islands. www.darwinlive.com

Prehistoric Times : Your book is absolutely beautiful. I have always been a Charles R. Knight fan, because I love his artwork, but I didn't really know much about him – the man, before reading your book. And your book tells his story so well. How did you get interested in him?

Richard Milner: When I was a kid I used to go to the Bronx Zoo and the American Museum of Natural History with my childhood friend Stephen Jay Gould, and look at the Knight murals, which were so magical. We never guessed that the artist was “legally blind” at the time he painted some of his great murals. The first time I heard it was forty years later when I had dinner with Ray DeLuccia, a longtime museum artist and I asked him if he had known Knight. He had been a young artist at the museum when Knight was older. He recalled placing a rock in a diorama and saw Knight passing by; the glass wasn't on yet. And he said, “Charlie!” “Yes, Ray.” “Can you tell me if this rock is positioned in a good place?” With an embarrassed laugh, Knight replied, “I can't possibly see that from here.” He was only about eight feet away.

PT: That was the first time anyone in the museum knew?

RM: Everyone knew his eyesight was poor. But this was the first time this co-worker realized he was actually blind. Knight hid it so well; he just didn't make an issue of it. Except privately, we know, he agonized over it. And I found a heartbreaking poem that's in the book about his blindness:

From out of the darkness of a mother's womb
I came into the light
And now--the Stygian darkness of the tomb--
For I have lost my sight!

PT: I have a question about that. I know that a rock thrown by another kid struck him in the right eye, but it was only one eye. And when he was older, he got the cataracts. But why did he have such poor vision in the other eye when he was younger?

RM: He was born with poor vision. His eyes were weak and astigmatic, as were his father's. He wrote several autobiographies, and in one of them he says he was aware that for years he put a strain on the better eye. The kid had almost knocked his



eye out with the pebble when he was six, and he spent weeks lying in a neck brace in a dark room. When he got out he wore an eye patch for months. It was very painful and very sad. His sight was never the same and he was never the same. He remarked that for an artist that's about the worst thing that can happen to you. It's like Beethoven having to compose the symphonies when he was deaf – but he did it.

PT: Both men had such fantastic dedication and courage that you just have to hold them in fantastic awe and respect.

RM: The way Knight saw it, he really didn't have a choice. He was an artist—an animal artist—from the time he was a little boy. He couldn't do anything else. He didn't want to do anything else. So there was nothing to do but go on.

Knight's passion was to draw living animals – never from photographs. And he would go anywhere to draw a species that he hadn't drawn before. He'd travel to zoos, circuses, and other cities, and ended up drawing about 800 different species in his lifetime. But there was no market for them. Art galleries wouldn't feature images of exotic animals. There was no such thing as wildlife art. Galleries and dealers only wanted three kinds of animals—prey, like deer or foxes that were being hunted by humans, cattle that were grazing peacefully in a rustic field, and hunting dogs. And that was it.

PT: Tell us how he could paint the murals since he was almost blind?

RM: I wondered about that, and I found the answer in his writings. He made small oil sketches on boards that were maybe three or four feet wide, which he said was seven-eighths of the work of doing a mural. They were not rough sketches; they were exquisite miniatures of the mural. Every tree, every cloud in the sky --everything that was going to be on the mural was on that board. Then he would have assistants lay out a grid pattern and meticulously copy it large up on the wall, square for square. Only then, when it was finished, would he climb up on the scaffolding, maybe to fix an eye or a detail and sign his name. When he made the oil sketches, he had to

bring his eyes a few inches from the work. If you had seen him painting, his face would have been right down next to the board.

PT: Wow.

RM: We used to have a blind governor of New York here. When you'd see him on television signing a document, he'd have to put his face almost right down on top of the paper. That's the way Knight had to paint. And if his patron, the paleontologist and museum



president Henry Fairfield Osborn, wanted another element or revision in the scene, everything would have to be changed on the sketch, which would entail weeks of work. Once it was copied on the wall, it was too late for any changes.

PT: I love animals, too, of course, and I know that's the way Knight started out. But how did he go from painting living animals to specializing in prehistoric animals?

RM: At first, he had no special interest in painting prehistoric animals. Everyone associates Knight with the American Museum of Natural History. Some people have said to me, "He painted those backgrounds on the dioramas, didn't he?" No, he never painted a background on a diorama. He did paintings and he did murals. He wanted to learn about how animals were constructed from the inside out. So he hung out with the taxidermists there at the museum. Taxidermy was in a very primitive state, but they were developing it. And to do that, they were doing a lot of dissections. So before long, he was doing dissections and drawing the muscles of many different animals; they would receive carcasses from the city zoos. In the book, I have his sketches of the anatomy of a cat, seal and bear. He would be able to work on these first-hand. One day when he was in the taxidermy shop, somebody said that a man from the fossil department was around yesterday, and wanted to know if there was anyone who could draw a prehistoric animal. And they said, "Sure, Charlie can do that," So that's how he got into it. He'd never before thought of trying that.

PT: (Laughs.) He took it as a challenge.

RM: Yes. So he met with the paleontologist, Dr. Wortman, and did a watercolor restoration of a pig-like mammal called Elothorium, which was an Entelodon. That was a hippo-sized pig-like animal, which, to my editor's consternation, I captioned a "Prehistoric Porker." He did such a good job that the young, dynamic curator of paleontology who had just been hired, Henry Fairfield Osborn, wanted to meet him. Osborn was a very wealthy, upper-crust guy from Princeton who had taught zoology at Columbia, and was a man with a plan.

PT: I'll say.

RM: He had grandiose visions of what this museum would become under his leadership, and soon advanced to director and finally president. And his plan was to fill the museum with fabulous artworks of prehistoric scenes. When he met Knight, who was 20 years old, he said to himself, "This is the man who is going to do this." And later, he actually told Knight, "I've always dreamed of filling this museum with great works of art done by your masterly hand--under my direction, of course."

PT: He's usually described as pompous and imperious, isn't he?

RM: Yes, here you had these two strong-willed creative people, and Osborn had all the power at the museum and Knight had none. But Knight had a secret weapon: his talent. When Osborn pushed him too hard, he would threaten to quit. Now, he really had nowhere to run. It was the only natural history museum in town—or in the country—that wanted such murals. Yet, when he occasionally got fed up, Osborn would usually fold, because he knew that Knight was indispensable. The problem was, from Osborn's point of view, so did Knight! One time when Knight threatened to quit, Osborn wrote him, "You know that would be a calamity, both for yourself and for the museum."

Knight was so dedicated to his art there was really nothing else that interested him. He was very careless about money. He'd continue doing murals for the museum even though they never paid enough, and wind up in debt each time he finished one. Osborn was always crying poverty because, of course, the museum needed millions for the building of new wings and new halls. Whatever was left over was for the artist. And sometimes it wasn't a lot, and he'd have to go to his uncle, J.P. Morgan, the famous banker, and beg him. "Come on, J. P., give me some money for Knight's murals, it will be the best money you ever spent." And J. P. would come through. But there was a kind of concatenation of forces at work there. Knight's father worked for J. P. Morgan for years as his executive secretary, so J. P. was getting it from

two places. He was watching young Charlie grow up, and, constantly heard how talented he was from his father – and then later he's getting it from his nephew Henry Fairfield Osborn: "I need this guy for my museum, you've gotta give him some money." He really couldn't get out of it.

PT: We can also thank J. P. Morgan for enabling Knight to get into the museum on Sundays when it was closed to the public. Because Morgan was also Treasurer of the museum, that association made Knight a privileged character who was allowed to hang out in the taxidermy shop.

RM: Right. When he went to the Central Park Zoo with his father, they would go to the nearby museum, which actually started in Central Park. The first natural history collections were housed in a building that used to be a munitions dump during the Civil War – the Old Arsenal Building, which is still there today. Another heavy hitter who was contributing money to building the museum was Theodore Roosevelt's father. Young Teddy Roosevelt was also interested in natural history and animals, and of course he created the National Parks and became our "conservation president." Knight worked for Roosevelt's friends Henry Fairfield Osborn, and William T. Hornaday, who was the founding director of the Bronx Zoo, and shared their passion for animals. Before coming to head the zoo, Hornaday had been chief taxidermist at the Smithsonian Institution's museum.

So now Knight is starting to paint these prehistoric animals, and Osborn invites him to illustrate an article he's writing for the Century magazine in 1896 on the fossil mammals of the American West; that was Knight's first public exposure of his wonderfully lifelike restorations of prehistoric animals. They were all mammals, by the way – no dinosaurs yet. This was the Golden Age of American paleontology. When Knight was still a small boy, it was still the Wild West. In the 1870s, when he was a small child, the bison were being exterminated by the millions. By the time he was an adolescent the great herds were reduced to a few fragments.

PT: You have this incredible picture in your book of a mountain of buffalo skulls about to be ground into fertilizer.

RM: Yes, that's a famous photo. But they not only slaughtered buffalo for the trade in hides and bones, but the government sanctioned it to subdue or exterminate the American Indians. There was a very deliberate policy, it wasn't an accident. They had buffalo hunters relentlessly firing on herds, to make sure the Indians had nothing to eat during the harsh winters on the Great Plains. So they had to drop their weapons and come in to the forts and reservations because they were all starving.

When I was a child in the 1940s, playing cowboys and Indians on vacant lots in Brooklyn, it never occurred to us that the Hollywood Western movies we loved were glossing over the deliberate genocide of a people as official public policy. And then, ironically, the government had later reversed itself and now wanted to save the bison. That was largely due to the efforts of the Boone and Crockett Club, led by Teddy Roosevelt, William T. Hornaday, and Henry Fairfield Osborn. They called themselves "Sportsmen" --- they were really recreational hunters. They were Eastern wealthy city guys, who would head out to the remaining wilderness to play at being Davy Crockett

© Chas R Knight
© AMNH



or Daniel Boone – hence the Boone and Crockett club. One day they realized that they (and commercial hunters even more so) were killing all the animals and they had to stop. So they turned around and became conservationists. It was quite remarkable, really. And the Bronx Zoo was part of that effort; in fact, its official name today is the Wildlife Conservation Park. And the idea was that they were going to put in large ranges for elk and bison and pronghorn antelope, bears, and all the native American species. They'd have plenty of room to roam around and breed, and not be confined



© Chas R Knight © Smithsonian's National Zoo, Jessie Cohen

in small cramped cages with concrete floors, like those in the old Central Park Zoo.

We tell in the book about how Hornaday had wanted to get an exhibit of an American bison family for the Smithsonian. And he went out in 1896, as museum men did in those days, to shoot some. He rode the range on horseback for weeks across the Montana prairie and couldn't find any herds. Finally, he found some stragglers and shot them all. And brought back their skins and bones to his museum. But there was a little bison calf that won his heart. It followed him back to camp after he'd shot her parents, and he named her "Sandy" and took her back to Washington DC. She became a celebrity animal there, but didn't live long, and eventually joined her parents behind glass in the exhibit. However, during the time Sandy was alive, thousands of people came to see her. So Hornaday started a Department of Living Animals at the Smithsonian, which later became the National Zoo. That's how it started. With one little bison calf.

PT: Wow!

RM: I think these are wonderful stories that people should know. At about this time, Charles R. Knight became fascinated and haunted by the idea of extinction. That animal species could just be wiped off the Earth, which was a fairly new concept in Western culture. Before that, people had thought that species were ideas in the mind of God and could never be completely eliminated. And they started to see that indeed they could be completely eliminated, and that it was final and they were never coming back.

PT: So they used the bison on the postage stamp and the ten-dollar bill (known as the "Buffalo Bill") as an icon of the new conservation movement.

RM: Yes, and those were Knight's drawings of a bull bison from the National Zoo on the money and stamps. The amazing part to me, as a New Yorker, is that these guys at the Bronx Zoo began building up a little herd of bison. And when they had some young adults, they would load them into cattle cars and ship them out West. Theodore Roosevelt and some of his wealthy, influential allies had persuaded Congress to create federal bison ranges in Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Montana, where they would be protected. There are 600,000 bison in the American West today—most of them descendants of that tiny herd in the Bronx, New York City.

Which is a remarkable thing.

PT: Do you have more about the Bronx Zoo?

RM: Well, the other thing about the Bronx Zoo is that eventually Knight did some sculptures there.

PT: Boy, he really did. Those are wonderful sculptures.

RM: Yes, he sculpted the African elephant heads at the old Elephant

House. They're still there -- in fact they're the only elephants at the Elephant House these days, because the Bronx Zoo no longer wants to display elephants. The few elephants that are left are in a wooded area of the park, which you can only see from a tramway, and they're not exposed to the public up close. Which is very good for the elephants and very bad for the children. We had the opportunity when we were kids--and Knight had the same opportunity --to get really close to these animals and draw them, and look them in the eye. And feed them a

peanut. Now that's happening less and less. But we have to understand that elephants need a great deal of space to roam around and they need social company of other elephants, and it's very hard to justify keeping them in small concrete enclosures if you really love animals.

But of course Knight's numerous drawings of elephants and tigers in the zoo, which he loved so much, translated very well when he applied that knowledge to painting a saber-tooth cat or a woolly mammoth. He knew elephants and big cats backwards and forwards. So little by little he became immersed in the work and eventually did become a thoroughgoing paleoartist. Of course that term was not coined until Mark Hallett invented it many years later.

PT: You were saying that he wasn't a very good businessman. I find that so true of a lot of artists.

RM: Yes, he used to undercharge magazines for his writing and drawings, and one editor wrote him, "You are a very good painter and a very poor mathematician."

PT: What about his Field Museum payment? That was the one that was so sad...

RM: Yes, that was really a terrible story. After a lifetime of struggling and never getting paid properly, and wrangling endlessly with Osborn and the museum over money, they were at an impasse over a new Hall of Dinosaurs that would have been his crowning glory. Osborn wanted it. But when Osborn offered to pay for only a few sketches to show sponsors, Knight refused. "No, you've got to raise all the money first, and then you've got to let me design the entire Hall as a unity, as one integrated work of art."

Knight said he had a special idea about how to depict the dinosaurs in the large murals. Osborn assumed that he would make them realistic, like his early paintings. "In fact, make it easy on yourself -- you can copy from them," he said. Knight held his ground: "No, I will not copy from my early paintings. First of all, there are a lot of mistakes that were made over the past twenty years that we want to correct. As we've gotten more complete fossil skeletons, we've had to revise some of the reconstructions. And second, I think putting those up large on the wall in a very realistic way would be monstrous, awful, you'd hate it."

Knight believed that most people at that time were frightened of dinosaurs, and considered them "sinister" and hideous. Kids didn't yet go to sleep with Barney the fuzzy purple tyrannosaurus or have pictures of dinosaurs on their pajamas. Kids found them terrifying. The tradition in Western art and illustrations was of dragons! So Knight said he wanted to depict them in a sort of dreamlike, mysterious way. He wanted to use a lot of muted blues, and rose, and turquoise in his palette, and show a sort of

“dinosaurs in the mist.” Osborn didn’t like the idea but Knight said that’s the way I’m going to do them. While they were arguing about this proposed dinosaur hall – and it went on for several years – suddenly he gets a commission for \$140,000 to paint 28 big pictures for the Field Museum in Chicago. That was the largest fee ever offered to a painter of public murals up to that time.

PT: But the Field Museum people didn’t want the “mysterious” muted treatment of dinosaurs either, did they? At least, not at first

RM: The Field Museum had already searched for an artist in Europe, and the European artists said, “Why are you looking here? You’ve got the best dinosaur artist there in America: Charles R. Knight.” So he goes into this meeting at the Field Museum, and just when he thinks his financial problems are solved, he steps into his worst nightmare. They’re ready to shake hands and make a contract, when one of the trustees says, “Mr. Knight, how do you propose to paint these dinosaurs?” He tells them, and one man says, “We’d like you to brighten up your palette a bit, add a little color and brightness.” And Knight said, “I’ve had enough interference with people trying to collaborate on my work and art direction from museum people, and I’m not going to put up with it anymore.” And he turns on his heel and walks out of the meeting, and hops the first train back to New York.

When he comes back home, his wife and daughter are distraught. His daughter Lucy (Rhoda’s mother) was then in her late twenties, a good-looking young woman with a very forceful personality. She promptly took a train to Chicago, located some committee members at the Field Museum, and told them: “Gentlemen, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You have just turned away the Rembrandt of dinosaur painting.” Chastised, they replied, “Young lady, go back to New York and tell your father he can paint the dinosaur murals any way that he wants.”

So Knight got the huge commission and created 28 wonderful paintings there in four years, with time out to visit the Paleolithic caves of France for a few weeks.

But the story of his financial salvation ended badly. He gave the money to a conservative businessman he knew, who promised to invest it and make it grow. But in 1933, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was about to be inaugurated as president, Knight’s friend, who happened to be staunch Republican, panicked. He was convinced that Roosevelt would usher in a socialist regime and destroy the American economy. So he sold all Knight’s stocks and investments for pennies on the dollar.

Knight’s wife, Annie, became depressed and took to her bed. She begged Charles to talk with his friend and see if they could get any of the money back. But Charles said, “I can’t get involved in money disputes. I have to paint.”

PT: I told that story to my wife, and she said, “Honey, you’d be dead.”

RM: That story has never been published before. I got it directly from Knight’s granddaughter, Rhoda Knight Kalt, who is my partner in the book. In fact, Rhoda approached me to do the book and sold it to Abrams herself.

PT: Oh yes, she’s been a longtime friend of this magazine. She’s great.

RM: Well, she took over her mother’s business, which was promoting her grandfather’s art. Two generations of Knight women have seen to it that his legacy remains alive and appreciated by the world. While he was alive, his wife and his daughter Lucy would have to step in and agent him, try to negotiate decent fees, get publicity, act as intermediaries in his disputes with Osborn, and try to get money out of the museum.

There’s a wonderful letter in the book that Lucy wrote to Osborn at Christmas time in 1924, in which she says that the head of a “certain needy

family” is afflicted with a disease called “non-commercial genius.” “I’ve looked in the refrigerator of this famous artist and all there was is half a can of beans, some broken spaghetti, and a lemon.” Osborn wrote back that money would be forthcoming when the current sketches he had ordered were delivered – and calls the genius “a victim of Procrastination, otherwise known as The Thief of Time!” I liked that phrase so well I pasted it onto my computer.

PT: Wouldn’t Knight have been more comfortable if he joined the museum staff and took a regular salary, as Osborn wanted him to do?

RM: Osborn wanted him to collaborate with other museum artists. Knight said, “No, I do not collaborate with anybody. If I collaborate with anyone, then they’re no longer my own ideas, and I’d have to share credit for my paintings. As an artist, I’ve never done such a thing, and I never will. As far as joining the staff, why would you want me to do that?” He knew full well – the reason was to have full control of him. Knight said, “You want me to become a normal museum worker. I am not a museum worker. I am an independent artist, a freelance artist, and that is how I will remain.” And by saying that, Knight screwed himself out of pension and benefits, but he didn’t care. His creative independence was more important to him.

PT: I’d be interested to know where you got a lot of the paintings in the book?

RM: Many of them came from Rhoda’s archive. Every time she sold a painting over the last thirty years, she first had the artwork professionally photographed before she let them go to the buyer. And this created an archive that was fantastic. So she had about 1500 large format negatives in her safety deposit box in the bank. She brought them to her living room, and I held each one up to a lamp (my light box wasn’t working), and I picked out about 360 of them, which my publisher, Abrams, then scanned for me.



Also, when Rhoda’s grandmother was cleaning out her late husband’s studio, there were many cartons full of unsorted old papers and letters. She asked Rhoda to help her throw them out. Instead, Rhoda schlepped them down to the Manuscript Room at the Central Branch of the New York Public Library, where they found a permanent home in the archives. That’s one of the main places I worked, along with the AMNH, in going through Knight’s thousands of letters and papers. If Rhoda had not taken the trouble to rescue them from the trash years ago, there’s no way I could have written such a rich and interesting biography.

And then we got a lot of pictures from various museums. Rhoda has maintained good relations with the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, the Field Museum in Chicago, and the American Museum of Natural History in New York. And you’ll find that archivists of artworks tend to be very kind to descendants of the artist **Concludes on Pg 49**

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when it comes to their using them in books. Knight had made a deal with the American Museum that he and his descendants retained the right to use them that way. By the way, I worked for twelve years at the AMNH as a Senior Editor on *Natural History* magazine, so that's where many of the pictures came from. Then there were a few special pictures that have very interesting histories.

PT: What are some of those?

RM: One of them is the *Tyrannosaurus* that is standing alone with a splash of sunlight on his head. I got that from Sylvia Czerkas, who has that dinosaur museum in Blanding, Utah. That was in the Knight book "Dinosaurs, Mammoths, and Cavemen," which Sylvia did with Don Glut some years ago. I saw that picture in there and I flipped. Because I have a section in my book about the making of a restoration, and I found a handwritten draft by Charles Knight describing how he painted a *Tyrannosaurus*. The steps involved making a miniature mockup of the skeleton, using clay to flesh it out, then making a plaster cast of the clay sculpture. Then he would take the model outdoors in the sunlight to see how the shadows would fall at different times of day. He said that was a very simple technique for achieving a very effective illusion of realism—because the shadows would fall the same way with a miniature as with the full-sized animal.

So Sylvia's picture completes a series of pictures that I already had, starting with the skeleton. The middle step is shown by a photo of the bronze statue of that tyrannosaur, which is owned by Bill Stout, the well-known paleoartist who told me he was very strongly influenced by Charles Knight. Finally, I located Sylvia, and she kindly sent me the picture. When I asked her where the original is, she said nobody knows. It was hanging on a museum wall when somebody stole it years ago. We don't know where it is. If any of your readers knows where that painting is, maybe we can get it back. Meanwhile, that photo of Sylvia's is all that remains of it, and I was very glad to get it for the book. That layout would have been dead without it.

Then there's the bronze winged lion, which is perched on the end of an umbrella stand. People write to Rhoda and me all the time seeking authentication of so-called Knights. There are many phonies that turn up with his name signed to them – things that don't resemble either his signature, or his style, or his subject matter, but this one was signed in the bronze and it was certainly authentic. She and her friend had found it in a flea market in Connecticut for forty dollars.

One picture that was little known and previously unpublished is a mural of a family of saber-tooth cats with mastodons near a water hole in Pleistocene Florida. Knight painted it on a government contract during the Depression for a little post office in the village of Sebring, Florida. That post office was later converted into a police station, so drunks that were hauled in late at night found themselves staring at a gaping, growling saber-tooth behind the sergeant's desk as they were booked. Later, the little building was demolished, but some astute local citizens rescued the mural just in the nick of time; it is now on permanent display in the Sebring village library – and in my book.

Another unusual image was the painting of the French prehistorian-priest Abbé Henri Breuil. He had been the first to document the Paleolithic art in the caves of France and Spain. Anthropologist Ian Tattersall got a call from a prehistorian in France who said, "There's a picture on my wall of the Abbé Breuil, and it's signed by Charles R. Knight. Do you know anything about it? Did Knight actually meet the Abbé and paint his portrait from life? Or was it from a photograph? Did he paint any other prehistorians?" So Ian passed that along to me.

I told our French colleague that the picture was painted in 1927, when anthropologist Henry Field, nephew of Marshall Field, invited Knight and



© Chas R Knight courtesy Sylvia Czerkas

his family to visit the French caves. He had a wonderful time with the Abbé, who was a brilliant, dynamic prehistorian, dedicated to studying and preserving these Paleolithic animal paintings. In gratitude, Knight did a painting of him, and wrote a delightful account of his visit there, and even of the portrait painting session with the Abbé, whom he greatly liked and admired.

The painting was at the Institute of Human Paleontology in Paris, and I started to nag the French prehistorian to get a photograph taken of the painting, so I could have it for the book. They got a professional photographer to do it, which I paid for. It sets off my section on the cave tour very nicely, and gives me the opportunity to print Knight's descriptions of the Abbé and of the caves. And I asked the French prehistorian, "How did that picture happen to be hanging in your office?" He replied, "I think it's been on the wall of my office for a hundred years." I said, "Who had that office before you?" And he said, "Well, the Abbé Breuil! He still had the office when he died in 1961." I thought that was pretty good.

Another interesting acquisition was the Knight mural of the Blackfoot Indian creation myth, which I call the "Starry Knight." It shows the moon goddess being pursued by the sun god against a cosmic backdrop of Indian heroes in the constellations, and also depicts the Old Man and the Earth-Diver myth about the creation of the Earth. It's a wonderful mural that used to be near the entrance of the Hayden Planetarium, which adjoined the American Museum of Natural History.

The Planetarium was torn down and rebuilt a few years ago, and no one seemed to know what happened to that wonderful mural. The rumor at the Museum was that it was walled up or destroyed, and there was no good color photo of it. So I took an old black and white photo from a museum pamphlet, and asked the great paleoartist Viktor Deak to color and restore it, and that's the picture that appears in the book--a brilliant digital restoration of a "lost" mural. But I found out just before the book went to press that the original painting does indeed still exist. It was taken off the wall, rolled up and crated, and is in deep storage in the museum's Brooklyn warehouse, where it might remain for another hundred years – safe but lost, like the Ark of the Covenant in the last scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

PT: Thanks for telling how you got some of those rare images exclusively for *Prehistoric Times* and best of luck with your fine book.

RM: My pleasure, Michael.