



left, Terry, graphite, 22" x 30"
above, The Good Life, oil on canvas, 30" x 48"

It Takes One to Know One...

written by Brett Anningson

Arnold Mosley likes to get up close and personal with his subjects. And when he is painting cowboys, this means going on the cattle drive. He spends many hours in the saddle, working his way right alongside everyone else. "You cannot truly appreciate the cowboy's life and put that extra authenticity in your paintings," he explains, "until you have experienced, for yourself, the dust, rain, snow and freezing cold."

Of course, he comes by it naturally, having been born into the wilderness. It's true. In 1941, Arnold made his way kicking and screaming onto the family farm in a little Alberta prairie town called Beaverlodge. His parents and grandparents raised oats, barley and wheat near Hinton Trail, just south of the town. To supplement farm income, they also ran a trap line nearby along the



Arnold Mosley in front of his work



Patience Required, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"



Moving to Summer Range, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

Wapiti River. By the time he was six months old, Arnold was out there in the bitter cold checking the lines with his parents, bundled up in one of the dog sleds.

The oldest of four children – two boys, two girls – they all learned to work hard at an early age. "At the age of seven, I had to learn how to milk a cow," Arnold remembers, "and also how to feed the chickens and pigs, among other jobs. In the fall, we would pick blueberries for the homemade jam my grandmother made. Anybody who was brought up on a farm knows that chores were a necessity. Everyone had to do their part. I believe that the value of hard work makes for a better person."

This would become a life-long lesson for Arnold in a journey filled with hardship.

When It Crashes Down

In 1947, Arnold lost his mother. She was 28, he was seven. His father left to work in Grande Prairie, and the children went to live with their aunt and

uncle on a farm near Hythe, Alberta. After just a year, wanting the family to be together again, the four kids moved to Grande Prairie.

"Dad, being single, had a difficult time looking after us," says Arnold, "Because of this, Social Services threatened to take us away and move us into foster homes. One thing my mother requested before she passed away was that her children would never be separated. So, in 1950, my siblings and I were all back living with my grandparents in Hinton Trail."

Four years later, Arnold's grandfather passed away. So now it was just the kids helping grandmother on the farm. That early introduction to hard work was really paying off as the chores were heaped on. Then, in 1955, Arnold's father re-married, and the same year landed a job as an auto mechanic in Fairview, Alberta. Again, it was time for the kids to, sadly, say goodbye to their grandmother.

"In 1956, my father purchased a section of

land at Red Lake," Arnold recalls. "Northwest of Kamloops, BC. We were on the move again. This was a very remote place with a little shack to live in; no electricity, running water or indoor plumbing. My father brought in a contractor who set up a portable sawmill to log and mill the timber on the property. Trips to Kamloops for staples were few and far between. Venison and moose meat was our main staple. Our background had already prepared us for this kind of life style. You accept what's in front of you and make the best of it."

When he turned sixteen, Arnold went to work in the sawmill, alongside his father. This was a time when the logs were skidded to the landing with a team of horses. His job as a tailing edger didn't last long, as he was seriously hurt. His dad decided, then, it was time to get the kids an education, so they moved to Summerland, BC.

"It was rough for the first year or two as we now had to adjust to being around more people than we were accustomed to. Summerland seemed

like a big city to me at the time, especially when we were used to living in remote cabins in the middle of nowhere. Not long after, my father and stepmother purchased acreage in Prairie Valley outside of Summerland, which had on it various orchard trees. Besides going to school, my siblings and I became farmers again, in a way. During this time, I found myself devoting more time to my art. I set up a little studio in a shack in the backyard of the house. There, I began to read and learn as much as I could about colour theory. It seemed I always had my nose in an art book. Whether it was a 'how-to' book or biographies of well-known artists."

The Artist Within

"It seemed as though, no matter where I was, I always had a pencil and paper, sketching whatever interested me. While at my grandmother's farm, I acquired a set of oil paints and canvas. I was now ready to dive into the world of art and learn





previous spread, Last Crossing – Lawless Creek, oil on canvas, 30" x 48"
 above, Loop and Ready, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"



above, Breaking the Morning Chill, oil on canvas, 24" x 48"
 below, Double Thirst, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"



as much as I could. Because there was no school where we were, I tried the next best thing and that was schooling by correspondence. Well that didn't last long..."

Still, Arnold's interest continued to flourish. He was absorbed in the natural surroundings. He would draw the birds, animals and anything else that inspired him. He still has a coloured drawing that he did of a blue Jay when he was eight, and it shows some talent in the raw. Perhaps, that came from his grandmother. She could often be found at the kitchen table with pencil and paper in hand, drawing.

During high school, the plan was to become a commercial artist. But financial realities and falling in love meant seasonal work at a cannery and getting married to Sonia in 1964. Their first son was born the next year. In 1965, Arnold moved the family to Merritt, BC. where he got a job working at Craigmont Mine in the open pit. But fortune raised her ugly head and the mine went

on strike that fall, so Arnold and his family were forced to move into the cabin in the woods. Back to basics with no running water or electricity, just a woodstove and as much food as you could hunt.

Surrounded by wildlife and ranch scenes, Arnold was inspired to paint again. He showed some of his work at a little café nearby, and at a small gallery in Kamloops. "With the little money I made from trapping, help from the rancher and a few painting sales, I was able to support my family. In April 1966, the strike at the mine was over and we packed everything up, said our goodbyes and moved back to Merritt."

To better himself, Arnold took a course in mechanical drafting. After successfully completing the course, he found out the mine was looking for a geological draftsman. He applied and was hired. "I spent 17 years working at the mine," says Arnold, "and because things were more settled, I found time to paint. During this time, two more children were born; a daughter and another son.



ARNOLD MOSLEY
© 2010

In 1980, the mine ended operations and it was time to start looking for another job. That fall, the Ministry of Forests in Merritt were looking for a draftsman. I applied and got the job. During this time, I was starting to sell more art work. And so, in 1988, I gave notice to the Ministry of Forests that I was leaving. It was a difficult decision, but I thought that if I didn't go for it, how would I ever know if I could make it as an artist?"

Capturing the Beauty of the Wild

"My technique is very simple," Arnold explains. "When I'm doing a western piece, I make a preliminary drawing on paper to the full scale of the canvas. This way the cowboys, or whatever subject matter I am putting in, will be at the correct scale. This is critical. Once I am satisfied with the drawing, I flip the drawing over and apply graphite to it. I then lay the drawing on the canvas and trace it out."

Next comes painting in three stages: the lay-in, a middle stage where objects are blocked in more completely, and then a final stage where areas are more refined. Arnold believes in simplicity when it comes to creating art. He uses some Filbert, flat and round Sable brushes and a limited palette, which forces him to focus on the primaries. As he says, "it is amazing what you can do with red, yellow, blue and white." Then there is lighting. Two incandescent lights attached to the easel, as well as two banks of fluorescent lighting in the ceiling, and another light attached to the table near his palette. Natural light through windows is just never bright enough for him.

"My studio is strictly for work," Arnold says, "There is no radio or television, and no mirror for viewing my work in reverse. While I'm working I don't want any distractions, only total concentration."

Which is not to say it is stark. There are a number of paintings on the walls, including some of Arnold's own and pieces he has collected. There are also two saddles – one he had custom made and still uses, and another display piece that goes back to the 1920s.

"When I am not painting, I have always enjoyed and felt at home in the great outdoors," Arnold says. "Whether I'm hunting, fishing or camped out along a creek panning for gold with the family, it's all medicine for me. It helps me get away from the stresses of life. At the







ARNOLD MOSLEY
©2011



previous spread, Cattle Drive, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"
left, One Leg Up, graphite, 22" x 30"

above, When Things Have To Be Just Right, graphite, 22" x 30"

same time, I am absorbing everything around me. This is the time to take in nature, the trees, sky, mountains and water. As an artist, you're looking at colour perspective as it recedes in the distance. Looking at specific things and thinking, what colours would I use to achieve that? So when I'm out there doing the things I like to do, I'm also absorbing all those things that would make me a better artist."

To see more of Arnold's work, visit his website at www.arnoldmosley.com

The paintings of Arnold Mosley are represented by:

Hampton Gallery
Kamloops, BC
www.hamptongalleries.com
250.374.2400