

Owen Gromme, noted wildlife artist, dies ¹⁰⁻³⁰⁻⁹¹

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Owen J. Gromme, a former museum curator regarded by many as the dean of U.S. wildlife artists, will be remembered as someone who taught people to cherish and protect the world of wild creatures, a friend says.

Gromme, 95, who battled for environmental causes while capturing the nuances of nature in his art, died Tuesday at a retirement complex where he lived after suffering a stroke in 1989.

"I give each bird a way to get out of the picture," Gromme once said in describing how he could re-create the excitement of the wild in his realistic, yet varied style.

Gromme, winner of the Federal Duck Stamp competition in 1945 for his painting of shoveler ducks, spent 23 years compiling a volume of paintings of all the birds native to Wisconsin.

His "Birds of Wisconsin" was published in 1963. Another illustrated book, "The World of Owen Gromme," was published in 1983.

A native of Fond du Lac, Gromme found his first job at the age of 21 as a taxidermist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Wounded by a post-Armistice mine during Army service at the end of World War I, Gromme went to work after his return at the Milwaukee Public Museum.

Gromme was curator of birds and mammals when he retired from the museum in 1965 to devote full time to his painting. The same year, he was commissioned by Marshall & Ilsley Bank of Milwaukee to create 43 paintings for the bank's new downtown headquarters.

He released his first limited-edition print, "Wintering Quail," in 1970.

In 1976, the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau named him its first Master Wildlife Artist by a vote of his peers.

He was named artist of the year by

Ducks Unlimited in 1978, and the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1980 mounted a retrospective show of his work in a newly renovated exhibition area that was named the Owen J. Gromme Special Exhibits Hall.

Gromme had moved to the Oakwood Retirement Village with his wife, Anne, after taking ill Aug. 29, 1989, at his farmhouse in the Marquette County community of Briggsville. The family said at the time he had suffered a massive stroke resulting in partial paralysis of his body.

His death Tuesday was attributed to a combination of the stroke, heart trouble and old age. His wife had died Aug. 4 at the age of 87.

Survivors include a son, Roy Gromme, Lincolnshire, Ill.; a daughter, Anne Marie Gromme Ross, Minneapolis; and five grandchildren.

Services were scheduled at 2:30 p.m. Saturday at Hebron Chapel, Oakwood Village, in Madison.

The family suggested memorials go to the American Museum of Wildlife Art, Red Wing, Minn.; the Gromme Grant Fund, International Crane Foundation, Baraboo; or the Assisted Care Family Fund, Oakwood Foundation, Oakwood Village, Madison.

*Given Honorary
Life Membership in the
Wis. Society of Ornithologists
1950*