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Contact: Dianemarie (DM) Collins
623.825.9122 Email: DM@DMProductionsLLC.com

Ken Freeman, Scottsdale's Adopted Son, Receives Cowboy Spirit Award Joins Past Winners Including John Wayne, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Bruce Dern, Robert Fuller, Dale Evans & Ernest Borgnine in this Exclusive Club

"Kenneth M. Freeman, a nationally recognized artist, receives the Cowboy Spirit Award along with actor James Drury (The Virginian) during the Festival of the West on Saturday, March 20, 2010.

For artist [Kenneth M. Freeman](#), the cowboy hat and boots was not a gimmick or shtick. Neither was his Arizona attitude. Ken Freeman may have grown up in a traditional Jewish home in Chicago, Illinois but make no mistake ... he was a cowboy.

Keywords: art, festival of the west, museum, western art, cowboy, rodeo, fine art, Booth Museum, Smithsonian, Artist at Work, museum book, Scottsdale, Chicago, American Academy of Art

Recent Kenneth M. Freeman Awards of Excellence has received in 2010:

- The first **Lifetime Achievement Award** from Western Artists of America (hereafter known as the *Freeman Lifetime Achievement Award*)
- Western Heritage Award from Parada del Sol (the February 26, 2010 Rodeo Performance was also dedicated to Ken Freeman)
- Cowboy Spirit Award from the National Festival of the West
- Special Award from the World's Oldest Rodeo – Prescott, AZ

(Scottsdale, AZ) – What do John Wayne, Dale Evans, Gene Autry, Jane Russell, Roy Rogers and Ken Freeman have in common? They are all individuals who have been recognized by the National Festival of the West as men and women who have set the example of Western heroes with the integrity, strength of spirit, and moral character depicted by the American Cowboy. On Saturday, March 20, 2010, artist Kenneth M. Freeman, a Jewish Cowboy as he liked to refer to himself, will receive the **Cowboy Spirit Award** at the final [National Festival of the West](#) (presented to his curator, Bonnie Adams of the Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy).

Each year, the National Festival of the West presents the prestigious award to men and women who have contributed to the continuance of the western life-style and who have demonstrated the characteristics so admired in the American cowboy. Freeman is the only fulltime artist ever chosen to receive the Cowboy Spirit Award. Ken Freeman, who passed away May 2008, painted portraits of three other Cowboy Spirit Award recipients: John Smith and Robert Fuller (both known for *Laramie*) and John Wayne. Ken is honored posthumously on Saturday, March 20, 2010 at 2 p.m. at the festival.

The artwork he created specifically for the Festival of the West is now part of [Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy – 'Artist at Work'](#) museum book for the exhibition at the Booth Western Art Museum located in Cartersville, Georgia. [The Booth Western Art Museum](#), an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, houses the largest exhibit space for Western Art in the country and the upcoming Kenneth M. Freeman – 'Portrait of the West' exhibition opening in June 2010 continuing through October 2010 at the [Phippen Art Museum](#) in Prescott, AZ.

Mary Brown, founder of Festival of the West, considered Kenneth M. Freeman a close friend.

“We met the second year I began the festival and I connected with him almost instantly. Then when I saw his paintings and realized how good he was, I was truly grateful he wanted to be a part of the festival,” Brown remembered. “He was a fellow cowboy at heart, and his enthusiasm for the life was overwhelming in a very positive way. Without a doubt, he was a real sweetheart.”

Bonnie Adams, curator of the Legacy collection will accept the award for Freeman.

“Leaving his home in Chicago and moving to Scottsdale, Arizona was a turning point in Ken’s career,” Adams said recently. “The lure of the cowboy life captured his imagination as a young child. Once here he embraced the lifestyle of the West wholeheartedly and lived that dream – riding horseback, participating in cattle drives, becoming a Buffalo Soldier and attending Native American ceremonies. Ken would be so happy knowing he’s being remembered as a cowboy as well as an artist.”

Adams adds, “As he immersed himself in this rich cultural heritage, he documented the daily lives of the people, capturing faces and activities with his camera that would later be the models for his stunning paintings that embody the soul and spirit of the American West – cowboys and cowgirls, rodeo riders, Native American elders and children, grizzled mountain men and breathtaking Western landscapes. So completely did he identify with his new life, he even called himself a ‘Jewish Cowboy’.”

A Kiowa poet once remarked that the American West *is a place that has to be seen to be believed, and it may have to be believed in order to be seen.* Kenneth M. Freeman had the talent to draw, paint and sculpt the West as he had seen and experienced it. His unique combination of light and depth of color, together with rich cultural heritage, has left us with a body of work that connects with the soul and spirit of the American West.

About Kenneth M. Freeman

Works of Kenneth M. Freeman are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Museum, Library of Congress, American Art Academy, and Booth Museum as well as distinguished private collections. Accolades include winning competitions at the San Diego Museum of Art, the Hubbard Museum of Art, the Illinois State Fair, the *Salmagundi Show* in New York City, the Union League Club of Chicago, being chosen five times as artist for the Parada Del Sol Rodeo in Scottsdale, AZ and having a painting selected for the 1988 Prescott Centennial Rodeo. He was an illustrator for authors like Louis L’Amour. Ken was known affectionately as “*Rembrandt of the Rodeo*” by members of the press. First Lady Barbara Bush, impressed with Ken Freeman’s southwestern art, invited him to show at the Smithsonian Institute in conjunction with the *Native American Museum Extravaganza*. Ken also had a one man show in 2007 in Milan, Italy at Fondazione Metropolitan. www.KennethMFreeman.com

Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy Museum Exhibition Schedule:

These two collections are traveling retrospectives of the late Kenneth M. Freeman (1935 - 2008) who had a prolific career as both an illustrator and fine artist, primarily portraying the American West. *Artist at Work and Portraits of the West* presents a cross-section of Freeman's lifetime body of work and range of mediums.

- Artist at Work: The Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy

Museum exhibition of 50 works by Kenneth M. Freeman

[The Booth Western Art Museum](#), Cartersville, GA

January 2010 - May 2010

The Booth Museum is a Smithsonian affiliate museum

- Portraits of the West - The Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy

Premiere exhibition of 65 works by Kenneth M. Freeman

The Phippen Museum, Prescott, AZ

June 26 - October 24, 2010 - www.PhippenArtMuseum.org

About The Festival of the West

Celebrating the history of the American West, the Festival of the West is in its 20th year. The four-day festival is an extravaganza of music, Western film and TV stars and chuck wagon grub. There is a shopper's expo selling all things Western, from jewelry to saddles to furniture. Family friendly events including the Buffalo Soldier encampment, log home showcase, and Mountain Men Rendezvous take place each day. Michael Martin Murphy is concert, Saturday, March 20. It is never too late to be a cowboy! For full schedule and prices visit www.FestivaloftheWest.com

About The Cowboy Spirit Award

Every year the Cowboy Spirit Award is presented to recognize those men and women who have set the example of Western heroes with the integrity, strength of spirit, and moral character depicted by the American Cowboy. From its inception in 1992 when **Dale Evans**, "Queen of the West," and **Patsy Montana**, "America's No. 1 Cowboy Sweetheart," received their bronzes, this star-studded presentation ceremony was destined to become the high point of the National Festival of the West. Since that time, thousands of visitors have witnessed and become an integral part of the presentation ceremony. In 1993, **Rusty Richards**, long time member of the Sons of the Pioneers and song writer, received the award; in 1994, **Gene Autry**, the quintessential all-American cowboy, was honored; in 1995, **Roy Rogers**, "King of the Cowboys," received the bronze; in 1996, co-recipients **Ben Johnson**, World Champion Cowboy and Academy Award winner, and **Harry Carey, Jr.** received their awards; in 1997, **Denver Pyle** and **Herb Drinkwater** were brought to center stage; and in 1998, an unprecedented three bronze saddles were awarded to **Rex Allen**, the "Last of the Silver Screen Cowboys", **Buck Taylor**, star of *Gunsmoke*, and, the beautiful and multi-talented **Christina Paine**. In 1999 during a tribute to the Black Cowboys, author **Matt Braun** and singer **Herb Jeffries** received their awards. In 2000 **Lynn Anderson** and **Jane Russell** were given their awards in a special presentation featuring Ms. Dale Evans. In 2001 the Cowboy Heroes of Today were honored, with **Michael Martin Murphey** and **Bruce Boxleitner** receiving the award. With a special tribute to the Lawmen in 2002, the award was presented to **Clint Walker** and **Dennis Weaver**. In 2003, in a special tribute to the Balladeers, The National Festival of the West proudly added **Ernest Borgnine**, **Marty Robbins** and **Johnny Western** to the roster of recipients. In 2004 **Jack Palance**, **Robert Fuller** and the Westerns Channel received the award. In 2005 the recipients were **Mickey Rooney**, **Rick Schroder**, **Peter Brown** and **Johnny Crawford**. **Robert Horton** and **Morgan Woodward** received the award in 2006. In 2007, The National Festival of the West honored **John Smith**, **Ben Cooper** and **Shirley Jones** with the award. The *Rider's in the Sky* and **John Wayne** were the recipients for 2008. In 2009, The National Festival of the West honored **Hugh O'Brian**, **Bruce Dern** and **Rex Allen, Jr.**

MEDIA ALERT

Who:

Bonnie Adams, Curator of the Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy and actor James Drury (*The Virginian*)

What:

Cowboy Spirit Award at the Festival of the West

Where:

National Festival of the West held at West World, 7116 Becker Lane, Scottsdale, AZ 85260

When:

Saturday, March 20, 2010 at 2 PM

Details:

Cost for the Cowboy Spirit Award Ceremony is included in admission to Festival of the West. Adults, \$14; Seniors (60+), \$13; Children (12-5), \$4 and kids under 5 are free. Discounts for multi-day passes.

Why:

Kenneth M. Freeman (1935-2008) has the only two paintings in the American Legacy Collection from Arizona that are hanging in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Freeman began his career illustrating for Louis L'Amour. He was commissioned to paint the portrait of President Herbert Hoover and was invited by First Lady Barbara Bush to show at the Smithsonian Institutes in conjunction with the Native American Museum Extravaganza.

“Ken was an extraordinary artist,” says Bonnie Adams, curator of the collection. “He was able to capture the spirit of the person he was painting. He saw their passion and brought it to the canvas. Ken never painted negative energy. His work incorporated beauty, made no political statements and showed pride, honor and tradition.”

MEDIA RESOURCES:

HD Digital B-Roll footage is available of the Artist at Work exhibition at the Booth Museum. You can preview the video footage at <http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press.htm>

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES:

1. Booth Museum Installation of *Artist at Work* (TIF 5.5MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/boothinstallation.tif>
2. *Impending Decision* – Freeman’s most famous painting (JPG 3.8 MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/ImpendingDecision.jpg>
3. *Tough Draw* – the official image of the exhibition (JPG 2.7 MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/ToughDraw.jpg>

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