

## Henri Robideau The Real True Story

1946 - Born July 10, in Bristol, Connecticut, to a Franco-American Catholic family. Grow up in nearby Plainville, where my father is maintenance foreman at the G.E. plant. My mother is a bringer-upper of children and also works in clock factories and is renowned as the inventor of plastic curtains.

1955 - My father re-enlists in the U.S. Army and we move first to Hope Mills, North Carolina, then to San Diego, California. Over a two year period we're on the road criss-crossing the country by car. I'm nine years old and all agog with eyeballs glued to the window, watching like crazy the Giant American Scenery and it's mixed up big pandowdy full of people go flashing by our Hudson Hornet.

1959 - Move to rural Poway, California, in the coastal foothills of San Diego County, birthplace of the John Birch Society, population 650. Over the next five years the population swells to over 50,000 as the paradise of 1950's California is gleefully bulldozed into oblivion. In high school I do well academically but am too runty for sports. I think I'm going to be a scientist because I like playing with the gizmos in the science labs. I advance rapidly through the Boy Scouts by cheating on my merit badges.

1964 - Graduate from Poway High School and go to San Diego State College majoring in chemistry. Get a job working for the chemistry department and find out most of the research being done is for rat poison, deodorant sprays, nerve gas and artificial flavorings so decide to become an artist instead, a film maker perhaps, and proceed to flunk out of college.

1966 - Leave home and move to Northern California, living in Berkeley with a short stint in Santa Cruz. Work as a gas pump jockey, florist delivery boy and later as bookkeeper in an Oakland phonograph record store. Save up my money, buy a camera and decide to become a photographer. Attend Laney College in Oakland where I take a course in commercial photography. Get drafted but fight it and after three years of physicals get classified 4F (reject). I'm relieved because now I won't have to go to Canada.

1970 - Go to Canada anyway as the daily dose of violence in the good old USA has become too much for me. Cool my head out in Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the dullest cities in the world, living at sub-poverty level and feeling very lonely.

1972 - Things improve. I land a job as photo technician for the Vancouver Public Library Historical Photograph Section, which is where I first see the photographs of Mattie Gunterman. Spend two full years hacking my way through the Dominion Photo Company collection - a real education in Vancouver history. I also start hanging out with artist Jeannie Kamins, a bossy Jewish girl from Los Angeles with two kids and a basement large enough for my darkroom. We fall in love under the full moon in August. I move my darkroom in.

1976 - Jeannie gives birth to Frank at home and I catch him when he pops out. I'm a father. I'm also out of work as my job at the library is chopped. Work for a short while at the Vancouver City Archives. Then I'm back out on the street, working on my own, writing a book about the life of the famous camp cook and photographer of the Lardeau Gold Rush, Mattie Gunterman. Print up a show of her work that's travelled around Canada by the Photographers Gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

A couple of years later I receive a Canada Council Explorations grant to finish my research on Mattie, so go history digging in La Crosse, Wisconsin and around the Pacific Northwest. Start writing the Mattie book but it takes me four years to write the first chapter. More of my time devoted to my own photography, especially intrigued by Giant Things.

1980 - I swear off color photography on December 31, 1979 at 11:59 P.M., bucking the latest trend I commit myself to black and white for the 1980's. I teach for a year at the Emily Carr College of Art where I make a pile of money but don't have enough time to do my own art. Invent Giantthropology and when I finish teaching go to the Arctic on my first Giantthropological dig.

Finish writing the Mattie book - it takes me six months - but I finally learn how to write. Try for the next several years to get it published but publishers aren't interested. Go on with Giantthropology making numerous digs in Canada. Receive a Canada Council grant to finish the PanCanadian Giantthropological Survey. Travel for two months, logging 12,000 miles, from Vancouver to St. John's, Newfoundland and back, photographing and video taping the Giant Things of Canada.

Have numerous exhibitions of my work all across Canada.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

Henri Robideau, 1985



Donna McAlear  
Director/Curator

*Giant Spruce Person (actually made out of steel) is emblematic of the forest products town of Prince George, B.C. August 17, 1984. There's a time capsule welded inside "Mr. P.G.'s" shoulders.*  
Henri Robideau 1984

## Lecture and Reception – March 28, 8 p.m.

Henri Robideau will present a slide lecture and discuss his fascination with the Giant Things of Canada the evening of March 28 at 8 p.m. Following this presentation Henri and the Gallery staff invite everyone to join us for a social reception where you may meet the artist and enjoy refreshments.

GALLERY HOURS: Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sunday 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.  
Closed on Statutory Holidays

The Kamloops Public Art Gallery is a registered non-profit educational organization which operates for the benefit of the public. It is supported by the City of Kamloops, Cultural Services Branch of the Province of British Columbia, Canada Council, Community Arts Council of Kamloops, memberships, and corporate donors.