

## WINTER

This picture "Winter" was painted with a Central Oregon scene in mind. It is a picture of Timber Wolves when they ranged freely throughout Oregon and the Willamette Valley. It was created after an exhaustive study of wolves and by using slides which I had taken at different places in Oregon, in particular the upper Little Deschutes. I never copy a slide, but rather use several to remind me of the nature not present in my studio.

My first encounter with a wolf happened quite as a surprise. When about the age of five, my older brother and sister and I were playing in our lower field far from our house. It was at the edge of a small clearing containing piles of slash where my father was clearing to make a field which was the custom of most settlers in Oregon in the early 1900's. We were near a huge pine tree, when suddenly from the far side of the opening, came a very large wolf, trotting with huge strides directly toward us. We were all terrified. My older brother and sister were able to climb the tree and felt safe. In no way could I reach the branches. The memory of my failure to attain the safety and turning to face the wolf is still vivid in my memory. Never could a child be more completely frightened. I would surely be torn apart and devoured by this large wild beast.

On it came, silently and completely unafraid, looking right at me as it continued covering the ground so swiftly and with such ease. It came right up to me--looked right in my tear-filled eyes with wild, yet curious eyes, and then just as suddenly turned to the side and trotted off in another direction. For a moment I had been the center of it's attention. After it had left, we all three calmed down and we realized what a striking and wonderful creature it was. Wild, but beautiful, even intelligent in its appearance; something uncommon and never to be forgotten. I became a wolf fan at age five.

Later, after entering High school, I met a predator hunter named Harry Stokes. He was a wonderful man and invited me to go along on several of his hunts after Cougar and other predators. What an exciting situation for a teen-age youth. After my football was over for the winter, we spent many days in the most remote wilderness of Oregon. Several Mt. Lions were taken by Harry during this period and also nine timber wolves. No one can imagine the tracking and dog training experience during our all-night excursions in the snow and bitter cold.

Harry Stokes also schooled in in the ways of wolves at a time when most all people considered them long gone from the state. Perhaps they are now, but at least, in my imagination those near Six-inch tracks still appear in the snow and howl just could possibly occur again.

Since then, my study of wolves has been confined mostly to parks and zoos and wolves in captivity and has taken me to Texas, Colorado and Anchorage Alaska, besides Oregon. We did encounter a wild wolf while in Alaska.

I consider myself a naturalist, perhaps more than an artist. The animals in my picture are the center of interest and must be portrayed accurately as to form, color, habit and environment.

My hope is that this picture "Winter" will be viewed by many young men at the age when they can most appreciate these friendly, yet fierce creatures, which make their living by killing, because they were created to eat meat and must depend on their cunning as well as their strength and very long hunting strides to be able to survive.

*Harmon Oakland*