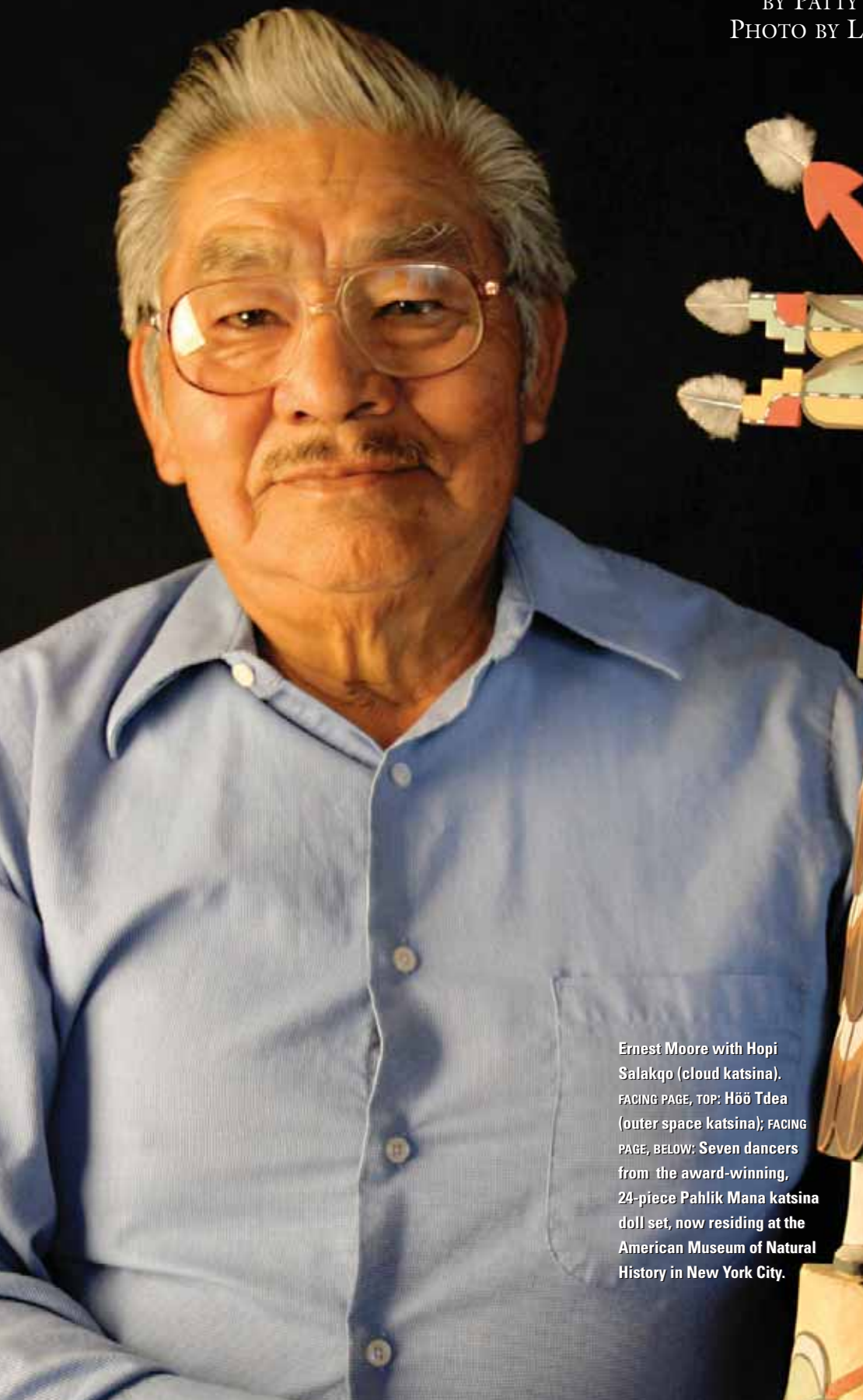


MASTER HOPI CARVER

ernest moore

BY PATTY TALAHONGVA (HOPI)
PHOTO BY LARRY PRICE (NAVAJO)



Ernest Moore with Hopi Salakqo (cloud katsina).
FACING PAGE, TOP: Höö Tdea (outer space katsina); FACING PAGE, BELOW: Seven dancers from the award-winning, 24-piece Pahlik Mana katsina doll set, now residing at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.



Last year, Ernest Moore Jr. (Hopi) entered the annual spring Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair & Market in Phoenix and captured the Best of Show award with a 24-piece Pahlík Mana katsina doll set. Remarkably, at 69 years of age, it was his first time entering the prestigious show (where he returns this March 6-7). Carving, in fact, is relatively new to this elder, who was born on the Hopi Reservation but spent more than 50 years living away from the Hopi land, culture and traditions. As he puts it, he's a "recovering ka-Hopi," referring to the fact that he did not live the life of a Hopi during his years away. The word Hopi means much more than "peaceful," as is often suggested. Hopi is a philosophy and a way of life.

When he was six, Moore moved away from his birth village of Munkapi, near Tuba City, when his father accepted a job in Keams Canyon on the other side of the Hopi reservation. When Moore was 11, his father moved the family to New Mexico before settling down in Poston, Arizona, on the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation. In the 1950s Moore enlisted in the U.S. Marines, and when his tour of duty ended he moved to Phoenix, where he spent several decades.

Carving katsina dolls wasn't part of his life. Pretty much nothing usually associated with Hopi arts was part of his life. He did, however, make his living as a graphic artist, and in 1988 he finally

decided to pick up a piece of cottonwood and see what he could do with this blank slate. He whittled out his first doll, and the desire to carve more took shape.

But buried in the man was a wish to one day return to his childhood roots and to renew his Hopi way of life. In 1998, he became sick with a thyroid problem. During his recovery, he came to some conclusions about his future, and with the help of his brother, Willie Moore, and his sister-in-law Sylvia, he moved back to Hopiland and took up carving full time. "My brother and sister-in-law have been very helpful in establishing my beginning of the rest of my life out here," he says.

From the start, he has favored the simple old-style carving that shows little or no movement. Often the arms and hands of the dolls are carved around the belly of the doll, giving the style the nickname "tummy huggers." He's also carved flat dolls—ones that are usually given to children—and dolls with elaborately carved wood bases. Each doll carries his clan signature: a water reed representing his mother's reed clan and flames for his father's fire clan. His art is marketed under his Hopi name of Quanhoyeoma, meaning soldier or guard.

"I want these things to make the buyers happy, glad and *loma katsi*," he explains. "In other words, to bring them happiness and prosperity. I also want them to appreciate that they possess something that I breathed a certain type of life into, a



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certain type of spirit. That's really hard for some people to understand, but that's my intentions." As he carves and the doll takes shape, he talks to it, saying, "Kwa kwai. Puh hapi" ("Thank you, now it's looking good"). Or "Pay loma hinte" ("Looks pretty good"). "As you carve you try to be in a thankful mood," he says.

Today, Moore has plenty to be thankful for. He calls this time the "rainbow" of his life—the rainbow that comes after the storm, a stormy life marked by alcoholism, divorce, illness, and finally recovery and revelation. His Best of Show award at the Heard 2003 fair led to the sale of the work for \$20,000, which allowed him to purchase a prefabricated house and a truck. "I am 90 percent content and happy here," he says. "I am one of those that does not believe that anything is 100 percent, so I will settle for 90 percent."

These days he carves, and he plants melons, beans (four varieties), sunflowers and corn. "The other day, I picked my blue corn," he says. "It was beautiful!" He lives with his three dogs and two cats, and in the morning he listens to KUYI Hopi Radio while he carves, then switches to talk shows—particularly Paul Harvey, whom he had the honor of meeting at the 2003 Heard fair. "I get to know what's going on in the nation," he explains. "I love talk shows!" But you can also catch him watching Martha Stewart's show, picking up gardening tips.

"I want this area where I live to be very calm and peaceful," he confides. "The storm will go away and the calm will set in and the rainbow will appear. In other words, what I'm trying to say is that I think I've had a very stormy life, and at this time, like I say, I'm a recovering ka-Hopi. My instinct now is to be a full Hopi; you see what I mean? So that really is my theme. I'm really beginning to feel that I have a purpose and that I'm a part of something important. I'm no longer out in the wilderness." 

Patty Talahongva (Hopi) of Phoenix has been a contributor to this magazine for many years, as well as to other magazines and major newspapers across the country. She is the president of the Native American Journalists Association and of White Spider Communications.

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