

Cover Artist

Linda Arnold

Atribute to 12 students and one teacher killed at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, last April, Linda Arnold's "Columbine Forever" was actually begun prior to the tragedy. "A friend and I had painted a watercolor of aspens and primroses, and we wanted another painting to go with it," Linda explains. "So I came up with a picture of aspens and columbines because they represent what Colorado is all about."

On the day of the Columbine incident, Linda was running an errand. "I was thinking what a beautiful and peaceful day it was, with no idea of what was to prevail," she comments. "I went to Best Buy, and a sales clerk asked me if I had children who went to Columbine High." Taken aback, Linda told the clerk, "No," and promptly drove home to learn more about what had happened. On her way, two ambulances passed her, and she saw a helicopter flying over the school. Once home, she turned on the TV and phoned friends whose children attended Columbine.

Two days after the shooting, in an effort to keep busy Linda returned to the painting she and her friend had started. Inspired by the courage of the teacher who had died, an idea came to her and she began to paint. Linda says, "I asked for God's help because I wasn't sure where I was going with the project." She worked on it for two weeks, not mentioning it to her family. "There were times I felt like a

were being collected, she simply wanted to leave her painting as an expression of her sympathy. Little did she know—or expect—what would happen.

"The guardian angels there asked me to make prints available to others," says Linda. "So many people wanted them that my husband and I decided to put up our own money to pay the printing cost."

Today, more than 700 prints have been sold, with 20 percent of the proceeds going toward Columbine High. Owned by teachers and others touched by the tragedy, Linda's prints hang in churches, clinics and homes across the United States, as well as such countries as Denmark, Chile and Germany. "Even the FBI is hanging it in its offices because its staff was deeply affected," says Linda, who has been painting watercolors for only four years. "The painting seems to bring comfort to those who see it, and it opens up dialogue."

In addition to the demand for "Columbine Forever," Linda has received requests for other paintings and has been asked to illustrate a book. She has also appeared on a Denver television station. This newfound recognition aside, the Columbine incident is much closer to Linda's heart than it was one year ago. In August, along with students from Columbine and Jonesboro, Arkansas, she will attend a conference on youth violence in Ontario, California, to which she was invited by the Hyundai Corporation, the event's sponsor. She has also gotten to know the families of the 12 students. "I've become involved in their lives, and they all have my print in their homes," she says. "They are my best friends, and I will be there for them."

Born in Denver, Linda is a fourth-generation Coloradan, having lived in Englewood and Idaho Springs as a child. At the age of four, she was diagnosed with a severe hearing loss and was enrolled in an extensive speech and hearing program to help her listen and speak. She comments, "My artistic ability helped me through hard times when I was struggling with my hearing loss and speech therapies." In 1971 she graduated from Clear Creek High School and attended Denver's Colorado Art School. She married her husband, Stuart, in 1975, and the two started Lakewood Bindery Company, which provides bindery work for Denver-area print shops. Prior to starting the business, Linda worked for Stearns-Roger Incorporated and SERI (Solar Energy Research Institute). She is currently the treasurer of the A.G. Bell Association and is on the board of directors for the Listen Foundation.

She and Stuart have two daughters—Alisa, 19, who attends Metro State College in Denver, and Kim, 17, a senior at Sheridan High School.

Linda enjoys painting children's portraits,

animals and watercolor projects, and she teaches watercolor classes to children and adults in her home studio. "I love art because people can relate to me through my work," she says. Her paintings are on display in private homes and the Gentry Gallery in the Denver West Shopping Center.

Initiated into Chapter AP, Idaho Springs, Colorado, in 1973, by her mother, Rose Thomas, Linda later dimitted to GR, Littleton, in 1978 and AM, Englewood, in 1981. Her sister, Lorraine Kawcak, belongs to AJ, Craig, Colorado. ☆



"Painting this picture was inspirational and heart-wrenching at the same time," comments Linda. Twelve small columbines represent the students who were killed; the large columbine on the right, the teacher. Raindrops on the flowers represent teardrops.

Unknowingly, Linda captured the dove shape typical of a columbine flower.

"When I took my original painting to have it framed, the person who was to do the work noticed the flower on the far left and told me it looked like a dove," says Linda. "She also informed me that 'columbine' is derived from the Latin 'columbina,' which means 'dove.' I knew then that God was there and helped me with the picture."

dog chasing my tail...and I almost ripped the painting up when I became frustrated with it...but when it was done, I liked what it had become—a representation of the true spirit of Columbine, which will rise again."

When Linda went to Chatfield High School, where items for Columbine students