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Booth Museum Exhibition Celebrates a Diversity of Heroes

The Longest Mile by Ernest Varner depicts contributions of African Americans in the West

Cartersville, Ga. – The Booth Western Art Museum is proud to announce that Acworth artist Ernest Varner's exhibition *The Longest Mile* is now on display in the Theatre Lobby Gallery. *The Longest Mile* highlights the long road that African Americans have taken from Buffalo Soldier to the highest military rank there is – Commander in Chief. The exhibition will be on display through March 14 at the Booth Museum located in Cartersville, GA.

Varner took ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) training while he was in college and joined the Army, during the Vietnam, when he graduated, as a Medical Service Corps Officer. Though he made a career in the military, he was always interested in art and studied it throughout the world from Washington, D. C. to Europe. Drawing on his military experience and love for art, Varner's exhibition at the Booth Museum highlights the military contributions of African Americans through the years.

Said Varner, "Unfortunately, not much is taught about the Buffalo Soldier and their many contributions to the U.S. Military. I felt it was important to pay tribute to the Buffalo Soldier and show just how far African Americans have come in military ranking. Sergeant Major was generally the highest rank a Buffalo Soldier could earn, and through the years African Americans have moved higher and higher. General Colin Powell held the highest U.S. government rank of all African Americans when he was appointed Secretary of State under the Bush Administration, until President Obama became Commander in Chief. We have made great strides in America through the years, not only in recognizing the contributions of African Americans, but also other ethnic minorities and women, which was my inspiration for *The Longest Mile*."

Varner's work celebrates a diversity of heroes to encourage Americans to celebrate their ethnic heritage and inspire the next generation of Americans regarding the journey ahead. **A Noble Past**, which is part of the Booth Museum's permanent collection, is one of the paintings in *The Longest Mile* exhibition. It depicts a Buffalo Soldier standing alongside an African tribesman; a piece which reflects a proud African heritage. Buffalo Soldiers are depicted in several other pieces within the exhibition, as are General Colin Powell and President Barack Obama.

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Lieutenant Colonel Varner served in the military for over twenty years and was awarded The Legion of Merit for his service. After retiring, Varner accepted an invitation from the Ambassador of Botswana to share his art in lectures and classes. He also participated in the 40th anniversary of the art in embassies program at The White House and State Department. Varner moved to Acworth in 1994 with his wife Jacqueline, and has been teaching art and creativity at Kennesaw State University for the past decade. He often has his work on display at Gallery 4463 located in downtown Acworth.

For more information on *The Longest Mile*, or information about other black artists in the Booth collection, call the Booth Museum at 770-387-1300 or visit www.boothmuseum.org.

About the Booth Western Art Museum

The Booth Western Art Museum, an Affiliate to the Smithsonian Institution, is a 120,000 square foot museum located in Cartersville, Georgia, where guests are invited to explore the American West through contemporary Western artwork. The Museum also houses a Presidential Gallery, Civil War art gallery, and Sagebrush Ranch, an interactive children's gallery. Open since August 2003, the Booth Museum is the only museum of its kind in the Southeast and is the second largest art museum in the state of Georgia. To learn more about the Booth Western Art Museum, visit www.boothmuseum.org.

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Photo Bylines:

Ernest Varner: Acworth Artist Ernest Varner currently has an exhibition on display at the Booth Western Art Museum which highlight the contributions of African Americans in the West.

A Noble Past: **A Noble Past**, which is part of the Booth Museum's permanent collection, is one of the paintings in *The Longest Mile* exhibition. It depicts a Buffalo Soldier standing alongside an African tribesman; a piece which reflects a proud African heritage.

Commander in Chief: Ernest Varner shows his piece **Commander-in-Chief**, and explains the long road that African Americans have taken from Buffalo Soldier to the highest military rank there is – Commander in Chief.