

## ***“RETURN OF THE EAGLE”***

Long ago in a time before this, the people of the Pacific Northwest coast were living in villages scattered along the coast line. Living in peace and harmony with nature, they respected the creatures of the land, the sea and the skies. They took from nature's bounty only as much as they needed to live.

The people recorded the stories and sagas of their ancestors in pictographs on stones, and figures carved in the posts of their long plank houses and on ceremonial masks. Because life was easy they devoted a lot of their time to perfecting the arts and the preservation of their culture. When the white man came with his sailing ships the people traded sea otter pelts for ironwood working tools.

Now they had the means to carve their elaborate traditional figures and crests into much larger pieces and soon free standing Totem Poles were erected in front of the Plank houses to herald the wealth and might of their chiefs.

With each year more ships appeared on the coast, trading ever more goods for even more sea otter pelts. This new affluence created an ever-quickening competition among the chiefs and the upper class of the indigenous people, straining to accumulate ever-greater wealth, only to give it all away during potlatch ceremonies. This to gain more fame and recognition and earn the right to more crests and heraldic symbols and eventually a Totem Pole. More and more carvers emerged and were trained by their masters to create bigger and taller Totems with more elaborate carvings and more ceremonial artifacts.

Eagle who had been living along the sea coast since time began was often seen perched high on a tall tree at the edge of the villages, observing the humans. The people who revered eagle felt honored by his presence. Often eagle would swoop down and sit right on a Totem Pole .

But eagle did not like the way the people were busily hunting sea otter just to trade its pelt with the white man for goods they did not need. Eagle tried to speak to the people to warn them of the direction they were headed but they could no longer hear him.

Eagle wanted to tell the people of the visions he had, visions of the disappearance of the sea otters, visions of epidemics and disease, of abandoned villages, of new rulers in the land, of the demise of the peoples culture, of the exploitation of mother nature; but no one could hear him! Sadly eagle took to the skies and was never seen perched atop a Totem Pole again. When the great Totems of the people later were taken down by white collectors, they fell victim to looters or crashed to the ground during the storms of time, eagle looked away in sadness. With a heavy heart eagle witnessed all of his visions coming true.

As time passed, little by little, the sea otters returned after the overhunting stoped . Later still the people began to move back to some of the villages to start a new life in keeping with the traditions of their ancestors. And when the first new Totem Poles were raised by the people in proud ceremonies, eagle circling overhead was overjoyed and swooped down to alight on the top figure of the Pole to hear the people cheering.

Thus the name of this Sculpture shall be : “RETURN OF THE EAGLE” to commemorate the time when the people of the pacific coast learned once again to hear the voice of the eagle .

The Timberman  
Walter Keller