



Johnson and wood carvings, circa 1939.

plained that he wasn't trying to be derogatory, in fact he rather liked Appaloosas and had ever since he first saw them in the Northwest while working at a CCC camp as a mapmaker and now owned a couple. After that letter, Johnson and Phippen corresponded a few times and in 1958, Phippen paid the Johnsons a visit at their ranch near Grand Junction.

It wasn't long before they became good friends, spending many hours together talking about ranching, Appaloosas and art. "At that time, George was really coming into his own as a western artist. He was selling paintings primarily through galleries and he also had a contract with Brown & Bigelow, a calendar



George Phippen told Johnson, "you've got talent, go to work." Years later he pulled out the clay Phippen had given him and followed his advice.

company in St. Paul, Minnesota. His work was very popular and appeared on a number of their calendars during the '50s and '60s. He had a strong interest in Appaloosas and used them in a lot of his work. He said at one point that he wanted to rope; I had an arena and we made a deal where he bought some calves and I fed them. He had moved from Prescott, Arizona, to Grand Junction by then and we would rope whenever we could. We went on spring and fall roundups together and that is where the inspiration came from for the painting 'Short Cut' where he used Patchy Jr. and myself as models."

At one point, Phippen had seen some of Johnson's wood carvings and they had discussed the possibility of Johnson taking lessons from Phippen. But they never got around to formal instruction. "I made several trips with George while he was delivering some of his work to various galleries, and I guess I got a million dollars worth of art lessons just hearing him talk about how he did things," Johnson said.

When the Appaloosa Horse Club decided it needed artwork of an ideal Appaloosa to use in various promotions, Johnson asked Phippen if he would be interested and, of course, he was. Phippen, who was known for doing extensive research for his projects, obtained a book titled *Judging the Horse* by Wall and

Jennings which listed the physical measurements of outstanding horses such as the Thoroughbreds Man O War, Crusader, Gallant Fox and Equipose. He took their measurements, added them together, then divided by four and that gave him the scale he needed as a starting point. He added typical Appaloosa characteristics, eye set, sparse mane and tail, and came up with several versions. One of those pen and ink drawings was adopted



Phippen produced many sketches and paintings using Johnson and Patchy Jr. as the central character.

as representative of the breed in 1960. It served in that official capacity for 25 years and, to many people, still represents their ideal Appaloosa better than any other. The original drawing is currently the property of the Appaloosa Horse Club and is on display in the museum at Club headquarters. In 1961, Phippen returned to Prescott where he worked until his death in 1966.

In 1968, Johnson said, "two sons-



Johnson recently completed this sculpture of 1981 World Champion PRCA bareback rider J.C. Trujillo which he dedicated to George and Ernie Phippen, both victims of cancer. Proceeds from the sale of this limited edition will be donated to the Oral Roberts University Cancer Research Center.