Famed Sculptor, Lincoln Borglum, Farmed in Area

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The name Borglum is hardly a household word to most Americans, but Mt. Rushmore with its famous patriotic monument is certainly known to most. It was the Borglums, father John Gutzon de la Mothe and his son James Lincoln de la Mothe, who were responsible for conceiving and executing the giant heads of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt comprising the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, South Dakota. The initial idea was brought to Gutzon by South Dakota state historian Doane Robinson. The Black Hills site on the 5,725 foot mountain named in 1885 after New York lawyer Edward E. Rushmore was dedicated on August 10, 1927 by President Calvin Coolidge. Completion of the work was not until 1941 when World War II suspended any further refinements. While the completion took 14 years all told due to financial limitations, the actual carving took 6½ years.

Gutzon Borglum, who was born in Idaho in March 1867, was the son of Danish immigrant parents. His father was a physician and rancher. Gutzon studied art in California and while there executed the large painting Stagecoach, now in the Menger Hotel, San Antonio. In his early 20s he studied in Paris for two years and then a year in Spain. He was awarded M.A. and L.L.D. degrees. After returning to the U.S, he painted and illustrating but began to concentrate on sculpting. Although he studied with and was influenced by the famed French sculptor Rodin, some say that Gutzon went into sculpture to compete with his talented younger brother Solon Hannibal, a sculptor of western art. Gutzon completed a head of Lincoln (1908) now at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington among other commemorative work to follow. He moved to Texas in 1925 to work on a monument to trail drivers. Its casting was delayed until 1940 and then was only a fourth the size of its original conception. A model of Christ intended for the waterfront was later modified by his son Lincoln and erected on a South Dakota mountaintop. Lincoln, born April 9, 1912, was Borglum's son by his second wife, Mary Montgomery, a PhD. In 1908 after a nine year marriage, Gutzon had divorced his first wife, Elizabeth (Lisa) Putnam, who was twenty two years his senior.

Gutzon had started to execute the Confederate Memorial on Stone Mountain, Georgia in 1916, a work interrupted by World War I but resumed in 1924. The smooth granite face would feature a frieze of Generals Lee and Jackson, Jefferson Davis and Confederate troops. Characterized by a temper, perfectionism, tremendous vitality, and being fiercely opinionated, Gutzon fell out with the work's sponsors, the Confederate Monumental Association, and destroyed his models. Augustus Lukeman was to take up the reins and complete this project.

At Rushmore and now 60 years of age, Gutzon sculpted five foot models of the presidents' heads. These had to be transformed into 60 foot heads 500' above the valley floor. If each of the figures was carved full-size, its length would be 465'. After surgery in Chi-
cago, Gutzon was to die of an embolism on 3/6/41. Seven months later under the direction of Lincoln and with a final cost of just under $1 million and the removal of 500,000 tons of rock the work ended on 10/31/41. World War II loomed and the last of the $50,000 appropriated had been spent.

Lincoln had joined his father in 1932 and worked for several years without pay. In time he was to become his father's right hand man. Between 1934 and 1938 he was in charge of measurements and enlarging the models as "pointer's" work superintendent; in 1938 he was made superintendent of the memorial. Initially resented by some as possibly being the privileged son of the boss, Lincoln with his quiet demeanor, friendly personality, and strong work ethic soon won everyone over. Four hundred workmen carved the smooth-grained granite. A one point Lincoln hired back workmen his father had fired in a pique of anger. In recognition of his significant contributions to the monument, the government named its visitors center museum, the Lincoln Borglum Museum.

Lincoln Borglum was in his late 50s when, in 1970, he came to the Valley from Hermosa, South Dakota and purchased a citrus grove at 8/10 Mile South Bass Blvd. in the Adams Gardens Subdivision. His former residence still stands on the southeast corner of the intersection of Hoss Lane and Bass Blvd. While operating the grove he continued to create, but much more modest works. He and his wife Mary Ann Bellsworth Borglum enjoyed the Valley and its people. They hosted numerous parties. Mrs. Borglum, born February 16, 1917 in South Dakota, was to die in August 1985. Though residing here, he was to die on 1/27/86 after an illness in Corpus Christi, where his daughter Robin Carter and son Robert lived. This Episcopalian and Freemason also left behind sons Paul, Dick, and James together with his younger sister, Mrs. David Vhary of Reno. Both Borglums are interred in City Cemetery No.1, San Antonio. At the time of his death Lincoln was working on a bust of Lloyd P. Nolen, Confederate Air Force co-founder. Harlingen's Bob Scoggins was a pallbearer at both funerals. He and his wife Marybelle fondly remember the Borglums every time they view their small bronze statue of Lincoln's "The Branding" portraying three cowboys branding a calf and the miniature of the Mt. Rushmore monument Lincoln made for them. Additional works of Lincoln are to be founding the Simon Michael Art Gallery, Rockport, TX. The painter Michael was a lifelong fiend of Lincoln.
