

Students share love of Eskimo art

By HELEN ZUCKER

The popularity of Eskimo sculpture is understandable.

"As Library Director, Dick Johnston, said to a crowd of kids, teachers and parents at the presentation of Vaughan School's gift of a soapstone fisherman to Bloomfield Township Public Library. "This is touchable, lovable sculpture."

The 12 by 5 inch fisherman, named "Audiak," after Inuit artist, the Eskimo artist who carved him, is so touchable that Charles Myers, owner of the Indian and Inuit Gallery in Birmingham, where the sculpture was bought, spent the summer building a special base that resembles an ice floe.

"Audiak" was securely bolted to the base, and the base, in turn, bolted to a wide bookshelf.

Myers didn't know what he was letting himself in for when he became involved with the project last June. He tried three different bases before coming up with the one currently on display.

"The students at the final Vaughan School Fair, impressed by art they had seen through the 'Picture Lady Program,' decided to use the \$325 they made to buy a piece of art for the library."

Sandy Hancock, the "Eskimo Picture Lady" at Vaughan last year, shopped around. Ms. Hancock decided, with much help, advice, and opinions from students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades, that it was an Eskimo sculpture they all wanted most of all.

A STROKE OF LUCK followed.

Ms. Hancock bumped into Barbara Klein, youth room librarian, at the Indian and Inuit Gallery. Ms. Klein, a knowledgeable lady on the subject of art, helped choose the most "touchable sculpture" the kids could afford.

Myers was generous enough to give a discount and the students, in a further burst of generosity, donated their \$25 to the book purchase fund at the library. Myers was then handed the job of dreaming up an immovable base.

All this hard work, lasting over six months, culminated in a rather emotional ceremony at the November presentation. The kids got to see their old friends — Vaughan School closed in June 1979. They talked about the differences at Booth, Way, Hickory Grove, Kingswood, Roper, and Fox Hills Schools where many of the ex-Vaughnians are now enrolled.

It was fascinating to hear nine-year-olds tossing around theories about "open classrooms" versus their "old-fashioned classrooms," as well as theories on "why Eskimo art is good stuff."

Several youngsters agreed that "soapstone is nice to hold," thus backing up Johnston's statement, and unconsciously hitting on the fact that soapstone carvings are often used as bedwarmers by Eskimos.

ALL THE STUDENTS looked very pleased with their purchase, and took turns going up to stroke "Audiak."

Amy Kiese, fourth-grader and spokesperson for the student council, formerly presented "Audiak" to the community. Clutching her skirt, Amy said loudly and firmly, "My school would like to present this sculpture to the

Bloomfield Township Library."

Pam Kiese, Amy's mother, stood proudly behind her daughter ready to help if needed. But Amy carried the day on her own.

Johnston and Caroline Nagenast, head of the youth room, accepted the piece, thanked the people involved, and formalities gave way to a lively party.

Mary and Gabriel Desharnais, parents of Armand and Denis, two ex-Vaughnians, said they wished they had bought a lot of Eskimo sculpture "back in the days when we lived right where it's made."

The Desharnais moved to Birmingham from Canada several years ago, and they talked about the "rise" of

Eskimo art. The carvings Eskimos do for practical purposes or to while away the time during bad fishing weather was "discovered" by American and Canadian art dealers during the '50s.

The Canadian Government formed cooperatives for the distribution of Eskimo art during the '60s, and good pieces are much harder to come by now. The Desharnais were familiar with the small village north of Port Harrison near Quebec where Inuit Audiak and other Eskimo artists live and work.

"Audiak" is now permanently installed at Bloomfield Township Library, 1099 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

Concert season opens chorus joins orchestra

In their first concert of the season, the Utica Civic Orchestra will perform at 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 7, in the new auditorium at Stevenson High School, in Farmington.

The present season marks the 10th year of the orchestra's existence and the fourth year under the directorship of conductor John Miller.

The guest chorus for the event will be the Rheingold Male Chorus, from Detroit. Miller is also the music director of this group.

The chorus will perform numbers from its own repertoire, as well as pieces with the accompaniment of the orchestra. They plan to join forces in a

performance of Edward Grieg's dramatic ballad, "Land Lighting."

The orchestra will present a variety of musical selections appropriate to the Christmas season. Some of the works that will be had include von Suppe's "Poet and Peasant Overture," "Nutcracker Suite" and Leroy Anderson's "A Christmas Festival."

Tickets for the concert can be purchased at the box office on the performance night or by contacting any board or orchestra member.

For more information call 739-6976 or 652-0205 weekdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

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