

Hunter dies after surgery

By F. Keim

One of Alaska's finest ivory carvers was recently buried here in Scammon Bay. For those who are familiar with his work, Homer Hunter's passing away represents a great loss to the Alaskan community of artists.

Homer was born 54 years ago in Hopper Bay, a Yupik Eskimo village located on the Bering Sea. It was there that he first started carving at the age of 12.

When he married Rose Ulak in 1952 he moved over to her home village of Scammon Bay which lies just across the Askinuk Mountains from Hoo-

per Bay. In the course of their life together there they raised 11 children. During this period Homer also served as Mayor of Scammon Bay and as an active member of its school board.

Through the years Homer became one of the most talented ivory carving artists in Alaska and probably in the world. The National Gallery of Art and Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. have recognized him as such by featuring his work in certain of their publications.

Homer's specialties were ivory jewelry and figurines either carved in high relief

or etched with designs representing animal species he used to hunt and fish. His bracelets, necklaces, rings and earrings are among the most exquisite-by delicate pieces that have been produced by Alaskan ivory carvers.

He also worked other materials, however, fashioning harpoon heads and uluaqs out of scrap metals for local use by the people of Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay.

In recent years, since he could no longer hunt and fish because of complications resulting from a bout of childhood rheumatic fever, he was able to concentrate on both the refinement of his form and the invention of new tricks to make art even more aesthetically pleasing to his customers. He also became extremely productive.

Homer wanted to live to be 99 years old, he said, so he could go on carving. In an attempt to prolong his life, he travelled down to San Francisco for open heart surgery. He didn't make it through the operation.

