

Artist to Depict Development of Eskimo from Stone Age

FAIRBANKS—M. C. "Rusty" Heurlin, one of Alaska's best-known artists, has begun work on a long-planned series of paintings depicting the development of the Eskimo people from the Stone Age to the present.

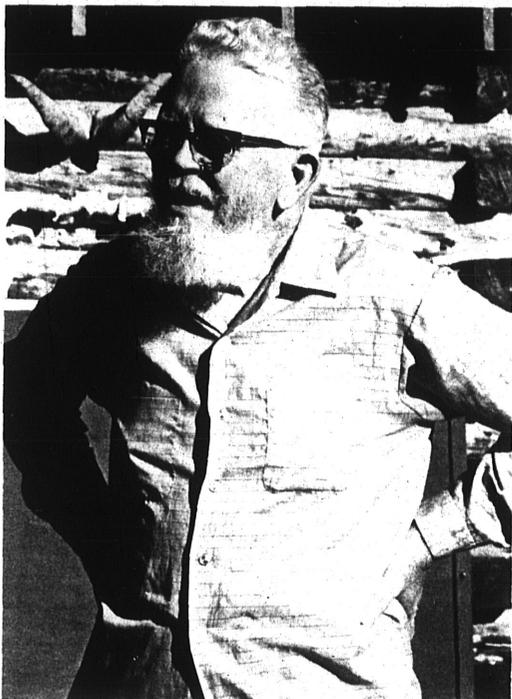
Heurlin, who works in a log studio near his Ester home, estimates it will take him more than three years to complete the ambitious work — "Our Heritage" — to consist of 19 paintings, each eight feet long and approximately four feet high.

Dr. William R. Wood, president of the University of Alaska, and a group of university regents, former regents and honorary degree recipients, all long-time friends of Heurlin, have raised funds from private sources to commission the work.

When completed, the paintings will be on permanent exhibit at the university, hopefully in a new museum building, said Wood.

"I thought about this series all the time I was in the Arctic — something for the Eskimo," said the artist, who as a captain in the Alaska Territorial Guard in World War II helped Col. M. R. "Muktuk" Marston recruit Eskimos in the northern and northwestern coastal areas of Alaska.

"From Nome we took guns up along the coast and saw they got to all the villages. And uniforms too. The Eskimos were wonderful people to work with."



"RUSTY" HEURLIN

The planned series of paintings was conceived while he was with the Eskimos and is based on his day-to-day observations, said Heurlin. "I thought about

the early weapons and the difficult task of getting whales with them — and the evolution of these weapons and clothing — and then the great change that

came with the (nonnative) whalers. I made the first sketches in 1946."

At Wood's suggestion, Heurlin decided to bring the Eskimo story up through the settlement of the Alaska native land claims last year.

"It was a great achievement," said the artist of the settlement. "The Eskimo is doing a good job of taking care of his own business."

For more than 40 years Heurlin, through his painting, has been chronicling life in the Arctic and sub-Arctic and winning acclaim for his work.

In 1971 the University of Alaska conferred upon him an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree, saluting him as a "remarkable contributor to the richness of Alaska's cultural life."

In the mid-1960's, he painted a series of 15 canvases on "The Big Stampede," the rush for gold, for the Alaska Purchase Centennial Exposition of 1967. These can still be seen at Alaska-land in Fairbanks.

Then he undertook the "Great Land" series, the first painting of which is a striking nine by five-and-a-half-foot canvas showing a white-robed Vitus Bering gazing at Mt. St. Elias and the Alaska mainland from the deck of the Alaska discovery ship St. Peter in 1741.

Now he is at work in his Ester studio on "Our Heritage" and is looking back nostalgically

on the days spent with the Eskimos, when they were still hunting whales under sail.

One of his fondest memories is of Taakpak, "the greatest Eskimo whaler of them all who got 119 whales in his lifetime, 3 of them when he was 83." In the fall of 1946, Taakpak, "gave all of his possessions away, crawled into an igloo and died."

Heurlin has long felt there should be a statue of him, and has persuaded sculptor Alan Johnson of Bambridge Island, Washington to undertake the work.

"I hope to have it erected on Eskimo soil, perhaps on a Barrow cliff overlooking the ocean," said Heurlin. "The Eskimos have never had a statue and they should have one. They've had their great people."

Alaska Leads in Self-Help

Alaska leads the nation in training of persons in Emergency Medical Self-Help, it was announced by Commissioner Frederick McGinnis of the Department of Health and Social Services.

Citing a recent Federal Survey, Commissioner McGinnis said Alaska's training program, which began in 1963 under the auspices of the U. S. Public Health Service, has reached 79,000 persons.

The training includes such first aid techniques as proper treatment for injuries, shock, and the effects of the cold, as well as artificial respiration and basic instruction for emergency childbirth, to name a few.

Special kits and films for this training have been made available to volunteer instructors in communities throughout the State through the Department's Office of Comprehensive Health Planning in an effort to reach as many persons as possible, the Commissioner said.

"We have given Medical Self-Help training increasing emphasis in recent months, and we plan to continue our support for this vital program indefinitely," he added.

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