

# Turtle Painting To Be Auctioned During Lilac Festival

## 'Lilac Dreams' Work To Be Sold at Island Dog and Pony Show

By Leslie Rott

It is always a wonder how a small idea can turn into something so much bigger. Who would have guessed that two 4th grade boys from Churubusco, Indiana, would have created a painting that will be auctioned off at this year's Lilac Festival? Even Devin Bultemeier and Broden Birk are awestruck by how far their project has gone.

Churubusco, northwest of Fort Wayne, is known as "Turtletown, U.S.A.," owing to a rare turtle sighting in the 1940s. According to Talent Development teacher Julie Leedy, while a man was standing on top of his barn, he noticed a giant turtle, about the size of a coffee table, in Fulk Lake. Hysteria set in, the lake was drained, but the giant turtle, named "Oscar," was never found. From then on, the citizens of Churubusco

For the masterpiece, the boys put paint on the canvas and let the turtles walk around and create the design.

have held their annual "Turtle Days" in mid-June, around the same time as Mackinac Island's Lilac Festival.

It's not surprising that Masters Bultemeier and Birk have a love of turtles, living in "Turtletown, U.S.A." The boys say their love of turtles began years ago, when they read several books on the ani-

mal. They enjoy catching turtles as a hobby and have it down to a science.

At Churubusco Elementary School, Devin and Broden are enrolled in a program for talented students called the Levels of Service Approach. Students work independently with teachers and create projects that accentuate their talents.

"The boys love turtles," said Mrs. Leedy, and that has influenced their projects. They have collected turtles for a display case and created their own comic strip, with a turtle as the main character. But what really struck them were paintings that they had read about in Weekly Reader. The story was about a turtle named Koopa, who paints and has sold his work in 42 of 50 states. They also found more information about Koopa on the Internet while researching the numbers and demographics of turtles. The boys wanted to model the paintings that Koopa had done and set out on a journey to find the perfect turtles to do the job.

At first, they were particular about which turtles they wanted for their project, however, catching the turtles turned out to be a dangerous job. Devin's shoe got caught in the mud and both boys almost got hit by a golf cart. They decided to keep what they could catch, and luckily, they caught what they had decided were the best turtles for their project, Painted Turtles.

The boys liked the Painted Turtles because they are not too big or too small. They wanted to be able create their paintings quickly, and wanted to use two turtles, which actu-



Broden Birk (left) and Devin Bultemeier make preparations for a turtle painting. The Churubusco Elementary students got the idea for their paintings from Koopa the painting turtle, who they read about in Weekly Reader and researched on the internet.

ally do the work on the canvas. They named their turtles "Oscar 1" and "Oscar 2" after the famed turtle who was thought to inhabit Fulk Lake.

For the masterpiece, the boys put paint on the canvas and let the turtles walk around and create the design. Together, Devin, Broden, and Mrs. Leedy spent an hour and a half creating four paintings.

Two of the paintings were kept, one by Mrs. Leedy and the other by the Churubusco Elementary School art teacher. The other two will be auctioned off, one at "Turtle Days" to benefit the Black Pine Animal Park in Albion, Indiana, and the other at Mackinac Island's Lilac Festival.

Why Mackinac Island?

Mrs. Leedy loves Mackinac Island and she and two of her teacher friends came here before the paintings had been completed and visited Mackinac Island Public School. While here, the women noticed a splatter painting in the hallway, which reminded them of the paintings that Devin and Broden were preparing to do after spring break. Mrs. Leedy proposed that one of the paintings be given to Mackinac Island, and school secretary Barb Fisher suggested it be auctioned. So Mrs. Leedy returned to the Island this spring with the painting.

The painting, "Lilac Dreams," will be in the silent auction Saturday, June 18, during the Dog and Pony Show, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Windermere Point. There is no minimum opening bid and proceeds from the auction will go toward the Dog and Pony Club.

Tourism Bureau Director Mary Slevin said that after receiving information on the painting from Barb Fisher, she thought it would be a good idea to incorporate the painting into the Dog and Pony Show because it is a "family event."

She also said that the painting, "Lilac Dreams," "really fits the theme" of the festival and with all of the animal events at this year's festival, she was excited to add turtles to the mix, given their history on the Island.

The boys said they would like to do future turtle paintings. Those interested in the project may contact Julie Leedy at (260) 856-3451.



A prized turtle belonging to Broden Birk and Devin Bultemeier crawls across a paint-covered canvas during the creation of another masterpiece.