

## Williams: Fountain sculpture 'had an energy of its own'



Fergus Falls artist Kirk Williams says there's a little bit of his grandparents in the fountain sculpture he created for the new Garden Court at the Pioneer Home. Williams' grandfather is a resident of the Pioneer Home. The court will be dedicated Sunday. (Journal photo by Kathy Berdan)

By KATHY BERDAN  
Staff Writer

Kirk Williams says there's a little bit of his grandfather and grandmother in his latest sculpture.

"There's some nostalgia there," Williams says of the elderly couple huddled beneath a broad umbrella. The soft waves in the woman's hair, the string of pearls around her neck and the oversized coat and bristly mustache on her companion give the sculpture a universal appeal.

Their lined hands exude a worn sort of warmth. This could be anyone's grandma and grandpa.

There's a security in the sculpture, Williams says. The couple is protected from the rain.

"It pretty much speaks for itself," he adds. "It says togetherness — Grandma and Grandpa together."

Williams says changing lifestyles and attitudes about divorce may alter the grandparent image in the future.

"This is the Grandma and Grandpa of this century," he says.

Williams was commissioned to create a sculpture as part of a fountain for the new Garden Court at the Pioneer Home. The sculpture is Williams' largest project and his first fountain effort.

The design had to be incorporated with the function of the water, he says, adding that the trickle and plop of the water in the fountain "makes a nice sound."

"Old people are easy to do for me," he says. "They have lots of lines and I love lines. It was right up my alley."

The project moved surprisingly smoothly, he says. Williams completed the basic structure in two

settings of about two hours each. He didn't have to tear it down and start again.

"It had an energy of its own," Williams says. "It totally formed itself. I was just there to oversee the project."

Williams found that working on a large sculpture was easier than his smaller works. Prior to the fountain, his biggest sculpture was about 2½ feet tall.

"There was more excitement to it, partly because it will be on public display," he says.

Cold cast bronze was used to create the fountain, making it lightweight and eliminating the need to have it cast at a foundry.

"It's a relatively new medium," Williams says. Powdered metals and epoxies are used, "allowing the artist to work in his own studio without a foundry."

The finished product was less expensive, he says. Williams figures a foundry would have charged at least \$10,000 to cast the sculpture.

The Fergus Falls native says to be "commissionable" an artist has to be able to produce his work when the client wants it.

"I'm getting closer to that," he says. A commissioned piece generally begins as someone else's idea, and the artist has to incorporate his style into it.

"I let them know what I can do," he says. "I take their (idea) and combine it with mine. It challenges you."

Williams says previous commissioned work helped him "make a leap" artistically as he challenged himself with another person's ideas.

Williams was commissioned to work on the sculpture in the fall of

1983, working on it that winter. But the Pioneer Home had been considering the Garden Court project for a number of years, says Carmon Jackson, Pioneer Home administrator.

Jackson says he'd been talking of a garden area for residents since starting at the home seven years ago. The family of Ione Lundeen, who died in June 1982, was looking for a project to dedicate to her memory, and offered to help with the garden.

The garden developed into a courtyard, with special consideration given to space for roses, Ione Lundeen's favorite flower. Local landscape designer and builder Tom Taylor was asked to design the courtyard.

There's little action in an enclosed courtyard, however, Jackson says.

"Trees and flowers grow slowly and quietly," he adds. "With this concern in mind, the idea of a fountain was born."

Jackson expected Garden Court to be a six- to eight-year project, but it was completed in about three years. Family and friends of Ione Lundeen provided the primary financing for development of the court, along with special gifts from others.

"Even though the plant life is young with much growth ahead, one already senses an atmosphere of peace and beauty," Jackson says.

Garden Court will be dedicated at a special service at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 12, at the Pioneer Home. The home will be having its annual Mother's Day smorgasbord that day.