

Beauty's No Burden For This Beast

By Curtis Leeds

Some of the whimsical artwork and unusual characters Kipp Sujet drew to amuse himself as he underwent painful bone marrow transplants have ended up in Frenchtown... on a mule.

Kipp's mule is one of two in Frenchtown that are part of the "Miles of Mules" program. They're among the 150 life-sized fiberglass mules scattered along the 165-mile Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, which includes the Delaware and Lehigh canals, where mules once towed boats in an era before Interstate highways and rail lines.

The program is a partnership of D&L National Corridor, which is a state agency; the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown; The Banana Factory of Bethlehem; and the Cultural Council of Luzerne County. The mules can be seen from June through October of this year. After that, those that haven't been purchased will be auctioned off to raise money for non-profit groups.

Although Kipp died in 1995, the year of his transplants, Frenchtown artist Barry Sharplin has helped keep his artistic vision alive by taking charge of the transfer of Kipp's work onto the mule. Originally contacted by the Frenchtown business association to paint its mule, Mr. Sharplin became involved with Kipp's mule, by chance. He was waiting in the Frenchtown Inn to meet Carole Hurst from the Michener Museum to discuss the project. He didn't know that Kipp's dad, Drew Sujet of Clinton, also planned to visit the Inn that day to discuss a mule



Photo by Ben Scheetz

RETURN OF THE MULES — They once provided the 'horsepower' for transport along the canal. Now, a more colorful species, like this one decorated by Frenchtown artist Barry Shanklin, can be found as part of an arts project along the 165-mile Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. The mules will be in place through October.

sponsorship with Ms. Hurst.

"We had already decided to sponsor a mule," said Jean Sujet. In addition to giving life to Kipp's art, the Sujets thought its sale would be a good way to raise money for the scholarship program they created in Kipp's name. It helps students attend the Beard School in Morristown, where Kipp attended and graduated with honors. He had also been a student at Clinton Public School.

"It must have been meant to be," said Mr. Sharplin about the chance encounter. "They asked me if I knew an artist who might be interested, and I answered, 'Hmmm,

maybe...'"

The Sujets are glad they met. "Barry has a feeling for Kipp's art," said Ms. Sujet. "We're so happy to have him involved."

Mr. Sharplin said others helped with the project, including his wife Cleo, and local artists Hardy Allbritton, Rosanne Hepburn and Pat Burns, and Roberto Padovano from New York City.

Mr. Sharplin considers himself lucky because most of the mules are in Pennsylvania. And he feels lucky to be chosen to recreate Kipp's art. "We really tried to be accurate, to be faithful to the feeling in the brushwork" that Kipp

used, he said. "It's so beautiful."

The transfer process, as described by Ms. Sujet, involved some of Kipp's art being made into slides that Mr. Sharplin then projected onto the mule. "But I don't want to make it sound easy," she said.

This isn't the first time Kipp's art has been used to benefit his scholarship fund. It's also found its way onto cards, hats and shirts as a means to raise money.

Kipp's art helped him through the difficulty of his treatment, and it continues to give. "It helps others," Ms. Sujet said. "The (scholarship recipients) are people who otherwise wouldn't be able to at-