

MV artist pays his tribute to farmers

By **DONNA HODGES**
Staff Writer

MOUNT VERNON — Art galleries all over the country, and even overseas, are calling Mount Vernon in search of "A Tribute to Farmers," this year's official poster of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival.

Larry Galen Larson, the Mount Vernon artist who designed the poster, said he has sent shipments all over Washington, to the East Coast, and even to Europe and Japan.

As the festival has grown in popularity the past few years, so has the demand for the posters, Larson said.

The 1992 poster is the third in a series of three that Larson designed. The 1990 poster, a tribute to the cultural folk life of the Skagit Valley, showed a field in bloom and the Vela Luka Croatian Dancers in the background.

Larson said he wanted to represent the diversity of the area by showing "the people of the valley."

"We're made up of Norwegians, Dutch, Croatians . . . I think that's something to celebrate," he said.

Last year's poster honored the valley's nature, and featured trumpeter swans in flight over a field of tulips.

This year's poster shows



Paul T. Erickson / Skagit Valley Herald

Larry Galen Larson, who designed this year's poster, says it has been getting international attention.

farmers gathering blooms from the fields.

In addition to the pastel colors that are used in all three posters, the posters are tied together by theme. The first is set in morning light, the second following an afternoon rain shower. The

1992 poster is set in the deep tones of evening light.

Also, careful observers will note a small butterfly and a ladybug that appear in all three posters.

Larson said the theme of the 1992 poster, "A Tribute to Farmers," has special meaning for him because his family raised dahlias as a hobby when he was growing up in Lynden. One of his goals in working with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is to make flower-growing profitable and worthwhile for area farmers, in order to preserve the valley's rural tradition.

"My motivation from the beginning has been preservation, not exploitation," he said.

Larson's long career in art and graphic design began in the 1970s, when he graduated from Western Washington University.

After working in Houston for a few years, he returned to this area and established Galen Design Associates in 1979.

This year's festival poster is available in galleries and shops across Skagit County. The original watercolors of all three posters in the series are on display at the Longfellow Cafe in Mount Vernon.

Because Larson's 1992 poster was the last in a series of three, the commissioning of next year's poster was opened to area artists, said Audrey Medved, managing director of the tulip festival.

■ Larry Galen Larson will be autographing official festival T-shirts and Galen Garden designs from noon to 2 p.m. Sunday at Rainbow Bridge Shirtworks, 128 S. First St., La Conner.

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