

Artist promotes global harmony

By Antonio Meza Estrada

Guest columnist

Recently, I spoke to the El Paso City Council about the honor of donating the "Three Doves" sculpture to the El Paso International Airport.

The sculpture was created by the artist Manuel Bennett and donated by him and his family to the people of El Paso for permanent display. They have visited this region many times, learning to love the open spaces, the mountains, the sunsets and, most of all, the friendly people.

The three doves that make up the sculpture represent various themes.

First, they represent the cities of El Paso, Las Cruces and Ciudad Juárez working together in a regional alliance to improve the health and well-being of their people. The El Paso International Airport serves these three sister com-

munities, and is the ideal location to display this beautiful sculpture, welcoming travelers and other visitors.

Second, the three doves, holding in their beaks an olive branch, represent the three states — Texas, New Mexico and Chihuahua — that work together in peace for the prosperity of the entire region. Doves, from earliest times, are an international symbol of peace and friendship among people.

Born in Philadelphia in 1921, Bennett at age 12 moved with his family to New York City, where he began his art education. In 1942, he went into the U.S. Army and worked in a mapping unit. In 1951, under the G.I. Bill, he went to Mexico with his wife and young son to continue his art studies, drawn by the vibrant artistic environment in our country.

The year 2001 marks the 50th year that he has been creating art in Mexico.

In 1980 and 1985, Bennett designed drawings for the UNICEF cards to benefit the children's fund. In 1992, he wrote and illustrated two children's books about

Olympic sports, emphasizing their importance for peace and understanding.

Bennett has sculptures in the City Halls of Hondo, City, Japan, and its sister-city, Encinitas, Calif., inaugurated in April 2001.

He was commissioned in 1999 to create a 16-foot-long sculpture for the city of Hiroshima by the Japan Society of San Diego and Tijuana, to represent their theme of building bridges for peace, symbolically connecting the three member countries.

Recent tragic events in the United States have once again pointed out the need for all countries, especially border neighbors such as Mexico and the U.S., to work more closely together.

Bennett has been in the past and continues to be an artist who works for peace and harmony in the world. As he says, each of us, with different skills, can contribute to the well-being of humankind.

Antonio Meza Estrada is consul general of Mexico in El Paso.



Meza