



ARTIST ROBERT K. (SMOKY) MOAK
Shows painting of the sailing ship that will come to Galveston
(Sun staff photo by Glenn Folkes)

Ex-City Painter's Work To Be Shown On Famed Ship

When the world's oldest sailing ship, the Elissa, sails to Galveston from Greece this summer, no one will be more thrilled than former Baytonian Robert Kenneth (Smoky) Moak, the world-renowned marine painter.

Smoky has painted the official picture of the ship, using blueprints from the company in Scotland where the Elissa was built in 1877. Prints of his painting will be sold on board the ship at Seawolf Park in Galveston where it will be open to the public.

Smoky considers it a great honor "to get the chance to paint the oldest sailing ship in the world."

"I'm as thrilled as a kid with his first pair of long pants," he smiled. "It's really a dream come true for Texas to have a genuine sailing ship."

And what a sight that will be — the magnificent vessel from ages past plowing the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico to a permanent new home in Galveston.

"Something like this hasn't been seen in Galveston in a hundred years — a fully rigged ship coming in."

Smoky says there is no danger of letting the ship "tie up at the dock and rot." She will be taken out periodically for sailing in Galveston Bay.

Although Smoky can't make the full voyage all the way from Greece, he does plan to hop aboard when it stops over at Key West, Fla.

"You can say that the Elissa is coming back to Galveston after all these years. Records show she sailed to Galveston two or three times during the 1800s." A history is being compiled on

the ship which was built by Alexander Hall and Son in Scotland. Five different owners have been traced and the names of captains for every voyage are known. The data will be condensed for brochures for visitors at Seawolf Park.

The Elissa is being reconditioned in Greece with the help of experts in the field. "It's not a hammer and saw gang," the artist commented. "Renovation is being done with the highest professional standards."

A new diesel engine will be installed for auxiliary power for the voyage to Galveston.

"This ship has a lot of history," Smoky noted. "If she could only talk after 100 years, think of the tales she could tell."

At one time the Elissa was

abandoned on the Mediterranean coast after it was used in a smuggling operation.

After the mast was cut off some 70 years ago, it looked like a tanker.

Smoky explained the group of men from Galveston had been wanting to get a ship of this vintage. One of the men discovered the Elissa on a trip to Greece. "He began to examine the possibility then of rebuilding it. It was found that the hull was still sound."

New masts, sails and rigging are being made and it will become seaworthy again.

Smoky was contacted about four months ago to do the painting. This week he combined a visit home with a trip to Galveston to confer with citizens (See SHIP, Page 2-A)

SHIP, PAINTER TEAM - -

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involved in the Elissa venture. They continued plans for a \$100-a-plate dinner to help finance the project. Dinner guests will receive large prints of the Elissa painting.

The dinner will be held in late February or early March in Galveston, depending on how long it takes to get the art prints made.

WORLD FAMOUS

The native Baytonian's seascapes hang in palatial halls and homes around the world.

One of the owners of a Robert Moak painting is King Oalf V of Norway. Foreign Minister Niels Dahl of Stockholm, Sweden, is another one. And there is a Moak work of art in the governor's mansion in Austin and many of his paintings in private homes and business places of the country.

"I only paint ships now and only do oil paintings," he relates:

Some 35 years ago Smoky was

a cartoonist. Then he became a magazine illustrator, working for such publications as Life, Look and Saturday Evening Post.

"But it got to be too much of a hassle," he says. "I was wearing too many hats and finally decided to give up commercial art for fine art."

Why ships?

"Because I like them so much. They are interesting, exciting and no two are alike."

Smoky is a transplanted Midwesterner, living in Parkridge, Ill., but gravitates to the coast every chance he gets, armed with sketchbook and camera.

He acknowledged his background in Baytown influenced his love of water. "My dad built me a boat when I was eight years old," he recalled.

He still loves the waterways around his native land and took a nostalgic tour of favorite haunts like Black Duck Bay and Morgans Point when he visited here this week.

Smoky is the son of Mrs. R. E. Moak, 1917 Utah. He and his wife, the former Lynn McMaster of Baytown, have four daughters, ages 19 through 27.

The artist is self-effacing about his successful career, saying he wouldn't be where he is today had it not been for the "host of people who befriended me."

Encouragement in art dates back to his first grade teacher, Mrs. A. N. Foster.

"I've been very fortunate in that throughout my life, in every phase of my work, there have always been people better than I, standing in the wings, and ready to help me. My work reflects the help of all these people."