



# The Arts

**Exactingly meticulous wood inlay work such as Wilf Aizlewood displays, started him selling his paintings to raise money for children.**

photo by Lisa Murdoch

## Memories and good works

by ARNOLD OLSON

Wilf Aizlewood's home reflects the love he had for Polly, his wife of 50 years, together with the art that makes money for children's charities, in her memory.

"She was a wonderful woman and fond of children. That's why I donate to children's charities now," Aizlewood said.

In mid-August he donated slightly more than \$3,000 to the Prince George Child Development Centre.

It was money he made from picture sales, after cost of materials was deducted, during a previous show at Prince George Art Gallery. In the 18 months before his gallery show, he worked hard to build up enough pieces for a show.

Although he looks on his work as a hobby, his paintings are respected enough for Canada Post earlier buying two as a gifts for Constantinople and Rome.

In a note sent after the interview, he asked if he could smuggle a thank you to those who support his work and help him donate to children.

At 85, he recalls a life of hard work that began when he went to work for a steel mill when he was 12.

"I never did any painting — I had to work.

"I wanted to be an artist, when I was young, but I had to work in the steel mills in Sheffield, England."

While he was at the mill he met Polly, his wife-to-be. She was 13 then.

He came to Canada in 1926, when he was 20, about to turn 21, spending five years on the prairies before moving to Prince George.

"I read a newspaper article. It took my eye and I came here."

For the next 26 years he lived at Isle Pierre, operating his own store and the post office for the greater part of the time.

Then he moved to Prince George, in 1957, to work for the post office here.

In the interim, he sent for his bride and they were married in 1938. Although they love children, they never had any.

"She certainly came out to a different life, when she came to marry me," he smiled in recollection.

It wasn't until 1970, when he retired from the



post office, that he started to paint.

"I never had a painting lesson in my life, except for one lesson from Wilf Fortney." Fortney is a former teacher and now is considered one of the region's leading artists.

This is a significant statement, considering Aizlewood's watercolors have about them a suggestion of the old masters' style. They capture the beauty of European streets or buildings, but modified by more light and cleaner streets.

When he was 76, Polly suffered from diabetes needed constant care.

He found when she called for him, he ruined his paintings because he dashed to help her.

So he turned to inlay woodwork, creating finely finished boxes, trays carvings or furniture. This work could be laid aside and not drip or run or change color.

One day, when she was in hospital, he recalled, he sold one of the inlay pieces. When she returned home, she missed the piece and asked where it was.

"I traded it for a cheque," he quipped and offered her the money. She gave it to a children's charity instead, giving birth to the idea that still lives with him.

"I turn everything over, except my expenses. It's a type of volunteer work. My needs are small."