Mrs. Sylestine to Show 

Pine Needle Work

Mrs. Rosabel Sylestine, a Coushatta Indian pine needle basketweaver, will be honored Sunday at the opening of her one-woman basketry exhibition in the Cabildo on Jackson Square.

The public is invited to meet Mrs. Sylestine and to view the exhibit between 1-5 p.m. Sunday. The show will continue through Aug. 31.

Mrs. Sylestine is one of the most creative basketweavers among her people, who have been recognized for their basket-weaving skills for many generations. She was born in 1922 in the Indian community along the banks of Bayou Blue in Allen Parish, north of Elton, where she continues to make her home with her husband.

The name Coushatta means "white reed-brake" and was originally applied to this group of Indians whose settlement was near the patches of swampcane. They used this material to weave plaited baskets.

When the availability of swampcane became scarce as farmers began to cultivate the land, the tribe members enlarged upon a second basketry media they had previously developed, that of the pine needle basketry art. This exhibition, organized by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana and the Board of Directors for the Louisiana State Museum, is being sponsored by the American Indian Program of Save the Children.

The Coushatta Tribe is giving special emphasis to the arts and crafts of its members in order to promote and retain their heritage.

The Coushattas further enhanced the method of using native long leaf pine needles in a coiling technique, bound together with raffia, creating numerous decorative and utilitarian basketry forms as well as unique effigy creations.

Mrs. Sylestine became interested in the pine needles when she was about seven years old and played with her mother’s gatherings. She learned her craft at her mother’s side. “I have only been a part of a cultural effort in the tribe, and I am glad I had the chance to share this beautiful art,” she said.

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