

Soph wins art contest on harmony

By Richard A. Kiley
Staff writer

ELMIRA — He doesn't consider himself a good artist, but that didn't stop Elmira Notre Dame sophomore Rick Berliner from walking away two weeks ago with a \$100 prize in a poster contest on racial harmony.

Berliner took a unique approach to the contest — which was sponsored by the Chemung County Commission on Human Relations — and he grabbed first place among grades nine through 12 at the Catholic high school in Elmira.

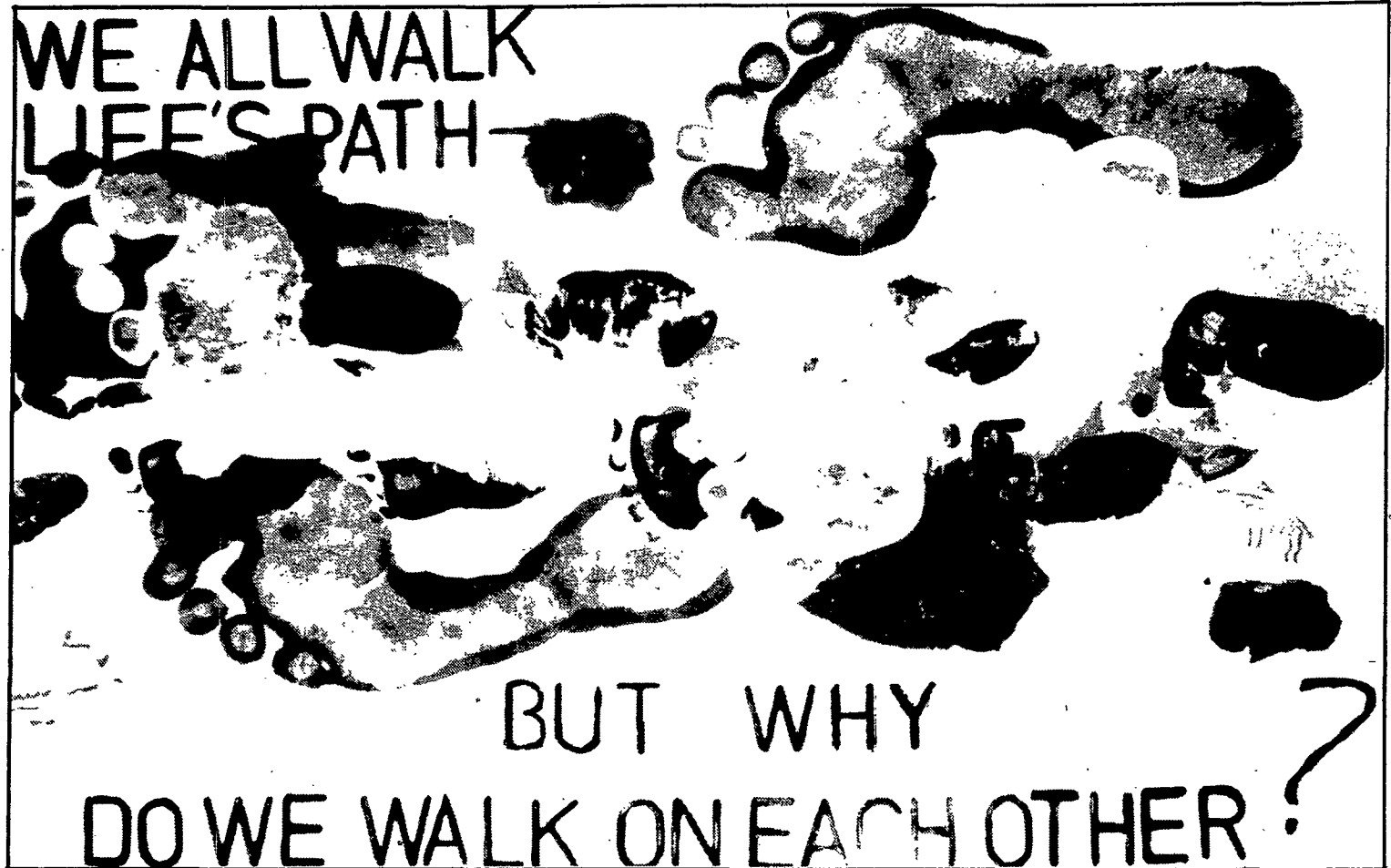
"My art teacher suggested painting hands, but I said, 'Everybody does hands so I'm going to paint feet,'" Berliner said. "Originally, I was going to draw the feet, but I thought it wouldn't look as lifelike (as) if I just walked on it."

The Notre Dame student, who lives in Elmira Heights, used his feet and a little paint to illustrate his poster's motto: "We all walk life's path, but why do we walk on each other?" The feet are painted in different colors to represent different groups of people, he said.

The money he won for his winning entry will go into his class treasury. Berliner's winning poster was also on display at this year's annual "Arts in the Park" exhibition in Elmira.

Although Notre Dame art teacher Dori Schnippert had all of her classes participate in the contest — which was judged by Arnot Art Museum staff — she did not restrict the students to creating posters solely on racial relations.

"I didn't want them to deal with discrimination against any one particular group," said Schnippert, who has been



Elmira Notre Dame sophomore Rick Berliner won the \$100 first prize in a poster contest on racial harmony June 16, by using paint and his feet. The feet are painted in different colors to represent different groups of people. Jeff Sobkowski

teaching art at Notre Dame for the past three years. "I saw posters concerning people with disabilities, women's rights, religion and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)."

Encompassing a broad range of groups was the aim of the contest's creator, Joyce Costello, a senior at Elmira's Southside High School. Stereotyping among groups at her school caused much tension this year, Costello said, noting that she hoped to use the contest as a way of promoting better understanding among students.

Impetus for the poster contest came from

the story of a fight between a "so-called 'head' and a so-called 'jock'" near the beginning of the school year, Costello said.

"Toward the end (of the year) things got a lot better, but there was a lot of tension in school ... It was just awful," said Costello, who is also a student member of the Chemung County Commission on Human Relations. "The situation was never really resolved."

As part of the pilot project, students at Southside, Notre Dame and Elmira Free Academy were invited to make posters dur-

ing the first two weeks of April. Costello noted, however, that Notre Dame students were the only ones to participate because "a lot of people were interested but they didn't have the time to make a poster."

"Because it was a pilot project ... a lot of people didn't hear about it early enough," said Costello, who is hoping to see more students take part in the contest next year.

Notre Dame senior Katie Cain, junior Trish O'Leary and freshman Kathy Tedone (freshman) were the other finalists in the contest.

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