

A Head Start for National Harbor District Treasure Goes to Pr. George's Development

By ANITA HUSLIN
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From the foot-thick layer of wood chips and soil, the crane hoisted a foot, a hand, a head and a leg, and then finally an arm that was bent at the elbow, its hand curled as if clawing its way from the earth. After 28 years, the giant was freed.

The cast aluminum sculpture known as "The Awakening" left its earthen home on the southernmost tip of Washington's Hains Point yesterday, and made its way on a convoy of three flatbed trucks and then a barge to a new sandy beach on the eastern shore of the Potomac River.

"Welcome home, Charlie!" shouted an ebullient Milton V. Peterson, using his pet name for the piece. A crane swung the body parts into position at their new resting spot as workers reassembled the sculpture, the \$725,000 maraschino cherry to garnish Peterson's \$4 billion National Harbor waterfront development.

See SCULPTURE, B2, Col. 1

Construction workers stopped what they were doing in the surrounding complex of hotels, restaurants, condominium units and office buildings to take pictures with their cellphones. A pair of documentary filmmakers captured the scene. A visiting delegation of Nigerian bankers who happened to be in the neighborhood watched in amazement and wondered aloud: Are they going to put the pieces back together?

"My business is all about ideas," Peterson said moments later, surveying it all from his office three stories above the shore. "And that was one of the most hot . . . ideas I ever had."

Peterson said he spent at least \$725,000 to move the figure and anchor it at his project. National Harbor, conceived before the current economic downturn, is intended to be the largest non-casino, mixed-used development on the Eastern seaboard. In April, Nashville-based Gaylord Entertainment plans to open a mammoth hotel and convention center there, but portions of a nearby condominium development have been delayed, and at least two restaurant operators have backed out of plans to open.

Peterson is undaunted. He envisions a lively development featuring a marina, stores, offices, restaurants and entertainment venues. Visitors will be able to sit at wa-

ter-view restaurant tables and watch the sun set behind "The Awakening" on the Potomac.

In the District, people stood behind storm fences in the morning cold watching the sculpture's excavation.

"You wonder why D.C. didn't buy it and just leave it here," said Maurice Chase, who used to visit Hains Point several times a week to exercise and take in the sight of the bearded metal giant.

The figure was "not very D.C.," said his sister, Annette Chase Bennett, as the trucks took it away. "That's what I like about it."

The District's loss is the gain of Prince George's County, which gave the sculpture a police escort during part of the trip to its new home. Peterson bought the piece last year from the Sculpture Foundation, a Santa Monica, Calif., nonprofit organization that encourages the placement of art in public places. The developer assured the artist that his work would be treated well.

The sculpture's creator, J. Seward Johnson, a member of the family of Band-Aid fame, chuckled recently over the mental image of the giant picking himself up, brushing the dirt from his limbs, and taking a quick jaunt down the river to his new location, said Paula Stoeke, director of the Sculpture Foundation, who came to town to observe the move.

Over the years, Johnson has said in interviews that he was surprised his creation so captivated a city that had largely thought of public sculpture as war heroes on horses, or bronze statesmen in suit coats.

He offered no further explanation for his work and let the public project its own stories on the figure.

It arrived in spring 1980, one of more than 88 sculptures invited to the nation's capital for the Eleventh International Sculpture Conference. Amid the sometimes inscrutable creations, "The Awakening" lay at Hains Point like an upended turtle, beckoning children and adults to stand and stare, sit in his upturned palm, try to scale his knee as it pointed skyward, and climb into his gaping maw. The giant's teeth have been polished by the hands and feet of countless children who have climbed in his mouth. Perhaps because of their perfect alignment, the giant's dentures are more amusing than threatening.

Runner Mike Stavlund lamented the sculpture's departure, in part because of the



boost that it gave runners when the Marine Corp Marathon was routed past the figure.

"It's funny," he said, pausing to watch the early morning work at Hains Point, as his 21-month-old daughter, Eleanor, sat snug in her stroller. The first few times he ran the long race, he says he remembered thinking the giant seemed to be dying, like Stavlund's legs. In later races, as his endurance improved, the figure looked friendly.

"It's a really huge metaphor for me," he said.

In looking through old records for specifications to help align the sculpture in its new location, Stoeke said the foundation discov-

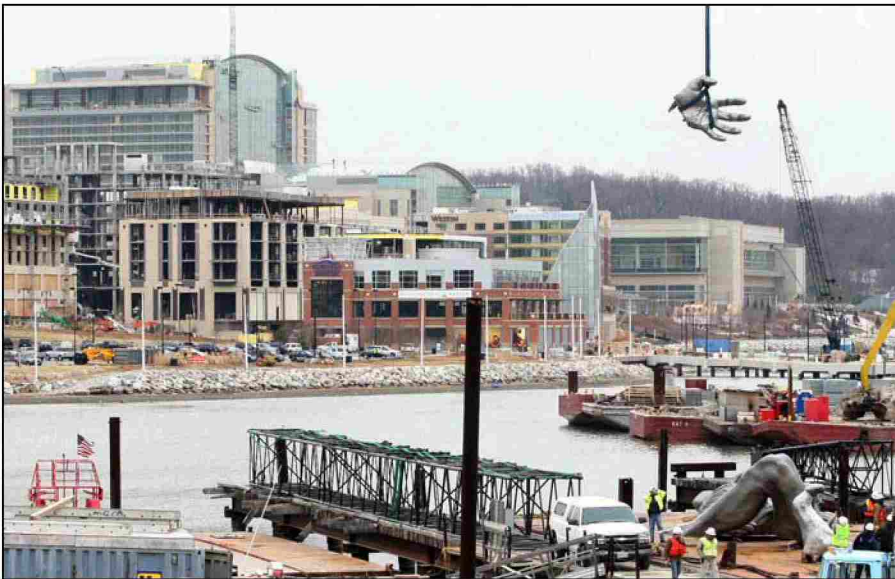
ered that the figure's various parts had been slightly bunched together at Hains Point. At **National Harbor**, they were stretched out a bit to reflect the right physical alignment of a person emerging from the ground, she said.

"I hate to see it move, but I'm glad to see that it'll still be in the Washington area," said David M. Furchgott, president of International Arts and Artists, who was director of the 1980 sculpture conference. "It's a work that will hold its own wherever it is. And if you think about it, sculpture is something that's a community marker in many places, and this will certainly continue to be that."



BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Workers lift L. Seward Johnson's sculpture of "The Awakening" from its berth at Hains Point.



BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

The giant hand of "The Awakening" makes a dramatic arrival at National Harbor.