

'He had an arts spirit': Famed Barre sculptor Frank Gaylord has died

Eric Blaisdell | March 22, 2018

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Barre sculptor Frank C. Gaylord poses with his works on display, including sculptures and drawings, at Studio Place Arts in Barre in 2015. Gaylord passed away Wednesday at the age of 93. (Stefan Hard / Staff File Photo)

BARRE — The Granite City lost likely its most famous modern-day resident with the death of sculptor Frank Gaylord.

Gaylord, 93, died at his daughter's home in Northfield Wednesday night. Funeral

arrangements have yet to be announced, and are being taken care of by The Hooker and Whitcomb Funeral Home.

Gaylord created the National Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Other monuments created by Gaylord include the Firemens Memorial in Eugene, Oregon; the Doctor Ashbel Smith statue in Baytown, Texas; the Policemen's Memorial in Jacksonville, Florida; the Toledo Mud Hens Monument in Toledo, Ohio; and the National Little League Monument in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

When Gaylord was growing up in Clarksburg, West Virginia, he recalled in a Times Argus story in 2015, his grandmother would give him plastic molds into which he would press clay to make reliefs. That transformed into sculpting clay animals and then he moved to carving soap, quickly learning how much material it actually took to make a full sculpture.

As he grew up, Gaylord was initially interested in taxidermy, which, at that time, was done by sculpting plaster molds, with the animal skins pulled over them.

Then World War II came along, and Gaylord became a paratrooper for two

and a half years. Gaylord served with the 17th Airborne and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

After the war, he used the G.I. Bill and ended up at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, which had both engineering and fine arts schools. He later transferred to Temple University's Tyler School of Art, where he focused on becoming a carver.

In 1951, Mac Durnovich of E.J. Batchelder Co. in Barre hired Gaylord. So he and his late wife Mary moved to Vermont. He knew the community's reputation, its rich ethnic heritage, and its renowned craftsmanship. He said in 2015 he knew he could learn there.

Master sculptor Giuliano Cecchinelli, of Barre, has known Gaylord since the 1960s. Cecchinelli said Thursday that Barre has never had a sculptor like Gaylord.

"He gave Barre more than Barre asked. ... He made Barre, Vermont," he said.

Cecchinelli said Gaylord was a perfectionist when it came to his style of work, which had a more modern flair to

it. He said when he first met Gaylord he could tell right away that Gaylord had class and that he would achieve what he wanted to achieve.

Cecchinelli said he owns several pieces of Gaylord's work, which he keeps in his home.

Sue Higby, executive director of Studio Place Arts in downtown Barre, has known Gaylord for 15 years. Higby highlighted his work at her studio in 2015.

"I'm truly very sorry to hear of his passing and his integrity as an artist will live on in Barre for years to come," she said.

Higby said Gaylord was a cultural intellectual who loved theater, dance and the human form. She also said Gaylord, more than most artists, had the ability to capture in his work the feeling of a ballet dancer's movement or the fluttering of a piece of fabric.

Jerry Williams owns and operates Barre Sculpture Studios. Williams has known Gaylord since the 1980s and at one

point he owned the studio next to Gaylord's.

"Frank was a mentor to many sculptors, some of them still operating in town. Some of them have moved on and done other things. But he was a real valuable part of the sculpture community in this town. Not just monumental, but the art of what we're doing," he said.

Williams said he will remember Gaylord as someone with a dry wit who knew how to put things in perspective, such as how sculptors fit into the art scene. He said because Gaylord went to art school, he approached sculpting from a different perspective than those who learned by working in a granite shed.

"When I met him I kind of wanted to emulate that part of him that wasn't ground down by an industry. He still had an arts spirit," Williams said.