

Vermont artist Frank Gaylord, sculptor of Korean War Veterans Memorial, dies at age 93

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BURLINGTON, Vt. — Frank Gaylord was an Army paratrooper in World War II who earned a Bronze Star during the Battle of the Bulge. Decades later, [he tapped into that experience](#) for his art.

The Barre sculptor was commissioned to create 19 soldiers for the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. As Gaylord told Sue Higby, executive director of Studio Place Arts in Barre, he got to know fabric from jumping out of planes, because when he pulled the parachute he looked back hoping to see fluttering, flowing fabric behind him.

“He became a student of how silk flows,” Higby said. That quality is apparent, she noted, in the crinkling of the soldiers’ ponchos in the Korean War memorial.

Attention to detail marked the career of Gaylord, who died last week in Vermont, less than two weeks after his 93rd birthday. He left a lasting impression on Barre, a community known for its sculpture thanks to the local granite quarries and the artists they attracted.

More: [Korean War memorial artist says Postal Service owes him](#)

“He was a seeker. He wanted to understand the know-how of sculpture and everything,” said Giuliano Cecchinelli Sr., a fellow Barre sculptor who began working for Gaylord in 1965. “He was a man above any other, to tell you the truth.”

The Korean War monument is undoubtedly Gaylord’s best-known work. That project provided him with what he called “the highlight of my whole life” when he watched the sculpture arrive on the National Mall.

“Looking back, I can see that it was my finest moment: To see your own work unloaded on the Mall, at the nation’s capital, with a monument that requires a sculptural solution,” the artist told former Burlington Free Press staff writer Sally Pollak in 2003 as he was about to receive the Vermont Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts.



A man runs past the Korean War Memorial on the National Mall on Veterans Day Nov. 11, 2015 in Washington, DC. (Photo: Brendan Smialowski, AFP/Getty Images)

Gaylord's body of work included a piece depicting former Connecticut Gov. Ella Grasso for her state's capitol building, a statue of young, leaping ballplayers for the home of Little League baseball in Williamsport, Pa., and sculptures of Vermont's first governor, Thomas Chittenden, placed in Williston and Montpelier.

Studio Place Arts, Gaylord's hometown gallery, hosted a career retrospective in 2015. The exhibition began with a conversation in which the artist told Higby he had a new project called GOGO — Girls Once Gazed On — more than a dozen graphite drawings of women he enjoyed looking at. Higby said Gaylord captured the power of ballet dancers, baseball players, religious figures and soldiers with equal skill.

“Strength would be one of the qualities that shows up in both men and women” in Gaylord's work, Higby said. “He admired the human physique. I'm sure that he studied old-school dissection and understood musculature. He understood strength and resilience and grace.”

He possessed those qualities, too, Higby said.

“He's creative, feisty, stubborn, a person of great integrity,” she said. “He really did work that was far beyond the work that was being done here in Barre, very stylized, imaginative work. He

really did set the pace in many respects not just for high-quality work but his ability to secure very competitive commissions.”



"John Henry," on view at Studio Place Arts in “Frank C. Gaylord: Sculptures & New Drawings” A Lifetime Retrospective, 2015. (Photo: COURTESY JACK ROWELL)

He also had an ability to protect those commissions. He maintained the rights to his work, including the Korean War sculptures, and won a court case in 2013 against the U.S. Postal Service when the agency used the monument in stamps without his approval. Gaylord was awarded nearly \$685,000 in the settlement.

Gaylord, who moved to Barre following art school in 1951, told the Free Press that he became attracted to sculpting as a 3-year-old growing up in West Virginia when his grandmother made clay animal figures for him.

“I’d take it to her and ask her to make me another and she’d say, ‘I don’t have time to do it again. You do it,’ ” he said in 2003. “And here I am.”

Gaylord had no complaints about the way his career turned out. “I only have one life,” he told the Free Press in 2003, “and what I’ve done is the thing I love more than anything else.”

Follow Brent Hallenbeck on Twitter: @BrentHallenbeck