

After 2 years of planning, statue for Howell icon Duane Zemper ready for unveiling

Sean Bradley, Livingston Daily Published 4:18 p.m. ET Oct. 25, 2018



(Photo: File)

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Each piece in a statue created to honor Duane Zemper has meaning.

The bronze, 7-foot-tall statue will honor the late Howell resident on what would have been his 99th birthday.

"It becomes an example of how someone who came from very little means can have an impact on a community," Mike Hall said on Tuesday. "It's a celebration of his life and the contributions that this man made to our community, in many ways in a quiet way. A lot of what he accomplished was in the background and behind the scenes."

The statue will be unveiled during a ceremony Nov. 4 on the lawn of the Howell Carnegie District Library.

Hall is the chairperson of the Zemp Legacy Committee, created after the 2016 death of Zemper, a renowned photographer whose nickname was "Zemp." The idea for a statue was pursued almost immediately after his death.

The statue — created by Colin and Kristine Poole of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and owners of Poole Arts — weighs 647 pounds and features Zemper leaning on a stack of books. That image represents his involvement in things such as creating yearbooks and doing sports photography, Hall said.



Lauren Caffrey created the lettering on the books in the statue, according to sculptors Colin and Kristine Poole. (Photo: Submitted by Colin Poole)

"Everything in that stack of books is some symbol of him," Hall said.

The statue also features a camera next to Zemper that is an exact replica of a camera he used in World War II, Hall said.

Creating the sculpture

Kristine Poole said the creation process for the statue took more than two years from idea to finished product.

"It was really us working within the committee to listen to what was important to everybody and incorporate these ideas into the final design," she said.

The actual creation process started with sketches, then creating a model one-third the size of the actual sculpture, known as a maquette.



In addition, two of Zemp's sons, Rick and Steve, helped with the final sculpture by using their faces to find subtleties in areas such as Zemp's face and hands.

After this, images of the maquette were sent to the Zemp Legacy Committee for approval.

Creating the full-scale sculpture started in the spring.



The bust portion of the Duane Zemper statue, set to be unveiled Nov. 4 in Howell, was combed by Colin Poole, of Santa Fe, New Mexico. He and his wife Kristine were commissioned to create the statue, which is 7 feet tall. "We use fine stainless steel tools to remove seam lines left on the wax from the mold, repair any defects (like bubbles) and refine details," Poole said in the Oct. 6 photo. (Photo: Submitted by Colin Poole)

"We sculpt the entire thing over again," Colin Poole said.

A silicone mold of the sculpture and book stack were created, which were then brought to Arts Castings of Colorado, in Loveland, Colorado, to pour wax for it.

"We came up to review the wax and make sure all the details were there to our satisfaction," Colin Poole said.

After this, the shell is waxed over, the wax is burned out, the cavity is filled with bronze, the shell is removed, and the bronze version of the sculpture comes out to many pieces then put back together

again.

In all, there are nearly 50 Easter eggs in the sculpture that refer to Zemp as a person, the community and the stories he told, Colin Poole said.

"We feel very grateful we get to be part of this project just because it's part of my life history," said Kristine Poole, who grew up in Novi and her parents and brother live in Howell.

Renaissance man

Zemper was born in Bay City but raised in Flint. He attended Eastern Michigan University before the war. A champion cross country runner, he was named an EMU Distinguished Alumni in 2009.

He came to Howell when he married his wife, Tillie, who was a fellow student and daughter of former Howell Mayor Eric Reiner.

Zemper was somewhat of a renaissance man.

A professional photographer in the Howell area for nearly 50 years, Zemper was also an active volunteer with the Howell Area Archives — his work forms the basis of the archives' photo collection. He saved many historical photos of the Howell area.

He was a decorated World War II veteran, serving as an aerial combat photographer during the war. A flyover of WWII vintage aircraft will occur honoring him and a missing pilot, Hall said.

Locally, he was named Howell Area Citizen of the Year in 1976, named a life member of the Howell Chamber of Commerce, and had perfect attendance at nearly 60 years of Howell Rotary Club meetings.

His family will be on hand to unveil the statue, along with the statue creators and community officials.

The unveiling is scheduled for 1 p.m. Nov. 4 at the library at 314 W. Grand River Ave. A reception open to the public is scheduled from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Howell Opera House, where the documentary, "Through the Lens of Duane Zemper," will be shown and refreshments served.

Colin and Kristine Poole will also debut their short film, "The Making of The Zemper Legacy Monument," documenting the process of creating the statue from its conception to completion. They will be available for a "meet the artist" session at the Howell Opera House.

"It's going to be a truly moving event for Livingston County," Hall said.

The piece will not just exist on its own.

"It's really the beginning of a piece of art in a public space," Hall said.

It will have an educational component in the form of a large book permanently mounted next to the statue that will list all of the donors who made donations toward the project on one side and have Zemper's story on another.

The story of Zemper's life for this portion of the project is being written by Joyce Fisher of the Howell Area Archives in the Howell Carnegie District Library.

That portion of the project is planned to be completed within the next six months, Hall said.

If you go

The unveiling of a statue honored Duane Zemper is scheduled for 1 p.m. Nov. 4 on the lawn of the Howell Carnegie District Library, 314 W. Grand River Ave. A reception open to the public is scheduled from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Howell Opera House.