

The Duane L. Zemper Statue



The location and identification of the many symbols found on the Zemp Legacy Statue, and the stories behind those symbols

Compiled by
Eric D. Zemper, PhD

Introduction

Duane L. Zemper, or “Zemp” as he was known to everyone in the Howell community, was born on November 4, 1919, in Bay City, Michigan. Growing up in Flint during the Great Depression of the 1930s, at the urging of a high school friend he joined the Flint Central High School Track & Field team in his sophomore year and soon discovered he was a talented distance runner. He drew the attention of the coaches at Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University), who recruited him. At Michigan Normal Zemp continued his successful running career, becoming a two-time All-American in Cross Country and a member of their American record-breaking two-mile relay team. In January of 1942 he graduated with a degree in physics, mathematics and chemistry.

In the fall of 1942, Zemp was teaching freshman physics at Michigan Normal when he met his future wife, Ruth Matilda Reiner (Tillie), of Howell. At that time, with WWII in full swing, he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps, married Tillie, and in April 1943 began training as an Aerial Reconnaissance Officer. Eventually he was assigned as the commanding officer of a photo intelligence unit attached to the 457th Bomber Group, stationed at Glatton Airfield in England, from January 1944 until the end of the war.

After the war, Zemp returned to live with his wife in Howell, where he decided to continue working in photography. He bought the Nelson Photography Studio and began over 50 years as the town’s professional photographer, taking everyone’s school pictures, graduation pictures, wedding pictures, baby pictures and family pictures, as well as pictures of all the major events in the community. Continuously honing his skills with the camera and in the darkroom, Zemp began receiving attention for the quality of his work. He received three Michigan Photographer of the Year awards, and in 1970 the national Master of Photography award, the highest national honor a professional photographer can receive. In 1966 he had the number one judged portrait from among over 12,000 entries from professional photographers across the country, and had three of the top four portraits that year.

Quickly adopting the Howell community as his “home town”, Zemp spent the rest of his life contributing in many ways to his community. Aside from his work as a photographer, he became a member of the local Rotary Club in 1948 and amassed over 65 years of perfect attendance at weekly meetings and community service through the club. He donated his time and materials to photograph Howell High School sporting events, mentored and coached countless athletes, and founded the Howell Athletic Boosters. After buying his studio, Zemp found many stored boxes containing old pictures, negatives and glass plate negatives of people and events in Howell and Livingston County dating back to the early 1860s. He worked to preserve these materials, along with old pictures and negatives brought to him by people in the community, and they are the source of the pictures of old Howell seen in many businesses throughout the community. This material also formed the basis for the *1776-1976 Howell Bicentennial History Book* that he co-edited, and provided the foundation material for the Howell Area Archives, which he co-founded and oversaw until his death.

After finding those old photographs and negatives when he bought the studio after WWII, Zemp began talking with the “old-timers” in the area to collect stories about the people and events in those pictures. Eventually, as the human repository for all these

old stories and anecdotes, he became the *de facto* town historian. Ever the teacher, Zemp often presented talks, lectures and classes on photography and the history of the area to local colleges, senior centers, historical societies and other local groups. For these efforts he received many awards from a variety of organizations, and in 2007 Zemp received the first “Duane Zemper Award” from the Howell Carnegie District Library, given to those individuals who bring positive attention and extraordinary support to the Library. Zemp was named Citizen of the Year by the Howell Chamber of Commerce in 1976, and the City of Howell designated June 6 as “Duane L. Zemper Day” (now celebrated on November 4, his birthday). In 1990 he was inducted into the Eastern Michigan University Athletics Hall of Fame.

On July 17, 2016, Zemp died, at 96 years old. He was active in his community and at the Archives right up until a few days before his death. The day after he died, at the weekly meeting of the Howell Rotary Club, members were coming to grips with the fact that Zemp, who had been in continuous attendance at weekly meetings since he joined in 1948, was no longer with us. Several members decided that day that something should be done to commemorate his life and his dedication to the community; to commemorate his legacy. From those initial discussions was soon formed the Zemp Legacy Committee, consisting of about 18 members of the community who were friends and acquaintances of Zemp (a list of these committee members is found at the end of this document). The next month, having heard of the existence of this effort, as Zemp’s oldest child I asked to join the committee as a representative of the Zemper family, and was immediately welcomed to the group. This was the beginning of just over two years of meetings, discussions and effort culminating in the dedication of the statue on the Library lawn on what would have been Zemp’s 99th birthday, November 4, 2018.

But at first the committee wasn’t sure just what they wanted to do. Name a street after Zemp? A building? A Park? Create a museum display? Erect a statue? Committee members just knew it was important to do *something*. Eventually the committee settled on a bronze statue. Once that decision was made, immediately the feeling was that it should be more than just a statue of a guy standing there or sitting there. It should be educational and interactive. Following the decision to commission a statue, a national search for an artist was undertaken, and in early 2017 we selected Kristine and Colin Poole of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Pooles wholeheartedly adopted the idea of creating an educational and interactive piece. The result is the statue you now see on the lawn of the Howell Carnegie District Library.

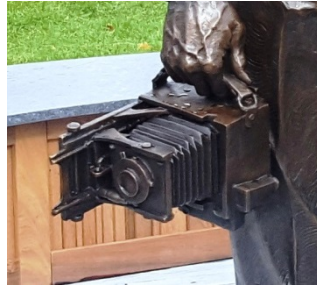
This statue contains nearly 60 symbols, items and book titles related to Zemp’s life, accomplishments and interests. The goal is to encourage people viewing the statue to explore the statue, to identify those items, and to inspire them to learn more about the history of the community, and maybe inspire them to make their own contributions to their community.

To assist in this process, this document identifies all these elements of Zemp’s statue, and provides some background for each, based on my knowledge of my father’s remarkable life.

*Eric D. Zemper, PhD
Ann Arbor, MI
March 2019*

1) Referencing Zemp's life-long career as a photographer, one of the easiest items to find on the statue is the Graflex Speed Graphic camera in his right hand. Zemp began using this camera while he was a photo intelligence officer in the US Army Air Force in WWII, and used it throughout his life. It used sheet film held in cassettes, and the camera was focused by moving the lens assembly at the front of the camera back and forth using either of the two knobs at the base of the camera below the bellows. On the statue, Zemp's initials, DLZ (Duane LeRoy Zemper), have been added to the bottom of the camera.

Can you find two major differences between the real camera and the camera on the statue?
(Answer is at the end of this document.)



2) The first of several references to Zemp's successful athletic career as a distance runner in Cross Country and Track & Field is the NCAA medal on his bolo tie that he always wore in his later years. He earned three NCAA Cross Country medals, two as an All-American finishing 10th in both the 1940 and the 1941 NCAA Cross Country Championship meets, and one as a member of Michigan Normal's second place team in the 1940 championships. Occasionally he would change the medal in his bolo tie and use the Michigan AAU Cross Country Championship medal that is found elsewhere on the statue (see #5 below).

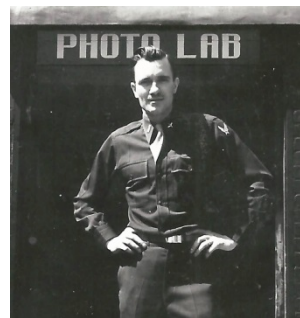


D.L. Zemper, Captain – 1941 Cross Country Team

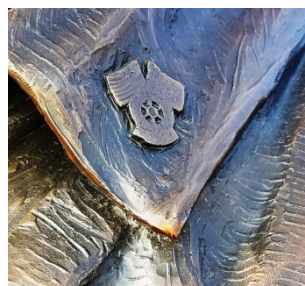
3) To the right of the bolo tie medal, on Zemp's sweater is a pin of the logo of the 457th Bombardment Group (H) of the 1st Air Bombardment Division of the 8th Air Force. (The "H" stands for "Heavy bombers"; the 457th flew B-17 Flying Fortress bombers, which were the largest of US bomber aircraft at the beginning of WWII.) The phrase on the bottom ribbon is the unit motto, "Fait Accompli", meaning "an accomplished fact" or in colloquial American, a "done deal". After training in photography and photo intelligence operations during 1943, Lt. Duane L. Zemper was assigned to the 457th BG as the commanding officer of the unit's photo intelligence group. The 457th BG completed their transfer from the US to England in January of 1944, operating out of Station 130 Glatton Airfield in Conington south of Peterborough. The group flew 236 missions between February 1944 and April 1945, then returned to the US for retraining in B-29 bombers and to await orders for deployment to the Pacific theater of war. That second deployment never occurred because of the end of the war. Lt. Zemper commanded a unit of 20 photo technicians whose duty was to fly on three of the planes during each mission and use large aerial cameras to take photos of where bombs hit, to assess accuracy and damage, immediately develop the film upon return to base, and get analyses to division headquarters within an hour of landing. In his later years Zemp often wore this pin on his sweater, jacket or a B-17 ball cap.



B-17G with 457th BG markings (triangle and "U" on tail)



4) The pin on Zemp's left shirt lapel on the statue is in reference to his membership in the Howell Rotary Club. The Rotary Club is a national service organization comprised of representatives of different professions within a community. Zemp joined Rotary in 1948, and served as president of the local club in the early 1950s. His more than 65 years of perfect attendance at weekly meetings was among the longest ever recorded in Rotary Club history. The Howell Rotary Club instituted the drive to create this statue to honor Zemp's legacy, and has also created an annual scholarship for a Howell High School student intending to major in college in photography, history or the visual arts.



The US and Canadian flags indicate the international aspect of the Rotary Club

5) On the archive box at about the level of Zemp's knees is the second Cross Country medal often worn by Zemp in his bolo tie. This is the 1941 Michigan Association of the Amateur Athletic Union state championship medal. It also can be seen on his bolo tie in the picture on the previous page of Zemp in his ball cap.



6) The Michigan AAU medal is on an archive box next to the phrase "On the wings of gratitude – Gift of John Seaton". This refers to Zemp's story of how he was able to begin college at Michigan Normal (now Eastern Michigan University). Although recruited by Michigan Normal's coach, Lloyd Olds, after graduating from Flint Central High School in 1937, Zemp could not afford to attend the college. At that time there were no such things as athletic scholarships, but Coach Olds had promised that Zemp would be provided with jobs to earn room and board at the school once he got there. However, being in the midst of the Great Depression, Zemp and his family could not afford the cost of tuition for the initial entrance to the school. A few months after his high school graduation, late in November while walking around downtown Flint, he ran into his high school Cross Country coach, John Seaton, who asked Zemp why he wasn't in college. When told he couldn't afford the \$35 tuition costs, Seaton pulled \$35 out of his pocket, gave it to Zemp, and told him to go to school. In January of 1938, he enrolled at Michigan Normal. That life-changing encounter set Zemp on his course of academic studies and distance-running success that molded the rest of his career. The placement of the championship medal here is in tribute to John Seaton's gift, which allowed Zemp to go on to a successful running career in college (see #8 below). The "wings" mentioned here is also a reference to the classic Track & Field symbol of a winged foot (see #8 below).



John W. Seaton



Lloyd W. Olds

7) The \$35 gift of John Seaton (#6 above) is also referenced in a book title, "The Life Changing \$35" with the publisher noted as "Tuition Press".



8) In a number of places on the statue will be found representations of the winged foot symbol for the sport of Track & Field. These are in reference to Zemp's successful career in the sport at Michigan Normal, as well as during his service in the Army. In college he was a top finisher in NCAA and AAU championship meets, was a member of Michigan Normal's 2-Mile Relay and Distance Medley Relay teams that won at the Drake Relays in 1941, and he was a member of the Michigan Normal 2-Mile Relay team that set the American Collegiate indoor record in 1940. While in the military stationed in England during WWII, Zemp was the 8th Air Force champion in the mile and half-mile runs, and was undefeated in numerous races against other air bases and British club teams. One of the easier of these symbols to find is on the book entitled "The Life Changing \$35". One of the hardest to find is in Zemp's left pants pocket. There are a total of seven of these symbols placed on the statue. In addition to the two noted previously, they can be found at:

- left arm inside cuff
- on book "Everyone Has a Story: What's Yours?"
- underside of book "Ode to a Storyteller"
- underside of book "Origins"
- inside of right shoe



Zemp winning races in college and in England

9) Another sport symbol is that for Cross Country, which is a pair of "C"s pierced by an arrow. This symbol can be found on the statue on the outside of Zemp's left shirt cuff, and is a reference to his successful career as a college Cross Country runner, as noted previously (see #2 and #5).



Most of the remaining items to be found on the statue are in the form of books and archive boxes.

10) Book “The Elephant in the Alley” is a reference to one of Zemp’s many stories about the history of Howell. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries circuses would occasionally stop in town, usually transported by railroad trains. On one occasion, after concluding their performances at the fairgrounds on the east side of town, everything was packed and being transported through town to the railroad station. Staying off Grand River Avenue, the circus elephants were being walked through the alley a half block south of Grand River Avenue. Between what is now Walnut and Center Streets one of the elephants suddenly keeled over and died. This presented a major problem. What do you do with a dead elephant? There was no heavy equipment available to haul it off. So they did the only practical thing they could do. They dug a deep hole beside the elephant’s body, and rolled it into the hole and buried it on the spot. So there is an elephant buried in the alley in Howell.



11) In reference to the Elephant in the Alley story, there is an elephant hidden in the binding of that book.



12) Archive box “Hazel Park – Bay City, MI 11-4-1919”. Bay City refers to where Zemp was born. The Hazel in Hazel Park is a reference to Zemp’s mother’s name, Hazel. The date is the date Zemp was born, November 4, 1919.



13) Below this is another archive box with “Howell Archives 1919-2016” with angel wings below the dates. The dates are those of Zemp’s birth and death. The “Howell Archives” refers to the Howell Area Archives that Zemp co-founded and oversaw until his death.

14) Book "The Torch – Howell High School Yearbook 1968". The Torch is the traditional name of the Howell High School Yearbook. The 1968 edition was dedicated to Zemp for his many years of assistance in producing the yearbook, providing pictures and materials, and mentoring each year's yearbook student staff.

15) Book "Michigan State Normal College Track and Field Records" is another reference to Zemp's athletic career at Michigan Normal.

16) Book "Once Upon a Time ... Ode to a Storyteller" is a nod to Zemp's many years of collecting and telling stories and anecdotes about the people, events and history of Howell. Some of these stories are preserved in recordings in the Howell Area Archives.

17) Book "Saved by the Camera Strap – D.Z." refers to an incident when Zemp was serving in the Army Air Force in England during WWII. On a training flight over the English Channel to test a new bombardier who had just been assigned to the 457th BG, the plane was making several passes over a target anchored in the Channel. On each pass the bombardier would drop one practice bomb. Zemp was sitting cross-legged on a V-shaped catwalk that ran through the middle of the bomb bay of the plane, taking pictures of where each bomb landed, so the bombardier's accuracy could be evaluated. After the final pass the plane turned back to base, and hit an air pocket. The plane dropped suddenly and, not being tied down, Zemp slammed against the ceiling of the bomb bay and lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness he found he was completely outside the airplane with his legs banging against the fuselage in the slipstream, and he was hanging onto his camera, which was jammed in a corner of the bomb bay doors. The K-20 camera, rather than the strap mentioned in this book title, actually had an aluminum body and handle. It took Zemp about five minutes to climb back into the bomb bay. He then crawled into the radio room, where the radio operator told him there was a message for him: He had just had a son (Eric) born back in Howell. This was in late May 1944. Zemp's later children were forever grateful he hung on to that camera.



Video recordings of Zemp telling this and other stories about his experiences in WWII are available in the Howell Area Archives

18) Book *102 Favorite Paintings by Norman Rockwell* (upside down on statue) is a book that was on Zemp's bookshelf, indicative of his interest in the visual arts.

19) Book "Aerial Photography during WWII" is a reference to Zemp's military career as an aerial photographer and photo intelligence officer during WWII.

20) Book *Photographic Print Finishing* is a book found on Zemp's bookshelf that he kept available from his early years of learning the art of photography. There is an image of a small camera for the publisher logo (arrow).

21) Book *Origins* by Richard E. Leaky and Roger Lewin is one of many books that populated Zemp's bookshelves that reflected his life-long interest in evolution and other biological sciences.

22) Book "3,450 Sit-Ups – WR" is a reference to the fact that, while he was training to be a photographer and photo intelligence officer, he set a world record of 3,450 sit-ups in 3h 42m.

23) Book "Rotary Club: The Four-Way Test" is another reference to Zemp's years as a Rotarian. The Four-Way Test is a moral and ethical code Rotarians apply to personal and professional relationships. 1. Is it the TRUTH? 2. Is it FAIR to all concerned? 3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? 4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

24) Book (upside down on statue) *John Adams* by David McCullough is one of many books on Zemp's bookshelves that reflected his interest in history, and particularly American history.

25) Archive box titled "History of Livingston County – Howell Area Archives – Joyce Fisher" reflects Zemp's many years of compiling materials for the Archives on the history of the county. Joyce Fisher's name is included here as a tribute to her many years of assisting Zemp in running the Archives and being one of his greatest supporters.



Joyce Fisher

26) Book "The Silver Dollar in the Mill Pond" recalls another of Zemp's many stories about the community. The large home on N. Michigan Avenue, known for many years as the "McPherson Mansion", was built in 1915 by Robert B. McPherson (R.B.), the grandson of one of the early settlers in Howell, William McPherson. About the time the home was built R.B. acquired two early American coins, which turned out to be the only two of their kind still in existence. Having them appraised, he found out they were worth a good deal of money. But he also knew that if only one of them existed, it would be worth much more than the worth of the two of them together. So R.B. stood on the back porch of his new home and threw the less valuable of the two coins into a pond in a swampy area behind the house. A couple of kids saw him throwing the coin into the pond, and spent many hours searching through the muck for it; but they never found it. The name "Moffitt" on the book spine where you normally see the publisher's name is a reference to a long-time friend of Zemp's, Jim Moffitt, who owned and lived in the McPherson Mansion from 1961 to 1972.

27) In relation to the "Silver Dollar in the Mill Pond" story, on the book just below there are two coins on the statue. The coin that is partially hidden is dated 1976, which is a reference to the year Zemp was named Howell Citizen of the Year.



Jim Moffitt and the Zemp statue



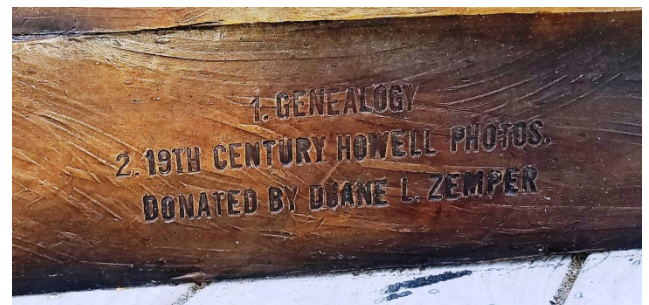
28) Book “1976 Howell Bicentennial History” commemorates the *Howell Bicentennial History Book 1776-1976* that was co-edited by Zemp. It included many of the stories he had accumulated about the community and, along with a companion Photo Supplement volume, was filled with hundreds of the pictures he had inherited and preserved after he bought his photography studio, plus many of his own pictures. Copies of these two volumes can be found in the Library and are preserved in the Howell Area Archives.



29) Archive boxes “Zemp Legacy Project Committee 2018” contains the initials of all the Zemp Legacy Committee members: **Pat Convery, Sandie Cortez, Brent Earl, Bob Ellis, Kim Esper, Joyce Fisher, Patti Griffith, Mike Hall, Erica Karfonta, Jon King, Holly Ward-Lamb, Richard Lim, Steve Manor, Dennis Perkins, Nick Proctor, Lindsay Root, Kathleen Zaenger, Eric Zemper.** A second set of committee initials appears on an archive box labeled “Howell Archives Livingston County Press 1910-1919”; 1919 was the year Zemp was born.



30) Archive box “1. Genealogy 2. 19th Century Howell Photos Donated by Duane L. Zemper” refers to 1) the help Zemp and the Archive staff were able to provide to the many people who came to the Archives seeking information on their families and ancestors, made possible by the extensive historical records of the county collected and preserved in the Archives; and 2) another reference to the hundreds of old photos Zemp found stored in the back of his newly purchased studio in January 1946 that he preserved and eventually made available to the community by donating them to the Archives as an initial collection of materials to help start the Archives.



31) Archive box “Julius and the Seamen – A Swashbuckling Tale” is a whimsical nod to Zemp’s parents, Julius Zemper (always known as Joe) and Hazel (Seamans) Zemper.



32) At the bottom of the book stack is an archive box labeled “Michigan State Normal College 1942”. This is a reference to Zemp’s college (now known as Eastern Michigan University) and the year he graduated (January 1942).



33) Book “Zemper Photography Studio” is a reference to Zemp’s business for over 50 years. The Life symbol refers to it as his life’s work. The name “Finch” in the spot where a book’s publisher is normally noted refers to Gary Finch, who worked with Zemp in the studio for many years, beginning when he was in high school. He also was the student photographer for the 1968 Howell High School yearbook (see #14). Gary eventually went on to be a photographer for General Motors until his retirement. There is available in the Howell Area Archives a document containing a memoir about Finch’s time working with Zemp in the studio, and a collection of about 135 of Zemp’s best portraits that Finch digitally preserved.



Zemp and Gary Finch

34) Book “WWII: Through the Lens of Duane Zemper” refers to a Public Broadcasting System documentary of that title about Zemp and his experiences in WWII. While visiting the Archives to get information on the Howell Opera House for a documentary they were producing for PBS, Donna Ryen and Matt Zacharias learned of Zemp’s WWII service and decided to produce a documentary about it. During the summer of 2007 the two made numerous trips to Howell to interview Zemp and go through the boxes of movies, film and photographs he had saved from destruction and brought home after the war. The resulting 18 minute video received a regional Emmy Award for best historical documentary in 2007. The video is preserved in the Archives and available for viewing in the Library.



Zemp, Donna Ryen, Matt Zacharias and their Emmy

35) Book *Fait Accompli: A Historical Account of the 457th Bomb Group (H)* represents a series of three books by Homer Briggs, James Bass, John Welch and Craig Harris covering the history of the 457th Bomber Group, in which Zemp served as the commanding officer of the photo intelligence unit during WWII. On the book spine is a depiction of a B-17 aircraft, which was the type of aircraft flown by the 457th BG (see #3 above).



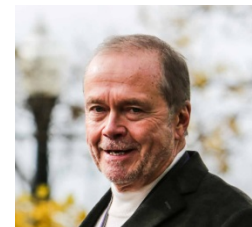
36) Book "Sir Eric in the Hall of Earls" by Gail Stevenson and Martha Danielson, published by Tillie Press. Another whimsical title from the artists, this one incorporating the names of Zemp's eldest child, Eric, fellow Zemp Legacy Committee members Mike Hall (chairman) and Brent Earl (both of whom were primary committee contacts with the Pooles), and Zemp's other children: Gail, Steve, Martha (Marty) and Daniel. The names appear a bit out of order of their birth: Eric (1944), Steve (1947), Gail (1949), Dan (1957) and Marty (1965). Tillie, of course, refers to Zemp's wife and the mother of his children.



The Zemper family in 1993; bottom row (l-r): Marty, Tillie, Zemp, Gail; top row: Steve, Eric, Dan



Ruth Matilda (Tillie) Zemper



Mike Hall



Brent Earl



Lt. Zemper and Tillie

37) Book *Contact* by Carl Sagan, along with Sagan's *Cosmos*, were prominent books on Zemp's bookshelves, indicative of his continuing interest in science, cosmology, and the possibility we might find life elsewhere in the universe.



38) Found on Zemp's pant cuff above his left shoe is the artists' signature, representing Kristine and Colin Poole.



Kristine and Colin Poole

39) On the back side of one of the archive boxes is circular symbol that was incorporated by one of the artists, Kristine Poole. When asked about it, she responded, "The love symbol is a little charm I've carried with me since my university days at Northern Michigan University. I thought that from further away it looked a bit like a "stamp" one might find on the corner of an archive box and on closer inspection, it was a comment on being married for your whole life - the story on that side of the box is about Zemp and your mom, so it seemed like it fit there."



40) Finally, there is a book entitled “Everyone Has a Story; What’s Yours?”, with Zemp as the publisher. Over the many years of his life, this became something he was often heard to say. He believed everyone had something interesting in their life that should be shared with others, and he spent much of his time getting the people he met in the community to tell their special stories.



Members of the Zemp Legacy Committee:

Mike Hall (chair)	Patti Griffith
Eric Zemper	Jon King
Erica Karfonta	Richard Lim
Pat Convery	Steve Manor
Sandie Cortez	Dennis Perkins
Brent Earl	Nick Proctor
Bob Ellis	Lindsay Root
Kim Esper	Holly Ward-Lamb
Joyce Fisher	Kathleen Zaenger

Artist Juror Committee:

Brent Earl (chair)	Fern Sirapa
Cathleen Edgerly	Kathleen Zaenger
Joyce Fisher	Eric Zemper
Lindsay Root	

(Answer to the question posed in item #1: The positions of the strap or handle on the side of the camera and the viewfinder on the top of the camera were reversed on the statue by the artists to provide a better overall design.)

As noted in the Introduction to this document, the goal of the Zemp Legacy Committee in commissioning this artwork was to encourage people viewing it to explore the statue, to derive enjoyment while identifying the many symbols incorporated into the piece, and to inspire viewers to learn more about the history of the community, and maybe inspire them to make their own contributions to their community. We trust we have succeeded.

ENJOY!

Photo credits: Kimberly Zemper Miller (cover); Steve Zemper (Graflex camera on page 1); Commemorative Air Force – Mesa, AZ (B-17 on page 2); Jim Moffitt (Jim Moffitt on page 8); Kristine and Colin Poole (Pooles on page 12); all other photos – Eric D. Zemper and Zemper family photos.