

# LOS GATOS

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Los Gatos

The Heart of Los Gatos

*Living*

COMMUNITY INTEREST

## COURAGE *and* SACRIFICE *Inspire Artistic Tribute*

By Ellen Manzo

Truly great works of art create emotion with the eyes that see it and with the heart that can feel it.

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation has faced a difficult challenge in selecting a fitting design that both honors our veterans and at the same time, complements the esthetic character of Los Gatos. After all, this team was not just in search of an aesthetically pleasing, public art piece. They have

been tasked with selecting a design that appropriately conveys the Town's deepest gratitude and respect for the sacrifice of their local and deployed military members and veterans. The selected piece is meant to be a lasting memorial and reminder, honoring those who have contributed so much to securing America's freedom, past, present, and well into the future.

The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation has conducted two national art challenges in order to find a rendering that effectively complements the beauty of the Civic Center, while meeting their criteria of design and messaging. The team first conducted a preview and briefing with local artists, intent on providing local professionals the advantage of time to construct their concepts. Months later, the Foundation extended the reach of their Call to Arms Challenge by opening their search nationwide, notifying artists, architects, art schools, and art associations of the opportunity to compete in the design endeavor. The process called for multiple reviews of renderings, briefings, and financial proposals. Ultimately, the final selection was based upon review and input from local stakeholders, the public, and the Foundation Board. Four years, thousands of volunteer hours, and four Town Council presentations later, the board of the Veterans Foundation had attained final approval for their proposed memorial. The selected design, *The Flame of Liberty*, is the thought-provoking work of acclaimed artist Frank Kocian Morris.

As with any construction project, the follow-on work has been just as time-intensive as the design work. With the help of nine sets of professionals, comprised of structural engineers, soil engineers, arborists, water irrigation experts, and more, all of whose expenses have depended upon the private fundraising



efforts of the Foundation, the initial conceptual design has been translated into architectural plans. The final step of the process is a Town review of the architectural plans, expected to occur prior to year-end.

It takes a special artist to compete in a challenge of this kind, one who believes in the strength of his or her concept, for the personal risk of involvement and time is costly. Any artist who competed for the challenge did so with no guaranteed return. The Foundation was fortunate to have had several stand the test.

In the art world, one might consider Frank Morris to be Renaissance-like, for his talents and recognized successes cross several mediums: public art, sculpture, portraiture and illustration. In addition to public spaces, his work hangs in private collections, corporate boardrooms, and city halls. His paintings have been reproduced on covers of magazines such as *Newsweek* and *New York Magazine*, where he was asked to paint luminaries to include Presidents Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Rosalynn Carter, Hamilton Jordan and the Shah of Iran. Mr. Morris' illustrations include productions for best-selling authors Anne Rice, John Updike, John le Carré, David Brinkley, Walter Cronkite, Salmon Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez, John Berendt, Camille Paglia, P. J. O'Rourke, Peter Mayle, Toni Morrison, Julia Child, Lauren Bacall, Scott Turow, Cormac McCarthy, Elie Wiesel and Michael Crichton.

While many revere the notoriety of being selected as designer for the U.S. Mint, Mr. Morris has been selected by the U.S. Treasury, honored with the prestigious position of Master Designer. "To many, coins are just currency. To me, each is its own distinct piece of sculpture or three-dimensional art," explained Frank Morris, who is responsible for creating designs for multiple American circulating coins, Congressional medals, and Presidential medals. Recent design selections by the U.S. Mint include three Congressional Gold Medals to honor the Native American Code-Talkers of World War I & II, three Gold Collector Coins that honor First Ladies Caroline Harrison, Ellen Wilson & Grace Coolidge, and the November 2017 planned release of the George Rogers Clark coin in honor of a celebrated Revolutionary War hero.

And his list of notable commendations speaks volumes regarding his talent. Frank Morris has received 1st place awards, citations from *Artists Magazine*, *Print Magazine*, *National Competition of Realistic Art*, *Communication Arts Magazine*, *Outstanding American Illustrators of America* and the *Society of Illustrators*.

A native of Memphis, Frank Morris trained, lived and worked in California and New York and returned to Memphis where he now resides. Many exceptional artists sport a solid foundation



and Frank Morris is no exception. He began private training at an early age in the atelier of noted painter Paul Penczner. He then earned a fine arts degree with honors from the University of Memphis and continued his post baccalaureate studies at the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. Mr. Morris worked in New York City as an illustrator and designer and continued to perfect his craft at famous art schools, including The Art Students League and the New York Academy of Art. This wealth of professional experience and artistic training enabled Frank Morris to naturally evolve into one of the premier artists in America. And, as his career has progressed over time and his elevator ascended heights in his craft, he has responsibly passed on his knowledge to others by teaching at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, the Memphis College of Art and private lessons in his own Atelier.

Passionate about the importance of recognizing America's veterans and first responders, Frank Morris served in the United States Air Force and his San Francisco-based brother, William Morris, served in the Vietnam War. What artist understands the needs of veterans more than one who has personally served his country? In this case, it was evident that his passion fueled his inspirational creativity for it landed him the selection of his iconic memorial design, one that delivers a strong message of gratitude and honor – a memorial that the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation plans to bring to Los Gatos with the assistance of a community that remembers and appreciates America's Guardians of Liberty.

For continued information on the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation's progress access [www.honorAvet.org](http://www.honorAvet.org) and <https://www.facebook.com/veteransmemorialfoundation>.