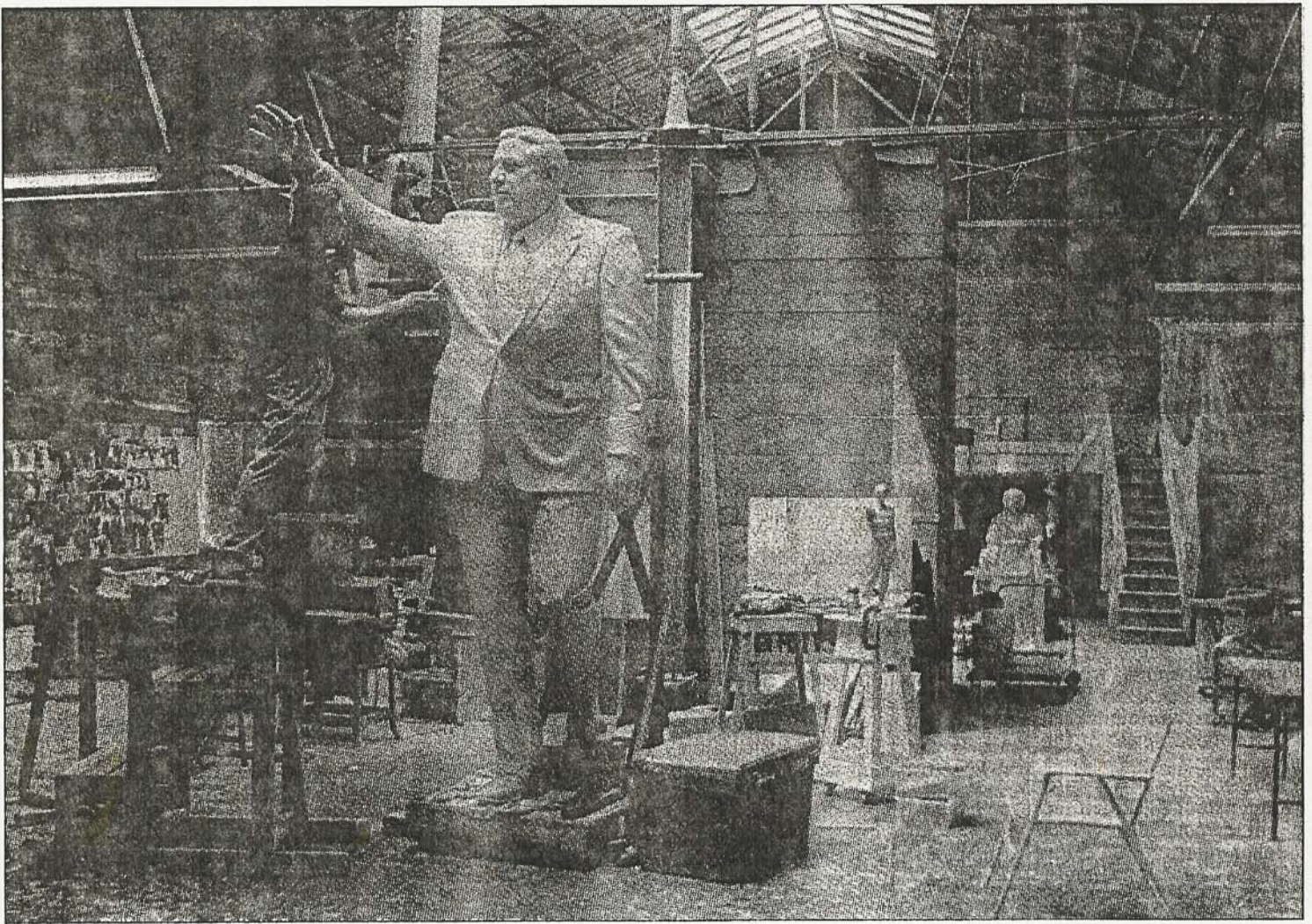


Philadelphia Inquirer

Sunday, December 27, 1998

Mayoral monument emerges



CHELIE KEMPER-STARNER / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Sculptor Zenos Frudakis works on a statue of Frank Rizzo in a Chester studio. The 10-foot-tall clay image of the late mayor was used to make a cast for the finished bronze piece, which will be presented Friday at the Municipal Services Building. Funds for it were raised among Rizzo's family and friends. The story of the making of the statue, more photos: **NJ. and Region, B1.**

New Jersey & Region

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The public can judge Friday if the sculptor caught the late mayor's essence.

Frank Rizzo, still larger than life

By Murray Dubin
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Carmella Rizzo and her son drove to the city of Chester and walked inside a brick factory building near the waterfront and up the steep steps to the second floor. There, for the first time, they saw it.

Sculptor Zenos Frudakis waited nervously.

"I felt vulnerable," he said. "She knew him better than anyone, and she also knew him as a younger man. Suppose she said, 'No, you missed it!'"

But she didn't.

"That's him!" was what he remembered her saying.

City Councilman Frank Rizzo Jr. didn't recall what his mother said that April night eight months ago, but he was clear on one point:

"Zenos satisfied the number-one person, my mother. She said the pants were too tight and something about the cuffs. And she walked around and made sure the hair wasn't too long."

And she pointed out that there was no watch. Her husband always wore one on his left wrist.

"It was so real, it was incredible," said Carmella Rizzo, remembering that first look. "I think the sculptor tried to keep it as close to his age as he could, you know, the way he was. Frank liked the way he looked, the gray hair; he thought he looked distinguished."

Her son was satisfied as well. That was his father up there.

This Friday, in the early afternoon, about the same time as the first Mummers string band arrives at City Hall, a 10-foot-high bronze statue of the late Mayor Frank L. Rizzo is to be presented on the steps of the Municipal Services Building.

And then people will judge for themselves whether it does look like Frank Rizzo.

Frank Lazzaro Rizzo was born on Oct. 23, 1920, and died on July 16, 1991, just two months after winning the Republican primary for mayor.

He was Philadelphia's police commissioner from 1967 to 1971, twice mayor, from 1972 to 1980, and a candidate for mayor five times.

A monumental presence in the urban topography, he was a friend to presidents, a pal to bus drivers, a "Yo, Frank!" to anyone within hailing distance.

His supporters considered him an honest mayor representing rowhouse Philadelphia. Some detractors thought

See RIZZO on B4



Rizzo in bronze: Former mayor still larger than life



Zenos Frudakis agreed in 1994 to produce a statue of former Mayor Frank Rizzo.

RIZZO from B1 him a racist and an embarrassment to the city.

Throughout a long public career, he was seen as "bigger than life," and the description became part of his identity in the same way that police commissioner and mayor and South Philadelphia were part of who he was.

Now, at 10 feet tall, he is much bigger than his height of 6 foot 2. Now, he is a monument.

What follows is the story of his statue, crafted from oil-based Italian Giudec clay, then cast in bronze.

It is also the story of a sculptor, the son of an immigrant trying to fashion the body, face and spirit of another immigrant's son.

Death was sudden. One minute, he was fine; the next, he was dead on the floor in the bathroom of his Center City campaign office: heart attack.

An elaborate funeral, a spectacle, 160 cars in the cortege to the cemetery — then he was gone.

Family and friends wanted to fill the void.

"We all felt we had to do something to memorialize Frank," said Lou Cissone, 63, a nephew and retired chief financial officer for Sun Distributors, now SunSource.

"I've been involved with Uncle Frank since his first campaign. I did work as treasurer; I looked at campaign funds. He depended on me to do everything financial. To this day, for Aunt Carmella, the bank statements come to me.



DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Ben Weaver (left) and Larry Welker of the Laran Bronze Foundry of Chester pour molten bronze into molds.

"We talked about foundations, scholarships, but it all gets bureaucratic, and Carmella didn't want something that we would have to be raising money for year after year. And we talked about naming buildings, the courthouse, the Municipal Services Building."

It was family talking: Cissone and his aunt; her children, Frank Jr. and Joanna Mastronardo; Carmella's sister, Eva Collela, and her husband, Gus. Later, Joseph Rizzo, the mayor's younger brother, would be involved.

No one is sure who first suggested a statue, but Rizzo's son wants it clear that it was not his idea.

"It was the people's," he said. "They wanted a statue. My father, my father would have pool-pooled it. He would have not wanted a statue."

His mother was not so sure.

"He would have been proud," she said. "But I really don't know how else he would have reacted."

The councilman wasn't sure it was a good idea, until he had mentioned it to the mayor.

"Rendell said my father was Philadelphia," he recalled. "It was then I realized a statue wasn't inappropriate or corny."

The idea took hold late in 1992. It would be privately funded. Friends and family would pay for it and for its maintenance.

Jody Della Barba, the mayor's former personal secretary, "started knocking on doors and raising money," Cissone said. "She was important. She really got us moving."

She even had a design firm prepare a model of a statue, which was presented at a cocktail party for potential fund-raisers. The model was

a disappointment, but, Cissone said, "people were saying to us that they wanted to do something and not to forget them."

So the Frank L. Rizzo Monument Committee went ahead. Frank Jr. and Linda Roth, whom he had worked with at Peco, and Cissone were its leaders. An event at Palumbo's in September 1993 raised start-up funds.

A few months later, the committee found its sculptor.

Cissone, who was on the board of directors of the Fitter Square Improvement Association, knew a little about public art and had heard of Frudakis. The sculptor had done busts and life-size statues. Here was a guy who could do guys in suits.

And that's what the committee wanted: Rizzo in a suit. No billy club in a cummerbund. No hint of the man who talked about breaking

criminals' heads. Good Rizzo. Mayor of the people.

Frudakis understood. "They wanted people to see it and remember the best of the man," he said. "He evoked strong emotions. And I tried to capture the positive ones."

The committee and Frudakis signed a contract on March 28, 1994: one hundred thousand dollars for one life-size Rizzo statue.

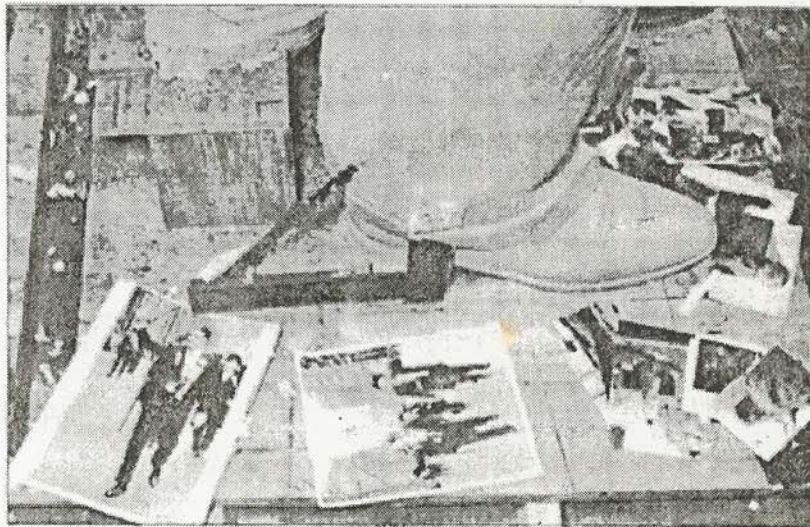
In the end, Frudakis concluded that life size wasn't big enough.

Son of a Greek immigrant miner, Frudakis grew up in Gary, Ind., and came here in 1972 to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. It was Rizzo's first mayoral term, but Frudakis wasn't paying attention:



DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Frank Rizzo photos were close by as the clay version of the statue, right, was sculpted. Sculptor Zenos Frudakis cleared debris from the bronze cast of the head of the 10-foot statue of the former mayor, at left. The last weld attaching the head of the statue to the body was made by Henry Paterson of Laran Bronze Foundry, of Chester, above. Finally, chemicals were brushed on and rubbed off to give the bronze its patina.



CHERIE KEMPER-STARNER / Inquirer Suburban Staff