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Sunday Review



CHARLES FOX / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Carmella Rizzo (center), flanked by her children Frank Jr. and Joanna Mastronardo, attends the unveiling of the statue of the late mayor outside the Municipal Services Building. The memorial was dedicated Friday.

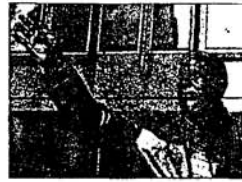
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City & Region

Frank Rizzo statue greets the new year

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David Peatross, 5, plays at the feet of the statue, at the Municipal Services Building at 15th Street and JFK Boulevard across from City Hall. David's father, Charles, was a photographer for Rizzo.

Statue of Frank Rizzo is unveiled as crowd cheers, Mummers play

By Cynthia Burton
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Frank Lazzaro Rizzo was a man in motion, which is why his wife and son and a sculptor who came to know him decided that his monument should be a statue walking toward the people, hand upheld in a greeting.

Until yesterday, only a handful of Rizzo lovers had seen the Zenos Frudakis sculpture of the late Philadelphia mayor and police commissioner. The statue, permanently affixed to the steps of the city's Municipal Services Building and facing the north wall of City Hall, was unveiled as the Broomall String Band played in the background at the Mummers Parade.

The crowd was small — about 150 people — but spirited. As Mayor Rendell came to the microphone to make a ceremonial speech, they chanted "Eddie, Eddie." When they counted down from 10 to the moment the blue plastic tarp was pulled from the bronze statue, they drowned out the Mummers.

They braved piercing cold to once more tell Rizzo stories and talk about how he was "larger than life."

For his son, Frank Rizzo, a city councilman, the memory was of a day when he and his father approached the mayor's entrance at the northeast corner of City Hall and a bus driver stopped his bus, got out and shook the mayor's hand. Or when father and son went to a Phillies game and had to move to a back

row so that all the people coming up to greet the big man would not block the fans' view of the game. Or when they would go to the Country Club Restaurant on Cottman Avenue and the waitresses would stop serving customers to greet him.

"This is how I remembered him," his son said. "He was always waving at people."

For his wife, Carmella, the unveiling was a moment of triumph tinged with sadness. "I would rather have had him here. He would have been thrilled," she said.

And, for Martin Weinberg, Rizzo's closest political strategist, it was a memory of a St. Patrick's Day parade in 1972 where the two were marching together. A photograph of Rizzo waving during that parade was used as the model for the sculpture.

"As people go by here, they're going to smile because they're going to remember something about him," Weinberg said.

The son of an Italian immigrant, Rizzo was born in 1920 on Rosewood Street near Ritner, the heart of the city's Italian community. He followed his father into the police department in 1943 and quickly rose through the ranks to become commissioner in 1967, attracting plenty of publicity along the way with raids on strip joints and coffeehouses.

He was first elected mayor in 1972, but his dominance of the political scene had started before that. In the 1967 mayor's race, Mayor James H.J. Tate wooed Rizzoites by declaring that he would keep Big Frank on as the city's top cop.

Rizzo left the mayor's office in



As the statue of Frank L. Rizzo is unveiled, members of his family look on. They are (foreground, from left) his son, City Councilman Frank Rizzo, the late mayor's wife, Carmella, and daughter, Joanna.

CHARLES FOX / Inquirer Staff Photographer

January 1980 and spent the remaining 11 years of his life trying to get it back. He ran for mayor in every election from 1983 until 1991, when he won the Republican primary and died two months later of a heart attack. Had he lived, he would have faced Rendell in the 1991 general election.

Even in this 1999 mayoral cycle, Rizzo's presence will be felt. Wein-

berg, who wants to be mayor, was joined at the unveiling by former Council President John F. Street, who also wants to be mayor.

Frudakis said he wanted this work to capture the kind side of Rizzo.

"I didn't want him on a pedestal," he said. "He is stepping off a pedestal. He was a man of energy. I wanted to show him moving."

"This is how I remembered him," his son, Frank Rizzo, said. "He was always waving at people."