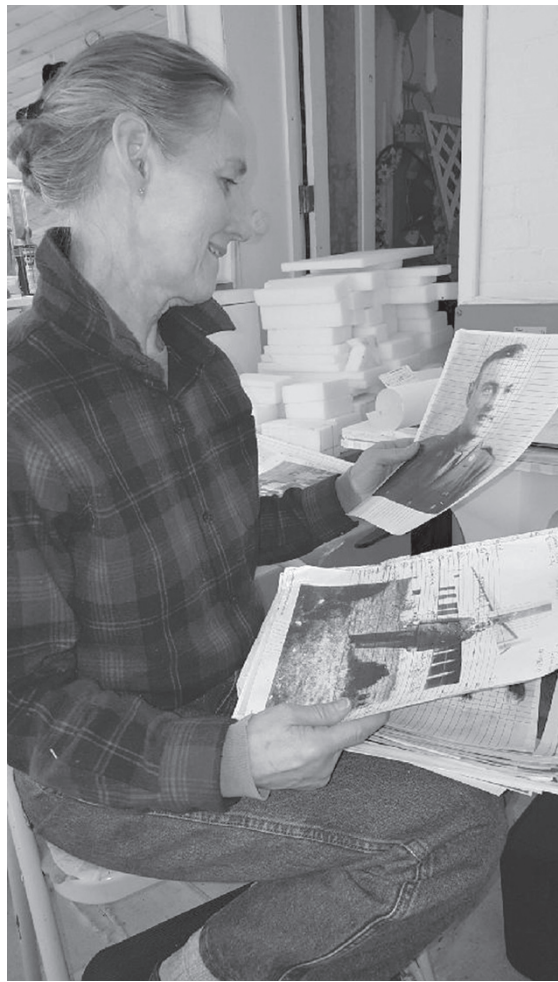




Peter Henderson, left and Susan Geissler stand above her initial drawing of Charles N. DeGlopper, which she used to craft her sculpture of the World War II hero from Grand Island. (Photo by Michael J. Billoni)



Susan Geissler reviewing photos of DeGlopper early in the sculpting process. (From the Susan Geissler collection)

began firing his Browning automatic rifle at the attacking Germans in an attempt to suppress their fire while allowing his comrades to retreat. As he continued to walk to the middle of the road spraying bullets towards a stunned enemy, DeGlopper stood tall on that road despite being shot and wounded. It dropped him to one knee but he continued shooting round after round, until he ultimately was killed on the road.

A true American war hero was born at that moment.

Six years ago, Town Parks Department officials met with Drexelius and members of the local American Legion and Charles N. DeGlopper VFW Post 9249 to brainstorm ways to embellish the DeGlopper Memorial Park as a tribute to town veterans. Soon thereafter, the DeGlopper Memorial Expansion Committee was formed. A life-sized statue of DeGlopper was discussed and artist Ralph Sirianni created a drawing that was approved by the committee. It was promoted that plans for a DeGlopper sculpture would be unveiled at the site on June 2, 2016. That announcement caught the attention of Geissler and her husband, Peter.

"Peter and I heard they were going to construct a statue of a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient from Grand Island," Geissler explained. "We decided to attend, just to see whom the sculptor was. While we were there, we ran into Ralph, the artist, whom Peter knew. When Peter asked him whom his sculptor was going to be, he said, 'Why Susan, of course.'" Geissler said with a look of surprise.

During the ceremony, Geissler connected with another artist, Anita DeGlopper. Neither knew each other but they found a common bond in art.

"I had no idea who she was," Geissler said. "We struck up a conversation and we quickly learned we are both artists. When Ralph came over with the drawing and I heard Anita talking with him about his drawing of DeGlopper's nose I became interested. When I offered a suggestion, she looked at me and said, 'You must be the sculptor Ralph was talking about.' It was hysterical and we had already liked each other from our earlier conversation, so this just make everything kind of a bond."

Once Geissler was on board as the sculptor, she began her intense research of her subject.

"My brothers and I all visited Susan in her studio during the process of her sculpting Charlie, and watching it all was quite amazing," Ray DeGlopper said.

"From these discussions, I created a small 3-D clay model of the subject which would use for fixing its form and the direction of the gun among other details," Geissler said.

From her research, she got onto the floor of the studio and drew the life-sized image which was her model and then she used Styrofoam blocks

as the image was built. It was quite a time-consuming, detailed process.

In late January 2020, Geissler cut the clay sculpture into two and both parts were carefully loaded by Henderson, Ray DeGlopper and a couple friends into a rented Penske box truck. After its base was mounted to the floor of the truck, the sculpture was placed on it and securely attached to the insides of the truck. Henderson got into the driver's seat and began his long drive for the 22nd time to Loveland, Colorado, to the mold maker where they apply a number of layers of latex rubber and a support plaster mold to the clay. From there it is transported to a foundry in Loveland for a 13-step process over two to three months to cast the bronze sculpture. Upon completion, Henderson flies to Colorado, rents a truck and drives home.

With the unveiling less than two months away, Geissler and Henderson are excited and happy for the community. "I hope everyone likes it," Geissler

humbly says. Outdoor public art bronzed sculpture displays are nothing new to her. Her Freedom Crossing Monument was dedicated in 2009 on the shores of the Lower Niagara River in the Town of Lewiston, where she also created the Tuscarora Heroes Monument near the town park.

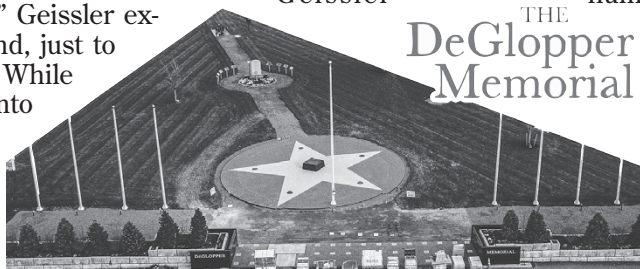
"I was very happy that Ray and Anita highly approved of the sculpture and for me, that is what matters most," she said.

Describing this project, Geissler sat back, reflected and with tears welling in her eyes, said: "Being an artist it becomes very emotional because as you are creating the image, you are putting yourself in his place. I was there with him on the road as he was saving his troops by pulling the trigger of his Browning automatic rifle. I just wanted to make sure that came through in this sculpture."

For Ray DeGlopper, being part of this committee since its inception has been an amazing experience for his hometown to finally recognize his uncle, whom he remembers meeting once.

"My only recollection of him was when he came home on leave from Fort Niagara to our family's farm on Fix Road," DeGlopper said. "I remember when he came into the house, he had to duck his head because he was so tall."

"The unveiling of this sculpture of Charlie will be very emotional for a lot of us," he added.



THE DeGlopper Memorial

Grand Island man arrested on harassment/hate crime

Erie County Sheriff's deputies have arrested Timothy Knight Jr., 33, of Grand Island on charges of threatening a Black man over several weeks.

The Sheriff's Office responded to a complaint by a Grand Island man who said was receiving threatening communications from the defendant. The communications reportedly elevated to physical threats with racial overtones and epithets.

After an investigation and consultation with the District Attorney's office, Knight was arrested on April 12. The defendant is charged with a felony count of 2nd-degree hate crime/aggravated harassment.

Knight was processed and remanded to the Erie County Holding Center pending his arraignment.

Taquito Lindo Artisanal Tacos



Signs point to Taquito Lindo Artisanal Tacos coming soon to 1849 Grand Island Blvd. The previous restaurant at that location, the Viking Diner, closed on March 13. The original eatery at the site was the Clown House, which opened in May 1955. The building also previously housed the Islander Restaurant and McMahon's Family Restaurant.

Building owner Dave Mazur had advertised the site as a turn-key operation. He was not available Thursday for comment on the new restaurant.

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