

WINTER 1989

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Para Poet's
Drop Zone

AIRBORNE
NETWORK

Franco Vianello
*Sculptor —
Paratrooper*

The Saga of
Mark Alexander

Editor's note: The 11th Airborne Memorial Statue, now erected at Ft. Benning, has a unique linkage to Renaissance period of Italy because of the relationship between William Porteous, HQ-2-511 PIR and Vianello. Their gentleman's agreement (AQ, Fall/89) gave novice Porteous a head start in creating a para-trooper statue that memorializes the spirit and accomplishments of the "Angels" for posterity.

FRANCO VIANELLO is both a renowned sculptor, and an exciting and versatile modern artist, with roots in Renaissance Italy. Born in Venice in 1937 to a family with a heritage of over a century of sculptors and founders, he began his traditional training in a foundry at the age of nine. By the time he was eleven years old, his skills and talents were recognized by famed sculptor Napoleone Marinuzzi, who accepted Franco as an apprentice.

Vianello came to the united States in 1959 as a recognized and highly respected sculptor, having created numerous bronze works, including life-size statues. He also restored historic old works in piazzas, churches, and for several well known collectors, including Peggy Guggenheim, who took a particular interest in the talented young sculptor. Franco has always cast his own works, in both bronze and glass.

After serving as a para-trooper, Franco settled in California with his wife, Jane, and resumed his professional career as a sculptor. Today, his works can be seen throughout the world in Canada, Europe, North Africa, South America, and the Orient, as well as throughout the United States.

Profiles Profiles

A fine creative sculptor, equally talented in both abstract and representational works, Vianello is also one of the few artist-craftsmen experienced in enlarging statues to heroic sizes and casting them in bronze in his own foundry. He was recently commissioned by the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, to both sculpt and cast an eighteen foot high bronze version of Frederic Remington's master work, *'Coming Through the Rye.'* That magnificent statue now stands in front of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, and was the subject of a recent U.S. Commemorative postage stamp. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Western Art and the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, the Directors of The National Cowboy Hall of Fame voted unanimously in

1981 to present Franco Vianello with its highly-prized "Trustees Gold Medal."

Among Vianello's commissioned works, which range from pieces small enough for your desk to those of truly heroic proportions, are those he did for The National Audubon Society, Champion International, the Seattle World's Fair, the Scripps Oceanographic Institute, the Wells Fargo Bank, the Dillingham Corporation, Levi Strauss, the Bohemian Club in San Francisco, the San Diego Historical Society, the San Francisco Academy of Sciences, and the 18' Tuna Monument on Shelter Island in San Diego Bay. In addition, Mr. Vianello's works have been exhibited in countless galleries and are treasured by knowledgeable private collectors all over the world.

Art critics have hailed Franco Vianello as "The sculptor who can do it all - figures in action, portraits, animal life, anything..." "This highly talented artist has combined his creative genius and techni-

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The General Swing Chapter members visited the Vianello Studio in November 1984.

Left to right: Franco, Elizabeth, Jane Vianello, and Roberta Yee



cal skills to the level of real perfection..."

"One of the top contemporary sculptors of this era."

Franco Vianello has established his studio, gallery in Napa Valley, at 2040 Oak Knoll Avenue West, Napa, California 94558, (707) 253-9130.

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ROBERT V. BEMIS now lives in Long Beach, CA with Eve, "the best wife a guy could ask for." Born in Deer Creek, MN on 24 Sept '21, he enlisted Jan '43, became Haugen's original, assigned to C Company 511th PIR, 11th A/B. Fought in WWII and the Korean War, Bemis was with D/27 Infantry Regt/25th Division and HQ & HQ 34th Combat Engineer Battalion in the '50s. He retired in November '52 as 1st Sergeant after receiving numerous decorations and citations including his Purple Heart, C.I.B. and Parachute Badge.

While living in Washington the following appeared in the local newspaper:

**COMRADES SEND
SAMURAI SWORD TO
LOCAL VET -**

Staff Sgt. Robert V. Bemis, Ellensburg veteran, who was

wounded in the Battle of Manila and discharged from the Army last December 31, has been sent a Japanese Samurai sword as a token of remembrance from members of his division, the 11th Airborne, now occupying the Japanese homeland.

His mother, Mrs. Fern Hecht, of Ellensburg, who received the sword and displayed it at the Record office yesterday, said Sergeant Bemis went to Portland last week, and will make his home there. He has not yet seen the sword, she said.

A letter from Maj. Gen. J.M. Swing, commanding the 11th Airborne, accompanied the sword. It read:

"This Japanese Samurai sword is a token of remembrance from those of us in the division who now occupy the homeland of the Jap. It was captured in Northern Honshu after their collapse and surrender. The actual defeat, of course, took place on other islands where you gallantly fought the enemy we now rule.

"I know you feel proud that General of the Army MacArthur selected the 11th Airborne Division to land on Japan first of all troops. We flew from Luzon to Okinawa and then to Japan and now are deployed in the prefectures of Miyagi, Iwate,



Robert V. Bemis (right) with "Chattahoochee" Meis at the recent "Angels" Columbus, Georgia Reunion



Akita and Yamagata.

"Your former comrades-in-arms join me in hoping you are well on the way to full recovery and enjoyment of the peaceful, happy life you so well deserve"

Trooper Bemis would like to know if any other guys received a sword as he did after he was discharged from the hospital on Jan 46. His address: 2052 Golden Avenue, Long Beach, CA 96806.

WALTER E. WICKSTROM of Rocklin, CA was born in Richmond, CA on 26 May 1928. After enlisting in the State Guard at an early age, he then served with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 33rd Regiment and was honorably discharged 15 Sept 46. After two weeks he joined C Company, 1st Battalion 188th PIR, 11th Airborne Division. Private Wickstrom received his jump training in Japan and his wings 13 March 47.

His jump certificate was signed by Major General Joseph M. Swing.

He served as a Rifleman with the rank of PFC. He was discharged at Fort Lawton, Washington on 12 Jan 48.

His most memorable experience in Japan was the time the engines on the plane stopped and down, down, down it went when finally the engines started running again!

Presently he works on the railroad and on people's houses. He enjoys fishing best of all. Married three times, he wrote, "I am still trying to get this divorce over with and then get my life going again. I will be going to the 50th Anniversary in 1990. I hope they will have some rooms left."

Photo right: Trooper Walt wants to share a 188 logo on a bag he purchased from the PX in Japan. > AQ