



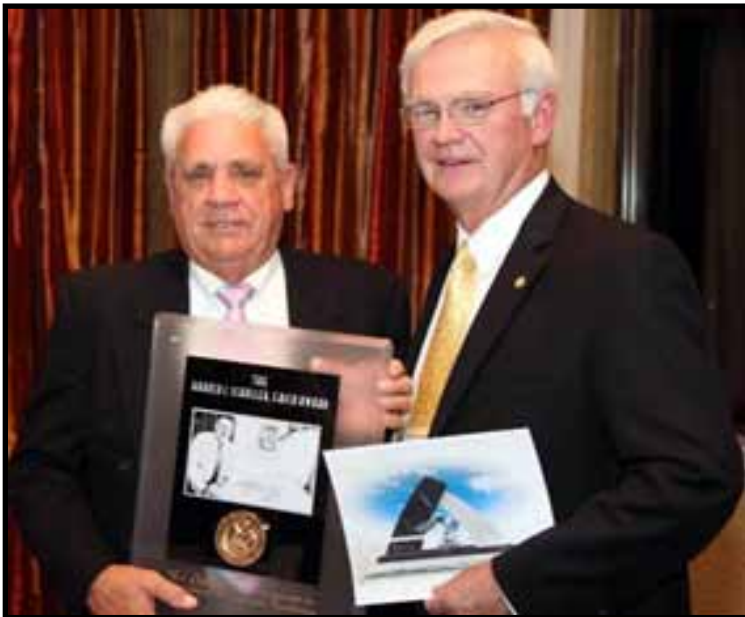
# MILESTONE

HELPING OURSELVES BY HELPING OTHERS

## OH! SAVANNAH

Savannah, Georgia seemed like the perfect place to hold our 60th Annual Meeting. A city filled with history, preserved over the years from conflicts like the Civil War and numerous storms and hurricanes, seemed to know there were commemorative art memorialists in town. The city was in its most beautiful fall colors as members of the American Institute of Commemorative Art gathered to meet, share their ideas and compete in our annual design contests honoring two of its most recognized designers, Harold J. Schaller, FAICA and Eugene H. Faehnle, FAICA.

Nearly 100 photographs and several renderings were submitted by members in the competition which covers conceptual design and renderings and their brag memorial set within the last year.



Dave Bott, CM, AICA accepts the Harold J. Schaller, FAICA Award on behalf of his son Drew Bott, CM, whose winning design and rendering took top honors in the conceptual category. Halsey Tuthill, AICA, the son-in-law of the late Harold Schaller, made the presentation for the family.



Terry Joy, AICA, of Joy Monuments, Louisville, Kentucky accepts the Eugene H. Faehnle, FAICA Trophy for his winning design. This is Joy's second Faehnle Award having won his first in 2001 during our 50th Anniversary meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. Shown with Joy are Jeff Anderson, CM, AICA and last year's winner Monica Johns Montani, CM, AICA.

The big winners this year were Drew Bott, CM for his rendering and conceptual design taking the Schaller Award and Terry Joy, AICA who dominated the Faehnle design contest categories winning several awards including first place in the companion monument category which took "Best of Show" and earned him his second Eugene H. Faehnle, FAICA Award and the traveling trophy to take home to his office in Louisville, Kentucky. View all the winning design photos on pages 9 to 15 in this issue. Congratulations to all participants and winners!

DESIGN

SCULPTURE

CRAFTSMANSHIP

COOPERATION

EDUCATION



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*Comments...*

*By your Executive Director*

Wow! We are going into our 20th year as your Executive Director and Association Secretary! Yeah, it's time to "hang it up!" This year will be our last and as we contemplate all of this, and I must admit, with a tear sometimes coming to my eye, I know it is for the best. For Jeanne and me as well as for the Institute. It is time for new blood - a younger person to direct the activities and take the Board of Governors suggestions to continue what is certainly the very best association in the memorial industry.

It is amazing that many of you have told us that of all the many groups you belong to, whether a civic or professional association, you rate your membership in AICA as the most important. We are a family for sure. That's what makes giving all of this up so tough. It has been a labor of love for us and for sure a great adventure being with all of you for these many years.

Looking back when I was hired to replace Donna Patten, AICA - then our Interim Executive Director having taken the position after her husband Don Patten died in 1992 - I was so excited to have the opportunity to direct the Institute. I wanted to advance the professionalism and continue the good works of our past Executive Directors. I could hardly wait to get started!

Leland B. Longstreth, AICA  
*Executive Director & Editor*  
Jeanne A. Longstreth  
*Association Secretary & Assistant Editor*

**Board of Governors**

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Scott A. Johnson, AICA, *Vice President*  
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Dave Reeson, AICA  
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Jerry Lager, AICA  
Monica Johns Montani, CM, AICA  
Bobby Mattos, CM, *Association Member Representative*

**AICA MISSION STATEMENT**

**To Promote Excellence In Commemorative Art And  
To Enhance Design And Professional Knowledge  
Through The Exchange Of Ideas Within An  
Atmosphere Of Trust**

Please allow me to reminisce a little - it helps me feel better about leaving the position:

The *Milestone* was my first attempt at change. It had been a monthly newsletter, printed on a typewriter and then mimeographed and mailed to the membership. I wanted to take it to a higher level and make it more of a magazine and publish it in a professional manner as a quarterly news publication. It certainly has come a long way as now we use a professional publication program called InDesign and load it on to our web site in full color.

Early on, Harold J. Schaller, FAICA assisted me by writing interesting articles and sharing historic photos of past activities enjoyed by members from the time he took office as our second Executive Director in 1965 and before. I miss him and his insight to our industry, his great inspiration and of course his wonderful memorial designs.



Others have contributed as well to make for better reading. I added a president's page and to date every president that I have served under has always offered interesting messages to our members. Thanks to all who have contributed over these many years.

I approached the Board and suggested starting a more formal recognition of our younger memorialists and this resulted in naming many sons, daughters and key employees as Associate members. Now we have their interest and participation in many of our best programs as contributing members. Many of these Associates have gone on to become the Designated member of their firms. Today they number 23.

Commitment to Excellence was a name I selected for the biannual seminars to increase the knowledge and skills of our young and not-so-young members. We have had several Commit seminars to date, offering training in design, sales and sales management. We have used outside instructors for very good sales training and our own members to instruct design and rendering techniques.

These could not have been as great as they were without the cooperation of members like Mike Johns, CM, FAICA; Charlie Hunt, FAICA; Jim Peterson, AICA; Bob Berg, AICA; Monica Johns Montani, CM, AICA and others. One of our Associate members, Dave Harless of the Sears Monument Company, Charleston, West Virginia has attended all but one of these. He is committed to being an excellent memorialist - and is. Others who attended have bonded and made life long friendships with their fellow students. It has been a rewarding experience to say the least.

As technology invaded the memorial industry and business in general, it became time to develop and upload the Institute's own web site. With the assistance of John Scott, AICA we have kept the site refreshed with new information including each year's design contest winners and interesting designs for each of our categories. Most recently this news magazine can be viewed in full color as well as videos produced by Scott all to make the "members page" an interesting part of the web site. We recently added a "Buyers Guide" and kept the "Find a Member" section current for viewers

to find assistance in designing and buying a memorial that will be much different than those being offered by low-priced memorial marketeers.

Publishing a Membership Directory complete with a listing of our award winners, past presidents (there have been 32!) and the recent addition of our Mission Statement, which was developed a few years ago, all assist us in keeping in touch with one another.

The Mission Statement, and most particular the ending sentence, "Within An Atmosphere Of Trust" has guided us through our most recent controversy - membership in the Institute. It also reminds us to "Promote Excellence In Commemorative Art".

So, besides the normal duties like collecting dues, selling supplies, planning our Annual meetings and seminars, Jeanne and I have managed to stay busy doing a little something most every week on your behalf.

Now we look forward to meeting one more time this fall and seeing someone else take the reins and move the Institute forward to bigger and better times. We will continue through 2012 and assist the new Executive Director make a smooth transition so as not to interrupt the flow of excellence.

*We hope to see you  
all this fall,  
Lee and  
Jeanne*



# “WINNING”

*This is not an article about Charlie Sheen*

*By Monica Johns Montani, CM, AICA*

**“Don’t bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself.”**

**- William Faulkner**

There were a few controversial subjects discussed at our annual meeting in Savanna, but one important issue that never gets enough attention is one of the real reasons AICA is in existence. We are the “elite” monument designers of North America, yet we have members that hesitate to share their talents because they feel others are better. I once viewed “winning” as being able to design something better than Charlie Hunt or Terry Joy. Now I know it is so much more than that. The coveted “Faehnle Award” is what we all aspire to win one day, but it is not the only reason to enter into our annual design competitions.

Winning an award for the vocation we share is a wonderful experience. It has inspired me to work harder for the next family I meet. It is pride in knowing that my peers think highly of my talents. It is the joy in sharing what I am proud of. But truly it is knowing that someone else may benefit from seeing my design ideas and may recreate it in their own way.

AICA’s membership is based on the atmosphere of trust and having non-compete members allows us to share unselfishly. It is sharing our work in the design contests that makes us all better designers. We need more entries to help us all grow as designers. Design is the core of what AICA is about. Every member should enter!

**“Helping ourselves by helping others” is practiced through commemorative memorial design, sculpture, craftsmanship, research, and continued education of the members of AICA.**

*We can only help others if we share what we have and what we know.*

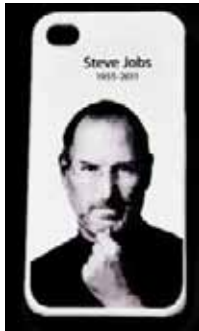
It was said that some of the designs this year were unique, beautiful works of art, but to some, *unsellable* for certain market areas. There were many other designs that I felt worthy of awards because I took away other design ideas from them as well. This is the true spirit of our design competitions.

It is important to participate because you never know who will win. Our company won a few different categories a year ago, and we never imagined we would. There are a few designers that have talents better than others, but one of the reasons we know who they are is because they ALWAYS enter. Other designers who have won know how wonderful it feels to have tried and succeeded. It isn’t just winning that is important, but in knowing you tried and helped yourself and others grow.

The Special Olympics has a great motto: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.” I wish you all the courage to enter anything into our design contests next year. Even if you don’t take home the trophy it is worth knowing that the work you did for the family made it a winner. (that’s really what it’s about anyway). Start a file of your design photographs now and enter the design contests.



# Honoring a Life



By Jed A. Hendrickson, CM, AICA



A recent Wall Street Journal article, “Colorful Coffins and Funerals to Die For” (WSJ Oct. 22-23, 2011), highlighted some varied, unusual and creative ways we honor our dead.

The author, Sarah Murray (also author of “Making an Exit: From the Magnificent to the Macabre – How We Dignify the Dead”), takes us on a small journey of how human beings creatively send off our dead – from burial in the ground, burning them in fire, leaving corpses out for carrion or burial at sea. Many of us have read about the colorful traditions in Ghana of coffins and caskets shaped as fish, cola bottles or airplanes. In the U.S., Hot Rod Caskets produces caskets themed for firefighters, sports fans and Trekkies.

The article also mentions how within hours of Steve Jobs death, impromptu memorials appeared at Apple stores around the world. Here in Santa Barbara, well wishers brought flowers, candles, letters and Post-it Notes to our local Apple store. A small candlelight vigil was even held. It reminded me of similar events, most notably when Princess Diana died. When my 19 year old nephew died some years ago, his friends gathered in an area he liked to visit and decorated a large boulder with messages to Brandon.

So what does this have to do with AICA? Well, I think all these things demonstrate just how important to society is the need to honor those who have gone before us. I believe memorial rituals and customs are even more important than these funeral rituals.

In Savannah we saw wonderful examples of memorials designed to ease the sadness of loved ones and to honor the dead. Our tour through Bonaventure Cemetery provided a great backdrop for our own Design Contest – where we tell our client’s stories in stone.

A friend of mine, Paul DiMatteo, at Maine Memorials, uses the tag line: “*Honor your family with a work of art.*” At a recent visit to Oregon Memorials, I saw the line “*We narrate our heritage with stone. We mark our place in history with obelisks and arches. We honor our dead with sculptures and gravestones.*” The source of the quote is unknown, but the designs we saw in Georgia – both at the cemetery and the design contest – were truly works of art and worthy of honoring our loved ones.

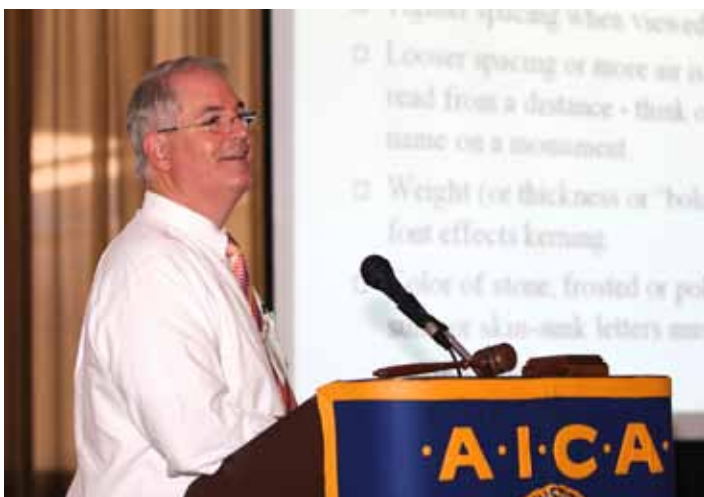
As society’s rituals for the dead change over the years, it is wonderful to see the way members of AICA preserve the tradition of honoring those who have lived. Our memorials help family and friends remember the lives of their loved ones.



## *Speakers! Yeah, we got speakers...*



New member presentations were made by David Sadler, CM, AICA of Sadler & Son, Hobbs, New Mexico (Left) and Jason Campbell, AICA of Campbell Monument Company, Provençal, Louisiana.



President Jed Hendrickson, CM, AICA presented an interesting program entitled, "Fun With Fonts". Guest speaker, Jason Church of the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, presented a program informing the members of NCPTT's function and recommendations for preservation and cleaning of historic memorials. NCPTT is part of the National Park Service and is headquartered on the campus of Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana.



Kevin Laird, shown above, of Brookhaven Monument Company, Brookhaven, Mississippi presented his program on symbolism. Laird's program, Southern Symbolism, tied conventional symbolism into our Bonaventure Cemetery tour explaining both the many traditional symbols used today as well as symbols that were popular and found in many of the historic sections at Bonaventure.



Bobby Schlitzberger, CM, AICA of Schlitzberger and Daughters, Houston, Texas entertained us during our group luncheon with a power point program showing the many civic memorials he has placed, most donated by Ross Perot, former presidential candidate. Schlitzberger has built memorial tributes to many of our most famous military heroes including Admiral James Bond Stockdale, who was a Naval aviator, Senior Prisoner of War in Vietnam and a Medal of Honor recipient.



Terry Joy, AICA of Joy Monument Company, Louisville, Kentucky shared his story of how mentors in his career have helped develop him as a designer and memorial salesperson. During his program entitled, "What My Mentors Have Taught Me", Joy gave credit to AICA designers Eugene H. Faehnle, FAICA; Harold J. Schaller, FAICA; Roy Keith Jr. and John Keith (past members) and Lee Longstreth, AICA.



Bob Berg, AICA of Richardson Monuments, Lisbon, Ohio presented his program following our tour of the Bonaventure Cemetery. "The Savannah Walz" a look at the work of artist and sculptor John Walz showed many of Walz's most famous memorials built during his lifetime as a resident of Savannah. Following Berg's presentation the audience was divided into groups to design a fitting memorial to Walz as he now lies in an unmarked grave in Bonaventure. More about Walz and those designs can be seen on pages 18 to 30.



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# HAROLD J. SCHALLER, FAICA AWARD WINNER



The Ola design rendered by Drew Bott, CM of the Mark H. Bott Company, Riverton, Wyoming caught the eyes of the judges in the Institute's annual design contest. Bott's design was created to magnify the guardian angel. The angel is protecting a "soul" even with his life in danger. One small, usually unnoticed feature of the angel is the deformed wing. Meant to illustrate the power that we each can exert in behalf of others despite the many weaknesses (both visible and invisible) that we all possess. The piece was designed for display, but the angel sold before it came to fruition. The contemporary design has many interesting features besides the angel sculpture. Note the flared margin in the steeled finish to accent the joined tablets, one with a polish finish and the other steeled. The break in the polished above the family name brings your eye to the use of bronze lettering attached for a great effect. An all polished second base serves the design well as a pedestal for the sculpture.



# EUGENE H. FAEHNLE, FAICA AWARD WINNER

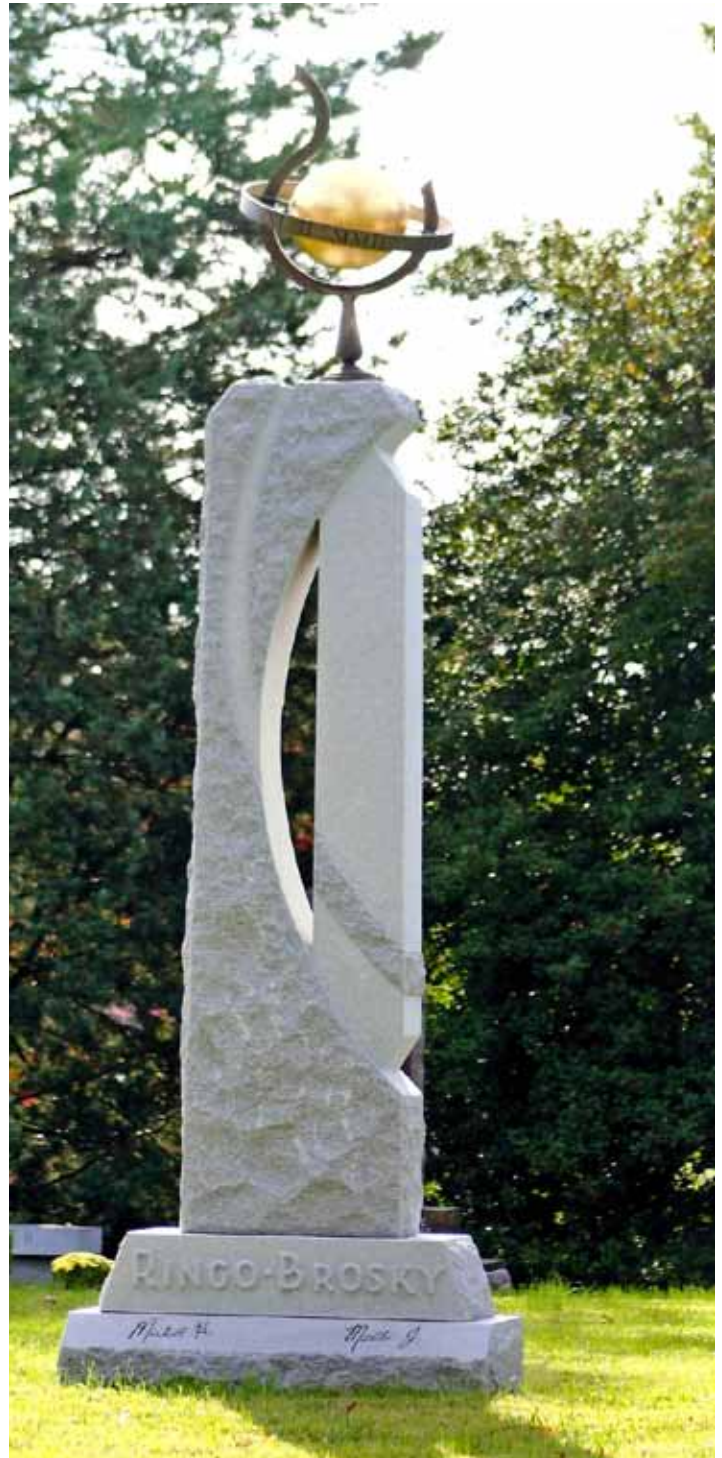
## RINGO-BROSKY MONUMENT

Mike Ringo loves armillaries and thus one in bronze sits atop his and his wife's monument designed by Terry Joy, AICA of Joy Monuments, Louisville, Kentucky. Joy was given much freedom to come up with what turned out to be this year's "Best of Show" capturing his second Eugene H. Faehnle, FAICA Award and taking home the coveted Faehnle Trophy to display once again in his Louisville office.

Joy describes this unique contemporary design as a memorial that features a sculpted pedestal with multiple contrasting textures and an open feature, all of which draws one's eye towards the custom made bronze armillary, reminding us that time is our most valuable asset.

Note the care given to enhance the open area by contrasting finishes of rock pitching and steeled surfaces. Round raised lettering, normally shown only on older style monuments of past, was added with great effect to this modern design. Contrasting inscriptions in script continues to add interest to another "Joy" design.

Last year, in Loveland, Colorado, Joy won first place in the Individual Monument and the Single/Companion Marker category and took third place in the Companion Monument category. He returns this year to win the big prize and place second and third in the Family Monument category.



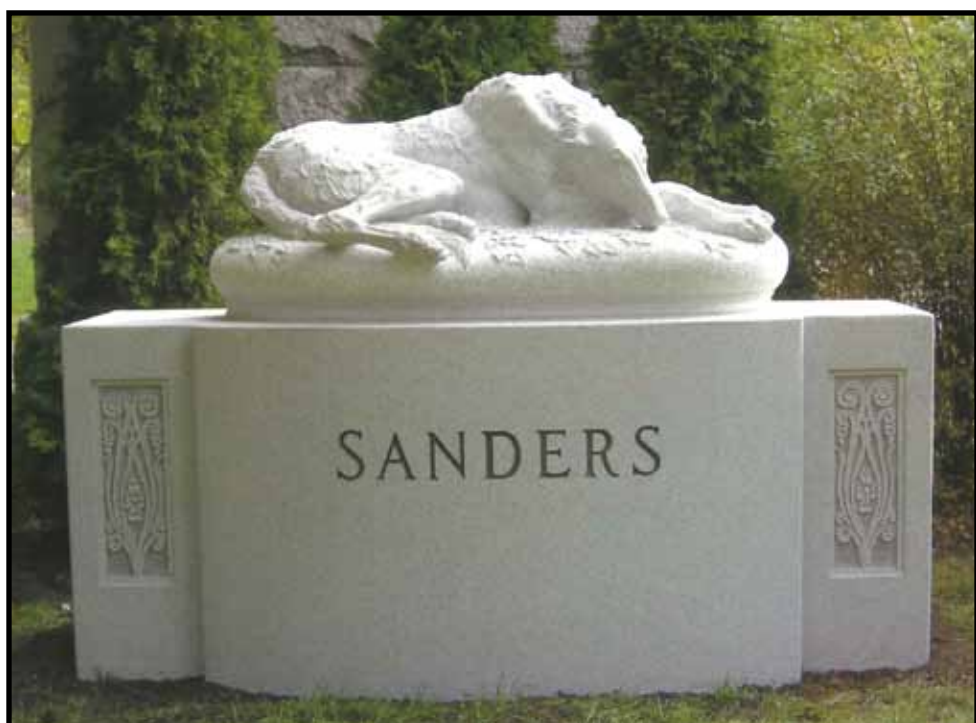


# FIRST PLACE WINNERS



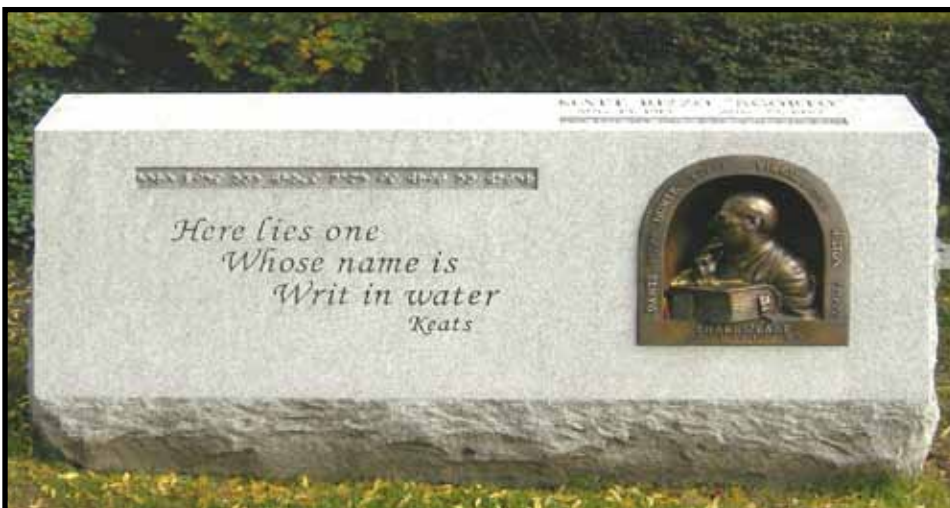
Taking First Place in the Public/Civic Monument category is this inspirational design HONORING ALL WHO HAVE SERVED and features a globe of the world supported by a red column with 13 stripes. The shapes around the globe symbolize the Pentagon in Washington D. C. and carry the emblems of the various branches of the military. An eagle sits atop the memorial protecting our freedom. The design is by Michael Feinberg, CM, AICA of Peter Troost Monument Company, Hillside, Illinois.

The SANDERS monument took First Place in the Family Monument category and is a design by Tom Gast, AICA of Gast Monuments, Chicago, Illinois. This stately monument captures one's eye with its magnificent sculpture of the family dog, a Borzoi (Russian Wolfhound). The full round sculpture is life size and carved in Barre granite. (See close up of the Borzoi on page 11)





The SPOLTORE monument was designed as a tribute to Johnny Spoltore for his many amazing accomplishments as a professional hockey player. His personalized hockey stall with the Louisiana Ice Gators jersey and helmet have been carved in black granite. The design is by John-Michael Weber, AICA of Superior Memorials, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.



JOHN RIZZO was a sightless man and a notable writer of philosophy. So Tom Gast, AICA of Gast Monuments in Chicago designed this unique marker to commemorate his memory. The area above the tribute is sandblasted Braille. The bronze relief portrait bust of Mr. Rizzo complete this very personalized tribute. His inscription, also in English lettering and Braille are on the top of the marker.



**ON PAGE 13**

Harvard Wood, IV, AICA of H. C. Wood, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania took second place with his design for WILKERSON-STRUMF in the Companion Monument category.

The MARTIN, a very tall and contemporary monument designed by Terry Joy, AICA of Joy Monument Company, Louisville, Kentucky took second place in the Family Monument category.

The STEVEN J. ROBINSON ledger style lawn level marker by Cal Christensen of Quiring Monuments, Seattle, Washington was the second place winner in the Single/Companion Marker category.

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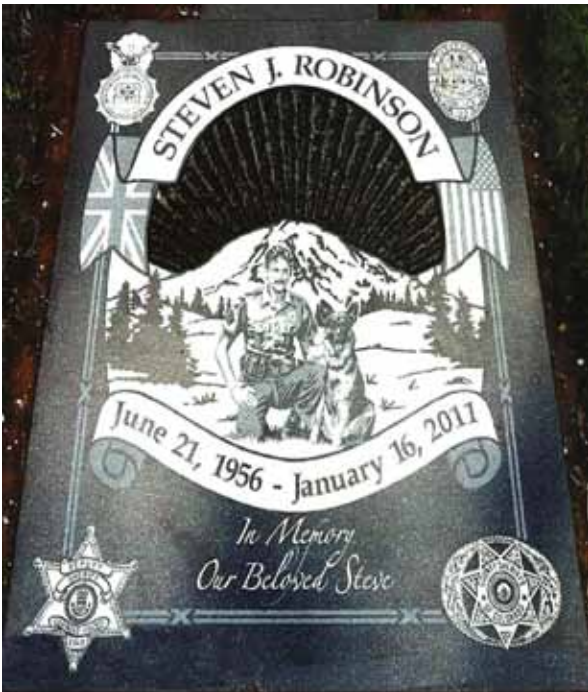
The Public/Civic memorial to the UNBORN was designed by Scott McLeod of REMCO Memorial, Regina, SK, Canada.

MARVIN R. WITBECK won in the Individual Monument category and was designed by Mike McBride of The Greeley Monument Co., Greeley, Colorado.





# SECOND PLACE WINNERS



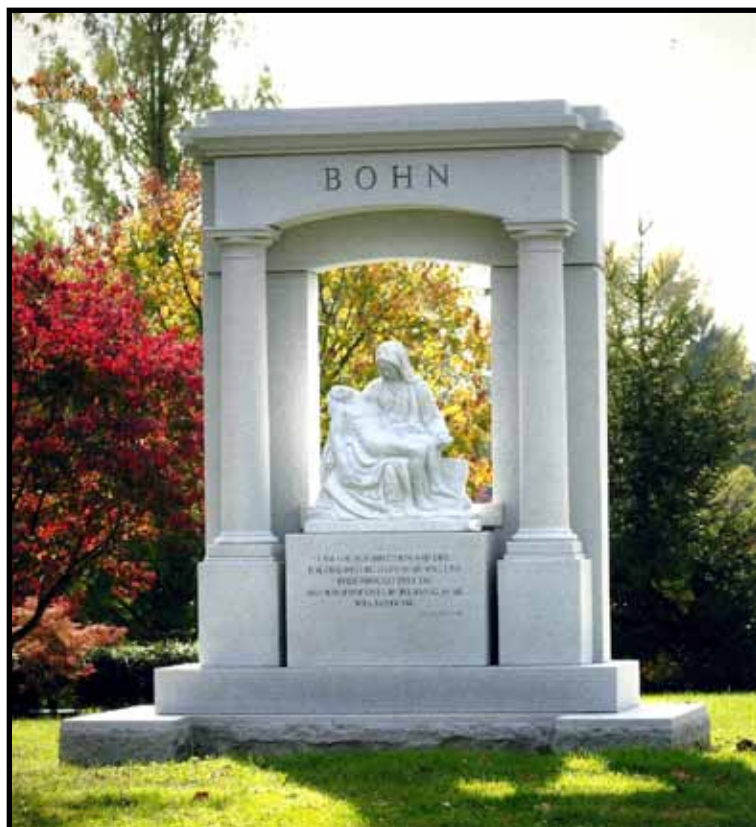


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# THIRD PLACE WINNERS



Public/Civic Monument winner:  
**FREEDOM**  
BY David and Drew Bott, Mark  
Bott Company, Ogden, Utah



Family Monument winner: **BOHN** By Terry Joy, of  
Joy Monument Company, Louisville, Kentucky.



CARR by Drew Bott, CM of Mark Bott Company was a winner in the Individual Monument category.



RAY by Terry Joy, AICA, of Louisville, Kentucky won in the Companion Monument category.

The Single/Companion Marker category winner was the single lawn level marker for WAYNE TOD KOUNS, Jr. by Michelle Shaw, CM and Monica Johns Montani, CM, AICA both of The Johns-Carabelli Company, Cleveland, Ohio





# Wow! What fun we had!



Nice catch Paul!



Son Douglas and Mom Cindy Sadler with Tom Gast



Paul Zinter, Dave Reeson, Janice Campbell and Donna Zinter enjoying the River Cruise.



The Berg's, Peterson's and the Longstreth's enjoying dinner.

The young Vance Ferguson

The Sadler Family

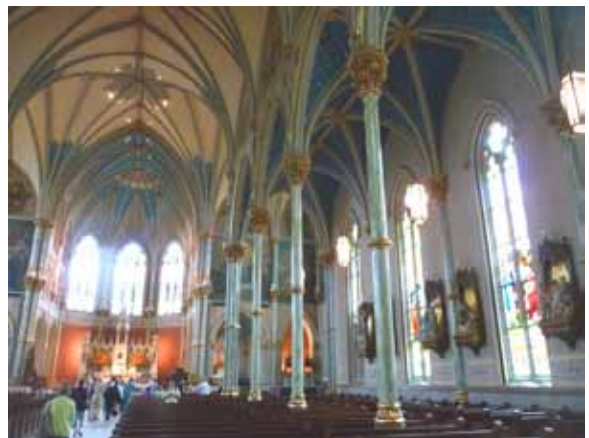


Julie and John Scott





# Savannah City Sites



**Beautiful  
Interesting  
Historic  
Savannah !**





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## EXPERIENCE BONAVENTURE CEMETERY





## EXPERIENCE BONAVENTURE CEMETERY



**JOHN WALZ**  
**AUGUST 31, 1844**  
**NOVEMBER 27, 1922**





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## EXPERIENCE BONAVENTURE CEMETERY



Memorial tributes in various sections of the cemetery offer visitors a view of both older, more elaborate style monuments, ledgers and markers with raised carvings and others of the more modern designs reflecting the different tools and technologies used over the years by American memorialists. Shown here are a mixture of designs within the same section of Bonaventure. A modern day sculpture in bronze pays tribute to a marathon runner and the piano shape monument remembers a musician.



## EXPERIENCE BONAVENTURE CEMETERY





*A Partnership*  
By Stacy Doty  
Bonaventure Historical Society

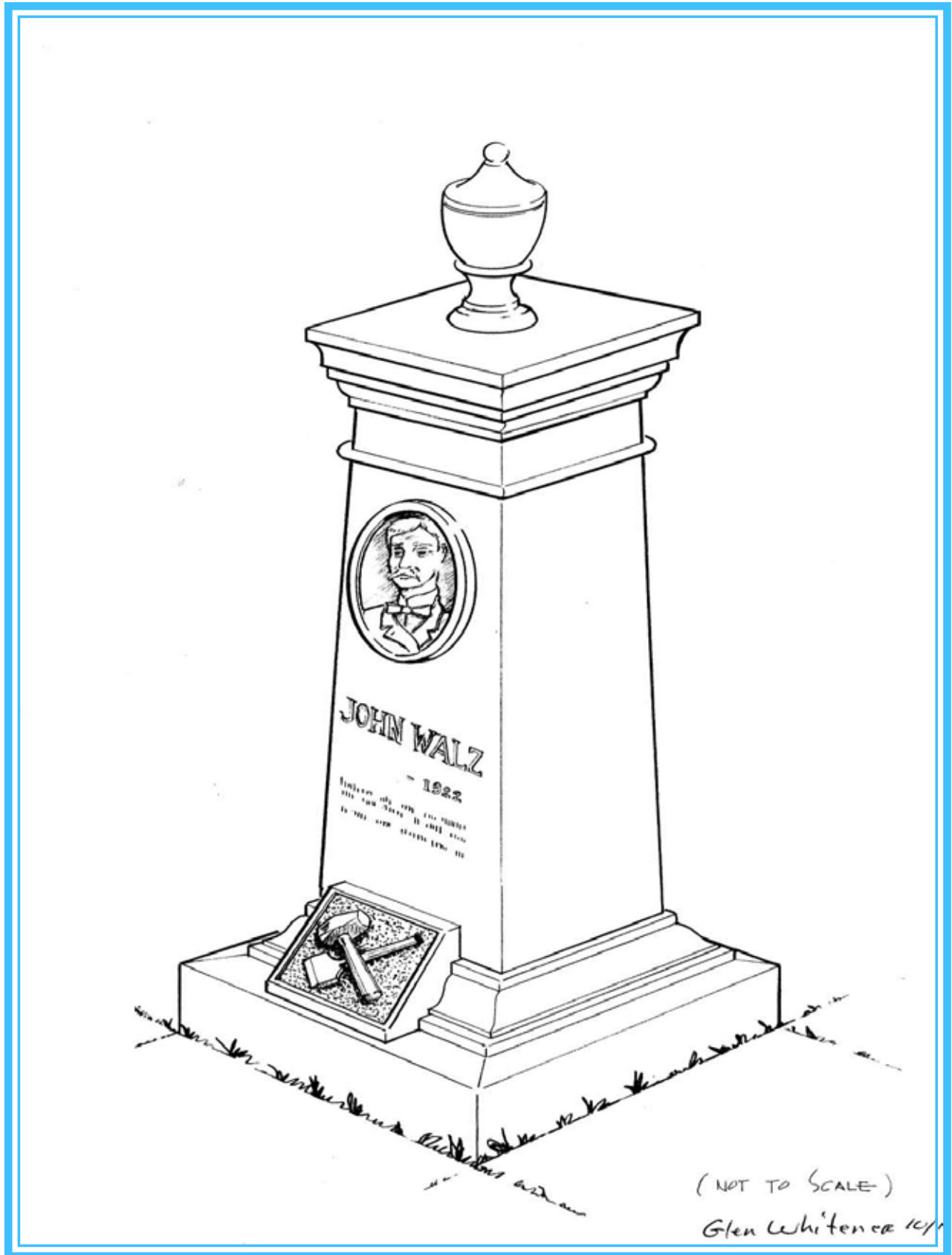
The Bonaventure Historical Society is pleased and proud to be able to announce that we are partnering with the American Institute of Commemorative Art in an effort to honor the creator of Little Gracie and more than 70 other works of funeral art in Bonaventure Cemetery. The goal of our collaboration is a fitting tribute to John Walz.

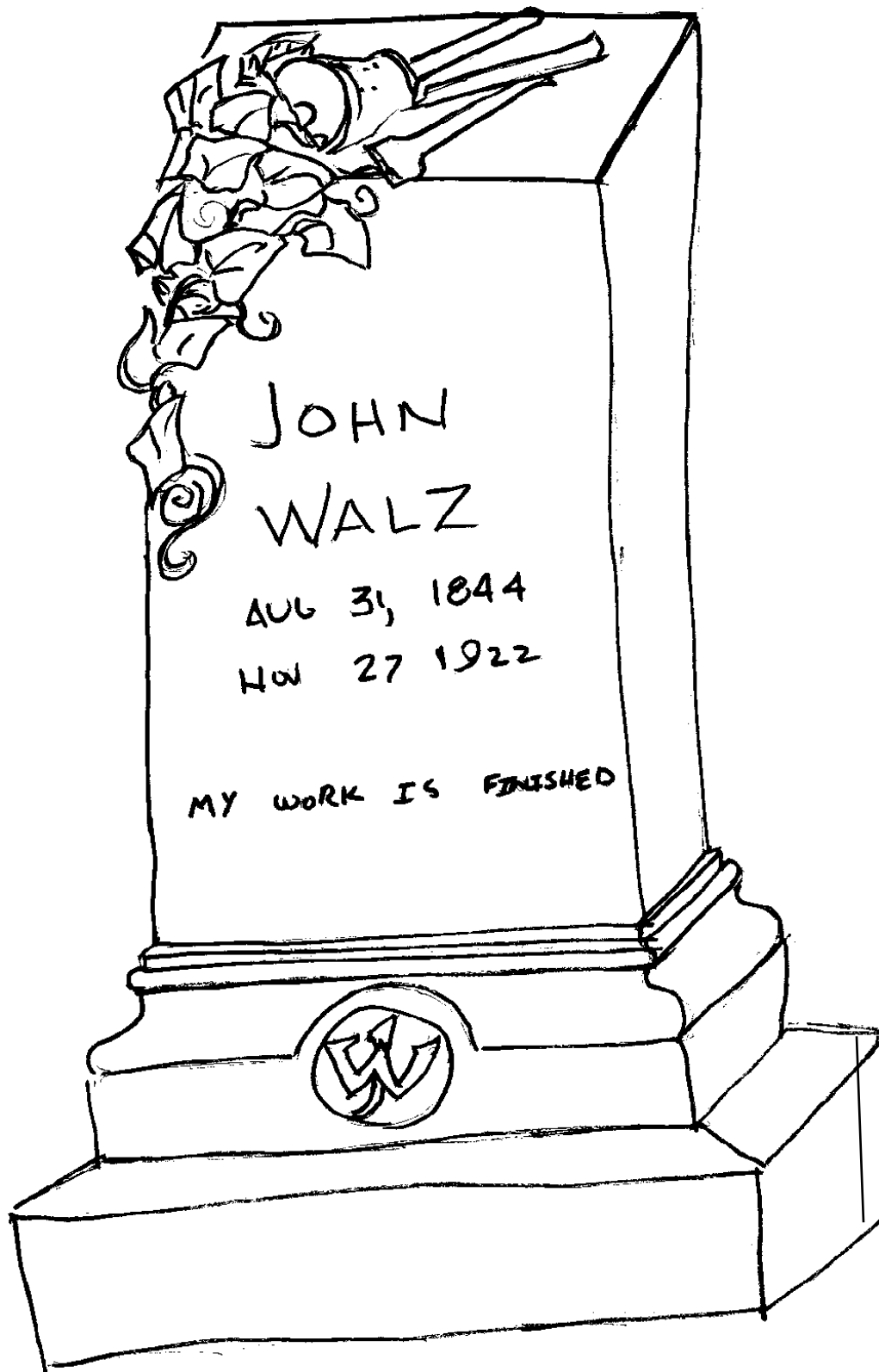
Walz came to Savannah in 1890 after an earlier visit to install the first two statues of artists outside the new Telfair Academy of Art. He resided in Savannah until his death in November, 1922. He is buried in Bonaventure Cemetery's Section A, lot 331 beside his wife, Sara Bell Gilmore Walz whom he married in 1907.

Walz had two studios during his residence in our City, one at 408 Bull Street and the other at 409 East Liberty Street. Walz created exquisite memorials for those buried in all the cemeteries that existed during his lifetime, but the majority of his sculptural tributes are found in Bonaventure. He did not limit his efforts to funeral works, but also produced carvings on public buildings such as the Board of Education Building on Oglethorpe Avenue and the Federal Courthouse and Post Office on Wright Square. Additionally he rendered a baptismal font for the Episcopal church at Abercorn and 34<sup>th</sup>. Streets. His works are found in outlying cemeteries beyond Chatham County and on Gettysburg Field where he made a monument to the 106<sup>th</sup>. Pennsylvania Infantry.

One only has to observe his artistry in portraying poppies, grieving figures, roses, entwined initials on footstones to realize that his ability as a sculptor was superb. We may never know for certain why his widow destroyed his drawings and notes after his death or why she never honored him with a memorial. We will always know that he deserves acknowledgement if we see the evidence of his talent and skill in the lots at Bonaventure, Catholic and Laurel Grove North and South. Whether it is the angels, human figures or dogs, Walz triumphed in his portrayals.

AICA is an older organization than the Bonaventure Historical Society by 43 years, but we now share a vision and a goal: to commemorate an artist who inspires us, who deserves our efforts to honor his skill, and of whom we are in awe. We hope to involve others in our community, others in the commemorative industry, others who recognize true vision and artistry and those who share with us the belief that John Walz should be adequately honored as he honored those for whom he produced such fine and lasting tributes from his vision.

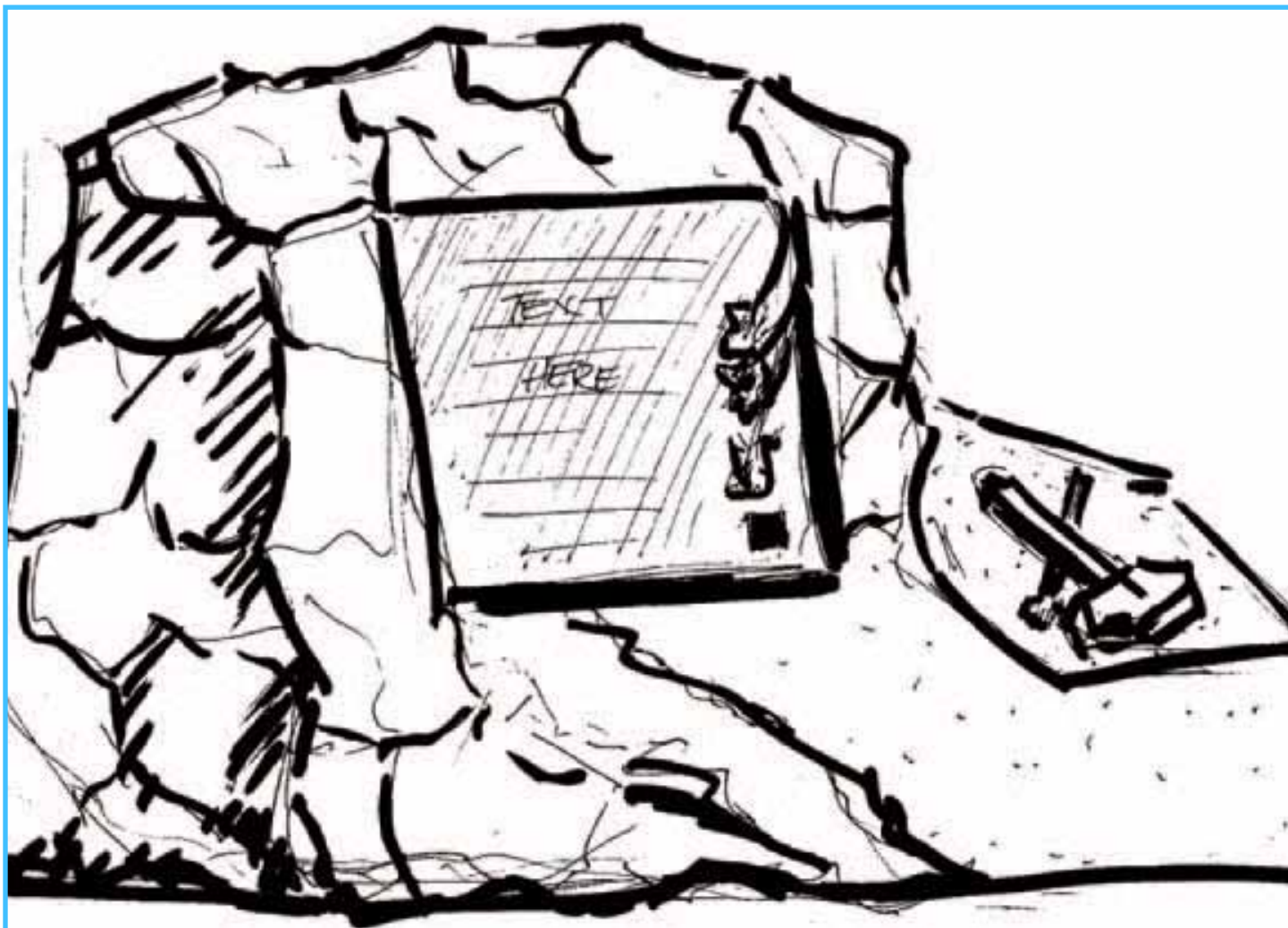






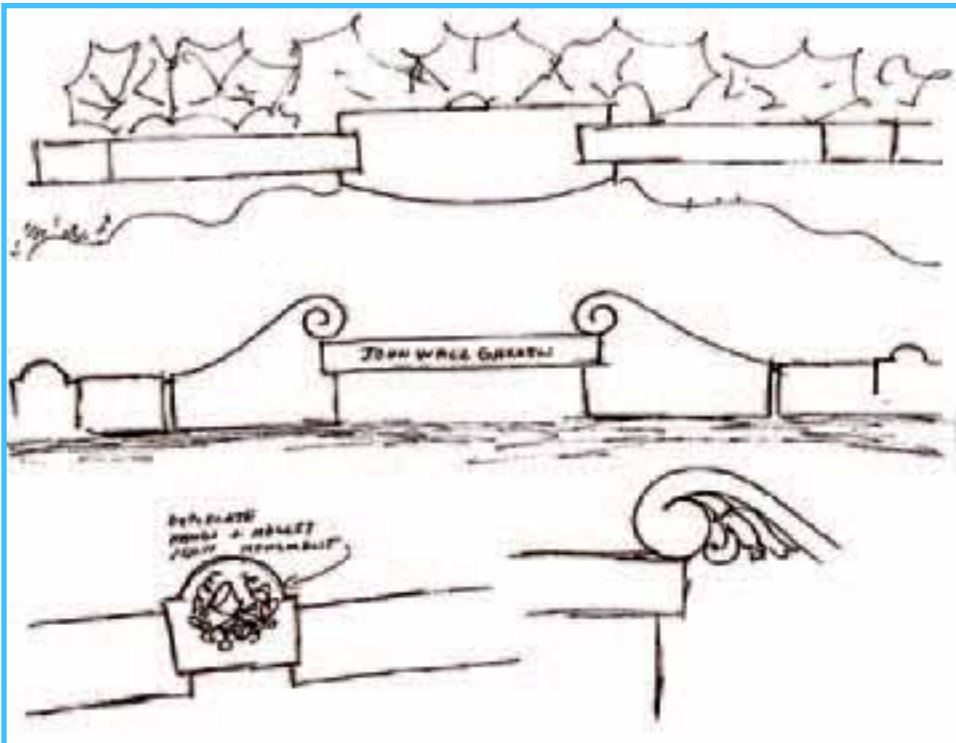
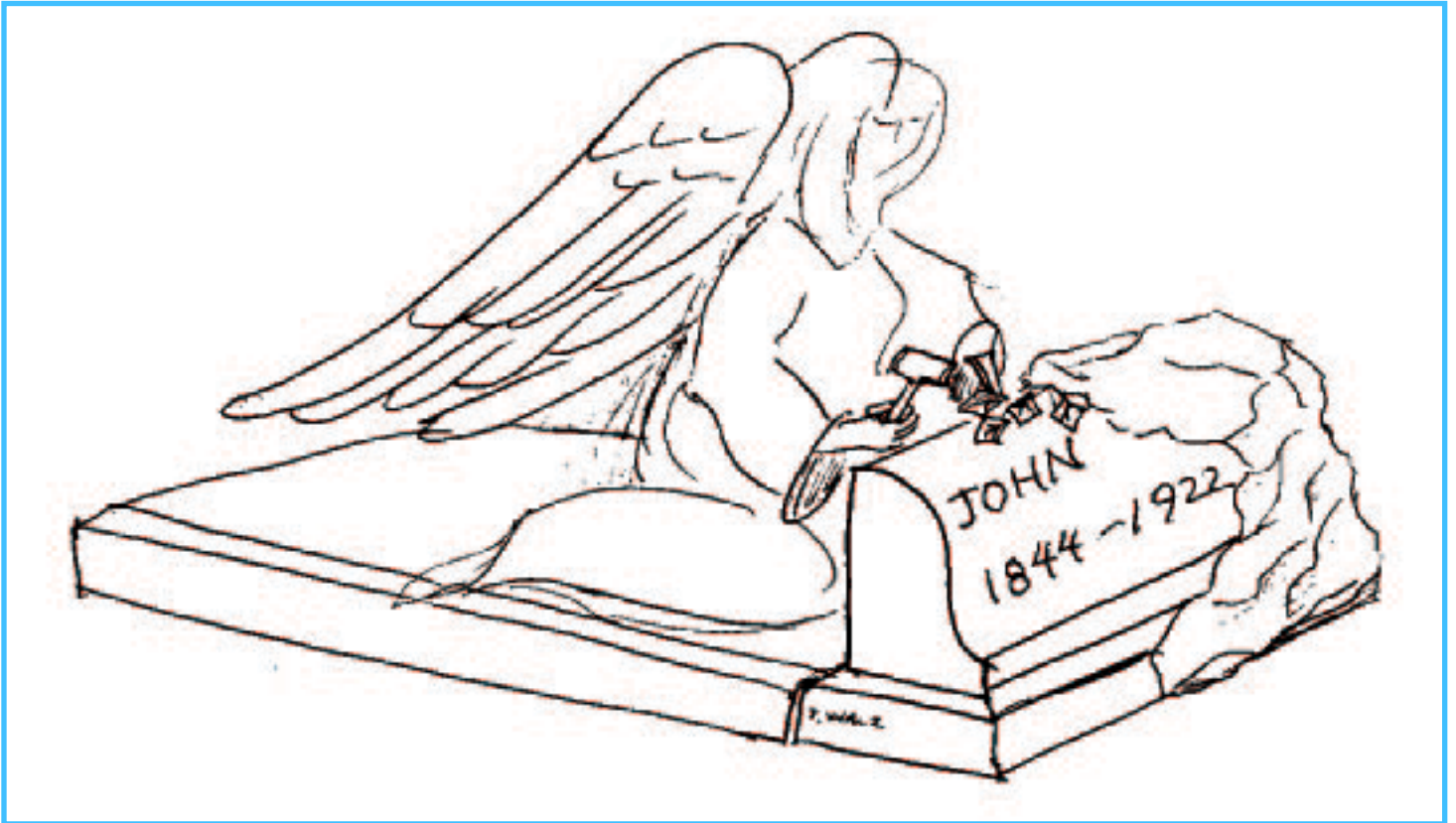
HERE - A popular theme: John Walz's tools as well as his monogram as seen here on a headstone in the fashion of the era in which Walz lived and on a ledger grave cover.

LEFT - Draped ivy enhances the tools on this tall monument offered as a suggestion for the memorial tribute. Many of Walz's beautiful carvings were bas-relief ornamentations using various floral arrangements to carry out specific symbolism while adding great interest to the memorial.



A boulder style marker, cut as a tribute to John Walz, was one of the suggestions by AICA members during Bob Berg's session, "The Savannah Walz", following the Bonaventure Cemetery tour. The team's suggestion is a tribute to Walz in a raised plaque, which would have his inscription and perhaps a short verse, while showing his tools cut in bas-relief on a separate part of the boulder. The entire memorial would be cut from a single block of stone.

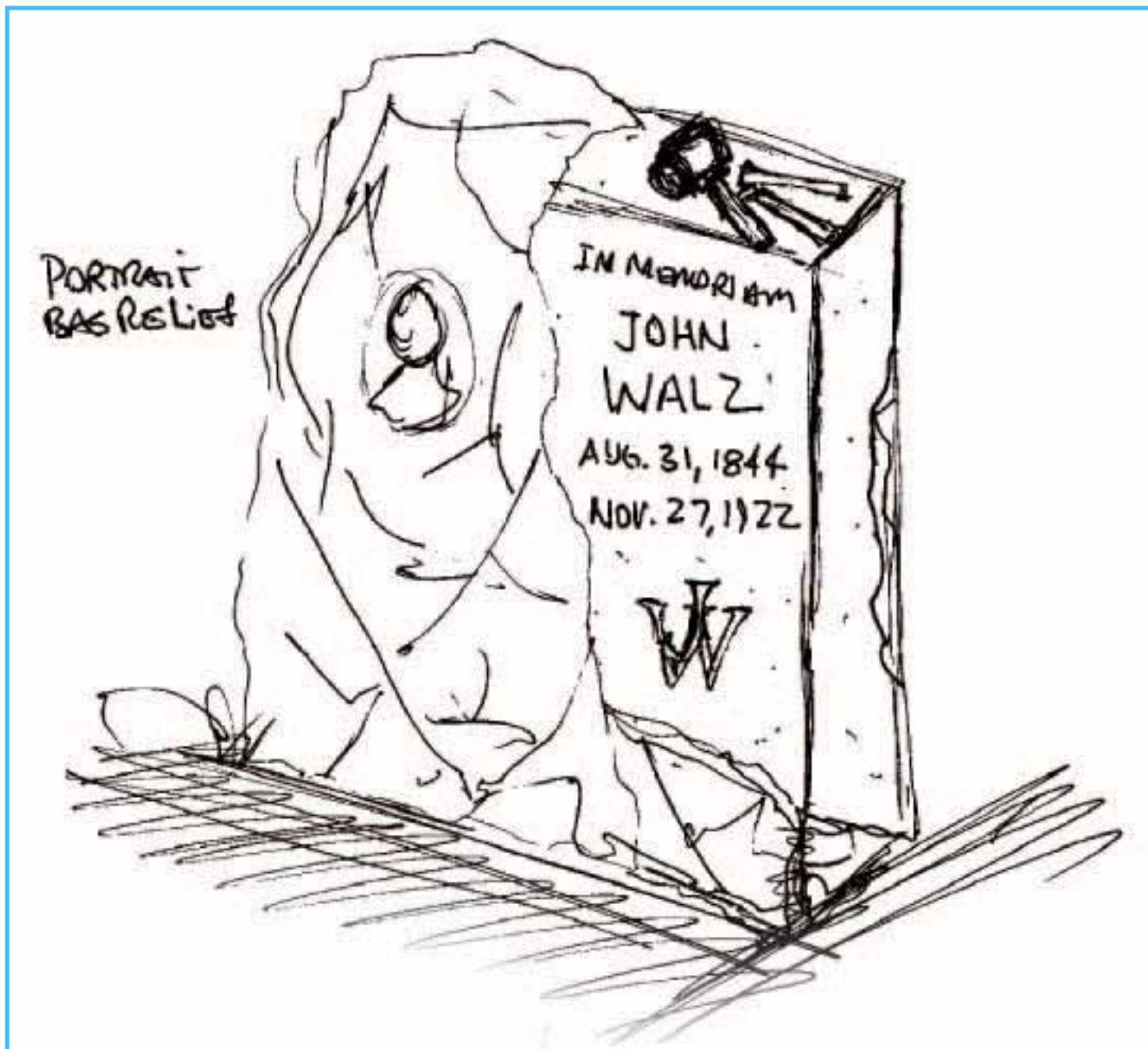
Another smaller sketch shows a dove carving - often seen on a Walz designed memorial in Bonaventure.



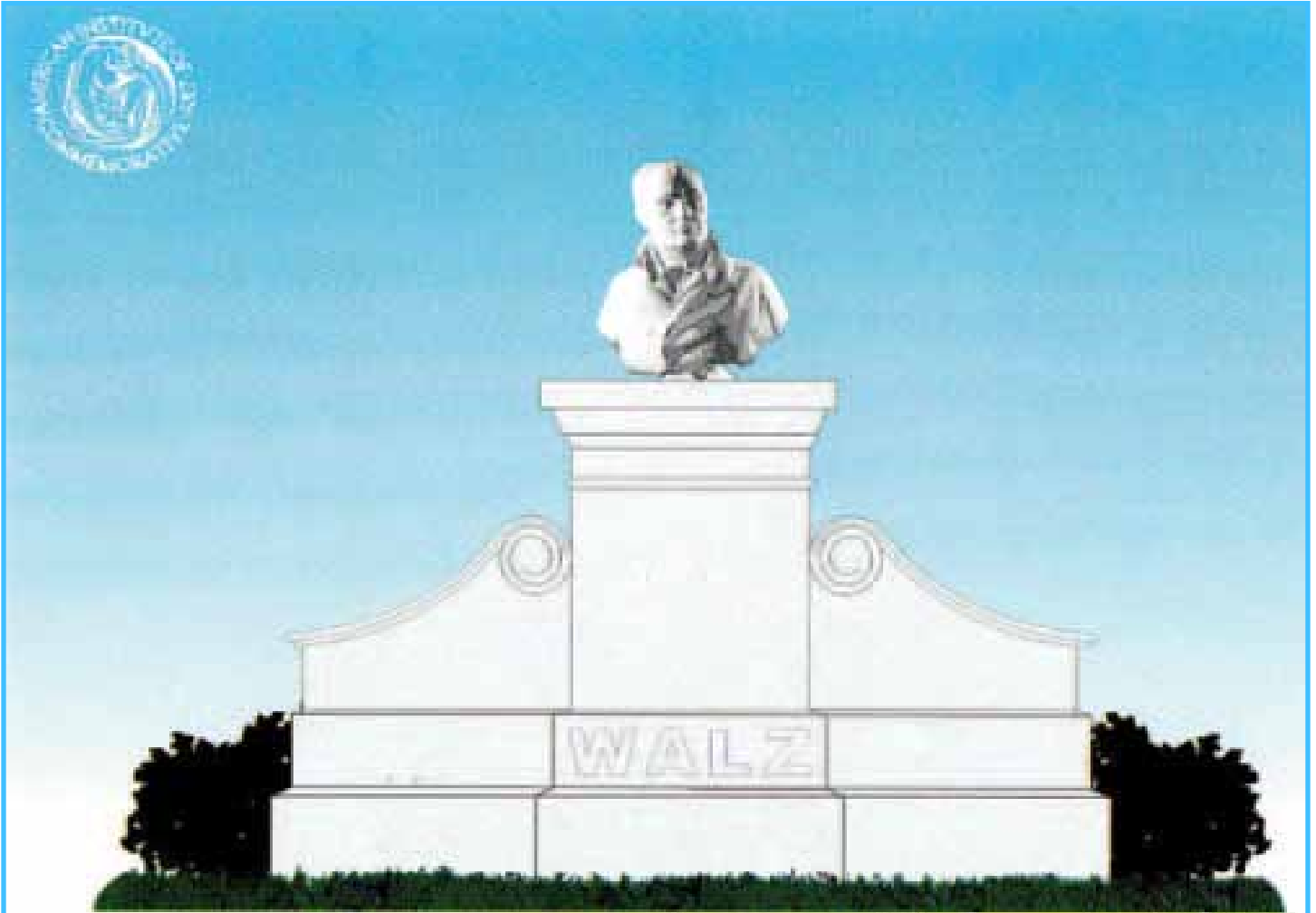
Many of John Walz's designs feature a beautiful full round angel in various positions, some holding flowers, others pointing upward or in prayer.

This suggested design by an AICA team portrays an angel carving Walz's memorial tribute. The combination of a ledger and headstone would cover his grave. A very nice idea!

Small details often lead AICA members to recognize John Walz's signature memorials while touring Bonaventure Cemetery. This team suggested adding some of Walz's favorite treatments to his bench style memorial. Shown are top, front and detail views.



This design suggestion is a small monolith, carved from one block of stone and features a rock pitched finish with a finished portion having been smoothed for the lettering. Atop are the tools of Walz's trade. A portrait of the artist in bas relief completes this tribute.



Mike Murphree, AICA of Camden Memorials, Inc., Camden, Arkansas submitted this rendering with his idea for the John Walz memorial. Murphree captures Walz style of memorialization seen in many of his Bonaventure Cemetery monuments. A bust of the artist is suggested atop the pedestal.



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# THE JOHN WALZ MEMORIAL FUND

If you wish to make a donation to  
**The John Walz Memorial Fund,**  
please make your check payable to:

Bonaventure Historical Society

and mail to:

American Institute of Commemorative Art  
8015 Van Ness Way  
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Lee and Jeanne will gather the donations from our members and  
forward to the Bonaventure Historical Society



# BOB BERG'S BEAUTY



## CALCUTTA VETERANS MEMORIAL

The Calcutta Rotary Club had a vision twelve years ago to build a community park on the original 1803 site of the settlement of Calcutta, Ohio. The park was planned and built around the proposed tribute to the area's veterans - a granite memorial.

On Saturday, November 12, 2011, the culmination of hundreds of hours of work was dedicated by the Rotary Club members.

The chosen design, one of several proposals, forms an American star, the symbol of our country. The flagpole surround is in two pieces and forms a true pentagon. The pentagon is flanked by five triangular shaped "star points". Each of the triangular tablets represents one branch of our military services and is etched with the symbol of that branch of service on two faces. The corresponding Medal of Honor for that branch of service is etched on the inside face. The inscriptions on the flagpole surround were selected by the design committee.

The entrance memorial is engraved with a gold leafed Rotary International logo and is surrounded by two flush granite pavers and hundreds of lettered brick pavers sold by the club members. J. Robert "Bob" Berg, AICA of Richardson Monuments, Lisbon, Ohio is the designer of this beauty.



## You Get Out What You Put In

Bobby Mattos AICA  
Associate Member Representative

Perhaps the most interesting response to the economic situation this passed few years has been the amount of business's that have decided to cut budgets for continuing education and exposure to industry specific networking and collaboration opportunities. It is expensive to travel and pay fees for workshops and seminars on top of being equally costly to be away from our business but I believe that we need to be working together and learning from one another now more than ever. The annual AICA meeting is clearly one of those opportunities that is extremely important but there are so many more available around this country throughout the year.

This spring marks another Commitment to Excellence Seminar, The School of Hard Rocks III, the MBNA JAM as well as numerous other opportunities to continue widening the gap between your firm and the one down the street (or the one on the internet) through educating yourself and your staff. After all, what illustrates more perfectly your desire to continue growing, learning and pushing the envelope to your customer and staff than making the commitment and investment to do so?

A few examples that come to mind immediately are Members like Charlie Hunt, Jed Hendrickson, Kevin Laird and Cole Brown. I personally have noticed that I always see the 4 of them at nearly every industry event I attend. They themselves and their firms have realized the value of their attendance and participation and as you look around the landscape of the industry it is hard not to notice how many times you see and hear their names and/or pictures of their works. It is terrific to see fellow AICA members and associate members recognized and succeeding above and beyond the norm in the monument industry. Other members like Terry Joy, Troy Caldwell and his team, David Sadler, Bill Boone and the entire staff from Greeley Monument Works are also, in every way, firmly in that same group of believers. In fact, it is only logical to assume that their commitment to growing as designers, sales people and stone carvers is in large part why they have found and continue to experience so much success in their perceptive businesses.

As you look at your 2012 budget and perhaps consider what expenses are worthwhile I would encourage all members to consider the value of investing in themselves and their staff; it definitely seems to be working for those who already are!