

# Sculpting a Tribute

*Barbara Mungenast lends her talents to a military homage*

On Sept. 11, 2001, the 3rd United States Infantry Unit, or Old Guard, sprung into action, performing search, rescue and recovery operations at the Pentagon. It was quite the change of pace for the unit, which was established in 1784 and is primarily responsible for military ceremonies, special events and memorials. It also has a platoon that guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Early in 2002, St. Louis sculptor Barbara Mungenast received a phone call from James Laufenburg, Old Guard commander on Sept. 11. He had a request for Mungenast.

"His father-in-law had seen some of my work, and they wanted to find a way to honor the soldiers that had served in The Old Guard, past, present and future," Mungenast recalls. "They were interested in doing a memorial."

Laufenburg says Mungenast didn't know much about The Old Guard so she spent some time in Fort Myer, Va., and observed some military ceremonies. "What better way to get her familiar with it?" he says. "She went back and did some concept sketches. It was exactly what we were looking for."

Mungenast soon found herself working on a one-third-life-size bronze model in her living room, the beginning of The Old Guard Monument to be placed on the grounds of Fort Myer.

When completed, the monument will be about 12 feet tall and feature three figures: One wearing the ceremonial uniform of those that guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; one wearing the 1700s-era Fife and Drum Corps uniform; and one wearing a combat uniform. Centered between the three will be an Arlington National Cemetery grave marker.

"For the Army, they want everything precise," Mungenast says, which suits her attention to detail just fine. She had three military uniforms in her home in order to perfectly replicate even their tiniest detail.

It's a project Mungenast especially holds dear since her husband Dave was in the Special Forces and their son Kurt is a former Marine.

"I'm very emotional about it because I've put so much of my self and my feelings into this," she says. "I'm deeply honored. And I know they like it. The soldiers that have seen it, the colonel, they love it. It's for them."

Already six years in the making, the monument's completion is unknown, but Laufenburg gives September 2009 as a possible date.



"We just need to raise more funds," Mungenast says. "We're trying to get enough money to have the piece cast." The estimated \$1.2 million project is funded solely through donations.

For Laufenburg, executive director of The Old Guard Monument Foundation, the monument isn't just about The Old Guard. It's a tribute to the entire U.S. Army. "As this project has evolved, I have matured in my thoughts, and I see it now more as a gift to the Army, not just the regiment," he says. "It really is a wonderful project." W

by Laura Kruty

Photo by Steve Perotti

on the Web

For more information about The Old Guard Monument or to make a donation, log on [www.theoldguardmonument.org](http://www.theoldguardmonument.org).