



# Born of CLAY Before *Bronze*

by Laura S. Goddard

Born of clay, the Special Warfare Memorial Statue, more commonly referred to as the 'Green Beret Soldier' statue, began life in the Spring of 1968 at the studio of renowned sculptor Donald De Lue, in Leonardo, NJ.<sup>1</sup> Designed to represent the Special Forces soldier, the statue started out as a 'maquette' or prototype, a sculptor's rough, small scale model, of the proposed sculpture.<sup>2</sup> This 'salesman's sample' shows commissioning clients, in this case the Special Warfare Memorial Committee, what to expect.

Once the Special Warfare Memorial Committee was satisfied with the artist's rendering, De Lue created a full size version in clay.<sup>3</sup> When it was finished, the sculptor invited the memorial committee to visit his studio for final approval.<sup>4</sup> With their blessing he proceeded to the next stage, preparation of the plaster cast. This was the mold for the bronze statue. The clay model was carefully laid in a wooden 'coffin' and plaster was poured all around it. Then the hardened plaster cast shell was fully cut away for shipment to the foundry in Viareggio, Italy. There, molten bronze was poured into the plaster cast.<sup>5</sup> After the bronze cooled and hardened, the cast was broken away. The statue then had the flashing ground off. Finally it was cleaned and polished and a protective coating applied before being sent to the U. S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare, at Ft. Bragg, NC.<sup>6</sup>

The Special Warfare Memorial statue, symbolic of the dual role of Special Forces as "constructors as well as destructors,"<sup>7</sup> is 17 feet high. The soldier alone is 12 feet tall.<sup>8</sup> The SF soldier is standing atop a concrete and marble pedestal. Inside the base is a time capsule containing a bust of President John F. Kennedy, and a book of quotations from his speeches, as well as berets with the appropriate insignia and flashes of Special Forces units, active, reserve, and National Guard at the time.<sup>9</sup> †

## Endnotes

- 1 Donald De Lue, "Both Heart and Mind of Sculptor Donald De Lue Part of Bronze Artwork," *Veritas* (Vol. VII, No. 16, 26 November 1969), 3.
- 2 *Maquette* - French, from the Italian *macchietta*, meaning speck, or little spot, sketch, diminutive of *macchia*, ultimately from Latin *macula* 'spot.'
- 3 Donald De Lue, *Veritas*, 3.
- 4 Donald De Lue, *Veritas*, 3.
- 5 Donald De Lue, *Veritas*, 3.
- 6 *Program of Events, Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Ceremony Culminates Five-Year Effort,"* 26 November 1969, 9, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 7 Major General Edward M. Flanagan, Jr., *Program of Events, Dedication of the Green Beret Statue, "Statue dedicated to memory of fallen soldiers,"* 26 November 1969, 11, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 8 Donald De Lue, *Veritas*, 3.
- 9 *Program of Events, Dedication of the Green Beret Statue,* 26 November 1969, 13, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

Library of Congress photo.





Shown here are photos of what is believed to be Donald De Lue's clay 'maquette' of the Special Warfare Memorial Statue.

Above is the front view of the *maquette*. Part of a *maquette's* function is to realize the 3-dimensions of every element of the figure's form. The *maquette* would later be transformed into the full size, clay model of the Special Warfare Memorial Statue.

Note that De Lue delineated particular characteristics in the sculpture sketch to embody the spirit of the Special Forces soldier.



The *maquette* from the back, note the pipe support to stabilize the clay sculpture.



The clay sketch detailing the jungle uniform, form fitted to the soldier by moisture and sweat.



De Lue's envisage of the hand offered in friendship with the weapon held at the ready.



Rear view of the easy stance held by the soldier.



The clay study of the snake, symbolic of evil, with the boot using the rock to put an end to the snake's tyranny.

