

Fort Taber Flag to honor Thomas “Frank” McCoy WWII Army Veteran Who Fought in the Battle of the Bulge

During the month of September, the 37th Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of Thomas “Frank” McCoy, a WWII veteran who served in the Third Armored Division of the United States Army, participating in the infamous the Battle of the Bulge.

Frank was born in Wichita, Kansas on January 27, 1925. He attended East High School, graduated in 1943, and joined the Army shortly after. Once completing his training in the U.S., he headed to with the Third Armored Division, where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Also known as the Ardennes Offensive, this was the last major German campaign during World War II. The battle took place over forty days from December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945.

At the end of World War II, McCoy was discharged and returned home. He went on to receive his BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) from Kansas University in 1950, then studied at the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts in Liege, the Academy of Fine Arts in the Belgian city of Liege, where he received a Diploma with High Distinction. Before returning home again, Frank worked as the interim head of the art department at the Army’s community newspaper, Stars and Stripes, in Germany.

Upon returning to Kansas, he earned his MFA (Master’s in Fine Arts) from the University of Kansas. He worked for several years as the men’s fashion illustrator at Henry’s Clothing Store in Wichita before taking a job at the Swain School of Design in New Bedford in 1954.

According to his obituary, after teaching at Swain, Frank taught at Bradford Durfee College/New Bedford Institute of Technology which became SMU (Southern Massachusetts University). Frank and fellow professor, Ed Togneri, developed the strong drawing and painting program at SMU which transitioned into the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, where Frank taught painting, drawing and printmaking until he retired in 1991 after 32 years of teaching.

He continued to draw, paint and exhibit his own work for the next 25 years. Because he still loved to teach, he mentored a group of SouthCoast summer residents who enjoyed Frank's paint instruction as well as his critiques.

Throughout his life, Frank enjoyed reading, Big Band music, jogging, tennis and, of course, art.

Frank died at the age of 93 on February 17, 2018. He leaves behind his loving and kind companion of 21 years, Gretchen Knowlton, his faithful, sweet Cocker Spaniel, Lily, numerous friends, and appreciative students whose lives he touched.

Many of his former students left messages of remembrance on the funeral website including Gayle Giroux Thorley who recalled, "Frank was my painting and drawing professor at SMU (UMass Dartmouth). He was a kind, inspiring and constructive presence always. A true artist and art lover."

Mary Natalizia, also a former student, shared these thoughts..."Sat at my easel today (which Frank gave me when I was poor and struggling) mixing greys (like the ones I mixed 40 years ago in a palette knife painting he had assigned to loosen me up and help me understand the graphic underpinnings necessary to all good painting)- thinking of how important this man was to my development as an artist. He taught me to draw, and by that, I mean to open my eyes and SEE! Rest In Peace Dear Frank and thank you for being such a wonderful teacher and human being."

Lastly, Helen DeGroot, fondly remembers, "Just being in the

same room with Frank was a pleasure. Being a student in his class was a privilege.”

Linda Ferreira, of **Empire Ford of New Bedford**, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford of New Bedford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com.