

Sculptor seized athletic moment

By Steve Lundgren
Associated Press

LA GRANDE, Ore. (AP) — Ramon Parmenter thrives on seizing the moment.

More specifically, the Joseph sculptor seizes the instant — the instant Seattle Seahawk Steve Largent caught a pass or the instant Olympic gymnast Tracee Talavera vaulted onto a balance beam.

But the bronze figures of athletes and dancers that have brought Parmenter fame in both the art and the sports worlds capture more than a freeze-frame in time. They imply motion.

"Movement; I love movement," Parmenter said as he twisted a bit of modeling wax between his fingers. "When you're moving, there's always emotion. You can't get away from that."

A 16-inch-high bronze of marathon record-setter Alberto Salazar, which Parmenter created before the 1984 Olympics, says it all. Caught in mid-stride, the sculptured runner's face shows a mixture of pain and determination. The viewer easily can envision the strides leading to and following that frozen instant.

Since his first series of athlete sculptures in the early 1980s, the Eugene native's reputation, and repertoire, have been growing exponentially. Now his works are selling for thousands of dollars at galleries around the country and he is receiving commissions for major works.

Most recently, he completed a larger-than-life statue of University of Oregon distance great Steve Prefontaine for Nike's new corporate headquarters in Beaverton. In January, the Seattle Seahawks unveiled a trophy upon split end Steve Largent's retirement to commemorate his achievements.

Mostly, however, Parmenter does what he wants and hopes someone will buy it.

"Unless they really cross the palm with green, I do speculative art," he said.

Parmenter and his brothers, Greg and Brad, were to travel to the International Art Show in New York this week. Greg is the general manager and Brad is the marketing director of Parmenter Studios in Joseph.

Parmenter's whole artistic career has been a series of surprises, many of them brought about by taking advantage of opportunities.

Becoming a sculptor was almost an accident. When Parmenter was studying commercial illustration at the Oregon College of Art in Ashland, a man from Red Lion Motor Inns walked in one day.

"He asked *does* anyone do sculpture," Parmenter said. "No one raised their hand, so I did."

He hadn't up until then, but at \$200 a pop for table decorations, Parmenter decided he would learn.

"I thought, 'It's extra money for college,' you know how that is," he said.

At first, he tried ice, but the sculptures kept melting before the banquets were over. Then Parmenter had the cook order some wax.

What arrived was buckets of vegetable shortening, the type used in pie crusts. Undaunted, Parmenter sculpted the greasy stuff, and to his surprise, it worked. His works included a Venus di Milo replica and a Gabriel with an eight-foot wing span.

Gallery representatives staying at the motel started leaving cards. Parmenter didn't think much of it until a cousin, who was also involved in a gallery, suggested he try bronze. Shortly after, he did a bronze mountain climber and was on his way.

In 1982, his big break came when he did a series of sculptures of top-ranked athletes, many of whom would later win Olympic medals. The show, titled "Essence of Movement," showed in Eugene, Los Angeles and several other cities.

Melee Continued from Page 1

have a party and get along with police; you can have a party and get along with your neighbors," he said.

While Loveall said he could not remember the last time tear gas was used to disperse a crowd in Eugene, he believed it was during the Vietnam War protest riots of the late 1960s and early '70s.

"(War protesters) at least had a cause," he said. "What the people are doing now is just senseless. There's no issue, no cause now."

Dave Fidanque of the local American Civil Liberties Union chapter said he had received a number of calls from University students inquiring about their rights in the incident.

"There's no question that police have an obligation to maintain order and to do so ... using the least amount of force necessary," he said.

People have the right to assemble, he said, but "people don't have a constitutional right to be rowdy any time they want, any place they want."

A key problem in evaluating the March 31 melee, he said, is that testimony from police and students present show two fundamentally opposing views; namely, whether police gave adequate warning, and whether the use of tear gas was warranted.

"If differences in perceptions are just swept under the rug, it will just create more problems down the road," Fidanque said.

On Saturday night, police responded to two noise complaints about a party with live music in a courtyard at East 14th Avenue and Mill Street.

Capt. Loveall said police arrived, then bottles were thrown. Warnings to stop were met with "a barrage of them," he said.

Officers released tear gas to disperse the crowd. An hour later, a group of about 200 gathered near 14th Avenue and Patterson Street.

A "very audible" bullhorn was used to tell the partiers to disperse, Loveall said, but more bottles were thrown. The bottle-throwing prompted the release of more tear gas.

After the crowd broke up, two youths from Ashland were arrested for their part in the "mob psychology that prevailed," police said.

Alexis Maddock, a resident of one of the apartment complexes where police first were dispatched, said neither side is blameless. "The police came in with an attitude, and the students responded with an attitude."

Maddock said she was skeptical that the police gave an audible warning at the incident, which began as a get-together of about a dozen tenants of two apartment complexes.

"If they did it they didn't have a bullhorn, and nobody could hear them," she said.

By the time police arrived, Maddock said, apartment tenants had withdrawn from the party. "None of us threw any beer bottles; we were all hiding."

Maddock, a Lane Community College student, joined other apartment tenants in a meeting Tuesday with Vice Provost Gerard Moseley and Assistant Dean of Students Elaine Green to discuss the incident and propose alternative social events for students.

In addition, they will meet Thursday with members of the Department of Public Safety, to discuss the possibility of party sponsors being held financially responsible for the police work.

Although the tenants have accountability to apologize for the noise created by the music and crowd, it would be unrealistic and unfair to fine the tenants, Maddock said.



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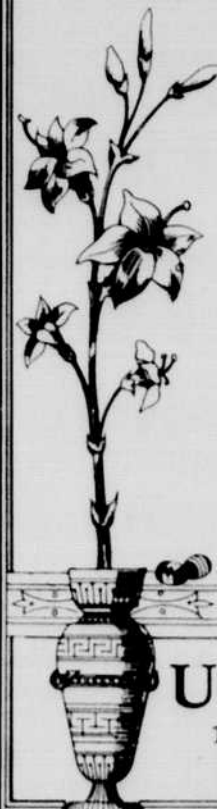
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