

SALINA JOURNAL

Dr. Richard D. Bergen

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When it's possible friends and family will gather to remember a Salina man whose sculpture sits atop the state capitol building.

Dr. Richard D. Bergen, the Kansas artist whose iconic bronze sculpture Ad Astra graces the capitol building in Topeka, died last week on Wednesday. He was 95.

Bergen and son Rich partnered for over 35 years in the Bergen's Sculpture Studio, a north Santa Fe Avenue gallery and work space in Salina, where together they crafted more than 40 monumental bronze sculptures and other works of public art found in cities across Kansas.



College after service in the U.S. Navy during WWII. He ultimately earned degrees from three Kansas institutions of higher education and inspired hundreds of his own students to embrace the creative arts.

Bergen made Salina his home for nearly 65 years. As director of art education in the Salina public schools during the late 1950s through 1960s, he taught every child in Salina's kindergarten through sixth grade classes through his monthly visits to each of the city's then 16 elementary schools.

Bergen became a professor of art and chair of the Art Department at Marymount College in 1967, and studied in the summers to earn a doctorate in art education from the University of Kansas in 1973. His first monumental bronze, Trifinity, was completed during that time. With three intertwining figures, representing the past, present and future of Salina, it stands between the city's library and court house and was dedicated in January 1975.

Trifinity was the first of many sculptures he crafted and installed across Kansas, including the Pony Express Rider in Marysville, Heritage Woman in Wichita Heritage Square, the Buffalo Soldier in Junction City, and most recently, the Terrible Swede on the Bethany College campus in Lindsborg.

With a master's degree in art from Kansas State University earned in 1963, many of his works are found in Manhattan. They include the crouching Wildcat ready to pounce at the K-State Alumni Center, Holy Family at St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Ernie Barrett with hand outstretched at Bramlage Coliseum, and busts of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Marianna Kistler Beach at the K-State art museum named for her.

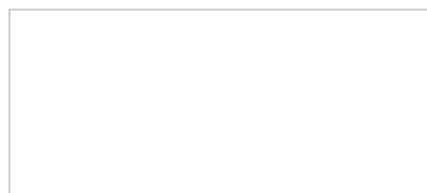


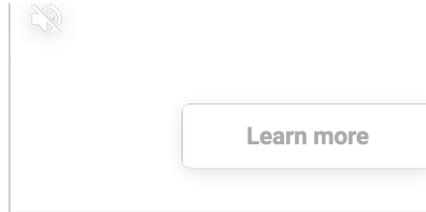
Bergen was also an enthusiastic community and civic leader. He was a founding member of the Salina AMBUCS club, a member of the Masonic Temple, and elected to a term on the Salina School Board in 1973 and served as president. He was an active member of the St. John's Lutheran Church and the Salina War Memorial Committee, which raised funds to honor Salina's veterans with a plaza in Sunset Park. His sculpture of an eagle with wings spread wide is atop the memorial.

Born January 7, 1925, in Palm Beach, Fla., to Gilbert and Fern (Tyner) Bergen, he grew up in Elizabeth, N.J., where he attended high school. Bergen enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1941 and served as a machinist in the South Pacific. Encouraged to study art after the war, Bergen attended the Newark School of Fine Art in 1946, then moved to Kansas to enroll at Bethany College in Lindsborg to study with noted artists Birger Sandzen and Charles Rogers.

Bergen graduated from Bethany in 1953 with a BFA in art. He met his wife, Marquette native Lou Ann (Lindstrom), in his very first class at Bethany, which sealed his fate to be a Kansan. The two were married on June 3, 1953, and were together for 65 years, until she preceded him in death on Sept. 4, 2018.

Bergen is survived by his daughter Lori Bergen (Charles Mangano) of Boulder, Colo., son Rich Bergen (Lynda Buehre) of Salina, grandchildren John Bergen Kamerer of Wichita, Anna Bergen Kamerer of New York, N.Y.





A memorial service and celebration of life will be held at the St. John's Lutheran Church of Salina as soon as restrictions on travel and public gatherings are lifted.

A virtual memorial can be found at www.BergenWasHere.com.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorials to the Richard and Lou Ann Bergen Scholarship in the Creative Arts through the Greater Salina Community Foundation, which can be made in care of Ryan Mortuary, 137 N. 8th St., Salina.

Correspondence can be mailed to the Bergen's Sculpture Studio, 320 N. Santa Fe Ave., Salina, where Rich will continue creating art.

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