

# Huge war horse statue rearing to record

From hoof to saber tip, sculpture of Gen. Forrest to rise 22 feet above road

By David R. Logsdon  
BANNER LIFESTYLES WRITER

Jack Kershaw's statue of Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest and his war horse will tower over passing motorists on Interstate 65.

When it's finished it may set the record for the tallest statue of a rearing horse.

"I'm reasonably certain this is the tallest rearing horse ever done," says the retired attorney. From the tip of Forrest's upraised saber to his horse's rear hooves, the statue will be 22 feet tall.

The horse's pose may seem exaggerated, but it is possible, Kershaw says.

"The Spanish School in Vienna trains horses to rear, also to hop forward," he notes. "So, it is a real position."

"Forrest, I'm going to have him with a pistol in one hand and a saber in the other, which was characteristic. He didn't believe too much in saber work, but he used it to signal with."

The statue will be part of a display of flags from the Confederate states that has already been put up by Kershaw's long-time friend William Dorris. A new flag has been added to the display with the words "Forget hell"

The display, located along I-65 between the Brentwood and Harding Place exits, generated controversy earlier this month when several African-American legislators complained because the state Department of Transportation cleared brush from the roadside so the flags would be more visible to passing motorists.

The legislators also were angry because state inmates were used to make more visible the site that will hold a "heinous" statue of Forrest, who they liken to Hitler.

Forrest is the founder of the original Ku Klux Klan. Originally, it was a secret group to protect Southerners from Northern retribution after the Civil War. He disbanded the organization



several years later, but white supremacists reformed it in Georgia in the early 1900s.

But Kershaw says his sculpture is only a tribute Southern history and heritage.

"He was a Tennessean and undoubtedly the greatest cavalry leader," Kershaw says of the subject of his sculpture. "His characteristic cry was, 'Follow me!' That's a whole lot different from the fellow who says, 'Go up there and get them, boys. I'll be waiting right here.'"

Kershaw has been working on the statue for about a year and plans to finish it in December; then it will be placed in Dorris' private park.

"The statue will be on a

foundation, which will be a little island in a pool of spring water, so it will be attractive," Kershaw says.

Though bronze is traditional for statues, the sculptor is using modern nonmetal materials.

"It's foolish to spend all the money it takes to cast in bronze," Kershaw explains. "The foundryman gets the money. This way saves a lot of money and gives something better than bronze."

"I have developed a technique I am patenting for sculpture, which is the same technique used for building speedboats and sports cars. I carve a core in a foam block, then apply several layers of fiberglass and polyester resin.



BANNER PHOTOS: JOHN RUSSELL

Artist Jack Kershaw, in the above photo, adjusts a model of his statue of Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest that will be placed in a private park along Interstate 65. Kershaw, in the photo at left, carves the horse's ears on the foam block that will serve as the core of the statue.

That is extremely strong stuff, as durable as bronze.

"As a precaution, I will insert metal skeleton in each leg and back, so it will be very secure."

The finish on the horse will be gold leaf and on the general silver leaf.

"I checked on the durability of these finishes; there is virtually no maintenance problem," Kershaw says. The statue will be coated with a DuPont product so smooth graffiti will not stick. "You can wipe it right off with a dry cloth," Kershaw says.

Funding for the statue comes primarily from the League of the South, which Kershaw says is a relatively new organization dedicated to preserving Southern heritage. Other support is provided by chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Kershaw is donating his time and skill, acquired over several decades. "I have always done art work," he says. "Back in the '30s I was state director for the WPA art projects."

Though Kershaw has created other statues over the years, this is his most ambitious undertaking. "I've never made anything this big," he says. "Nobody else has either."

David Logsdon may be reached at 259-8240 or by e-mail: dlogsdon@NashvilleBanner.com