

# NORTHWEST STONE SCULPTORS ASSOCIATION

JANUARY/FEBRUARY  
2019

# Sculpture Northwest

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**CONTACT**

P.O. Box 27364 • Seattle, WA 98165-1864

FAX: (206) 523-9280

Website: [www.nwssa.org](http://www.nwssa.org)

**General e-mail: [nwssa-office@nwssa.org](mailto:nwssa-office@nwssa.org)**

**NWSSA BOARD OFFICERS**

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Ken Barnes, Vice President, (206) 930-0681

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Patty McPhee, (206) 919-4938

**PRODUCTION STAFF**

Penelope Crittenden, Co-editor, (541) 324-8375

Lane Tompkins, Co-editor, (360) 320-8597

**DESIGNER AND PRINTER**

Nannette Davis of QIVU Graphics, (425) 485-5570

**WEBMASTER**

Carl Nelson

[carl@mostlyrandom.info](mailto:carl@mostlyrandom.info)

(425) 252-6812

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT...



*Not long ago, Carl was asked what an artist should consider if they wanted to put their sculpture into a non-gallery setting, such as a coffee shop. Here is Carl's answer.*

1. Ask if the coffee shop has any insurance regarding theft or vandalism, if not, be willing to lose the piece in exchange for "exposure." Generally insurance covers cost of materials like \$50 for the new piece of stone. In some cases, you will

probably be a friend of a friend who thinks this is a cool idea. Get to know the owner and their staff.

2. Will you get any say in display and curation so as to minimize grab and go theft?

3. Soft stone is scratchable. Will the display allow someone to inadvertently scratch the piece? If it is going to be touchable, make sure it stays safe and can't be knocked over or dropped.

4. Lighting in a coffee shop can suck. Will you get any say about lighting?

5. Have a clear inventory, with each piece listed and priced. Find out who will be handling sales and the collection of money. Think about having a price label with a QR code so folks can contact you directly to learn more about the work and about you.

Hope this helps.

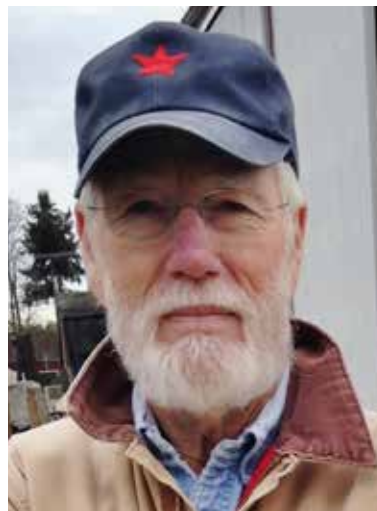
... Carl

## FROM THE EDITORS...

We start off the New Year with a return to a black and white cover. Don't let that bother you. The Cathedral of St. John the Divine shows pretty well in gray scale. We enter the cathedral at the invitation of Joseph Kincannon who worked for twelve years on the extension of the south tower for that building. His is a story of luck, persistence and creativity; leading him to an ever expanding world of stone carving.

In another approach to sculpture, we are treated to a review of Bob Leverich's project to produce outdoor granite furniture for high school students. Congratulations, Bob, for the final completion of this work.

Speaking of projects, a fortunate thirty NWSSA members enjoyed a Whidbey Island tour of Hank Nelson's twenty acre extravaganza he calls Cloudstone. Erin Rants breaks it down for us to begin an understanding of the very long journey Hank has taken to produce the wonder that is Cloudstone.



We also have a couple of newbies to get to know. We'll meet Lisa Svircic who talks about a chlorite female torso of hers.

And we meet a young man at the beginning of his stone adventure, Luke Nalker. The joy in his voice is infectious.

May it ever be so.

... Lane and Penelope

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: JOSEPH KINCANNON AND THE PORTAL OF STONE

In 1979 I entered the world of stone through an unusual portal; a portal at a cathedral, to be specific, The Cathedral of St. John the Devine in New York City.

As cathedrals go, this mammoth edifice is a 19th century show of American might. It's a cathedral to beat all cathedrals... in size, anyway. The interior floor is two football fields in length. The ceiling height is 120 ft. at its highest and with massive granite walls sheathed in a thick skin of limestone. The place is dirty, dank and cold just like the city it sits in, and I loved it instantly. I had never seen such grand architecture. There was nothing timid in the construction of this building. I was immediately struck by how the roaring city outside is silenced upon entry.

By the way, when I arrived at this cathedral it was not to be a stone carver, but to work in their gift shop. My brother had landed me a summer job. He wanted to broaden my horizons. And broadened they were. People streamed in from every corner of the world. Tour buses would unload a stampede of weary travelers every hour on the hour. They'd meander through the cathedral in a muted daze, but when they entered the gift shop, that was with real purpose. It may have only been a gift shop, but to me it was like the United Nations.

Outside of this quiet stone fortress, New York City rumbled away. A place full of danger and adventure. Too intimidated by the subway, I used to walk everywhere. Along with the frenetic buzz of activity, ever present, was a backdrop of extraordinary building facades adorned with ornament. The past of this great city was just staring down on a new crop of inhabitants. It was easy for me to imagine immigrants fresh off of Ellis Island walking around inspired by this mystifying landscape. I couldn't fathom how these things were made. I knew nothing about nor had ever given any thought to stone.

My first glimpse at the work behind the scenes happened unexpectedly one day as I walked to lunch. There were people pounding all hell out of a giant slab of limestone with crude hammers and chisels. Eight or nine young men and women and an older red-faced man in a tweed cap were hard at work. The old man was English and the others were all African-American and Puerto Rican. This



was the beginning of a Harlem hood apprenticeship program.

The idea was to train young people from the neighborhood in the methods of cutting and carving limestone. The purpose being to continue the construction of the Cathedral as it was halted at the start of World War II. The main effort was to build a tower on the west front of the Cathedral.

I was eighteen years old and it was then that I knew what I wanted to do with my life. Also I had an edge, as my brother, Jeep, within a year had become one of the top stone cutters in what was to be known as "The Yard." With his support, and my nagging perhaps for another year, I gained an opening that led me into the world of stone.

My first job was to run a quarry saw. This was a formidable machine equipped with a sixty inch circular blade designed to cut through large blocks. It was the second step of the

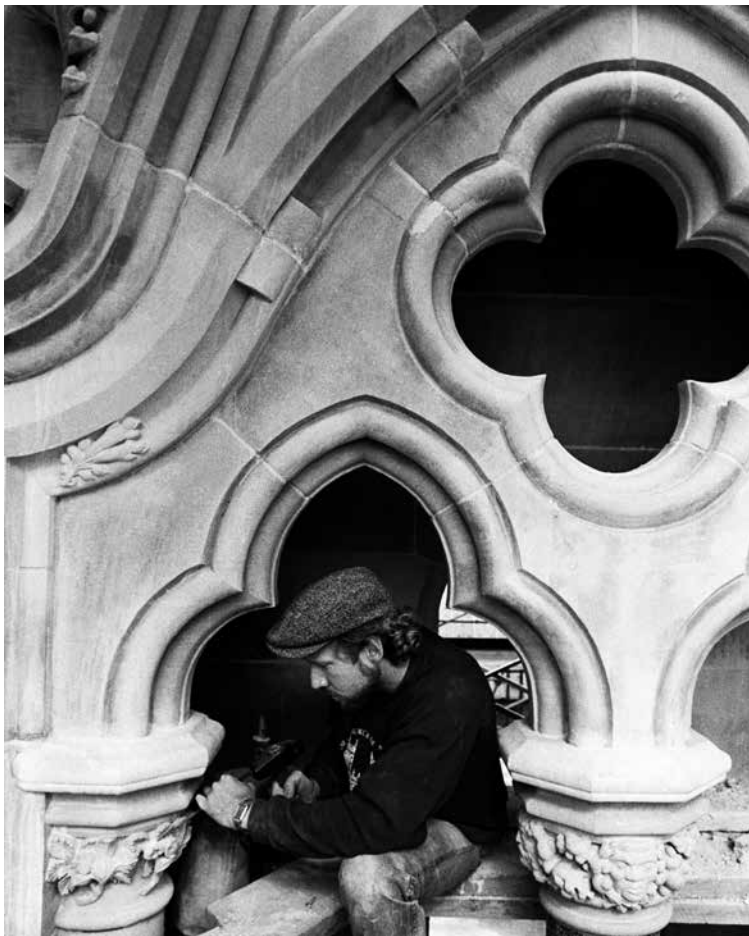


▲ ROUGHING OUT STATUE BLOCKS (PLACED IN 1920'S) OF CATHEDRAL CENTRAL PORTAL, 1988.  
PHOTO: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ



▲ CARVING NYC AS A MODERN DAY APOCALYPSE ON CAPITAL BASE AT CATHEDRAL CENTRAL PORTAL, 1988.  
PHOTO: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

▼ IN SITU CARVING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON FOLIATED CAPITAL FOR CATHEDRAL TOWER, 1986.  
PHOTO: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ



quarry blocks' journey through our workshop. The first stop was the frame saw, which was essentially a mechanical two-man saw. From my station, the stones were moved into the "cutting shed" which is where the stone cutters would fashion the stones into any number of designs. They relied on templates transferred from the original architectural drawings dating back to the 1890's. All this drafting and transferring was done by hand. There was no question regarding our role. Quarry blocks entered one end of the building and intricately carved stones exited out the other. The stones were then stored outside until the spring at which point we would shift to the roof to build the actual tower.

The training was intense and the pay, poor. Four years of cutting stone moldings, arch stones and basic building blocks. Three years of carving ornament:



▲ AQUATIC HEAD FOR WATER SPOUT ON LIMESTONE FOUNTAIN, 2014, AUSTIN TX.  
PHOTO: HOLLY KINCANNON

foliated capitals, grotesques, arch spandrels, etc. and all by hammer and chisel. For a period, we did everything, but eventually the work was subdivided stone cutters, and stone carvers with a team of masons building the tower. I became a carver.

The first idea drilled into us was the need to be anonymous. We weren't permitted to sign our work





# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT *continued*



▲ DETAIL OF FAUNA AND FLORA ON A LIMESTONE FIREPLACE MANTLE, 2010, AUSTIN TX. PHOTO: HOLLY KINCANNON

or bring attention to whom did what. We were strictly “architectural sculptors” and none of us had a problem with this commitment. We were accompanists. The building was the great work.

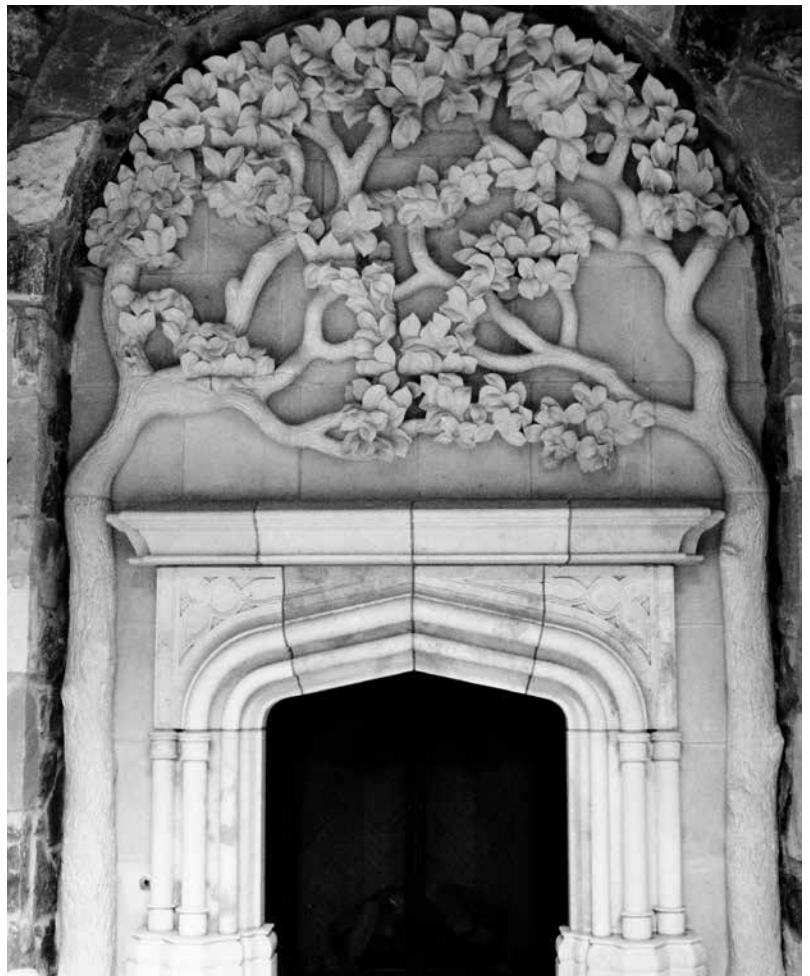
As a representational carver, I loved carving anything from nature. Foliage held my greatest interest, and still it does. I found that the fluidity and organic approach allowed for a great amount of freedom. Unlike statuary or grotesques, these works require extensive drawing and model making. I loved it all, but carving foliage allowed me to take off and develop as a carver.

There was a lot of repetition. For example, we had to produce dozens of crockets which are bulbous foliated cabbage forms that march up the corners of pinnacles. We had a model to follow, but naturally each carving was slightly different. When a pinnacle was constructed, each crocket had its own pulse. The carvings appeared to be moving. This in effect draws the eye upward and follows the line of the stone. In an age of automation, it’s important to note that this movement or pulse exists because the human hand produces these carvings with all necessary mutations. The stones appeared to be alive.

The structured environment of the Cathedral stone yard and building program appealed to me, but at a certain point, I felt the need to cut the moorings and explore a little. At nighttime, “The Yard” was available which offered a great opportunity to work more freely. During this time I stumbled into the direct carving approach. This was not taught or

encouraged at the Cathedral, and it turned me on my head. I was on fire and convinced myself that I had unlocked the key to all the great carvings throughout history. I would pour through books looking for great works of sculpture that might have employed this very approach.

Like jazz from the fifties and sixties, I felt that carving was all about pure improvisation. No more being shackled by drawings and models or any preconceived notions. I wanted to “find my way” through the stone with only the stone itself informing me. I wanted to be the John Coltrane stone carver. At this point, I begin tearing into the stone. I worked at a fevered pace and learned a great deal. Eventually, I circled back with an understanding of the importance of prepared drawings and models, but that tornado-like yearning and years of exploration still drives me today. I worked at that cathedral for twelve years and it was truly a great experience. My move to Texas in 1992 and the modern environment that I have since worked in has not been an easy transition.



▲ FOLIATED TREE CANOPY OVER EXISTING FIREPLACE, 2006, AUSTIN TX. PHOTO: HOLLY KINCANNON

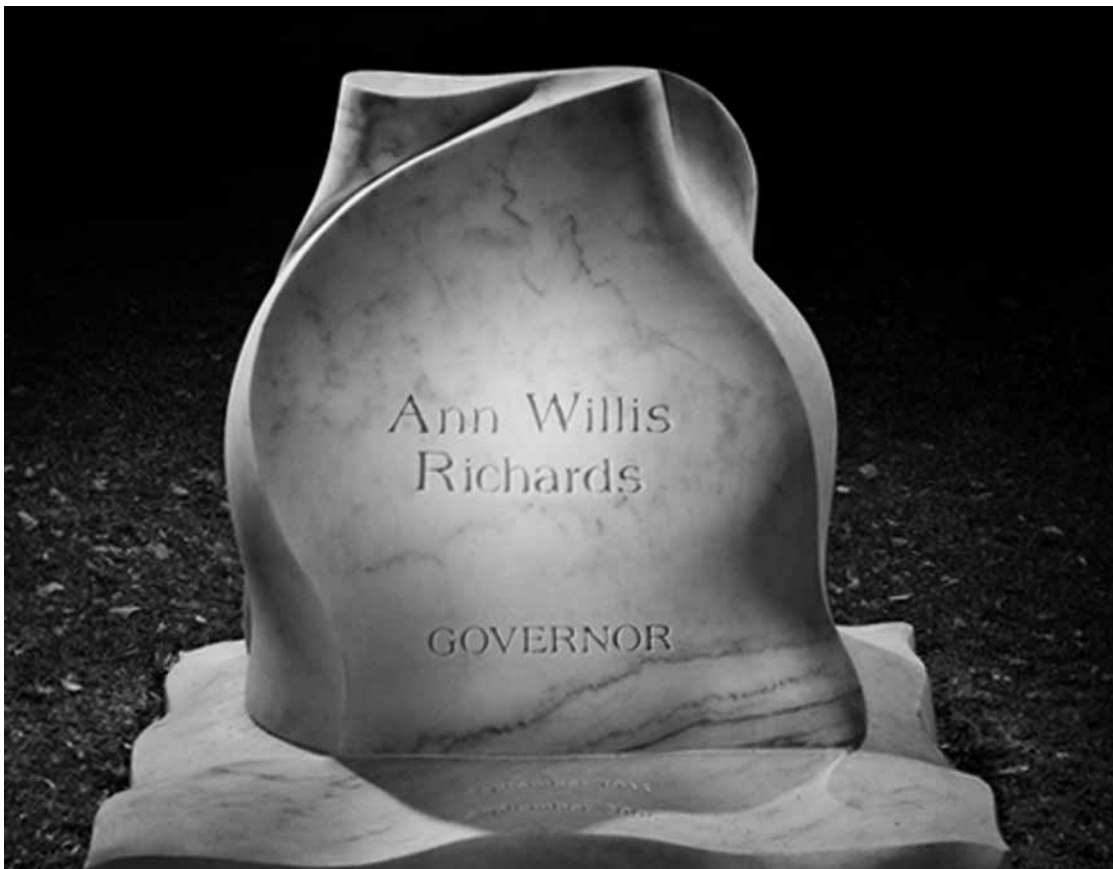


▲ BILL-OF-RIGHTS MONUMENT FOR ARIZONA CAPITOL IN PROGRESS, AMENDMENT #9, 2012. PHOTO: HOLLY KINCANNON

The cathedral was my only school, and I thought modern architecture was an abomination. I looked around at these cold glass buildings and saw nothing to entertain the eye. Austin Texas to my thinking had no continuity from one block to the next. I just couldn't wrap my mind around how architecture, or how we, had gone so far astray. Why would people accept this inferior typology?

I felt so removed from the world of European architecture, even from New England. My training and aesthetic seemed to be antiquated. So, my wife and partner, Holly, who's trained as an architect, and I named our new studio, ARCHAIC. And with the help of our two brothers, Jeep and Richard, and a growing number of apprentices, we began carving statues, fountains, fireplaces and restoring Texas' courthouses and churches. Eventually because we both have a passion for art we moved into the realm of public sculpture and urban design.

As an artist, I slowly backed off of the flamboyant and highly articulated designs fitting for a cathedral. I began to explore geometric forms that are more in tune with the palette of our new landscape. I began looking at the work of architect Carlo Scarpa and the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi. I took more interest in the subtle interplay of planes, angles and the explorations of textural treatments. My stone carving approach began taking fewer steps to achieve purpose with a block of stone. Mind you, I am still on this journey. I'm also very excited about our studio's next phase. We are on the move again and taking our chisels to the hauntingly, beautiful world of the Old South. And while I will not be carving under the arches of a Cathedral, I will be under the moss-laden oak trees of Savannah, Georgia. And although we changed our studio name from ARCHAIC to KINCANNON STUDIOS in 2008, perhaps it's time to rethink this story.



▲ MARBLE MONUMENT FOR GOVERNOR ANN RICHARDS, 2008, AUSTIN TX. PHOTO: JEFF WILSON



# WAYS OF KNOWING *by Bob Leverich*

## Bob Leverich's Commission by the Washington State Arts Commission to create a sculpture on the grounds of Vashon Island High School.

For those of us thinking we might want to do some public art, here is a cautionary tale of a project taken on and completed by Bob Leverich, a NWSSA member from Olympia, Washington. The tale is not meant to discourage us, but to inform us about just what it might take to successfully complete such a major project.

These things always seem to take more time than is originally planned. If you've been following Bob's story in the Journal, the website and the List Serve, you know how much equipment and how many people were involved to see this effort through to its completion.

It took sixteen long months before the work was done. That said, Bob and all the people who helped and supported him in his grand conception now know the following to be true.

Thousands of high school student hours have already been spent sitting and leaning and laughing on and around the tons of granite from the commission that Bob accepted and completed.

Congratulations, Artist/Citizen Robert Leverich.



▲ VERY EARLY ON A SATURDAY BACK IN JUNE, 2017, WE LOADED MY PICK-UP WITH A GENERATOR AND LOTS OF SUPPLIES AND HEADED TO THE RAVENSDALE GRAVEL QUARRY TO MAKE THIS SUCCESSFUL BOULDER SPLIT.



▲ DJ, WITH THE MARENAKOS BOOM TRUCK, LOADING THE TWO BOULDER HALVES FOR TRANSPORT



▲ BOB USING A GAS-POWERED 14" CUT-SAW WITH A WATER FEED TO ROUGH OUT THE BOULDER SCOOP-OUTS.





▲ OCTOBER 21, 2018: GATHERING OF NWSSA MEMBERS AND OTHERS TO CELEBRATE THE SCULPTURE COMPLETELY DONE – WITH GRASS AND EVERYTHING.



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## LET'S MEET ...



### LUKE NALKER

I discovered NWSSA when visiting the Seattle Japanese Gardens where they were hosting a soapstone carving class. I took a flyer and later checked out the website where I was excited to learn about the upcoming symposium at Pilgrim Firs. I needed a vacation badly, and I thought, "What better way to release stress than hammering stones in the woods for a week?" It turned out to be much more than I expected.

I'm very thankful to have found "my weirdos," a community of the most kind, sharing and generous people I've ever met, who introduced me to a new passion in life. I'm excited about seeing everyone again next year!

*~Luke*



# 1 X 1 X 1 : LISA SVIRCIC

## ***How did the idea come to you?***

The idea for this piece came to me from the shape of the original stone. It had a natural twist and arc to it that wanted to become a female torso. I brought this stone to carve at the symposium at Pilgrim Firs this July.

## ***Process: Maquette? Drawing? Direct Carve? Other?***

I always start direct carving the stone and together we find the form. I used a point chisel to rough out the shape and then used a flat tooth chisel to develop the shape. I like to keep part of the natural stone in the final piece so I worked around the cleft in the waist, which was in the original stone. I used a flat chisel to finish the back of the piece and sanded/polished it to a high shine. I left the raw chisel marks in front and created a curvilinear division so it's not a stark front versus back.

## ***Hardest part?***

The hardest part was finding the mood of the sculpture as well as keeping the anatomy in mind as I worked. I had been away from sculpting for a while, so I had to find my way again. Many artists at the symposium helped me with their thoughts and critiques. Thank you!

## ***Easiest part?***

The easiest part was choosing to incorporate both the flat tooth chisel marks and the smooth polished finish. I was getting feedback at the symposium about my mark making and how nice it looked... but chlorite polishes to such a beautiful black shine! So, I did both and am pleased with the results.

## ***What did you learn from the making of this piece?***

I learned a lot from this piece about myself and about the generosity of artists. Even after not carving for a while, I can still carve. This is a valuable lesson not to give up and not to give in to temporary insecurities. Also, the wonderful support and helpful critiques from fellow artists are truly a gift. Thank you!



▲ 'NATURAL BEAUTY', 17" HIGH 6" WIDE, BLACK CHLORITE





# NWSSA VISIT TO HANK NELSON'S CLOUDSTONE

by Erin Rants

Getting Hank Nelson in front of a microphone on December 8th in front of 30-plus NWSSA members and a few Cloudstone Board Members, was the only challenging part of a talk by Hank, and tour by Board members, of Hank's vast Whidbey Island utopia/dystopia, Cloudstone.

Hank shared some of the depth and breadth of his experience in carving stone: how he learned to carve marble in the afternoons during an early year in Italy while he learned to cast bronze in the mornings; to the "macho side of me" that led Hank to work graceful yet imposing abstractions in Cascade granite; to the "really" macho side that led to his monumental sculptures. Many of these are stunning South Dakota red granite, displayed in all their glory over the 20 acres (of Hank's fifty-five acre plot of island land,) that comprise Cloudstone. The dystopian quality of Cloudstone mentioned earlier is seen in Hank's monumental 'earthworks.' There are several of these works around the acreage in which the earth has been radically moved, with snaking moats and giant berms re-employing objects that have been tossed aside by industry: rusting oil tanks and giant pipes, twisted rebar and chunks of concrete. This place is a vision of where we're going, fraught with danger and possibly, great beauty.

Many thanks to Carl Nelson (no relation to Hank) for spearheading this adventure and for engaging Hank in sharing his vision that resulted in this spectacular place, and appreciation to Rich, who introduced Hank and thanked him for his years of on-the-ground equipment management of NWSSA's Camp Brotherhood Symposium.

*Ed note: Thanks to Kentaro and Rich who talked to Erin about the idea, and to Erin who took on the effort of getting it done. Thanks to Carl for working with Hank to make this happen.*

***For a look at Hank's body of work go to: [cloudstonesculpture.com](http://cloudstonesculpture.com)***





NWSSA  
P.O. BOX 27364  
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98165-1864

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***Say it with color!***

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Contact Lane at [lane@whidbey.com](mailto:lane@whidbey.com) or Penelope at [artist@crittendensculpture.com](mailto:artist@crittendensculpture.com).

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