

HONORING **FALLEN HEROES**

AN INSPIRED DESIGN WINS THE 2017 TRU VUE FRAMING COMPETITION

by Francine Hackerott, CPF



The core elements of the frame design commemorate the Granite Mountain Hotshots and their mission, including the choice of juniper wood and the representation of the eternal flame.

In its fifth year, the Tru Vue® Framing Competition invited custom framers to apply their craftsmanship, design creativity, and preservation focus to Tru Frameable Moments™ in their communities. Francine Hackerott of The Frame & I in Prescott, AZ, was named the winner of the Best In Show: Judges' Choice Award for her entry, "Eternal Remembrance," honoring a crew of elite firefighters who lost their lives on the job.

The Granite Mountain Hotshots perished in a fire that took place outside Prescott, AZ, on Yarnell Hill in 2013. The impact it had on our community was significant, and their story made national news. In fact, a major film about the crew is being released later this year.

Many memorial gestures were made to honor these firefighters in the aftermath of the tragedy. The idea that I could use framing in some way to commemorate their service had been on my mind since the tragedy, but it wasn't until Tru Vue announced the theme of its 2017 Framing Competition, Tru Frameable Moments™, that the inspiration for the design began to come to me. While this wasn't a moment of celebration, the memory of these elite firefighters who had so much passion for their work left a significant impression on all of us in the Prescott area.

The three core elements of my design commemorate the Granite Mountain Hotshots and their mission, including the choice of juniper wood and the representation of the eternal flame. Though memorial framing is often done using shadowboxes, I chose a two-dimensional design to put the focus on the human element of the men's faces. Many of the Hotshots were firefighters part-time and held other positions in the community. Almost half of the men had children. So their personal connections to the people of Prescott were very strong. We knew them not just as a team but also as individuals.

The photos offer a contrast of vibrant color and somber black-and-white. At the top, you see the Hotshots before the tragedy in a pyramid pose in front of one of the juniper trees they saved during a previous fire. This photo, taken from the camera of one of the firefighters who was lost, depicts their sense of camaraderie and strength of their bond as a group. It has become one of the most familiar images of the Hotshots in the aftermath of the tragedy. The second image, from local photographer Rhonda Snyder, shows the memorial that emerged along the fence in front of the Hotshots' training facility, demonstrating the devastation felt by the community.

The Granite Mountain Hotshots were known for protecting the area's indigenous juniper trees, and I wanted to incorporate juniper into the frame design. Because the Hotshots were dedicated to saving juniper trees, using this specific reclaimed wood was necessary for a piece meant to honor them. Starting with a 9" wide slab of recovered wood, I crafted the components of a lap-joined, 18"x21" frame. The side pieces included a good portion of the bark to suggest the image of a tree trunk.

This was my first time working with juniper. It is a wonderful, semi-hard wood with a tight grain, and the most pleasurable thing about working with it is the aroma. All of my senses were engaged during the carving process!

On the carved portions, treatment with stain enhances the weathered look of the design. Along the top of the frame is an insignia with the number 19 in the center, an eternal flame, and the star of life as well as the symbol featuring the snake and staff that is recognized to represent emergency medical services flanking each side. The U.S. flag and the Arizona state flag extend from those symbols. I used woodcarving chisels for the majority of the work, except for the contours around the flags, which I fashioned with the help of a scroll saw.

Also, hand-carved at the bottom is the Latin phrase,



Juniper wood was incorporated into the frame design to represent how the Granite Mountain Hotshots were known for protecting the area's indigenous juniper trees—a 9" wide slab of recovered wood was used to construct a lap-joined, 18"x21" frame.



A Larson-Juhl frame, Ferrosa Iron, was attached to the piece from the back with L-brackets. This frame can be easily removed, and the engraved pieces on Optium Museum Acrylic can be slid out to access the light channel. The entire frame is covered with a lacquer spray for preservation, and the photos are glazed with Optium Museum Acrylic.

“Esse Quam Videri.” The English translation is, “To be, rather than to seem,” which conveys the Hotshots' commitment to their mission.

Extending inward from the side components and recessed is a flat portion in which I carved a channel that holds a strip of LED lights, illuminating the names of the 19 firefighters lost at Yarnell Hill. The names were engraved on wood laminate at a local trophy shop, and the laminate is mounted on a piece of Optium Museum Acrylic®. Because the laminate is wood-toned on both sides, the light is surrounded by wood on all sides and

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casts a golden light like that of an eternal flame.

It was tricky determining how to design the frame so that the lights could be changed when burned out. The solution was to use an inner frame that not only served this function but also acted as a fillet, giving the piece a more finished look. I chose a Larson-Juhl frame, Ferrosa Iron, and attached it to the piece from the back with L-brackets. This frame can be easily removed, and the engraved pieces on Optium Museum Acrylic can be slid out to access the light channel.

The entire frame is covered with a lacquer spray for preservation, and the photos are glazed with Optium Museum Acrylic.

Because the theme of Tru Frameable Moments™ emphasizes such a strong connection to the community, this piece will eventually be incorporated into a public memorial display. Though it was truly an honor to receive the Grand Prize Award and to be recognized by industry peers, this story is really about the community. I was happy to be able to share this with other custom framers at the West Coast Art & Frame Expo, and now with the people of Prescott, so many of whom were connected to the Granite Mountain Hotshots. **PFM**

Francine Hackerott, CPF, has 30 years of experience in the custom framing industry, currently at The Frame & I Gallery and Frame Shop in Prescott, AZ. A master woodworker, she has an eye for detail and can craft just about anything out of wood, from exquisite hand carvings to multi-angled and arched frames. Conservation materials and an emphasis on preservation figure strongly in her work. Although this is her first entry in the Tru Vue competition, she has won other awards for her framing.



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