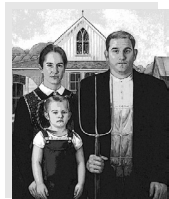


## Art Adventure I Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski



# A sad month

September is a sad month for Americans. This five year anniversary is a reminder of the tragedy that still lives with us. Unlike other attacks on the United States, technology has made us all eye witnesses to one of the most horrific crimes against America in history. The constant replays of the planes crashing into the towers, the billowing smoke, and the masses of desperate people in New York fleeing the city are haunting images which never leave our consciousness.

Each generation has an image or a symbol which symbolizes their era.

One image that remains just as powerful today as it was when captured on February 23, 1945, is Joe Rosenthal's famous iconic photo of the six soldiers raising the flag on Iwo Jima. This black-and-white photo is one of the most highly regarded in the history of photo journalism. Although it was a Pulitzer Prize winner for Joe Rosenthal, it wasn't without controversy.

Many claimed the photo was staged. There was an earlier flag raising that morning before Rosenthal arrived. He

heard from other press people it had already been raised. Even though he heard this, he still went up to the Iwo Jima hill. He asked around to see if any of the marines were still there, but there weren't any of the first flag raisers. It's rumored the higher brass said the flag was too small and wanted another photo with a larger flag. Not being able to find any of the original soldiers who held up the first flag, Rosenthal mustered up some local soldiers and then snapped the photo. The photo had the caption, "Atop 550-foot Suribachi Yam, the volcano at the southwest tip of Iwo Jima, Marines of the second Battalion, 28th Regiment, Fifth Division, Hoist the Stars and Stripes, signaling the capture of this key position."

This photograph made Rosenthal an overnight success. The earlier flag raisers were upset as they felt it wasn't the real flag raising. Unfortunately, in the upcoming days, the battle of Iwo Jima would claim the lives of five out of eleven of the two sets of flag raisers. The battle would continue for one more month. But the iconic photo was etched in the mind of Americans then and for many more generations to come.

Rosenthal died on Aug. 21, 2006 at the age of 94. According to the Associated Press, Rosenthal lived out the rest of his life as a photographer in San Francisco, shooting "politicians, drug dealers, fires and parades."

Eric Graf lives in my neighborhood in Schererville with his wife Chris and three children. Eric works three jobs, and Chris works swing shift at a local factory. Although he is a policeman with no art training, he has certainly been creating art as far as I'm concerned. As long as I've lived in my neighborhood (six years), I've always admired the family's work ethic. They are always working in the yard, digging holes, planting trees, moving heavy dirt, mulch and rocks. Their yard is artfully decorated with a fountain, gazebo, winding paths, a carriage, and a wishing well. I often tease him that he should be an artist as he's always creating.

Then came September 11th. Graff watched the horrific news for 24 hours. The next day he created a patriotic art display of the American flag painted on a grassy hill adjacent to his house approximately 8' x 10'. As the elements faded the art, Graff cre-

ated a gigantic outline of the U.S.A. from mulch and with the American flag inside. On Sept. 11, 2002, he recreated the famous Pulitzer Prize winning photo taken of the fireman raising the flag at ground zero with mannequins dressed exactly like the photo.

In 2003 the patriotic art included another set of mannequins showing emergency personnel saving the chaplain. Graff again created an art memorial from a photo in 2004 with approximately 3,000 flags containing the names of every person who died in the 9-11 tragedy including all flights, civilians in the towers, and all rescue

teams. This art display increased to 180 feet in length. This sea of flags actually caused traffic problems entering the subdivision.

Last year, Graff paid tribute to "All of Those Who Answered the Call," with a photo of each and every soldier who died including a description of how he died with the 3,000 flags. This tribute received national coverage from Good Morning America.

This year the memorial includes a gigantic hand painted mural of the towers after impact. This alone took over three months of arduous work in the garage. Yellow wooden

ribbons symbolize all of the Indiana soldiers who died. A large sculpture of both towers produces smoke, patriotic music, and an explanation of why he's doing this.

While Graf's memorial art display will never be discussed in an art book, it certainly creates the emotions and thoughts that many artists strive for but never achieve.

Please view this passionate outdoor exhibit before September ends by driving by 2406 Ticonderoga in Schererville, on the Corner of 77th Ave and Patterson.

Contact Sam at The Steeple Gallery at (219) 365-1014 or at samowner@sbcglocal.net.

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