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## HOT SPRINGS NEWS

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### **Bronze Statue of Babe Ruth at Hot Springs' Majestic Park Could Last for 'a Thousand Years'**

*(LINK TO VIDEO OF BRONZE POURING: <https://app.frame.io/presentations/82057ded-8db0-4005-b23d-e628adfd6f97>)*

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK, Arkansas — The eight-foot bronze statue of baseball immortal Babe Ruth that was dedicated today (February 6, 2023) could still be standing a thousand years from now, according to sculptor Chad Fisher's father, Fran.

The Ruth statue, one of only three known bronze sculptures of the Hall of Fame legend, now stands at the entrance to Hot Springs' Majestic Park baseball complex, where Babe, Cy Young, Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron and dozens of

other baseball greats trained and played in the 20th Century when Hot Springs was renowned as The Birthplace of Major League Baseball Spring Training. The other Ruth bronzes are in Baltimore, Md., and Japan. (In Waco, Texas, there is an outdoor sculpture that depicts Ruth and fellow New York Yankee immortal Lou Gehrig sitting on a park bench, but that is not considered a monument to Ruth alone.)

"When a bronze [statue] is created with the correct alloy, the expectancy for external exposure is many centuries," Fran Fisher said. "Some experts have stated bronze can last a few thousand years exposed to weather. When protected, in a controlled interior environment, the expectancy is indefinite."

Fran Fisher said the statue of Babe weighs between 1,400 to 1,500 pounds. "We pour our own bronze," he said, "and do so with extra thickness, which adds strength and endurance — we are prepared for the statue to be exposed to very enthusiastic fans and weather." He said some parts of the statue are solid bronze, including the fingers, parts of the shoes and some of the internal structure.

The clay model of the statue was created in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and Chad Fisher transported the wax phase of the "lost wax process" to Fisher Sculpture Foundry in Dillsburg, Pa., he said.

The completed sculpture was transported by truck from Pennsylvania to Hot Springs by Chad Fisher and an assistant. "We don't let the statue out of our sight after we create it," Fran Fisher said

Installation of the statue at Majestic Park took "about five hours, which includes unloading, uprighting, unwrapping, measuring and marking the base for holes, drilling the holes in the granite, affixing the stainless steel anchors to the statue, testing the fit and finally permanently installing the statue with Hilti 500 epoxy."

Fran Fisher explained in some detail the creation of the Majestic Park statue.

"The statue of Babe is based on an eight-foot figure," he said, "therefore the total composition with bent knees and bat is about seven and a half feet high. If Babe was standing up straight, the total would be over eight and a half feet — plus the height of the base.

"The perfect viewing angle is designed for individuals around five to six feet tall. Chad compensates for the viewer's visual distortion to make the statue most appealing."

Fisher said completion of the statue's design was complex. "The design phase is the most important phase and Chad does design work through photos, sketches, early ideas in clay and then isolates the best design," he said "In some cases, as with Babe, the design is changed based on Chad's updated info and feedback. The design period generally lasts about 90 to 120 days."

Creation of small clay models takes a few weeks each and the full-size clay model takes six to eight weeks, Fisher said. After the full-sized clay model is completed, a rubber coating is applied to capture all of the detail in reverse/negative.

Then the rubber is supported and coated in a mixture of plaster and sisal so the rubber detail retains the proper shape without distortion. The plaster is marked and prepared to be separated in sections like the two halves of an egg shell.

Special wax is then poured into the rejoined shell pieces in seven to 10 layers to reach the desired thickness. This requires a special skill as the wax thickness must be consistent throughout for the next steps. The wax is then separated from the first mold, examined and slightly refined at times before dipping. The final mold making process step requires the wax to be dipped into a solution and then to a silica sandy-like substance. The coating is repeated up to 12 times in ever-increasing sized silica particles. Larger shells require special attention due to the incredible stress they endure from the hot bronze. After the shells have dried they are heated in the furnace at about 1,600 degrees to melt out the wax. This is called "de-waxing." The shells go through a final preparation with a fine examination of their structure so they can endure the next step. And areas are reinforced with a special heat-tolerant patching compound to strengthen any potentially weak points.

The shells are then preheated again to 1,600 degrees and swiftly moved to a sand pit where simultaneously the bronze has been heating up to its desired liquid temperature of 2,150 degrees. The bronze is then poured into the shells in this very carefully executed step. After the bronze cools to 500 to 600 degrees the shells can begin to be removed as the bronze is in its final solid form.

The bronze pieces are cleaned and prepared for assembly. After the welding process, which requires a few days, the welds are "chased" or blended skillfully so

they cannot be seen. The final bronze is then ready for patina, which is coloring the bronze through various techniques using acids and other chemistry applied to the 500-degree statue by means of a torch and spray container. The statue cools and is waxed and ready for transport.

Chad Fisher has over 50 bronze statues in the public domain, Fran Fisher said, and multiple private commissions, and multiple editions of gallery works like Chad's international award-winning "Seven Deadly Sins" for internal and external display.

"Chad is the most prolific sculptor known at his age," he said. "No one has created more work from start to finish, with his own hands in his own facility than Chad at under 40 years of age."

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