

NEWEST MONUMENT IN U.S. HONORS LEGACY OF AMERICAN WORKERS, WORKING MOMS

One man's labor of love showcases the forgotten history of millworkers who built America, including his mother

MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA, UNITED STATES, May 11, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- This Mother's Day, one man is honoring his own mother and thousands of others in a unique and extraordinary way - by creating, financing and unveiling what's thought to be the largest monument in the U.S. to millworkers. It's been a personal passion project for 70-year-old Jim Warlick, whose late mother sat behind the same sewing machine at a hosiery mill in North Carolina for 33

years, starting at the age of 16. Now, the larger-than-life [Dignity of Work monument](#) he created with the likeness of his mother, Mary Harrison Warlick, and two other millworkers is debuting in Morganton, N.C., highlighting an overlooked chapter in history just in time for Mother's Day.

"My mom and other millworkers like her in my hometown and across the U.S. worked so hard. I saw her leave every morning in the dark to head to the mill where she earned just \$80 a week for 40 hours of work. She never complained. She felt lucky to have a job and be able to support me and my two sisters as a single mom," Jim explains.

"A few years ago after she passed, I discovered that the local history museum in my hometown had all these big portraits of bankers and mill owners who did great things, but there was nothing really honoring millworkers, despite the fact that they were such an important part of the fabric of this country," he continues. "Nobody ever really asked them about their work or showcased it, so I made it my mission to bring their stories to life."

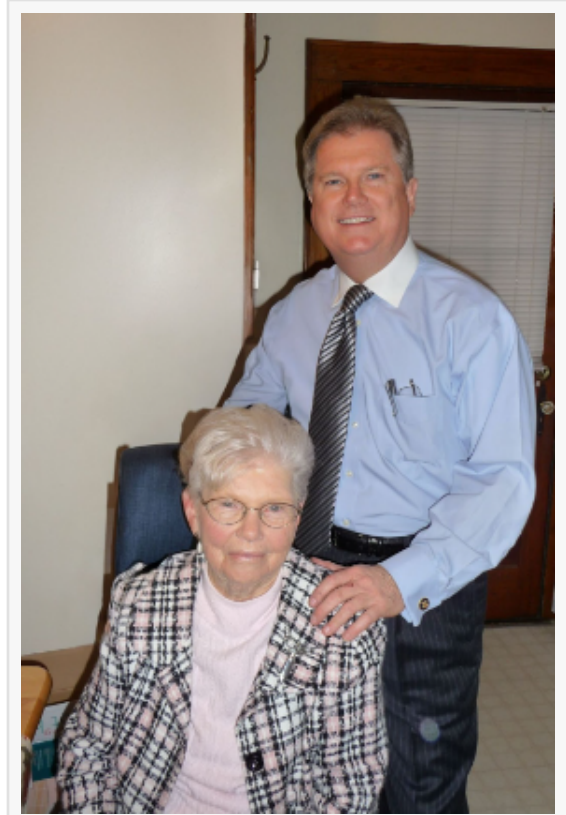
After a long career saving and selling presidential artifacts and memorabilia as the owner of



The larger-than-life Dignity of Work monument, thought to be the largest monument in the U.S. to millworkers, was dedicated May 6, 2023, in Morganton, NC

[White House Gifts](#) and the [American Presidential Experience](#) traveling exhibit, this is a far more personal version of history for Warlick. To fund the Dignity of Work monument and history exhibit, Jim auctioned several items from his presidential collection in 2020, including the second to last car JFK rode in the morning he was killed in 1963, 12 replicas of first lady gowns, and signed Abraham Lincoln and JFK documents.

He spent six years on the project, working with a design team to map out a monument showing a larger-than-life impression of the millworker experience. The statue is 22 feet long, 10 feet high and weighs over 9,000 pounds/5 tons. His initial attempts to find a home for it were rejected because of its size. "I was told it was too big, but there's a 30 foot tall statue of a Confederate soldier in town, and I think millworkers deserve to be larger than that," Jim explains. "I did eventually find the perfect home for it in front of the History Museum of Burke County. Lots of school children and others come to the museum and now they can all hear, see and learn these important stories."



Jim Warlick and his late mother
Mary Harrison Warlick

THE DIGNITY OF WORK MONUMENT & EXHIBIT

The Dignity of Work monument and corresponding Dignity of Work Millworkers Exhibition were dedicated May 6, 2023, in Morganton, NC. The exhibit will run for two years.

Made of porcelain enamel panels and rusting steel, the monument features the images of three millworkers: Jim's mother, Mary Warlick, repairing hosiery; Anne Ramseur, now 90, working in a textile factory; and Claude Moore, Jim's uncle, creating a chair in a furniture mill where he worked his whole life.

"If my mom were alive today I think she would say, 'Jimmy, you're making too much of a fuss. I was just a millworker.' But I believe millworkers built our communities and churches, and they haven't been respected and honored as they should. I don't want their stories forgotten," Jim says. "My mother and Claude didn't live to see this, but Anne promised me she was going to be there to see this monument in person and I'm just thrilled she's been able to do that."

AVAILABLE INTERVIEWS:

Jim Warlick: Founder of the Workers Legacy Foundation. Available in D.C. or N.C.

Anne Ramseur: 90-year-old former millworker in N.C. Featured on the far right of the monument.

PHOTOS & VIDEO:

A media kit is available upon request. It includes photos and video of the monument's creation, installation and dedication as well as photos of the presidential artifacts sold to fund it.

BACKGROUND ON JIM WARLICK

Jim Warlick grew up in a family that was interested in politics, and he got involved at an early age. As a child, he spread leaflets around his town for candidates and, by the age of 12, he was collecting presidential memorabilia. In 1980, he took a few days off from his job on Capitol Hill to stand outside a convention selling political buttons. He made more money in a week than he did in a year working for his congressman and his career collecting and selling political and presidential memorabilia and artifacts officially began.

Jim opened White House Gifts in 1989. His first physical location was a kiosk in Union Station, which he grew to six retail locations in Boston, Chicago, Baltimore and DC. Today he maintains his flagship store next to the White House selling a wide variety of memorabilia and souvenirs. He's also amassed an impressive collection of presidential artifacts and political memorabilia that includes 1.5 million campaign buttons and posters in his private collection. He is one of the country's foremost JFK memorabilia collectors, has acquired or built five Oval Offices, which he routinely rents to movie studios and others and he turned two Boeing 707 aircrafts into replicas of the presidential Air Force One, with interiors as they were during the Reagan and Kennedy administrations.

Passionate about ensuring that American history not only remembers presidents, bankers and mill owners - but also his mother and other hardworking millworkers like her, Jim founded the Workers Legacy Foundation in 2017. In 2020 he sold some of his personal memorabilia collection to fund the Dignity of Work monument and exhibit, which were dedicated and opened in his hometown of Morganton, NC in May 2023.

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