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The New York Times

The Metro Section

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 2006



David Joseph/Rambusch

A Hands on Tribute to 9/11 Firefighters, in Stark Relief



By DAVID W. DUNLAP

There is that instant of horror to be relived, forever frozen in bronze. There are scenes of valor and camaraderie to be celebrated. But more than anything, there are names to be touched and traced: the Fire Department's 343 dead.

The first large-scale 9/11 monument at ground zero — a bold, literal and almost neo-Classical 56-foot-long bronze relief dedicated to the firefighters “who fell and to those who carry on” — was unveiled yesterday on the side of “10 House,” the home of Engine Company 10 and Ladder Company 10, across Liberty Street from the World Trade Center.

In unison, members of the two companies removed six flag-bedecked panels that had been hiding the mural, then marched slowly away, revealing the full panorama, centered on the flaming towers, with heroic and humbled firefighters on either side.

Within moments of its unveiling, family members and firefighters in dress blues were on their knees at the mural, rubbing the inscribed names of those who died on Sept. 11, 2001, arranged by rank, from First Deputy Commissioner William M. Feehan to Paramedic Ricardo J. Quinn.



Ting-Li Wang/The New York Times

Bea Miller, 86, with her daughter Janice Testa, found the name of her son, Henry Miller Jr., yesterday on the bronze relief honoring firefighters who died on Sept. 11. Above left, firefighters signed the back of the relief before its installation last month. At top is the monument at full width.

“I wish his name was not on that wall,” said Miriam Juarbe, the mother of Firefighter Angel L. Juarbe Jr., as she clutched the rubbing she had just made. “He made us proud. He gave too much.”

Brian D. Starer, vice chairman of the Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation, which raised the money for the monument, said he found a 12-year-old boy making a rubbing who told him, “This is all I have of my father.”

President Bush, appearing in a video-

taped message shown at the opening of the ceremony, said, “The time for mourning may pass, but the time for remembering never does.” Former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, who was present, said simply, “It’s very hard coming here.”

Remembrance was the theme of the morning. Peter E. Hayden, the chief of the Fire Department, pointedly noted the absence of an official memorial across the street, on what he called “holy ground.”



Ting-Li Wang/The New York Times

Brandon Anaya, 10, etched the name of his father, Charlie Anaya Jr., a firefighter from Engine Company 4, who died on Sept. 11. The memorial was unveiled yesterday.

“We’ve had empty promises from empty suits,” Chief Hayden said, “but the Fire Department has fulfilled its promise.”

The ceremony coincided with the fourth anniversary of the Fire Department’s cessation of recovery operations at ground zero, although the monument is not quite complete. It is framed, as intended, by nine lighting fixtures, but the 11 paving stones for its base have yet to be installed, pending city approval. These are to be of the same garnet-flecked Adirondack granite as the Freedom Tower cornerstone.

Since crowds are already a constant at 10 House, the monument is likely to become an instant landmark.

But its creators envision a more distant horizon.

“This is a 100-year monument,” said Harold Meyers, assistant chief of the department and the Manhattan borough commander. “We wanted it to tell a story. One hundred years from now, we want you to look at this and say, ‘This is what happened.’”

In the central panel are the flaming towers, caught at the instant when the

second jet hit on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001. Flanking it are scenes of firefighters laying down hose lines, a weary firefighter reaching up from a curb, firefighters washing their faces at a hydrant, a fireboat on the horizon.

They are composed in exacting detail. Chief Meyers made sure of that. A chief at the temporary command station is wearing his regulation F.D.N.Y. tie clip. Some firefighters have chocks — door-opening wedges — strapped to their helmets.

Mr. Starer said it was impossible to put an exact dollar figure on the project because so much labor and material was donated. “This is a million-dollar memorial that didn’t cost a million dollars,” he said.

Holland & Knight is an international law firm whose New York office is at 195 Broadway, a block from ground zero. Its central role in the firefighters’ monument can be traced to the earliest days of the rescue and recovery effort, when Mr. Starer helped furnish ice for the workers on the smoldering pile.

“I like to think of this story as ice to bronze,” he said.

In September 2001, his wife, Cheryl Roy Starer, immersed herself in volunteer work at a triage center in Public School 234, four blocks north of ground zero. After two or three days treating workers with deeply bloodshot eyes, for whom conventional eye drops offered no relief, she set out to create soothing ice compresses.

Mrs. Starer telephoned her husband and said: “I want you to stop what you’re doing. I need ice. I’m not asking you, I’m telling you.” He asked how much. “All you can get,” she answered.

Nuzzolese Brothers Ice, Diamond Ice Cube and Maplewood Ice answered Mr. Starer’s call, delivering 20 tons of free ice daily to ground zero for a month. Then they asked to be paid for future deliveries.

To pay for the ice, Mr. Starer, an admiralty lawyer, took advantage of assistance that had been offered by three international shipping executives — Thomas Hsu, Gregory B. Hadjieleftheriadis and Axel Karlshoej — to create an “ice fund” for ground zero.

After nine weeks, ice was no longer needed, but there was still money in the

fund. Mr. Starer offered to buy a fire truck, but fire officials proposed instead that the money be used for a memorial.

He agreed, with the understanding that the monument would also honor Glenn J. Winuk, a Holland & Knight partner and volunteer firefighter in Jericho, N.Y., who raced to the trade center after helping evacuate his own building. He was not seen alive again. Mr. Winuk's name appears on a separate plaque from the listing of the 343 New York City firefighters.

Mr. Starer approached the Rambusch Company, a 108-year-old firm that specializes in decorative metalwork, stained glass and lighting. He was drawn by the firm's experience and, not coincidentally, by the fact that its chairman emeritus, Viggo Bech Rambusch, is the brother of one of Mr. Starer's law partners.

"Trajan's Column," Mr. Rambusch declared to Mr. Starer.

Conjuring that Roman monument, Mr. Rambusch evoked the notion of unfolding reliefs, almost cinematic in continu-

ity and clarity, transmitting a wartime narrative wordlessly across centuries. Further, Mr. Rambusch ordained, the 9/11 monument must be made of a noble metal: bronze.

His sons, Martin V. and Edwin P. Rambusch, worked on the project with Joseph A. Oddi, a delineator, and Joseph Petrovics, a sculptor.

It was Mr. Oddi who sketched the preliminary vision of the monument — the burning towers already the centerpiece — during a meeting in Chief Meyers's office in December 2003 at which firefighters talked about their experiences on 9/11.

A 10-foot-long plaster model followed. Dozens of details were fussed over: how high the fireboat sat in the water, how the radio cords curled.

Full-scale panels were made in plastilene clay. At this late stage, Charles R. Cushing, a naval architect and friend of Mr. Starer, noticed that the smoke from the north tower was drifting in the wrong direction. That was revised.

Negative plaster casts were made from the plastilene. These were used to make positive plaster casts that, in turn, were pressed into a mixture called French sand. That created another mold into which the bronze was cast, at the Bedi-Makky Art Foundry in Brooklyn.

The six-foot-high, 7,000-pound mural arrived in Manhattan on May 19 in two 24-foot-long side sections and an 8-foot-long central section.

It was put up overnight. Before the south panel was hoisted into place, the installation crew and the firefighters from 10 House were invited to write messages on the back with paint pens. Some offered sentiments like "I'm here with you" or "'Til we meet again." Others enumerated their friends who died that day — six names, seven names, eight names.

"I'm not a misty guy," Chief Meyers said, "but I have to tell you, I had a misty moment."

And those sentiments are meant to stay private and personal. "I hope," the chief said, "no one ever gets to see the back of it."