

Memorial to be unveiled at Logan to those lost on 9/11 flights

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By Tania deLuzuriaga, Globe Staff

It is the place where a nation's nightmare began. Now, Massachusetts Port Authority officials hope that a 2-acre sliver of grass and glass in the midst of Logan International Airport will also bring a measure of peace.

The \$3.5 million Airport 9/11 Memorial will be unveiled this morning, seven years after two jets departing from Boston were commandeered in the worst terrorist attack in US history.

The airport's connection to Sept. 11 is especially fraught, because both of the planes that brought down the World Trade Center in New York departed from Boston. Though investigators found airport personnel blameless in the hijacking - no aviation security protocol was violated - the deaths of more than 2,700 people will never really clear the conscience of many who were working at Logan that day.

"This happened not because anyone failed to do their jobs that day, but because [the terrorists] figured out how to beat the system," Massport CEO Thomas J. Kinton Jr. said last week, as he sat inside the green-glass cube that is the memorial's focal point.

"It changed the lives of all of us," he said. "This isn't ground zero, but it certainly was the launching point."

Set on a slip of land alongside the Hilton Hotel and the west parking garage, the memorial consists of a grassy knoll planted with ginkgo trees and capped with a translucent green-glass cube, which contains the names of the 147 people aboard American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175.

But even as officials hope the park will offer comfort for employees who lost friends and colleagues that day, some victims' families say they find it unsettling.

"It is not a place of solace," said Carie Lemack, whose mother, Judith Larocque, was a passenger on Flight 11. She said she doesn't plan to visit it.

"My sister and I have chosen to remember our mother as she lived and not in the last place on earth she set foot before she was killed," she said.

Even as Stephanie Holland-Brodney intellectually understands the need for a memorial at Logan, she said she has mixed feelings about it. Her mother, Cora Hidalgo Holland of Sudbury, was a passenger on Flight 11, and being reminded about the attack is the last thing she wants before getting on a plane. She had planned to attend a private unveiling yesterday, but changed her mind.

"I understand why they wanted it built," she said in a telephone interview. "But it took me three years to get on a plane after my mother died. I still cringe when I hear plane engines; all I can remember is the cry of those engines as the plane hit the tower."

Visitors enter the park at a round patio emblazoned with the words "Remember this day." From there, two walkways wind slightly uphill through the grass and the trees to the cube. It is a subtle reference to the two flights.

"We wanted to evoke memories of Sept. 11 without being too literal," said Boston architect Robert Linn, who was one of the principle designers of the memorial.

A fieldstone wall gradually rises along the terminal road, blocking noise from the roadway and creating a sense of serenity, despite being set in the middle of the airport. Inside the cube, two glass panels stretch toward the sky. One side lists the time that each flight took off. On the other are the names of the victims. Above, translucent gray squares are strung along steel cables, reminiscent of the glass-and-steel shards that rained from the World Trade Center.

Michelle Pare, a cousin of flight attendant Karen A. Martin of Danvers, who died aboard Flight 11, visited the memorial yesterday and said it reflected the hope she felt in the wake of a tragedy that cruelly changed the world.

"When I looked up in the sky to see the cables and glass that seemed to be shattered like our hearts were that day, I saw through the clouds of Hurricane Hanna approaching, and a glimpse of blue stood out," she said. "I remembered what a beautiful friend told me in the early days after Sept. 11 - that even though the clouds don't ever seem to disperse in our lives at times, we need to remember underneath it all the sky is always blue."

Architect Keith Moskow, who led the design effort with Linn, said the ceiling of the memorial is meant to "convey the idea of the fractured sky."

"No one ever looked at the sky the same way again," said Moskow whose firm is Moskow Linn Architects Inc.

The cube is visible from several vantage points around the airport. A silent beacon of remembrance, it comes into view as drivers enter the airport, and travelers can see it from pedestrian bridges that lead to Terminal A and the Hilton Hotel. Illuminated at night, passersby may also glimpse it as they drive out of Terminal B, as they leave the airport, and as they loop around the eastern end of the airport to return to the terminals.

"I liked the idea that it was a very peaceful design," said Peg Ogonowski, the widow of American pilot John Ogonowski, who sat on the committee. "It's a design for people at the airport, not just the people that died . . . it will offer people there a place of solace."

Though he understands the reservations, Kinton said he thought it important that Logan commemorate Sept. 11, both as a part of the healing process and as a reminder for the thousands of travelers who stream through each day.

"For me, it brings up the memory of that day and the days afterward when an eeriness descended and you wondered if there'd ever be planes flying again," he said. "It all comes back when you see the names, just the enormity of what happened that day . . . How can you not leave something behind for future generations?"

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