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Air Force Memorial Design Approved

Arlington, VA, March 14, 1996 -- Two key commissions approved a futuristic design concept for an Air Force Memorial, bringing the ambitious project another step closer to reality.

"Absolutely brilliant!" That was J. Carter Brown's description of the Air Force Memorial Design concept. Brown chairs the Commission of Fine Arts in Washington, DC which granted unanimous approval of the dramatic design concept for an Air Force Memorial. Members of Washington's National Capital Planning Commission had similar praise for the James Ingo Freed memorial design as they too granted approval.

James Ingo Freed, of New York City's famed Pei Cobb Freed Architects, is the principal architect on the project, as he was on Washington's National Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Memorial will sit on Arlington Ridge adjacent to the Iwo Jima Memorial and the Netherlands Carillon nearby Arlington National Cemetery.

Freed said, ". . . it is difficult to capture air in a design, yet that is the medium in which the Air Force operates." He added, " the Army operates primarily on the ground, and the Navy on water. Those are easier to work with. But the sky and air are more difficult."

After several attempts with futuristic designs, Freed and his associates focused on a star pattern. The star has a long tradition of gracing all Air Force aircraft and missiles. Further, it is central to the rank insignia of every enlisted member in the United States Air Force.

Approaching the Memorial from the west, the visitor will be greeted by four larger-than-life figures representing an ever-present Honor Guard for the Memorial. They will hold the American and USAF flags.

Passing the Honor Guard, guests approach an above-ground three-dimensional form derived from the five-pointed star, open to the elements and without a roof. It is lightly tethered to the five points of the star.

Visitors may next enter a below ground exhibit center that will portray the Air Force past, present and future. A Meditation Room is planned for those choosing to reflect on a loved one, a unit, or the total experience of their lives.

With an approved design concept in hand, the Air Force Memorial Foundation can now proceed with more detailed design planning to include the exhibit center and landscaping.

The Air Force Memorial Foundation is a non-profit organization whose objective is to site, design and construct a Memorial to all members of the Air Force and its predecessors, such as the Army Air Forces, and to highlight the aerospace technology that has been so important to the service.

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Photos available upon request

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