



In October, airmen gathered on a promontory above Arlington National Cemetery to dedicate and consecrate an Air Force place of honor.

The Magnificent Memorial

Photography by Randall Scott and Guy Aceto

THREE STAINLESS STEEL SPIRES SOAR HEAVENWARD, OFFERING AN OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGN OF THE SPIRIT AND DRAMA OF FLIGHT.

The Air Force traces its origin to 1907. Over nearly 100 years, more than 54,000 airmen died in combat, yet the Air Force remained the only service without its own memorial in the nation's capital. That all changed on Oct. 14 when a multitude of airmen—including one named George W. Bush—officially dedicated the gleaming Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Va., just across the Potomac River from the Washington Monument and Capitol dome. Its three spires, the highest reaching 270 feet, overlook Arlington National Cemetery and are now part of America's most sacred ground. The dedication ceremony honored the millions of men and women who have served in the Air Force and its predecessor organizations.

At right, members of the US Air Force Honor Guard wait near the Memorial's imposing steel spires.



Photo by Guy Aceto



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Clockwise from above: In the plaza surrounding the spires, father and son contemplate the names of Air Force Medal of Honor recipients inscribed on a granite wall. • A bronze Honor Guard sculpture, comprising four eight-foot-tall figures of airmen, faces the site's central parade ground. It was created by sculptor Zenos Frudakis. • A C-17 airlifter soars above one of the Memorial spires; it was part of an overhead "aerial review" of historic and current Air Force aircraft.

The capital's newest monument was designed by a world-renowned architect, the late James Ingo Freed. Freed spoke of "making the medium of the Air Force visible. ... The core of this effort lies in making air tangible, making technology felt." The dedication ceremony opened a year-long celebration leading to USAF's 60th birthday on Sept. 18, 2007.



Photo by Guy Aceto



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Counterclockwise, from left: Gen. Russell E. Dougherty, USAF (Ret.), holding cap, and Brig. Gen. John O. Gray, USAFR (Ret.), both former AFA Executive Directors, linger after the dedication. • Retired Col. Bernard F. Fisher, whose name is inscribed on the Medal of Honor wall, displays the decoration he received for heroism as an A-1E pilot in the Vietnam War. • A four-ship "heritage flight" features (l-r) an F-86 Sabre, F-22 Raptor, F-15 Eagle, and F-4 Phantom.

The dedication event drew a crowd of some 30,000 attendees, including such dignitaries as Medal of Honor recipients, combat aces, Flying Tigers, Tuskegee Airmen, Women Airforce Service Pilots, and Air Force astronauts.



Photo by Randall Scott



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Above, President George W. Bush, a former Air National Guard F-102 pilot, arrives as Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld looks on. The Commander in Chief delivered the keynote address and then accepted what he called "this magnificent monument" for the American

people. • At right (l-r) are Jean T. McCreery, Lorraine Z. Rodgers, and Elaine D. Harmon, all Women Airforce Service Pilots during World War II. They have just received commemorative coins from Secretary of the Air Force Michael W. Wynne.



Photo by Randall Scott



Clockwise from right: A World War II veteran contemplates inspirational words on a granite inscription wall. • Senior Air Force leadership (l-r) CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley, Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley, and Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne stand at attention as American flags snap in the breeze. • Retired Maj. Gen. Doyle E. Larson, a former AFA Board Chairman, waves to a friend, while retired CMSgt. Glenn M. Shull of Minnesota, an AFA state president, surveys the crowd.

Initial plans, formulated in the early 1990s, envisioned a star-shaped memorial on Arlington Ridge, near the Marine Corps' famed Iwo Jima Memorial. This sparked opposition, and Congress authorized construction on the present site, where the space is larger and the view grander. Construction began in February and was completed in September.



Photo by Guy Aceto



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Far left: The highly polished stone inscription walls lend a sense of depth to the inner courtyard area. Note the personal memory book left behind by a visitor. • Left: Retired Lt. Col. Spann Wilson, 90, was one of several Tuskegee Airmen—America's World War II African-American military fliers and their support members—were pioneers against racial discrimination. Sixty-six died in action, while 32 were taken as POWs.

President Bush, in his address, told the audience: "Every man and woman who has worn the Air Force uniform is part of a great history. From the Berlin Airlift to the Korean War, to Vietnam, to the Gulf War, to Kosovo and today's War on Terror, a long blue line of heroes has defended freedom in the skies above. To all who have climbed sunward and chased the shouting wind, America stops to say: Your service and sacrifice will be remembered forever, and honored in this place by the citizens of a free and grateful nation."



Photo by Rendell Scott

Right: Three Tuskegee Airmen—(l-r) Sam Rhodes, Sam O'Dennis, and Charles E. McGee—chat with members of the media after the ceremony. The distinctive red coats are symbolic of the famed Air Force group.

"This Memorial soars; it soars in space and in the imagination," declared Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne. "This Memorial is a brilliant symbol of freedom and the spirit of flight." Added President George W. Bush, "A soldier can walk the battlefields where he once fought. A marine can walk the beaches he once stormed. But an airman can never visit the patch of sky he raced across on a mission to defend freedom. And so it's fitting that, from this day forward, the men and women of the Air Force will have this Memorial, a place here on the ground that recognizes their achievements and sacrifices in the skies above."



Photo by Randall Scott



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Clockwise, from above: US Army Air Forces Maj. Frank Brandon, 86, a World War II glider pilot, was also a prisoner of war in Germany, one of several who attended the dedication. • Members of the Air Force Honor Guard Drill Team performed in advance of the official ceremony, tossing and spinning 11-pound M-1 Garand rifles with fixed bayonets in precision routines. • Leading the procession of old and new aircraft over the spires was this yellow Stearman PT-17 biplane. • The B-2 stealth bomber, with its distinctive geometric shape, was a real crowd pleaser.

The Air Force Memorial officially opened to the public on Oct. 17. The site now will be operated and maintained by the National Park Service, with input and oversight from various Air Force groups, including the Air Force Association.



Photo by Randall Scott



Photo by Guy Aceto





Counterclockwise, from left: O.R. Crawford, vice chairman of the Air Force Memorial Foundation (and former AFA Chairman of the Board), talks over the day with Maj. Julie Petrina (sunglasses), an ANG C-130 pilot, and her sister, Maj. Jenifer Petrina, an intelligence officer. • Retired Col. James P. Fleming (left, with grandson Garrett Fleming), and retired Col. Joe Jackson, both Medal of Honor recipients of the Vietnam War era, get together at the dedication. • Attendees visit the glass wall engraved with images illustrating the “missing man” aircraft formation—the only images of aircraft to be found at the Memorial.

Photo by Guy Aceto



USAF Photo by Diana Perry



Photo by Geoff Chesman



Photo by Randall Scott



Photo by Guy Aceto

Left: Dallas developer H. Ross Perot Jr., chairman of the Air Force Memorial Foundation and former Air Force Reserve fighter pilot, steered the project for the past five critical years. Perot said that contributions from 140,000 private

donors provided the \$30 million for construction of the monument. • Above: Members of the Thunderbirds take care of business at the on-site vehicle, helping prepare for the day’s flying event.





Photo by Guy Aceto



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Photo by Randall Scott



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Counterclockwise from top left corner: Six specially marked F-16s of USAF's Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team streak past the Air Force Memorial in preparation for the day's final event. • Directly above the spires, four Thunderbirds zoom up and curve outward, trailing smoke and forming a ring through which a fifth F-16 would plunge in a grand finale. • At a special service on Oct. 15, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne lays a wreath under the spires in memory of fallen airmen. It was the first official event to be held at the new monument. • Four F-16s fly over the Memorial in a "missing man" formation, traditionally used to honor pilots lost in the line of duty.

H. Ross Perot Jr., chairman of the Air Force Memorial Foundation, said, "This Memorial says, to everybody who visits, ... 'This is the spirit that helped build our Air Force.'" ■

Randall Scott is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance photographer whose work has appeared in the pages of Time, Forbes, and the New York Times, among other national publications. This is his first contribution to Air Force Magazine. Photographer Guy Aceto is a former art director of Air Force Magazine and frequent contributor. His firm, Ace Art and Design, is based in Ashburn, Va. His most recent work for Air Force Magazine, "Battlefield Airman School," appeared in the April issue. Other contributors were Donna Parry, an Air Force photographer, and Geoffrey T. Chesman of Image Link Photography, Bethesda, Md.