



American News File Photo by Dawn Dietrich

Depiction of a hero: Sculptor Ben Victor stands next to the statue of a soldier he completed. The sculpture will be unveiled Tuesday at the grand opening of the Aberdeen Regional Airport.

Grand opening set for Tuesday

By Scott Waltman

American News Writer

Planes have been coming and going for more than two months, but Tuesday will mark the grand opening of the new terminal at Aberdeen Regional Airport.

Veterans Day is the perfect time to celebrate the opening of the new War Memorial Building, according to Dave Osborn, Aberdeen transportation director. For those who have already seen the terminal, there's another reason to go, he said.

The actual war memorial, which will be located in front of the new building, will be unveiled at a special ceremony.

Osborn hopes people from across the region will attend the 2 p.m. ceremony. Mayors from as far as 100 miles away have been invited. So have some business leaders. But the event is open to everybody, Osborn said.

The first of three statues — a 7 1/2-foot-tall bronzed soldier holding an American flag — will get its first public showing. He will stand on a 2-foot raised concrete platform surrounded by granite benches and a plaque on a podium describing the artwork.

Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., is slated to speak at Tuesday's event, but that is pending whether Congress is in session. Representatives from the offices of Rep. Bill Janklow, R-S.D., and Sen. Tom Daschle, D-S.D. will also attend. Aberdeen Mayor Tom Hopper and other city and Brown County leaders will be on hand as well. So will members of the airport board and area veterans groups.

Airport Terminal

Eventually, the two other soldiers, a man and a woman, will be added to the memorial. The final cost will be about \$210,000, with that money being donated by government boards, businesses and individuals.

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Osborn said the ceremony is

scheduled to be outside and last 30 to 45 minutes. If the weather is bad, it will be moved inside while regular airport business is being conducted.

Work on erecting the memorial begins today. The statue, however, will remain covered until Tuesday.

Fund-raising for the memorial is ongoing. The city of Aberdeen contributed \$100,000 and Brown County \$25,000. Airport officials hope to pay that money back in time.

"Right now, what we've seen is that we got so busy (with the terminal opening) that fund-raising really became a secondary focus," Osborn said.

That will now change, he said. Pledge cards with a composite of what the final memorial will look like will be on hand at the ceremony.