

March 8, 2008

Dear September 11th Family Members,

As the son of Morris Pesin, the “father” of Liberty State Park and a preschool teacher, I have tremendous empathy for the deep pain that you experience for the loss of your loved ones. I have real, heartfelt spiritual compassion for your suffering. The spirit of my father and my love for Liberty State Park, compels me to write to you. I ask that you please take the time to read this letter from my heart and consider my thoughts. I ask for your patience and respect as a fellow human being and American.

I'm writing to you on the first anniversary of The Friends of LSP's announcing its well-founded lawsuit which The Friends felt it was forced to initiate, to protect Liberty State Park from the memorial's negative view-obstructing impact. Park lovers feel that the “national shrine views” from the **closest and busiest place in LSP to Ground Zero and lower Manhattan are a priceless state and national treasure to be protected and passed on to future generations.** People had been able to “take in” this dramatic, spiritually-moving view that got more and more powerful and heart-stirring, the closer they got in their approach by foot, car or bus to the Hudson River, CRRNJ Terminal, and the Public Plaza.

That view, as many people have said for six years, was the best memorial to 9/11 victims, as park users and tourists saw the sacred vista of the entire skyline with the Twin Towers gone. People shouldn't have to walk up or around a 10 foot high by 200 foot long hill or walk through 200 foot long by 30 foot high walls to see those views. This view-blocking design in this location defeats the memorial's purpose.

The design obstructs sacred, culturally-significant views of Ground Zero and lower Manhattan, and also blocks panoramic views of the NYC skyline, civilization's signature urban skyline, up to the George Washington Bridge, and blocks the view of the river, on which thousands were evacuated on 9/11.

By the 1960's, Jersey City's shoreline was piled high with maritime and industrial debris, the remains of a bustling waterfront that was left to decay by the railroads and shipping companies. The pioneers of Liberty State Park, including my father, created a park with the purpose of cleaning up the waterfront wasteland, and of forever opening to the public, green open space and open skyline vistas, of Emma Lazarus's “shining city of eternal hope”. The memorial would block awe-inspiring Terminal area views.

This memorial design in this location totally eliminates LSP's only Public Plaza. This great, active Public Plaza was enjoyed in many ways by people of all ages, for instance by tourists approaching the Terminal ferry ticket office, by people taking wedding photos, by regular park users vista-watching on the flat Public Plaza (or in adjacent green field) and by the mostly senior citizen audience who came to the free Jersey City summer concerts where the music and the breathtaking views of the NYC skyline and the river allowed them to look across at Ground Zero and lower Manhattan, and to reflect with sadness but also with that eternal hope for the future.

It has been expressed that placing the Memorial in and by the path of boisterous, hurrying thousands, with the chatter and noise of tour and school groups, families, etc. on their way to and from the ferries to Lady Liberty /Ellis Island, and next to Terminal festivals (which would extend onto the Public Plaza as LSP's 1978 Master Plan envisioned) is the wrong place for a solemn memorial for peaceful reflection.

The Public Plaza had been a public commons of this urban state park for the public to enjoy next to the historic landmark 1889 CRRNJ Terminal which is part of the “**Historic Trilogy**” of the Terminal (from which most Ellis Island immigrants traveled to their new homes), Ellis Island and Lady Liberty.

In the late 19th and early 20th century many of the forebears of those lost at Ground Zero arrived at Ellis Island seeking freedom and a chance for a new beginning; many then went to the Terminal for a journey westward on the Central Railroad of New Jersey Railroad. The memorial design casts aside and overwhelms the important American immigration story of The Historic Trilogy pathway for immigrants. The jury ignored its own criteria that the memorial design should be integrated with LSP’s history.

I also want to express here that the public was given no DEP public meeting or any official opportunity to express views about the memorial design for the Terminal Public Plaza after the jury chose the 6 finalist designs or after the Families Memorial Committee chose the “Empty Sky” walls and hill design.

I ask that you please come to the park and drive up the cobblestone Zapp Drive and look through the construction fence to see the impact of the hill on the NYC skyline and Hudson River, and please envision the 30 ft high by 200 ft long walls there. Those views with the hill and planned massive walls are a very different reality than the deceptive aerial, birds-eye perspective in the rendering by the architect, which the victims’ family committee saw and which is on a nearby construction sign. The architect’s rendering doesn’t even show that the river, used in the evacuation on 9/11 and part of the Terminal area special and important waterfront vista, would be totally blocked off by the hill and walls.

I respectfully urge you to please consider what I have written with the hope that victims’ families and park users can work together to find a solution for a memorial which shows reverence to the people who perished, and also doesn’t obstruct the sacred “national shrine” views or eliminate the Public Plaza.

I ask that you please read the enclosed James Ahearn column from The Record, “A living memorial is best”. I hope you will consider his Grove of Remembrance solution or relocating this memorial.

My mother Ethel Pesin, now 93, whom I live with, who also treasured those New York City views and LSP’s only Public Plaza, also asks that you consider this letter which expresses her feelings also. I’m the president of The Friends of LSP, but I wrote this letter only on behalf of my mother and myself.

Respectfully,

Sam Pesin, the son of Morris Pesin, the “father” of Liberty State Park