

Station fire site being prepared for permanent memorial

Posted: Sep 12, 2013 5:06 PM MDT Thursday, September 12, 2013 7:06 PM EST Updated: Sep 12, 2013 5:15 PM MDT Thursday, September 12, 2013 7:15 PM EST
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WEST WARWICK, R.I. -

Another chapter is coming to a close and a new chapter is opening at the site of The Station nightclub fire in West Warwick.

A fire caused by a pyrotechnics display engulfed the structure on Feb. 20, 2003, killing 100 people.

The site was transformed into a spontaneous makeshift memorial after the tragedy. But everything has to be removed to make room for a permanent memorial.

"I want it to come home with me. It's a piece of me," Jody King said Tuesday, as he removed a cross with the name of his brother, Tracy, on it.

"He's my pain in the neck. He's my most dependable friend and I want people to remember how special he was. I now know of five people that he pulled out of this fire. I had a fifth person come up to me to tell me what a wonderful brother I had," King said.

King is taking one cross home with him. Another one he had a hand in making he's sending to Ty Longley's son, who was born after his father died here. Longley played in the band performing that night.

The rest will be left for a time capsule -- to go along with all the other keepsakes and mementos not picked up -- that will be part of a new permanent memorial to be built at the site, headed up by Gina Russo.

"They've come up with a great design, a great layout for this, and she will do the right thing for our 100 perfect angels," King said.

Derek Johnson was 32 years old when he lost his life at The Station. His father, Bob Johnson, comes up from Pennsylvania on a regular basis. He's not satisfied that justice has been served.

"Everyday's yesterday to me. I have an issue with -- all I ever asked for in the state of Rhode Island, all I ever asked for was the truth. You can't have justice without truth," said Johnson, referring to the lack of a trial.

Johnson said a trial would have brought to light the whole story: the mistakes, the oversights, and the tragic sequence of events.

The first step of prepping the site for the permanent memorial begins next week.