

# Victim's families remember

By Tim Talley  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY — Church bells chimed on streets that once rang with a bomb's blast. Children saw their reflections in a calm pool where there was once an ugly crater. And families found serenity Wednesday in a place that has pained them for five years.

On the anniversary of the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, 168 sculpted chairs stood in silent tribute to the 168 victims of the most deadly terrorist attack on American soil.

"To me it's like my funeral for him, my time to say goodbye," said 20-year-old Sarah Broxterman, who lingered over the stone-and-bronze chair inscribed with the name of her late father, bombing victim Paul Broxterman.

The chairs soon overflowed with flowers as thousands came for the first of two ceremonies to dedicate the Oklahoma City National Memorial at the site of the federal building.

Later, President Clinton walked with representatives of families, survivors and bombrescuers through the 168 chairs before the second dedication ceremony.

"As the governor said in alluding to Gettysburg, there are places in our national landscape so scarred by freedom's sacrifice that they shape forever the soul of America — Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Selma," the president said. "This place is such sacred ground."

Earlier in the day, bells tolled at 9:02 a.m., the exact moment when the fuel-and-fertilizer truck bomb exploded and stripped the face from the building, turning its nine floors into a tomb of concrete and steel.

After the names of the victims were read, family members, survivors and rescuers stepped through one of two golden gates marking the entrance to the memorial. There were 149 big chairs for the adult victims and 19 little ones for the children who died.

"I felt their presence there. I feel their presence every day in the office," said Renee Kiel, who clutched roses as she walked among the 35 chairs representing Housing and Urban Development co-workers.

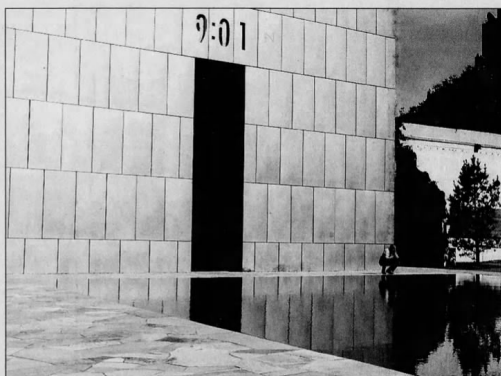
Children with thick sticks of chalk scrawled messages on tiles beneath artwork in the children's area of the memorial. Some dipped their fingers into the dark reflecting pool that stretches along what once

was the bomb crater. P.J. Allen, who was severely injured but was one of the few children in the building's day-care center to survive, stood waving an American flag. His hand still bears scars and a tube helps him breathe. "I thought it was lovely," said his grandmother, Delores Watson.

An honor guard representing the rescuers who rushed into the building first and



**THEN AND NOW:** The front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building crumbles following the April 19, 1995 explosion that killed 168 people. Right, a man kneels at the



Associated Press photos

reflecting pool Wednesday during a moment of silence at the dedication ceremony of the Oklahoma City National Memorial in Oklahoma City.



**MIRROR:** Two youngsters play Wednesday at the edge of the reflecting pool during dedication ceremonies of the Oklahoma City National Memorial in Oklahoma City. The pool, only three-quarters of an inch deep, is made of black granite which makes it look much deeper.

stayed for weeks to recover the dead hoisted a U.S. flag over the site. Lified by a stiff breeze, the flag snapped to its full length.

Rev. Robert Allen, a Unit-

ed Methodist minister who coordinated civilian chaplains during the rescue effort, said: "This whole memorial will serve as a reminder that hate may blow up a building



**SURVIVOR:** P.J. Allen, who was hurt in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, waves an American flag Wednesday during the dedication of the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

but we as a people will never forget."

Just blocks away, Terry Nichols sat isolated in an Oklahoma County Jail cell awaiting an August preliminary hearing on 160 state counts of first-degree murder in the attack. Nichols and Timothy McVeigh were convicted in federal court. McVeigh, who was sentenced to death, is in a federal prison in Indiana.

Nichols had no way of watching or hearing the memorial services, said Sheriff John Whetsel.

## MAIN FEATURES

Major features of the Oklahoma City National Memorial:

**Chairs:** Stone and bronze chairs resting on glass bases etched with the names of each of the 168 victims. The chairs are placed in nine rows to represent the floors of the federal building, with five chairs representing victims who died outside.

**Reflecting pool:** Approximately where Fifth Street once was and where the truck bomb exploded in front of the building.

**Survivor Tree:** An American elm that survived the blast sits on a promontory and is meant to represent the survivors.

**Helpers' Orchard:** A group of fruit trees surrounding the Survivor Tree that is meant to symbolize those who rushed to help after the bombing.

**Gates of Time:** Anchoring each end of the memorial, the gates are intended as both a physical and symbolic transition into the site. One is marked "9:01" and the other "9:03," the minutes bracketing the 9:02 bombing.

**Children's Area:** Honoring the children killed in the bombing, a corner of the memorial features a wall of ceramic tiles hand-painted with messages from students and teachers from across the country. It also has several chalkboards for temporary messages.

**Expected attendance:** About 300,000 people a year.

**Cost:** \$23.1 million, including memorial, museum under construction in bomb-damaged Journal Record Building and anti-terrorism institute.