

Freedom Tower: A Look Back In Time

Local Resident Plays Crucial Role in Building the Freedom Tower after 9-11

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It was September 11, 2001, fifteen years ago, when a tragedy of unimaginable destruction struck our country. Terrorist hit the World Trade Center North and South Towers and destroyed the buildings but more dire was the loss of American lives. This event set our country and specifically the City of New York on a path to making the most difficult and important decision. What are we going to do with the site where so many Americans were lost and so much of our country's pride was destroyed by terrorists?

My involvement with this terrible incident began like so many others, by watching the events unfold on television as the terrorists conducted the most horrible attack on our homeland in US history. As a contractor, it was then that I felt we would need to rebuild what had been taken from us, and what transpired after that is something remarkable.

As the estimating and sales manager at Benson Industries of Portland Oregon, I was involved with many of the worlds iconic large construction projects in the United States and around the world. Our reputation in the architectural and construction market put us in a position to be invited to participate in the design and construction of what became the Freedom Tower.

Beginning in late 2003 and thru 2004 many great ideas were being considered for a new development at the site of the fallen twin towers. Benson Industries was contacted to

provide estimating and design services for the new development and to meet with the architects at SOM, the general contractor at Tishman Construction and with the owner of the project, Mr. Larry Silverstein. I remember telling Lou Niles, Benson's President and CEO (now retired), after one of our many meetings, that Benson Industries must and will be involved with the building of the Freedom Tower, also known as World Trade Center Tower One.

After a long and hard fought contest with the other bidders, Benson was awarded, in April 2005, the contract to design, fabricate, assemble and install the exterior facade, including the glass and stainless steel panels for Freedom Tower.

Over the next few years Benson Industries designed and tested the exterior glazed system, commonly called a curtainwall, for all specified performance criteria. Teams of engineers and project managers at Benson Industries prepared for the eventual assembly and installation at the site. Because the curtainwall system was to be of such a high performance, and the building was considered to be a target of terrorism, non-disclosure agreements and high security was implemented by the building owners including the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Benson Industries established a dedicated assembly location in Gresham, Oregon for the complete assembly of the curtainwall exterior facade. Benson employees worked for several years in Gresham to assemble the curtainwall system employing strict quality control and to package and load the curtainwall system into secure containers for transport by train to New York City. Upon receipt of the containers at the site in New York, security tags were removed, and the curtainwall system was unloaded for eventual installation by a team of dedicated Benson Ironworkers and Glaziers. Every person involved with the sales, design, engineering, assembly and installation

of the curtainwall system was proud to be a part of the project as evidenced by their dedication and hard work in making the system a reality and by the smiles on their faces.

No project in my 45 years in this industry has ever elicited such pride of involvement by everyone than was demonstrated during the construction of Freedom Tower. The first curtainwall corner unit to be installed was of such a large size that it was necessary to deliver the unit on a dedicated flatbed truck. The journey was filmed and documented by the Discovery Channel as the curtainwall unit traveled from Gresham Oregon to New York City. Upon arrival at the jobsite, a ceremonial installation of the unit began the process of installing over 13,000 curtainwall units needed to enclose the gleaming exterior of the Freedom Tower.

Freedom Tower, World Trade Center Tower One is now the tallest building in the United States

at 1,776 feet and is a reminder of the year of our Declaration of Independence that is celebrated on the Fourth of July.

Over the years since the initial attack in 2001, Tower Four has been constructed and Tower Two and Three are under design and construction. The footprints of the original towers have been remodeled to honor those that lost their lives. A new transit center and museum have been completed. Thousands of visitors circulate the site to remember and honor everyone that lost their lives and to celebrate the dedication of those that worked so long and hard to rebuild; not only the buildings but to show the world that we will never forget.

John Beaulieu has been married to wife Paula for 45 years and lived in Oregon since 1988. They have two adult children and two grandchildren that attend Tualatin High School. John loves to race cars and play golf.



John Beaulieu and Lou Niles, former President of Benson Industries.



Freedom Tower in the construction phase

