
THE AUGUSTA PRESS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 - 2021 | THEAUGUSTAPRESS.COM



RETIRED COLONEL WAS IN THE PENTAGON WHEN IT WAS HIT

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

A last-minute call brought Jack Hook to the Pentagon on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001. At the time, he was a colonel assigned to Fort Gordon, but the Pentagon was a familiar place to him. He'd worked there from 1996 to 1998.

The meeting was set for 9 a.m. followed by a second meeting later that afternoon with then Maj. Gen. James Lovelace.

On most trips to Washington, D.C., he stayed at a Doubletree Hotel within walking distance to the Pentagon, but on this trip, he couldn't get a room there. Instead, he stayed downtown and needed a rental car to get to his meeting.

"I had to drive in, and I didn't know how bad traffic would be in D.C. I got to the Pentagon around 8:15," said Hook who retired from the Army in 2004 and lives in Columbia County, where he taught and coached at Augusta Christian Schools.

Once he arrived, he sat in the car for a few moments. He

marveled at the weather and the clear blue sky.

"It was so beautiful. There was low humidity. I stopped and prayed and thanked God," he said.

Twenty years later, Hook still remembers the vivid details of the events that would transpire that day.

He was accustomed to the fast-paced environment at the Pentagon and headed into his meeting early. Only minutes before the meeting started, the first plane hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York. American Airlines Flight 11 flew into the building between the 93rd and 99th floors.

Hook stopped at the snack bar and just as he was heading into the meeting. He heard something about a plane crash. He didn't have time to investigate. His meeting was in an isolated, windowless room inside the building's west wing.

The meeting had been going according to plan — until 9:37 a.m.

"We heard a loud

explosion," he said.

At first, he thought it might have been a bomb set off by protesters.

They sent a couple of people out of the room to investigate, but it wasn't long before security entered the room to evacuate the building.

As he rushed out of the building, he glanced out one of the windows.

"There was a big billow of black smoke, black thick smoke, and it smelled like jet fuel," he said.

Little did he know at the time the reason he was smelling jet fuel was that five hijackers had crashed American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. The plane's wreckage was only 50 yards from the enclosed room where Hook's



An aerial view of the Pentagon after the 9/11 attacks. Photo courtesy of the FBI.

meeting had been held.

Hook’s first thought was to call his wife. He didn’t have a personal cell phone, but he used his military phone to call home. He got through to let her know he was okay. He knew that she’d hear about the explosion.

By then, he’d learned of the other planes because people in the building had been watching news reports.

“As we stood outside, we started piecing things together,” he said.

Hook said he was grateful for the little things that morning — the things that could’ve seemed like minor inconveniences such as having to stay in downtown Washington, D.C. and being forced to get a rental car.

“I started counting my blessings,” he said.

He was also grateful he called his wife when he did because before long cell phone lines were jammed with so many people trying to call out. He couldn’t reach anyone at Fort Gordon to find out what he should do. With plane service halted, Hook used the rental car to drive home that night.

“It was easier to get forgiveness” than asking

permission, he said.

The meeting scheduled with Lovelace didn’t occur that day. His office was in the wing that the plane struck, killing his administrative assistant.

Hook said that part of the Pentagon had undergone some renovations. Offices were still vacant, resulting in fewer casualties than would’ve occurred had the space been fully occupied. The office where he was pinned as a colonel was obliterated by the crash.

The crash and fire killed 125 people in a building where 16,000 to 20,000 people work on a daily basis. Another 59 people died on the plane, bringing the total lost at the site to 184.

A week later, Hook returned to the Pentagon for that meeting with Lovelace.

“It was so different when I went into the Pentagon on the 17th and 18th,” he said. “Everyone was wearing their battle dress uniforms. The Pentagon was typically an office environment. Everyone was in battle dress — the Army, the Navy, the Air Force.”

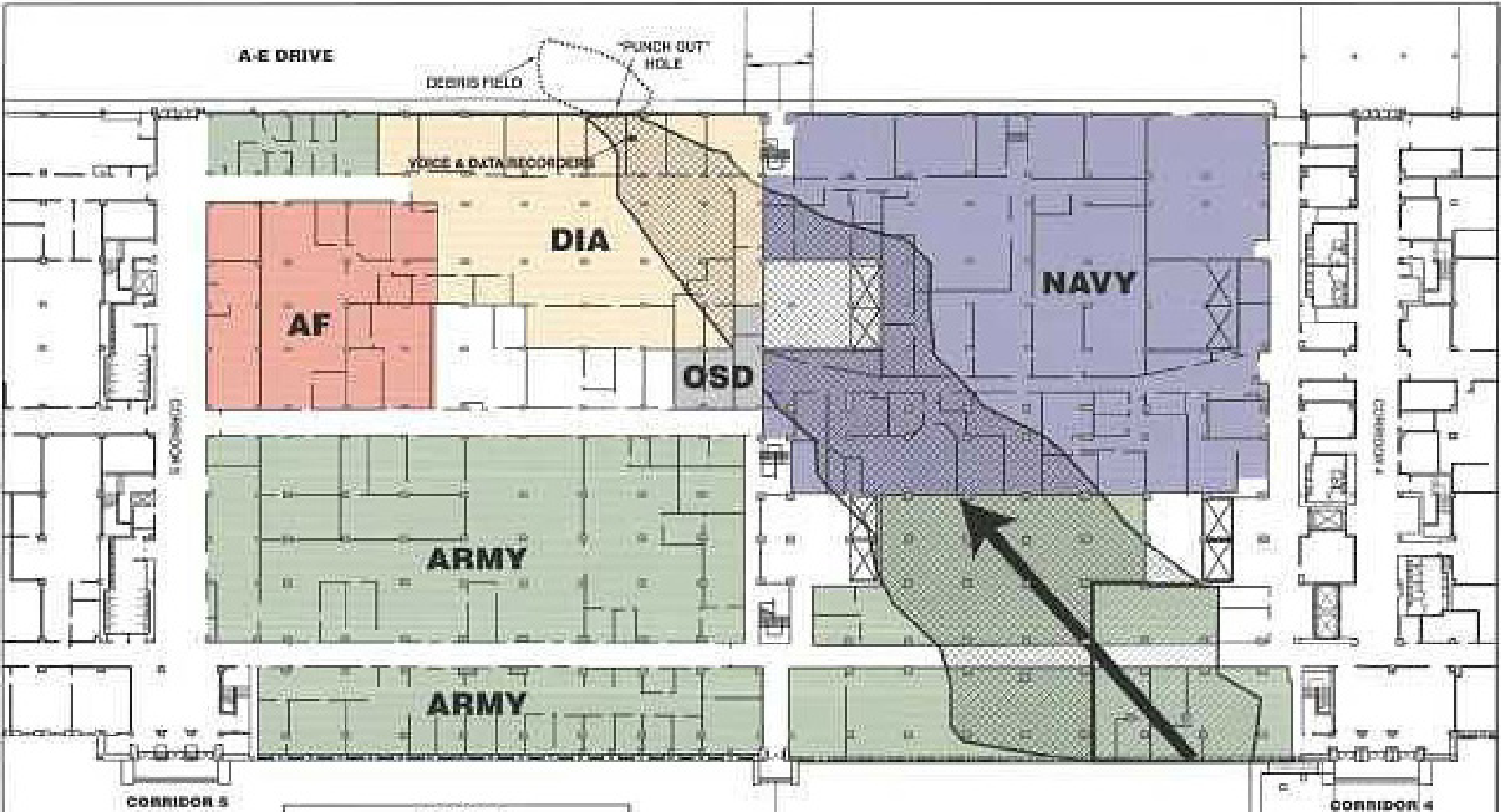
The meeting was held underground, and the topics had shifted.

“We were back to work, and we knew Bin Laden was



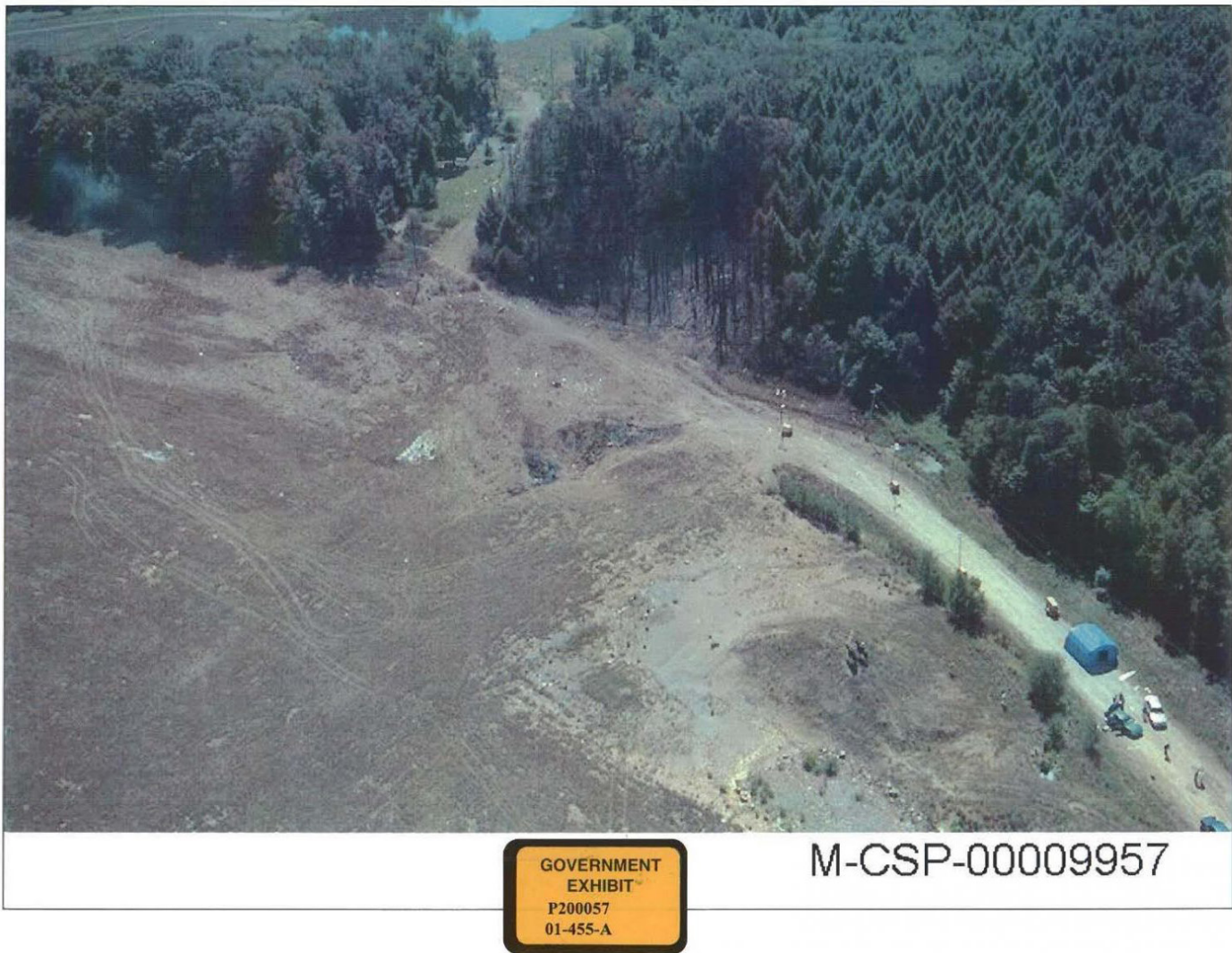
Col. Jack Hook was assigned to Fort Gordon when he was called to Washington, D.C. for a meeting at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. Photo courtesy of Retired Col. Jack Hook.

PATH OF AIRCRAFT THROUGH THE FIRST FLOOR



A graphic shows the path of the plane into the Pentagon. Photo courtesy the U.S. Navy

REMEMBERING THE HEROES OF UNITED FLIGHT 93



GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT
P200057
01-455-A

M-CSP-00009957

An aerial view of the United Flight 93 crash site. Photo courtesy National Park Service.

By: Dana Lynn McIntyre

In September 2001, I was working at WJBF NewsChannel 6, living in a cottage on in Olde Town with my dog Lucy and cat Spike. Sept. 11 started as any other day. I walk Lucy, shower, dress and, by 8:45 a.m., drive the 10 blocks to the television station.

As I entered the newsroom, I saw the early morning crew and producers all standing, staring up at the bank of monitors that were tuned to the local stations and the three major news networks. I kept walking to my desk but turned to look at the end monitor.

I've always heard people say this, never believed it, but it's true: everything went into slow motion as I watch smoke billowing from the first tower and, later, a plane slam into the second.

Shouts in the newsroom about a third plane, this one hitting the Pentagon.

I told people to make calls. Call Plant Vogtle. Call SRS. Call Thurmond Dam. Call Fort Gordon. I called a friend with the Secret Service to ask if they still had their offices in the World Trade Center. They did in February 1993 when the bomb was set off in the underground parking areas. Voicemail. I left a message. After that, I called Fort Gordon and asked for comment on what was happening.

I called the public affairs officer at the Savannah River Site and told him photographer Mike Ludwikowski and I would be heading to the site. We arranged to meet at the administration building. I got a call from a public affairs officer at Fort Gordon with a statement from the commanding general. I emailed it to the producers.

Then producer Adrienne Turner, reading from the Associated Press wire, said a fourth plane had crashed. It was in southwest Pennsylvania. Holding my breath, I asked where.

"Somerset County," she replied.

"That's home," I said and dropped into my chair.

I opened the AP story and read the crash site was in Shanksville. Born and raised in Geistown Borough in neighboring Cambria County, I knew immediately where it was.

United Airlines Flight 93 had departed from Newark, N.J., heading to San Francisco, Calif. Less than an hour later, as the plane neared Cleveland, four hijackers commandeered the aircraft and turned it back to the east.

The plane first passed over Pittsburgh, then the Johnstown area where people at the Johnstown-Cambria County Airport. Air traffic control repeatedly ordered the pilot to land. Others at the Metropolitan

Life Insurance building and Galleria Mall, all in Richland Township, saw it fly over.

The jetliner, traveling 580 miles per hour, would have covered the roughly 19 air miles from my childhood home to the crash site in Shanksville in less than a minute.

That's when I called my mother. She answered, said everything was fine, and she was watching the television coverage. I asked if she knew where my father was. She did not. I had her turn on our police scanner, and I listened to Richland Township Dispatch for a few moments. I asked her to call if she heard from dad. I promised I'd do the same.

My father had a small farm with a few head of cattle in Bedford County on the other side of Somerset County. Just something to keep him busy. He loved tractors and spent a lot of time hanging out with his brother-in-law who owned a dealership in Stoystown, just minutes down the road from Shanksville.

He was also a police officer, a former constable and deputy sheriff. He was one of those guys who ran toward what everyone else ran from. Although not his jurisdiction, I knew my father was hardwired to go try to help at the crash site if he was close by.

While Mike drove us to SRS, I tried calling the farm and the dealership. No answer. I called dispatch to find out what

assistance was being sent to Shanksville. And I asked if they had heard from my dad. They had not. I tried the farm again. Still no answer.

When we arrived at SRS, we met up with the public affairs officer and the head of security with Wackenhut. Soon after we got there, they got word to evacuate all non-essential personnel and lock down the site. Mike and I watched, getting video as the Wackenhut staff changed from street clothes to protective gear. Sidearms joined assault rifles. The exodus of cars began, and the gates closed. Bomb dogs searched all vehicles that remained in the parking lot.

There wasn't much for Mike and I to do as the networks stayed on the air broadcasting from New York and Washington, D.C. None of the other NewsChannel 6 crews in the field had much to do either.

I'm not sure who got to Shanksville first, the television stations in Johnstown and Altoona or from Pittsburgh, but eventually those images appeared on the monitors in our live truck.

It was about 6 p.m. when my cellphone rang. I looked at the Caller ID and jumped out of the truck. It was Dad.

I was so relieved just to hear his voice that I honestly don't remember where he said he had been all day. I don't remember anything he said. I just remember hearing his voice, and that was enough. When we finished talking, I called Mom and let her know he was fine and back at the farm.

The station cleared us. Mike and I packed up the live truck and headed back to Augusta.

But I had heard my mother's voice. After eight hours of searching, I had heard my father's voice. The story would continue. For many days.

I was at Shanksville for the one-year anniversary. I visited there every trip home, and for the 10-year anniversary. My last visit was March of this year.

On Sept. 11, 2001, more than 2,990 people were killed. Forty-four died when United Flight 93 crashed in Shanksville, Pa., 40 of them heroes who fought what has been called America's first victory over terrorism.

A common field one day. A field of honor forever. The National Park Service will livestream Saturday's 20-year anniversary observance. <https://www.nps.gov/flni/planyourvisit/sept11observance.htm>

I'll be watching. And remembering.





An American flag hoisted near the United Flight 93 memorial. Photo courtesy National Park Service.

EFFECTS OF SEPT. 11 HAVE BEEN HARD AND BITTER

By: Hubert van Tuyll

Airliners crashing. Thousands dead. Immense buildings collapsing. Our greatest city brought to a halt. All air traffic stopped. Enough to explain the shock of that infamous day – and yet there is much more that explains why the shock was so great, and also why the effects have been so long lasting.

The United States is a historically fortunate country. Attacks on America have been exceedingly rare. Sometimes, of course, the enemy outsmarts you – whether it be the Imperial Japanese Navy at Pearl Harbor, who with their plan neutralized our entire massive military establishment in one fell swoop, or Al Qaeda on 9-11. The shock of 9-11 was even greater because at the time of Pearl Harbor, Americans were aware of growing hostility with Japan. We knew little of the thinking of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden despite the fact that we were, and are, up to our strategic necks in the affairs of the Middle East. Our involvement led to his bloody attack, although we could hardly have foreseen all bin Laden's justifications. He even cited the Sykes-Picot treaty of 1916, to which the United States was not even a party.

Our history of comparative

invulnerability goes back a long way. The last time that someone launched a successful attack on the continental United States was ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY SEVEN years before 9-11. Two years after we launched the War of 1812, the British Army overran Washington D.C. and burned the public buildings. Fortunately for the American public, a few months later we slaughtered a British army at New Orleans (a month after the war was over, actually) so that the war seemed less disastrous than it had actually been. And if this war seems obscure – it is – we celebrate it every time we sing the "Star Spangled Banner."

Most Americans then and later agreed with George Washington, who in his farewell address had warned us away from foreign entanglements. Had we followed that advice, there would have been no 9/11. Trouble was, the United States and the world changed in ways that our founder could hardly have foreseen. In the 19th century, the United States slowly started getting involved in world affairs, culminating in the 1890s with the annexation of the Philippines and Hawaii, and the building of a world class navy to protect our overseas trade. Even when World War I broke out, we

were a very late entrant and never in any real danger.

World War II was different, as our (again late) entry into the war was because of an enemy attack (Pearl Harbor) – but Pearl is almost as far from San Francisco as New York is, and many Americans did not even know that it was an American town. (Hawaii did not become a state until 14 years after World War II.) There was no real chance of a Japanese attack on the continental United States, nor was it part of Japanese strategy to do so.

Of course, the Cold War did expose America to attack – indeed, to annihilation. What is relevant to us today is that the Cold War led to a high degree of paranoia, and inevitably, conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories had existed before, of course, particularly regarding Pearl Harbor, but those did not matter much, as the country was highly unified during the war, and we won a clear and decisive victory.

The Cold War was marked by "McCarthyism," an attempt to root out Communist subversion. This did a lot of damage, as the definition of "subversive" was always vague, careers were ruined, and freedom declined.

I remember well having to sign a loyalty oath when I joined Augusta College (as it then was) in 1991.

We also got more religious. "Under God" was added to the pledge of allegiance, and we became a majority church-going nation for the first time since colonial times. I mention these things to show the extent of the impact the Cold War had. However, no actual war touched American soil, and the only nuclear damage we experienced was what we did to ourselves.

So did Cold War paranoia simply carry forward into the post-9/11 era? For better or worse, we had a decade and half of comparative peace after the Cold War ended. How many of you really do remember the war in Kosovo? So, there was a subconscious expectation of a calm world when the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, dawned. This may help explain the intensity of the reactions at home.

The most visible totem of the 9/11 conflict – soon renamed the War on Terror – was the Patriot Act. This law made it easier for the government to spy on its own citizens, and it allowed all kinds of searches without warrants. Obviously, there is a

constitutional problem there, but it is hard to challenge because the government can keep those searches secret. However, we have done this kind of thing before. The Quasi-War against France (1798-99) and World War I led to laws that effectively made it illegal to criticize the government. On the other hand, people today are much more aware of their constitutional rights, yet portions of the Patriot Act survive while others have lapsed without renewal.

Paranoia inevitably leads to blame throwing and searching for enemies, especially in a conflict where the enemy is not very visible. For example, there have been fringe explanations somehow blaming Israel for the attack, bizarre to everyone except historians and Jews who know that sooner or later, any disaster around the globe will be blamed on Jews. A second, more wide-spread attitude is to blame all Muslims and attack American Muslims. Again, this is not without parallels. German Americans were attacked during World War I, and most Japanese Americans were imprisoned soon after the outbreak of World War II. Irish Americans, too, as far back as the Quasi-War during President John Adams' administration. This is not only stupid; it is dangerous because we are highly dependent on information FROM American Muslims to alert the police to individuals with terror plans. They are positively the last group we want to alienate.

The weirdest theories of all have the towers being blown up by a conspiracy that placed explosives inside the buildings before the airplane collisions. One frequently cited argument is that jet fuel does not burn hot enough to melt the Towers' structural girders. This is nonsense. The Technical University

of Delft had been studying the possibility of airplane collisions with buildings for many years before 9/11. According to their model, the Towers stood much longer than expected, a tribute to its architect, Minoru Yamasaki. Yamasaki had taken airplane collisions into account, but airplanes had gotten much bigger since the 1960s. Incidentally, Yamasaki could have explained that even if a fire does not melt metal, it can warp and bend it ...

Most important is the question of whether our current national disunity is in any way related to 9/11. I cannot give a clear yea or nay here, but I suspect that it does. The unity of 9/11 was deceptive and temporary. We were united when we were under attack, but there was no follow-up attack. We did attack the Taliban because the shielded Al Qaeda, but we soon overran Afghanistan – and then what? Invading Iraq yielded little unity. Also, 9/11 inevitably led to accusations of treason against groups and even whole political parties. But I suggest that the underlying cause is that we waged twenty years of war, albeit low level, without any clear result, except when bin Laden was turned into fish food.

Thinking about Afghanistan and especially Iraq should make us consider how we have changed our foreign and military policies. As a country with global commitments and the world's most massive military, these are not minor issues. Here we encounter a paradox.

The 9/11 tragedy occurred because we are a global power. Our reaction was to extend our global reach. We waged two wars, the first in Afghanistan intending to destroy Al-Qaeda and overthrow the Taliban. This

war has just ended as a result of actions taken by Presidents Trump and Biden. Yet, we still have a (small) presence in Iraq. Why were we there?

One suggestion for a possible explanation is the Magnet theory. The official reasons for the invasion seemed rather thin. There was no connection between dictator Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, and while Hussein may have enjoyed 9/11, he had no role in it. The evidence for the "Weapons of Mass Destruction" argument was disputed from the beginning and, given how much pressure within the Bush II administration there was to produce it, the management must surely have known that it was on thin ice. It may have been just to overthrow Saddam using the War on Terror as an excuse, but then there was little reason to stay. The Magnet theory simply states that you use your military presence to draw enemies, including terrorists, into open battle, and then using our superior firepower to kill them. "W" at least once hinted at this as a value of the presence in Iraq. A secondary aspect of this theory is that you are fighting the enemy far from home instead of on your doorstep, which by itself is a strategy used throughout the centuries.

As far as military strategy and tactics go, did the 9-11 wars demonstrate that we had learned from the past, and did we show that we learned during those conflicts? As in every war, there were good and bad points. During two decades of war and occupation, the Pentagon managed to keep casualties low. In Afghanistan, for example, we lost only 115 men per year on average. No draftees were needed. As a result, perhaps,

public protests were minimal. Diplomatically, we ensured that there was no active great power opposition. Whether we value the long occupations, we have shown that we can do it.

Yet some problems continue to plague us. The soldiers became absolutely exhausted. Some were getting redeployed almost as soon as their leaves began. Many suffered and continue to suffer psychological problems as a result. This fits in with a second problem, namely that as a country, we are hopelessly overextended; it is interesting that both Presidents Trump and Biden took or are taking steps to remedy this. We are continually waging wars like this while also spending fortunes preparing for traditional major power wars, and at a certain point, this becomes unaffordable. But maybe the biggest disappointment in Afghanistan (the jury is still out on Iraq) is that we clearly failed to inflict meaningful lasting damage on the enemy or succeed in building up a stable opponent to that enemy. Even South Vietnam lasted two years after we left. Then and now, having a strong and stable local force is an absolute necessity. (I never understood why we abandoned the Kurds.)

Perhaps 9-11 should have made us more careful about believing in "stand-off" warfare – the idea that you can always react with lots of cruise missiles and bombing, supplemented by some ground forces, without taking any hits. And also, perhaps relying more on diplomacy and less on always turning to the military. This is not pacifism; this is wise use of resources, not to mention, survival.

RIVER
SIDE

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING



Georgia: 706-945-5227

South Carolina: 803-634-2062

<https://www.riversideheatandac.com>

TRAVEL IMPACTED BY SEPT. 11



Travel has been impacted with added security measures since 9/11. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

By: Skyler Andrews

Most Americans are probably used to the stringent protocols of air travel by now, but it wasn't always that way. Sept. 11, 2001 caused a shockwave to America in countless ways, and one of its most visible effects is the transformation of travel and the aviation industry. Only two months after the attacks, the Transportation and Security Administration was created. "In the aftermath of the attacks, the first thing that we saw was National Guard in the airport that were providing security in the terminal areas," said Herbert Judon, executive director of Augusta Regional Airport. Before 9/11, airlines were

responsible for providing security at the airport checkpoints. The Federal Aviation Administration oversaw security and different companies were used to screen passengers and bags before the TSA took over those responsibilities. Judon, who has been in the aviation industry for 30 years, recalls how drastically different airport safety measures were before 2001. Non-ticketed persons, for example, were permitted to go past security. "If you had to see off a relative, you could go down to the gate and see that person off and then just come back off and go to your car," said Judon. "That's something that

changed the whole environment significantly." While most of these procedures have become the norm, their foundation was laid long before 9/11. The 60s and 70s saw a significant number of airplane hijackings. However, the 9/11 attacks still had a profound effect that rippled particularly across the aviation industry. "Everybody was so shell shocked that it was one of those rare times when everybody was on the same sheet of music," said Judon. "Those changes were well-received because there was a sense of unity." Other changes have been enacted over the past two decades because of foiled terrorist plots. Airplane cockpit doors have been reinforced. The types of items that can be brought on board have changed with restrictions being placed on amount of liquid in containers. Also, people are required to have their shoes scanned for the explosives, according to tsa.gov. Full body scans have also been implemented since 9/11. The security regulations require that airport and airline employees all play a role in keeping everyone safe. The strong sense of accord among staff at airports and airlines in response to the attacks highlighted a sense of alertness and responsibility that was already present in the industry and has become even more entrenched since then. Judon believes this is better understood now than it was prior to 9/11. "I think those of us that work in the industry understand that even of our jobs aren't directly related to security, there's certain expectations of being vigilant when you're in and around the airport environment," he said. "We have to pay attention, report things, see something say something. Those ideas have now been ingrained in those of us who work in and around airports." 9/11 has also underscored the criticality of airports and airlines and their ability to be shrewd and adaptable in ways that have been proven since with events such as the COVID pandemic, and before that the spread of H1N1 and SARS. "The last 20 years in the aviation industry, airports specifically, have learned to be very flexible to adjust and to pivot," said Judon. "To put certain protocols in place when we have these health crises or security or geopolitical events." Augusta Regional Airport in particular makes sure remembers the day and its effects that would eventually ripple to courses of action that are normal today. "For the past several years, we've implemented a moment of silence here at the airport," said Lauren Smith, public relations manager at Augusta Regional. "8:36 is the national moment of silence for that day. The TSA will actually make an announcement inside the terminal for a moment of silence, and we also invite our staff to go meet outside at our flagpole."



‘WE SAID WE’D MAKE THEM PAY’



Standing on top of a crumpled fire truck with retired New York City firefighter Bob Beckwith, President George W. Bush rallies firefighters and rescue workers Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, during an impromptu speech at the site of the collapsed World Trade Center towers in New York City. “I can hear you,” President Bush said. “The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.” Photo by Eric Draper, Courtesy of the



The USS Tennessee under attack at Pearl Harbor. Photo courtesy National Archives and Records.

By: Ernie Rogers

I remember September 11, 2001. It was a day probably not unlike Dec.7, 1941 in most of America. No treachery was expected. Lives weren’t likely to change in seconds.

I was working on road data and drinking my third cup of ambition when I wandered into the secretary’s office to have the usual morning chat with our director that set the tone for the rest of the day. The television we used to monitor inclement weather was on Fox News – background noise was all it was.

Then the voices of the Fox talking heads changed from morning-show cute to wait – something’s happening here, and we don’t know what it is!

A plane, they said, has crashed into one of the Twin Towers in New York City. We watched and listened until they showed the tape of the “accident.” A clear blue sky. Steel and glass monuments to American exceptionalism reaching into it.

Then a plane, a large plane, completely out of place flying into Tower One of the

World Trade Center. A fiery explosion and black smoke poured from the huge gaping wound in the building. That was no accident, I thought. Our morning chat broke up. I was back in my office later when I heard the secretary shout, “Oh, noooo!”

The second tower had been hit by another plane – removing all doubt about what was happening in our country. We were under attack! Thousands would die as we watched the monuments burn and collapse in on themselves and on all within them.

Constant entreaties from the Red Cross for blood were broadcast. I didn’t think there would be that much need for blood. How could there be many survivors coming out of that rubble?

There weren’t. Only a few of the thousands.

We watched the modern ruins smolder. We saw the firemen working to rescue and recover anyone they could find. Mostly they didn’t find anyone. It was a smoking scene of pure horror.

Our president came to the ruins. Stood on them with firemen and told our enemies who had killed our people and knocked down those buildings we were coming for them. They would pay, he said. We would not forget! Well, we went after them. They paid. Some of us forgot.

We recently surrendered an entire country to an amalgamation of the very terrorists who knocked the buildings down and whose leaders we once had imprisoned. When our feckless leaders ordered our military to cut and run, we left our own people, our allies and BILLIONS of dollars worth of war materiel for our enemies to abuse and use.

During a SNAFU of an evacuation process, these terrorists blew up 13 more of our finest young men and women and more than a hundred of our presumed allies at the gate to freedom. We pretended to go after them. We said we made them pay. We said we won’t forget!

SHERMAN &
HEMSTREET
Real Estate Company

BEING MUSLIM IN AMERICA IS DIFFERENT NOW FROM 2001



A silhouette of a mosque. Image by Mohamed Mahmoud Hassan

By: Scott Hudson

It was scary being Muslim in America in the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, according to Imam Jawad Rasul of the Islamic Society of Augusta.

He was 13 years old and living in New York City when the attacks occurred. He watched the trade towers burn in the distance.

“I saw it with my own eyes, and I still remember the smell of the smoke that burned for almost a month,” Rasul said.

Rasul didn’t just watch the towers burn in the aftermath of 9/11. He learned some hard lessons about being Muslim in America as well.

The times were scary for Muslims living in America in the months and years immediately after the attacks, according to Rasul. Simply wearing Muslim garb could open a person up to a random attack.

Rasul remembers being chased by a gang of older boys on the streets of New York.

“They chased me yelling that they were going to cut my throat. I hid in a barbershop, and the men there protected me,” Rasul said.

When President George W. Bush launched the War on Terror after 9/11, he made it clear that he was not waging war on Islam. However, that does not mean that being a Muslim in America has been an easy ride over the past 20 years.

According to a study published by the Journal of Muslim Mental Health in 2012, hate crimes against Muslims increased by 1,700 percent in the direct aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks; however, that number has decreased dramatically over the past two decades.

A recent report released by the Department of Justice finds that hate crimes against persons

of a particular religion accounted for 13.4 percent of all hate crimes committed in 2020. That percentage includes hate crimes against persons of all religions, not just Islam. Considering that there are 3.45 million Muslims living in America, according to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of hate crimes against Muslims because of their religion is very low.

After the attacks, Rasul says the New York City police began acting like the CIA. They even placed spies within Quran learning schools. One of those spies turned in a dossier on Rasul when he was in college.

However, Rasul says the statistics that show that Islamophobia has abated greatly in America are a reflection of his experience.

“America has a history of being wary of particular ethnic groups, from the internment of the Japanese in World War II to the Red Scare during the Cold War. Now people are scared of the Chinese. I am, too,” Rasul said.

Statistics aside, real life stories show that immigrants from the Middle East are mostly treated well in America today, sometimes better than in their home countries where Sharia law prevails. Sharia law is religious law that governs many aspects of Islamic society.

Mustafa Gomma and his wife, Sandy Barsiq, are among those immigrants from Muslim countries who have flourished in America.

They were a young couple fresh out of dental school, living and practicing dentistry in Cairo, the capital of Egypt. They wanted to start a family, but then, in 2010, the Arab Spring swept through Egypt, toppling the government and placing the Muslim Brotherhood into power.

Gomma grew up in

luxury. His father, Sharif, was an international building contractor who owned a large horse breeding farm on the outskirts of Cairo. The family spent weekends on the Red Sea enjoying the comforts of the family yacht.

However, when the secular government fell, Gomma, Barsiq and others found they had targets on their backs. The ability to be able to dress nicely and drive a personal automobile meant they could easily stood out, which made it easy for them to become targets in a changing Egyptian society.

The couple had two choices: they could retreat to their family’s walled compound outside of Cairo and be guarded by arms and trained dogs, or they could immigrate to America.

The decision was made to immigrate, however, there was a problem. Gomma, whose mother is an American national, enjoyed dual citizenship, but his wife was Jordanian.

Getting Barsiq out legally was going to be a challenge.

Friends of the family in Augusta contacted (then) Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) for help and Broun obliged and aided the couple with the immigration process.

Upon arriving in Augusta to start their new life, the couple found that they had an even bigger problem in front of them than the immigration process: finding work?

The American Dental Association does not recognize licenses and dentistry degrees from Egypt. The young couple would have to requalify as dentists or find a different career path.

Again, friends jumped into action and helped the couple get jobs, but the jobs were not exactly what one would anticipate for well-educated professionals. The

pair were offered jobs as servers at Buffalo Wild Wings.

Barsiq and Gomma went from lounging on the family yacht and being waited on hand and foot to waiting tables themselves in a foreign country.

“It was a culture shock. We both had to learn to sacrifice. It was worth it, though. It was all totally worth it,” Barsiq said.

The young couple persevered and they welcomed a child, Adam, shortly after arriving in the United States.

Gomma eventually applied for a part-time position with the U.S. Postal Service, which, due to his hard work, became a full time job with government backed benefits. Barsiq pursued a career in real estate. Barsiq, who is now a fully naturalized U.S. citizen, works for Keystone Homes and says she is living the American dream.

“America is my country now. It’s amazing. I love it here. It is the perfect place to raise our child. I really just love it here,” Barsiq said.

According to Rasul, Barsiq and Gomma’s experience is typical for Muslims who immigrate to America.

“They come from societies with corrupt governments where hardly anyone can get ahead, and they come to America and learn that through hard work, they can live the American dream,” Rasul said.

Gomma says that he has faced some uncomfortable situations when people hear his Arabic name.

“Sometimes people ask my name, and I tell them Mustafa, and I can see the look on their face change. But I always take it in stride and try to put them at ease that I am not some militant terrorist,” Gomma said.

According to Gomma, he has had people ask him about the myth that a suicidal jihadist martyr will receive 72 virgin women as his reward in Heaven. Gomma’s response, he says, is to handle it in good humor by quoting “Achmed,” the dead terrorist dummy of ventriloquist Jeff Dunham, of whom he is a fan.

“I tell them, ‘Why would I blow myself up and die to then have to teach 72 virgins how to have sex with me?’” Gomma said. He says that is definitely not his idea of paradise.

EVENTS COMMEMORATE THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

It's been 20 years since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and several events will give pause to reflect on the day while celebrating the American spirit.

The day begins at Augusta University's Summerville Campus.

A joint ceremony between the city of Augusta and the university will include the John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School Jazz Band. The Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, Augusta Fire Department, Richmond County Sheriff's Office and Augusta University ROTC honor guards will combined to present the colors and perform a ceremonial bell ringing at 8:46 a.m.

As the bell rings, the Stephen Stiller Tunnel to Towers Foundation 5K Run will begin.

The foundation's "mission is to honor and support first responders and the military. Tunnel to Towers is also dedicated to the memory of Siller, a fallen firefighter and father of five, who was off duty when the first plane struck. He drove to his Brooklyn fire station to retrieve his gear after hearing about the crash on the scanner," according to the Augusta University website.

Also on Saturday, The Augusta Ballet, the newly renamed performing company for the Columbia County Ballet, will present FREEDOM, at 6:45 p.m. on the amphitheater stage at Memorial Gardens behind the Columbia County Library.

The piece was originally created by Michael Viator, a decade ago when he was a dancer

Members of the military participate in a previous Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation 5K at Augusta University. Photo courtesy Augusta University.

at the Columbia County Ballet. He revamped it this summer with help from his wife, Olivia. The newly imagined piece features multiple vignettes.

"It starts with the tragedy and praying for the nation, praying for healing," he said.

Then the movement shifts. "It turns to celebrating the freedom we have," Olivia Viator said.

"We are excited to partner with the Columbia County Ballet for this year's 9/11 event," said Columbia County Commission

Chairman Doug Duncan in a news release. "With it being the 20th Anniversary, we wanted to offer something different than years past. When the Columbia County Ballet approached us about using the Memorial Gardens Amphitheater for a 9/11 performance, we saw this as the perfect opportunity to honor and remember those who lost their lives along with the events of 9/11 as the ballet tells a story through a beautiful performance."

The Augusta GreenJackets will commemorate

the anniversary as well. A GreenJackets military jersey will be auctioned to benefit Forces United, which serves area military veterans. A fireworks display will be held at the game's conclusion. The Augusta GreenJackets will take on the Columbia Fireflies at 6:05 p.m. at SRP Park.



Scenes from a July rehearsal of Freedom. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

SEEING ‘FARTHER THAN THE PARTIES’

By: Craig Albert

The Al-Queada attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, were a spectacle of political violence and terrorism never witnessed before, or since, that fateful Tuesday morning. Through the hallways of Capitol Hill, to the university classrooms, to the boardrooms of the highest caliber think tanks, Americans then believed that dreadful moment in U.S. history would usher in a new order of politics and patriotism—one hallmarked by less hatred, more compromise and greater unity in the manner espoused by the great Founding Framers.

What happened? There were, of course the obligatory few weeks of political togetherness where it seemed as though the country was headed to a new discourse of unity, cohesion and perhaps understanding. But this feeling of bonded nationalism, of patriotic identity, of country-over-party, was short-lived.

What have we seen since? It is hard to believe that since 9/11 the United States has not evolved into a country that understands who and what it is. A country focused on the framing intent of the Founders. Instead, it has devolved into a country marked by vacuous ultra-partisanship. A partisanship so venomous that each side prefers to destroy individuals opposed to its views rather than focus on hearing the other, solving problems, and moving toward a more perfect union.

Both sides of the political spectrum have leaped to the ideological extremes; the right has moved away from limited constitutionalism to a dangerous combination of populism and Christian nationalism, both political concepts, it is worth noting, that the writers of the “Federalist Papers” warned against. In fact, both were concepts used to illustrate a move toward despotism rather than toward democratic-republicanism.

The left has also sprinted toward extremes. It, too, has embraced an anti-constitutional form of populism while disregarding the stability of religion, even in the private sphere, it seems. And, the left has embraced a form of post-hypermodernism that would surprise even 20th century philosopher Michel Foucault with its practical successes in transforming American politics and culture.

Neither of these excessive moves to the ideological extremes is too concerning by its self. What makes one pause is that both sides frequently use the same tactics of targeting, silencing and shaming as a means of usurping the political realm. Both sides seek complete control of the



Placards expressing emotions remain after memorial services held on the grounds overlooking the Pentagon as part of the September 14, National Day of Prayer and Remembrance. President George W. Bush declared the day in the wake of terrorist attacks on September 11, which resulted in extensive loss of life and damage to the Pentagon and the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City.

three branches of government and, more importantly, of the citizen’s soul.

An elementary reading of the Constitution and the “Federalist Papers” demonstrate how single-party control of the branches of government teeters on totalitarianism, even if it is a friendly, soft-despotism, à la de Tocqueville. Further, and maybe more troublesome, if a citizen does not belong to one side or the other, or dares to think independently, the side(s) that the free thinker abandons wants to cancel them out of existence or seeks to compel the thinker to accept the common views of this or that party. In other words, in less than 20 years, the United States has moved from a society based on free-inquiry and willingness to attempt noble discourse between alternative views. It has become a society that punishes dissent, difference, dissidence and even ignorance and unfortunate mistakes in speech and action. It feels as though each side seeks a tyranny of thought that silences the alternative and embraces an unyielding hesitancy of negotiation and compromise. And for both sides, it appears it has become party over country. Beware the party-system, once cautioned George Washington.

Further, in a truly revolutionary shift, the greatest danger from terrorism is now, for the first time in contemporary American history, not from outside the United States but inside. As the American intelligence community reports, domestic terrorism is the greatest threat to the national security of the US.

This threat appears to be emboldened by the hyper-partisanship on both sides. On

the left, there appears to be a growing acceptance of anarchist and so-called anti-fascists, though the regime it envisions is co-equal with the conceptualization of fascism. The left has also developed a greater tolerance for political violence when it is in the name of social justice—even when that violence destroys cities in desperate need of better representation and renewal.

On the right, there is much greater acceptance and action on behalf of nationalist militias, white supremacy groups and the “conservative” populism that resulted in the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, an act that, in terms of political significance and consequences, will follow the consequences of Sept. 11. The threat of direct political action from both sides is ongoing and being monitored by appropriate agencies.

What is to be done? As I reflect upon the tragedy of Sept. 11, I am reminded of the Socratic adage: Know thyself.

In the writings of Plato, one can read that in order to perfect any political regime, one must start with an unabashed assessment of oneself. To form a more perfect union, citizens must seek the hard path of self-improvement of mind, body and soul. One ought to see how one fits into the greater scheme of the Divine (however you define divinity, in Plato’s words). A greater understanding of the self will generate a true love of the other. That ought to be the new American dream if Americans want political renewal: to love one another as oneself.

Democrats, Republicans, Independents, atheists, Catholics, Muslims, elderly and children



died on that terrible day, and hundreds of thousands since. We honor them by honoring the other, by listening to the other, by embracing difference, by truly loving those who disparage one’s views.

The Founding Framers called us to a politics of representation of true interests and mutual respect—let us use the solemn occasion of the 20th anniversary of 9/11 to reflect on how we can better America’s political regime by bettering ourselves by truly loving our neighbor.

I write this in love for all, with a desire to be inoffensive to all, with the hope of a politics of understanding and “...in writing it I did not mean either to serve or to contest any party; I undertook to see, not differently, but farther than the parties...” Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America.

ONE AIRLINE PILOT PONDERES POSSIBILITY OF OTHER TERRORISTS THAT DAY



An American flag hoisted near the United Flight 93 memorial. Photo courtesy National Park Service.

By: Debbie van Tuyl

Editor's Note: American Airlines Pilot Kent Fronseca recounts his and his crew's experiences on Sept. 11, 2001 in this story. Part of this piece is taken from his memoirs of the day. Those sections are in italic. The remainder of the article is based on Fronseca's responses to questions submitted via email. To protect his and his crew's privacy, Fronseca requested that all names but his be changed, and all communications were handled via email.

Al Qaeda leader and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammad told investigators he had hoped to field 10 teams of terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001, according to the 9/11 Commission report published in 2004.

Their job would have been to fly airplanes into additional government targets such as the United States Capitol and the White House as well as certain nuclear power plants and skyscrapers, according to the report.

Mohammad made it sound as if that was the plan until

the arrest of Zacarias Moussaoui and the decisions to withdraw from the plan by other erstwhile hijackers. Moussaoui may have been among the designated hijackers before his August 2001 arrest for suspicious behavior at a flight school in Minnesota, according to the report.

But what if Mohammad lied to investigators? What if there really were other teams of terrorists on planes that Tuesday morning?

"We have no idea how many planes were targeted that day," said American Airline pilot Andy Shane said. He added that FBI agents have told him it's not possible to know how many, if any, additional teams were on board airplanes, waiting for their chance to wrest control of jetliners from pilots and use them as terrorist weapons.

One of Shane's fellow American Airlines pilots, Kent Fronseca, may have been piloting a targeted plane that day. Certainly, some odd things happened on that flight.

"Brother Fronseca's story is so cringe-worthy and terrifying," he said.

Fronseca has written a

memoir about that day, and he made a portion of it available for this special 9/11 remembrance story.

Fronseca didn't hear the stories of his flight attendants until two days later that "four men of interest" were to fly on his Flight 449 from Boston to Miami that Tuesday morning. His aircraft that day was a McDonnell Douglas DC-9 MD-80, configured with two seats on each side of the airplane and four across the middle.

He and his crew from "that day" were sitting down to dinner on Sept. 13 when flight attendant Peter Stephens asked a question (attendants' names have been changed due to Fronseca's desire to protect their privacy).

Peter started the story with, "You know how sometimes we fly crews from other airlines on our aircraft?"

I said, "Yes, like deadheading crew members from Federal Express and UPS?"

He said that when he was greeting passengers at the front door as they entered, if he saw another deadheading flight crew (not flying the plane, but riding as passengers), he would always greet them specially. He

considered, in his words, that we were all in one big fraternity, that as flight crew members, we had something in common.

That morning four males with dark complexions, some with mustaches, entered our airplane. All four carried black pilot kit bags (book bags to carry their flight publications) with bright green tags on them that said CREW. Two of them had on shirts that said Miami Air, and the other two wore regular civilian clothes.

When Peter was greeting the passengers, he saw them come onboard, recognized them as pilots (or so he thought), and he said to them, "Hey guys, how's it going today?"

Peter told Fronseca he found the "pilots" behavior odd because none of them responded to him. Fronseca and the other two flight attendants, Jean Glover and Sandra Spivey, agreed that was odd. Usually, other flight crew members were at least somewhat friendly because of their common backgrounds. All three attendants believed the men were Hispanic because of their dark skin and Miami Air shirts.

Fronseca said he agreed it seemed strange the four were not

cordial. Jean said, "That's not all, it gets better."

The four sat directly behind the bulkhead between first class and coach. Fronseca thought that mean they'd set four across in a single row, but no, Peter told him. They'd sat in the two rows directly behind first class, and each had taken an aisle seat. Seating was plentiful that day because the flight was more than half empty, Fronseca remembered.

Jean noticed as she was hanging up jackets in the aft first-class closet that the "Miami Air Pilot" sitting in the second row back, left aisle seat, had his kit bag in front of his feet as he sat there, not under the seat in front of him, but directly in front of his seat.

As a flight crew member, he should have known that was illegal, that all bags must be secured and stowed under the seat for takeoff and landing. Nothing can be in front of your feet that would impede you in the event of an unscheduled emergency evacuation. As a pilot, he should have known that.

Mary went up to the man and told him, "Sir, you will have to stow your kit bag under the seat for takeoff."

He did not respond to her but just stared up at her. She then told him two more times and she got no reply. She told me, "Kent, I don't think he spoke English."

But as a pilot, he has to know English – if, in fact, he was a pilot. All pilots, worldwide, are required to speak English, especially if you are working for Miami Air that flies in the United States. She told me she, after verbalizing the request three times, finally motioned with her hand to slide the bag under the seat and he complied.

Fronseca told Jean he didn't think their tale was sounding too good. It had him a little concerned. She responded, "There's more."

A few minutes after the pilots took their seats, an unaccompanied minor boarded and took his assigned the window seat next to the pilot who hadn't seemed to understand English. Once the child sat down, the pilot stood up and moved to an aisle seat two rows back. More concerning was that he left his kit bag when he moved.

Jean, who had moved on up front to serve beverages to the first-class passengers watched as the pilot moved and saw him when he realized he'd left his kit bag. He hopped up to retrieve it. Jean went over to him and said,

"Sir, if you want to move to another seat, that is fine. We are fairly empty today, but you can leave your kit bag there if you wish. No one will bother it."

The pilot did not answer. He just grabbed his bag and returned to his seat where he stowed his bag.

"Kent, he did not speak English," Jean said.

"This does not sound good!" Fronseca said to his crew members. But Jean was not done. She continued her story.

As I sat there at the table, listening to this, they asked me if I remembered the announcement, I'd made to the passengers just before we returned to the gate, telling them they I had suspected there had been a hijacking and to take all their bags into the terminal once we parked. I said, "Of course I did."

The crew told me that everyone on the airplane knew what was going on as we taxied in that morning, even before I made the announcement. I guess not everyone complies with the turn your cell phones off rule, because phones were ringing off the hook that morning. Or maybe they were like me and just forgot to turn off the phone. The fact that the World Trade Center had been hit twice was a well-known fact among the

passengers before we returned to the gate. Jean then informed me of the last particularly alarming event on Flight 449 that morning.

As the passengers deplaned the aircraft, the supposed pilot who sat in the right-aisle seat of the first row behind the bulkhead, got up and started making his way against traffic, against the flow of people moving forward toward the door. He headed toward the rear of the galley carrying his kit bag. He made it all the way to Jean in the very rear of the aircraft, who was standing next to Sandra.

Jean told me, and Sandra confirmed, that he got about 12 to 18 inches from Jean's face, right in the personal zone, and asked her, "DO YOU SPEAK ARABIC?" Jean who was blonde (and I think she told me at the table) from California or Florida, replied, "Of course not."

The "pilot" then rattled off about 15 or 20 seconds of FARSI or ARABIC language, then turned away and walked up the aisle. He was the last passenger that morning to deplane the aircraft.

When I heard this I said, "You're kidding right," and they both replied that no, it was the truth.

Immediately I said, "Tell me you have told someone about this!" meaning they had talked to some authorities.

Later that night, the entire crew of five, including Fronseca, met with a five-member team of FBI agents at their hotel to be "debriefed/interviewed." FBI agents talked to each first separately and then as a group. None of the crew members ever heard anything further from the FBI or any other agency about what they saw that day, Fronseca said, adding that he has "heard since the event that supposedly may other aircraft were targeted that day. Maybe my aircraft was targeted. I never heard yes or no, but I am glad we did not takeoff that day."

Flight 499 from Boston to Miami was delayed for maintenance on Sept. 11, 2001. Its route would have taken the crew and passengers to JFK and then down the east coast over Baltimore, past Washington, D.C. and on to Miami. The flight was scheduled to leave Boston at 8:40 a.m.

American Airlines Flight 11, the plane hijackers flew into the North Tower, left Boston's Logan Airport only 40 minutes earlier.

But during pre-flight checks that morning, one of the crew found a malfunction in the brake overheat sensors.

"Maintenance elected to not fix the system since it was not required for flight by the MEL (minimum equipment list)," Fronseca said.

The delay meant they pushed off from the gate at 8:55 a.m., 15 minutes late and nine minutes after Flight 11 hit the North Tower.

Fronseca had already taxied out to Logan's Runway

9 for takeoff. He was in line, just waiting "as a Chautauqua Commuter Dehavilland Dash 8 aircraft landed in front of us on 04R [a landing runway that morning]. The Dash 8 was on about a two-mile final when we took the runway."

No sooner had the plane started down the runway than an air traffic controller came on the radio.

"American 449," the voice said, "we are not sure what is going on, but we were just told to stop all departing aircraft."

We replied, "Roger." We sat there for two or three minutes when the controller then said to us, "American 449, we just got word that all departures on the East coast have been stopped."

At that point I told Scott, the flight engineer, I would be off the radio for a few seconds while I made a PA [public announcement] to the people on board. I turned down the volume on my headset and made a quick PA to the passengers telling them that for some unknown reason we were not being released for takeoff. I told them I would either take off soon or would get back to them with more information as I got it.

But Flight 449 did not take off that day, and Fronseca says he will always remember that his plane was supposed to be the next to depart Boston where, just half an hour earlier, two plans, one American Airlines and one United Airlines, "took off and were hijacked violently and flown by terrorists into the World Trade Center."

He continued, "I was the captain on the second American Airlines aircraft to take off on Sept. 15 from Boston. I remember it was a clear sunny afternoon. I flew with a totally different crew that day to Chicago on a flight to transport 135 passengers with about 35 of those uniformed AA crew members trying to get home to their families for the first time in six or seven days."

Fronseca said he was never afraid to fly. He thinks maybe it was his military background that had him focusing more on his "mission," which was to complete each flight safely.

"I do remember taking off to the East over Boston harbor, seeing almost a hundred boats in the water enjoying the day," he said, "and what was really going through my mind is how easy a target I could have been if some boat had a shoulder-fired surface to air missile onboard (SAM). Of course, this never happened and has never happened, but I sure thought it."

Even today, when retirement is only a couple of years out, Fronseca says he has never found out whether his plane was a target that day.

"I often wish I could thank the pilots of the other aircraft that were landing and kept me from taking off," he said.



PEOPLE SOUGHT COMFORT IN THEIR FAITH IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE ATTACKS

By: Skyler Andrews

For months, the numbers 911 had stood out to Rhonda Matthews. She felt like they were a call to prayer, but she didn't know what for.

Matthews, the lead pastor at New Life Church, has led prayer at 11 a.m. Tuesdays at the church almost since it began more than 25 years ago. And that particular Tuesday, her phone started ringing early. People were seeing the news; people were afraid.

That Tuesday morning, she saw more people than usual at prayer.

"It was pure evil," she said. "I had to comfort a lot of people."

Rev. Ted Clarkson, interim rector at Church of the Good Shepherd, remembers the day clearly. It was before he was clergy, still a practicing lawyer at the time. He recalls watching as the news came in, lawyers and office staff affixed to the images from the television, from District of Columbia and New York. His wife came down that morning to join him.

"It was not a time to be alone," said Clarkson. "I remember being so thankful that our church held a service that very afternoon."

Matthews was seeing, and Clarkson was experiencing, firsthand one of the first explosive ripple effects of Sept. 11, 2001: a paroxysm of mourning, yearning and spiritual seeking.

In the days that followed, prayer was held at New Life multiple times as people tried to process what they'd seen and heard.

"People had a lot of different emotions," said Matthews.

And they knew they didn't have the answers for what they'd experienced. They sought to find spiritual meaning where emotional and mental answers didn't satisfy.

"We all needed the comfort of our God and the knowledge that God is ultimately in charge," said Clarkson. "Our priest read from the book of Job, one of the lessons of which is that we as humans will not always understand why something happens, but we still must trust in God."

The Pew Research Center noted an uptick in prayer and the significance of religion in Americans' lives as early as November 2001. A survey the center conducted found that 69 % of Americans said they prayed more immediately after the terror attacks, Sept. 13 – 17. While that number decreased to 44 % by November, 16 % said they were attending religious services more

than they were before the attacks.

The struggle of people to comprehend the gravity, tragedy and wider implications of being a person of faith in America seemed to give way not only to more intense seeking, but more genuine connections with their faith, and thus with one another.

Matthews remembers. In the weeks that followed, she saw something beautiful happen.

"I saw a spirit of unity in the nation and in the body of Christ," she said. "I saw people genuinely caring about their brother and their sister no matter what their background."

The surge in faith among Americans was significant but did not sustain, according to statistics. But in the 20 years since the attacks, that upwelling remains telling.

"I believe that this is a time when our faith and traditions are more important than ever," said Rabbi David Sirull of Adas Yeshurun Synagogue.

Reflection upon Sept. 11 and

the swelling of faith that came after seems to show how faith traditions and spirituality persist not only as means of comfort, reflection and even community but also insight amid devastating times.

"According to Jewish tradition, each human life is considered as a whole world," said Sirull. "Whether we're talking about the 3,000 innocent souls lost on 9/11, the 6 million Jewish victims who were murdered in the Holocaust or a friend who recently passed away due to COVID, each life is sacred, created in God's image and, therefore, a tragic loss in every case."

Clarkson says that what it means to be a person of faith did not change after Sept. 11, but perhaps changed, or at least affected, how some may have understood what faith is.

"I believe that some have come to faith and others have left faith depending on their understanding of 'the faith,'" said Clarkson. "For those who believed that persons of faith are protected

from all evil, their faith has been challenged if not destroyed by the death of so many innocents. For those who believe that God will be with people of faith, especially when there is suffering, those persons have probably had their faith strengthened."

Clarkson had recollected that his priest, during the service held at his church on Sept. 11, read from the Book of Job, 42:2.

"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

Looking back at that day also evokes for Clarkson Psalm 121:1-2.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help com? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Features editor Charmain Z. Brackett contributed to this story.



First Presbyterian Church in downtown Augusta. Photo by St. Julian Cox III

GROUNDING PILOT REMEBERS 9/11



Andy Shane is an American Airlines pilot who was flying on Sept. 11, 2001.

By: Debbie van Tuyl

Pilots were center stage on 9/11. In particular, 19 pilots who knew how to take off but not land; 19 pilots who boarded four planes that Tuesday morning intent on starting a war with America.

But scores of other pilots were on deck that morning, getting ready for take-offs, already in the air or preparing for landings.

Andy Shane was among the hundreds of commercial pilots in the air that morning. He was flying for American Airlines that morning.

Shane's trip began on Sept. 9. He was assigned to fly from Dallas to Dulles Airport outside of Washington, D.C. He got up early that morning and stowed his gear in his personal airplane. Shane lived about 45 minutes outside of Dallas, and whenever he could, he commuted to work in his plane.

"It was great," he said. "I could fly to Dallas and park my plane right next to my airliner. I'd chain it to the chain-link fence, and it'd be right there when I got back."

The weather didn't cooperate that day, though. Morning fog set in and didn't burn off in time for him to fly. So, he transferred his gear to his car and raced to Dallas. The flight to D.C. went off

without a hitch.

A native of western Maryland, Shane had arranged to have a day's layover on Sept. 10 so he could visit his parents and stop in to see his mother-in-law in Silver Spring. He rented a Jeep, brought bagels to his mother-in-law and then headed out Interstate 70 to the small village of Williamsport where he grew up. He spent the day with his parents at an Elderhostel event before heading back to the D.C. area to spend the night and get ready for the next leg of his itinerary.

Shane's Sept. 11 began early, around 5:30 or 5:45 a.m., he recalled. He was flying from Dulles to Chicago and from there back home to Dallas. On his way to the runway, Shane said he taxied past his colleague Chip Burlingame's plane. Burlingame, also a pilot for American Airlines, was to push off at 8:10 a.m. with Flight 77 to Los Angeles. Instead, his was the plane that hijackers flew into the Pentagon.

The flight to Chicago was uneventful, Shane said. He was filling out paperwork and preparing for the next leg that would take him home to Dallas when a flight attendant grabbed his elbow, commanded, "Come with me," and pulled him

into a dark room. Shane said he was thinking to himself, "How do I get out of this without hurting her feelings?"

Instead of seeking an illicit liaison, the flight attendant dragged Shane into a darkened room where other American crew members were watching the news of the attacks in New York.

The FAA hadn't grounded planes by the time Shane's was supposed to board passengers, so the somber crew got everyone seated. Shane was fully aware that two planes had flown into the Twin Towers, and he wanted to reassure those flying with him that morning.

"My contribution to 9/11 was, I told my passengers that I'm their captain for the trip to Dallas, and I had one objective for the next three hours," which was to get them all safely to Dallas, he said. "I told them, 'The whole crew is devoted to your safety and security.'"

Before he could finish, an agent boarded the plane and told Shane he wasn't going anywhere; all planes had been grounded. All commercial flights remained grounded until Sept. 13. Small planes, like the one Shane had hoped to fly to work on Sept. 9, were grounded far longer, about six weeks total.

Looking back, Shane, a former Air Force officer who's been flying for American for 33 years, said he thinks it was a miracle the attacks succeeded.

"Those guys were 16th century commandos," Shane said. "It should have been obvious they weren't pilots. For one thing, several of them couldn't speak English, and you have to be English proficient to be a pilot."

He also laments that airlines didn't learn more from the two cockpit breaches that happened before 9/11. One of those involved a FedEx pilot who was facing firing for falsifying his hours flying. According to Shane, Auburn Calloway joined a FedEx flight in Memphis as a deadhead passenger. He brought a hammer and a spear gun with him. Calloway was able to breach the cockpit and attack the crew, nearly killing the flight engineer and severely injuring the pilot and co-pilot who were eventually able to subdue him and land the plane.

The other pre-9/11 cockpit breach involved a four-engine regional jet in California, Shane said.

"It's shameful we didn't

learn from those events," Shane said.

The Israeli model is to have the cockpit completely isolated from the cabin, and that's a model Shane believes U.S. airlines should follow. So do some pilot unions who are pushing to have secondary barriers to protect cockpits.

"We're not impenetrable," he said. "You're not going to stop someone who cleverly infiltrates."

He recounted what he believes to have been a close call just a few years ago in Frankfurt, Germany.

He was serving as co-pilot on that flight. He and the pilot had just checked in when an agent came to them and said she had a regional airline pilot who wanted to occupy the jump seat on the flight.

"That had never happened in 30 years of flying," Shane said. "The FAA sometime, but never other pilots."

Usually, other airline crew members who fly are seated with the passengers, he explained.

The pilot was a Somali national who had proper credentials, the flight attendant told the pilot and Shane. She assured them the man has been security vetted. But he also had a gym bag, and that's what made Shane nervous.

"It made the hair stand up on my neck," Shane said.

To placate the agent, the captain says, "Okay, he can have the seat, and invited the Somali to join him in the cockpit," Shane continued.

Out of sight and hearing of the Somali pilot, the captain asked one of the flight attendants to find a seat for him with the passengers. They seated him in first class.

The flight went off without a hitch, but Shane said he was nervous the entire way home, remembering other cockpit breaches and wondering if he and his pilot had averted such a catastrophe for themselves by moving the Somali pilot to the passenger area. Something about the request to fly in the jump seat and that gym bag, they just didn't sit right.

"We were both terrified," he said.

In America, the TSA does an extraordinary job of keeping airflight safe, Shane said.

"TSA, in my experience, has batted 1,000," he said. "I've been dazzled by how good, perceptive and patient they are."

PUTTING A FACE ON CRIME

Download your copy online at

TheJailReport.com

TEACHER AND FORMER SCHOOL CHILDREN REMEMBER THAT DAY



The 9/11 memorial at the site of the original towers.

By: Tyler Strong

Twenty years ago, kids my age were in first grade. For many of them, Sept. 11 is one of their first significant memories, or at least one of the easiest to recall to this day.

I was in Mrs. Joan Dalton’s class at Hillcrest Baptist Church School in South Augusta. The first inclination I had that something was out of the ordinary was when Mrs. Dalton’s daughter, Amy, who was captain of the cheerleading squad, came in abruptly and asked if there still would be cheerleading practice. I listened up because my sister, Megan, four years my senior, was on the squad, and I was keenly interested to know if I’d get to go home early instead of staying at school during her practice.

“No,” Mrs. Dalton said. “Not after what happened.”

A somber mood crept into what was a generally upbeat and positive atmosphere, and I wasn’t the only student to notice. Bryce Adair, also in my grade at the time, recalled something similar.

“It felt like life stopping,” he said. “My teacher was real distraught.”

Bryce said his mother came and picked him up from school early, an experience I’m sure many schoolchildren shared that day. Then, he and his mother started watching the TV.

The TV.

This was certainly my first memory of ever seeing something on TV that wasn’t Scooby-Doo or Clifford the Big Red Dog. I don’t remember the car ride home, but I remember climbing the steps into my house and seeing my

mom sit motionless in front of the tiny TV in our living room. I can still see images of dust-covered buildings. Abandoned streets. Rubble. Destruction everywhere.

If I asked what happened, I don’t remember the answer. As a parent, what do you say? A disaster? An accident? An attack? There’s a hard line to toe there, wanting to educate your child while also protecting them from a world that just changed forever, whether you knew it or not.

Eva Claire Schwartz, a first grader at EDS at the time, shared her perspective as someone whose parents wanted her to understand what had happened.

“I know everyone’s experience is different, but my parents wanted me to know what was happening in the world. My mother was a journalist and usually included me in current events.

“You will always remember this; I remember her saying as we sat on the sofa and watched the towers burning.

“And she was right. That’s my most prevalent memory of that day. I can feel the sofa fabric, dark green and soft, under our huddled figures. It’s one of my last memories of the two of us before my sister was born a little over a month later.”

Ashlie Fortson was teaching at Evans High School. She said it was a day she will never forget.

“One of my students had gone to the restroom and cut back through the media center where the television was on. When he came back in my room,

he had a terrified look on his face,” Fortson said.

“He asked to use my cell phone so that he could call his sister, who was supposed to be working in the World Trade Center. A great sense of relief came over us all when he got her on the phone and we found out that she had not gone to work that day because she had a headache. Everything stopped for the rest of the day.”

Gary McClune was 13 at the time, living in Rochester, New York. He was just a few hours from “the city” but close enough to still be terrified about what could happen next.

“I was in art class with Mrs. Morsheimer. I had a crush on her,” McClune said. “We were sent home. Teachers were crying. I didn’t have any idea what the World Trade Center was. They just kept showing the planes hit over and over.”

McClune said he walked to school every day with his friend, Codie. On this day, the kids in his area were sent home early and the two boys turned on the TV

while waiting for McClune’s mother to come home.

“I remember there was a mad scramble to get the bus riders onto the bus and into the bus loop,” McClune said. “It was like panic mode. Once we got home, we really had no idea what we were watching but we knew it was bad and unforgettable.”

McClune said not long after this day, the children in the schools started practicing “what were essentially terrorism drills,” according to him. It was when the kids practiced how fast the buses could get loaded up and off into their typical routes.

“We would sit on the bus for what felt like an hour after we got on and they would take attendance and relay the info to the school district.

“I don’t remember hardly anything, but I remember 9/11.”

{powerserve}

Building your business online.

Free Consultation

RETIRED PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER REMEMBERS RESPONSE

By: James Hudgins

Editor's Note: James Hudgins was the public affairs officer at Fort Gordon on Sept. 11, 2001. He was the first civilian PAO assigned to Fort Gordon, taking the position after the Presidio closed in California. He retired in 2011 after 40 years of service and lives in Columbia County.

So many memories fade after 20 years, but the memory of Sept. 11, 2001 remains as vivid as the day itself. Its impact still affects me. It haunts and brings about many emotions. Any mention of the words "terrorism" or "terrorists" bring back memories of that terrible day. In light of recent events, those memories of 9/11 have become even more dominant.

Just before 9 a.m. on that clear, late summer day, we got word that a plane had crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. I remember looking at the blazing building on television wondering how such a catastrophe could happen. I also remember watching another airliner hazily circling the two towers. In disbelief, I watched that plane dive into the South Tower. Shocked silence soon changed into the grim realization that our nation had been attacked by terrorists. Our world changed forever in those few minutes.

Very shortly after that, we were informed that another plane had crashed into the Pentagon. Our sadness and helpless rage only intensified because the terrorists' targets were our friends and colleagues. After a brief period of numbness and overwhelming concern, I clearly remember our military leaders springing into action. Within hours, guidance and directions began coming from higher headquarters. All the major commands, including Signal, began planning for an overwhelming response.

For weeks, long days and late evenings were spent in strategy sessions held in secure conference facilities. I remember the intense and grim determination of everyone involved. Overlapping all was a united sense of patriotism and appreciation of our uniformed personnel and the flag we all serve under.

As a result, Operation Enduring Freedom was conceived and executed. In those early, successful days of justly punishing those who would so cowardly attack our shores, there was a great deal of pride in our nation and the values it stands for. Those in uniform were seen as being noble. Leaders



were admired for their clarity of purpose and dedication. Petty differences were put aside for the greater good. Perhaps we should look back to those days for our direction against future terrorist actions. One can only hope....

SEPT. 11 AS MUCH ENDED THAT DAY AS BEGAN

By: Sylvia Cooper

I went to a newspaper conference for editors and writers one time and heard one of the important speakers say, "If you're having trouble getting started on your story and can't find a lead, lower your expectations and just start writing."

The speaker was a famous sportswriter and broadcaster. I think it was Bob Costas, but I'm afraid to say so because I've forgotten so much. But I haven't forgotten what he said, and when I'm stuck, I just start writing, and soon find what it was I wanted to say. But when I was asked to write about the 20th anniversary of 9/11 for The Augusta Press, I couldn't imagine what I could say that thousands of writers and newscasters haven't said many times before. It would have to be profound. But then I decided to

lower my expectations of being profound and start writing what I remember about 9/11.

Everybody old enough to remember that day remembers what they were doing when they heard about the attack, just like old timers remember what they were doing when they heard that JFK had been shot in Dallas. That was a terrible thing that changed the course of history in the country, but it cannot touch what happened when that airplane slammed into the first Twin Tower.

It was the end of security and trust. It was the beginning of hatred and thirst for revenge. It was the beginning of endless stories of bravery and courage, of America's finest heroes rushing to their deaths when duty called. It was the beginning of horrible scenes of bodies falling from the burning building and of people running to escape the black cloud of death pursuing them down the street when the first tower fell. It was the beginning of stories of unbelievable bravery and harrowing escapes from death. It was a time of great leadership on display in the person of New York Mayor Rudy Guiliani. It was a time when the word "terrorists" was on everybody's lips.

And it was the end of life as we knew it and the beginning of metal detectors in every courthouse and government building in America. It was the beginning of getting serious about security badges and removing trash cans in lobbies of public buildings where bombs could be hidden.

At the newspaper, we were looking for angles to localize the tragedy. People would call in to report that a close relative had died in the attack. The editors would send reporters out to speak to members of the Arab community in Augusta to see what they had to say.

The editor sent me over to Augusta State University to interview some of the students. They were all transfixed on the unfolding events on the student center TV.

And unbelievably, I got a call from former Augusta Commissioner Moses Todd who'd been working as a union pipefitter atop a building in New Jersey. He said he could see black smoke rising in the distance in New York. Everybody in the newsroom was in awe. Moses Todd had seen smoke from the burning tower.

AT

AUSTIN TAYLOR
INSURANCE AGENCY

Click for a FREE Quote

We are Augusta's
Local Agents

AUGUST 11

We are Augusta's
Local Agents

AUSTIN TAYLOR
INSURANCE AGENCY

Click for FREE Quote

MEET THE PRESS



Debbie Van Tuyll
Executive Editor



Joe Edge
Publisher



Connie Wilson
CFO



Dana Lynn McIntyre
Reporter



Sylvia Cooper
Columnist



Anna Porzio
Reporter



Ashley Brown
Sports Columnist



Senior Reporter
Scott Hudson



Features Editor
Charmain Brackett



Business Editor
Tyler Strong



Reporter
Skyler Andrews



Columnist
Michael Meyers



Crime Reporter
Greg Rickabaugh





Obituaries

