

Searing Memories Of 9/11 Terrorist Attacks On 20th Anniversary Date

by Ray Bost

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Saturday marked twenty years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But the searing memories of that day are as clear as if it were yesterday.

My wife, Tracy, and I were sitting at our kitchen table that morning when news broke of a plane hitting the North Tower of the World Trade Center. As a firefighter with the city of Murphysboro, my mind immediately raced with thoughts of what the first responders on the ground would be facing as they worked to evacuate the building. Not long after that, a second plane hit the South Tower, one crashed into the Pentagon and another plummeted into a field in rural Pennsylvania. We were under attack and facing a challenge unlike anything we had experienced before.

There were 2,977 innocent lives lost that day in the deadliest terrorist attack in history. We lost mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers, sisters, and friends who were living their lives as they would on any average Tuesday. Their loved ones still feel pain every anniversary, birthday, or Christmas spent without them.

Amidst the fear, death, and destruction rose thousands of heroes who exemplified the best of America. Our firefighters, police officers, and first responders showed incredible courage and fortitude, putting their lives on the line to rescue the victims. Friends and coworkers helped each other to safety. Complete strangers risked their own lives to save another. Every one of our instincts tells us to run from danger, not towards it. Yet these heroes selflessly ran through fires, explosions, and rubble around them in order to reach those trapped. 412 firefighters and police officers gave their lives that day. We've lost many more to injuries and illnesses related to the attacks over the past 20 years.

We also cannot forget the passengers and crew of Flight 93 who sacrificed themselves to take back the plane so it would not hit the White House or U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Heroes like Todd Beamer, whose last known words were "let's roll" as he led his fellow passengers to retake the plane. These ordinary Americans did the unthinkable in order to protect our capital city.

That dark day forever changed the course of our nation. Nearly 3 million American military men and women have deployed to war zones to fight terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS. Over 7,000 have made the ultimate sacrifice, including 13 young servicemembers during our withdrawal from Afghanistan. While much remains uncertain about the future, one thing is certain: our troops and their families did not sacrifice for nothing. For 20 years, they have protected our nation from the danger of another attack.

An entire generation of Americans have been born in a post 9/11 world. As they grow up, we must ensure that September 11, 2001 does not become just another page in their history books. We will never forget the Americans we lost, their families, and the first responders and military personnel who have answered the call. We are forever grateful for their service and the sacrifices they made to save lives and keep Americans safe. Whether it is the 20 year, 50 year, or even 100 year anniversary of the September 11 attacks, our nation will always remember.

- Mike Bost