

## Patriot Day

18 years ago, we witnessed a lifechanging event. Many of us remember exactly where we were when we heard the news that an airplane, American Airlines Flight 11, was flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center, and when United Airlines Flight 175 was flown into the South Tower 17 minutes later. We then watched in horror as American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. A fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93 was hijacked and crashed into a field, killing all on board, in Pennsylvania after passengers realized the intent of the hijackers and attempted to retake the plane. The casualties for these attacks were almost 3,000 killed, 6,000 injured and with countless others effected by long term diseases from rescue operations. Personally, I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade English class, and my Science teacher came into the room and he was ghost white and told us the news.

The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks changed the landscape of America as we know it. I remember 9/12 as vividly as I remember 9/11. My father, mother, brother and sister were at a local Korean War monument with a group of other people living in our neighborhood. All of us with American Flags, wearing Red White or Blue, singing the National Anthem or chanting USA, and a local police officer driving by with sirens and lights on to show support. This is a far cry from just two years earlier when I was being bullied for my Patriotic views and support of my father, a Marine, and my grandfather, a Soldier. We all have these memories, but it is important for us to remember them, especially in today's day in age where Patriotic themes can be seen to be under attack by many in popular culture. It is important to remember that 9/11 caused many of my generation to join the military or to become a police officer or firefighter, whose bravery was center stage on that horrific day, 343 firefighters, 72 police officers, 55 military personnel, 8 EMTs and 1 fire patrolmen (these 9 were part of privately funded emergency response teams thus not included in the FDNYs 343 count) lost their lives during the attacks. Their bravery and sacrifice saved countless lives and inspired millions of Americans. A recent New York Post article revealed that many children of these heroes have joined the FDNY in recent years, but that 16 "Legacy" firefighters are graduating from this year's academy, the most ever.

All of us know someone who was personally affected by these attacks, whether it be someone who was killed or injured in the attack itself, someone who assisted in rescue and clean-up efforts, a member of the military who has been killed, wounded or deployed because of the Global War on Terror. We owe it to these brave men and women to remember their sacrifices. We owe it to those who lost their lives on that horrible day, or the days that followed, to live our best lives in honor of them: to men and women like Officer Mark J Ellis NYPD, 11 Sep 2001 New York City; Firefighter Scott M Davidson FDNY, 11 Sep 2001 New York City; John P. O'Neill Head of Security World Trade Center, 11 Sep 2001, Todd Beamer Flight 93, 11 Sep 2001 Stonycreek Township Pennsylvania; Sgt. Matthew T. Abbate USMC, KIA 2 Dec 2010 Helmand Province, Afghanistan; Sgt. Caryn E Nouv USA, KIA 27 July 2013 Ghazni Province, Afghanistan; Senior Airman Quinn L. Johnson-Harris USAF, KIA 2 Oct 2015 Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan; Hospital Corpsman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Matthew I. Holzemer USN, KIA 17 June 2018 Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti; and the most recent death SFC Dustin Ard USA KIA 29 Aug 2019 Zabul Province, Afghanistan.

The events of 9/11 helped shape how we view patriotism today. The valuable lessons we have learned as a country in the past 18 years need to be carried on so that the next generations of American's can know of their sacrifices. This way our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will be able to grow up in this great country, and that it may flourish for generations to come.

In Fraternity Charity and Loyalty,

Ben Frail, PDC

National Patriotic Instructor