

Patriot Day

By Dr. R. Pletsch



What is Patriot Day? It's only been around for a short time. It's the title of how we commemorate 9/11. Yes, that date in 2001 when terrorists drove planes into The World Trade Center, the Pentagon and when they crashed in Western Pennsylvania. The original count was about 3,000 deceased, but since that original count, some have sadly committed suicide and some have died from illness because they worked in the contaminated crash sites.

It may seem odd to commemorate a date when all those innocent people died. But look at what happened that day. The individual heroism will never be completely known. We know of many first responders who rushed into those burning buildings to save as many as they could, not even knowing how many had survived.

Many stories have been confirmed of workers risking their own lives trying to lead others including some severely injured to safety. Some helped carry people out as many as 80 floors to safety. Some survivors talked about people that saved them, went back in to help more and were never seen again.

The Pentagon also had many cases of people rushing in despite the flames, the fear of explosions, and warnings that Flight 93 had turned and was heading to DC, target unknown. The Air National Guard were the first to respond and they sent two F16s as soon as they could. The two jets were unarmed and these two brave pilots decided if they spotted Flight 93, they would ram the airline out of the sky, even though it was filled with innocent people in hopes to save even more.

They had no idea that the passengers of Flight 93 worked together to take over the jet and the terrorists drove that jet into the farm lands near Shanksville, PA. All these heroes knew they were on a suicide mission.

How are these events patriotic? Many of the survivors later said their inner feelings took over. There was no care if the people were male or female, Black or White, Americans or not. Not even if they were friends or strangers. They did not care or even consider these things. It was not about reward or notoriety. They were at that time and space simply people. We, as Americans, don't leave people behind. I believe it's in our DNA.

You never know how you will react until the unexpected happens. I was a principal at the time and I had the shades on the East side all closed. That was the view of Sears Tower, that I feared would be next. I had our clerks tell people who called, no early dismissal, trust your students with us. Many of our staff members were doing the same, trusting our kids to other professionals -- and God.

This is what patriotic people do. They do their best to help each other regardless of Religion color etc. I have friends who lost several people that day. and they tell me they fly their flag every Patriot Day to remember those caught in the buildings and those that worked and prayed for them. There are presently very good memorials at these locations. It would be good to view them. Our kids deserve to know our history.