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23 Years Ago: A World Changed

At work, commuting, in a classroom, or just waking up are all common responses given as answers to a day that most everyone remembers where they were or what they were doing when they were informed of the news that would change not only the United States, but the world forever.

The September 11, 2001 Attacks

Twenty-three years ago millions of people awoke to discovery that the United States was under attack. On September 11, 2001, between 8:19 a.m. and 9:28 a.m. four U.S. flights were hijacked to be used as weapons against the core value of American life, freedom. At 8:46 a.m. American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of New York City's iconic World Trade Center. The North Tower would collapse not even two hours later at 10:28 a.m. At 9:03 a.m. United Airlines Flight 175 impacts the South Tower of the World Trade Center. The South Tower later succumbed to its structural damage and collapsed at 9:59 a.m. At 9:37 a.m. American Airlines Flight 77 impacted the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. At 10:02 a.m., after several passengers bravely attempted to overtake the cockpit from hijackers, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The total calculated count of victims who perished directly from the September 11th attacks was 2,977. However, lasting impacts would continue to affect the heroes of that day for years to come.

9/11-Related Cancer

Dust and debris from the collapse of the World Trade Center would spread across the New York City area including Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn, New Jersey, and Staten Island. This dust contained multiple known carcinogens including soot, benzene, cement, asbestos, and dioxins. Inhalation of dust from Ground Zero has since been linked to decreased lung capacity, cancers, and breathing issues. September 11th first responders are at a 25% increased risk of prostate cancer, a 219% increased risk of thyroid cancer, and a 41% increase risk of leukemia, among multiple other illnesses and health conditions. As of November 2023, there had been nearly 34,000 known cancer cases among responders and others exposed to Ground Zero in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. As of June 2023, 6,314 enrollees of the WTC Health Program, a federally-funded program providing benefits to the victims of 9/11, have passed away from illnesses related to 9/11, including not just first responders but also workers who were employed in buildings surrounding the World Trade Center. The most common conditions associated with 9/11-related illnesses are lung cancer,

leukemia, brain cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, and pancreatic cancer. The average lifespan for a 9/11 first responder is around 55 years old.

In Memoriam: Vincent Rocco Ungaro

Vincent Rocco Ungaro was born on August 18, 1956 and is the uncle of a friend of mine I met through my education at Loyola University New Orleans. On September 11, 2001, Vincent, "Vinny," was a member of Squad Company 288. Vinny would spend the next nine months, outside of his normal shifts with Squad 288, working at Ground Zero during search and recovery efforts. After search and rescue efforts at Ground Zero were completed, Vinny was promoted to Captain, taking charge of Engine 235 in Brooklyn. Vinny was later diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia but remained on the job. After fighting a hero's fight, Vinny passed away on October 1, 2016.

Vincent Rocco Ungaro of Squad Company 288

Gabrielle Gatto was always proud of her uncle and ready to spread her praises of him and his heroism. Every year on September 11th she would walk through the Loyola New Orleans campus handing out American Flag ribbons for others to wear to commemorate the anniversary of the attacks and all those who sacrificed everything for the love of our country.

What Can You Do?

Although September 11th is a time to remember those who fought for our freedom in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, it is also an opportunity for us to volunteer our time in honor of those fallen heroes, such as Vinny Ungaro.

September 11th is a National Day of Service and Remembrance and is referred to as Patriot Day. On Patriot Day the U.S. Flag is flown at half-staff at the White House, and all U.S. government buildings and establishments throughout the world, and a moment of silence is observed beginning at 8:46 a.m., marking the time American Airlines Flight 11 impacted the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Thousands of people across the United States use Patriot Day to participate in volunteer and service opportunities, many of which are coordinated by the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps. In memory of those fallen heroes who sacrificed so much on that day in 2001, we at Mouledoux, Bland, Legrand, and Brackett encourage all to find some time on September 11, 2024, even just a few minutes, to honor those heroes like Vinny by volunteering, wearing a U.S. Flag ribbon, lowering your flag to half-mast, observing a moment of silence to reflect on the actions of those heroes, or donating to a foundation in their honor. Volunteer opportunities in your area can be found at https://americorps.gov/join/find-volunteer-opportunity#/search and donations can be made at https://911memorial.org/donate.

Firefighters George Johnson, Dan McWilliams, and Billy Eisengrein raise a U.S. Flag atop the rubble of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.