



September 11, 2016: Remembering the day terrorism failed

“A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the United States, when terrorists hijacked four planes, using them as weapons of mass destruction and killing 2,996 people and injuring more than 6,000 others at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and the crash site of Flight 93 off U.S. Highway 30 in the Allegheny Mountains near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Citizens from 82 countries lost their lives in the attacks. It was the deadliest incident for firefighters and law enforcement

officers in the history of the United States, with 343 firefighters and 72 officers killed. It also was the day that terrorism failed.

Many attendees at ASWB’s Education Conference in Jersey City, New Jersey, took time to visit the World Trade Center memorial, which opened in 2011, and museum, dedicated in 2014. Of the remaining memorials, the one at the Pentagon opened in 2008 and, last to open on September 10, 2015, the one commemorating Flight 93. On a recent trip to my



hometown of Pittsburgh I visited Flight 93 National Memorial Park, quite by accident, because a side trip to a favorite historic inn took me past it and I felt compelled to stop.

The memorial is powerful in so many ways:

- for the walkway lined in black marble tracing the flightpath that leads to the memorial plaza
- for the 40 white marble panels on the plaza engraved with the names of the 33 passengers and seven crew members who sacrificed their lives
- for the everyday personal effects recovered and on display in the exhibit hall

Mostly, however, the memorial's power manifests through the story of the revolt against the hijackers—told through 37 phone calls that 13 passengers made to loved ones and officials—in which they said everyone on board knew the other planes had crashed and they were taking a vote before setting on their mission to stop the hijackers of Flight 93.

The courage of these men and women resonates at this memorial, which isn't in a big city because of their heroism. Although remote, the crash site is only 18 minutes' flying time to Washington, D.C., and the terrorists' intended target—the U.S. Capitol. The plane, traveling 563 mph when it crashed, disintegrated upon impact, leaving a crater 15 feet deep and 30 feet wide that was backfilled after the investigation. A boulder now marks the point of impact.



Congress designated the Flight 93 crash site a national memorial in 2002. The U.S. Park Service recorded the first visitors in 2003, and groundbreaking for the Visitor Center Complex took place in 2009. Until the permanent memorial opened, a temporary one drew annual visitors in the hundreds of thousands. A note in the Park Service visitor records dated May 1, 2008, states: "Record number of group visits by bus. Many middle and high schools are discovering Flight 93 to be an important stop on class trips to Washington D.C. etc." This 15th anniversary year, a ranger told me, the Park Service expects approximately half a million visitors to come to what has been dedicated as "a common field one day, a field of honor forever."

Each year as the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on America is remembered, it is not the acts of the terrorists that are relived—it is the resiliency of a nation, the heroism of "Let's roll," and the determination of people everywhere

to overcome terrorism that are celebrated. On each day of remembrance, it becomes only more evident: September 11, 2001, was the day that terrorism failed.

— Jayne Wood

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