# 9/11 ANNIVERSARY

## 20 YEARS AFTER THE ATTACK THAT

# **CHANGED THE NATION**



Firefighters, police officers and others remember dropping what they were doing and watching the TV from Albert Lea when they heard the news of the 9/11 attacks. PROVIDED

## Firefighters, law enforcement reflect on where they were on 9/11

By Sarah Stultz

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Remembering the attacks on 9/11 brings back a variety of emotions for people — especially for first responders.

Whether they were already in their present positions or just getting started in the field, all agree it was a day that they will never forget.

The Tribune interviewed several officers and deputies with the Albert County Sheriff's Office, along with firefighters with Albert Lea Fire Rescue, about their memories from the day 20 years ago.

### Adam Conn

For Albert Lea Officer Adam Conn, 9/11 was his first day on the job at the Albert Lea Police Department.

He said he had just reported for

"I had a big range of emotion from sadness to anger just thinking about what happened and that this happened on American soil. It seems to me like it just happened yesterday."

– Emergency Management Director Rich Hall

Lea Police Department and Freeborn duty and was assigned to his trainer, and within a couple hours of being on shift, news broke out that the World Trade Center towers had been hit.

> Officers flocked back to the squad room, where he said they spent a majority of the day watching the events

> unfold on television. He remembers feeling upset and angry that something like that could happen in the United States,

a country that is usually known for

having strong intelligence. Being a new officer, he said it was

eye-opening for him. "It was the big picture right there," Conn said. "It's day one, and it's like, 'Holy cow, what am I getting into?' Twenty years later I look back on it, and I wouldn't change a thing. I love my job. I like what I do and helping

'It was hard for my students to

He said he hopes the United States has enough intelligence that something like 9/11 will never happen again.

### **Rich Hall**

Freeborn County Emergency Management Director Rich Hall said he was driving into Rochester and was about a mile out of town when he heard that the first plane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers.

He didn't hear what size of plane had hit so he didn't know what to think, but when the second plane hit, he knew right away, "Oh man, we're in trouble."

Hall had retired from his military service in April only a few months

He said he remembers calling several of his friends still in the military

See REFLECT, Page 2

## All that mattered was love and life'

FORMER TRIBUNE PHOTOGRAPHER SHARES HER EXPERIENCES OF NEW YORK ON 9/11

By Sarah Stultz ah.stultz@albertleatribune.com

Before Trish Lease Way became a photographer at the Albert Lea Tribune in December 2001, she worked for a period at

the New York Times. Though she worked as a photographer shooting assignments for the newspaper and was even employed full time inhouse in the photography department for five years, she said she was not officially on assignment on Sept. 11, 2001, when two planes crashed into the

World Trade Center towers as part of an al Qaeda terror attack. Living in the West Village at the time, she said she was walking her two dogs in downtown Manhattan on Cedar Street only a few blocks away from the World Trade Center towers when she witnessed a plane crash into the

first tower.

"I had a choice to make that infamous day," she said. "Am I a civilian or a journalist right now? I decided to be a civilian.

She said she safely put her dogs back in her apartment and went back into the area now known as Ground Zero and assisted anyone

who needed help. "I gave water to police officers, firemen and all the victims that made it out alive," she said. "I wiped the human ash out of strangers' eyes. I hugged complete strangers with unconditional love. I directed victims to EMS areas."

She recalls meeting one man after the towers collapsed

who was in severe shock and who was cut and bleeding. He told her he had a fight

with his wife that morning, and she tried to calm him down and give him water. "My wife, she is going

to think I'm dead," he told Lease Way her as he said he was supposed to have been on a flight that

He got louder and louder, and Lease Way said people started to gather around them. Many cell phones were down that day, and she asked him out loud what his phone number was. He told her

See MEMORIES, Page 3

## TEACHERS RECALL

## WATCHING **EVENTS UNFOLD** FROM THE **CLASSROOM**

**By Tyler Julson** tyler.julson@albertleatribune.com

Many people, young and old alike, could probably tell you where they were and what they were doing on the day of Sept. 11, 2001. For the younger generation, it was sitting in a classroom preparing for the school day to begin. But what about the teachers? How did they handle the news and what was it like with numerous children looking

to you for possible answers? Four teachers at Albert Lea High School who were on staff on that day in 2001 are still teaching at the school today. Jim Haney, Ken Fiscus, Diane Heaney and Mindy Kruger all say the day started just like any other.

For Haney, the day began by wishing a friend and colleague a happy birthday. Fiscus was teaching in his advisory period, and Heaney was teaching voice lessons.

Their stories about how they heard the news were relatively the same: A student or fellow



Ken Fiscus, along with Jim Haney, Mindy Kruger and Diane Heaney are the four remaining teachers at Albert Lea High School who were with the district on the day of the 9/11 attacks. Fiscus said he remembers that day to be one of the worst days of his life up to that point. TYLER JULSON/ALBERT LEA TRIBUNE

staff member came into their rooms with the distressing news. Fiscus said he didn't believe it when he first heard about it.

"In bolts this kid who was a troublemaker, not in my advisory group, he charges in 'Mr. Fiscus, turn on your TV. Two planes just hit the World Trade Center.' I said 'Josh, get out of here.' I didn't believe him," Fiscus said. "He just popped in my room and said that out of the blue. Then a quiet kid who was in my advisory comes in right behind him and silently shook his head. It looked like he'd seen a ghost. That's when I walked over

and turned on the TV."

Haney said a teacher came into his classroom as he was teaching about the American Revolution and told him about the first plane. He said he didn't think much of it at the time because he thought it was a small single-engine plane that was involved in an accident. Haney said when the lesson was done, a student asked if they could turn on the TV and see what damage had been done.

"I had turned on the TV and I knew that this was much worse

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## REFLECT

Continued from Front Page

and talking with them and meeting a friend at Brothers Bar & Grill in Rochester for breakfast and they sat and watched as things played out on the television. Later in the day, he met

several of his fellow firefighters at the fire hall and remembers seeing the line of people at the nearby gas station who were waiting to get gas.

His thoughts were with the military and the Pentagon but he also thought a lot about his fellow firefighters in New York.

"I had a big range of emotion from sadness to anger just thinking about what had happened and that this happened on American soil," Hall said. "It seems to me like it just happened yesterday. It's still fresh in my mind."

Hall said he ended his military career in recruiting in the National Guard and a lot of the young soldiers he recruited ended up deploying oversees in the aftermath of 9/11. He also has close friends who died

"I also felt guilt for having gotten out and not being able to go serve with my friends," Hall said.

He has a good friend serving in Kuwait with the Minnesota Army National Guard who in recent weeks served in a special mission to bring people out of the Kabul airport in Afghanistan.

His friend plans to retire in less than a year.

#### Todd Earl

Freeborn County Chief Deputy Todd Earl said he was on patrol for the Sheriff's Office on 9/11 and had iust gotten done working an overnight shift.

He finished with his shift at 7 a.m. and like normal for him had a hard time falling asleep right away. He turned on the TV. and pretty soon emergency messages started coming up about the events that were transpiring in New

"I remember just not sleeping all day long, I was so angry — just so angry. I had to go to work that night and still wasn't tired," Earl

said, noting that his disbelief and anger kept him up all day glued to the TV. Earl said he remem-

bers feeling sick to his stomach that anyone could actually do what was done and his heart went out to the police and firefighters who sacrificed their lives that day helping those around them.

"It didn't feel like we were in danger in Freeborn County, Minnesota, but we're all partners, we're all brothers in law enforcement," he said. In addition to being in law enforcement, Earl served as a firefighter for 2 1/2 years while in college.

"It was hard to see the same people, dedicated to doing good throughout the community, get lost so quickly. That sheer number is just so devastating. You see one or two and it's bad enough, but you get hundreds, and it's just unbelievable.

#### **Chris Diesen**

Albert Lea Officer Chris Diesen said he was attending school at Normandale Community College and remembers even what parking spot he parked in that day at the school.

Just as he got there, the radio station was actually joking about a plane hitting the first tower.

He went into his first class, and by the time he came out, everyone was staring at the TVs.

He said he was in shock as the nation was under

Working as a mechanic at the time, he said he went to work but they didn't do anything there except for sit around the radios and

Knowing he was going into law enforcement, Diesen said he wished he could do something to help.

"I think every law enforcement officer would tell you the same thing,"

Now, knowing that it has been 20 years since that event, he said he hoped the country has learned some lessons — though he is not

"It's weird seeing there how it galvanized everyone into one, and all the division you see today, where'd that go?" he said.

"It was an amazing time when people put everything aside and said this is our country and we're going to support it. Never seen anything like it and probably never will again."

— Albert Lea Police Detective Julie Lynne Kohl

#### Julie Lynne Kohl

Albert Lea Police Detective Julie Lynne Kohl said the morning of 9/11 she was working on her motorcycle and was preparing for a trip to the Black Hills when she received a call saying she needed to turn on the TV and that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center in New

It wasn't very long after she turned on the TV that she saw the second plane strike the second tower.

'I knew it was a terrorist attack when I saw that second plane," Kohl said.

An Air Force veteran,

she said she wanted to go fight and obtain justice for what had happened. She said being with the Albert Lea Police Depart-

ment since 1992, her heart also went out to the police officers and firefighters who died in service to the

"They were brave men and women," she said. "They were heroes."

The weekend after the attacks, she remembers being at Mount Rushmore and being part of a memorial service there for everyone who died in the attacks. At the end of the ceremony, she remembers at least one bald eagle flying over the "It was just chills down

the spine," she said. "Not only that, you were with people you had never met before, and it was like everybody was related to everybody. You talked to everybody, you sat next to people you didn't know, you interacted with people you didn't know. It was an amazing time when people put everything aside and said this is our country and we're going to support it. Never seen anything like it and probably never will

She said it is surreal to

think it has already been 20 years since 9/11 and is saddened that there are many people who have forgotten what happened that day or who do not know much about it because they were born after the event.

#### **Darren Hanson**

Albert Lea Deputy Director of Police Darren Hanson said he was working on overnights with the police department on 9/11 and had gone home for the day to sleep when he received a phone call from his wife. 'She just said you should

flip on the news, I think the country's under attack," he said. "I flipped it on just in time to see the second tower get hit.' He said it was an expe-

rience that left him wondering what was going on, and then he started hearing about the other planes. "You truly felt like you were under attack," he

said. "I remember thinking everything is different now.' At some point in the day he said he purposely turned off the TV because he had to go back into work

later in the day. That night

he remembers the lines at the gas stations with everyone trying to fill up Hansen said though he knows the risk of being a law enforcement officer, seeing the huge numbers of officers and firefighters — and others — who

'staggering." "All the families that were affected, changed just basically in an instant,'

were died that day was

As a father of young children at the time, he said it made him think about them and how in the blink of eye he could have fatherless or motherless children.

Thinking now about the

20th anniversary of the attacks, he said it hits him to know that there is a generation now who doesn't remember the attacks or who hadn't been born yet when they took place. "9/11 changed every

thing," he said, noting the changes that have happened in security since then. He also noted advances that have been made since in how first responders can process and disseminate information.

### Jeff Laskowske

Jeff Laskowske, deputy director of Albert Lea Fire Rescue, said on 9/11 he was in his second year of school to become a firefighter in East Grand Forks and was working at Walmart at the time when he saw the first plane hit the World Trade Center tower while in the electronics department there.

He remembers the college closing shortly thereafter that day.

He was hired officially as a full-time firefighter just a few months later in January 2002 and said there has been a substantial increase in federal support for fire departments in the time

#### **Dennis Glassel**

Albert Lea Fire Capt. Dennis Glassel said he was working at the old fire station on Clark Street on 9/11. He said he had not been

there long, and remembers someone coming downstairs to the fire quarters and saying that the first World Trade Center tower had been hit. "We were watching TV when the second tower got

hit," Glassel said. "It was overwhelming, but at the same time, we're so far removed from New York, it didn't seem real.' He said it was a reminder that in the blink of an eye,

something very serious can happen in their line of He hoped people would take time to reflect on

where they were 20 years ago on this day and what they remember about that "Hopefully it will rejuve-

nate our country," he said.

## J.D. Carlson

Albert Lea Public Safety Director J.D. Carlson said he was working nights with the Albert Lea Police Department on 9/11 and remembers waking up and seeing the news of what had happened after he received a phone call.

After that, he sat in bed and was glued to the TV as he watched the news unfold.

That day also has a lot of significance because it was the evening he proposed to his then-girlfriend, Mindy. At that time, Carlson

said he was also still with a Marine Corps unit out of Waterloo, Iowa, and it was up in the air on when he would be activated. "That was kind of disheartening for the longest

time because it was an ar-

tillery unit and we were

expecting to go right away

and it kept getting delayed and pushed back with other units," he said. His unit was eventually called in 2005-'06 to Iraq. He previously served in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

Carlson said with the 20th anniversary of 9/11 this year, he can't help but think of the Marines who died in recent weeks in Afghanistan. Four or five of them were in their 20s.

They only have known life here during times of war — the global war on terrorism," he said.

His mind also shifts to those who were left in Afghanistan who were born in that same time period who've only ever known life in combat zones but who were able to enjoy freedoms that they never had prior to that. "Now to be in a country

and have that taken away, I can't imagine living that same way," he said. Carlson said he strug-

gled a bit with not being called to Afghanistan during his military service. He said he also had a difficult time leaving after his service, particularly in Iraq, knowing all the effort he and others put in while they were there and not knowing what would happen after they left. He said he has toured

the Twin Towers with close friends from the Bronx and went back in 2004 with family to view the devastation. "To see the devastation -

it's impactful," Carlson said.

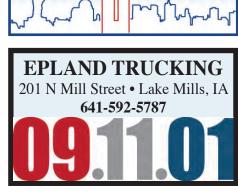






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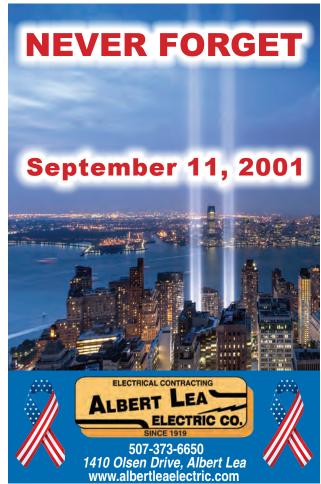




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## Covering 9/11 in the Tribune



The Tribune's front page from Sept. 12, 2001, is shown.

### MEMORIES

Continued from Front Page

the number, which she repeated and then watched as three others and herself tried to dial it. She stopped to find others to also call, and at one point had about 25 people calling his number.

"He is still saying it over and over again, 'My wife ... flight ... she thinks I'm dead. They're all dead. They're all dead," he said. "She is going to think I am dead.'

About 15 minutes later, in the distance, she said she heard a man make it through on the phone to the other man's wife and then run over to let the man

speak on the phone.

"The hysterical man grabs the phone as it is still in mid-air heading toward his ear and mouthed, 'Baby, baby, I'm here. I love you. I love you. I'm alive. I love you. I'm so sorry. I love

gatherers all cheered, clapped, whistled," Lease Way said. "Me, I clapped, cheered, fell down on my knees, feeling the rubble and stones smash my kneecaps and the goose bumps filled my being, tears of joy running down my ash-covered face, knowing right then and there nothing else really matters but the love we have for ourselves and the love we share with each other."

She said the day was a sad one in her life, but it was also a life-changing experience for her.

"On that day, we were all equal on the hectic avenues of downtown Manhattan," Lease Way said. "On that day, CEOs were equal to janitors — all trades, all financial classes were equal. It didn't matter in those hours what you did for a living or how much money you had. All that mattered was love and life.'

That same fall, she said she was working on assignment for the New York Times on a day suspected anthrax was mailed to the newspaper.

She said she was stopped at the front door by a security guard, who took her photo assignment and offered to bring it in for her. He warned her if she stepped into the building, she would be under 24-hour quarantine for anthrax. All of her co-workers were stuck on the fourth floor of the building.

"I walked away from that building that evening and never returned," she said. "I was filled with fear and anxiety."

The next day she applied for the photographer position at the Tribune in Albert Lea and moved out of Manhattan a month and a half later and came to Minnesota.

"Albert Lea and the beautiful people I met along the way will always hold a special place in my mind and heart," she said.

Lease Way now lives in Hudson Valley, New York, with her husband and two Dalmatians, Casey and

Cleo. "Every year I light white candles and put them in windows to honor those who have passed on and their families," she said.

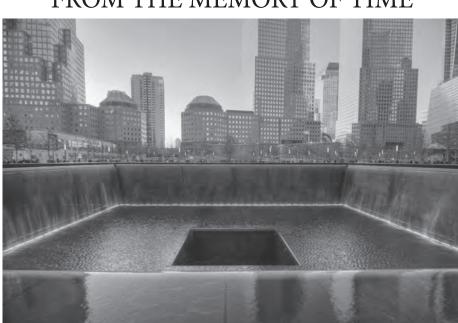
She also shares the story about the man on social media every year and has not yet missed a year.

## To forever remember



A memorial stands at the site of the World Trade Centers in New York where the towers collapsed after the worst terror attack on American soil. PROVIDED

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## TEACHERS

Continued from Front Page

a building," Haney said. "About a minute into watching, the first tower fell and my heart sank knowing that thousands of people had just died. My students were silent and respectful as they knew the gravity of the situation."

Heaney said she turned on the classroom TV just as the second plane crashed into the towers. She said she couldn't believe what she was seeing. She remembered going into the bathroom, shaking and saying a prayer for the country and for everyone involved.

The rest of the day was a lot different than any other normal day. Heaney said she had two different choir classes throughout the rest of the day and everyone was in shock. She said she gave her classes the option of singing or not, and everyone decided the music they were working one was an appropriate way of expressing their emotions at the time. Heaney said they sang, talked and tried to carry on the best

Haney said he kept the TV on in his classroom the rest of the day so he and his students could stay up to date on what was hap-

they could.

"It was hard for my students to comprehend what had just happened, just like it was hard for me to understand," Haney said.
"The questions they had were 'What happened? And 'Who would do this?' I did not have a good answer."

Both Haney and Fiscus compared it to the Pearl Harbor attacks. Fiscus talked about what was going through his head when he first saw the destruction.

"This was war," Fiscus said. "The only thing I could compare it to when I was talking to the kids was, this is what Pearl Harbor may have felt like for my grandparents ... Both towers had already been hit. We've been attacked. Life is going to be different from here on out."

Heaney, Fiscus and Haney all called the day one of the saddest in American history. After school practices and activities were canceled that day, allowing students and staff to be home and see their families.

"I remember just wanting to get home and hug my husband and kids," Heaney said. "They were little at the time and we tried not to scare them and limited what they saw on TV, but everyone knew something bad had happened."

Fiscus said he remembers how everyone came together in the days that followed the event.

"One of the neat changes was how patriotic everybody was," Fiscus said. "You couldn't find an American flag in any stores. That Halloween, the number one

costume was a firefighter." As part of the lesson plans on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Haney said stu-dents will be watching segments of survivors and family members of the victims talk about that day. He said it is important for students today to be taught about it because they were not alive when it happened and it's his job as an educator to make sure they know the story of that day.

In 2012, Haney was named the Minnesota History Teacher of the Year, which allowed him to study for a week with the curator of the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum. He said he heard multiple stories of bravery during his time there.

"If you get a chance, please go to New York City and spend a day at the (9/11) Museum and Memorial," Haney said. "It is one of the saddest places on earth, but so important that we remember the sacrifice of all the people, firefighters, police, soldiers, victims and survivors of the attack. History has to be remembered in its totality, the good and the bad. 9/11 was the worst day, but it must be remembered or we will forget the sacrifice of so many.'





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## Tribune staff reflect on where they were on 9/11

## The whirlwind felt on 9/11 from the airport

I was actually in the air when the first plane struck the World Trade Center. A co-worker and I were flying from Kentucky to a big meeting in New Orleans. with a connecting flight

in St. Louis. were supposed to leave with the rest of our group the day before, but we were tasked with revising our presenta-



tion. So after about four hours of sleep. we boarded an early morning flight on Sept. 11 with the final presentation in hand. LittÎe did we know that we would never give that presentation. When we landed in St. Louis, our only thoughts were to grab a quick breakfast and make our connecting flight. As we walked through the concourse, we saw a group of people looking up at a TV with shocked expressions, so we stopped to see what was happening. And as we watched, the second plane struck. From that moment on, it was like we had entered the Twilight Zone. All outgoing flights were canceled, so we knew we weren't going to make it to New Orleans. Thanks to quick thinking on the part of a co-worker back in the office, she secured a rental car so we could drive back home to Louisville. We had to leave our luggage behind, as no checked luggage was being released in case one contained something dangerous. As we made our way through the airport to our rental car, we saw numerous armed guards with search dogs walking through the crowds of stranded travelers. That was a scary sight. When

we finally were leaving the airport in our rental

car, an image of the air-

port tarmac packed with

airplanes three and four

five-hour drive back home, we were immersed in radio news reports as the events of the day unfolded. We prayed for those who lost their lives, and we thanked God that we would be with our families very soon. Our co-workers who were in New Orleans were not so fortunate. They weren't able to get back home until five days later. I am still thankful that I was not part of that group. — Terri Green

## **Feelings of** shock and tears as events played out

The morning of this tragic event we both went to work as usual. Jack owned his own business and was working from home and watching the morning news, when they broke in when the towers were

hit. Jack was numb and shocked. Watched every minute and couldn't believe it.

Donna Werner I had just gotten

work at the Midtown Liquor just before 8 and turned on the TV in my office. The news broke in and showed the towers being hit. It was unbelievable.

Tears came to my eyes and I called Jack. My thoughts turned to

those that ran from fear and the heroes risking their lives for others.

I WILL NEVER FORGET 9/11--2001

— Donna Werner

## Stop the press!

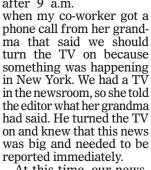
On Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, I was still a "newbie" at the Albert Lea Tribune with just a little over five months under my belt. Back then, we had an afternoon paper so our deadline to go to print was 9 a.m. When I would come into work at 8 a.m., the newsroom staff

everything up before the deadline, and it was common knowledge that you did not bother them with anything until after the deadline

an emergency or pertinent to the that issue was going to press. I believe

that it was just a little after 9 a.m.





At this time, our newspaper was still printed in Austin, so the editor (or maybe the publisher) got on the phone and literally said "Stop the press!" It took several hours to get information on what was actually going on, but once they had it, they changed the headline and front page story and reprinted it. Our Tribune phones were ringing off the hook because the papers were very late. It turned into one of those "hard to work days" between answering the phones and wanting to watch the TV and waiting for information from the editor as he received it.

Michelle Rasmussen

### From the eyes of a fourth grader

On Sept. 11, 2001, I was in fourth grade at Northwood-Kensett elementary school. I was in Mr. Park's classroom, but the day hadn't officially started when the first tower was hit around 7:45 a.m.

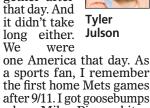
I remember a lot of that day was spent watching the news in our room. Being fourth graders, we were right on that line of being able to grasp what was happening, and I was grateful for the opportunity to keep up with what was going on. Like many people, I

thought it was a tragic accident at first, but then I remember watching the TV as the second plane hit. I remember just being very confused. Being so young, my

classmates and I had never really been exposed to acts of war and terrorism. In a way, prior to 9/11, we were all very much blind to events around the world. As a fourth grader, you rarely, if ever, think about what's happening outside of your personal world, let alone on the other side of the globe in countries you've probably never heard of. 9/11 changed that. From that day forward, I

remember constantly being worried about what was happening in the Middle East. Could it happen again? Where would the next attack be? Not things your average fourth grader should have to worry about.

On the flip side, I On remember seeing how the nation came together after that day. And it didn't take long either.



a sports fan, I remember the first home Mets games after 9/11. I got goosebumps when Mike Piazza hit a home run late in the game to put the Mets over the top, and the stadium went wild.

It's crazy to think about how our lives were forever changed after that day. Of course, the decades-long war that followed comes to mind, but what about how people traveled? I had never flown on a plane before then, but I couldn't imagine not going through TSA before a flight.

Is 9/11 something I still think about on a daily basis? No. But when I do think about that day, it brings back so many feelings and memories. Even to this day, watching videos of the planes crashing into the buildings makes my stomach drop a little bit. Hearing all the stories from the loved ones of people who were lost that

is always sad to hear, but I also think it's important we remember them by sharing their stories every year.

— Tyler Julson

## A day to never forget

As I was seated in the middle of my 12th-grade Advanced Placement English class in high school, a woman knocked on the door of our classroom and explained that something horrible had happened.

We were in one of the two trailers-turned-classrooms at the school.

The woman told us that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center's north tower, and my teacher, Mrs. Pufko, turned on the TV.

A senior in high school, I wasn't quite sure what to think.

I don't think I had much time to think, actually, because shortly after we turned on the TV, another plane crashed into the

We sat in silence as we watched.

The memories that follow are kind of a blur. I can't remember how long we sat there like that or if we watched the footage in any of our other classes. I can't remember if we watched footage after the plane crashed into the Pentagon just a few hours away or the plane crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

All I can remember to this day is the uneasy feeling I had in my stomach as we went on with the rest of

The next day, I remember telling my dad, the most avid of the newspaper readers in our home, that I wanted to keep the copy of our local paper, The Roanoke Times, that day.

I knew it was going to be something I wanted documented.

I pull that paper out periodically to remind me what took place. Sarah Stultz





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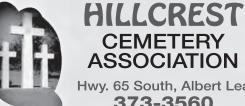


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