

82 A Day to Remember – September 11, 2001

By David Cochran

Tuesday, September 11, 2001 is one of those days we shall never forget. Most people can tell you where they were when they heard the news that the two planes struck the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. They likely remember the plane going down in Shanksville, PA, and a fourth plane striking the Pentagon. So much happened in such an unexpected way in such a short time that morning that it was almost too much to comprehend.

So much happened in such an unexpected way in such a short time that morning that it was almost too much to comprehend. It was such a crystal-clear blue sky in Blawenburg and much of the Northeast, a perfect September day. The juxtaposition of the beautiful weather being pierced by horrible attacks on our country made the events seem surreal. The days that followed were equally unsettling, as we learned that so many people perished in these attacks.

This September 11 marks the 21st anniversary of what has become known as 911. Communities across the country, especially in the Northeast, will gather at memorials to remember those who were killed in the attacks and those heroic first responders who rescued so many, some at the sacrifice of their own lives.

There are two 911 memorials in Montgomery Township, one at Veteran's Park, and the other at the Blawenburg Fire Department (Montgomery Fire Department #2).



The 911 Memorial at Blawenburgh Fire Station

The Blawenburgh memorial shown above holds a piece of steel from the World Trade Center on a granite pillar. At the top, it says “Never forget”. Below it is a logo for the New York Fire Department, Station 343. At its base is the identifying number of the World Trade Center steel piece which is at the top of the pillar.

Overall, 412 emergency workers were included in the death toll of 2,977 at the New York site on that infamous day. Three Montgomery residents and one Rocky Hill resident also died in the 911 attacks – Brian Thomas Cummins, Steven Goldstein, Philip L. Parker, and William F. Fallon.



That Memorable Day

My memories of the day include being mesmerized by what I was seeing on TV. We had an electrician doing work on our house, and he and I just sat in shock seeing the events unfold. Later that day I went to the top of Grandview Road, where it had been said for years that you could see the twin towers in NYC on a clear day. It was very clear, and what I could see was smoke rising in the distance. This made the event seem very real.

Later that day, I was teaching a technology class at Georgian Court College in Lakewood. I had a Turkish exchange student in my class. As soon as he entered the class, he started telling us in a very emotional voice that he was Muslim and that what happened was not how believers in Islam were supposed to act. Indeed, this action was done by extremists who had a much different interpretation of Islam than the Muslims I know.

Blawenburg Victim



The 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center in New York

Phil Parker was the only Blawenburg resident to perish that day. Ironically, he worked for Cantor Fitzgerald in their Philadelphia office. That day, however, he was visiting the New York office and was among the 658 of the firm's employees who were killed. A memorial service for Phil, led by Rev. Richard Van Doren at Blawenburg Church, was held on October 5, 2001, and over 550 people attended. Like all the other victims, Phil is remembered at the World Trade Center Memorial. His name and location are: Philip Lacey Parker, S-61.

As events unfolded after the event, Blawenburg Church became a collection point to help families affected by the tragedy. Over \$60,000 in goods and cash were collected and distributed.

Remembering 911

Much has happened since 911. Children born on or just after 911 are in college or beginning their careers. America's longest war, which was fought in Afghanistan began because of these attacks, just ended in 2021. Another "war" of Russian aggression is being waged in Ukraine, and there is a lot of division within our own country.

When all is said and done, our country with its democratic principles and freedom is a fragile institution. Any number of people and events can cause damage to our way of life. We certainly learned that from 911. It is important for all of us to remember that these attacks on democracy can and do happen from inside and outside our country. It is up to us to stand against terrorism and assaults to this great nation that was founded on democratic principles almost 250 years ago. One way to do this is to remember the saying on the 911 memorial in Blawenburg. Let us "never forget". And we can do more than that. We need to recognize tyranny when we see it and support candidates, whether they be Democrat, Republican, or Independent who will remember our nation's values and will act in Congress to maintain and improve on our freedoms. If we don't do that, then we're at the mercy of extremists and those whose personal agendas supersede the values of the nation.

Where were you when you learned about the 911 attacks?
Write your memory in the comment section of this blog.

Facts

1. A plaque naming the contributors to the 911 monument in Blawenburg is also at the firehouse site.



2. It is believed that more people have died from the toxic effects of the collapsed towers within the following 20 years than from the actual attack. These victims suffered from the toxic after effects such as cancer and other malignancies from inhaling toxic fumes.
3. Following the 20th anniversary of 911, Rebecca Koblin wrote a good article in the Montgomery News about the events in Montgomery, including comments from local people.
<https://www.themontynews.org/single-post/monty-firefighters-remember-911-terrorist-attacks>
4. You can find the memorial location of all victims of the 911 attack in New York at:
<https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/honoring-the-fallen-full-list-of-names-of-the-9-11-victims>.
5. Shortly after 911, US authorities confirmed that that Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda organization were responsible for the attacks. The UK drew the same conclusion. It took a decade to find and kill Osama bin Laden.

Sources

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Pictures

Blawenburg fire station monument – D. Cochran

Twin towers attacked – Sara Schwittek, various sources on the Internet

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