

How did 9/11 touch your life?

My thoughts instantly directed to my two young sons. Questions they might have: What would they know, understand, feel about this horrific incident? Aware that the world changed significantly forever, I contemplated how this new threat to us, our country, our peace would impact their innocent hearts, brains, loves, lives. Would they embrace fear or bravery? Would they withstand paranoia or tolerance? Would they have the chance to experience any rightful life ahead, as we all had been blessed and privileged with until that despairingly fateful morning? I pray(ed) fervently for their well-being, safety and shelter from all undeserved hostility.

Roger H. Weiss
SAIC, Technical Integration Specialist
ISS Payloads Office

Last September, I was a student anticipating joining the NASA team. When the Boeing 767 struck the first of the Twin Towers, I was in shock then fear. When the second plane hit, the future I had imagined so many times disappeared. The entire country united that day with one common goal: To protect our lives and our freedom. As I talked with the other engineering students about to graduate, all we could wonder is: What does this mean for the future? Do we need to join the military, start working in industry to build new weapons or something else?

Lisa A. Tidwell
NASA, Cooperative Education Student
Office of Public Affairs

Shock, dismay, unbelievable anger, then a gut-wrenching sorrow that brought tears. Knowing those who died would not be the last. Even now this is almost impossible to write about. The hot flash of righteous anger still burns at those that could destroy instead of build. Just look around here on site and see all of the friendly smiles and handshakes, with what has been accomplished and what we will accomplish in the future, then tell me that good will not triumph over evil.

Bill Holmes Jr.
RJV, Production Manager
Structural Engineering Division

9/11 was the first time adults and children of the United States had the fear of the unknown since the Bay of Pigs in the 1960s. Would it be like it was in World War II, when families were separated never to see or touch their loved ones again? Slowly, we have returned to "normal," but we still have the ache and fear in our hearts for the next time. Only with the prayers of God's children will this nation continue to stand and be the land of the free. "God Bless America."

Sharyn Lee Willis
NASA, Travel Claims Group Lead
FMD/GBTech

9/11 touched all of our lives! We may not have known the men and women personally who died, but our hearts ached for those lost and their families. My son, a Marine Reservist, was in school that tragic day. He received a call from his unit that they were being called up. He and others in his unit had to drop out of their college semester to serve. I might add, they were glad to do it... anything to protect our country!

Truda Furr
NASA, Human Resources Specialist
Human Resources Office

At first it seemed so unreal that no one quite understood what they were seeing. Those of us who were military veterans thought that we were watching the start of another war (and so we were). Fear and total confusion gripped the room. But, the real fear set in when we heard the Center was shutting down and that we must all leave immediately. Suddenly, the horror we had been watching came to our doorsteps! I have not felt fear like that since my first day in Viet Nam. I just didn't know what was going to happen now.

Jack Baston
SAIC, Internet Applications Developer
Mission Operations Directorate

On 9/11 a coworker called and told me a plane flew into the World Trade Center. I saw that the TV was on in the hall just as the second plane hit the south tower. I saw by the banking of the plane at impact that we were witnessing a mass terrorist act. I got on the phone with my brother in New York who works uptown and travels to the WTC for meetings. He lost several hundred from his company, in the north tower, and three on a plane. We are lucky his two kids still have a dad.

John D. McKenna
United Space Alliance, Cargo Avionics
and Software Engineer
Operations Division

I am grateful to live in a country whose government respects and protects individual liberties but whose governmental design allows it to deal effectively with such cowardly acts. I am grateful for a President and other leaders who had the resolve to use the law enforcement and military resources of our country to send a powerful message to terrorists and the world that our system will not be undermined. I am grateful for our emergency responders and to our military for executing their roles and assignments thoroughly and without hesitation. I am grateful to be an American.

Wilber R. Boykin
NASA, Chief Information Officer
Program Integration Office

The week of 9/11 found me in Forsyth, Missouri, with my parents, two sisters and a niece. On television they cut to the first tower in flames. We watched in shock as the second plane crashed into the other tower. Our thoughts were of those innocent people in the towers who didn't know what was happening. As we returned to Texas, American flags were flying everywhere. In a small Arkansas town at dusk, people were gathered by the highway holding candles and waving flags. I've never been more proud and thankful for living in such a great, caring country.

Lori Wheaton
IMPASS, Protocol Coordinator
Office of Public Affairs

It is beyond my comprehension how people could be so filled with hate. They boarded planes full of people they had never laid eyes on before. They used those unsuspecting people in carrying out plans to crash into buildings filled with other unsuspecting people, whom they also

had never laid eyes on before. Being so consumed with hatred that you are willing to die in the name of it, and take people you do not know with you, is beyond my comprehension.

Lela T. Walker
Kelsey-Seybold, Quality Assurance Coordinator
Environmental Health Laboratory

The 9/11 attack made me feel vulnerable and somewhat afraid. I realized that like other countries having terror in their own cities, we are now on the list. Never again will we be 100 percent safe. We now know that we have enemies who mean us great harm. The 9/11 event has made me feel great sorrow for New York City. I think they must worry daily about when the next terrorist attack will occur, but I know in my heart that if we pray for our leaders, God's blessing will make the USA a safe and great nation again.

Phillip W. Good
Lockheed Martin, Associate Engineer
Space and Life Sciences Division

We had returned to our small, rural western England hotel in mid-afternoon, at the very moment the attacks on New York and Washington had begun. From our isolation, we would watch the entire attack on CNN. The British people sensed our needs, and responded in a magnificent fashion to meet them all: Lodging, transportation, medicines, whatever we needed. Attending services at Westminster Abbey, we saw tears of sympathy from our fellow worshipers. Although we have been to England many times, this was the time when we truly got to know the real English people. We will always cherish this memory.

Humboldt C. Mandell, Jr., Ph.D.
NASA, Advanced Development Office
Engineering Directorate

I concluded, in my youth, the military in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, must've been negligent, allowing the Japanese to fly into history undetected, thinking it was an American bomber formation. I just knew if I was there, I would have done better, recognizing this was an attack on America! I stand humbled. I missed it, too, on September 11th. We need to recognize that we are vulnerable to attack, despite our wish to be safe and secure. We must be vigilant, and never waiver in our faith in God, our respect for life and our duty to expunge evil.

Thomas E. Diegelman
NASA, Technology Account Manager
Technology Transfer and Commercialization Office

My life was touched by the comfort and condolences that other countries gave us. 9/11 taught me that we are deeply hated; but more importantly, it taught me that we are genuinely loved.

Laurie Y. Carrillo
NASA, Planetary Scientist
Space and Life Sciences Directorate

I was in California on ISS business when I awoke just in time to see the second plane crash. The disbelief and bewilderment is indescribable. It was nearly impossible to perform the audit paperwork that day while the images of death and destruction were displayed on a huge screen in our work area. I regretted being stranded 1,600 miles away from my wife and 9-year-old son in such disturbing times.

E-mail and telephone alleviated some of the sense of isolation and helplessness. I focused on the fact that my son's father was going to return home; many other fathers weren't.

Del A Murphy
GHG Corp., H/W Quality Engineer
ISS Safety and Mission Assurance

I thought the plane that hit the first Twin Tower was a Cessna, not a 767. My father-in-law was traveling through Pennsylvania at the time of the crash there. I was sent home and I was alone. I turned on the TV to get the latest scoop. My mother-in-law told me my father-in-law was all right and that no relatives in D.C. were hurt. I was so worried that Houston was going to be next. I was so glad when my husband and daughter came home. I never felt so helpless in my life.

Stacey E. Morrison
NASA, Deputy CIO
Space and Life Sciences Directorate

We became the leader of the world when Communism failed. 9/11 goes beyond my urge of retaliation. President Bush believes, "America is such a force for good around the world, yet we hear messages from other nations that they don't see what the American people see in our country." Why do other nations see us as arrogant, self-indulgent, hypocritical, inattentive and unwilling or unable to engage in cross-cultural dialogue? Waving flags and killing more terrorists will not erase 9/11. We need to be more pragmatic in dealing with the needs of all people, not just those in the United States.

David M. Leung
NASA, Thermal Engineer
Space Station Unpressurized Elements

After coordinating the "Remember the Children Toy Drive" with local businesses, I drove to New York to deliver the toys. The authorities took me into Ground Zero to see the devastation. A police officer started asking me detailed questions about the Toy Drive. Seeing my puzzled look, he explained that the workers wanted to hear details about other people working to benefit the victims. Yes, the Toy Drive benefited the children whose parents were killed. Unexpectedly, it also helped by giving the workers another positive story. You never know how your "good deed" effort will impact unforeseen people.

Mark McDonald
NASA, Project Manager
Biomedical Systems Division

Although a graduation I was to attend was rescheduled, I definitely think 9/11 was a graduation, which reinforced two things for me. First, we all have a short time here on Earth. So, we better work to release all the distractions of the world, get grounded in who we are and determine what our passions in life are (what gives us life/energy/grace while we are here) and pursue them. Second, I think 9/11 reinforced a lesson from Mother Teresa who, when asked if she got discouraged in her work, said it was her job to be "faithful, not successful."

Kimberly L. Grayson
NASA, Project Control Assistant
Automation, Robotics and Simulation Division

I was in Salt Lake City supporting the Benefits of Space Exhibit when I watched the second plane slam into the second tower. All I could think of at the time was the lives snuffed and wondering where it was going to end. However, my solo drive home from Salt Lake City allowed me to see the response of small towns and cities all across Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Red, white and blue were everywhere. This reaffirmed what I knew in my heart – America is strengthened whenever challenged by adversity. Eagles soar when storms threaten.

Ron Montague
NASA, Safety Engineer
JSC Safety and Test Operations Division

I did not lose anyone that I know in 9/11, though a friend escape Tower II before it fell. His story brought this disaster home to me and I went to NYC to pay my respects. When I landed in the city, I felt affection for the people. New Yorkers are so strong, so resilient and yet so vulnerable. A native New Yorker took me to Ground Zero and we were allowed onto the viewing platform early one morning. Alone on the platform, we prayed and cried. Though scarred, I felt an aura of protection and healing around the site.

Judith Sanders
NASA, Human Resource Development Representative
Human Resource Development Office

I am a NY native. My sister works for the NYC Department of Corrections. 9/11 started normally. My sister and I try to wish each other a good day if there's time. She e-mailed stating a small plane just hit the South Tower. My brother Joe was flying out of NYC. At the time I did not know if he was on any of those hijacked planes. Late in the evening I heard from my frantic sister, who had just witnessed both towers collapsing and bodies falling from the towers. As for Joe, I got word his plane was rerouted.

Marie Lopes
MEI, BL/Science & Analysis Procurement

Terror no longer exists in my life. It was killed on 9/11 by those who wanted my life to suffocate in it. I don't even call the perps that t-word anymore. I don't even use the word. Now, they're just "enemies" or "thugs." They're not pro-anything; they are anti-civilization. After raising kids and helping others raise theirs, it's all too easy to recognize just another form of manipulative aggression, extortion and blackmail by immature persons. Absolute resistance – with wisdom and, sometimes, force – is the only remedy. So I continue to work on the ground floor of a high-rise.

Martin Maier
Anteon Corporation, Program Manager
JSC Export Services Team

After working in building 32A for 15 years, our group was transferred to the NBL. That morning (9/11) as we were packing, our television in the break room revealed the horror that took place that day. During the rest of the week as we moved, we had forgotten how sad we were to be leaving building 32A. The last day that we finished packing, we turned out the lights and the only light that was on was in the break room. It was eerie to see the light and think about what had happened that day in the break room.

Bruce E. Adams
Johnson Engineering, Neutral Buoyancy Lab
Office Manufacturing Lead
Sonny Carter Training Facility

I am still in complete disbelief that such a thing could happen in "the Land of the Free." I have realized that "Culture Matters!" I mean the way of thinking, way of life and way of worship matters. Life would never be the same. There was a time when people were trusted. I am convinced that any society that ignores the fundamental

principles of harmonious society – i.e., democracy, empowerment of women and life-oriented education of masses – is bound to breed terrorists, religious fanatics, autocrats and will deprive the people of their most fundamental right, that is, freedom!

Nikhil Mehta
Barrios Technology, Inc., Senior Systems Analyst
VMDB Team

I mages of a thousand voices crying out together one last time remain lodged in my mind. The absolute devastation and merciless waste of precious human life makes one reflect on the misguided emphasis placed on superficial and insignificant concerns. What's really important is making opportunities to tell spouses, family, friends and neighbors how we feel – too often we take for granted others know we care. And what's really important is patriotism, not just during times of crisis, but a real sense of nationalism, which inspires us all to be, feel and act "American" everyday. Keep waving those flags, USA!

Major Tony Smith
NASA, Deputy Director
DoD Human Spaceflight Payloads

How do I forget such sadness and loss? How do I forgive such evil? How do I begin to understand the irrational behavior of my own species? I can never forget, but I try not to hate as they did. September 11th has made me realize how very precious every moment is! It's made me more "aware" and, yes, it has introduced an element of fear for the unpredictable. Thankfully, it offers the opportunity with my children and friends to discuss the "one constant" who has, and will always be, there for us for comfort and peace, our Heavenly Father.

S. Kelley Williams
GHG, Travel Coordinator, Move Coordinator
& IRM Corp. Rep. for Independent Assurance

9/10 is my parents' anniversary and my younger sister's birthday. 9/11 was always just "the day after." Now though, it's taken on a whole new meaning. So this year, like so many before, on 9/10 I will send good wishes to my family. I will also thank my lucky stars for still having loved ones to send wishes to. On 9/11, I will be thinking of those whose loved ones perished. And along with those thoughts, I will again thank my lucky stars for having been able to send wishes "the day before."

Vicki Haxethorne
IMPASS, Imagery Cataloger
Spaceflight Imagery Review Facility

I have served for 29 years as a paramedic in a local volunteer EMS organization and I am part of that community, so the loss of Fire and EMS folks at the WTC really hit home. One of my fellow paramedics was picked to go to the WTC site after 9/11 as a medic for two weeks. Her personal recounting of events there and her photos were simply astounding. She brought back so many uplifting stories of the human effort there that one could not help but be touched and feel a renewed faith in the American Spirit.

Alfred B. Mercier
United Space Alliance, Senior Software Specialist
Spaceflight Training Division

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