

The 9/11 tragedy was meant for evil but it turned out to be good for Americans. This tragedy brought this country to a new focus and a bonding of Spirits. We became that "One nation under God with liberty and justice for all." I saw such an outpouring of love among races, colors and creeds. We were no longer fighting among ourselves but for our country. America will always be the land that I love.

*Julia A. Belton  
SAIC, Senior Mechanical Technician  
Receiving, Inspection, Testing Facility*

I grew up in New York City. I saw the Twin Towers built. I was in New York City in July 2001. I stood between the towers at night, leaned my head back and marveled at the sight. I didn't take an elevator ride to the top of the towers during that trip. Why? I had been up there once before and they'd always be around. I could have lost a dozen people that I grew up with that day. They were just lucky that they were somewhere else. I'll never take anything for granted again.

*John J. Zipay  
NASA, Systems Engineer  
Space Launch Initiative Project Office*

We were at a vendor plant in Pennsylvania for a Critical Design Review just 90 miles from New York City when events began to unfold. It was difficult to concentrate on the remainder of the meeting. It was hard to believe all that was happening as we watched the news reports that night. We had our rental car and made the fortunate decision not to turn it back in. The car was a bright green Ford Mustang. We made arrangements to drive the Mustang back to Houston. The three-day drive down the East Coast was very nice.

*George Fletcher  
GHG Corporation, Senior System Safety Engineer  
Safety & Mission Assurance*

I first heard about the tragedy on the way to work. My wife called and told me the unbelievable story about airplanes hitting buildings. My first response, besides shock, was to pray; pray for the victims, their families. Also to pray for the President. My most earnest prayer was that many people in this nation would come together in a turning back to God, our only hope and strength. I am thankful that we have a President who is not ashamed to claim a dependence on God, and called upon Him to help our nation in this time of tragedy.

*Alex Quinones  
GHG Corporation, Software Engineering  
Technical Lead /CSOC  
Mission Operations Directorate*

As I was watching the replays of the planes running into the WTC towers, I heard a loud boom. I looked out the window to see a billow of smoke rising from the Pentagon. Still in shock from watching the news, I had a feeling of disbelief, panic and fear running through me all at once. Volunteers with medical/first-aid experience were asked to get on a bus to render aid to those wounded. Being on the site was numbing to the body and mind. I will never forget that day.

*Christopher M. Boenker  
Johnson Engineering, Dive Operations Tech 1  
Neutral Buoyancy Lab*

I realized my perception of my and my family's safety was obviously naive. I saw something I knew: That the strength, will and fortitude of the American people will, even in times of horrific tragedy, forever be the envy of the world. However, on a more personal level, the method the terrorists used seared the daylight out of me. I am a commercial airline pilot's wife. Fortunately, he was home at the time. When the planes started flying again, I had to pull myself up by my bootstraps, kiss my husband goodbye and be strong for myself and my family.

*Karen Walsemann  
NASA, International Training Engineer  
Mission Operations Directorate*

Since the unforgettable day of September 11, I have changed my life to be more appreciative to what time God has given us. My patriotism has grown. A tear is shed when I hear the National Anthem. My family and I have turned to the church. I've regained appreciation for the small details that used to go unnoticed. I don't have much, but I have realized that I have more than most. This has prompted me to make the most out of my life and to give as much as I can to better someone else's life.

*Rita Ann Alaniz  
Johnson Engineering, Program Data  
Administrator  
Space and Life Sciences Directorate*

Flight Control Teams were involved in simulations and real-time support of ISS ops. We were mulling over what to do with the simulation when we got word of the Pentagon being hit. Our decision was easy...terminate the activity. I then spent time conferring with JSC management about vacating the MCC. There were no known threats; however, we quietly and efficiently moved the operation. The look in the eyes of the team was one expressing defiance of what was done to our country and a determination that we were going to continue to do our job and do it well!

*J. Milt Hefflin  
NASA, Chief  
Flight Director Office*

I couldn't keep the quiver out of my voice when I told 150 STEP students, including (future Center Director) Lt. Gen. Jefferson Davis Howell, Jr., the nation was under attack. We started class before the story broke so no one had a clue. The looks on their faces will be with me forever. None of us will be that naive again. I watched Gen. Howell change from genial Program Manager to soldier as I spoke. Center Director Roy Estess, Bill Parsons and the rest did an outstanding job responding - especially since this wasn't expected. I feel more comfortable knowing the General's in charge if anything else should happen.

*Stacey A. Menard  
NASA, Safety and Test  
Operations Division*

They say the whole is more than just the sum of its parts; but for me, with respect to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, these parts were the very defining essence of New York City and the place that I call home. I was born in Brooklyn, in the shadow of these futuristic steel titans, and worked there for many years. Now the fond memories of friends, coworkers, and old schoolmates are forever

tarnished by an act of hatred. A piece of my past has been violently ripped away, and nothing can undo this.

*Wayne Matrejek  
United Space Alliance, Computer Science Staff  
Flight Avionics Division*

I was at Mission Control supporting ISS operations that morning as an Ops Planner. I had come off the overnight shift when the towers were hit. I hastily left to get home. The Pentagon was hit as I was driving. I received a call later saying I was critical to operations and I would have to come in to MCC that night. Before I left that evening, my young daughter asked, "Daddy, if you go to work, will your building be on fire, too?" I remember that was a very, very long drive in from Friendswood that night.

*Christopher E. Leslie  
United Space Alliance, ISS/Operations Planner  
Mission Operations Directorate*

In the grand scheme of life, this terrible tragedy might teach us the value of time, our lives, loved ones and freedom. Policemen and firefighters displayed the grit that heroes are made of on 9/11. Their bravery allowed them to treat others with respect and kindness. Respect and kindness to each other eliminates the negativity that sometimes surrounds us. It takes less energy to be positive. Energy that is used to be unkind or negative is reflected back on the person. Remember: what touches me, touches you.

*Bobbie Walsh  
Kelsey-Seybold, Registered Nurse  
Kelsey-Seybold Clinic*

Watching the Twin Towers fall to Earth crushed more than metal, glass and helpless human flesh. It flattened both my sense of a planable future and my ability to delay dreams. I moved closer (physically and emotionally) to my family. I ended a five-year relationship that stimulated no growth in either of us. I traveled extensively to experience diverse cultures - airplane flights are much less frightening than the road rage on the Gulf Freeway! When tomorrow comes I will be financially prepared, but I now actively strive to fulfill the longings of my "future" before I sleep each night.

*Michael E. Evans  
NASA  
Flight Design Requirements and Integration Office*

The events of September 11, 2001, made me realize how very precious life is, how very much I love my country and how very proud I am to be an American! It also made me realize that one never knows what may occur tomorrow, next week or next year. However, whatever does occur, I believe that each and every one of us is now prepared to fight for our country in an effort to preserve what we enjoy as Americans every day - our very precious freedom!!

*Laura L. Jackson  
NASA, Secretary to Sharon Delp  
Projects Procurement*

If it was possible, 9/11 made my 3-year-old daughter even more precious to me. I wanted to immediately surround myself with my family, to look them in the eye and reassure myself that my little corner of the world was "OK." Clichéd as it sounds by now, it renewed in me a fierce pride of being an American, and all the blessings that entails. Amongst those blessings are the many freedoms we as American

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