

September 11, 2001

It was a beautifully clear late summer morning. Throughout the country people were beginning their daily routine. The disparate lives that were destined to share this horrifying event were preoccupied with the tasks of everyday life. For some people, it was the ordinary commute, catching trains, trying to get an early start on crowded highways. For others it was waiting for school buses on the first day of school or trips to the airport for vacations in faraway places -- perhaps combining business and pleasure. At least one couple was beginning a second honeymoon.



The greatest concern for the Secretary of the State's Office was the municipal primaries that were taking place that day. Everything seemed perfectly normal, the way it seemed to have always been. Then everything changed. It changed in such a profound way that it would never be quite the same again.

While the world was unaware, four transcontinental flights were commandeered by terrorists and a day of horror had begun. At 8:46 a.m., American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center. The news spread very quickly, but in a disjointed manner. The shock was universal. People stopped what they were doing and wondered at such a terrible accident. Then at 9:04 a.m., a second airplane, United Airlines Flight 175, crashed into the second tower. As unbelievable as it seemed, it was clear that this could not be an accident.

The World Trade Center

Both towers were now on fire and we watched in shocked silence as the first efforts to evacuate the building and fight the fires began. We were transfixed by what was happening before our eyes and our hearts were heavy with worry for the safety of the thousands in those buildings and hundreds who were working to save them.

At 9:38 a.m., while reporters and television crews were arriving at the Pentagon seeking information on the attack on the World Trade Center, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into that building, within site of the United States Capitol. A stunned nation struggled to comprehend what was happening. Later, we learned that only minutes before the attack on the Pentagon, United Airlines Flight 93 was also hijacked. We cannot know with certainty the intended target, but we do know that because of the courage and selflessness of the passengers on that airplane, the final attack failed. The last of the hijacked airplanes crashed at a rural site in Pennsylvania near the town of Shanksville.

As the day wore on, the skies over New York, Washington and rural Pennsylvania turned black with smoke. Placed at a distance, there was little that most of us could do other than watch and pray. Then the unthinkable, first one and then the second tower of the World Trade Center collapsed while thousands were still trapped inside. The towers that had been the most prominent elements of the New York skyline crumbled into the streets crowded with firemen, police, emergency response workers, and ordinary people desperately trying to escape. Survivors ran from the scene driven by falling debris and billowing clouds of gritty gray dust. The nightmarish images permanently etched into the memories of all who saw it.

For the next several days we were victims of what we did not know. We listened to stories of miraculous survival, but more often what we heard was the anguish of the families, friends and coworkers desperately seeking some word from or about a loved one, hoping against hope that more survivors would be found. For a precious few, it proved to be the case, but for most, the waiting dragged on painfully as hope slowly died.



The Pentagon

But in our time of shock and sorrow, something truly remarkable happened. In the days and weeks following the attack, the nation was galvanized and united in purpose. The response to the events of that day were immediate as people from every walk of life and from around the world expressed their caring in countless selfless acts. The outpouring of generosity and the willingness to help were deeply moving. Faced with unspeakable pain, it gave us a reason to feel better about our world. We know of the heroism of the firemen, police, and emergency medical personnel, but we have also heard innumerable stories of ordinary citizens volunteering to help in whatever way they could. Some brought food, others brought basic tools and supplies such as work gloves and bottled water, or simply showed up to work side by side with the other volunteers. There were no distinctions based on race, religion, age, or ability. The only question asked was "How can I help?"



Tribute in Light

The days wore into weeks and now a year. It is said that time heals all wounds, but the recovery has been slow and who can help but wonder if the wounds, actual or emotional, will ever heal or merely become numb over time. Only a few short months ago, bodies of victims were still being recovered from the World Trade Center site. With each discovery came a fresh wave of grief. We have seen the quiet dignity with which each body was treated as it was carried from the site. Even now, when that recovery work has ended and repair of the Pentagon has been completed, relatives and loved ones, friends and neighbors still look for something that will bring their uncertainty to an end.

In the final analysis, we will not be judged for what we suffered as individuals, a people, or a country, but by the manner in which we grieved; in the way we responded to horror and extended our helping hands to our neighbors; in the way in which we endured tragedy and began at once to rebuild. We will be measured by our strength, our belief in the greatness of our country, our faith in something greater than ourselves, and the ideals that make the United States of America an example for all the world.

It is difficult to find a word that could encompass or describe the attack and what followed, so it is referred to simply as September 11 -- a day that transformed our country and the world. This dedication is made not only to the victims, their families and loved ones, but also to the police, firemen, emergency medical technicians, doctors, nurses, laborers, and the

ordinary people who wept and grieved and gave in whatever way they could. It is to all of these, with a conflicting collection of emotions -- sadness and anger, respect and outrage, grief and admiration -- that I dedicate the 2002 Edition of the Connecticut State Register and Manual. I pray that we will never see another dedication like it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Susan Bysiewicz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S".

Susan Bysiewicz
Secretary of the State