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Connecting September 9, 2021

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Colleagues,

Good Thursday morning on this Sept. 9, 2021,

With the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks two days away, today's Connecting welcomed an influx of memories from you and your colleagues on your memories of where you were on that day.

Not many newsletters are fortunate enough to have a stable of journalists like you – and if you have yet to share your story, please send it along today for use in Friday's edition.

We lead today's issue with a touching story by **Emilio Morenatti**, AP's chief photographer for Spain and the winner of the 2021 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography.

Emilio lost a leg in 2009 in southern Afghanistan in a blast that severely injured a U.S. soldier, **Freddie de los Santos**, who also lost a leg. They were both treated at Walter

Reed National Military Medical Center - the soldier and the photographer. It is a beautifully done story and I hope you take time to read it.

Wear a size XXL or Small polo shirt? Adam Yeomans ([Email](#)) shipped out more than 60 of the snappy AP 175th anniversary polo shirts ordered by colleagues but has one of each size left. Drop him a note if interested. Proceeds went to AP Emergency Relief Fund.

Have a great day – be safe, stay healthy!

Paul

Photographer, his leg lost, seeks answers from Paralympians



By **EMILIO MORENATTI**

When I last saw Freddie de los Santos, his mouth was ravaged -- his teeth had been blown away by the same blast that took his leg. And yet, he always smiled.

The year was 2009. We were both being treated at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center; I too had lost a leg in southern Afghanistan. We spent months together, the soldier and the photographer, and he would tell me of his exhaustion, his trauma and his nightmares.

A dozen years later, Freddie has a new life. He is a Paralympian, one of several American soldiers who rebounded from horrendous injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan to compete in the Tokyo games. And I have resumed my career with a camera, traveling the world, telling stories.

At times I think I would give it all away -- my life's work, the prizes and recognition, including the Pulitzer I was awarded this year -- just to walk on my own two legs again. But I also realize the role my disability has played in shaping who I am today.

And I wonder: Can disability actually give us more than it has taken?

I wanted to share these reflections with those soldiers wounded in combat, to speak amputee to amputee about the capabilities we have come to possess despite our disabilities. And so I crossed the United States to talk with five Paralympians.

I would not have the intimate conversation I was looking for with triathlete Melissa Stockwell, the kind shared only between two people who were both missing a limb; we connected mostly as parents, trying their best to raise their kids.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Bob Daugherty, Francesca Pitaro.

Your memories of 9/11



Dennis Anderson in Baghdad Airport "Good Friday Attack" April 9, 2004. Second embed.

Dennis Anderson (Email) - *"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."*
George Washington

With the 20th anniversary of 9/11 just days away I cannot help but think about the young 82nd Airborne Division troopers and their brother and sister Marines returning from the intense and terrorized exit from Kabul that took the lives of 13 of our troops and wounded dozens of others.

I cannot help but think what kind of transition many of them will make when they exit armed service. Most will do a few years and move into civilian life. What will it be like for them? Most of them were infants, toddlers, or born after 9/11.

I'll start by saying I think the federal Department of Veterans Affairs is important, and many of its hundreds of thousands of employees do good-to-great work on behalf of veterans. To which I will add that we still have about 20 veterans a day committing suicide, a few in the parking lots of VA hospitals where for one reason, or no reason at all, when care did not out-race despair.

Every single one of us alive in the age of reason remembers 9/11 and we all have a story. I shared mine with Valley Press Editor Jennifer Garcia.

My son, Garrett, roused me out of bed a couple of minutes after 6 a.m. and that was a couple of minutes after 9 a.m. on the East Coast, and rushed me downstairs to see the second plane hit the South Tower, with smoke already billowing from the North Tower.

I went into work as chief Editor at the Antelope Valley Press and our 9/11 headline was "Infamy." Twenty years later, there are different kinds of infamy.

A couple of days before 9/11, we dropped an Army buddy of mine off at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, and we walked right up to the gate. As my son and I exited the terminal, we remembered our belt packs had Swiss Army knives in them that got through the metal detectors because of composite grips. That would never happen again.

The first generation of post 9/11 troops were in Afghanistan a couple months later. They pursued Osama bin Laden into the mountains, and he escaped into Pakistan for the next 10 years before Navy SEALs got him. The next wave went into Iraq, for reasons that now seem dubious, and I went as embedded reporter. A year later, my still teenage son was with the Marines, fighting in Fallujah, a little slice of hell in Iraq. Next, he went to Afghanistan.

The Marines who served in Fallujah brought home a heavy load of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. So did about a half-million other of the more than 2 million who served in the "War on Terror." Many others have an intimate 9/11 story. They knew, or were related to someone, who perished. Or, they served after the attack that killed 3,000 and took down the World Trade Center and blasted a hole in the Pentagon.

It changed our family's life. Our family has generations in service back to the American Revolution. We tended to be citizen soldiers who did a hitch and came home. But the

after-effect of 9/11 has remained with us long after service and deployment.

Of Osama bin Laden, the leftist scold Michael Moore wrote this week, that the terrorist's plan "didn't involve invading countries the normal way. ...He simply fought to bankrupt us - financially, politically, spiritually. And to kill more of us. And get us to wipe out the American dream."

"He also wanted to neuter our military and show the world that we could be defeated by men in caves who possessed nary a single fighter jet, or a Blackhawk helicopter or a can of napalm to their name."

Moore continued, "How did he know we would start and stay in a 20-year war, offering up our young sons and daughters to him on the altar of the military-industrial complex?" Bin Laden, Moore wrote, "wanted to blow up the idea of America, not the Mall of America."

I have never much cared for Moore or his politics, but in this case, I cannot fault his analysis. As for the veterans, I am with George Washington.

No drug therapy has proved effective as a cure for PTSD. Many who achieve highest level recovery manage it in talking groups at the VA Vet Center where many counselors are combat vets themselves.

The Vet Center in Palmdale at 38925 Trade Center Drive has such groups, and individual counseling. If your service was in combat or hazard, the phone number is 661-267-1026 for an appointment. For veterans in crisis, the Veterans Crisis Line is 1-800-273-8255.

I know this. The VA can do better in many areas. I know a vet who has had his pension pulled through a bureaucratic blunder. He served in World War II, is 98 years old, and is in the hospital. Restoring his pension has required wave after wave of complicated paperwork. Why? This should never happen.

My little prayer is that the veterans of the fraught but miraculous airlift from Kabul receive the heroes' welcome they deserve. Next part of the prayer is that they receive the benefits of service they earned without going through a lot of rigamarole to receive them.

This is Dennis Anderson's 9/11 column, published in 09-09-21 editions of Antelope Valley Press where I was chief Editor for 16 years. Dennis is a licensed clinical social worker at High Desert Medical Group. An Army paratrooper veteran, he deployed to Iraq with local National Guard troops to cover the Iraq War for the Antelope Valley Press. He works on veteran issues and community health initiatives.

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Dan Day (Email) - Sept. 11, 2001, started like any other day, except the weather was spectacular. Cloudless blue sky, bright sunshine.

I caught my usual New Jersey Transit train into Midtown from my home station in Summit, N.J. I walked uptown from Penn Station to Associated Press headquarters at

50 Rockefeller Plaza, skirting the crowd outside the NBC Today Show studio. I arrived about 8:40.

Shortly after, I walked over to the office of my boss to see what was on the morning news on his TV set. I worked on the executive floor at headquarters, three floors up from the newsroom. Reports were just coming in to Channel 4 (WNBC-TV) that a plane had crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers.

I figured it must have been a traffic-spotting plane that had wandered off course. The first pictures I recall were from remote cameras, showing a plume of black smoke emanating from the upper floors of the tower. A big story, no doubt, for New York.

How wrong I was.

The details of the next hour are a jumble in my memory. I had gone back to my office to start work, but as more and more people came into the office there was more and more commotion. At some point I heard the second tower had been hit, and we were all shocked.

At some point I called home -- the last call I would be able to make there all day -- to advise my wife to turn on the TV. She was getting ready to take our daughter to Newark Airport for a flight to Los Angeles on her way back to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. Our daughter had wanted to take an earlier flight from EWR to San Francisco - - United 93 was the one she wanted -- so she'd get back to campus sooner. My wife, providentially, insisted on the later flight, in large part so she could get our youngest, a second-grader, off to school.

And sometime before 10 a.m. I heard via an instant message from a friend elsewhere in the AP system that there'd been an explosion at the Pentagon. Clearly, something terrible was in the works.

As 10 o'clock approached, I was standing with my boss, Wick Temple, in his office, watching the towers burn and speculating on how a rescue might be mounted for the people trapped on the upper floors. Could helicopters pluck them from the roof? Or would the heat force them back? And once the fire is out, what on earth would happen to the buildings?

The towers were tall and massive nearly beyond comprehension. I had once gazed up at them from street level, looking for angles from which to photograph them, a task I found essentially impossible. As amazing as TV footage of the attacks is, it cannot convey the scale of the towers to anyone who has never seen them up close.

Suddenly, one of the towers started to collapse, smoke billowing up and filling the screen. Wick and I looked at each other and our jaws dropped. Silent for a moment or two, I'm pretty sure one, if not both of us, said, "Holy s---."

This was now a disaster of immense proportions, and I went back to my desk to make some phone calls. But the phone lines were jammed. We couldn't make any calls out, on land lines or cellular, and I can't remember any coming in. E-mails started pouring in from around the country, and I was able to communicate with a number of people by Instant Messenger.

About half an hour later the second tower collapsed, and the full scope of the attacks was becoming apparent. We started wondering if we were in danger ourselves.

Like the World Trade Center, Rockefeller Center is one of the most recognizable sections of New York City from the air. The AP building flanked the huge NBC/GE building that towers over the plaza, which is widely known for its ice rink. In the warm months the rink is converted to outdoor dining, as it was on Sept. 11.

We could easily imagine Rockefeller Center being an easily identifiable target for any pilot in the air. So could building security. The complex was ordered evacuated sometime around 11 o'clock, as I recall.

But we stayed on. Frankly, I couldn't get home. The trains and subways were halted, the tunnels under the Hudson to New Jersey were closed. My best option would be to walk to the apartment of my brother across from Central Park, but -- and this was my major worry of the day -- I wasn't sure my brother was still alive.

My brother worked at Customs House, one of the smaller buildings at the foot of one of the World Trade Center towers. He had survived the 1993 bombing of the Trade Center. But this attack was huge, and with the towers collapsed, his office was sure to be buried in the rubble.

My brother's subway train had been delayed uptown, and he didn't get down to the World Trade Center stop until just after the first plane had hit. Seeing the fire blazing high up one of the towers, my brother knew it was an attack, so he ran north.

When he reached Canal Street, he found a pay phone. The only number he could reach was the toll-free line to our other brother in Ohio, who was able to call my wife at home. Finally, my daughter relayed word to me -- via Instant Messenger -- that my brother was OK.

I don't remember many specifics of the workday. At one point I went outside to an automated teller machine to withdraw some cash, figuring they'd soon run out of money. It could be days before they'd be refilled, I reckoned.

One of the men in our office collected money and made a run to get sandwiches and soft drinks. Again, we didn't know if we'd be able to get home or how long the food supply would last.

The remainder of the day was, from what I can recall, subdued. A few calls trickled in, and I spent a chunk of time e-mailing colleagues and friends.

Once it appeared the attacks had stopped -- it had been a couple of hours since we had learned of the United 93 crash in Pennsylvania -- we now wondered how to get home. A couple of people on our staff set out on foot for their homes in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx.

Late in the afternoon, the radio stations reported that the PATH trains -- on the Port Authority Trans Hudson subway line -- were about to resume service. Around 5:45

p.m. -- coincidentally my normal time to head home -- I decided to take my chances and walk to the PATH station near Macy's at Herald Square.

I cut through Rockefeller Plaza and headed up to Sixth Avenue, which are both normally packed with people most of the day. But there were few people on the streets. In fact, I can't even remember seeing anyone until I got to the train station.

Had I looked down the avenue, I could have seen the smoke from the wreckage of the Trade Center. But other than getting a fleeting glance at a wall of gray, I kept my eyes low, focused on getting to the train station.

PATH fares in those days were \$1.50 per ride, and I bought a round trip ticket for \$3.00. (I still have the ticket, with the return-fare credit on it.) People crowded around the turnstiles, waiting for word from conductors that the trains would begin running.

Finally, the crowd surged onto the platform and onto the train. I didn't make it onto the first one, so I had to wait another 15 minutes or so for the second.

The ride underground was nerve-wracking. The PATH train heads south through lower Manhattan, toward the Trade Center, before swinging east and heading to New Jersey. Passengers on the train were tense, quiet. I remember trying to guess the precise moment when, at mid-river, we crossed the state line into New Jersey. Then I waited seemingly forever to emerge from the tunnel and pull into Hoboken station.

Normally, I took a train home directly from Penn Station to Summit. But I knew the Hoboken alternative quite well from previous days when the Midtown service was delayed. I was able to hop a Summit-bound train quickly, around 7 p.m. The train was not crowded, the mood again subdued. Because normal timetables were disrupted, the train made every local stop.

Finally, I reached Summit, home into the arms of my wife.

At the house, the phone rang nearly continuously as relatives and friends across the country called to find out if we were OK. So many people were getting busy signals, I recorded a new voicemail greeting saying everyone was fine.

Our home was busier than normal. Not only was our daughter still with us, but the children of friends were staying with us. Their father, who worked close to the World Trade Center, stayed in Manhattan overnight. Their mother, a volunteer paramedic, was working long hours treating survivors.

This is a footnote to the 9-11 story, an aspect of the day that received little or no media coverage. Many of the people who survived the attacks got on homebound trains and arrived at their stations confused and in shock. Authorities set up a triage center at the Summit train station, where these bewildered commuters -- many of them executives from Wall Street -- were treated.

Although I noticed none on my homebound train, some of these people were covered in ash from the cloud of rubble that coated lower Manhattan. As with the first Apollo astronauts quarantined after returning from the Moon, no one knew if they were contaminated. So they were cleaned, disinfected and otherwise treated.

On Sept. 12, I didn't go to work, and our house started filling up. My brother and his girlfriend came out from Manhattan. A sportswriter friend who had been covering the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York couldn't fly home, so he came out, too. And our daughter was still fretting about getting back to Cal Poly. The only person not at home was our older son, who had already gone back to his campus for the semester.

Sometime during the morning, a fighter jet roared over our street, a stark reminder that we had crossed a line from peace to war. Later in the day, we drove a couple of miles from our house to an overlook that afforded a distant but clear view of Manhattan. Several other carloads of people had pulled off to view the smoke billowing out of the World Trade Center site.

The smoke wasn't the worst part of it. The biggest shock was the void. The twin towers, long a fixture of the landscape, had vanished. We stayed at the overlook for only a few minutes, and never returned until long after the fires stopped burning at what was now called "Ground Zero."

That evening, we gathered with a couple of other families on our street, holding lighted candles to remember the uncounted dead.

The next day, I returned to work, steeling myself for an altered world, one on edge in dread of more attacks. Soldiers with nasty-looking guns patrolled Penn Station, where on the walls were pasted hundreds of pleas for information on the people missing from the World Trade Center.

For fear of bombings, most small parks beside the Midtown skyscrapers were closed, and it was nearly impossible to find a trash can anywhere. They'd been removed. Building lobbies through which I used to walk to save a few steps on my way to the office were blocked by guards checking I.D. badges.

But not all was closed. Churches stayed open longer so people could drop in to pray, as I did at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and as our family did at our home parish in Summit. I fought tears as we sang "God Bless America."

Over the weeks and months that followed, we adjusted. To new traffic patterns. To stricter security. To new villains and fears.

Several months after 9-11, we drove into New York to visit Ground Zero, which was still being excavated. We joined the crowds on lower Broadway, passing hundreds of makeshift memorials set up on the fences lining the streets. We approached the intersection closest to the site but moved away quickly.

That was hallowed ground.

The story is told in three consecutive blog posts I made as managing editor of The Modesto Bee on the five-year anniversary in 2006.

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Mike Doan (Email) - I was working four blocks from the White House at the Kiplinger newsletters. After the Pentagon was hit, I feared there would be a plane crash in our neighborhood. While traffic was jammed, I got on my bicycle and rode home. As thousands fled on foot and smoke was rising from the Pentagon, it felt like a war movie. I realized then that the journalistic instincts I had for years to “get the story” were gone. I just wanted to get away.

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Gene Herrick (Email) – 9/11 – What a day!

On this historic day, a few years after retiring from the AP, I was volunteering for a local non-profit agency called “Helping Hands” in Rocky Mount, VA.

The agency interviewed people struggling with some form of poverty, and needed help with their electric bill, and things like that.

Suddenly I heard about 9/11. I grabbed a tiny radio and put it into a window to help with its antenna system. The other volunteers, and a few clients clustered around the radio, and listened with shock. “Oh, my God, what is this all about?”

Then, of course, there was a lot of gabbing about who, what, why, etc.

We were all in shock and full of questions to hear about New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. Later, we all went to television sets and watched the video of the disasters. No one could believe what they were seeing. Prayers were said.

The question seemingly has not been fully explained. It was a long-living shock.

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Bill Kaczor (Email) - I was the Pensacola correspondent but temporarily in Tallahassee on 9/11 covering a meeting of Florida’s Governor and elected Cabinet members, who jointly oversee various agencies. We had heard reports of a plane crash in New York, but early in the meeting Gov. Jeb Bush was called away to take a phone call. Shortly thereafter the meeting was canceled. I spoke briefly with Bush, but he knew little about the situation.

I then returned to Pensacola to begin the biggest wild goose chase of my career. AP started matching the names of the hijackers to people in the United States. Several were or had been in the Pensacola area. I began knocking on doors and talking to apartment managers. After spending an entire day of this it was apparent none were hijackers. The names were the Arabic equivalent of Jones or Smith and shared with Saudi air force personnel who trained at Pensacola Naval Air Station and nearby Whiting Field. Some of the addresses were on-base housing.

Over the next several days and months I covered the involvement of Florida Panhandle military bases in the 9/11 response including Hurlburt Field, headquarters for Air Force Special Operations, and Tyndall Air Force Base, headquarters for the 1st Air Force. Staffed almost entirely by the Air National Guard, the 1st Air Force is part of NORAD and in charge of protecting the continental U.S. from air attack. Its

commanding general described his frustration over being unable to get fighters scrambled quickly enough to thwart a threat from inside the U.S. The focus had been on external threats, but that changed immediately. A couple fighters could have shot down United Flight 93 but not before passengers took matters into their own hands.

I also wrote about 1st Air Force's public affairs officer Don Arias. He called his brother, a stockbroker, at his office on the 84th floor of the second World Trade Center tower. Adam told Don that he could see people falling from the neighboring tower. Don told him "That's no accident. Get out of there." Witnesses said they saw Adam on the street but he apparently went back inside to help others and was himself killed. Both brothers were former New York City firefighters.

While there were no 9/11 terrorists in Pensacola, one emerged with a vengeance 18 years later. Saudi Air Force 2nd Lt. Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani posted an ominous message on social media on Sept. 11, 2019, that stated "the countdown has started." He then traveled to New York to visit the 9-11 memorial and later watched videos of mass killings with three friends. Early on Friday, Dec. 6, 2019, Alshamrani criticized America on Twitter for supporting Israel and being anti-Muslim. He then got a semi-automatic gun and went to Building 633 at the air station. There, he killed three Navy trainees and wounded eight other people including three law enforcement officers before sheriff's deputies fatally shot him. I was retired by then, but AP called me to the scene until Tallahassee Correspondent Brendan Farrington could get there. I contributed relatively little, attending a news conference and getting quotes from a couple worried wives (their husbands were OK). The attack has had a lasting impact. The base, including the National Naval Aviation Museum and Blue Angels practice shows, has remained closed ever since to civilians except those with DOD ID cards. Base officials are considering a bus service for visitors, but nothing has been done yet.

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Photo/David Hume Kennerly

David Hume Kennerly ([Email](#)) - September 11, 2001. I was in Washington, D.C. on an assignment for Newsweek. Just before 9 a.m. I tuned in to ABC's Good Morning America. They were holding on a live shot of the North Tower of the World Trade Center where it appeared that an airplane had crashed into the building. It was smoking and on fire. Minutes later, at 9:03 am, a jetliner streaked in from the right side of the screen and smashed squarely into the adjoining South Tower. A ball of flame exploded a millisecond later. It became instantly clear that this was a coordinated and unprecedented attack on the United States. I grabbed my cameras and headed to my office at Newsweek on Pennsylvania Avenue a block from the White House. I wondered if they were going to attack the nation's capital next. They did.

The Pentagon was hit by hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 at 9:37 am, shortly before I arrived at Newsweek. I immediately went out on the deck where I could clearly see the Department of Defense across the Potomac River. Thick black smoke billowed from its west side. I started shooting photos, and also placed a camera on a tripod and trained it on the U.S. Capitol. God only knew what was going to happen next, and I wanted to be ready.

The rest of the day was a blur. The only good news was that neither the Capitol or the White House were attacked thanks to the heroic crew and passengers aboard the fourth hijacked plane, United flight 93. The people aboard fought to retake control of the plane and it crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania before the hijackers reached their target in Washington. Everyone on board died, but most likely the U.S. Capitol Building itself was spared.

Read more [here](#).

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Bill Kole (Email) - My personal 9/11 experience was bewildering and surreal: I was at the main rail station in Budapest, Hungary, waiting to catch a train back to my AP base in Vienna, when the first plane hit the towers.

On the train home, I found myself surrounded by a half-dozen uniformed Hungarian conductors and customs agents as I kept refreshing my BlackBerry and giving them updates in German about what was happening. I was their only source of news, and they pumped me incessantly for the latest.

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Larry Margasak (Email) - I arrived that morning at my AP desk in the House of Representatives. The TV's, of course, were on, but we couldn't watch the unfolding attacks for long. Capitol Police came running through the press gallery yelling for everyone to "get out" - another plane might be heading our way. Ladies' pocketbooks, men's sport coats, just about everything, was left behind. Fire alarms went off. I made sure I grabbed a reporter's notebook and checked that I had pens in my shirt pocket.

Once outside on the east side of the Capitol, members of Congress (but not the leaders, who were flown to a secure bunker in Virginia) were wandering around aimlessly, looking toward the building and waiting for the horror of a plane hitting the dome. Instead, we saw smoke rising in the distance, and soon learned the Pentagon had been hit.

A non-governmental organization with a first-floor office let me use the phone, and I kept getting comments from every lawmaker I could find. But none of them had any great insight — except one. He was a conservative congressman from California, Dana Rohrabacher, who had been to Afghanistan. An Afghan warlord he knew had recently been assassinated by al-Qaida operatives, and the congressman said he was sure there was an Afghanistan connection to the unfolding attacks. I phoned in his comments but never did learn whether they made it into the copy. Probably not. But how right he was.

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Guy Palmiotto (Email) - I was in discussion with Chuck Zoeller, then Photo Library Director, in his office when we saw the first plane hit the WTC on his TV. Disbelief and silence ensued as we and the library staff as we viewed the second plane hit the Trade Center. We were unsure what was coming next, were we under attack? Did we witness a fluke accident? Ultimately, the towers collapsed as we witnessed on TV and the seriousness of the situation was apparent and unprecedented.

After some time passed, I do not recall the time increment, maybe an hour or so, we had been given the option to remain in the office, or exit the building and seek options to evacuate Manhattan. I chose to leave and try to evacuate the island.

Though at this point many of the exit options, such as tunnels and bridges were closed. Especially in Lower Manhattan.

I made my way to the waterfront on Manhattan's West Side, where the NJ/NY ferries are located, which probably took an hour, maybe, very confused at this point. The streets in disarray and crowded with fellow evacuees. On a routine day this trip was 20 minutes.

As we waited for available ferries to New Jersey, which ultimately took about six hours, myself and thousands of others, many covered in dust as they evacuated their lower Manhattan offices, witnessed F-16's and FA-18 fly over the Hudson River, soldiers and military vehicles patrol the West Side Highway, and the stench of burning building materials with the smoke filled the air.

I remember the day started as clear and sunny, but as I awaited evacuation, the dense smoke had certainly created a pall over Manhattan and I watched the thick smoke continually rise as my ferry crossed the Hudson hours later. Eventually, I arrived at my NJ residence, but my trip took about 10 hours from the time I decided to leave 50 Rock.

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A photo I shot from our roof that brilliant and tragic morning.

Brenda Smiley Pyle ([Email](#)) - I was using three different cameras, but not all negs were returned. It was early, and I had recently returned from a disappointing trip to Panama researching a mass grave story, and was going over visuals.

It was the vibration I felt first and when I went to our big West-facing window, saw a silver nose cone coming through the first tower. Richard (Pyle, my husband) was out walking our Alsatian, Rommel, getting back in time to see the unimaginable on the roof deck. The smell, the sight, of our once-beloved view, horrific. And I feared our neighbors who worked in the Towers would have already been at work. I located his Star Trek phaser-like AP cell phone and he made that fateful call to the New York bureau. Mark Phillips lived nearby at the time, and, like other neighbors, was rooftop. Richard told him that he had to shoot this and send to Barbara Woike at AP asap. Before long, what looked like misdirected snowflakes began to fall from the sky. The smell intensified. The wind, like a giant cone, was blowing it all our way. By this time, Richard was preparing to get down there, if the subway was still working.

Electric power went out all over. The Verizon station, along with a historic Greek church, had been heavily damaged. We were without electricity. The subway to the city stopped abruptly. Richard had to get out and walk the rest of the way across the Brooklyn Bridge. He said he met up with another person, a construction worker, and together they walked through the smoke and against straggling, ashen-covered survivors, the lucky ones, who were trying to get back to Brooklyn.

I didn't hear from him for what seemed like an eternity. Much later that day, I got a call. He was with the mayor's people and other press, and didn't think he'd be home any time soon. With the Verizon station gone, his mobile wasn't working.

Blow, O-Kaze, Blow.

That brilliant, blue sky was history. For three or four days more, the determined O-Kaze continued its directional blow of fetid debris and origami-like strips of paper our way, destroying the poorly functioning AC, slithering through any window openings, carpeting the roof, and devastating the lettuce and growing tomatoes.

I could tell Rommel was feeling the effects, as was I. It was in the air. I could taste it. Rommel tried crawling underneath the bed, deciding instead on his own bed.

Eventually Richard hitched a ride back. He wanted to get to his laptop, but the unstoppable combat reporter was covered in the dust and exhausted. A shower and rest was in order.

Spending that time down there, unprotected and without a mask, Richard subsequently developed lung fibrosis, destructive lung damage, and the same pulmonary sarcoidosis he described as contributing to the death of a WTC office worker in a 2011 article.

In a way, it is a war story. His last one. Courageously covering 9/11, so close to home, he may have met his nemesis.

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Terry Spencer (Email) – *AP Broward/Palm Beach correspondent* - Sept. 11 -- I was on vacation from the Miami bureau, staying at a house on Dewey Beach, Delaware, with my wife Gail, our 3-year-old son Andrew and our friends, Trif and Stacey Alatzas

and their son George, also 3. (Trif was then the business editor of The News-Journal in Wilmington, Delaware, and is now publisher of the Baltimore Sun).

Trif and Stacey had rented the house and we were their guests. My family had arrived on Sept. 10 and it was a spectacular day. The boys had a blast playing in the ocean and the families enjoyed each other's company. On the morning of Sept. 11, Andrew looked out the window, saw the gorgeous sky and water and begged me to take him down to play. So at about 8:30, I did. The others said they would be down shortly -- but they never came. For more than an hour, Andrew and I played alone and, to be honest, I was getting a bit angry -- where was everybody? Keeping a 3-year-old safe in the ocean alone is work and Andrew wanted to play with George. Finally, I told Andrew, "Let's go see where Mommy and George are." I distinctly remember going to the shower outside the house, rinsing us both off, walking up the flight of stairs and opening the door to find the adults huddled around a radio -- the TV was broken. What's going on? Planes have crashed into the Twin Towers, they told me. What? Cessnas? No jetliners.

Trif began organizing business coverage for his paper. A thousand miles from home, I was lost. Eventually, we took the boys for ice cream and then my family headed north to Wilmington. I remember driving past the usually sedate Dover Air Force Base, where airmen in battle gear and armed with jeep-mounted machine guns guarded the gates. We stopped for dinner and in the near-empty sky I saw one plane high above -- an AWACS with its distinct roof-mounted radar dish monitoring the region to make sure no further attacks were coming.

The next morning, no one who works in Florida was surprised to find out the terrorists had trained here. My news editor called and asked if there was any way I could back, but the planes were grounded. No one in the Mid-Atlantic needed my help, so my family did what President Bush suggested -- we went on with our lives and finished our trip.

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Michael Weinfeld ([Email](#)) - I was fascinated by Ruth Rosati's story (in Wednesday's Connecting) about attending a funeral at Arlington National Cemetery the morning of 9/11.

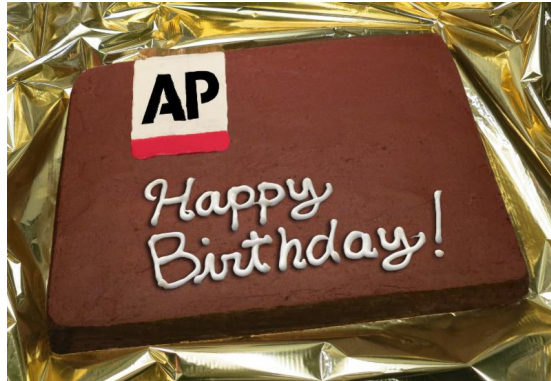
My wife, Tia Mayer, and her mother, Marcene, were also scheduled to attend a funeral for a family friend at Arlington that morning.

I was working at AP Broadcast in Washington, DC and called to tell them what was happening. They set off for the cemetery anyway and as they were driving down George Washington Parkway, they could see huge plumes of smoke billowing from the Pentagon over the trees. Once they arrived at Arlington, the gates closed shortly afterward, and one else was allowed in.

I called Tia and encouraged her to walk to the best vantage point overlooking the Pentagon and had her do a live shot on AP Radio describing what she saw. Unfortunately, her flip phone didn't have a camera.

Mrs. Rosati must've been there earlier than Tia because she was allowed to leave Arlington after the funeral she attended. Even though the funeral for Tia and her mother's friend was canceled, they weren't allowed to leave for about 8 hours. Tia says they did serve them lunch, though.

Connecting wishes Happy Birthday



Bill Hancock – bhancock@collegefootballplayoff.com

Stories of interest

Only on AP: US veteran determined not to lose Afghan colleague



U.S. Army veteran Spencer Sullivan, right, and Abdulhaq Sodais, who served as a translator in Afghanistan, hug each other and cry during an interview in Bremen, Germany, Aug. 14, 2021. Sullivan is trying to help Sodais get asylum after he had to flee to Germany. AP PHOTO / PETER DEJONG

By JULIE WATSON, ANDREA ROSA AND PETER DEJONG

San Diego reporter Julie Watson spent months building a relationship with U.S. Army veteran Spencer Sullivan and his Afghan translator Abdulhaq Sodais, leading to exclusive video and photos of them meeting in Germany and a layered, all-formats story on Sullivan's battle to keep America's promise to bring his comrade to safety.

After his first translator another translator was killed by the Taliban while waiting for a U.S. visa, Sullivan felt the U.S. had betrayed its promise to help those who risked their lives interpreting for American troops. Sullivan was determined not to let Sodais, who used smugglers to get to Europe and feared being sent back to Afghanistan, suffer the same fate. The situation took on urgency as the Taliban seized control and the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan.

Read more [here](#).

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Russian police detain journalists rallying for media freedom (AP)

By DARIA LITVINOVA

MOSCOW (AP) — Police in Moscow on Wednesday detained three journalists who picketed Russia's Justice Ministry, protesting the authorities' recent crackdown on independent media, Russia's top independent Dozhd TV channel reported.

Irina Dolinina, Alesya Marokhovskaya and Polina Uzhvak of the Vazhniye Istorii news outlet came to the ministry to protest against the recent designation of several independent media outlets, including Dozhd and Vazhniye Istorii, as "foreign agents." The label carries strong pejorative connotations that can discredit the recipient, and implies additional government scrutiny.

The three journalists demanded that authorities abolish the law allowing media and journalists to be labelled "foreign agents." They displayed small banners reading "There are no foreign agents, there are journalists," along with an elaborate disclaimer those designated as "foreign agents" are obliged to add to any content they produce, disclosing their status.

"The fact that we're being labeled 'foreign agents' is merely a ban on honest journalist work, nothing else," Dozhd quoted Dolinina as saying. She and Marokhovskaya have been designated as "foreign agents," as well.

Read more [here](#). Shared by Adolphe Bernotas.

The Final Word

*From the There's Still Humor in This World
Department...*



Paul Stevens - My wife Linda received two left shoes from Zappos in the mail this week.

So she called them and said, "I received two left shoes and I do not have two left feet!"

To which a kind customer service rep said, "Oh, you must be a good dancer!"



Celebrating AP's 175th

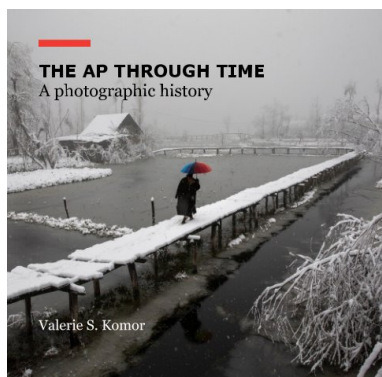
AP store for 175th, vintage merchandise



The AP has created a store with 175th anniversary merchandise available for purchase, as well as items branded with some of AP's most historic logos.

Click [here](#).

AP Through Time: A Photographic History



AP Through Time: A Photographic History” - created by Director of Corporate Archives, Valerie Komor, is a keepsake commemorating AP's 175th year. Small in size (6 ¾ x 6 ¾ in.), it is organized chronologically in eight segments that trace the broad outlines of AP's development from 1846 to the present: Beginnings, Evolution, New Century, Modernity, Expansion, One World, Speed, and Transformation. Click [here](#) to view and make an order.

AP at 175 video

This video celebrates the unique role AP has played since 1846.

Oops!

The embed code for this video is not valid.



Today in History - Sept. 9, 2021



By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Sept. 9, the 252nd day of 2021. There are 113 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 9, 1850, California became the 31st state of the union.

On this date:

In 1776, the second Continental Congress made the term "United States" official, replacing "United Colonies."

In 1893, Frances Cleveland, wife of President Grover Cleveland, gave birth to a daughter, Esther, in the White House; it was the first (and, to date, only) time a president's child was born in the executive mansion.

In 1919, some 1,100 members of Boston's 1,500-man police force went on strike. (The strike was broken by Massachusetts Gov. Calvin Coolidge with replacement officers.)

In 1932, the steamboat Observation exploded in New York's East River, killing 72 people.

In 1948, the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (North Korea) was declared.

In 1956, Elvis Presley made the first of three appearances on "The Ed Sullivan Show."

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the first civil rights bill to pass Congress since Reconstruction, a measure primarily concerned with protecting voting rights and which also established a Civil Rights Division in the U.S. Department of Justice.

In 1960, in the first regular-season American Football League game, the Denver Broncos defeated the Boston Patriots, 13-10.

In 1971, prisoners seized control of the maximum-security Attica Correctional Facility near Buffalo, New York, beginning a siege that ended up claiming 43 lives.

In 1991, boxer Mike Tyson was indicted in Indianapolis on a charge of raping Desiree Washington, a beauty pageant contestant. (Tyson was convicted and ended up serving three years of a six-year prison sentence.)

In 2005, Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Michael Brown, the principal target of harsh criticism of the Bush administration's response to Hurricane Katrina, was relieved of his onsite command.

In 2015, Queen Elizabeth II became the longest reigning monarch in British history, serving as sovereign for 23,226 days (about 63 years and 7 months), according to Buckingham Palace, surpassing Queen Victoria, her great-great-grandmother. New York became the first U.S. city to require salt warnings on chain-restaurant menus.

Ten years ago: New Yorkers and Washingtonians shrugged off talk of a new terror threat as intelligence officials scrambled to nail down information on a possible al-Qaida strike timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Five years ago: Defying the White House, Congress sent President Barack Obama legislation giving the families of victims of the September 11 attacks the right to sue Saudi Arabia. (Obama vetoed the bill, but Congress overrode his veto.) Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, speaking at an LGBT fundraiser in New York City, described half of Republican Donald Trump's supporters as "a basket of deplorables," a characterization for which she ended up expressing regret. Shaquille O'Neal and Allen Iverson were among those inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

One year ago: The top U.S. general for the Middle East, Gen. Frank McKenzie, said the Trump administration would pull thousands of troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan by November. President Donald Trump acknowledged that he had downplayed the coronavirus in the weeks after it emerged, saying he was trying to be a "cheerleader" for the country and avoid causing panic. Officials said the wildfires burning in Oregon's forested valleys and along the coast had destroyed hundreds of homes; in Washington state, flames devoured buildings and huge tracts of land. A federal report said vaping by U.S. teenagers had fallen dramatically, especially among middle schoolers.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Topol is 86. Singer Inez Fox is 79. Singer Dee Dee Sharp is 76. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Joe Theismann is 72. Rock

musician John McFee (The Doobie Brothers) is 71. Actor Tom Wopat is 70. Actor Angela Cartwright is 69. Musician-producer Dave Stewart is 69. Actor Hugh Grant is 61. Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., is 58. Actor-comedian Charles Esten (formerly Chip) is 56. Actor Constance Marie is 56. Actor David Bennent is 55. Actor Adam Sandler is 55. Rock singer Paul Durham (Black Lab) is 53. Actor Julia Sawalha (suh-WAHL'-hah) is 53. Model Rachel Hunter is 52. Actor Eric Stonestreet is 50. Actor Henry Thomas is 50. Actor Goran Visnjic (VEEZ'-nihch) is 49. Pop-jazz singer Michael Buble' (boo-BLAY') is 46. Latin singer Maria Rita is 44. Actor Michelle Williams is 41. Actor Julie Gonzalo is 40. Neo-soul singer Paul Janeway (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 38. Actor Zoe Kazan is 38. Author-motivational speaker-businessman Farrah Gray is 37. Actor Kelsey Asbille is 30. Contemporary Christian singer Lauren Daigle is 30. Country singer-songwriter Hunter Hayes is 30.

Got a story or photos to share?

Got a story to share? A favorite memory of your AP days? Don't keep them to yourself. Share with your colleagues by sending to Ye Olde Connecting Editor. And don't forget to include photos!

Here are some suggestions:

- **Second chapters** - You finished a great career. Now tell us about your second (and third and fourth?) chapters of life.
- **Spousal support** - How your spouse helped in supporting your work during your AP career.
- **My most unusual story** - tell us about an unusual, off the wall story that you covered.
- **"A silly mistake that you make"** - a chance to 'fess up with a memorable mistake in your journalistic career.
- **Multigenerational AP families** - profiles of families whose service spanned two or more generations.
- **Volunteering** - benefit your colleagues by sharing volunteer stories - with ideas on such work they can do themselves.
- **First job** - How did you get your first job in journalism?
- **Connecting "selfies"** - a word and photo self-profile of you and your career, and what you are doing today. Both for new members and those who have been with us a while.
- **Most unusual** place a story assignment took you.



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