



Two Years and On September 11, 2001

by Martin J. Pociask



The horrible events of September 11th when terrorists unleashed their cowardly and heinous attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and against those innocents on board the hijacked jetliners, changed the way most of us view life and security.

The world was appalled at how those evil perpetrators exacted their dastardly deeds, which resulted in such boundless grief for so many individuals; touched by the massive loss of life of friends, family, and loved ones. They, along with the many who were horribly injured or disfigured will be remembered always with honor and affection. And we will not soon forget those heroes who inspired us with their courage, many of whom like the firemen and policemen, rushed to assist and then sacrificed their lives in an effort to rescue the victims of the attacks.

As the tragedy unfolded, the Helicopter Association International (HAI) faced many challenges. It was extremely important that the membership was kept informed of all developments and modifications to the National Airspace. The staff monitored legislation that affected the industry, posted the latest NOTAMs and TFRs on HAI's website and sent blast-fax and email updates to the membership.

The membership was surveyed to collect impact data to measure the economic implications brought on by this horrible event. HAI President, Roy Resavage testified before the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Aviation of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and wrote letters to President George W. Bush, to the Department of Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta, and then also to Federal Aviation Administration Administrator, Jane Garvey.



Photo courtesy of FEMA.

Additionally, letters were sent to House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Tom Dasche, as well as several hundred Members of Congress on hot-button issues.

Two years and on, and the human spirit still shines. A wary public has returned to air travel and affected businesses have resumed some sense of normalcy. Ground Zero, where the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City stood is cleaned up, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. is repaired, and the fields around Shanksville, Pennsylvania have been cleared of debris and dedicated. Memorials and markers now are in place, they act as locators for those still searching for consolation. They also offer us an opportunity to reflect on what happened then, and over the past two years, and encourages the fervent hope that it never happens again.

We will not forget that day, or the innocents who bore the brunt of this brutal assault on civilization. Though the attack was directed against America, the victims came from many countries that make up a world that surely now feels more vulnerable. **R**

Martin J. Pociask is director of communications for HAI.



A Pilot Remembers

by Arthur Anderson
Photo courtesy of FEMA.

September 11, 2001, started out as a beautiful day. Nice flying weather. It was crystal clear with a strong wind, and afforded good hovering conditions. I was flying what we at the base call "the radio ship" (N8BQ). Onboard was Brian McKinley reporting for 1130AM Bloomberg Radio and Tom Kaminski for 880AM CBS Radio. Sometimes we are required to do cut-ins for WABC-TV in New York, so we were also carrying television-broadcasting equipment (including a camera).

The radio ship has the longest morning shift of all the news helicopters. It usually launches at 6 a.m. and runs till 9 a.m. Most of the television ENG helicopters land when the news goes national at 7 a.m. It was late in our shift and we were headed back to the base.

After looking at the traffic near the Alexander Hamilton Bridge, we had crossed over the George Washington Bridge southbound, when I noticed something odd. There was an airplane flying over lower Manhattan. You never see a plane over lower Manhattan. I was working LaGuardia Tower (LGA) when I saw the plane fly into the north tower of the World Trade Center. In my mind, for a second, it was like a cartoon. There was a hole in the shape of an airplane in the side of the building! It was just for an instant and then the smoke and flame came billowing out.

Stunned, I asked LGA if they lost one, and I could hear the confusion

and shock in their reply. They didn't know what was going on either. I left LGA airspace and headed into the Hudson River Exclusion, where there is no air traffic control. I flew south-bound toward the towers. We knew we had to go and cover this story.

Brian and Tom (my onboard reporters) were broadcasting and they started rolling the camera. We flew down to the site and it was just incredible. Debris was falling. Smoke and fire was billowing out from at least 3 sides of the building. When I first saw the plane, I had not realized it was so big, but we soon figured out that it must have been an airliner; you just had to look at the destruction.

Everyone was trying to find out what was happening. Brian and Tom were doing a great job of story coverage given the little information we had. We started to feed video to WABC Local News, who then went national with Good Morning America and it spread from there. At first we were the only news helicopter in the air because the

other guys had landed around 7 am. The first pictures the world saw were taken from our ship. I radioed the base to tell the other guys to get in the air, but there was no answer. I assumed they were on the way. When they arrived at the scene, we were all on the radio talking about what we were seeing.

We continued to move around the area, trying to view the different angles. We had been in the area of Chelsea (lower Manhattan), but then moved down the Hudson and ended up near the Colgate Clock in Jersey City. We surveyed the damage to the North Tower and decided to move back up to the north side. When we arrived back in the area of Chelsea, unbelievably it happened again! One of the other pilots said it was another plane.

I had been facing north, so I didn't see the plane, just the explosion coming out of the building. It was huge. And it was strange, because of all the paper in the air; it looked like confetti. I can't recall

who said it, but someone said it was a terrorist attack. At that point I felt like I had a target on my back. I wondered, how many more planes were out there?

Fuel. We needed fuel. It was the end of our shift and we were coming close to minimum fuel. I told Tom and Brian I was going to Ridgefield Park Heliport to refuel, and then we'd get right back up. Also, NYPD Aviation was telling everyone to clear the immediate area. We landed and refueled. I called Teterboro Tower to depart from Ridgefield but they directed us to stay on the ground. "The airspace has been sterilized."

Sterilized? What did they mean? We found out that not only was Teterboro airspace closed but so were Newark, Kennedy, and LaGuardia. Brian and Tom continued to do reports from the ground. And all I could do was watch as the towers burned and fell. **R**

Arthur Anderson is Line Pilot for Helicopters Inc. in New Jersey and flies under contract to WABC in New York



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