

# 9/11: South Shore remembers those who died in 2001

By Jessie Marchesseau

Rounding the corner en route to the Duke Theatre at Lake Tahoe Community College on Sunday, I walked into a sea of tiny American flags, 2,977 of them to be exact. One for each victim of the attacks.

A loud bell was tolling – 2,977 times.



Each flag represents one of the 2,977 people who died at the World Trade Center.

Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

In commemoration of the 10th anniversary of 9/11, LTCC presented The 9/11 Project. The event, which consisted of a theatrical presentation, a panel discussion, and a special commemoration and reception, was not only to pay tribute to those who died that day, but also to celebrate local public safety personnel.

“I wanted to honor and remember the victims of 9/11 and morph

it into something a little more hopeful," Susan Boulanger, director of theater arts at LTCC, said.

Girl Scouts wearing sashes handed out programs at the door and asked for donations for the South Lake Tahoe Search and Rescue. The local Boy Scout troops had placed the nearly 3,000 miniature flags into the ground. Most of the Scouts did not look old enough to remember that day in 2001, some of them were probably not even born yet.

The Duke Theatre, which holds 190 people, was packed. Some attendees were forced to stand in the walkways. As the lights went down, 18 actors dressed in black took their places on stage in front of 18 chairs. Seeing them standing there, somber, on a stage of all black, a firefighter uniform and hats from various public service departments displayed in the rear corner of the stage, it was apparent there would be no singing and dancing in this play.

Boulanger chose to do a collection of monologues from two plays for the 9/11 presentation. Seventeen actors would be reading from "With their eyes – September 11th: The view from a high school at Ground Zero," a series of real-life accounts of faculty, staff and students at Stuyvesant High School, located just four blocks from the World Trade Center. The 18th actor would perform excerpts from "The guys," a play based on a true story about a New York City fire captain who lost eight of his men in the tragedy, and is then faced with the task of finding the words to remember each of them.

Before a syllable was even spoken on stage, I felt the lump forming in my throat and the tears beginning to well in my eyes. A woman in front of me pulled a tissue from her purse. Just the thought of that day brings about myriad emotions for many of us.



Law enforcement gather at LTCC for Sunday's event.

The performance was dramatic. Not a giggle or a snicker in the house. Each oration was a reminder of the real people affected that day, not mythical heroes or ghosts, but ordinary people whose lives would never be the same.

"We tend to forget that they're human beings," Boulanger said. "We put heroes on a pedestal."

She said she chose this particular set of monologues to remind us all of that.

After the theatrical presentation, a panel of seven law enforcement officers, firefighters and military veterans took their place on stage to share how the events of 9/11 affected each of them personally and their professions. The audience was also encouraged to pose their own questions to the group.

South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler said it was an honor to be asked to be part of the panel. "I'm glad that people are still paying attention, and we haven't become numb to the events of 9/11," he said.



A plaque at  
LTCC honors  
those who lost  
their lives  
Sept. 11,  
2001.

Due to weather, the commemoration and reception that had been slated to follow at the Ledbetter Terrace was moved into the theater. Boulanger announced the planting of two crab-apple trees in the terrace along with a plaque reading “In Honor of the Heroes and Victims of 9/11 And the Heroes Who Protect Us Today September 11, 2011.” As she gave thanks to our public service personnel, the audience offered a standing ovation.

“I wasn’t there when it happened, and I couldn’t do anything then,” Joanie San Agustin, one of the actors, said after the performance. “This was a really great way to pay tribute to those who gave their lives and those who lost their lives.”

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## **Study: Educators not teaching about 9/11 in U.S. schools**

***Publisher’s note: Lake Tahoe News wanted to do a story for its 9/11 series about how K-12 educators in the Lake Tahoe Basin-Truckee area address the event in the classroom. The reporter was thwarted in his efforts. One assistant principal in***

***Truckee said, "Teachers may or may not be open to talking to local media based on the topic, and Is the topic something that may be damaging to our school or district?" Lake Tahoe News regrets at this time not being able to tell you what local children are learning about 9/11.***

**By Valerie Strauss, Washington Post**

Most states do not include in their social studies/history standards a direct mention of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to a new study, and only four states actually name Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda.

An earlier stage of the study had found that many of the best-selling history and civics textbooks used in schools have "a startling lack of detail about what actually happened" on Sept. 11.

Twenty states plus the District of Columbia mention the terrorist attacks but most don't require that students learn more than a few key facts devoid of context, it says. Of those that don't directly mention Sept. 11, 14 states include some reference to terrorism or another key term related to the war on terror. And 14 states don't include any reference to 9/11, the war on terror or terrorism.

"For the most part, students are not directed to examine the roots and causes of terrorism, but instead are asked to learn about the impact of these attacks, primarily on the United States," a summary of the report says.

The study was conducted by Professors Jeremy Stoddard from the College of William & Mary and Diana Hess at the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Spencer Foundation. It was released by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tisch College at Tufts University.

It was released just days before the 10th anniversary of the attacks and contributes to a debate about how, when and what

children should be taught in school about the event.

For example, a separate report just issued by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute argues that some 9/11 lessons being taught to children are missing the point of the event, giving too little information about the history and instead discussing related issues.

**Read the whole story**

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## **9/11: A generation loses its innocence in a N.Y. minute**

**Publisher's note:** *This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Stephen Ward**

When you're young, you have a peculiar way of gauging things. Some children worry about a new school because of the size or shape of a fence, or from the look of their teacher. Others might sense alarm if their dinner is overcooked or negated altogether.

Although these signals are dubious, they grant closure. They help you reduce dimensions, to understand the world around you and momentarily fend off its opacity.



For me, I always judged how the day would unfold by who woke me up in the morning.

My mother was the norm; she would sit beside me and rub my back, speaking softly until I woke up. This meant today would be the new yesterday – everything is as it should be.

Being woken up by my father was a different story. He favored yanking the sheets off quickly and shouting “Morning!” relying on the startle to wake me up. This occurred less often and indicated that I had an appointment or errand to run before school. The day would be slightly different, more unpredictable.

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, both parents were in my room. But, unlike the other days, neither one made an effort to disrupt my sleep. I awoke to find their backs facing me on the foot of my bed, my bedroom light still off. They were just sitting there, motionless, with their eyes glued to the burning building framed within the 12-inch TV screen.

I couldn't ask what was happening before a second plane answered my question.

I wish I could say time stood still at that point, but the opposite happened. The TV was turned off and I was told to go downstairs for breakfast. My mom, with her nurturing disposition, consoled me throughout my bowl of cereal. She told me she'd take me to school and that everything would be all right. Don't worry, she repeated. Everything is fine.

But I already knew that wasn't the case. I woke up myself, with both of my well-being signifiers entranced in front of me.



Stephen Ward –  
2001

Ask any teenager what it's been like since 9/11, and you'll probably get a descriptive before/after binary. Before, schooldays seemed shorter. Lunch tasted better and the air was less stagnant. Teachers would watch their students from afar, reclined against the school wall and talking among themselves.

Sept. 11 was a lost day. No one wanted to do anything, so everyone sat together and watched the TV or listened to the radio. Every 50 minutes, a bell rang – a signal for everyone to get up and go somewhere else to do more of the same.

The most memorable class that day was physical science. My teacher had a close friend who worked in the World Trade Center. She stopped class repeatedly to answer her phone, exchanging calls with her friend's wife. She cried uncontrollably in front of us when her friend called and said he was alive.



Stephen Ward  
has lived with  
the aftermath  
of 9/11 most  
of his life.

From Sept. 12 onward, teachers were falconine. They stayed on the field with students during every break from class, constantly surveying the grounds. They were sentient guard towers, armed with whistles and neurosis.



I was 13 years old living in Las Vegas when the terrorist attacks transpired. According to the major news channels, my region was a potential target. Some of the hijackers met in strip clubs and casinos in Las Vegas before carrying out the attacks. Security cameras showed the perpetrators sauntering through casino floors, detached from reality with the blue, grainy haze of the recording. Like the world they left behind, they were a shadow of themselves.

I wish I could say social profiling didn't seep into the schoolyard, but it did. Among the many topics discussed back then were sleeper cells, especially in our area. Teachers kept close watch of the Muslim students. Children with darker skin were supervised by multiple hall guards. We stopped getting the occasional hug from our teachers when we left class.

The "us versus them" mentality the nation's leader adopted divided what was once a unified generation. By reducing dimensions, by trying to better understand the world around us, and our place in it, my peers adopted a new breed of hostility.

It carried into high school. By my sophomore year, the war against terrorism was in full motion. Many students were bloated with chauvinism. The common resolution in history and government classes was to turn the Middle East into a parking lot. This was met with overwhelming approval.

Not every teacher promoted xenophobia. My sophomore English teacher showed us documentaries about war, social unrest and the conspiracy theories surrounding the attacks. His mantra was on expanding our perspective, not polarizing our paranoia.

During the last 10 years, I've had quite a bit of time to reflect on what happened and, consequentially, what it means. The world I live in now is a product of an unpredictable event, one that lasted for a few hours and shifted the social axis of everyone around me. To grow up during the post-9/11

era is to grow up with a broken perception of safety, trust and acceptance.

Still, I'm convinced my English teacher had it right. Resilience is tangible, so long as my generation seeks information and awareness rather than rhetoric and scare tactics.

Nowadays, I spend more energy gauging my reaction rather than the events themselves.

*Stephen Ward is a student at UNR interning for Lake Tahoe News.*

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## 9/11: 'Women at Ground Zero' – gripping, inspiring

**Publisher's note:** *This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Kathryn Reed**

Now I understand why "Women at Ground Zero: Stories of Courage and Compassion" cannot be read all at once. It is so emotionally charged that it requires the reader to pause long enough to digest the words on the page.



But at the same it's one of those books you don't want to put down because it is so gripping.

Authors Susan Hagen and Mary Carouba embarked on a journey to New York City just after terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers Sept. 11, 2001. Their frustration with seeing no women rescue workers on television or in other news accounts led the Californians to search these women out.

The book is about 33 women; including three who died in the attacks. They are firefighters, police officers, emergency medical technicians and therapists. It's not that their stories are more important than men's. It's that until Hagen and Carouba came around no one was talking about the women. The media and politicians focused on the men.

But this is not a book for women. It's for everyone who cares about what happened that day. It also puts a more human touch on the tragedy that I had not connected with before.



From Sept. 1-12, Lake Tahoe News is looking at 9/11.

For someone like myself who was out of the country at the time of attacks, the book offered insight into this event on 9/11 and the months afterward that I was not aware of.

I learned the EMTs not connected to the New York City Fire Department were not given the same benefits as those who are employees. I learned about the police department's evidence department and the heartache of body parts coming in – like a hand with a wedding ring.

I winced as I read. Tears welled up. Anger – though I'm not entirely sure whom it was directed at – filled me. But overall I smiled when I finished the book and had a bit of time to reflect on what I had read.

The authors taking the initiative to research and write the book impressed me. But mostly I felt inspired by these women's stories.

Hagen and Carouba were on the South Shore in September 2010 to give a talk – which was funny and poignant at the same time.

Although the book first came out in 2002, a 10th anniversary release of "Women at Ground Zero" is out. More information about the authors is on their website.

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## **9/11: A world-changing event experienced outside the U.S.**

**Publisher's note:** *This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Kathryn Reed**

Machu Picchu. It's what I think of when I hear 9/11.

Throughout the day on Sept. 11, 2001, I kept being drawn to the most sacred temple at these historic Inca ruins in Peru. Pages of my journal talk about the experience.

Later that night and still today, I am compelled to believe that stone brought me a source of spiritual energy that resonates calmness when I think of her and of 9/11.



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I had taken a six-month sabbatical from my job as an editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, with four months of it spent in South America. I was finishing week one of the trek when the cowards leveled the Twin Towers.

Being out of the country during this momentous time has left me not sharing the intense feelings of those who were on U.S. soil that morning. In reflecting back on my memories – aided by my journal and emails to my parents – I can honestly (and selfishly) say I'm glad I was where I was, doing what I was doing.

Getting back to Cuzco that night was a bit harrowing because of the transportation strike, not speaking Spanish, and fires burning in the road. I thought I had a great story to write home about.

Somewhere along the way word came that a plane had hit the towers. We thought it a Cessna or something small, no surprise there would be deaths associated with it. But somehow I knew it was bigger than that by the time I got back to my hotel. I just didn't know how big.

I asked a hotel employee to put CNN on in English. He looked at me with an expression that said, "Oh, god, she doesn't know."



Kathryn Reed  
at Machu  
Picchu Sept.  
11, 2001.

It didn't take long to see what I hadn't known until that moment. The videotape of the planes hitting the World Trade Center kept playing. It was surreal. It was like a bad B movie that wouldn't end.

The next day was spent watching CNN and emailing family and friends. People filled the Internet café. Wallpaper on one computer was of four panel photos of the WTC collapse.

My journal on Sept. 12, 2001, says, "I'm not thrilled to have in my possession a ticket on American to JFK in December. I really want to be at home to see-hug all my family [and] friends – but at the same time staying on track may be best – and for now that's what I'll do. Last night was restless because of this news – today I was a bit numb – I just wanted to be around English speaking people – ah – how we migrate to people like ourselves."

A few days later I'm at Lake Titicaca where I meet a couple from Philadelphia traveling with their adult daughter. They have black armbands as a symbol to those who died in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. We cut one in half and I wear mine with honor.

Eventually I tie it to my backpack – where it stayed for the entire trip.

I'm getting word from friends in Vegas about lines for

gasoline. I read about people in the United States being fearful. I don't comprehend these feelings.

I feel a sense of loss and loneliness – but not of fear.

On Sept. 17 I write to my parents, "It is so weird being out of the US ... it is [as] though nothing really has changed. I do not have any constant reminders of all of the East Coast tragedies and the domino effect."

It's Sept. 18, I'm outside the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia. I can't stop staring at our flag at half-staff. I'm told not to hold onto the fence. I'm told I have to get permission to take a picture of the flag. Now I'm angry. It's *my* flag.

On Sept. 18 I write a group email saying, "People down here do care. Though it was a bit weird the other day crossing from Peru into Bolivia and waiting in the line at the Bolivian immigration office and having a young shoeshine boy come up and ask me where I was from. The United States I responded. Oh, and then he makes a gesture with his hands of a plane going through a building. I had nothing more to say. A woman with a Netherlands passport in front of me said what a way to greet you. I smiled. She said the tragedy has affected the whole world."

Mom writes back about the continual pit in her stomach.

To this day it's something I don't relate to.

It's Jan. 2, 2002, and in my journal I write, "On Sunday [Dec. 30] we went to Ground Zero. They opened a viewing platform that day. It was hard to believe that the World Trade Center once stood there. It looked like a construction site. Had there not been other buildings boarded up [and] w/canvas hanging down it would not have been so dramatic. What got me the most were the views from the Empire State Building [and] Statue of Liberty ferry. And on the city map it just has a

white space for the WTC – with no written designation. It is still hard for me to comprehend all that the United States [and] its people have [and] are going through and perhaps having been in S. America on Sept. 11, 2001, will make it impossible for me to ever grasp the magnitude of the loss [and] fear.”

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## **9/11: Terrorist attacks just part of Tahoe's economic woes**

**Publisher's note:** *This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Susan Wood**

A decade after Sept. 11, 2001, the terrorist attack may not turn out to be the Lake Tahoe economy's worst enemy. But it didn't help with the snowball effect of the economic downward spiral.

The South Shore's long recovery through peaks-and-valleys from a series of economic challenges started in March 2001. It shows a region that's both reliant on and hard hit by a drop in tourism. The challenges since the March 2001 recession are in line with national trends.

Fear of travel, skyrocketing fuel prices, subsequent wars, high unemployment, a burst housing bubble and a few recessions before and after the horrific event have contributed to a plummet in consumer confidence and travel numbers.





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Consumer confidence fell substantially according to national reports in one month from August to September 2001. Tourism, and with that hotel occupancy, took a dramatic drop across the nation. In New York City, hotel occupancy fell 40 percent and 3,000 employees were laid off, according to reports compiled by the U.S. Commerce Department.

Then, the worst recession in a generation forced companies to retool, rethink and re-evaluate business as usual.

Throw in smack-you-in-the-eye competition from Indian casinos to the largest South Shore employers, and Tahoe may have lost and seen the last of its tourism heyday.

“Certainly air transportation has become quite a bit more annoying since 9/11,” Lakeside Inn and Casino Chief Executive Officer Mike Bradford told *Lake Tahoe News*, also echoing a few national studies on the subject. “But no doubt, it’s shown how resilient we are (as a country).”

The longtime local businessman has seen all the other economic factors hit the Lake Tahoe Basin hard.

“Tahoe is in a unique situation,” he said, referring to tribal gaming options popping up all over the Central Valley and on the West Slope. What stands out for Bradford while observing the region is in a sense “what hasn’t changed.” And “that’s

unfortunate when you consider what we have to offer,” he said, characterizing the lack of an evolving tourism market as a major impediment.

“Because it’s no longer an economy based on gaming – we have to make adjustments. I’m not sure we’ve learned much since (2001), but we’ll need to take an educational look at Tahoe after 9/11 and now. Really, I bet it looks not that much different except for the excavation of Project 3 (South Lake Tahoe’s convention center redevelopment project based near Stateline).”



Tourists keep coming to Lake Tahoe, but they aren’t spending money like they did before 9/11.

The casino chief admitted to the difficulty in quantifying any particular factor like terrorism attacks based on the eastern seaboard. However, 2001 appeared to serve as a catalyst for challenges to business from one side of the United States to the other.

Immediately following Sept. 11, the stock market closed for four days – the third time in history. Only two other events – the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre and the Wall Street bombings of 1929 – showed a 252 trading-day decline in the stock market. Insurance losses topped \$30 billion – the worst in

history.

## **Changes to air travel**

“It’s certainly been our Pearl Harbor. From an aviation perspective – using that as a reference point, 9/11 brought a dramatic change to the aviation world. Airlines took a significant beating that some couldn’t recover from. The impact of tourism was huge. When you take a look at the airport now, it’s a hassle some people avoid altogether,” said Adam Mayberry, a Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority board trustee and former spokesman for the Northern Nevada aviation center.

But the problems started even sooner.

“We couldn’t seem to get a break,” Mayberry said. In about the same time period, American Airlines bought Reno Air – which did a substantial business out of the Reno-Tahoe airport – “then reduced flights,” he added.

Right after 9/11, passenger counts “took a dive.”

However, the Reno-based airport experienced a much better recovery than many airports following 9/11. Before 9/11, it offered 80 departures a day. Then with much work, the airport authority and staff did the leg work to get the number back up 72 today.

Current airport spokesman Brian Kulpin cites high fuel prices as more of a culprit, using history to back up the opinion. Five years after 9/11, the departures clawed and scratched their way up to 90 flights a day.

“But when fuel hit \$145 per barrel in July 2008, our number of daily departure flights hit a low of 54,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*. Moreover, more than 100 commercial airports nationwide lost all of their air service in summer of 2008.

“In terms of passengers, we saw a drop to 284,000 per month just after 9/11. When fuel hit a \$145 per barrel (rate) in

2008, we saw a drop to 283,000 passengers per month in fall 2009," Kulpin pointed out. Just last year, Reno was ranked first in the nation for recovering flights over the decade with a 14 percent increase.

The recession hit airlines like Aloha and Northwest hard, with them either going out of business or merging with another. Then came travel's ugly byproduct of 9/11, the recession and fuel prices – baggage fees and liquid container restrictions.

### **Impact on the South Shore**

The recession has taken its toll on Lake Tahoe business. First, there are the musical chairs of retailers and restaurants on the South Shore. Second, boarded up buildings diminish the natural scenery. Of the businesses left, budget and creative adjustments had to be made.

Marlene Lewis, the manager at the Great Outdoor Clothing Co. at the Y, has noticed a steady decline in business in at least the last handful of years working there.

She points to the combination of Indian casino competition, recession and 9/11 as the culprit for our town's downward spiral.

Lewis worked at Albertsons during 9/11 and remembers how people walked around in a daze in the store.

"But about three years ago, things really started declining," she said, referring to her current business at the Factory Outlet center. She further quantified her shop's drop in business by about 30 percent.

Jana Walker, who runs Sealed With a Kiss and the Lakefront Wedding Chapel, has seen a mixed bag as a result of 9/11 and the recessions. Her retail shop has called on her creativity.

"Being in business here, you have to have creativity, flexibility and ingenuity – or you'll be passed up," she said.

“You can’t rest on your laurels.”

Walker admitted to making fewer buying trips for the Heavenly Village shop since 2001. And buying mistakes are less forgivable than previous decades. In her other business, the wedding chapel has seen a big drop in the large weddings since 9/11.

“People aren’t flying in 50 people or so anymore,” she said.

Even though she cites the recession as a worse culprit to business than 9/11, Walker recalls that time period as a trying one. Days after the terrorist attacks, she organized a local fundraiser for the victims of 9/11 at the casino corridor. Hundreds of people showed up. Most who attended told this reporter that life as we know it had changed forever.

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## **9/11 event benefits Tahoe Douglas Bomb Squad**

On Sept. 11 from 11am-4pm, the Horizon Casino-Resort in conjunction with JRW Group Entertainment will host a community event with 100 percent of the proceeds to be donated to the Tahoe Douglas Bomb Squad.

Admission is free.

Members of the bomb squad will put on a demonstration, along with K-9 units.

The event on the south end of the Stateline property will include entertainment, a barbecue and more.

The barbecue costs money. Tickets are available at:

Horizon Main Cashier or Gift Shop

Douglas County sheriff's Stateline substation (Monday-Thursday, 8am-5pm)

Tahoe Douglas Round Hill Station (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm)

KTH0 at Ski Run Marina (Monday-Friday 9am-4pm)

Cost before the event is:

- \$15 – includes barbecue, commemorative T-shirt and \$5 free slot play
- \$25 – includes barbecue, T-shirt, \$5 free slot play and two tickets to the Bethany Owen show.

Prices are more at the event.

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## **What are your memories of Sept. 11, 2001?**

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## **9/11: South Tahoe residents fend for themselves in D.C.**

*Publisher's note: This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Dennis Cocking**

Those of us who are old enough to remember Nov. 22, 1963, have indelibly etched into their memory exactly what they were doing at the precise moment they heard the news of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. For me, it was just as a classroom movie had finished when I was in the sixth grade. As one grows older, other events are added to that list; wedding days, the birth of children, and the passing of loved ones. On Sept. 11, 2001, another memory was added to the list, as it was to all Americans but, a little too close for comfort for me.

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, I was in Washington, D.C., with South Tahoe Public Utility District Director Duane Wallace seeking congressional support and funding for district infrastructure-related projects. We had a 9am meeting with Rep. John Doolittle in the Rayburn House Office Building not far the Capitol building and I had ducked into the Starbuck's in the hotel lobby to grab a cup of coffee for the taxi ride. I glanced up at the television and heard that "a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center," however the news commentator was speculating that it was likely a private aircraft, as there had been several near misses over the years.



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As I met Duane in front of the hotel to catch a cab, I

mentioned the news report and Duane said he heard the same report as he was leaving his hotel room. Since it sounded like it might well have been a private plane, we began to go over the points we wanted to make with Congressman Doolittle in our upcoming meeting. I also confirmed that I had been able to locate a couple of tickets to the Baltimore Orioles game Wednesday night to see Cal Ripkin play in one of his last home games before he retired, and what a stroke of luck that was. We were scheduled to fly out of Baltimore-Washington International on Sept. 13 and a ball game would be a great way to spend the last evening in the Washington, D.C., area. I had no idea how my plans would change.

As we entered the congressman's office, all eyes were on CNN as at approximately 8:46am Flight 11 had crashed into the North Tower and, at 9:02am, Flight 175 plowed into the South Tower. It soon became obvious that this was not accidental and America was under attack. Very quickly things became chaotic in the office with alarms beginning to sound throughout the building. Within minutes, U.S. marshals and Capitol police armed with automatic weapons entered the office and took Congressman Doolittle to a secure location. We were left standing in the office entry with a bunch of staffers all trying to figure out what the next move should be. As the marshals were leaving, we asked, "What about us?" They responded, "You're on your own, but I would suggest getting out of the building."

Running down the well-worn granite stairs to the street we heard others talk of one, maybe more, airplanes that were inbound to either the Capitol or the White House. We ran out onto the Capitol Mall and looked back fully expecting a plane to fly into the rotunda of the Capitol. We later learned that the brave folks on Flight 93 gave their lives and prevented that from happening. As we were moving away from the Capitol we heard a large explosion followed by several smaller ones. We would later find out the large explosion was Flight 77



slamming into the Pentagon and the smaller explosions were fighter aircraft from Langley Field in Virginia breaking the sound barrier as they began to patrol the skies over Washington, D.C., for any additional inbound aircraft.



Dennis Cocking

Amid a chaotic gridlock of everyone that could leave the town and those who were trying to make their way back to their hotel rooms, we joined the exodus and made our way back to our hotel. As we walked to the hotel, sharpshooters began to emerge on the rooftops of the federal buildings – pretty spooky. Cell phones were useless on the walk back, but I was able to reach my wife, Kathy, when I got back to the hotel on a landline and let her know that I was all right. It was hard to believe all this had transpired within about 45 minutes.

Like many other Americans, we spent the next six days watching the news and trying to make some sense out of a senseless act. We took a cab to as close as we could get to the Pentagon, and walked the rest of the way to see the damage. It was a sad and depressing sight knowing how many lives had been lost.

We tried a number of different avenues to return home as airline flights were out of the question. We called car rental agencies and Amtrak, all to no avail. We even contemplated renting an RV and heading west. Finally, on Sept. 16, since we had our original return reservations, we were given priority when commercial airline flights finally resumed. Our return flight included more than seven different legs crisscrossing the nation and ultimately taking nearly 18 hours. Seeing the

lights of Tahoe when returning from Reno at night is always a welcome sight, but never any better than the return home from this trip.

*Dennis Cocking is the public information officer for South Tahoe Public Utility District.*

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## **9/11: Bracing for news from family working in NYC**

**Publisher's note:** *This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.*

**By Jessie Marchesseau**

My alarm went off at 6am. It was Sept. 11, 2001, five days after my sister Summer's 24th birthday.

I was not sure if she had received the gift I had sent yet, a small gold kaleidoscope with a colorful glass wheel on the end. I had a habit of sending gifts late.

Summer lived in Elizabeth, N.J., about 15 miles from the heart of New York City, and 2,700 miles from my home in Genoa. She worked in Manhattan and would have caught the train to Penn Station more than an hour ago. I had visited her for two weeks that May and we had ridden that train several times.



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looking at  
9/11.

Now, however, I was back home in Genoa and had to be to work in half an hour. I was a cart washer at the Genoa Lakes golf course, and though I hated the early hours, I did appreciate the free golf.

After dressing and grabbing a quick breakfast, I jumped in my car for the morning commute. At about a mile on a country road, it was considerably less time-consuming than Summer's.

As I started on my way, it was clear that this morning's radio content was different than the usual music selection. In fact, there was no music at all. Just people talking about a horrible plane crash in New York City, buildings falling, people dying and possible terrorists.

It only took a few minutes to get to work. I pulled my car into the usual space set aside for employees, but could not bring myself to turn off the engine. I sat there, frozen in my car, listening to every word they were saying on the radio, trying to comprehend.

My first thought was of my sister. She was there, in the city under attack. I knew from my trip a few months before that she worked blocks from the World Trade Center, miles even. I also knew the rest of my family did not know this.

As I sat in my car, paralyzed by the news, my parents, brother

and grandparents were in Montana, glued to their televisions.

“My initial thought was that she’s not OK,” my grandmother recalls of that day. “And grandpa was just a nervous wreck. He paced the floor continually; he was just so sure something had happened to her.”

My mother, like me, retained a little more optimism.

“At first I thought, New York’s a big city; she’s probably not close by. But I couldn’t get ahold of her to find out,” my mom said. “But the more I watched the news, the more I thought she might be nearby.”

My sister had visited the World Trade Center a number of times. The ticket office there offered Broadway show tickets without waiting in line, and the restaurants had decent food. Her birthday being only a few days earlier, Summer and some friends were planning to celebrate that evening with dinner and a show.



Jessie  
Marchesseau,  
right, at her  
sister,  
Summer’s,  
wedding.

As soon as my mother heard the news, she tried to contact Summer, her oldest child, but to no avail. All the phone lines in the New York area were down. She tried numerous times over the next few hours, as did my grandparents.

My dad remembers calling Summer maybe a dozen times throughout the morning using his cell phone or a landline whenever there was one nearby.

“You just worry yourself sick until you find out,” he said.

Finally, I turned off the engine and walked hurriedly toward the cart barn, my thoughts racing. Did my family know what was happening? Did my boyfriend know? He was probably still in bed. Did the people at work know? And was my sister really OK?

As I walked in, five minutes late, I was reprimanded for my tardiness. I did not care. Didn't they know I had a sister in New York? Didn't they know what was happening? I wanted to go home and call my family and watch the news.

As the morning dragged on, I busied myself at work, and, much like my parents, kept telling myself Summer was fine. I had no access to a phone and spent the entire shift impatiently anticipating my release.

My mother and father also went to work that morning. Staying home was not going to do them any good, and Montana was not under attack.

At the office, coworkers asked my mother about Summer. They knew she lived in the New York area and wondered if she was safe.

“You always worry when your kids are not close by,” my mother said, “especially when you see something like that in their neighborhood. And you get more worried as the day goes by and you can't get ahold of them.”

My grandparents, on the other hand, were home, watching the incessant news coverage, worrying, crying and praying.

It was not until sometime around noon or 1pm that my parents received a phone call. My sister was fine. Cell phones were still down around New York, but she had managed to get through

using a payphone at a nearby school. The call was short; a line of people were waiting to use the payphone, but she wanted everyone to know she was fine.

“Oh god, it was such a relief, it was just such joy,” my grandmother said of the news. “... we had always said we were so lucky that we had never lost any of our grandchildren, and thought maybe our luck had run out.”

What the rest of us did not know that morning was that my sister had not gone to work on Park Avenue as usual. She had not gone to work at all.

“It was just one of those mornings,” she said. “One of those mornings when you get up, and nothing is going right, and you’re running late.”

In her small basement apartment in New Jersey, Summer was getting ready for work while watching the Fox 5 news. She saw the footage of the first plane hitting the World Trade Center.

“I looked at it, but I didn’t think anything of it,” she recalled. “I don’t know why. I was like, ‘god that’s horrible, but I still gotta get to work.’”

Thinking there must be some issues with air traffic control, Summer hopped in the car en route to the train station, still determined to go to work. She remembers listening to Howard Stern on the radio, a very serious, humor-free Howard Stern, covering every second of what was going on: the Pentagon, Pennsylvania, the second plane.

“That’s when I thought, ‘this is scary, I’m not going to go into the city today,’” she said.

She had already taken time off work to fly to Montana two days later. With airports shut down and the city in wounded chaos, Summer decided to start her trip early. She left that day by car.

On that cross country drive, she recalls seeing evidence of patriotism displayed everywhere and how the nation visibly banded together.

However, returning to the city the following week was when it really hit her, Summer said. As she stepped off the train into Penn Station like she had done so many times before, she stepped into a very different New York. This one had missing person posters plastered everywhere, most of them handmade. The once bustling city streets were quiet. Train station parking lots were filled with cars no one picked up for days, weeks. There was no one to pick them up.

Though she was in the city daily, my sister did not visit Ground Zero until Thanksgiving of that year. The site was still smoldering, and the smell sickening. Missing person flyers still posted.

The aftermath, she says, was almost worse than the tragedy itself: the change in the city, the somberness and those faces staring back at you from the ever present flyers.

Our family is lucky; we are all still here to tell our story of that day, to remember and to be grateful. Many were not so lucky. But whether you lost someone close to you or not, here we are 10 years later, still feeling the aftermath of that day: Sept. 11, 2001.

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