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We can learn and change from remembering events of Sept. 11

Nine months ago today, America was a pretty normal place. A plane could fly overhead without any concerns. People looked out the windows of the country's tallest skyscrapers with the only thing on their minds being the beautiful view. Of course, what happened the next day changed our lives forever.

It is difficult for many of us to fully understand what happened on Sept. 11. The closest a majority of the country ever came to the World Trade Center was through our television sets. Although many people have tried, I can't even begin to imagine how the lives of those directly affected by the tragedy have changed.

Since Sept. 11, the country has risen up in a patriotic storm. You can't drive around anymore without seeing a "God Bless

America" bumper sticker on a minivan. But why couldn't we have cared a little bit about our country before the terrorists attacked us? It was our superficial urge to boost our stock portfolios, eat our fast food and turn on our satellite televisions that made the terrorists do what they did. As a country, we had lost touch with the basic freedoms we enjoy. It is pathetic for people to think that by putting a bumper sticker on their car, somehow they understand and everything will be all right. It is also pathetic that it took such a tragedy to bring the United States to this level of patriotism, even if it is a false one.



Jeff Oliver
Columnist

For me and my fellow graduates from the University, life has gone on since Sept. 11. Unless we boarded an airplane or crossed the border, our everyday lives consisted of the same regimen that existed before the hijacked planes were flown into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. As our generation enters the world, though, we will carry the impact of Sept. 11 with us.

Like our grandparents who lived through World War II, our generation will be more intent on funding the military. We will also take a greater interest in what our government is doing,

not only domestically, but also around the world.

For most of our lives, political leaders have slipped through the cracks of responsibility. Now, every little move they make will be watched. At the same time, though, we will trust our leaders more than ever before.

We were a self-interested country before Sept. 11. Many of us ignored any news of what was happening in other parts of the world. Now we understand that we live in a culture that is dependent on the world as a whole. We are graduating at the height of the information age, so there is no excuse to not pay attention.

Wherever you end up after leaving Eugene, wake up every morning and read the newspaper, and watch the news before you go to bed every night. In between, use the endless supply of sources through the Internet and read from newspapers around the world. In all things, remain critical, and if you have questions, then find the answers.

Sept. 11 was a wake-up call to the United States that knocked us off our high horse, and with much respect to the families of those who lost their lives, it was good for us. We're never going to forget what happened on Sept. 11, but as the future leaders of our country, is it our responsibility to learn from it. We should be thinking not only about how to prepare if it ever happens again, but also about what we can do so nobody ever thinks of doing it again.

E-mail columnist Jeff Oliver at jeffoliver@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.



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