

9/11: A moment of terror and unity

Two decades later, locals reflect on the terrorists attacks

By **BRYCE DOLE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As Amy Madden called her colleagues in New York on Sept. 11, 2001, she wondered why no one was answering.

Madden was working at a securities brokerage firm in Portland, her first job out of college. It was around 6 a.m. She was working east coast hours. A coworker brought in a radio. Together, they listened as the world changed.

"I just remember being scared," said Madden, the manager of Roosters Country Kitchen in Pendleton.

At around that same time more than 200 miles away, Jack Remillard was preparing for the first day of the Pendleton Round-Up. His daughter, who was in the army and was stationed in Alabama, called and told Remillard to turn on the TV.

As the first images appeared, the since-retired assistant chief and fire marshal remembers clearly what went through his mind: "Firefighters are going to die today."

He was right. More than 340 New York firefighters died that day. Nearly 3,000 people died in total.

It was a tragedy that forever shaped America's place in the world. Twenty years later, that day sticks in the minds of residents living nearly 2,700 miles away from the World Trade Center.

Grasping what happened

When Remillard got to the station later that day, the television was on. Every channel displayed the carnage, and the firefighters, like millions of people nationwide, were glued to the TV. As he headed to the Round-Up, he saw the local National Guard's tank heading toward the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport at Pendleton. Until then, it hadn't sunk in that the nation was at war.

That evening, Madden



Firefighters raise a flag late in the afternoon of Sept. 11, 2001, in the wreckage of the World Trade Center towers in New York.

The Associated Press, File

recalled going to church, "because I didn't know what else to do," she said. The service was packed with hundreds of people. The pastor prayed for the men and women that would be called to war.

In the days to come, Madden reeled with anxiety. She told a doctor that she was experiencing panic and shortness of breath. The doctor told her many others were experiencing the same thing. She felt that her shel-

tered life had been shattered. She said she had to grow up quickly.

"You didn't know when the next attack would come," she said.

Back in Pendleton, Remillard felt similar to Madden.

He was on edge. That Round-Up, he said, was somber and subdued.

"It was clear people were worried," he said.

The tragedy hits home

Michael Selves was a 1965 graduate of Pendleton High

Tribute honors retired lieutenant colonel killed in 9/11 terror attack

The Main Street Cowboys on Saturday, Sept. 11, will hold a tribute to Michael Selves, a 1965 Pendleton High School graduate and retired Army lieutenant colonel who was killed when a plane struck the Pentagon on 9/11. The tribute will occur at 9:45 a.m. on the side street between the Pendleton Round-Up & Happy Canyon Hall of Fame Museum and the new Round-Up office. Organizers encourage classmates of Selves, among other community members, to attend the tribute.

School and a retired Army lieutenant colonel who died in the plane strike at the Pentagon. Selves also was the son of Remillard's neighbor.

Remillard's job, as he describes it, was to protect firefighters so that they could protect the public. After hearing the reports of firefighters killed that day, he felt a greater responsibility to his crew.

"It made me realize I needed to do a lot better at my job than I thought I was," he said. "When 9/11 hit, I wanted to make sure the guys were OK, whatever happens."

Shortly after, public safety officials gathered in the Vert Auditorium, Pendleton. Together, they tried to make sense of the event. They spoke of their feelings and sang songs. Later, they paraded through the town. Remillard said he felt proud to be an American after 9/11.

"To me, that showed a pride in who we are and why we do what we do," he said.

A sense of unity had descended on the entire nation, he and Madden said. They felt it, even though they were nearly 2,700 miles from where the Twin Towers fell.

Surreal September

9/11 etches itself into memories of Baker County residents

By **JAYSON JACOBY,**
LISA BRITTON and
SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Whitney Black remembered the horror and the fear and the disbelief.

But even more vividly from the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, she remembered the frustration.

How helpless she felt, with most of a continent between her and New York City, where two great buildings had collapsed, where so many people had died and so many more were suffering.

"As soon as I found out, I felt like I should be there, helping people, protecting," Whitney said on Thursday, Sept. 9, two days shy of the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.



Black

"It drove me nuts."

Whitney, now 49, was at home in Baker City that sunny, late summer morning with her husband, Shannon, and their two young children.

They didn't have a television. She first learned of the tragedy when her brother-in-law, Chris Black, telephoned.

"Check the news," he told her.

Whitney recalled watching on TV as the second airliner struck one of the Twin Towers. She said she thinks she was at her parents' home in Baker City.

She's not sure about that.

But she absolutely recalled her reaction to seeing that improbable collision, the fire and the smoke, the tiny dots on the screen that were people, leaping to their deaths.

"Surreal," she said.

"We were all so afraid, just trying to sort it out," Whitney said. "We

got to see it in real time. Your heart aches."

Later in the day, when the scale of the catastrophe became clear, she said she felt compelled to act. She started by calling Baker City churches. She phoned other people she knew.

Her goal was to gather supplies that people in New York City might need, or that might offer them some meager comfort in a terrible time.

"It was a channel for my frustration," Whitney said. "I think a lot of people responded that way."

Within a day, Whitney was watching about 30 volunteers sort through donated items at the Baker City Church of the Nazarene, stacking them into piles on tables.

There were gloves and clothes and toys to brighten a frightened child's day.

She said she talked with a man in New York City who was coordinating the donations that arrived from across America. She recalled how gratified she was at the sheer volume of donations Baker City and Baker County residents collected and how shocked her New York City contact was when she told him what the population here is.

She had to repeat the figure twice.

"It was amazing," Whitney said. "We came together. We were all just devastated. How can you have any petty squabbles with anyone when you see something like that? So many people wanted to volunteer."

Two decades later, it's that community spirit that helps Whitney balance the sadness of her memories of what she, along with so many millions of Americans, saw that day.

Bill Mitchell, retired teacher

Sept. 11, 2001, was a Tuesday, and every Tuesday Bill Mitchell played basketball at 6 a.m. before heading to his classroom at Baker Middle School, where he taught social studies.

As the time for school



Robert Giroux/Getty Images

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, a coordinated terrorist attack saw two hijacked commercial airplanes crash into New York City's Twin Towers, a third plane into the Pentagon, and a fourth into a field in western Pennsylvania. In the Manhattan crashes alone, 2,753 people were killed, and an additional 244 people died in the other two locations. The attacks were the most devastating terrorist activity to ever take place on American soil.

approached, he headed to get his mail at the school office.

"It's just as clear as if it was yesterday," he said.

Dana Blankenship, who taught science at BMS, met Mitchell at the stairs.

"He said 'It's Pearl Harbor all over again. Turn your TV on.'"

Mitchell did, and watched the



Mitchell

chaos in New York City, a place he'd visited several years before with a group of middle school students.

And on that day, a Tuesday ingrained in so many American memories, he would stand before multiple classes.

"I remember thinking the lesson plan for today has changed drastically. It became a question-and-answer day," he said.

Mitchell remembers two reactions from his students. First, they

were picking up — and absorbing — the anxiety of the adults around them.

Second, they wanted answers. "Their need to want definitive answers of what's happening and what were the consequences. And there were no answers," Mitchell said.

He did have one truth to offer.

"I told them things are going to change," he said.

He has not yet returned to New York City.