

Attacks:

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In looking at how the U.S. effort in Afghanistan turned out, Marcum was a bit disappointed.

"It's unexplainable, seeing the decades of work and progress made ruined," he said of the Taliban takeover. "All because of some bad political decisions. A good effort was definitely thrown away."

He said there were 25 Marines killed and more than 180 wounded in his unit when he was attached to Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marine Division. He fears that while the U.S. had to take action in the wake of 9/11, attempting to build democracy in a culture that really didn't understand it or accept it was a futile effort.

"It was hard being there and not being discouraged. Seeing the devastation of a war for both the Afghan's and military members across the world, and for what?" he said.

Marcum, who now is the lead hunting guide for Divide Camp, which works to heal veterans through God and nature, is concerned that although it's been 20 years since 9/11, many veterans have had trouble moving on.

"There are thousands of veterans who did things they can't forget, and who lost a lot of friends," he said. "The military's suicide rate is already too high, events like this can often times be the last thing for someone before they break. If you're struggling, reach out. It's not worth the loss of anymore lives."

He urged any veterans who are struggling to reach out to a friend, family member, anyone. Or call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255.

Jack James of Enterprise was in Afghanistan for about six months in 2002 as an individual augmen-

tee to Joint Special Operations Task Force as a Navy Seal in Combined Joint Task Force 180. He served directly under the general who was in charge of operations at the U.S. Air Base at Bagram, one of the last positions held by the U.S. before the evacuation.

"I could keep my eye on how this conventional commander was going to use the Special Operations Task Force," the former Navy commander said. "For the most part it was good. I learned a lot."

James said he learned "combat patience," which he defined as when something's going on in the field, senior officers must give the guy in field time to work out the problem.

Although it's a disappointment that Afghanistan fell to the Taliban after the U.S. withdrawal, he doesn't see it as a waste and said it's much different than the fall of Saigon in 1975.

"It's a sad scenario, but it's not a waste," he said. "It looks like Vietnam, but it's a lot more organized. (It was) twenty years of war, 20 years of American soldiers dying there and loss of American treasure. ... On the surface it seems like fall of Saigon. They were trying to get everyone out then but didn't have enough helicopters."

James agreed that for a country like the U.S. to try to rebuild Afghanistan, it seemed like a futile effort.

"You're not going to be able to change a culture that's been there for centuries and a totally different religion," he said.

But James doesn't feel the entire effort was a waste.

"Some kinds of seeds were planted. ... It'll be a shame if Taliban cut off everything," he said. "I'm waiting for some suicide bomber gets on one of the planes going out. ... They're going to want to end it with a bang."

Zak Bradshaw of Enterprise was



Andy Marcum/Contributed Photo

Andy Marcum of Enterprise deployed with this group of K9 Marines from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. These Marines, seen here at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, and their dogs are vital for the detection of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the field.

already planning going into the military, when the attacks took place early one day of his junior year of high school. They were televised all day. But he hadn't yet decided on the branch.

"By 9/11 I'd decided on the Marine Corps," he said. "I just wanted to be a Marine."

Although 9/11 didn't change his plans, it did make them more profound.

"It just made joining the military feel more real," he said. "You just knew there was more of a likelihood of being in a war by the time I could actually go in."

When the invasion of Iraq happened during March 2003, he knew he'd be going to Iraq or Afghanistan.

"It didn't really matter which," he said.

Was the national effort worth it?

"I can't agree with all the justification or reasons or policies from the various administrations over the past 20 years, but I don't look at either of them as having been in vain," Bradshaw said. "Afghanistan is a country we already knew was harboring al-Qaida and overthrowing the unrecognized Taliban government" was appropriate.

As for Iraq and Saddam Hussein, they were "not good" though the country was relatively stable.

"I think it was a good thing to get rid of that government," he said.

The numerous names of fellow

Marines who didn't come home from Iraq that Bradshaw has tattooed on his side are a regular reminder that their lives were not a waste.

"A lot of things that 9/11 changed were transparent to me because I hadn't flown before so I hadn't experienced those security situations," he said. "So I didn't have a ton of noticeable differences. I think the biggest thing was an expectation of more terrorist attacks after 9/11. A post-9/11 world created a world of fear for America, which is what terrorism's geared at."

Public officials

Wallowa County Commissioner Susan Roberts served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1967-69 — well before 9/11. She worked at a Marine base handling supply and logistics, managing men and material going into and out of the country.

In 2001, she was mayor of Enterprise. She said that at the time, the city took no direct action as a result of the attacks.

"It should've affected everyone, but the kind of action a small city in Eastern Oregon would've taken would've been a 'feel-good' thing," she said. "Most of us here felt quite sure it was a planned event and ... there's no sense in panicking everybody."

But she hasn't forgotten the tragedy and shock of the attacks.

"I'd like to remind people that after these things happen, we say we'll never forget. We build memorials and then move on to other things," she said. "When you say 'We'll never forget,' you don't have to be out on the street carrying signs saying 'We'll never forget.' It's within yourself to remember."

Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish wasn't in the county in 2001; he was an investigator/detective with the Catawba County, Sheriff's Office in North Carolina. He remembers a shift in the awareness of law enforcement toward criminal enterprises.

"We became more cognizant of criminal groups that might be funding terrorism," he said.

He added that a friend became aware of a group that was smuggling tax-free cigarettes to New York, with the proceeds going to the terrorist group Hezbollah. That friend went onto work an FBI task force focusing on such criminal activities.

"Law enforcement is the first guard against terrorism," Fish said. "There was more training in my capacity in North Carolina on identifying people" who were likely to have terrorist contacts.

He also told of a gun range there that had people wanting to come in and simulate personal combat but were reluctant to identify themselves, which prompted a call to the sheriff's office.

"In law enforcement, in general, there's more training to be on the lookout," he said. "We started noticing things going on around us with international ties, rather than just ordinary day-to-day crime."

One way of not forgetting is an awareness of how the attacks changed the world, Roberts said.

"With what's occurring in the world today, don't pretend it won't happen again," she said. "But focus on the stuff that matters, not the stuff that doesn't."

Workers:

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No chance for profit

Millar is not alone. Several restaurants across the region have reported challenges with hiring workers over the summer. Some blamed expanded federal unemployment benefits as the culprit for lower workforce participation, even though the region has seen lower unemployment benefits claims now than it had before the pandemic started. Others recognized the high cost of living, taxes and low supply of housing that has made rents and home prices balloon.

Millar explained that while business picked up considerably over the summer, the lack of staffing and overburdened industry has a cascading effect with other restaurants, causing a feedback loop of demand and short supply. As one business cuts its hours, patrons look elsewhere for a meal.

"It's a funny, weird thing where I think we would all be excited if there were three more restaurants because we just need more places to send people to eat, so it's a unique situation over here," Millar said.

Earlier this summer, Baker City's Main Event Sports Bar and Eatery was experiencing severe worker burnout in June due to staffing shortages, which led to closing the restaurant on Tuesdays.

The situation there has changed little. While the sports bar is open seven days a week, it's had to cut

evening hours, close earlier and open later throughout the week.

"On Sundays and Mondays we're one of the only restaurants open on Main Street, so we're extremely busy, but extremely short staffed," said Jessica Eastland, manager at Main Event Sports Bar and Eatery. "If we had an adequate staff, it would be a very profitable time for us but that's the thing — we've got people who are working overtime hours when we could have had other employees working those hours, so that we weren't paying more in wages. Our wages right now are through the roof because we have so many employees that are working overtime every single week because we are so short staffed."

Rolling with the punches

For Bruce Rogers, COVID-19 has presented the challenge of keeping two businesses profitable. He and his daughter, Harvest Rogers, own both Timber's Feederly in Elgin and Local Harvest in La Grande.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unimaginable challenges in staffing for both restaurants. With the shortage of workers and revolving mandates for public dining, the owners have adjusted to rolling with the punches.

"This far into it and with what we've seen, the rules have changed and the rules are different and will change again," Bruce Rogers said. "We're just chameleons at this point. We just change and go with the flow while doing our best to remain a

profitable business."

On top of the shortage of workers, Timber's Feederly is facing a hurdle as Harvest Rogers takes maternity leave. She said she typically works open to close every day, and her absence has forced Timber's to limit orders to takeout and outdoor dining for the time being.

Closing indoor dining is a technique that the owners used on both restaurants to save costs with a limited staff during the early part of the pandemic. They looked at new ideas in order to stay afloat during unstable times.

"When you couldn't have inside dining, we switched over to to-go and delivery only," Bruce Rogers said. "We had to start up a delivery service to remain competitive at that point, but when we opened back up

again we shut the delivery off."

Both Timber's Feederly and Local Harvest changed hours from seven days a week to five days a week, and both close an hour earlier than they used to. One advantage to owning two restaurants is the ability to rotate staff from one location to another if one restaurant is short.

"We have several employees that are able to work at both places, mostly our top three people are very versatile for us," Bruce Rogers said. "They fill in everywhere for us."

Filling the gap

With pandemic-related federal unemployment programs ending, Bruce Rogers is expecting an increase in prospective employees. In addition, students return-

ing to attend Eastern Oregon University in the fall are promising for filling positions.

To cope with employment challenges, the owners have adjusted the scope of employees compared to who they would typically hire in the past.

"The demographics have changed," Bruce Rogers said. "We've started hiring younger people and we've started hiring older people. When we find people that are qualified, we try to snatch them up."

They hired, for example, two 16-year-olds in the summer and had a family friend who is a retired teacher come work for the restaurants.

"We've leaned on friends and family to help us

through this time as well," Rogers said.



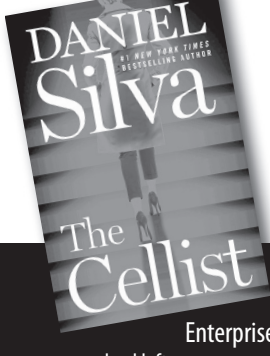
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