

A Guest Article from Florida's Attorney General



*Bill
McCollum*

Remembering 9/11/2001

Many of us can recall exactly where we were when we heard the news of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. I was driving on the George Washington Parkway in Washington, DC, just opposite the Pentagon, when I heard the report on the radio that United Airlines Flight 175 hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Minutes later, a second plane hit the towers and American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon.

That tragic day eight years ago changed everything. Americans were shaken to the core. We lost our sense of security as we watched, horrorstruck, as terrorists turned airplanes into guided missiles. We gathered with our loved ones—thankful they were safe—and prayed for victims' families and mourned the loss of total strangers.

That morning cast a spotlight on America's heroes. As thousands of men and women ran away from the collapsing towers in New York's financial district, on that morning, hundreds of brave men and women ran toward ground zero. Law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics and other first responders risked their own lives in the hopes of saving others.

In the following weeks, the world watched as law enforcement officers and firefighters from around the country flooded into New York to help the city recover. Those dedicated individuals became the faces of freedom, democracy and enduring strength. The American public rallied around our first responders, proud of what they represented—that the American spirit perseveres, even in

our darkest moments. In those weeks and months, we began the long journey to healing.

Eight years later, I am still awestruck by the unimaginable courage our law enforcement officers showed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. No man or woman alive could have witnessed the implosion of the twin towers in person and not been terrified. To have the level of commitment to public service that would give a person the drive to enter that scene is beyond comprehension.

In Florida, this heroism is evident every day. Our men and women in law enforcement enter dangerous situations daily to protect our citizens and enforce our laws. The call to civil service is one of the most admirable a person can receive. The decision to be on the front lines, fighting crime in our neighborhoods and protecting our citizens from their fellow man, is a daring and selfless one.

We are reminded all too often of the dangers that our law enforcement officers face in the field; in the past two months, Florida lost two courageous officers in the line of duty. My thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of **Tampa Police Officer Mike Roberts** and **Polk County**

Detention Sergeant Ronnie Brown – these two men died while answering the call of duty and we should remember them as fine examples of Florida's very best: the men and women in law enforcement who have made Florida's safety their priority. Their heroism is as evident today as it was on that tragic day in September 2001, and Florida is a better place because of their efforts. ●

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A man decides to join the circus. He shows up to demonstrate his skills to the impresario.

"I have the most unusual act," he announces. "I'm sure it will amaze you."

He proceeds to climb a tall tower, and jumps off. He flaps his arms wildly, and finally his fall slows. He soars forward, then swoops upward, turns and swoops back again. Finally he stops in mid air and gently lowers himself to the ground.

The impresario stares blankly at him for a long time. Finally he says, "Is that all you've got? Bird imitations?"

What Was It Like When...?

By Keith Bettinger

I enjoy studying history. I watch the history channel, read the tomes of Stephen Ambrose, and love to read historical novels. I am a baby boomer, a member of the generation that came to be when our heroes returned from World War II.

When I read about the attack on Pearl Harbor I wonder what went through the minds of the American public as they heard the news that the American Military had been attacked. I wondered what it was like to be suddenly pulled into a war. My parents can still tell me stories about rationing, food and gas coupons, and friends going off to war. Every community has a memorial to those friends and heroes who did not return.

The war of my generation was a long and protracted one. It too has many heroes that are now growing gray. It was not like World War II. It had been around for years, and slowly swallowed up the youth of the United States. Our veterans were not treated with the respect they deserved. The Viet Nam war did not answer for our generation the question, what was it like when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Now we have our answer. On September 11, 2001, terrorists stole our aging innocence. On that day, America was plunged into a new war; probably different than any other it has ever fought. This time our military was not the only target. Symbols of American pride were destroyed. Along with the twin towers went thousands of civilians working in many different occupations, while they tried to secure the American dream. Stolen from us along with all those civilians are the heroes of the New York City Fire Department, the New York City Police Department, the Port Authority Police Department and the military and civilian personnel at the Pentagon, who went into the burning buildings to rescue people while others were fleeing for their lives.

In the history of law enforcement and fire fighting, losses of these staggering proportions have never been seen before. The losses from this horrific event took more lives than those lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Baby Boomers, who wanted to know what it was like when Pearl Harbor was attacked and America was plunged into war, now have their answer. The "other" generation can tell you where they were on December 7, 1941. Many generations can tell you where they were when they received the news that President John F. Kennedy was killed, and now we all will remember where we were on September 11, 2001. We now know what it was like when the United States was attacked and plunged into war. It has happened to us. May God Bless America!

Keith Bettinger writes from Las Vegas, NV. He is the author of: FIGHTING CRIME WITH "SOME" DAY AND LENNY. He is Secretary of the Public Safety Writers Association (www.policewriter.com) and winner of 11 awards for writing.

The drill sergeant making his morning announcements to a group of newcomers in a training camp, stated: "Today, gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. First, the good. Private Brabant will be setting the pace on our morning run."

With this the platoon was overjoyed, as Private Brabant was overweight and terribly slow.

But then the drill sergeant finished his statement: "Now for the bad news. Private Brabant will be driving a truck."