

We Remember...September 11, 2001

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*Chief Reporter
New Journal and Guide*

"The World Will Not Be Same."

That statement has been uttered like a mantra since the terrorist attacks this time last year.

Americans of every walk of life have been assessing the impact of the attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) and the Pentagon on not only the country as whole, but their individual personal and family lives, too.

Days after the attacks, the level of fear and anxiety equaled the level of angst against the men, who were quickly identified as the culprits who hijacked and then piloted

the planes into the buildings, killing thousands and tearing down the nation's walls of security and peace.

In the wake of the observance of that "infamous day" when America's domestic peace and security were attacked, the *New Journal and Guide* interviewed a variety of Hampton Roads residents to determine how they view life today.

And how, if any, the attacks last September have altered their perspective, professionally and personally.

Each time she sees an airplane cutting through the skies of Hampton Roads, Del. Win-some Sears says she utters a small private prayer.

She, like many of the

Hampton Roads residents who thought that an airplane was a safe and efficient means of traveling long distances, views them now as possible tools for sudden and remarkable destruction.

"I do not think we take plane rides or life for granted these days," said Del. Sears, who

"I have seen more stories...which educate us about the world and allow us to look at our world more clearly."

*Don Roberts
News Reporter*

represents the 90th House of Delegates District. "We have developed a new awareness of things which once were not so frightening. Once upon...we viewed terrorism as something which occurred far way. But now it has occurred here at home and now we have a new sense of vulnerability."

Sears said that many of her



Dr. Kevin McCowan
Photo by Derrick Smith

"I do not think I will ever forget what I saw..."

Dr. Kevin McCowan

constituents she talks to these days, still fear renewed attacks, despite the precautions taken at the nation's airports and other areas.

She said, as a member of the General Assembly, she is vigilant about bills which may threaten American civil liberties and rights.

Sears recalls that during the last and the first session she attended, she worked with other lawmakers to kill a bill which on the surface had good intentions, but had it been passed, would have had grave consequences.

"The Bill would have allowed students on Virginia colleges and universities to vote on campus where they attend school as though it was their native home," she said. "But it would have barred them from receiving student financial aid

based on their location and other privileges they had."

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Putting 9-11 and what it means into prospective

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Sears said, "In the wake of 9-11, a lot of people are worried about the safety of our people and keeping would-be terrorists from using our laws to hurt us. But at the same time, we do not want to pass laws which would restrict our God-given rights at the federal and state level."

Rev. Marcellus Harris of the First Baptist Church Morrison in Newport News, said that weeks after the September 2001 attacks, he saw an increase in the number of people sitting in the pews at his sanctuary.

"I think people had a high level of consciousness of their vulnerability and the potential for violence in this nation," said Harris. "It has settled down now, and the number of people coming to church has also."

Harris is a leader in the Peninsula chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and is worried about the spoiling of Civil Rights, especially by the federal government, which is seeking to infiltrate, deter and destroy organizations and individuals who may be part of an organized terrorist cell in the States and in Europe.

"Profiling is a big concern. I was at the airport (in Newport News) when a White woman said she would not get on a plane because she saw some gentlemen who looked like they were from the Middle East and may be terrorists. I think citizens and the government may be overreacting."

Harris continued, "Black folks, especially, should be worried about this...although we have been victims of profiling and terrorists for 300 years. We should be worried about people being arrested and held with no charges. Many of these people are of color. And I fear that people of color and folks who look like Arabs may be larger targets for profiling."

Don Roberts recently celebrated his 13th anniversary as a staff reporter for WAVY-TV 10, located in Portsmouth.

Since 9-11 Roberts has had a greater sense of urgency about covering subjects for the news which have "more meaning to the lives of people."

"We have been accused of covering news which has no importance...it does not make a difference in our lives like car chases," said Roberts. "But since 9-11, I have noticed more effort has been devoted to covering news about our children. If there are stories about victims, then we do pieces about who the victim was and how he lived and about his family."

"I have seen more stories which educate people about the reasons why people abroad hate us. These are stories which educate us about the world around us and allow us to look at our world more clearly."

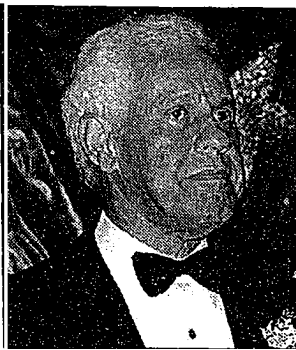
Luis Galindo, is a native of Colombia, is studying advertising at Norfolk State University and is a senior.

Once he completes his degree, next spring, he will be returning to his native land applying his degree in a business he hopes to open.

The Colombian government over the past decade has been fighting to destroy various homegrown terrorist cells. Most are left-wing organizations, bent on bringing down a Colombian government they say is corrupt and inefficient. Inciting fear in the people, they believe, will lead to a loss of confidence in the government.

Many are funded by the highly organized and powerful drug cartels in that country, who funnel billions in illicit drugs to the U.S.

Over the years, Galindo has had close friends who have been killed during terrorist bombings in Bogata, where he lives. During summer breaks at home, he has heard and seen the explosion of bombs planted by terrorists, just two blocks from his parents' home.



Former Va. Gov. L. Douglas Wilder

"People in my country live in fear of terrorism every day," said Galindo. "There is no justification for such violence and cause of death here or back home. But when 9-11 occurred, Americans felt the same vulnerability that people in Columbia and the Middle East feel. I think that sense of invulnerability and safety has been lost to a degree."

Former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder said that the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 can be linked to long standing hatred by extremists around the world who may be resentful and jealous of American cultural freedom and economic wealth and have a perception that Americans are "meddling" in affairs overseas.

"We should be asking not, why do they hate us, but, what do we do to cause them to hate us," said Wilder, the first Black man to be elected governor of a state.

Wilder said that Americans should consider the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the seeds of ferment it has spurred in the Middle East which fosters angst against United States interests.

He said the recent defeat of Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, in the Congressional Primary in Georgia, because of her perceived pro-Palestinian stance, was an indicator of how the Middle Eastern tumult is causing such events as 9-11, and affecting the nation politically.

"McKinney was very liberal and outspoken and openly contemptuous of the Bush policy...even accusing him of having prior knowledge of the attacks last year," said Wilder. "That caused some resentment from not only Whites but some moderate African Americans. That shows some fissures in the Black political thinking in this nation. But I think that they can be repaired."

"I do not think that anyone can question Black patriotism," said Wilder. "But I think we have to be careful about endorsing policies which may not be fair or cause unnecessary conflict here or abroad."

Wilder echoed a sentiment of Rev. Harris who said that "we have laid down our lives since the first days of the Revolutionary War, even when we were not considered full citizens. Crispus Attucks, a Black man, was the first man to die in war for this country's freedom. And he could not vote, could not own land or enter a pub to have a meal then."

"Black Americans are showing the same level of patriotism today, despite the disparities which exist in this nation."

Iman Vernon Fareed is the leader of a small Muslim Community in the city of Norfolk. Days after the attacks last year, Fareed was anxious, and so were many of his family and fellow Muslims, about reprisals against them.

Most of the perpetrators who were involved in the hijacking of the planes were Muslims, but who were extremists in the Islamic religious fold, Fareed said.

Fortunately, his worst fears were not realized.

Fareed said that over the past year, there has been a "reaching out" from Christian and Jewish groups to the various Muslim communities in Hampton Roads.

"I have had numerous invitations to go out and speak to Christians and Jewish groups who want to be educated about Islam and what it means," said Fareed.

"There has been a distance between these Christian and Jewish groups and the Muslim community which has fostered not only fear, but contempt. Islam is about peace. Yet, there are extremists who believe in violence. Luckily it's just a few."

Fareed said that he has spoken before mostly White Christian and Jewish groups. He has had a few invitations to address Black congregations. He says that although there is a rift between White Christians and Jews, the gap is just as wide between Black Christians and Black Muslims.

"I think there is a fear that we may influence or recruit members of their flocks into our church," he said. "There is also a questioning of the message of Islam compared to Christianity. Most Muslims have a Christian relative or friend. But there is a distance between us which needs to be bridged."

Fareed said that many of his fellow Muslims, especially in leadership positions, are aware that "we are being watched because they fear our mosques and community have been infiltrated by the kind of extremists who carried out the attacks."

Many of the faces of the men who have been arrested for alleged involvement in the terrorist attacks are men of color, such as Zacarias Moussaoui. Moussaoui is known as the "20th Hijacker" who took flying lessons in the United States in preparation to commit acts of terror either on September 11 or later that year, if he had not been arrested in June prior to the attacks.

Fareed said that representatives of the FBI held meetings with local Islamic leaders two months after the attacks to assess "our concerns about our safety and other issues and ask for our help."

"I think there are a great deal of concerns especially from recent Muslim immigrants to this country," he said. "We're just hoping that people deem Islam as a way of life of peace...not one which threatens this nation."

"We have been seeking to convince the vast majority of the nation of that. But we know there are those who still harbor

suspicious and questions about what Islam means and is all about."

Dr. Kevin G. McCowan of Newport News was sitting with over 100 other physicians in a meeting hall just blocks from the World Trade Center when the two airplanes plowed into the twin towers.

Alerted of the possibility of a long list of injured and casualties, McCowan and other surgeons boarded buses for a hospital in the city, to stand by for the flow of people they expected to treat from the site.

Few of the injured came, he said. Later, he and other physicians boarded buses for a make-shift hospital just blocks from what would become known as "Ground Zero."

"There I saw the real, raw emotion of the thousands of people who were the real heroes...who saw the tragedy close up," said McCowan. "Today I still carry those experiences with me...I do not think I will ever forget what I saw and the emotions of the people encountered during that day I volunteered to lend my medical talents for such a worthy cause."

McCowan has been on a lecture circuit about Hampton Roads and elsewhere, sharing

his experiences with over 30 groups thus far. It is a catharsis and source of closure for him and others who were miles away from Manhattan that day.

"And it is a way in which a lot of people can share with me one of the most horrific events of our time," he said.

"People walk up to me and say how grateful they are for being able to see and listen to a man who was so close to such a huge and painful event in modern times."

Shortly after the tragedy, McCowan documented that infamous day while it was still fresh in his mind in a book he wrote with pictures and personal recollections.