

**September 11 Memorial Service
Comments for LTC Mike Burt
September 11, 2002**

Good morning. We gather today for a simple ceremony that marks the one year anniversary of the events of September 11, 2001. It was a day that will live indelibly in this nation's collective mindset until all living on that day will too have passed.

We begin our ceremony today with Skip Jacobs raising the American flag to half mast; followed by Rose Hatchett leading us in singing our National Anthem.

Skip lowers/raises to half mast the flag
Rose sings National Anthem

My speech this morning is taken from Sunday's Times Picayune. Leonard Pitts Jr. is the author and it sums up why we meet on this solemn occasion.

“And so, September comes around again. In the first days, it seemed appropriate somehow to mark our distance from the awful event in small increments, grateful that each step forward was another step away. We commemorated the end of the first week, the end of the first month. Now suddenly we are at the end of the first year since that late summer morning when two air buses controlled by terrorists were crashed into the towers of the World Trade Center, a third into the side of the Pentagon and a fourth into the Pennsylvania countryside.

One year. And predictably, we keepers of communal memory, we photographers and composers, artists and journalists, attempt now to summon back that day, to offer such context as we can, such meaning as we are able. But the tools of our trades feel inadequate to the task.

Where are the colors on the palette, the words in the dictionary, to explain what it felt like watching those planes impale those towers, the mind refusing to process the things the eyes reported?

What images in a viewfinder or notes on the scale can capture it all? How can you frame the dry-mouth disbelief of seeing people leap from burning skyscrapers and knowing their decision was perfectly logical, of watching dust-caked survivors wander the outskirts of holocaust like some army of the godforsaken, of knowing that your greatest city is suddenly closed for business?

Of praying, “God, why?”

I don’t know the words for these things. Can’t imagine the pictures or the songs. I only know that September 11, 2001, is the day the good old days ended.”

Did it change everything? Yes and no.

Yes... in that we believed the United States was a privileged sanctuary, that distant threats could not disturb our lives. We will never feel that way again.

But then, no, it did not change everything...American life has always been about change and facing challenges, and from the Civil War to the Great Depression to World War II, American have always risen to confront the monumental events of our times.

So we stand here today, saddened in memory, but determined to adapt to the inevitable change in our country. We always have.

Next in our ceremony are the readings by several employees who volunteered to express their feelings through prayer or poem.

Stan Green
Chris Brown
Peggy Plaisance
Van Nguyen
Michael Bourgeois
Eileen Farley

“G” Gomez will now lead us in singing America the Beautiful. It will be followed with Ed Usner playing Taps, and Rose singing God Bless America.

“G” sings America the Beautiful
Ed plays Taps
Rose leads with God Bless America

The final phase of our ceremony is the ringing of the district’s bell. I am proud to begin the three and a half hour tribute. Thank you for coming.