

THE RESPONDER

Virgin America Emergency Response Newsletter
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Remembered: 10 Years Later

A decade has passed. Many of us still recall that horrific day – September 11, 2001. A lot has changed, including the governments’ control of airport security. The way we once prepared to take flight is a thing of the past. The economy has changed; with different administration in place to lead the country. Perhaps most significant to the tragedy, the mastermind behind what has simply become known as 9/11 is dead.

In the days since we watched the fall of the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center, widowers and widows have remarried and unborn babies have grown into the adolescent stage suggesting the continuation of life. While others envision a safer world, many more believe that we are no more secure now than we were before the capture and execution of the Middle East leader. For others, the annihilation of Osama Bin Laden symbolizes the life of a martyr.

Despite our individual thoughts, opinions or beliefs, this month of September – 10 years later offers time to reflect on the victims, the public servants, as well as the innocent.

In Her Own Words

Heidi Snow remembers 9/11 while also managing the emotion of the loss of her own loved one due to the crash of TWA 800. Heidi and Michel were engaged; soon to be married when suddenly future plans became obsolete. Remembering the events of September 11, Heidi recalls, “On

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For the thousands to lose their lives and also those who would survive, we pay tribute as we remember.



September 11th, I was very shaken. 9/11 immediately took me back to those first moments and days when Michel was killed. The loss became as painful and fresh as in the beginning. I remembered the horror of the images of the wreckage of TWA 800 burning on the surface of

the Atlantic Ocean, as I saw fireballs in the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center...I recognized the same expressions of sorrow, pain, shock and anger from the early days at the Flight 800 grief site. I remembered the faces of the forlorn parents who had just lost their children, the wives who had lost their husbands, and a man who had lost his whole family. Mostly, I remembered the children. The most difficult element for me of 9/11 was grasping the scope of the loss and knowing how many loved ones were left behind, about the pain they were experiencing, and how hard it was going to be for them when that immediate shock subsided and when all the acute responders disbanded.”

These same feelings showed up during Heidi’s grieving and later propelled her into action; founding ACCESS – AirCRAFT Casualty Emotional Support Services. In its 15th year, ACCESS has provided care and mentorship to survivors and victims of a number of major air disasters and hundreds of other smaller plane crashes – commercial, private and military operations, ACCESS understands the challenges of air-disaster related tragedies, including the emotional and logistical challenges of sudden death and the

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frequent delays in the confirmation and notification of the loss of life and the prolonged or never resolved investigations into how and why the tragedy occurred.

ACCESS provides a resource of over 250 volunteers coming together from varied backgrounds and disasters, including: Pan Am 103 (1988); TWA 800 (1996); Swissair 111 (1998); EgyptAir 990 (1999), and; Alaska Airlines 261 (2000). Each volunteer provides a living testimony to survival, sharing the common belief that, “The truth is, you will get through it, but it is going to be a long road and it’s going to be a difficult road.”

Surviving Sudden Loss: Stories from those who have lived it, recently published by Heidi, commemorates the 15th anniversary of TWA 800 and the 10th anniversary of 9/11, including stories from individuals who lost loved ones on 9/11 in the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and on Flight 93, in Shanksville, PA. These stories of survival and transformation provide hope for other grief-stricken individuals who have no way to cope with their terrible and unexpected loss.

In July, at the 15th anniversary of TWA 800, Heidi met with some of the 9/11 families who expressed feelings of being anxious as the 10 year anniversary approached. “As I remember those who were lost in 9/11 and I think of those I know who lost loved ones on that tragic day, I am reminded on this 10th anniversary of just how precious life is.”

The Mission of ACCESS is to provide guidance and hope. ACCESS has provided training for Family Assistance groups throughout the US and as far away as Qatar and New Zealand. For additional information about this bereavement care, visit www.accesshelp.org