

It's hard to believe it's been almost a year now since the deadliest attacks on American soil.

After the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, and the foiled hijacking over Pennsylvania, we knew our world was changed. It was as if all innocence were gone, replaced by the threats of biological warfare and potential terrorist acts across the country.

There are those who have voiced the opinion that the falling twin towers in New York were representative of the falling of America. I disagree. Certainly, we all watched in horror as terrorists brought those buildings down, along with a section of the Pentagon.

But, in the weeks and months since, America has pulled itself up and stood stronger, taller and prouder than ever before.

Americans responded with amazing resilience and strength of character, qualities borne out of the struggle that created our country and the weave of the human fabric that makes up our population today.

People waited in line for hours, all across the country, to donate blood. We rallied around the flag, holding it close for solace and strength. We mourned for those we loved and for thousands we never knew.

From the hustle of New York to the calm of a small town in Mississippi, the feelings have been the same. We share a common belief in the principles of freedom that make America unlike any other nation on earth. We display a common caring for the needs of those who are suffering. We provide an example to the rest of the world about the true meanings of words like life and liberty.

However we choose to remember September 11, either corporately or individually, there will always be images and reminders of the shock and sadness of the day, ones that will never be erased from our collective memory – the impact of the planes, the collapse of the towers, the faces of people running through the streets.

Yet there will always be images of hope and promise for us to recall as well – firefighters, policemen and rescue workers, complete strangers reaching out to help each other, and our flag being raised over Ground Zero.

President Bush will lead our nation's remembrance on September 11, and speak to the country that evening. After the ceremonies in New York, we will gather in Jackson to reflect on the day and renew our own hope for the future.

Our nation has been scarred by the events of September 11, but we can and will move on. We owe it to the innocents who died that day, and to generations to come. Our obligation is found in the closing line of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

God Bless America.