

*Remarks for
"Mississippi Remembers 9/11"
September 11, 2002*

Over 61 years ago, an American president spoke of a “day which will live in infamy.” Then – and for years to come – Americans have prayed there would never be another day to fit that description.

Sadly, we are here to remember just such a day.

One year ago today, our nation suffered the deadliest attack in its history. Over the skies of New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, commercial airliners were converted into instruments of destruction.

America – and the rest of the world – watched in horror as innocents were killed in violent acts of terror and desperation. The images of that day will always be with us – they are images we can never forget.

We watched and listened with a mixture of awe and disbelief. We worried about other attacks. We felt vulnerable and violated and unsure about what would happen next.

And we lost two of our own in the attack on the Pentagon – Lieutenant Jerry Don Dickerson, Jr., and Joe Ferguson – men who grew up in Durant, and lived and worked in our nation's capitol.

Yet there were other images that remain imbedded in our collective memory – images of heroic acts, of fearless determination, and of a previously unimagined ability to rise above the challenges before us.

These are the images we cherish and hold close to our hearts. The sight of the stars and stripes rising over Ground Zero. The sounds of a country singing together the call of “God Bless America.”

The response to the events of the day introduced us to new heroes and reminded us of the quiet sacrifices that have been made over the years by the men and women of law enforcement, fire departments, the military and volunteer organizations.

Today, you have seen a few of those heroes – Mississippi’s sons and daughters who have dedicated themselves to serving others. They are the members of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marines, and the Coast Guard – and they are fighting and winning the war against the terror that brought us here today.

They are the members of the fire departments and law enforcement agencies – putting their lives on the line to ensure our safety every day.

They are the quiet volunteers – including Mississippians who worked with the Red Cross at Ground Zero and the Pentagon, who I'd like to ask to stand and be recognized.

Our heroes are here among us – serving in the military, as emergency responders, as ordinary citizens who give selflessly of their time and energy. Our heroes are remembered in this memorial park where we are gathered today – heroes of another generation, another time, and other conflicts.

This is a solemn day for us all. It's a day we can never – and should never – forget.

It's a day that reminds us of our commitment to the principles of our nation and the welfare of those around us.

In 1950, one of Mississippi's greatest writers accepted the Nobel Prize with these words – “I believe that man will not merely endure, he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.”

Today we celebrate the soul of America and all its incredible capacity for compassion, sacrifice and endurance. I thank God for the strength of that soul.

One year ago today, innocent people were killed. It is our job to make sure they did not lose their lives in vain.

May God bless our state, and God bless America.