

9/11: Personal views on a national tragedy
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Sean Sellers shares New York journal

Editors note: Five years ago, Opp native Sean Sellers shared journal entries written as he lived through seeing the World Trade Center destroyed. Now he shares his thoughts again as the country and the city he loves remember that tragic day.

For people, Sept. 11, is synonymous with events like the day Kennedy was shot or the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I remember the minute I saw the second ball of fire in the sky.

Now Sept. 11, 2006 marks five years of a new vocabulary, Ground Zero, is a destination in New York City, Code Orange is the color of everyday heightened awareness, and news announcements like special reports, or breaking news, stop me in my tracks, particularly in light of Homeland Security.

Even with constant media reruns of the events of that day, five years ago, I cannot say I flinch every time I hear a siren, or a car backfire because in New York these are almost hourly sounds of urban friction. I watch the news, but I cannot say that I hear the reports. The clash of politics, the Middle East death tolls, and the price of gas competes with where we stand in New York with the Freedom Tower an unfortunate name, I think. The void that is today Ground Zero, in part, is landfill from development project after development project as progression and technology has changed the landscape.

Before the ground was blasted for the foundation of the Twin Towers in the 1960s, the independent land and business owners in this area waged a fruitless battle, their sacrifice and displacement of the World Trade Center project reopens wounds of the past. The reality of strife is a part of the history of this land.

The financial district, today, Wall Street was first a palisade, a wall, hence the name, raised by the Dutch in the 1600s that stretched from river to river to compensate for its vulnerable position that still today is a tug-of-war stand for this land.

The Great Fire of 1776 burned everything in this area, everything except St. Paul's chapel. A bucket brigade, a chain of men and women passing buckets of water from the Hudson River to douse the church saved it.

Today St. Paul's one of New York's oldest monuments, stands less than 100 yards from where the towers fell. St. Paul's stands today for grace, honor, and resilience; however, it does not stand without its scars: Nothing in New York City stands without scars of that day.

I have lived in the rhythm in the hustle and the bustle of this city for 15 years, and in this time, I experienced an environment so engaging that it rages with the extremes of life itself. Other cultures may make lofty proclamations of art and lifestyle, New York holds a passion that makes living worthwhile.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, New York City is a place halfway between America and the world. A place wedged into the world's frenetic drive that broaches an international trade dynamic. Today we call it global, not international.

It is also here that I became aware of how slowly change moves through one's system, passing through feelings, first the feeling of being overwhelmed, then the stress of fear, and finally the numb reality that swells come September each year. I understand the mourning process; however, the process of defining the Freedom Tower and the ultimate memorial is wearisome at best.

My heart is in New York City. As much as the impact of Sept. 11 holds in my mind when I remember what I witnessed that day, it cannot drive my life. My heart is strong and forgiving as well as determined to live in a city that is routine to me.

Within my routine, I have the luxury of the best that the world holds. My options range from the necessities of the corner store to the diversity of the neighborhood establishments and stretches into the international enclaves of culture and cuisine; the abundance of artistry and lively-hood that makes living unique is here in New York City.

The villages of New York stand firm for the lives that were lost that day, only time will tell if a resolution will establish history, and honor the lost, as well as uplift The People it will stand for as a nation.

My prayers are with the families and the fiscal agencies as they try to fill this void.