



THE

MORNING AFTER...

What Will You Do Today?

By Barry Furey

Yesterday, on 9/11, I made a single social media post. It was simply the numbers “343” written on a black background; my way of remembering the firefighters who fell in New York City on that tragic day. And, while they are by no means the only heroes in the attack on America, I share a personal connection with that group. As is the case with any solemn remembrance, we all have our own ways of mourning and honoring the dead. I spent the remainder of the day in quiet contemplation.

But, today marks the morning after. The bells no longer toll, the reading of the names has fallen silent, the stairs have all been climbed. The flowers have been placed, the bunting taken down from above the firehouse doors, and the class A uniforms cleaned, pressed, and put away until the next ceremonious occasion.

For all too many of us, our thoughts return simply to the acts of everyday life, and in a way that is fitting. The sacrifices made that day and every day by public safety and military personnel allow us to do just that. Perhaps, like many, we’ll be caught up in the controversy of Nike and Colin Kaepernick, since it seems almost impossible to avoid. And we’ll cast moral judgement on all involved for the exercising of rights and for branding a former sports star as an American hero. But whatever your stance on this issue, remember that if there is any “blame” to be assigned, perhaps we should collectively step to the front of the line.

We have created a society where athletes and celebrities gather fame and fortune, while the true servants of the public toil mostly in the shadows. Granted, we should never be motivated by a desire to receive free press, but our selfless service and short memories often fail us. The royal family of

a country we fought to leave garners more coverage than any heroic rescue, as does our own royalty, the Kardashians.

The admiration afforded public safety in September of 2001 has faded fast and it is now open season on those who serve. Attacks on law enforcement officers have seemingly become commonplace, and even firefighters and medics in some communities have found it necessary to wear body armor. It needs to stop. Now.

It is our responsibility as an extended family to keep the memories of those who have passed alive by standing up for those who still remain. Countless people who were at ground zero on that fateful day and in the weeks that followed suffer from the effects. Some are still fighting to get proper care. Across this country in every region first responders deal with poor pay and adequate staffing, yet at a moment's notice it may be their turn to answer the final call. And while their duties do not put them directly in the path of physical harm, I would be remiss if I did not mention the ongoing plight of telecommunicators for whom second class citizenship has become a way of life.

It's the morning *after* 9/11. What have you done today? Thank somebody who serves. Share your story with someone who doesn't. Contact your representatives and educate them on our needs. Get involved in a fraternal organization. Don't let the spirit of the fallen die in the ashes. Become an agent of change. Just do it.