

One man's opinion...9/11

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It seems like both a moment and a lifetime since I last had the opportunity to write an article for this newsletter. In such a short period of time the world has changed and become much more uncertain than it was a few short weeks ago.

Many of you know I was not at the last meeting of the Olean Stamp Club. As I am writing this I'm not sure what business was conducted, whether the auction lots sold, the treasury balance or the presentation given. I promise to have this information to you in a later newsletter.

In a sense I traded my attendance at the last Club meeting for a front row---now called ground zero---view of the events of Tuesday September 11, 2001 in New York City. I was there for a noble cause of attempting to get the best interest rate for bonds issued by Cattaraugus County for capital projects. We stayed at the Marriott Financial Center Hotel---a hotel that no longer exists on anything but paper. This hotel was 1 block from the World Trade Center. Filled with both anxiety and enthusiasm related to doing our presentation, we left the hotel just minutes after the first plane had hit the first tower. Debris, of all types, was everywhere. While we stood watching the fires associated with the first plane crash--- the fires that engulfed at least 10 floors of the tower, the second plane hit and panic ensued. I had never known panic before this time and now wish it on no one.

In the aftermath our party of four was saved, when so many others were not. We have all thought ourselves lucky, and then guilty, then we have felt soul wrenchingly tired and numb.

While living this day in what seemed like an eternity, all I wanted to do was get home and be with my family. In some ways while dazed I have perfectly clear vision of what is important. To the quizzical looks of many around me I have been recently heard to say---“that's not important”. What is important are the personal relationships in your life. In a world where life can be snuffed out in an instant what is important is what we do and the relationship we have with those around us and those that are important to us. If you have not hugged your children, been with your parents, called and

consoled your friends and significant others---you should do that. This is what is important!

Oftentimes, as a stamp collector you get caught up, fixated by the hobby. It develops a life of its own and a priority probably higher than appropriate. After all, there is so much to learn and so little time. But, remember, stamp collecting is a hobby, not a reason for being. What is important are our interpersonal relationships---both positive and negative. These are what give life meaning.

We are on the cusp of war, potentially world war, which will affect each and every one of us. If you have not discovered, renewed, and/or affirmed your relationship with God, whoever he or she may be, this also is vitally important. We need help and direction. This too is exceedingly important.

I heard on the news that a “911” stamp is being proposed in Congress to commemorate the events. Its title seems an odd juxtaposition of marking the day of the attack while simultaneously acknowledging the efforts of those responding to what had to have been an emergency “911” call. I’m sure this stamp, if approved, will sell very well because the nation has been touched of the events of this day in New York City, Washington, DC and rural Pennsylvania. But somehow, the wounds still seem too raw. We need time as individuals and a nation. We need to know what is next...

Our world has changed. It is much more uncertain and less safe than it was a few short weeks ago. We will all be fine, we will all get through this, but please don’t lose track of those things that are important. Patriotism is great, rhetoric is great, a new stamp is great, wanting to help is wonderful...but hug your children, kiss your wife, call your parents, brothers, sisters and friends...now what we need is each other and faith in what the future can be!