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It was a fascinating time to be working at a newspaper. As Newspapers in Education Coordinator for the Daily Herald, I worked with schools in the area to teach lessons utilizing the newspaper.

I was getting ready for work when my husband, Steve, called and told me to TURN ON THE TV. I did, to hear and see the news of the 1st plane hitting the tower. As I watched, mesmerized, the 2nd plane hit. I hurried to my office located in the Elgin bureau. It was going to be a tough day.

Everyone throughout the Daily Herald organization showed up for work, even those reporters with the day off. They didn't need to be told – everyone would be examining various facts and angles as the day unfolded. The bureau chief hooked up a TV to keep an eye on developing news. I had a radio on in my office across the hall and would periodically run over to see what was happening. Rumors were flying fast and furious – bombs on the planes? Bombs in the buildings? Were there more armed planes? Were there terrorists on the ground?

One of the copy editors there was also in the army reserve and based in the same place as my son, Matthew. She was the HR manager for the base in Arlington Heights. At one point I asked her, “Do you think we will activate and deploy troops over this?” She sadly shook her head yes. It was estimated that up to 25,000 people could be lost between the airplanes, Twin Towers, Pentagon, and any other locations that could still be targets.

Reporters began to investigate any leads of Chicago area locals involved. It was quickly determined that a Wheaton College grad was on an airplane being hijacked and headed for Washington. He was one of four men who banded together to bring down the plane in Shanksville, PA, sacrificing their lives to save those located in the Capitol.

I wondered what our younger son, Jason, was experiencing in his high school classes that day. We talked when he got home. He said all the girls were crying, and they watched TV in some of their classes and discussed things. He asked me if I thought we'd go to war over this. “Yes,” I said. “With thousands killed from this, these terrorists must be stopped so this can't happen again.” He then asked if I thought Matt would have to go to war. I told him about the discussion I'd had with the HR reservist. It would be another year before I realized how deeply this affected him.

We all numbly went about our jobs over the coming days and weeks. I remember going to the corporate office in Arlington Heights. I was used to the cacophony of airplanes overhead since O'Hare airport was nearby. THE SILENCE WAS DEAFENING. I looked up one day to see jet fighters flying by. It became a regular sight for several weeks. One of our coworkers was stranded in Canada, having picked that day to return from a European vacation. She later told us how they landed and were welcomed by the Canadians, who had their hands full trying to accommodate all these people from various flights. I remember seeing all those planes lined up in the news coverage.

We had several discussions with our 2 sons over the coming weeks. Matt's unit, US Army Reserve 822 MP Co, deployed to Iraq in early 2003. They were part of security for the first wave and ended up building and guarding a prison camp in Basra. They were there 14 months. He met his future wife, Helen, in the unit and they served together. She even brought back an escaped prisoner, and the Daily Herald did a feature article on them. While our kids were gone, we developed a tightknit group of Army Moms on facebook, which still exists. The same fears exist for military moms today as then. Jason enlisted in United States Air Force after high school graduation, and even returned to do high school recruiting. He also met his wife, Joni, in his unit. He will soon hit his 20 year mark in service, but he's now in Space Force. He also deployed twice to Qatar. The first time he spent 5 days in Afghanistan and came back with a commendation. We don't know what he did, but only learned that he saved American lives and there were a lot less Taliban when his mission was completed.

Over the years I've often thought of that time. I still cry every year. I still hurt when I think of the lives lost and families changed forever. It gave my sons purpose, experience and maturity. It changed all of us.