

From adversity, strength

When terrorists attacked the United States on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, the worldwide Boeing team felt an acute sense of pain. Not only were its airplanes—vehicles designed and built to bring people together—used to target the World Trade Center and sites in Washington, D.C., but the company lost three of its own in the attacks: Chad Keller, D.C. Lee and Ruben Ornedo.

“The events of 9/11 remain fresh in our memories, and the impact of that tragic day will be felt for generations,” said Jim McNerney, Boeing chairman, president and CEO. “We remember and honor those who died and what their sacrifices meant. While we cannot change the past, we can help shape a better future through products and services that protect the freedoms we hold dear and ensure the safety and security of worldwide air travel.”

Frontiers recently asked employees to reflect on what Sept. 11 means to them today, a decade later—what they’ve learned, how their lives have changed, how they’ve moved forward. Following are some of their responses.

PHOTO: Searchlights placed next to the site of the World Trade Center create two vertical columns of light in remembrance of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. SHUTTERSTOCK

“I remember feeling a profound sense of disbelief and loss. I am more cautious and less trusting and pay more attention to my surroundings and the people who surround me as I go through my days. I find that my pride in this country is stronger. ... I believe we need to be better citizens, we need to speak up when we have something to say and present a possible solution instead of just complaining. Then we need to get involved and help implement the steps to make things right.”

– Denise Maurer, Manufacturing engineer, Boeing Defense, Space & Security, Huntsville, Ala.

“I had recently relinquished command of the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Plot in the Pentagon. That morning seven at the Intelligence Plot—including the commander who relieved me—were killed. Retired Adm. Bud Flanagan, founder of [Boeing subsidiary] Kestrel, lost 658 colleagues at Cantor Fitzgerald in the World Trade Center. Kestrel was formed to assist in the effort to prevent our nation from experiencing another such day.”

– David Radi, president, Kestrel–Boeing Defense, Space & Security, Annapolis Junction, Md.

“I was stranded far from home and family on 9/11. When I moved to the Renton, Wash., site, I became an evacuation focal. I also trained new employees to safely get out of the final assembly building in the event an emergency like 9/11 happens. It scares me when the evacuation alarm goes off, but I help sweep and clear the area. I want to ensure I do my part to help my co-workers get to safety.”

– Audrea Worthington, process analyst, Instrumentation and Data Systems, Boeing Test & Evaluation, Seattle

“When the first airplane struck, I was on my way to an engineering class at the University of Puerto Rico. I knew that it would be my duty as a future engineer to help rebuild. In 2004, Boeing gave me the opportunity to join its team and continue the tradition of making safe, reliable aircraft that would connect the people and resources necessary to overcome this tragedy. I am proud of being a part of Commercial Airplanes, and of having witnessed the resilience and creativity of the Boeing family.”

– Aimee Rodriguez Colon, Product Development–Structures, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Everett, Wash.

“What we learn from adverse situations like this: Healing comes in baby steps. We have the strength, the knowledge and the ability to pick ourselves up and move on. We have allies around the world. We go on with our families and friends, with love and hope. Motto: We overcome.”

– Lee Brooks, office administrator, Systems Integration Processes and Tools, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Everett, Wash.