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Remembrance Flag Honors 9/11 Victims and the Couple who Designed it

By: Casey J. Bortnick

Flags are one of our oldest and most sacred symbols. They're usually flown as a sign of patriotism and to mark an historic day or somber remembrance. You might see a unique remembrance flag flying under the stars and stripes this weekend. It's, first and foremost, a tribute to thousands of people killed on 9/11 but it's also become a symbol of a unique journey a Wayne County couple started 10 years ago.

"In my world I remember exactly where I was," said Joanne Galvin of North Rose, NY.

Galvin and her husband Steve were watching from Western New York, hundreds of miles away when two planes were flown into the World Trade Center.

"I was mystified how something like that could happen on our secure land," Galvin said.

Steve was listening to a radio broadcast. Someone tried to compare the attacks of 9/11 to Pearl Harbor but they couldn't remember the date.

"He passed a POW flag and just was thinking what he could do to make sure we didn't forget this day."

That night the couple came up with a design for a remembrance flag. A week later had a prototype, something they both liked.

The blue on each side of the flag represents the color of the state flags for each state where a plane was downed: New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The black in the center of the flag represents the sorrow for the innocent lives lost on the planes, those working in the towers, the Pentagon, and the rescue workers whom lost their lives during the rescue.

The four stars on the flag. The blue star represents the Pentagon and American Airlines Flight 77. The two white stars represent each of the towers at the World Trade Center, American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175. The red star represents United Flight 93 that crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.



It's called the 9/11 National remembrance flag. The Galvins got a copyright on their design, found a manufacturer and created a website. The first flag was given to Patricia Scales in December of 2002. She lost her husband on 9/11 during the attack on the Pentagon.

"She is one of the people I will never forget," Galvin said.

Not only did the orders start coming, but so did the memories.

"So many people were calling us, and thanking us, and telling their story of where their loved one was on that day. That's something we never anticipated when we started all of this."

In 2003, the Galvins' design caught the eye of New York State Senator Mike Nozzolio. He started working on a bill to make the flag official.

"This flag should fly in every government building across our state," Nozzolio said during a remembrance ceremony in Geneva eight years ago. Soon after that effort began Steve was diagnosed with lung cancer. For the next year he fought the illness and kept distributing flags.

"We worked on it to the very end, together. Until he just couldn't do it anymore," Galvin remembered.

Six years after he died legislation formally recognizing the remembrance flag was overwhelmingly passed in the Senate.

"I was in tears."

But the legislation never made it to the Assembly. Tuesday, Governor Andrew Cuomo unveiled a different flag, the official 9/11 Memorial Flag.

"It was a little heart breaking," Galvin said.

Galvin has sold or donated more than 3,000 flags, raising more than \$15,000 for organizations that help the victims of 9/11 and their families. And since the flag was designed to help people remember it's a promise kept. Official or not.

"As long as people keep purchasing them I will do what I need to do to make sure they have them," Galvin added.

For more on the history of the Galvins' flag or to find out how to purchase one click the link below.

[9/11 National Remembrance Flag](#)



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