

Legacy of flag honoring victims lives on

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NORTH ROSE — Joanne Galvin and her late husband, Steve, were like so many Americans after the 9/11 attacks.

They were trying to figure how they could honor the victims and provide support for their families in the aftermath of the attacks.

“Steve and I just wanted to do something to help,” said Galvin.

That they did. Steve, who died in 2005, came up with the idea of a National Remembrance Flag after seeing a POW/MIA flag flying on his way home from work at Elderlee in Phelps.

So they went to work.

“We went on the internet and were just looking for a design that wasn’t close to anyone else,” she said. “It was many months working on the design before we had a flag.”

Galvin said the former ElectroMark plant in Wolcott, which makes signs, labels and tags, provided important design assistance.

The goal, she said, was to create “a symbol that would last a lifetime as a remembrance.”

The flag’s four stars represent each of the planes that crashed on September 11, and the color blue on opposite sides of the flag was chosen to remember the three states where the attacks took place: New York, Pennsylvania (Shanksville) and Virginia (the Pentagon). A black panel in the center was chosen to express sorrow for the lives lost.

The flag proved popular, with over 3,000 sold over the years.

However, as that fateful day becomes more distant in the nation’s collective memory, so too has interest in the flag.

“Unfortunately, over time (interest) has faded significantly,” said Galvin, 66. “The flags and the remembrance — I have not been near as active (with the effort).”

The flags sell for \$40 apiece or are donated to charitable organizations. The proceeds are donated to charities helping



Spencer Tulis / Finger Lakes Times

Joanne Galvin and state Sen. Pam Helming (above) place the memorial wreath in front of the 9/11 monument at Long Pier at Lakefront Park in Geneva during the city’s 2019 ceremony. Galvin designed the blue-and-black memorial flag seen at the top of the flagpole.

Steve and Joanne Galvin (at right) are seen at the Shanksville, Pa., temporary 9/11 memorial with their flag.

families affected by September 11 or the subsequent Afghanistan War that followed.

“It’s not for my gain,” Galvin noted. “Of course, I’ve lost money, and that’s OK. It’s provided what Steve wanted to do in the beginning.”

While 9/11 may have faded in memory for many Americans, for the families of victims — either directly from the attack or those who died in response — “it’s a really hard day. ... We (her late husband, as well as her sons) have met so many people that lost loved ones on 9/11. I spent many hours on



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the phone with them. They thanked us for the creation of the flag.”

Galvin has attended several 9/11 commemorations at Shanksville, Pa., where Flight 93 crashed after being hijacked by terrorists who were thwarted by passengers in their attempt to crash the plane into the Capitol or the White House in Washington, D.C.

She also has attended the Pentagon ceremony, but has yet to visit the World Trade Center Memorial in New York City.

“I need to go to the memorial,” she said.

She’s also a regular at the Geneva ceremony, where the flag is flown for the annual service, which takes place today. Galvin plans on being there.

To buy a flag...

If interested in purchasing a National Remembrance Flag and/or related items, go to 911remembranceflag.com/order.php, email 911nrf@rochester.rr.com or call (315) 573-2292.

The flag’s legacy is extensive.

On a Facebook page dedicated to the 9/11 National Remembrance Flag, Galvin has posted pics of the many places the flag has flown. Some she has taken, others are submitted, including a few by way of former state sen. Mike Nozzolio, who pushed for the Galvins’ design to be the official 9/11 flag for New York. However, Nozzolio was unaware former Gov. Andrew Cuomo already had selected the state’s official 9/11 flag.

Galvin said she appreciated what he did on behalf of her and Steve.

“He went above and beyond anything I’d expect of a government official,” she said.

Galvin said she’s spent considerable time reflecting on the 20th anniversary of a seminal moment in American history. Mostly, she thinks of the victims’ families.

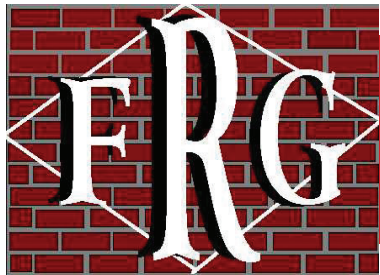
“I’ve thought about it a lot,” she said. “It baffles my mind that it’s been 20 years. I’m hoping that after all these years, everybody is able to move forward. That they’re OK. That time has healed those wounds.”

Galvin said the flag effort won’t end when she’s unable to do it.

Her oldest son, Dan Fitzmaurice, has vowed to keep it going, and she added that son Brian is also helping.

Galvin said the thrust of the flag to ensure that we never forget that fateful day.

“We get caught up in the everyday life and we just take things for granted,” she said. “I feel that it is important that we don’t forget what happened that day. We need to make sure something like that doesn’t happen again.”



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who died, those who survived,
and those who carry on.*

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