

I was in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11, 2001, to lobby Wisconsin's Congressmen and women for the electro plating society of Milwaukee with many of my fellow platers.

Our plane was descending to land at Reagan Airport when I noticed a plane flying below us and to the left of our plane. I thought, "Why he is so low, going so fast and headed to the same runway we are?"

I watched as he begun to cut in front of our plane (maybe two miles ahead) flying just above the trees. Then the plane disappeared behind a building and a huge fireball erupted that was three times the height of the Washington Monument. I muttered, "Holy Sh_t," and my friend, Bruce Laken, asked what happened. I told him I just saw a plane crash. He didn't believe me.

So, I told him, "Really it crashed, we're not going to land at Reagan." Just then our pilot powered up and started climbing, he turned a high bank away from the airport (I'm sure he did this so others would not see the smoke). Our pilot told us that the airport was closed and that we would be going to Dulles Airport where we could get ground transport and he would give us more info as it became available.

We felt that it was terrible that the people on that plane died (we knew nothing of the hijackings, or the world trade crashes at this time). Just as we were landing at Dulles, two EMT's that were flying with us stated that the crash must be bad since they were being paged to assist and they were stationed an hour from the crash.

That's when we discussed that it probably hit a building, since it was a mushroom type explosion and not a rolling fireball. It was hard for me to tell what it hit when it first went down since we were so low for our own landing, and the pilot turned away as we gained altitude so I did not get a good view.

We did not get the full story until we landed in Dulles. We spent about a half hour on the runway, not being able to use our phones (something I desperately needed to do, since my mother and father were waiting for me at Reagan and must have thought it was my plane that crashed, and since it was already over a half hour since the crash, I was sure my wife, Julie, must have seen the crash on the news).

Our plane finally rolled to a stop, and I tried to use my cell phone, but all circuits were busy. It would take a half hour before I could call my wife, an hour before I could get hold of my parents, who were now worried sick and stuck in traffic at Reagan, and another 15 minutes before I could get a hold of my secretary, whom I asked to call my five brothers and sisters and the rest of the family members and co-workers because I wanted to save my phone battery and the cell towers were clogged with traffic.

Shortly after we landed, the pilot, who while in the air and waiting on the ground gave us updates with a firm voice, keeping everyone calm and unaware of the true tragedies (this man and his crew were true heroes) came out of the cockpit crying, and apologizing for his condition and with a severely choked up voice told us for the first time of the full

scale of the tragedies of New York and Washington.

The whole plane was shocked. It was silent for a moment, and then the cell phones went wild with people trying to call loved ones.

I wrote this because I felt the need to write it down. I think it is helping me to talk about it. The sight of the plane crashing will never leave my memory. I hope that our government finds all of the cancers responsible for this terrible act of cowardice, for terrorism is a cancer and if you don't eliminate the whole cancer, it grows back. We must eliminate the whole cancer.

These people are not brilliant strategists that came up with some great plan. They are bottom-feeders who played on our fears. The strategies of using box cutters and mace to scare our great souls on these four planes, and then use these planes filled with fuel to crash into buildings, is equal to giving their camel water before crossing the desert.

We should be reporting how lucky there were to hit two targets, how inept they were by missing a huge White House that sticks out like a sore thumb and how the American spirit filled heroes in the fourth plane that attacked the attackers, saving our great country from a fourth disaster.

These bottom feeders feed on our reporting that they were smart. We must not give them that impression. The poor souls that lost their lives and the heroes deserve better. Let's talk up on how great our country is and how unbelievable is our spirit. **We are the greatest country in the world. All other countries look to us for leadership. Let's Lead!**

I am prouder than ever to be an American.

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