

# JOHN'S WORLDLY RAMBLINGS



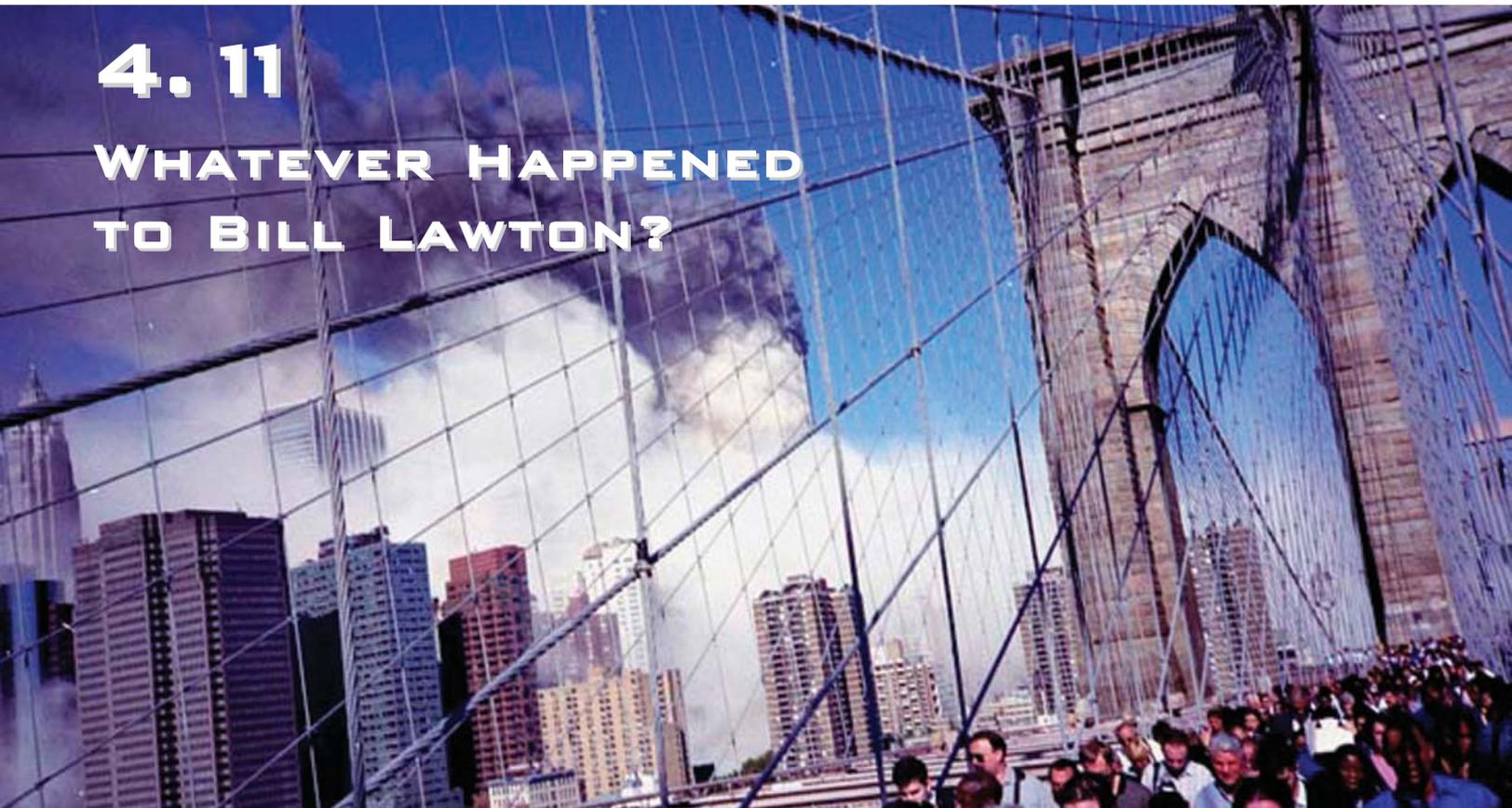
WE  
WILL  
NEVER  
FORGET

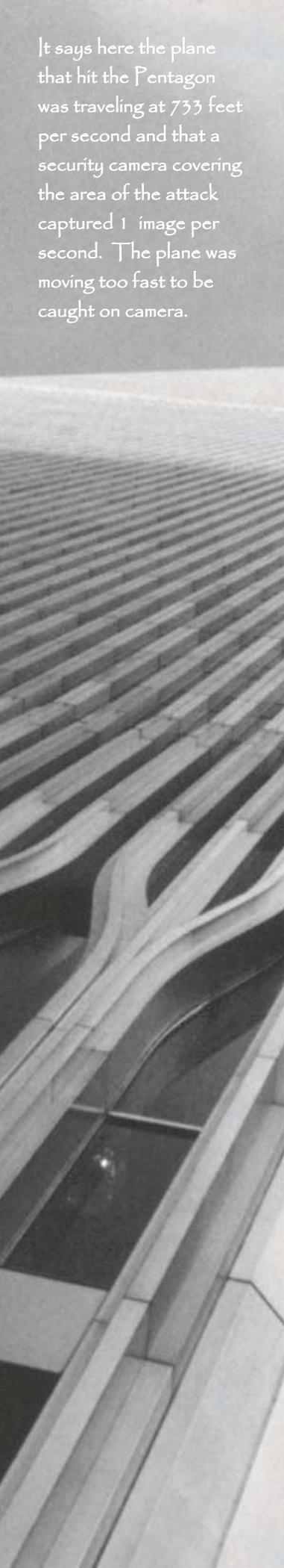


Support  
our  
Troops

**4. 11**

**WHATEVER HAPPENED  
TO BILL LAWTON?**





It says here the plane that hit the Pentagon was traveling at 733 feet per second and that a security camera covering the area of the attack captured 1 image per second. The plane was moving too fast to be caught on camera.

*"What's next? Don't you ask yourself?  
Not only next month. Years to come."*

*"Nothing is next. There is no next. This was next. Eight years ago they planted a bomb in one of the towers. Nobody said what's next. This was next. The time to be afraid is when there's no reason to be afraid. Too late now."*

*Falling Man - Don DeLillo*

So... it's been 6 years. I remember where I was. That's the way you're supposed to start these things off, isn't it? I remember... I was at work, a good little worker bee. What was it, a Tuesday? What time was it, like 8:30? Let me do some quick Internet research...

The first plane hit at 7:46, my time. And it was a Tuesday. (RoadRunner.) Funny, nowadays, although I technically begin work at 7:30, I'm usually not yet parked at that time. Often I'm still booting up my laptop at 7:46. I work in a different department now; I have my own office with no windows and a leaky radiator, new laptop, the whole shebangy-bang.

The radio announced the tragic incident of a plane hitting one of the World Trade Towers and I listened. Was it a horrible accident or deliberate? And then I listened again fifteen minutes later when the second plane hit the other tower. Not an accident. An attack. Then the Pentagon. Are we at war? Then a field in Pennsylvania, an M. Night Shyamalan movie. When

will it stop? Less than 90 minutes after it began, the attacks ended. Everything stopped.

But it didn't end. Not really. I spent some time in this break room at work straight out of the 1960's that isn't used anymore, watching news about the attacks on a TV with rabbit ear antennae. I drove home for lunch, at the time I was living in an apartment with a view of a landfill, and looked for signs of some "Red Dawn" invasion. I felt the same way on January 1, 2000 when I drove home from a hotel looking for signs of an apocalypse because the world was supposed to end or, at least, there was supposed to have been some chaos. I turned on the TV in my apartment and got my first glimpse of the plane crashing into the second tower.

That's the description in my head, the first tower to be hit by an airplane and the second tower to be hit by an airplane. I know they were called the North and South Towers, or 1 World Trade Center and 2 World Trade Center, but to me they are the first tower to be hit by an airplane and the second tower to be hit by an airplane. They will forever be that.

I visited the towers in 1999. I went up to the observation deck. I stood against the structure and peered straight up 1368 feet. I put my hand against the steel, felt the coolness. In another millennium people were supposed to look back and wonder how they did it, like Machu Picchu, you can't fit a knife blade between the stones. 2 years later they were all gone.

A night or 2 later, maybe it was 3 or 4, some friends and I went out to dinner. The tension was palpable. Everyone was going through the motions, waitresses doing waitress things, bartenders doing bartender things, customers doing customer things, but it all had the feel of a poorly acted play seen through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars.

There was supposed to be a candle light vigil that night. We went home and on the second story tiny balcony, we lit small citronella candles because they were the only candles we had.

Was it the next night or a week later, I was drinking with 2 friends, a Canadian and an architecture student. What did we talk about? The fuck you think?

I don't remember exactly what we said. Probably a lot of silence. I remember feeling very uncomfortable discussing the whole thing. Did we all feel the need to try and say something profound, something that would simultaneously encompass the memory of the dead and the heroism and the tragedy of that morning while giving hope for the future? I remember my friend, the architect-in-training choking himself up, saying something about the buildings falling. A structure is supposed to stand. A building stands.

Those buildings stood for almost an hour and over an hour and a half after the planes hit them. A lot of people got out alive because those buildings stood for that long.

Some people jumped out windows. Some... Over two hundred people jumped from the towers. Three hundred forty-three New York City Fire Department firefighters and sixty police officers died in the towers. Two thousand, six hundred and three civilians in the towers died. One hundred

It says here that the steel didn't need to melt for the towers to collapse. Steel heated to 1200 degrees loses 50% of its strength. 90,000 liters of jet fuel ignited other combustible materials raising temperatures above 1400 degrees.

This, along with the steel's fireproofing being removed by the impact of a large plane at 500 miles an hour and the stress of the weight of the buildings, was enough to make them collapse.





twenty-five died at the Pentagon. All two hundred forty-six passengers on the planes died. Twenty-four people from the towers are still listed as missing.

This does not include the 19 hijackers who are in heaven with their 72 virgins. Good thing heaven doesn't exist. Too bad hell doesn't exist.

So, here we are, 6 years on and everything that changed has pretty much changed back. I know back then I said that I wouldn't be the same after the attacks, but on the outside, I'm back to normal. I've only changed deep inside, where it doesn't count.

Did I cry? I don't think so. I cry over girls, not over the deaths of two thousand, nine hundred seventy-four innocents. Not over some buildings.

What's up with that memorial?

I understand how valuable that real estate is and how the desire to rebuild and repopulate those buildings and to build a monument is, but perhaps the problem isn't with the design, symbolism, logistics or message. Maybe it's time.

The USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor wasn't commissioned until 1958, about 17 years after the Japanese attack that sunk it. That thing about time, how it heals all wounds, is pretty much true. It also provides perspective. If you want a memorial to really stand for something that's relevant in the future, give it some time so when it's created, it will encompass more than just grief for the dead and reverence for the heroes and anger at those responsible.

This Rambling is far different than previous Ramblings that have mentioned 9/11 in passing or as the theme. A Rambling in 3 years will be far different than this one - assuming I will continue writing and that you, Constant Reader, will continue reading.

I want to know, when a memorial is too aged, what do they do? Do they rebuild it? Would that memorial be a memorial to the first memorial, or to the event the first memorial stood for? When does a memorial become obsolete? When does enough time pass for us to say: "That's fine. Tear it down; build a Wal-Mart here. We can read about it in the history books." When does enough time pass for us to remove it from the history books, just to be replaced by the next tragic event?

There is one memorial already finished. Already displayed. A 56 foot long, 6 foot high bronze relief panoramic representation of the burning buildings, the firefighters fighting fires and the names of the three hundred forty-three who died is now displayed across the street from Ground Zero on the wall of Engine and Ladder Company 10. But as regal and moving as the bronze piece is, the true memorial will never be seen until The Firefighters' Monument needs a memorial of its own. On its back are messages written to the dead by their brothers.

It's not 1000 feet of steel and glass or a pair of 30-foot deep footprints in the ground with water cascading down all 4 sides that engineers are trying to economically find a way to keep from freezing in the winter. It's a piece of art that simply states the facts without symbolism and without an agenda. Or maybe the symbolism is in the hidden messages, but I think we all know

It says here that the unusual structure of WTC7, columns on the first floor carrying exceptionally large loads, could collapse if even 1 column was compromised. A fire that burned for more than 7 hours fed by a pressurized fuel line from a large tank in the basement contributed to WTC7's damage and eventual collapse.

what that stands for.

We might be assholes, but not when it counts.

I don't know what your experience has been, but I have this brother who loves Jesus and telling people about Jesus. Nowadays he is more into telling people about how 9/11 was an inside job. The American government (read: George Bush, Dick Cheney, *et al*) arranged for foreign terrorists or possibly American citizens to carry out the terrorist attacks on 9/11. His goal, I believe, is to get a new, independent investigation of the 9/11 attacks.

He used to talk about Jesus nonstop. Now it's thermate this and WTC7 that. Controlled demolition. "Pull it." No airplane debris at the Pentagon. It makes family get-togethers somewhat tenses.

But I will give him credit for his obsessive, dogged, missionary approach to spreading his message. He has been involved in organizing and participating in public demonstrations on the 11th of every month, he hosts a cable access program called "The Blue Pill" (on CAR 25 in Racine) where he shows documentaries about 9/11 and other similarly themed subjects, and he has a website. All this, a wife, 3 kids, and Pilates classes. I'm writing this instead of cutting the grass.

After his first demonstration, the local paper did a story on him that made the front page. (Our paper doesn't really do news, the Packers regularly make the front page even during the off-season - I don't care much for the local fish wrapper.) A bit later, I was poking around the paper's website and came to a message board on the subject of my brother's article. The poorly written and thought out postings by a series of anonymous assholes - some bashing, some supporting my brother - gave me a new perspective on his activities.

These ball-licks hide behind odd, often lamely sexually themed screen names and maybe throw out 1 or 2 bits of information in a tug of war that essentially boils down to name-calling. Meanwhile, my brother uses his full name (properly pronounced, supposedly) and doesn't hide his face when getting his message out. I may not agree with his views and beliefs, but that protective, kick-someone's-ass-for-the-family part of me that doesn't show up very often flared up when I browsed through those posts. I considered writing a response to those fuckers, but quickly realized that the reply would, too, be an anonymous, name-calling post with a tidbit of fact. I like when I can avoid hypocrisy. It makes me feel magnanimous.

Besides, what would my screen name be? I figured why not let my friends know, since you're the ones that matter. So, there we are.

Despite evidence that seem to indicate there was an American government influence at work during the 9/11 attacks, it turns out plausible explanations have been given for each piece of the conspiracy theory puzzle.

In my mind, I see many conspiracy theorists using the same kinds of arguments for their claims that religious fundamentalists use in claiming the Bible as fact. After questions are posed, answers are ignored.

There are statements that begin, "There can be no debate." But that's untrue. There is always debate. And there is always scientific debate.

It says here, "Why do you think they fireproof steel trusses if steel can't be affected by fire?"





How come terrorists  
conspiring to attack us  
isn't enough of a con-  
spiracy in itself? Don't  
conspiracy theorists  
realize that sometimes  
something simple  
and small and  
crazy and  
mean can  
destroy  
something  
big and  
beautiful?

There's scientific debate about evolution, astronomy, and you can bet your sweet little tanned ass there's still debate over global climate change. There are still people who believe the sun revolves around the Earth. They debate it. The people who say, "There can be no debate," are the ones not interested in discovering the truth.

For a long time, I heard the arguments that said there was a government conspiracy behind the attacks. I never looked for a rebuttal to those arguments, but they're out there.

For the record: we did go to the moon, Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, and Asian vaginas are not horizontal.

My brother says, "Ask questions; demand answers." I think he says it. Or at least he has a shirt with that on it. Or maybe someone else said it. Whatever. I'm not telling you what to believe. I'm telling you what I think he believes, and what I believe today. Now, I do disagree with much of what my brother says and believes, but it doesn't mean that I can't give him a plug. So, my brother's website is <http://patriotchurch.org>. There's not a ton of content, but it links to a shitload of conspiracy sites. Also, his email address is listed there. To paraphrase Annie Choi, "You can email him and he will email you back and then you can email him again and he will email you again and this can continue indefinitely, or until one of you runs out of things to say." It won't be him.

For his television show, he records himself in his basement against a wood paneled wall to introduce some of the documentaries. I told him, "You have to decorate that, son. Put up a picture or put a flag behind you. Shit, even a laptop over your shoulder with a screen saver going." He's all, "No, I don't want anything to distract the viewer." Take it from me; everything needs a background. Almost everything. A guy talking, yes. A picture of a seal-tite fitting, no. That's the problem with "Mallrats." (Nobody will get that.)

After 9/11 they changed movies and TV. Remember "Spider Man" was coming out, and they redid the scenes that had the World Trade Towers in them? And that awesome "Simpsons" episode where Homer's car gets left in the plaza between the towers, and he goes to get it and hilarity ensues? They changed that episode, edited out the towers almost entirely, and took out the part where the guys were yelling at each other from tower to tower.

How does methodically erasing the towers from our collective memories in every way except seeing them slammed into by planes or crashing to the ground at "free fall speeds" honor the memory of those who died and the spirit of the buildings? That's like me only remembering my grandmother's last day in a hospital bed, struggling for breath instead of also remembering the racist things she said or the dry turkey she cooked on Thanksgiving. (I'm only kidding; she was a sweet old broad.)

A couple weeks ago I went camping with 4 of my friends. We sat around the fire one night drinking, smoking, talking, and I was thinking: married with 2 kids, married with a kid on the way, married and getting a divorce, soon to be married, and single. And all this happened after 9/11. (I

might be wrong, Rick's been married for a while, but it works better for me if it all happened after 9/11.) The millennium was supposed to be the benchmark from which we gauged all things on a linear time line, the anchor at zero. But now I want to use 9/11.

9/11 is something I don't really talk about. I hear about it, but I try to keep my fool mouth shut. 9/11 has a lot of jumbled emotions for me. I wish I could separate my emotions about 9/11 from the war, from politics, from conspiracy theorists, from the possible conspiracies, and from everyone's collectively diverse reactions, but it all exists in a knotted ball of tears, screams, hate, fear, bravery, and asbestos dust.

Some conspiracy theorists claim that the passengers on United 93 didn't die in the crash. They've forgotten.

If there was no link between the attacks and Iraq, then the government forgot.

I watch computer animation of the attacks, the planes crashing, the building collapsing over and over again. I've forgotten.

But what is it we're supposed to remember? It's not actually the act of terrorism. We shouldn't live in a state of fear or hate. We should remember the dead. We should remember the symbol for which the towers stood. We should remember heroes on the plane, heroes with beeping locator tags under the dead towers, and heroes who fight for a country that allows such wonderful dissension among its population.

I don't talk about the war because I don't think I bring any intelligence to that conversation. Almost everyone who does shouldn't. But that's why this country is the place to be and the place to shit on. We will let anyone disrespect the country, the troops, and the dead as long as they do so with images or words.

In the end, I have just one question: Whatever happened to Bill Lawton? ...What? ...Oh, I misheard it on the TV. They kept saying "Bill Lawton this," and "Bill Lawton that." It's "bin Laden."

Whatever happened to that guy?

John

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These are some of the messages written on the back of The Firefighters' Monument you'll never see again. When I was a kid and wanted to be a policeman/officer, a fireman, and an astronaut, there was a fire in my neighborhood. Naturally, I stood there and watched. When they had the fire under control, the firemen came out and I remember being disappointed. They... didn't look or act like firemen. I didn't want to be one anymore. It's important to remember that what one man can do, another can do. Firemen are only men. There's nothing unique about them. They're human. When they lose family, it hurts. But the real testament is that there are still firemen, especially in New York.

