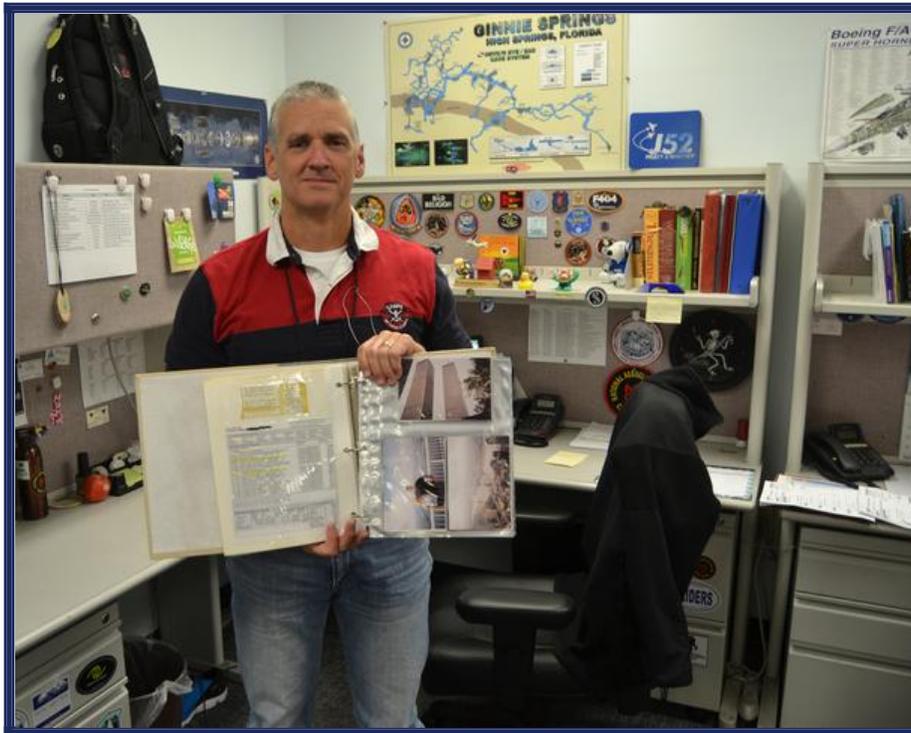




FRCSE employee was eyewitness to cataclysmic events of 9/11



Fleet Readiness Center Southeast F414 engine program manager Ricky Dumm displays the scrapbook he compiled from his trip to New York City in September 2001. The open page shows photos from his visit to the World Trade Center on Sept. 10, 2001. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – For Ricky Dumm and his wife Tammy, it was the first vacation in years they'd be able to take as a couple now that their daughter was a senior in high school and could stay home alone.

The trip to New York City in September 2001 would be a typical tourist jaunt including the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, American Museum of Natural History and World Trade Center towers.

“We developed a little bit of our itinerary so our daughter would know what we were doing,” said Dumm, program manager of Fleet Readiness Center Southeast’s F414 engine program. “Sept. 11 was our planned day to go to the Trade Center; instead, we were standing outside of the Fox studios watching their morning show on Sept. 10 and just decided to go ahead and go.

“So we hopped on the subway and went to the Trade Center the morning of the 10th.”

Little did the couple know as they walked past the cafés and workers setting up for Fashion



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Week, that the fortunate among the ill-fated employees at the World Trade Center would, the very next day, have their forlorn faces covered in the ashes of the gigantic towers in which they worked.

The unfortunate wouldn't see the next day's sunset.

Unbeknownst to those in the buildings Sept. 10, 19 radical Islamist terrorists were making their final preparations to fly two passenger jets into the towers the next day, as well as another into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and another into a high-value target that was never reached – thanks to passengers who overtook the hijackers after discovering it was a suicide mission.

But on the morning of Sept. 10, all was right with the world for the couple who had another tourist take a photo of them with the Hudson River as a backdrop atop the South Tower.

The next morning, the couple was again outside Fox studios as the band invited to play during that morning's show wrapped up its set in anticipation of the show's conclusion at 9 a.m.

"I vividly remember us standing on a street corner when I heard a plane fly over," he said. "Being in aviation my whole life, I always look up and notice when an aircraft is flying overhead.

"I remember seeing it, and then going across the street and hearing an explosion. It was muffled, but I could feel it in the ground beneath my feet."

When Ricky and Tammy returned to their hotel room, they turned on the television to find that initial reports were claiming a "small plane" had hit the North Tower.

"I was brushing my teeth when my wife screamed that another plane crashed into the South Tower," he said. "We knew right then that this was more than just an accident – it was an attack."

Not long after, the hotel room filled with smoke and gasses from the massive explosion.

"Our hotel was in Times Square, the perfect place for an attack, and I just felt vulnerable," Dumm said. "I wanted to get as far away as possible from the crowds and chaos, so we grabbed what we could carry and left."

At a bar a few blocks away, the couple frantically tried to reach their daughter from a payphone.

"We'd never told her we'd changed our plans," he said. "Finally we got through to my mother-in-law and she got through to the school. She was already in the principal's office, crying.



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“She didn’t know what happened to us. As far as she knew, we were sticking with our original plan of being at the Trade Center that day.”

The bar filled with New Yorkers – everyone watching the horror unfolding on the television. Often lost in the cataclysmic events of that day, is the humanity shown by Americans to one another. As the couple informed a woman sitting next to them at the bar that they were visiting from Florida and were now likely stranded, the New York attorney offered them refuge in her apartment. They thanked her, but declined hoping to find a way home.

The couple headed for Central Park, where hundreds of others had gathered to avoid being caught in the ominous shadow of any large building. The airports were shut down, but they finally secured a rental car and headed home after picking up a family friend who was also stranded.

Dumm has a scrapbook from that day, filled with clippings from the New York Post, New York Times and other publications. It contains his bank statement from the vacation, his reimbursement from his canceled flight and two photos that are particularly poignant. The first is a photo he took from the ground, looking up between the two massive towers that served as symbols of America’s financial strength. The second is the photo of him and Tammy with smiles on their faces during the morning of Sept. 10.

Sept. 11, 2001, would be a life-changing event for Dumm. A member of the Florida Air National Guard, he would go on to serve five deployments to the Middle East.

“Every time I look through this book, it brings back the memories of what those terrorists did to so many innocent people – it makes my blood boil,” he said. “It hurts to think of all those people I saw that day just trying to make a living and going to work.

“I’ll never forget it.”



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Ricky Dumm and his wife Tammy stand on the observation deck of the South Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 10, 2001. The couple were on a site-seeing vacation of the Big Apple. They changed plans and visited the Twin Towers on Monday, Sept. 10 instead of their original plan of Tuesday, Sept. 11. (U.S. Navy Photo/Released)