

# Preface

Minnesotans were in the World Trade Center towers, on the planes, and in the Pentagon on the morning of September 11, 2001. They were also on the front lines of the war that followed. We at the Minnesota Military and Veterans Museum have explored these facts in detail over the last five years, facts that have taken on an ever-greater urgency and importance. I am grateful for all who shared their stories and photographs.

We were inspired by the work of the 9/11 Commission. They distinguished their report from that of other national commissions by their clear commitment to create a book that people would actually read. After its release on July 22, 2004, the Commission's report became a runaway bestseller.

We were also inspired by the much earlier, local efforts of others who chronicled Minnesotans' war experiences, resulting in the books *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars: 1861-65* and *Minnesota in the War with Germany*. In many ways, we have technological advantages these teams from the 1870s and 1920s did not have. But as a present-day museum professional, I am also aware of the technological disadvantages resulting from our electronic age. The Post-9/11 messages and photographs we cherish are often stored in a virtual 'cloud' rather than a photo album or even a shoebox. There is an ephemeral quality to our post-9/11 narratives that demands our attention before the next computer upgrade or latest social media launch, lest they be lost to time.

The enduring Civil War letters and World War I photos in our Museum archive continue to serve us well but what will we have to share with our great-grandchildren of the post-9/11 experience?

The breadth and depth of these timeless treasures inspired our work. But what informed it was an appreciation for what a researcher might want to know 80 years from now.

In a practical sense, we do this every December as we continue to Never Forget Pearl Harbor and the resulting world war. In many ways, the content we've included in this publication is a response to what we wish we had from the days and months following December 7, 1941, or April 12, 1861. If we could, what would we ask Minnesotans who lived 80 or 160 years ago? What would someone in 2101 ask of us?

Compiling these profiles has been made possible through the extraordinary contributions of Al Zdon and Tim Engstrom, longtime editors of the Minnesota Legionnaire newspaper. As such, they have been reporting these post-9/11 stories for the last 20 years. Much of this content is based on oral history interviews. Some comments have been edited for clarity. Brian Leehan and the 34th Division Association have been an important part of this process as well.

Leading up to the publication of this first edition, we broadcast a statewide documentary, convened a series of virtual roundtables, and hosted a traveling exhibition over a three-year period. A primary objective of the traveling exhibit was to spend time in communities and gather stories first-hand. As a kick-off to exhibit openings, we often stressed the dual purpose of our presence. We hoped to learn as much from the community as they would by seeing and hearing the Post-9/11 Minnesota stories in the exhibit.

We also worked closely with the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs' 9/11 and Global War on Terrorism Remembrance Task Force. We were in contact with the state's County Veteran Service Officers and we employed a team of researchers from Minnesota State University Mankato to canvass county historical societies, Legion Halls and VFW posts, local radio stations and newspapers.

Work on the second edition of this book began the day this one was published. A robust online presence complements this completed work. Please use the QR code below to add your own stories and photos and find the latest on Minnesota in the Global War on Terrorism.

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