

# Redstone Rocket

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# Terrorist attack victims recall impact

World changed after Sept. 11

By SKIP VAUGHN

Rocket editor

skip.vaughn@redstone.army.mil

Lt. Col. Kenny Cox has been an air defense soldier ever since entering the Army in 1980. But nothing could have prepared him for the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Cox works at the Pentagon in the technology management office for the Army chief of staff. He was there when the hijacked airliner struck the Pentagon in the Sept. 11 terrorist attack and he returned to the burning building several times to help rescue victims. He later received the Soldiers Medal for his valor from the secretary of the Army.

"God used me on that day," Cox, 45, said in a telephone interview July 15. "Every time I came across an obstacle, somebody showed up. I consider that my angel."

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Photo by SSgt. John Valceanu

**MASSIVE DAMAGE**— The hijacked airliner that slammed into the Pentagon Sept. 11 caused massive damage to the building and killed almost 200 people.

# Community salutes Army, Redstone Arsenal

Gov. Bob Riley praises local efforts

By SKIP VAUGHN

Rocket editor

skip.vaughn@redstone.army.mil

A soldier saw someone carrying a souvenir plate from the annual Armed Forces Celebration Week dinner July 15 and said he wanted one. Here's hoping he entered the Von Braun Center North Hall soon enough.

After all the event was for him and the other men and women in uniform and the civilians who support them. It was the Huntsville and Tennessee Valley salute to the Army in celebration of the 62nd anniversary of Redstone Arsenal.

"America's warriors of yesterday and today have never failed to answer their nation's call," retired Brig. Gen. Bob Drolet, state president of the Association of the U.S. Army, told the 1,200 attendees.

On the night of major league baseball's All-Star game, this was the local community's all-star gala. There were general officers; there were returning combat heroes from the ongoing war against terrorism; there were Pentagon leaders; there were local, state and federal elected officials or their representatives; and there were many others from the military and civilian community.

"Thank you for the dedication this community has shown not only to the rest of the state but to the rest of the world," Gov. Bob Riley said.

Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen, commander of the Aviation and Missile Command and Redstone Arsenal, recalled highlights from the Arsenal's history. He recognized the soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces group which has returned to Alabama after serving in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"It's quite an honor to be

See **Salutes** on page 5



Photo by Skip Vaughn

**GUESTS OF HONOR**— Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen, commander of AMCOM and Redstone Arsenal, and Gov. Bob Riley were among the many guests of honor at the local community's salute to the Army July 15.

# Attack

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After the plane's impact, amid the smoke and chaos, he was almost out of the building. "Something told me to go back into the building — I threw up a quickie prayer — to go back to help somebody," he said. "There was a construction fence. A guy in a blue uniform showed up and had one key."

The key unlocked the fence, Cox entered and began his rescue attempts. He and others went back into the building amid water on the floor and 660 volts of electricity hitting the water, he related. "You could hear it popping," Cox said.

"I believe when you do things, that are the right things, God gives you a mission. He will give you the provisions to make it."

Two men in white construction suits entered with Cox and the other rescuers and stayed with them the entire time. There were people jumping from windows; and Cox and the others formed a safety net to catch them.

"The worst thing about the whole thing is when you can't hear the sound of the people you are compelled to save," Cox said. "There's no sound. Forty-five minutes passed until we finally had to retreat."

At times there were seven rescuers. The last time Cox entered the building, there were only three. And then the two men in white construction suits showed up. Only three men, including Cox, left the building. No one has seen the two in the white suits since nor could identify them, Cox said. He believes they were angels. "People can call them what they want," he said. "I know who they are."

Cox, stationed at the Pentagon since July 2000, received the Soldiers Medal in

November 2001 in a ceremony at nearby Fort Myers. He is credited with helping to rescue as many as 12 people on Sept. 11.

The Coushatta, La., native has told his story on national television networks, most recently on the Trinity Broadcasting Network on June 30. "It's just an opportunity to talk about Christ for me," he said.

"I've been all over the country talking to people about 9/11," Cox said, "about how God moves in your life when you're obedient to Him. It could've been anywhere in America where that (terrorist attack) could've happened.

"I was driven (to help). It wasn't about me, it was about what America stands for. It's people helping each other. It's always the right thing to help somebody. You can train for the military your whole life. You can't train for a terrorist attack of that magnitude."

Col. Bob Devlin, the Redstone garrison commander, was stationed at the Pentagon at the time of the attack. He had friends and acquaintances that died that day.

"Obviously it bothers you when you have friends that are hurt," Devlin said. "The next reaction is I was surprised. You never think of the Pentagon being attacked. And there was the outpouring to the Pentagon families, the walls filled with cards."

Devlin recalled the image of the large American flag draped on front of the damaged building. "Every time I see that I get the feeling that the world has changed and it's never going to be quite the same," he said, likening it to the impact of President Kennedy's assassination.

"The world has changed, some for the better — we're proactive in how we deal with terrorism. But in other ways, we lost some of our innocence."

## ■ Local military heroes welcomed home during gala

# Salutes

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welcoming home successful troops," Dodgen said.

Claude Bolton Jr., assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology, praised the Army's current operations and the community's role in their success. "I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, your Army is doing a great job," he said. "There are 370,000 soldiers forward deployed and on point in 120 countries around this globe and they are doing a magnificent job."

A past president of the Redstone-

Huntsville Chapter of AUSA, John B. Rogers was formally recognized for his appointment as the civilian aide to the secretary of the Army for the state of Alabama. Maj. Gen. Robert Hughes Jr., deputy commanding general for the Reserve Components 1st U.S. Army, conducted this investiture ceremony.

"This appointment is allowing me to have yet one more opportunity to work for soldiers and the Army that they serve," Rogers said.

More than 350 citizens of Madison County died in military conflict during the 20th century. There have been three Madison County recipients of the Medal of Honor.