



# ELFUN QUICK NOTES 1

An occasional publication by the Syracuse Chapter of material that would not ordinarily be included in our regular newsletters.

## ATTACKS BROUGHT BACK HIJACKING MEMORIES

(From the September 8, 2011 edition of The Post-Standard's Neighbors Northwest.)

The historic events of Sept. 11, 2001, are a grim reminder of what I encountered on Labor Day weekend of 1970 when I was a passenger on a hijacked airplane.



EILEEN SCHELL, chair and director of writing at Syracuse University, talks to members of a writers group at The Nottingham: (from left) Peggy Caselle, Jean Fatica and George Millman. The group have written letters about Sept. 11, 2001. Mike Greenlar / The Post-Standard

The story I have to tell about the hijacking I went through has a more fortunate ending than the one experienced by the victims of 9/11. In 1970, four commercial airliners were hijacked by Middle East terrorists; all passengers survived the ordeal. In 2001, four commercial airliners were hijacked by Middle East terrorists; no one survived the ordeal.

On Sunday, Sept. 6, 1970, four airplanes bound for the U.S. from Europe were hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Swissair and TransWorld planes were flown to the desert of Jordan. An Israeli El Al plane landed in London after the terrorists were overpowered. The Pan American World Airways jet in which I was a passenger was blown up on the runway of the airport in Cairo, Egypt, but all aboard were able to exit the aircraft and survive.

I was on the plane because I attended a meeting of NATO's Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development at Dusseldorf, West Germany, where I presented a paper. The day after the meeting ended, I went to Amsterdam to shop for my wife Lillian.

The next day, Sunday, I was on Pam Am flight 93, a Boeing 747 jumbo jet, bound for New York from Amsterdam. About 30 minutes after take-off, it was announced that first-class passengers should

move to the economy section of the plane. Shortly afterward, we were informed that the plane had been taken over by hijackers and that we were traveling to a "friendly" country.

During our flight, one terrorist was in the cockpit with the pilots, and the other terrorist was in the body of the aircraft. Both were armed with hand grenades and guns. Passports were collected from everyone; I was interrogated by the terrorist inquiring about my status in the Air Force. I told him that I was not in the military, but was a civilian on military orders.

The plane landed at the Beirut, Lebanon, airport in the middle of the night. Prior to landing, our passports were returned. While we were on the ground, one more PFLP member joined the two terrorists who had taken over the plane. Explosives were brought on to the plane. My fellow passengers and I were terrified and did not know what would happen next.

After about three hours on the ground, we were informed that the plane was taking off again. During the flight, the passengers and crew were divided into 10 groups to correspond to the number of exits on the plane, five on each side. Fortunately, the plane was half-filled with a total of about 186 occupants.

We were told to remove eyeglasses, take off shoes, loosen collars, and prepare to slide down the escape chutes when the plane landed. We were told that we had three minutes to exit the plane before it would explode. After an hour-long flight, the plane stopped on the runway, the plane doors opened, and the chutes expanded, ready for use.

I was on the chute directly behind the plane's engines. The wind generated by the engines knocked me down as I was running toward the terminal with torn socks and ripped pants. I managed to save my camera and a small briefcase. The plane exploded shortly after it landed. All of us survived, but several of the passengers suffered bruises and broken ribs.

Some 12 hours later, a Pan Am plane arrived from Europe to fly us to New York. The plane stopped in Rome, Italy, to let the European passengers off so that they could return to their countries. I was back in Syracuse on Tuesday after spending the night in New York. I went to work at General Electric on Wednesday morning.

I have never forgotten the dread and fear I experienced on that hijacked flight. All of it came back to me on 9/11 as the world watched hijacked planes used as instruments of death and destruction.

George H. Millman  
The Nottingham

## NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

The following headlines appeared in the Syracuse Post-Standard on the date indicated. The articles that generated these headlines may be viewed on [www.syracuse.com](http://www.syracuse.com).

"A new answer in Syracuse: Radar as bedrock industry" Jan 17, 2011

"Syracuse Symphony Orchestra launches campaign seeking public ..." Jan 26, 2011

"Syracuse Symphony Orchestra's general manager accepts job with ..." Feb 10, 2011

"Lockheed Martin site in Salina faces cuts of its engineering staff ..." Mar 21, 2011

"Syracuse Symphony Orchestra musicians refuse \$1.3 million in ..." Mar 28, 2011

"SSO board votes to suspend operations; season canceled, no refunds ..." Mar 29, 2011

"Navy extends Lockheed sonar contract" Mar 31, 2011

"What happens to the SSO's musicians now? ..." Apr 14, 2011

"Robert Behler, president and CEO for SRC Inc., quits after five ..." Apr 28, 2011

"Lockheed Martin lays off 89 - mostly engineers ..." May 5, 2011

"Frankfurt Airport chooses Sensis Corp. in DeWitt for upgrade ..." Jun 13, 2011

"Pentagon awards Lockheed Martin in Salina \$16 million contract for ..." Jun 21, 2011

"Saab defense firm reaches deal to buy Sensis Corp. of East ..." Jun 29, 2011

"Lockheed Martin engineers develop way for trapped miners to ..." Jul 11, 2011

"Court clears way for Aurelius residents to take GE to trial over ..." Jul 11, 2011

"Sensis Corp. receives state contract to develop way to cut ..." Jul 19, 2011

"Feds OK Lockheed Martin's MagneLink, which lets miners talk to ..." Jul 20, 2011

"Anaren reports higher sales, earnings ..." Aug 4, 2011

"Syracuse University is involved in plan to bring a symphony back ..." Aug 9, 2011

"Air Force orders \$30 million more radar work from Lockheed Martin ..." Aug 10, 2011

"SRC lands Pentagon contract to improve counter-mortar radar ..." Aug 11, 2011

"Syracuse Philharmonic: Syracuse University proposes credible plan ..." Aug 11, 2011

"Air Force orders \$30 million more radar work from Lockheed Martin ..." Aug 11, 2011

"Saab completes acquisition of Sensis ..." Aug 16, 2011

"Sensis founder Jud Gostin steps down after Saab AB completes its ..." Aug 23, 2011

"Saab AB's boss meets at Saab Sensis, Syracuse Century Club ..." 9 Sep, 2011

## **HOW DEWITT'S 'FLAG LADY' LANDED WORLD TRADE CENTER RELIC**

(From the September 8, 2011 edition of The Post-Standard.)

Her town was one of the first in America to get a piece of the twisted steel for a memorial to those who died

When Pat Masten (widow of Chuck Masten) talks about the piece of the World Trade Center she expected to get for the DeWitt Sept. 11 memorial, she uses her hands to make a square about as big as the seat on her walker.

On Sept. 10, 2001, she had rallied friends and tearful war veterans to convince the town board to allow a 60-foot flag pole to be erected at a prominent intersection simply because the town had no flags as nice as the village next door.

The next day, the towers fell and those tall steel beams poked out of the rubble for everyone to remember forever.

Right away, the DeWitt "flag lady" decided she wanted to get a piece of that steel to add to the flagpole display.

"I just thought it would be nice," she said, 10 years later, at age 79. "I was very naive about these things."





David Lassman/The Post-Standard

**PAT MASTEN** stands with the DeWitt 9/11 Memorial located in front of the town hall on Butternut Drive. Masten was chair of the memorial committee and was responsible for obtaining a piece of World Trade Center debris for the site.

The story of the DeWitt Sept. 11 memorial is one of persistence and behind-the-scenes politics that landed a 6-ton, 21-foot piece of steel in the front yard of the DeWitt Town Hall at time when museums all over the world were hoping for pieces of debris.

The terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon in Washington produced nearly 2 million tons of steel and debris. News reports at the time said that thousands of companies, community groups, municipalities and museums had flooded New York City and the Pentagon with requests for artifacts as the city struggled to figure out what to do with it. Much of the debris was melted and recycled. About 7.5 tons went into the bow of a Navy ship, the USS New York.

It would be four years before the Port Authority would develop a formal program to distribute pieces of steel for memorials in far-flung places.

Still, a woman in a town 250 miles from Manhattan, where the most likely physical connection to the attacks was a television remote control, got the attention

of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Masten was a child during World War II and remembers collecting cooking grease, used for munitions, and milkweed pods, to make life jackets. That instilled in her the kind of patriotic spirit that sparked her into action when the country was attacked.

Like many Americans, Masten had visited the World Trade Center and looked out from the Windows on the World dining room on the top floor of the North Tower. She remembered the height and strength of the buildings as she watched them fall. She felt as if the terrorists had come after every American.

"It was an attack on all of us, every little town and village," she said.

A piece of burned and twisted steel, she thought, would be a constant reminder of what happened, even if it wouldn't be beautiful to look at.

"I didn't want it too big, but I said it should be something that shows, the destruction, either burned or bent," she said.

Masten called Joan Christensen, her representative in the State Assembly. Christensen wrote a letter to Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Giuliani said yes, but no pieces would be released right away because the World Trade Center was a crime scene to be scoured for evidence.

## A big surprise

Months passed and Giuliani gave way to Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Masten kept up the phone calls. She needed to prod Giuliani's people to convince Bloomberg's people to keep the promise.

"This is what I know. You don't argue with Pat Masten, nor do you tell her no," Christensen said. "You say, I'll do what I can. I'll give it my best shot."

So, Christensen said she called Assemblyman Tony Seminerio, a Queens Democrat.

"Tony had a great rapport with Giuliani, or bravado or whatever it is that he had," Christensen said. "He was the one that ultimately nudged him."

Later, Seminerio's trash-talking style was put on public display when an FBI informant recorded his conversations and prosecutors successfully indicted him on bribery charges. He died in prison in January.

Back in DeWitt, Masten knows only that Christensen called a colleague for help and New York City called back within days.

She was told she could have a piece of steel.

It was going to weigh 6 tons.

And she had to pick it up in one week.

At her expense.

"Holy smokes," she said.

Masten called friends and friends of friends to get the steel delivered on a flatbed truck and stored in the DeWitt highway garage until an architect, a sculptor, gardeners and many others could build a proper memorial. More than 1,000 people and businesses donated time, supplies and money — totaling about \$60,000.

By Sept. 11, 2002, the rusted hulk of steel and concrete was unveiled in front of the DeWitt Town Hall, where drivers pass it every day on commutes around Interstate-481 through the eastern suburbs of Syracuse. Truckers occasionally honk, she said.

Each Sept. 11, the town holds a memorial service there. Throughout the year, people leave poems, coins and trinkets that Masten later brings inside the town hall to display in a case.

"I think a lot of people are very moved by it," she said.

The steel is a support column, forged in the 1960s, to hold floors of the World Trade Center. The force of the collapse and the heat bent the column about 4 degrees. Two steel plates jut from the side where floor supports were attached. They were cut free with a torch. Artists added bronze plaques between the plates with words from "America the Beautiful" on one side and an explanation of the column on the other side. It is topped with a sculpture of two stainless steel flames.

The column is rusted. Pieces of concrete are still attached. It will be left to the weather.

## **Memorial hits home**

The memorial came together fast, but not without public hearings.

Some residents complained that it would be ugly — one used the word "grotesque" —and should not be put in the town's front yard. They argued it would be better to have an isolated place that would allow visitors time to reflect quietly. People, worried about how victims' families would react.

Masten wanted it to be in a visible area that people could see from the highway and children could walk up and touch. The location would also be well-lit and convenient for the police to keep an eye on it.

Ed Michalenko, now the DeWitt town supervisor, was a member of the town board then. His wife's brother was killed in the World Trade Center. He remembers being supportive of Masten's efforts, but he also remembers that he was numb at the time.

Mary Ellen Michalenko's brother, Michael Seaman, 41, was a vice president and partner at Cantor Fitzgerald, the tenant most affected by the terrorist attacks with the loss of 658 employees. When she first saw news coverage of the planes hitting the building, she said, she knew right away that he was gone, because she knew exactly where he worked, on the 104th floor of the North Tower.

At first, she was worried about her own reaction to the DeWitt memorial and what it would mean to other victims' families, who may not want to be public about their grief. She drove by as the steel column was put in place.

"In the beginning, I thought to myself, 'ooh, what's it going to be like?'" she said.

She was surprised by how peaceful and beautiful the memorial looked to her from Interstate 481, she said. She left her brother's photograph there and lays flowers each year.

"Pat did a wonderful job. She's quite a dynamite lady," she said. "You need someone who can do something like that. At that point, it was not a main focus in my life. My focus was my family and my children."

In the last 10 years, Mary Ellen Michalenko has been to many memorial sites and tributes, starting with her brother's memorial service, one of the first. She has been asked to read victims' names at this year's ground zero remembrance.

## **Debris scattered**

Christensen believes the steel in DeWitt was among the first released. It arrived in DeWitt in May 2002, just eight months after the attacks.

A 4-ton piece of steel arrived at the New York State Fairgrounds in August 2002.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey did not start a formal program to distribute pieces until 2006. That agency does not have a record of DeWitt's piece and Bloomberg's staff did not respond to an inquiry. Bill Baroni, deputy executive director of the Port Authority, said the memorial in DeWitt includes one of the tallest and heaviest pieces.

In recent months, the Port Authority has made an effort to scatter pieces across the country and the world in time for the 10th anniversary.

The authority has approved requests from 1,218 municipalities, churches and community groups. In early 2010, there were two airplane hangars filled with steel. It is almost gone, Baroni said.

Because it comes from a crime scene, each piece released by the Port Authority has been approved by a federal judge — something Masten does not remember being done for the DeWitt piece she received from New York City officials.

In the Port Authority program, 350 artifacts were approved for groups in New York and New Jersey. World Trade Center steel rests in cities all over America and five foreign countries, including a U.S. Air Force base in Kabul, Afghanistan, and the U.S. embassies in Germany and India.



More than 700 pieces were requested by fire departments. Others went to community colleges, Red Cross chapters, churches, schools and government offices. One was awarded to the George W. Bush Foundation in Dallas. Another was given to the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund.

In Central New York, pieces have been approved for sites in Auburn, Baldwinsville, Cicero, East Syracuse, Fayetteville and Manlius, he said.

The Baldwinsville Fire Department put a piece of the steel in place just this, week, President Tom Perkins said.

The department applied three years ago and the Port Authority granted the request in January. It was a 20-foot piece of tubular steel that NuCor Steel workers cut into two pieces and coated with a rust protect-ant. It will be dedicated at 2 p.m. Sunday outside the department's Station 2 on Route 48, he said.

### **It's meant to be real**

Other artifacts — such as taxis and firetrucks — will be given to the National Sept. 11 Memorial and Museum in Lower Manhattan and the state museums in Albany and Trenton, NJ. Those museums have more expertise in preservation, Baroni said.

The key criteria was that the steel had to be open to the public, but the Port Authority did not set requirements for the design of memorials. The steel can be left outside in the weather.

"It's not meant to be pretty," he said. "It's meant to be real."

He has been to countless unveilings and has been touched by the reverence people hold for the remains, he said.

"They, correctly so, treat these pieces as sacred," he said. "For 3,000 people, this building was the final resting place."

The effort to preserve and display the artifacts of Sept. 11 is unlike the recording of any other event in American history. To pay respects to the victims of Pearl Harbor or the Oklahoma City bombing, you have to go there, he said.

The Sept. 11 attacks left victims all over the world, glued Americans to their televisions and cemented in memories where they were that day.

"This was a global event in real time," he said. "We didn't want it to be that the only place that you could go to see the remains of the World Trade Center would be just Trenton, Albany and New York City. We wanted people to be able to go to downtown Auburn or Charlottesville, Virginia or Brown City, Michigan ... and be able to see true, real evidence, steel that has been twisted in ways that no machine could do, in honor of the 3,000 people who didn't get to go home that day.

## **RAILROAD EXCURSIONS**

For those of you interested in trains, the Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society is sponsoring a number of one day excursions this fall.

Their flyer for these excursions is on the following page. If interested, you may call them at (315) 488-8208 or use their website [www.cnyrhs.org](http://www.cnyrhs.org).

Please note that the Syracuse Chapter has no affiliation with the CNYRHS nor is this a special offer for Elfun.

**Quick Notes is sent only to those Elfun who have elected to receive the Chapter's regular newsletter by e-mail.**

## 1 FALL FOLIAGE OCT. 2

Lv. 9:30 AM... Bus to Utica... Rail to Thendara. Return by 5:00 PM.

We'll enjoy the autumn scenery in the Adirondack foothills as we travel the scenic railroad route along vistas of forests changing colors.

## 2 DINNER & TALES OCT. 28

Lv. 4:00 PM... Bus to Utica.

Rail to Boonville...

Dinner will be served in a "HAUNTED" HOTEL while you listen to stories about local folklore and mysteries. Return about 1:00 AM. *This trip restricted to adults only.*

# 2011 RAILROAD EXCURSIONS



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NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

## 5 POLAR EXPRESS

DEC. 3 / DEC. 17

Lv. 5:00 PM. Bus to Utica... Rail to the "North Pole."

We'll pick up Santa, who will ride back with the children.

Santa will give each child their "first" Christmas gift.

Enjoy caroling with the Elves., and reading *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg. Hot chocolate and cookies will be served by Mrs. Claus.

## 3 HALLOWEEN TRAIN OCT. 29

Lv. NOON... Bus to Holland Patent...

Rail to Remsen... Kids: Wear your costume and enjoy some Halloween fun at the depot. Free pumpkins; goodies too! Back by 5:00 PM.

## 4 OLD FORGE CHRISTMAS Nov. 25

Lv. 9:00 AM. Bus to Utica.. Rail to Thendara... Bus to Old Forge for the ADIRONDACK CHRISTMAS on Main Street. Celebrate the start to the holiday shopping season. Santa and Mrs. Claus will take part in all events, including the tree lighting. Return by 9:00 PM

*All trips depart Wegmans DeWitt parking lot Aisle 12. Return times are approximate.*

Use CREDIT CARD online at <[www.cnynrhs.org](http://www.cnynrhs.org)>, or by calling (315) 488-8208,

or mail this form with CHECK or MONEY ORDER to: CNY Chapter, NRHS; PO Box 229; Marcellus, NY 13108

	EXCURSION	DATE	15/under	16-64	65+	No. of Tickets	SUB-TOTAL
1	Fall Foliage	10/02/2011	\$50	\$55	\$50		\$
2	Dinner & Tales	10/28/2011	N/A	\$83	\$83		\$
3	Halloween Train	10/29/2011	\$35	\$40	\$35		\$
4	Old Forge Christmas	11/25/2011	\$50	\$55	\$50		\$
5	Polar Express	12/03/2011	\$50	\$55	\$50		\$
6	Polar Express	12/17/2011	\$50	\$55	\$50		\$

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS:  TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$

NAME:

STREET ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER: (  )

CITY, STATE, ZIP: