

OPINION

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

Honoring the heroes of emergency preparedness

At the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum in Manhattan, you will read these words from the ancient Roman poet Virgil, "No day shall erase you from the memory of time."

And so Americans everywhere have continued to gather at 9/11 observances, every year since that terrible day, to ensure that it will never erase the memory of those we lost, and the ideals for which they will forever stand.

That was the case early last week at the 5th Annual Honor & Remembrance Ceremony at Tri-County First Responders Honor Park in Gang Mills, where we paid homage to 9/11 victims and their families and

loved ones – and where we also strengthened the sense of community, resolve, and sacrifice so critical to the future of our region, state, and nation.

As well, an annual tribute goes out to a local first responder who continues to stand for the virtues that have become synonymous with law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency responders everywhere since September 11, 2001: fearlessness, selflessness, and sacrifice, among many others.

This year's "First Responder of the Year" award recipient is Stephen Copp Sr., who for more than 50 years has served locally as an active paramedic and Emergency Services Instructor. He is the first honoree from

the ranks of Emergency Medical Services.

Former Corning Mayor Al Lewis may have said it best when he said, "I have worked with Steve for over 50 years in many different capacities and I can confirm he has dedicated his life to saving lives of others throughout the Southern Tier. He has done so much."

Those words alone signal the reason why our first responders earn our gratitude.

I have said it many times in the past, yet it always bears repeating: On behalf of the residents of the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions, "thank you" to those who come to the rescue in so many different and crucial ways.

Time after time, we

have been reassured -- and had our faith and hope restored -- through countless gestures of caring and commitment, rescue and recovery. A thousand stories go untold but collectively they stand as a powerful force of renewal. We simply do not carry on without them.

In 2014, New York State launched the Citizen Preparedness Corps with the goal of training 100,000 New Yorkers "to be first responders in their own homes and in their communities." The program seeks to provide citizens with tools and resources to help them better prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters. All of the programs are coordinated with local county

emergency management personnel. To date, forums have been held in every county within the 58th Senate District (Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins, and Yates counties) and more are scheduled each year (see prepare.ny.gov).

State and federal governments also provide critical funding to help localities strengthen and upgrade their emergency response capabilities. These timely and important public safety and emergency response grants make a difference for local emergency response teams. Emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are fundamental government responsibilities.

Yet as the years have gone by, whenever we

highlight the importance of local emergency services, one fact has been constant: declining numbers of volunteer firefighters, EMTs, and other emergency services personnel. The trend has been well documented by prominent organizations like the Firemen's Association of New York (FASNY).

New York government will continue to face stubborn economic and fiscal challenges in the future, as well as challenges in our schools, maintaining local roads and bridges, and others. Nevertheless, part of our long-term focus, in my view, must always include the ability of local volunteer fire companies and emergency services to recruit and retain volunteers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Getting the (basket)ball rolling

To the Editor,
Time has come to continue expanding the Town of Wayne playground.

Would like to start by putting in a basketball court for the kids, young and old.

I went to the Town Board meeting on 8/13/2019 and they gave me the go-ahead.

Our children are growing all the time. Our playground should, too.

Sports are always a great outlet for kids, especially basketball, so I think we should start there.

The cost can be up to \$10,000, so let's get those donations and fundraisers rolling for our children.

Checks made out to "Town of Wayne" can be mailed to Town of Wayne, PO Box 182, Wayne, NY, 14893.

Darlene Swarthout Hammondsport

Don't hold a name against someone

To the Editor,

What's in a name?

When we are born, we are given our family's last name to carry on. Then marriage gives us another new beginning - new name, new family, new babies born all with hopes and dreams for their own memories and traditions. Hopes, dreams and expectations for their futures and to be proud of who they are.

But in Steuben County, these dreams are not allowed and people are being unfairly charged and judged as well as being physically and mentally abused by people in power positions, just because of their name.

The people who have sworn to protect the people who have been voted into their positions of power have not protected or made sure each individual is treated for who they are.

A name is a name and it's time for our county to realize this and finally open their eyes and accept the many new generations for the extraordinary people that they are and to stop judging

them on unfortunate past events that they know nothing about, or have anything to do with.

All families deserve to make their own futures and the freedom to live without being wrongly accused and harassed simply because of a "name."

Tammy Comfort Woodhull

Hoping for better GOP character in 2020

To the Editor,

It is my expectation that President Trump is going to do all of us a big favor and decide some time in early-to-mid 2020 not to run for re-election partly because of an economic slow-down.

When that happens, I hope that the Republicans will nominate someone of good character such as Nikki Haley or Carly Fiorina.

Personally, I don't know what I find to be more despicable about the guy - the way that he makes fun of and insults people's physical appearance, or the way that he views women as sex-objects.

Stewart B. Epstein Rochester

Open your eyes, hearts in 2020

To the Editor,

What are you? Republican, Democrat, Independent or any other party line?

I chose none of the

above. I was brought up in a family of Republicans and many relatives were Democrats. In 1969, I joined the service and boy did my ideas change.

With a new election coming up, it's time for everyone to open their eyes and hearts.

First I am a human with a heart and blood flowing through my brain and body.

Second, Democrats have a moving moving brain and blood flowing - I just don't know where they are going.

Third, Republicans have ice cold stone hearts, with ice blue poison flowing through their veins. They use fear to scare us and hope that will get us to vote for them.

We have a President that texts us lies all of the time and changes his mind every time he looks at his immigrant wife. These are no smart Republicans that will stand up to him face to face.

When President talks, I see his lips move, but speeches come out from the back of his pants. He cannot even get figures right or locations right.

Four, Trump says he knows what he is doing and the rest of us are stupid. He slandered me and many more tax payers.

Five, the President, vice president, senate leader are all racist supremacists and encourage violence.

Six, our President is a coward. He wimped out of military service, won't let us see his high school reports, college reports, or taxes. He and his family still make money off their businesses that they were to remove themselves from in present situations. His son-in-law, with his slumlord businesses in Baltimore is a disgrace.

Finally, now Trump is stealing our tax money to build a stupid wall. Our debt is rising higher, faster than ever. With the Republican's new tax program, we're going to continue taking it on the chin.

Gary Drehmer Corning

CHARITA GOSHAY | GUEST VIEWPOINT

Threat of terror still exists; it just looks different

When the news broke last week that an American Airlines mechanic was arrested for allegedly sabotaging an airplane, you could be forgiven for wondering if it might be an attempt at terrorism.

Though the seriousness of the incident can't be minimized, it almost was a relief to learn it wasn't terror, but rather some mope trying to gin up more overtime.

This is the time of year when we hold our breath, when our thoughts turn back to Sept. 11, 2001.

As a nation, our gift - and our curse - is the ability to move forward. While doing so is a necessary tool of progress, our collective inability to focus for very long dooms us to ignore warning signs of that which threaten the present.

We've become notoriously impatient with detail and complication. History bores us. Geopolitics would too, if we ever bothered with it. We like our villains black-hatted and easy to identify.

Different monster
A different kind of monster has stepped into the vacuum.

In 2019, the danger is homegrown, perpetuated by Americans who have convinced themselves into believing they're preserving their country, when in reality, they're unraveling it.

Radicalized through social media, they've emerged, seemingly out of nowhere, emboldened by politicians and talking heads who feed into their resentment and victimhood. They're striking out wildly at a nation that is changing in ways contrary to how they've come to define it.

There's been some debate over exactly what constitutes domestic terrorism, but why? It isn't nuclear physics. If you murder or maim innocent people to further your own fanaticism, be it religious, political, social or

racist, you're a terrorist.

Emanuel AME Church; the Tree of Life Synagogue; Fort Hood, Texas; San Bernadino, California; Orlando, Florida; Las Vegas (2014 and 2017); Parkland, Florida; Gilroy, California; Oak Creek, Wisconsin; Poway, California; El Paso, Texas; Dayton, Ohio; the killing of six police officers in Dallas; and too many others to list all were acts of domestic terror.

"Persistent and evolving" However, no statute exists to charge a domestic terrorist with domestic terror.

Why not? The Department of Justice has determined the greatest immediate threat no longer comes from foreigners or Islamic extremists but those who think they are being good Americans by killing other Americans. They have appointed themselves the arbiters of what defines "American" - of who belongs here and who doesn't and who gets to be fully human.

In May, Michael McGarrity, assistant director for the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, told a congressional committee he would describe the threat of domestic terrorism as "persistent and evolving." A month later, he told the House Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties the number of domestic terror incidents has risen 30 to 40% since last October.

Despite this increase, the current administration has reduced funding to address the threat.

Though law enforcement is growing more adept at ferreting out such people, the war against terror has no expiration date. For us, it will exist as long as there are Americans who are willing to betray this country by committing violence against it.

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Sun. 9/15 2:15, 5:45
Mon. 9/16 5:45
Tues. 9/17 Closed
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