

# Remember September:

## a commemorative mail art project by gail ellsperrmann

What did you do last Memorial Day? If you're like most people, you had the day off from work and you spent it either at a family picnic or crossing things off your "to-do" list at home. And again, if you're like most people, you didn't go to a parade or spend much time in reflection of what the day is all about. Now please, I am not being critical of you – I'm just discussing the reality of our current lifestyles. Most people younger than fifty will have trouble correctly defining Memorial Day or Veteran's Day (Pearl Harbor Day seems easier to define but most people get the date wrong). Yet, these, and other important dates in history are as important to our past as September 11, 2001 is to us today. The people around "back then" also said they would never forget, yet, somehow, later generations have.

We have said we would "never forget" 9-11-01. I came up with the idea of the Remember September Mail Art Project as a way for people to express their feelings and to reflect on the attacks, the heroes, the victims, their patriotism, and how our lives have changed. Just like Pearl Harbor Day, a parade doesn't seem an appropriate way to mark a day when so many people died. I thought that a better way to remember would be to take the time to create a small piece of artwork, a decorated envelope, and have your own private parade to the post office on September 11<sup>th</sup> to mail it each year. The envelope, with its September 11<sup>th</sup> postmark, would become part of the Remember September Mail Art collection, to be exhibited at various venues.

The 2002 "call" for envelopes yielded over 150 submissions from around the world. The artwork was heartfelt and beautiful and is the beginning of what I hope will be an enormous collection as years pass. Many artists contacted me to say that having this project to work on helped them to work through their feelings about the day. Two schoolteachers wrote to say that it gave them a way to discuss the day with children and give them an avenue to express their feelings. Participants were invited to insert a poem or private journal page in the envelope, which will never be opened, to give them a place to record their thoughts. The response to my idea has been heartwarming.

An article featuring many of the envelopes was in the September issue of *Somerset Studio* and I've had someone express interest in a possible book project, a few years from now. I intend to make "the call" every year – I hope that you will share this article with friends, family, and children's groups and that you will choose to keep the promise to "never forget" in this unique way. I encourage you to gather a group together with a box of envelopes and some basic art supplies to create envelopes for the project.

**(Remember September, continued)**

The guidelines for submission of envelopes can be found through a page on the Artella Web site, [www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com/RememberSeptember.html](http://www.ArtellaWordsAndArt.com/RememberSeptember.html).

If you would like a CD of all the 2002 envelopes, please send \$12.00 (payable to Gail Ellspermann), to Remember September, CD Order, P.O. Box 793, Katonah, NY 10536 and I will be happy to send one to you. Please note that any profits from the sale of CD's will be contributed to a 9-11 related charity. I can be reached at [SeptemberMailArt@aol.com](mailto:SeptemberMailArt@aol.com) if you have any questions.

As for Memorial Day, the "official" Federal date of observation is the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of May each year. It was originally known as "Decoration Day", when people would decorate the graves of fallen soldiers from World War One. It later became known as Memorial Day and now includes honoring all war dead by decorating their graves with flags and flowers.

Veteran's Day is officially observed on November 11<sup>th</sup> each year. Originally, it was called Armistice day, in honor of the World War One armistice signed at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. It also originally celebrated the sanctity of Peace. In 1954, the holiday was changed to Veteran's Day to honor all Veterans.

In defense of those who are confused, our Federal government has changed the names of both holidays and has monkeyed around with the dates of celebration several times. No wonder we are confused.

By the way, Pearl Harbor day is December 7<sup>th</sup>. They can't fiddle around with that date, or September 11<sup>th</sup> either!

*on this page and those that follow, please enjoy a trip through this virtual gallery of some of the submissions from Remember September 2002.*

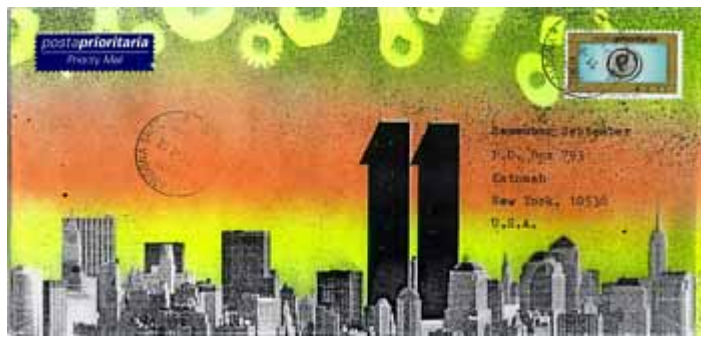


Sandy Keating  
Portland, OR



Julia  
Silver Springs, ME

(Remember September, continued)



Fabio Sassi  
Bologna, Italy



Annamary Holmes  
Brooklyn, NY



Dorothy Starlin  
Hamilton Square, NJ



Gail Ellspermann  
Katonah, NY



Susan Cohen  
Jenkintown, PA



Anne  
Coralles, NM



R.F. Cote  
Quebec, Canada



Deena Camp  
Lithua Springs, GA



Glen M. Epstein  
Iowa City, IA



Sande Salowey  
Plainfield, NJ



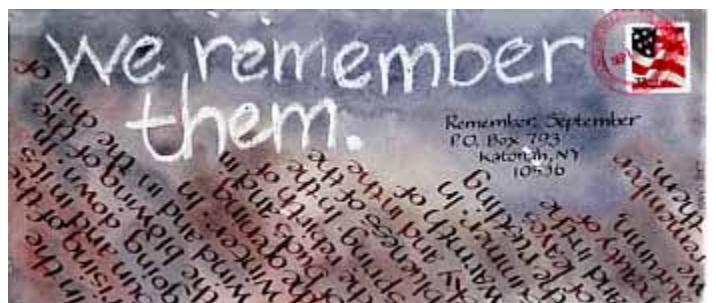
Lianne Gabe  
Moorestown, NJ



Gerry Jackson Kurdock  
Hudson, MA



David L. Alvey  
Dallas, TX



Elissa Barr  
Brookline, MA



Rita Cleary  
Trenton, NJ



S. Zoe Hecht  
Brooklyn, NY