



Hugh's News

A proper memorial

This month at the Pentagon a memorial will be dedicated to the 184 victims who died on Sept. 11, 2001. One of those victims was my high school ROTC instructor, Max Beilke. On March 29, 1973 Max Beilke was the "official last man" to leave Vietnam the United States was ending its direct military presence in Vietnam.

When tragedy struck the morning of Sept. 11 people wondered what had happened. The names and the number of victims would not be known for weeks.

The following day *The Washington Post* described how American Airlines Flight 77 approached the Pentagon, "the unidentified pilot executed a pivot so tight that it reminded observers of a fighter jet maneuver ... Aviation sources said the plane was flown with extraordinary skill."

Within days the names of 19 terrorist hijackers were publicized.

On Sept. 16, Hani Hanjour was named as the hijacker and pilot aboard American Airlines Flight 77. *The Washington Post* said, "Federal records show Hani Hanjoo [sic] obtained a commercial pilot's license in April of 1999 with a rating to fly commercial jets."

When Hanjour's name appeared in the press, Marcel Bernard, the chief flight instructor at the Freeway Airport in Mitchellville, contacted

authorities and reported that Hanjour had visited the airport.

Hanjour went into the air in a Cessna 172 three times with instructors. In August 2001, a scant month before the attack on the Pentagon, for a "check out" to rent an airplane.

"Insurance requires that a person must be checked out before they can rent a plane at the airport," Bernard said. "Hanjour's skills were so poor we would not rent a plane to him."

The Prince George's Journal [Sept. 18, 2001] reported that Hanjour did not finish a flight school in Arizona in 1996 "because instructors felt he was not capable." Bernard recalled that Hanjour did have a commercial pilot's license that had been issued in Arizona, but he was certain Hanjour did not have what is called a "Type Rating," which is necessary to fly commercial jets.

Bernard said it is possible a person with some flying experience, even a poor pilot like Hanjour, could steer a plane in the air and crash into a building.

But, he said, "[Hanjour's] skills were so poor he may have been aiming for the White House when he hit the Pentagon."

Bernard said it was difficult to believe the *Post's* report on the hijacker's maneuvers into the Pentagon.