



9/11

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My Property Law class—new first-year law students—began as usual at 8:30 a.m. on September 11, 2001. We were in the Pardee Court Room, the law school's formal showplace for major events, discussing the arcane doctrine of adverse possession. It may surprise you, but if someone else uses your land for several years, that person may become the new owner.

As we began to explore the reasons for this doctrine and how it might apply in the case at hand, something was clearly distracting my students. Although they knew I might call on them at any minute, they were glued to their laptop screens and whispering back and forth. I asked what was going

on. It seemed that an airplane had crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center. This produced a frenzy of chatter, followed in a few minutes by news of the plane going into the other tower. More frenzy.

Feeling I should try to achieve some sense of normalcy fairly quickly, I tried to bring the conversation to the legal implications of what had happened. Was it an act of war? Did it violate international law? How should we respond as lawyers? I let this discussion continue for several minutes.

But then I turned back to the mundane subject of the day. Just as we were getting started, we learned the University had been closed, apparently because there had been a rogue aircraft in the Cleveland airspace. It was no longer time to discuss adverse possession.