

Reflections On A New Day Of Infamy

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Prior to September 11, 2001, my generation had been fortunate enough to escape the unspeakable tragedies such as Pearl Harbor or the assassination of President Kennedy that defined the generations of my predecessors. Indeed, the most traumatic national events that I could recall prior to September 11, 2001, were the tragic explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger in January 1986 and the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April 1995.

While these events were indeed tragic, the catastrophe of September 11th represents a new “day of infamy” that will unite the members of my generation – and indeed every person on earth – as we will remember September 11th every day of our lives. For me, the September 11th tragedy was all the more devastating, not only because the events literally unfolded before my eyes, but because the victims in the World Trade Center were my peers, many of whom had followed career paths not dissimilar to my own, and all of whom had arrived – exactly as I had – early in the morning of September 11th to get a head start on the day’s activities. Neither they nor I could ever have anticipated the enormity of the tragedy that was about to occur.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks, I began to reduce my recollection of these events to paper—a process that continued for many months. As we as a nation reflect on the first anniversary of these tragic events, I wanted to share my recollections of the days surrounding what has been, and what will surely continue to be, one of the most profoundly defining moments of my life.

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

An Unlikely Witness

September 11th had already begun in a very unusual way for me. On September 6th, the previous Thursday, I had taken my car to the Chrysler dealership in Union City, New Jersey, for an oil change. The mechanic had clumsily spilled oil around the engine, which caused a grayish-white smoke to emanate from under the hood. I made an appointment to return the car to the dealership at 7:30 a.m. on September 11th.

David Harris followed me to the dealership in Union City and had agreed to drive me to work after leaving the car. I arrived at the dealership promptly at 7:30, and by 7:50 was on my way into Manhattan to my office on 48th Street in Times Square. I arrived at my office by about 8:15, which was virtually unheard of for me, as I typically arrive between 9:15 and 10:00 on a normal day. After eating a quick breakfast at my desk and reading the then-current headlines of the day on the CNN.com website, I turned to the day's tasks.

The day had promised to be a busy one. In addition to my case responsibilities at work, approximately 15 new first-year litigation attorneys had arrived at the firm the previous day, and I had to prepare for a presentation to them about the mechanics of reviewing and producing documents. Our department had also planned a welcome reception for our new colleagues that evening at a nearby restaurant.

At 8:55, my office telephone rang. It was my friend, Tom Nichols, who asked if I had heard about "the plane crash." I said that I had not, and he informed me that a plane had crashed "in Manhattan" at the World Trade Center. I clicked the "refresh" button on my web browser to consult the CNN.com website, which showed as "breaking news" that an unidentified plane had crashed at the World Trade Center. I also began to hear the sirens from emergency vehicles downstairs. I told Tom that I wanted to find out more about what happened and would call him back shortly.

Two thoughts entered my head at that point. The first was that there was a possibility that David was much nearer to the World Trade Center site than I, as he often frequented a coffee shop in the morning in Greenwich Village. His cell phone had broken several days before, and there was no way for me to get in touch with him. Assuming that he would be as concerned about these developments as I, I wanted to try to find him. My second thought was of concern for what was happening downtown. In no way realizing the magnitude of the unfolding catastrophe, I envisioned a small plane (a Piper or Cessna) that had wandered off course and inadvertently impacted the tower.

The combination of these two thoughts led me to leave my office quickly (so quickly that I left my briefcase, cell phone, and keys behind) and try to go downtown. After wandering around the streets near Times Square for a few minutes, trying in vain to catch a glimpse of the World Trade Center (which was impossible due to the visual obstructions of the midtown high-rise office buildings), I walked to the 42nd Street subway station and descended to the red line 1/2/3/9 trains. The first train to come along heading downtown was an express number 2 train, which I boarded. As the train continued its course downtown, it made several awkward stops between stations. At several points, the conductor made unintelligible service announcements, referring vaguely to an "emergency" at the World Trade Center. I sincerely hoped that I would not be caught underground on a crowded subway train as a result of that emergency.

Ultimately, it was announced that the train would stop only at Chambers Street before heading to Brooklyn. As this would be my only chance to get off the train in Manhattan, I left the train at Chambers Street and hurried up the subway stairs to the street level. It was 9:25.

The subway exit was located at a unique five-point intersection of Chambers Street, Hudson Street, and West Broadway —5 blocks (and 580 yards) north of the World Trade Center. The subway exit faced

south, and the first thing I saw upon emerging from the station were the two gigantic World Trade Center towers. The damage was far worse than anything I had imagined or could ever have anticipated. There were two enormous blazing holes burning through both towers, sending dense black smoke billowing into the otherwise beautiful blue September sky. In addition to the smoke and flames, there were tens of thousands of glimmering pieces of paper and other debris fluttering as though suspended in the air hundreds of feet above the ground. I was dumfounded. My initial thoughts centered on how it would ever be possible to repair such extensive damage. That concern would ultimately be rendered moot.

I then noticed the immense crowds of hundreds of New Yorkers gathering in the street, some crying, some running, some with cameras — all stunned. Aside from the steady flow of emergency vehicles heading towards the burning towers, there was virtually no traffic in the street. Many cars had pulled up to the curb, with their drivers gazing up at the World Trade Center.

I began to overhear some of the people on the street discussing a second airplane that had struck the tower (which happened while I was underground in the subway). Naively, I asked an older gentleman how it was possible that two aircraft had crashed into the World Trade Center. The man replied condescendingly in a thick Irish accent, “You don’t really think it was an accident, do you?” I began to consider this bone-chilling rhetorical question. Indeed, I overheard one onlooker ask, “So was this that Osama Bin Laden guy?”

I have always had a general interest in aviation, so I turned to a younger man who claimed to have seen



the second impact and asked him what type of aircraft struck the tower (still believing it to be a small airplane). I dismissed his response that it was an “Airbus-type” commercial aircraft. It was only when I heard from others on the street varying reports about a 747 or a 737 that it occurred to me that the doomed aircraft could have been a commercial airplane with passengers on board. This realization unsettled me to my core.

Horrific stories were already beginning to circulate among those who had witnessed the original airplane crashes. I overheard the man with the Irish accent telling me of the incredible heat that he felt when the airplanes crashed and exploded. He also mentioned that he had counted about 15-20 people who jumped out of the building from above the impact to their deaths on the street below.

I did not have long to ponder the gravity of the situation, for several police officers started running up

the street towards where I was standing shouting for everyone to “get back.” Rumors began to circulate that a third airplane (apparently the one in the air intended for the Pentagon) was heading for New York as well. A frantic middle-aged woman ran up the street shouting that she didn’t want to be around for that as well.

All of a sudden, presumably as a result of the police officers’ shouting, hundreds of people began to scream and run up the street away from the World Trade Center as quickly as they could. This chaos was unreal to me, as I felt as though I had seen something similar when I watched Independence Day. Nevertheless the chaotic stampede of stunned onlookers prompted me to fear that I quite possibly had unwittingly walked into a death trap. The thought of being struck by a third crashing aircraft or being trampled by hundreds of frantic New Yorkers sent me up the street very quickly.

After several minutes passed, I stopped running. At that point, rumors were circulating that the towers might actually fall, which I promptly dismissed as rank speculation. Nevertheless, I decided it was time to leave. Unfortunately, the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) had other ideas, as it quickly became clear that there was no more subway, bus, or taxi service anywhere downtown. I realized I would have to return to my office (roughly 60 blocks, and nearly 3 1/2 miles away) by foot.

Thus, I started walking (and sometimes jogging or sprinting) uptown. Hundreds of people remained in the street. By now, people were huddled around portable radios to listen to breaking news reports. A few taxicabs and delivery trucks had stopped at the curb, rolled down their windows, and turned up the radio so people could listen to news reports. The expressions on the faces of the people I passed varied tremendously—some were crying, others were desperately trying to go about their daily “routine.”

It did not look like I would be able to find David anywhere. In the chaos of the moment, I could not orient myself (not being particularly familiar with downtown) to figure out how to find David’s coffee shop. I realized that all I could do was try to get back to the office, assuming that he would try to call me there. Strangely, as I walked uptown, I was frustrated that I was unable to call my secretary to let her know I would be late in getting back to the office! Of course, I would later learn that she, like so many others, would not be at the office at all.

I frequently turned back around as I walked uptown. Each time I turned around I was shocked anew by the sight of the two immense columns of black smoke and fire dominating the lower Manhattan skyline.

I continued my uptown exodus like a zombie. My state of mind was jarred once more by someone screaming from a second- or third-story window, “Oh my God, they’ve just hit the Pentagon!” The gasps of disbelief from those already stunned by the unfolding World Trade Center catastrophe were horrific. It seemed at that moment that the entire scenario was simply too unbelievable to be true. Yet, to my horror, the radios on the street were confirming reports of a plane crash at the Pentagon as well.

Once the news broke of a similar catastrophe at the Pentagon, it became clear to everyone that the country was literally under attack from all sides. My sense of shock quickly ceded to a sense of vulnerability; indeed, I began to wonder where the next attack would occur. Given the course of the events of that morning, it seemed as though a new attack could happen at any instant.

After some time had passed and I had reached the vicinity of 8th Street, there was a great commotion on the street, and people began to scream and shout. I turned around and saw not two, but one, World Trade Center tower. People were shouting in disbelief that one of the towers had collapsed. I did not see this tower collapse, but I saw massive amounts of dust and smoke in the background coming up from the ground.

I was stunned to the core. The improbable predictions were coming true—the World Trade Center was coming down. Some of those around me became hysterical about the acquaintances or loved ones they knew were in the tower. Others were trying in vain to console and comfort them. As if someone had flipped a switch, the adrenaline ran throughout my entire body, and I started to dash up the street, stopping occasionally to try to use various pay phones on the street to call my office.

Public pay phones were one of the many truly strange sights that morning, as people lined up—sometimes in lines up to 10-12 people deep—around public telephones to try to contact loved ones. Interestingly, in the years that I have worked in Manhattan, I believe I had used a pay phone only once. Moreover, with the popularity of cell phones, it would be virtually unheard of to see anyone waiting to use a pay phone—indeed, Manhattan pay phones are so infrequently used that they often do not work in any event. The World Trade Center was home, among other things, to numerous radio and cellular broadcast antennas, all of which were destroyed when the towers collapsed. As a result, virtually no one could use their cellular telephones, and masses of people lined up to use those few pay phones that were operational.

At 14th Street, I went down into the subway hoping to find some way (short of walking) to get back to my 48th Street office. Although the station attendant claimed that trains were operational, it became clear that they were, in fact, not running. I even tried to find the PATH train station (which involved my wandering clumsily underground between 6th and 7th Avenue) to board an incoming commuter train from New Jersey going uptown to 33rd Street. These efforts were to no avail, and I resumed my uptown sprint. When I turned around to look downtown this time, the skyline that greeted me was particularly surreal — the sight of a solitary World Trade Center tower (and not two) was one of the eeriest things I have ever seen in my life.

Time seemed to stand still during my return jog to my office. I was aware of neither the passage of distance nor time. As I continued north, hundreds of stunned New Yorkers huddled around cars and trucks with radios, which were now confirming the collapse of the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

During this time, I heard the unmistakable roar of jet engines above, which was highly unsettling given the events of that morning. When I gazed skyward, I saw what appeared to be a military fighter jet patrolling the skies of Manhattan. Although the realization that there was now a military presence “on the scene” gave me some comfort, each time the jets passed overhead, those of us on the street began to panic and gaze wildly around the sky, fearing that more terrorist aircraft were en route. Particularly after the reports that a similar attack had occurred at the Pentagon, the realization that other aircraft could be bound for Manhattan was a horrific thought.

After some time had passed and I had reached roughly 20th Street, a great commotion began on the street again. I turned around to witness the image that will remain with me for the rest of my life. As I turned my gaze to the south, a huge black cloud of dust, smoke, and debris seemed to pour like a fountain out of the sky. Nothing about that sight remotely resembled the World Trade Center tower, or my assumption about how such a tower would fall, envisioning something akin to a domino. Nevertheless the gasps from the street and the horror in the pit of my stomach confirmed to me that I was witnessing the collapse and destruction of the remaining World Trade Center tower. Presumably as a result of the roughly 44 blocks separating me from “ground zero,” I cannot recall hearing any sort of roar, rumble, or explosion as the tower collapsed. Rather, the only sounds came from people on the street, who were by this time frantic. I was glued in place and could not speak, think, or reason anything other than “Oh, my God; Oh, my God” — a phrase that I exclaimed scores of times without interruption.

A well-dressed young man standing next to me with tears in his eyes turned to me and asked with a discernible English accent, “What just happened?” I responded, “I think the second tower just came down.” We stared incredulously at each other for several seconds. Some time later as I passed the Manhattan Mall at roughly 34th Street, I overheard a young man screaming to a companion, either in anger or disbelief, “Don’t you understand what has just happened here?!?” I doubt that any of us did, or in fact could, at that point.



It was during my return trip uptown that my thoughts turned towards my aunt who was scheduled to arrive in New York City that afternoon. Ever since I moved to the East Coast, my aunt—who, like my entire immediate family, lives in Muncie, Indiana—had talked about coming to visit me in New York City. My aunt and I had spoken to each other several days before, and I learned that she and a friend would be visiting Boston and Rhode Island before taking the train to New York City. I

presumed my aunt was in all likelihood still in Boston. Still not fully realizing the enormity of the disaster that had taken place, I began to wonder how I would explain to her all that had transpired.

As though I had traveled no distance at all, I suddenly found myself at Times Square with thousands of stunned New Yorkers staring at the large-screen televisions that can be found virtually on every corner. My arrival in Times Square provided my first encounter with the news media as well as my first opportunity to see footage of the second aircraft impacting the South Tower. Almost simultaneously, the news reports were confirming that an American Airlines and a United Airlines Boeing 767 with passengers had been hijacked that morning from Boston and were the planes that struck and destroyed the World Trade Center. The news that the aircraft involved in the attacks were Boeing 767s was stunning, as I realized that such aircraft were large, widebody jets, capable of carrying more than 250 passengers cross-country, and even internationally. I also read the news that scrolled across the façade

of the building at Four Times Square that the FAA had grounded all air traffic until further notice — an imminently wise course of action, in my view.

I had long passed the point of sensory overload at that time, and was unable to comprehend fully what had happened. Naively, I tried to reassure myself that because the attacks took place early in the day, the towers might not have been completely full, thereby avoiding massive casualties. The magnitude of the loss of life I had just witnessed would not sink in for days.

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Just before 11:00, I returned to my office at 1585 Broadway. Strangely, only two hours had passed since I had dashed precipitously from my office building that morning. Those two hours were doubtless the longest and most impressionable of my life. To my surprise, security guards were posted outside the building and informed me that the building was being evacuated, which explained why I had seen a colleague, visibly distraught, walking away from the building a few moments before. After wandering around outside for a few moments, I realized that without my cell phone or keys, it would do me no good to try to leave. I pleaded with the security guards to let me back into my office building at least long enough to get my belongings. Thankfully, when I showed them my employee ID card, they acceded to this request.

There were very few employees from the firm left in the building, and virtually no employees of Morgan Stanley, the firm's landlord and owner of the office building, and, as I would later learn, the principal tenant of the World Trade Center. Those few employees who remained were visibly shaken. In fact, one attorney on my floor, who is typically the picture of strength and composure, held her head in her hands in desperation.

The first person I called from my office was my mother, who was reassured to hear from me, yet surprisingly calm about the day's events. Shortly thereafter, I phoned my friend Tom, whose call had set the morning in motion earlier. During my conversation with Tom I learned that David was safely in Connecticut and had been trying to call me. I tried to call the church in Fairfield, Connecticut, at which David works, but was unable to reach anyone. I ultimately called a mutual friend in Fairfield and, to my great surprise and relief, David answered the phone.

David insisted that I follow the lead of my many coworkers and leave the building instantly. I assured him there was absolutely nothing else I could do, as it was impossible to leave Manhattan by train, bus, or car in any direction. Indeed, the radio confirmed that the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels, as well as the George Washington, Queensboro, Manhattan, and Brooklyn bridges, were closed to traffic until further notice. Furthermore, no subway, PATH, or commuter trains were permitted in or out of the city, and Grand Central Station, "Penn" Station, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal had all been evacuated. I was, in essence, stranded. I knew, however, that I was not alone in that respect.

In fact, David was in a similar situation, having left the city that morning for Connecticut. It seemed likely

that he would not be returning to New York any time in the immediate future. He made plans to spend at least one night with a friend in North Haven, Connecticut.

David also suggested that if I insisted on remaining in the building, I seek refuge in the basement-level law library and work there for the remainder of the day. Of course, there was no possibility of doing any work, as there was no way I could focus on even the most ministerial of tasks. The only thing I could do was listen to the radio, call friends by phone (which at times was difficult in light of the disruption in service), and visit Internet news sites for the latest updates.

As I was surfing the Internet and listening to the radio, I learned that a fourth commercial aircraft had crashed in Pennsylvania. By this time, my mind had long since stopped processing such information rationally. I was overwhelmed, not only by the immense sadness for the loss of life in four terrorist attacks, but at the concept of four fatal aviation crashes in a single morning, any one of which standing alone would have been a national tragedy.

During the time I spent in my office, I spoke with my friend, Mike Coup, in Wichita, Kansas. For the first time, I started to speculate at the number of people who might have been in the World Trade Center when the attacks took place. I told Mike that I guessed as many as 10,000 might work in the World Trade Center. He thought it was probably more. Mike, of course, was correct, as I would later learn that there were more than 50,000 people who worked in the World Trade Center. One of the more chilling moments came during that conversation when Mike told me that our mutual friend and colleague Brett Valliant, who had just completed a concert tour of Australia and New Zealand, was “somewhere” in the air between Australia and Wichita, and had not been heard from. Thankfully, I later learned that his flight was safely diverted to Honolulu, where he spent several relaxing days on the beach – clearly the luckiest friend I knew at the time!

After some time, the telephone rang, and I spoke with my aunt who was in the train station in Boston. She reported that she and her friend had boarded the train for New York that morning, had traveled a few miles, and then were ordered to return to Boston. At the time I spoke with my aunt, she did not seem to have heard the entire extent of the news of what had happened in New York. She asked me to telephone the Milford Plaza Hotel, where she had planned to stay, and let them know she might be running “a little late.” I told my aunt that I would call, but that I thought it highly unlikely that she (or anyone) would either be permitted into the city, or would even want to venture into Manhattan.

I later learned my aunt had planned a sightseeing tour for September 12th, which included an early morning stop at the World Trade Center, as well as breakfast at the fabled “Windows On The World” restaurant on the 107th floor of the South Tower. Clearly, had the attack taken place a day later, or had my aunt’s trip occurred a day earlier, these catastrophes could have taken on a much more personally devastating meaning.

Most of my colleagues who remained at the office lived either in New Jersey or Connecticut and, like me, were in effect stranded until further notice. Although the firm offered everyone in the building a free lunch, I did not welcome the idea of spending the night in my office (although I had certainly done that before) and wanted desperately to return home to Hoboken.

Rumors were both rampant and conflicting among the friends with whom I spoke and among my colleagues. I heard varied reports that the State Department, Camp David, the Capitol, and the White House had been attacked, either with planes or car bombs. I also heard speculation that there were dozens of commercial aircraft still in the air and unaccounted for, and that more hijackings were expected. It was virtually impossible to verify any of these rumors, as it was difficult to get through to the on-line news agencies, and I did not have access to television.

By about 2:00 p.m., I was getting particularly restless and happened to look out the window to see ferries taking people from Manhattan to New Jersey. Encouraged by that sight, I called the New York Waterway to confirm whether they were in fact operating ferries to New Jersey under the circumstances. They reported that the ferries were running and that they were “just trying to get as many people home as possible.” Not yet entirely understanding that statement, I gathered my belongings (this time taking my cell phone and keys), and left the office, heading to the ferry dock located at 40th Street and the West Side Highway.

When I reached the West Side Highway, I began to understand the comment from the New York Waterways representative with whom I had spoken. It seemed as though every single person in Manhattan had descended on the West Side Highway. There were more people assembled to get on a boat than I had ever seen in one place in my entire life. There were literally tens of thousands of people like me trying to repatriate to their New Jersey homeland. The scene was reminiscent of a very bad day at Disney World: people were lined up several abreast snaking back and forth as far as the eye could see.

Although there were technically two different ferry companies separated by about five or six city blocks, it was clear to no one whether there was one line or two, where the line was going or ending, or whether the line in which one was standing was destined for Weehauken or Hoboken. It was a distinction without a difference, as we all just wanted desperately to be on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River. Moreover, the proximity of the New Jersey shoreline further fueled the general impatience and malaise we all felt. As the State of New Jersey was at a distance of at most a few hundred feet, many joked about swimming or canoeing to the other side. Sadly, those already agitated and stressed by the day’s events did not always make for the most pleasant company to spend hours with in line.

During this time, the West Side Highway, which is typically very heavily traveled at any given time, was virtually deserted. The only traffic on the roads consisted of emergency vehicles and what appeared to be military personnel. The military fighter jet patrol continued throughout the afternoon. By this time, I could see a pair of jets that appeared to fly in tandem—one along the Hudson River and one along the East River. The jets flew south along the length of Manhattan, made a sharp 180-degree turn, and flew back in the opposite direction, ultimately returning to the south again. Although more than six hours had passed since the attacks, the roar of jet engines remained unsettling, notwithstanding the safety that they represented.

By late afternoon, I was finally able to place a few cell phone calls, although it took repeated attempts to

be able to dial out. I called my friend Tom and asked him to relay messages to my mother and anyone else who was concerned that I was safe and on my way home.

After spending two and a half hours in the sunlight with tens of thousands of cranky individuals yearning desperately to be home, I reached the front of the line and boarded a boat for Weehauken, which is one town to the north of Hoboken. In light of the day's events, the New York Waterway waived the usual \$4.00 charge.

The trip across the Hudson River was sobering. The five-minute trip took place in absolute silence. No passenger said a word on the way to Weehauken, and the only sounds came from the churning of the water beneath us and the patrol of F-15s above us.

The Hudson River crossing provided us the first opportunity to see the forever-altered New York skyline. Immediately upon our departure, our eyes were transfixed on the once proud skyline of lower Manhattan. The sight was grim. The two sleek proud gray towers that were as much icons of New York as the Statue of Liberty had been replaced by an ominous cloud of thick gray and black smoke, slowly rising and drifting to the south and east from Manhattan.

Upon our arrival in Weehauken, the conductor mentioned that, since we would in all likelihood not be returning to Manhattan for several days, we should take the opportunity to donate blood at the many locations established to aid in the relief efforts. I departed the ferry, relieved to be in New Jersey and anxious to return home. Thankfully, my apartment was only about 10 blocks from Weehauken. Employees of a Tiger Mart located at Willow Street and 19th Street, on the main road into Hoboken, were giving away water to the many weary travelers walking back to their homes. I thanked them for their offer, but did not take their gift, feeling somehow as though they should save the water for those who had gone through so much more than I that day.

As I crossed the Willow Street bridge, I decided to call into my voicemail at work and see what, if any, messages I had. To my surprise, the only message I had was from an employee at the Chrysler dealership where I had taken my car earlier that morning. She informed me that the problem with my car had been remedied, although she said she was sure that I had other things on my mind at the time. I made a mental note of her message and decided to retrieve my car as soon as practicable.

After a slow and deliberate 20-minute walk—much less harried than my 3 1/2-mile sprint uptown earlier in the day—I walked into my apartment just after 5:00 p.m. I had never been so happy to be home. Almost instantly my phone began to ring, as people called to find out about David and me. That evening I spoke to concerned friends literally from around the world, as well as to friends I had not heard from in many years. Although it was reassuring to hear their voices, it was thoroughly exhausting to recount over and over even an abbreviated version of the day's events.

I turned on the television and for the first time was able to ponder the media reports of the day's tragedies. I saw the video images that have now been seared into the world's collective consciousness of the American and United airliners crashing into the World Trade Center, and the ensuing collapses. It was all the more disturbing to be able to reconcile the media reports with what I had witnessed earlier

in the day.

CNN began to report the estimated flight paths of the hijacked aircraft. I was surprised to learn that American Airlines flight 11 – the first to strike the World Trade Center – followed a flight path that brought the Boeing 767-200 (at an altitude of about 800 feet) directly above my office building at Times Square. Strangely, I hadn't heard jet engines or anything out of the ordinary until my friend called me to tell me about the plane crash.

In an attempt to allay the concerns of those who remained unaware of my proximity to lower Manhattan, I composed an email briefly setting forth, not only that I was safe, but also a short overview of the day's events.

I watched President Bush's address to the nation at approximately 9:00 p.m. upon his return from Florida. It was sobering to know that our newly-elected president would have to face such an important and critical chapter of our nation's history.

Later that evening, I received a broadcast voicemail message from the firm informing all employees that all of our offices around the country would be closed on Wednesday. This announcement was academic to me, as it would simply not have been physically possible for me to return to Manhattan. All bridges and tunnels remained closed, and I could simply not face hours waiting for a ferry.

I went to sleep at approximately midnight and slept surprisingly soundly.

Wednesday, September 12, 2001

The Day After – The Strange Request

I began my "day after" by sleeping in. I immediately turned on CNN and continued to watch the unfolding coverage of the disaster throughout the day. I unfortunately found myself without even a scintilla of energy to do anything that day, other than the routine tasks of emailing friends.

I would normally welcome a day home from work as an opportunity to catch up on housework, music business, or practicing. However, I did not have the mental state to focus on any such activity.

It was in this context that I received a surprising request. My friend Russ Shaner from Rochester, New York, telephoned me early in the afternoon. Assuming that he too had called to make sure I was safe, we made "small talk" and briefly discussed the events of the past day. After a few moments had passed, Russ asked pointedly, "What are you doing this weekend?" I honestly had no idea. Russ explained that Lew Williams was scheduled to perform a concert for the Rochester Theatre Organ Society (RTOS) on Saturday, September 15th, but it was beginning to look unlikely that he would be able to fly from his home in the Phoenix area to Rochester in light of the FAA's grounding order. I was scheduled to perform for RTOS in April 2002, so Russ asked if I would be able to switch dates with Lew, as I could presumably

drive from Hoboken to Rochester without much difficulty. Without pondering the question at any length, I agreed.

Almost immediately after I hung up the telephone, I began to question the propriety, not only of going forward with a public concert merely a few days after the terrorist attacks, but also my ability to find the state of mind necessary to give my best to a concert.

Indeed, my state of mind alternated between distraction and depression throughout the day, particularly as the news media began to give estimates of the numbers of dead and missing. The heart-wrenching stories began to pour in about the heroes who were lost in the attacks. I was particularly moved by reports of the firm Cantor Fitzgerald, from which approximately 700 employees were missing and presumed dead.

I also started searching in my mind to determine if I knew anyone who worked in the law firms in or near the World Trade Center. I was particularly concerned about two of the larger firms in or near the towers. Thankfully, with the passage of time, I learned of the safety of my friends at these firms.

Later in the day, I decided to spend some time in the gym that is part of my apartment complex. The televisions, frequently tuned to MTV or other movie or sports programming, broadcasted CNN. Those who were training and who worked downtown began talking to each other—"sharing notes" so to speak—about their experiences and of their acquaintances from whom they had not yet heard anything. These conversations were exceedingly difficult to overhear and further unsettled my state of mind.

As the day drew to a close, I continued to watch CNN at nearly every moment. I also learned from my colleagues that the office would reopen on Thursday morning. As Mayor Giuliani and President Bush were urging Americans to go back to work and get back into their routines, I decided that I would make every effort to cross the Hudson and return to my Manhattan law firm.

As I was preparing for bed that evening, reports began to circulate that bombs had been found at the Empire State Building. As I was reconsidering my resolve to return to work, CNN announced that the threat had been a hoax.

Thursday, September 13, 2001

The Return To Work

Thursday morning began as Tuesday morning had—with a trip to the Chrysler dealership (although this time to pick up my car). To my great surprise, as soon as I walked through the door, the face of the sales representative with whom I had spoken on Tuesday paled as though she had seen a ghost, and she nearly jumped over the counter to greet me. She explained that I was the only one of her clients who had not yet claimed his vehicle since Tuesday.

Since she knew, based on my office phone number (with a 212 area code), that I worked in Manhattan, she had obviously jumped to an erroneous conclusion about my safety. She explained that since I did not respond to her voicemail message or come to the dealership on Wednesday, she assumed that I had not survived the attack. Of course, I reassured her that I was (obviously) fine and that I had not been directly impacted by the attacks. Although it was touching that she had been concerned for my safety, it was nevertheless an eerie feeling knowing that at least one person had believed I had not survived.

I drove back to Hoboken and prepared to return to work for the first day since the attacks. As I went through the Lincoln Tunnel by bus, I was stunned by how few people were traveling. Undoubtedly, the sparse traffic was due to a combination of the Rosh Hashana holiday, and the profound fear so many still felt.

When I arrived at work, I quickly noticed that the post-attack psyche at my law firm could be divided into two types of people: those who had decided to throw themselves into work as deeply and completely as possible; and those, like me, who had difficulty concentrating on doing any meaningful work.

Fortunately, the first part of my day was consumed with the routine administrative tasks I had tried to do early on September 11th before the attacks. The routine nature of these tasks lent itself well to my inability to concentrate on anything substantive. Nevertheless, I spent a great deal of time clicking the “refresh” button on my web browser to read the latest news reports. Once those tasks were complete, however, and it was time to focus on doing some legal writing and analysis, I quickly found that I simply could not concentrate or do anything productive.

I spent a significant amount of time pondering my agreement to give a concert in Rochester over the weekend. It had become clear that many of the sports and entertainment venues, including the Academy Awards, were postponing or canceling their events, and I began to wish that RTOS would follow suit. In fact, at one point I called Russ Shaner to express this viewpoint to him.

As he was not home at the time of my call, I sent him an email to the same effect. He responded that he certainly understood my situation, but that RTOS felt that “a sense of normalcy would be a good thing for [its] mostly older audience,” and that it would “be good for them to have an opportunity for a break from the TV coverage,” which had admittedly become overwhelming.

I was only able to work until about 6:00 p.m., which would have been under normal circumstances an extremely early hour for me to leave the office. Nevertheless, given that I had been most unsuccessful in getting anything done, I figured that I should just leave and try to work on revitalizing my state of mind.

On my way home from work, I walked past The New York Fire Department’s Ladder 54, located at the corner of 48th Street and 8th Avenue. I had walked by this firehouse countless times during the two years I had worked at my law firm. This time, however, was very different, as the fire battalion, like so many others around the city, had lost dozens of its firefighters. The fire station had posted photographs

of its missing firefighters on the outer walls, and people from throughout the city and beyond brought hundreds of floral bouquets, cards, candles, posters, and other indicia of support.

The sadness I felt as I pondered the firehouse was strangely transformed into an intense sense of patriotism. For what I believe to be the first time in my life, I went into a souvenir shop and purchased various American flag memorabilia — a desk-sized American flag, a “God Bless America” keychain, a red-white-and-blue pen with stars, and a magnet with the World Trade Center and an American flag.

As I arrived in Hoboken, I passed an older gentleman distributing flyers soliciting aid on behalf of the Hoboken mayor’s office to help in the relief efforts. Breaking with my tradition of ignoring people who hand out materials on the street, I took several flyers from the man.

I spent most of that evening considering my upcoming trip to Rochester. As I read various postings on the Theatreorgans-L on-line e-mail list, I came to learn that there were a number of theatre organ concerts scheduled for the weekend of September 15th and 16th. In addition to my concert on Saturday evening in Rochester, Tom Hazelton was scheduled to perform at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham, and Scott Foppiano at Shea’s Buffalo theatre in Buffalo, New York, on Sunday afternoon.

Lacking any comparable precedent whatsoever, I was at a loss to develop a suitable concert program to perform just days after the September 11th attacks. I felt that it would be inappropriate not to do or say something in honor and remembrance of September 11th, but at the same time, I wanted the program to be sufficiently “light” that it would provide the much-needed escape from the events of the past days.

I spoke with Donna Parker as well as Clark Wilson, two close friends and colleagues, to get an idea of what they considered to be an “appropriate” program under the circumstances. Both Donna and Clark agreed that the best approach would be to make some sort of tribute, but not to dwell on the events too long. Donna suggested, “Don’t tie the state of the country to everything you are playing.” Clark concurred, and suggested that I begin with the Star Spangled Banner, and then proceed normally from there.

After speaking with Donna and Clark, my mind began to race to figure out exactly what I should play. I finally settled on opening with the National Anthem and closing with “God Bless America.” I also decided that the rest of the concert should be as “normal” as possible. I also emailed Russ to inquire if RTOS could obtain a large American flag to hang from the stage in tribute, and Russ assured me he would make every effort.

As I began to plan the concert, for the first time since September 11th, my spirits were lifted. That this concert could be a small way for me to help people to come to terms with what everyone was experiencing was a very calming realization. Motivated in part by the gentleman handing out flyers in Hoboken, I also decided to dedicate the proceeds from my recording sales to the World Trade Center Relief Fund.

I went to bed that evening with a sense of accomplishment. Not only had my outlook toward the

concert changed, but I felt as though I was actually doing something beneficial, not only for the others affected by the tragedy, but also for myself.

Friday, September 14, 2001

The Patriot

I could not face the prospect of going in to work on Friday, particularly as I would need to leave relatively early to undertake the six-hour drive to Rochester. The idea of going into the city was further complicated by the news that President Bush would arrive in mid-afternoon, following a memorial service at National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., to tour the disaster site.

In light of the days' events, and the slim likelihood that I would succeed in focusing on anything meaningful, I decided to work from home. The term "work" was a euphemism, as it was an enormous struggle to complete even two hours of work that day. Indeed, although I spent a few hours in my office at home attempting to do a few tasks for clients, my thoughts inevitably strayed to the events of the past few days and the continuous news reports on CNN.

At 11:00 a.m., the appointed hour for the national memorial service at National Cathedral, I quickly realized that I simply could not watch the memorial service, for at the first sound of the organ and the choir, the deep anguish from the past few days would return in a rush. In fact, even as I watched and listened to rebroadcasts of the service on the television and radio, those same feelings of overwhelming sadness returned, particularly at the singing of "The Battle Hymn Of The Republic" at the conclusion of the service.

Throughout the course of that day, I began to ponder for the first time the type of military action the United States would take in response to the terrorist attacks. By Friday, most commentators and officials appeared to concur that Osama Bin Laden had in some way been involved in the attacks, and I began to hear for the first time reports of the now-infamous Al-Qaida terrorist network.

One of the more memorable incidents of the day took place as President Bush officially declared the attacks "acts of war"—a term of art with immense legal and political significance. Moreover, NATO stunningly activated its reciprocity provisions under Article V of the NATO treaty, which provides that an attack against one member-nation is deemed an attack against all. That the first-ever invocation of this treaty provision occurred in order to defend the United States, rather than a western European country attacked by the Soviet Union, clearly illustrated that the world order I grew up in during the 1980s had been turned on its head.

Among the more chilling and sobering reports of Friday were announcements from the FBI that there was "no reason to believe" that more attacks were "not possible." My translation of this rather legalistic statement was that the FBI believed there were other terrorist cells operating in the country, and, without wanting to provoke panic, the FBI had cautiously put the nation "on alert."

In any event, I began to distract myself from the events of September 11th by preparing for my upcoming concert. I sketched out my program for the following evening, and began pondering the words I would address to the audience during the performance. By approximately 4:00 P.M., I decided to depart for Rochester (if for no other reason than to have a change of pace).

Over the course of the six hours I spent in the car between Hoboken and Rochester, I had a great deal of time to consider the upcoming concert and how I would proceed. I had decided that I would open the performance with the National Anthem and would conclude with "God Bless America," with the rest of the program being as "normal" as possible. Having never opened a performance with the National Anthem, and lacking any precedent from which to base the propriety of that choice, I spent most of my time in the car mentally planning my arrangement of the hymn.

After many different mental iterations, I ultimately devised an arrangement that drew upon, as an introduction, many of the American patriotic hymns, such as "My Country 'Tis Of Thee" and "America The Beautiful," ultimately culminating in the National Anthem. As I thought through the National Anthem, I was touched by the profound and haunting symbolism of the lyrics that seemed so particularly à propos at the time:

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

As I pondered the conclusion of the concert, my mind settled on the beautiful, yet less well-known patriotic song by Irving Berlin, which bears the name of and draws upon the "quintessentially American" inscription found at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

I decided that at the end of one chorus of this hymn, I would conclude with the standard, "God Bless America."

The profound sense of peace and national pride that these hymns gave me was very startling. I had never been an immensely (or even remotely) patriotic person, and had certainly never “wrapped myself in the flag.” Indeed, for the first time in my life, I began to understand the intense pride a World War II veteran must feel upon seeing the American flag—a feeling of pride, tempered by a somber respect for the sacrifice and loss of life that the emblem symbolizes.



I arrived in Rochester at approximately 10:00 p.m. as I had planned. I checked myself into the hotel provided by RTOS, made arrangements for the next day’s rehearsal, and, after reading a few emails and making a few telephone calls, went promptly to bed.

Saturday, September 15, 2001

The Concert

Saturday the 15th started very early for me at approximately 8:00 a.m. Due to the unexpected timing of my trip to Rochester, all of my rehearsal time had to take place between 9:00 a.m. and roughly 5:00 p.m. As it turned out, I spent the greatest portion of my rehearsal time preparing my opening arrangement of the National Anthem, and my closing arrangement of “Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor” and “God Bless America.”

I worked steadfastly throughout the day, stopping only for a brief lunch with Russ Shaner and Allen Miller. As 5:00 neared, I realized that I was quickly approaching my exhaustion point, and that I needed to stop practicing and return to the hotel for a brief nap in order to prepare for the concert, both mentally and physically.

Ordinarily, I would have felt a high degree of anxiety given the rushed nature and relatively limited quantity of the rehearsal time I had to prepare for this concert. Nevertheless, I tried throughout the evening to remind myself that it was important for the focus to be on providing a few hours of relaxing and therapeutic music. After a very brief nap, I returned to the Auditorium Theatre by about 6:30 p.m. to get a few last moments of rehearsal before the doors opened to the general public.



During this last-minute rehearsal, I saw for the first time the huge American flag that Ken Evans, then President of RTOS, had obtained for the evening's performance. The flag, which he called a "Perkins" flag, was enormous by any measure and occupied a substantial portion of the stage. In a word, the flag was breathtaking. Before the doors opened to the public, Ken and I conferred and decided that it would be best to have the curtains closed as the audience arrived, and then open them as the console came up from the orchestra pit with the National Anthem.

As 8:00 neared, I was not nearly as anxious as would be typical prior to a public performance – particularly a performance for which I did not feel I had adequate rehearsal time. I tried as much as possible to convince myself to go out and just "have fun," so that this sentiment would engulf the audience as well.

As I stepped into the orchestra pit and took my place at the bench, it was heartening to note the exceptional attendance at the concert. In light of all that had happened during the week, no one was certain what the concert attendance would be. Although I had feared that the concert would be sparsely attended, I was delighted to learn my concern was unfounded, as it was clear that there was a very large audience present. I later learned that the attendance was approximately 1,000.

Ken made a few introductory remarks, and asked that the audience observe a moment of silence in honor of the events of the preceding Tuesday. After that observance, Ken introduced me, and I embarked on the most memorable concert of my career.

I waited until the audience had finished its initial applause after Ken's remark before starting my introduction to the National Anthem, particularly as the arrangement began on a very quiet registration. As soon as I began to play and brought the console out of the orchestra pit, the stage curtains – as we had discussed – began to open. Immediately upon the sight of the huge American flag, the audience jumped to its feet, applauded, and stood reverently before what must be one of the largest, most impressive American flags I have ever seen. The audience's response nearly deafened the organ at that point of the arrangement. Not surprisingly, as I arrived at the beginning of the National Anthem, the audience began to sing in unison, which was a highly moving and emotional experience for everyone involved.

At the conclusion of the National Anthem, the audience remained on its feet for approximately 20 to 30 seconds. I addressed them for the first time that evening with the observation that, if anything, the events of the past week had taught everyone the need to come together as a nation, and that music was one of the great healing forces and a wonderful way to achieve that objective. These were not empty words for me, as my healing process had begun when I started to plan for this concert.

I proceeded through the rest of my planned program for that evening, all of which was extremely well-

received by one of the most appreciative audiences I have ever performed for. In addition to the National Anthem, the audience heard many light “standards” during the first half of the program, such as:

Give Me The Simple Life
The Boy Next Door
El Relicario
Fiddle-Faddle
Medley From “Mame”
That’s All
The Back Bay Shuffle

Immediately before the last selection before the intermission, I announced to the audience that all proceeds from the recording sales would be given to the World Trade Center Relief Fund. The audience generously provided the relief efforts \$1,100 in sales that night.

During the second half of the program, the audience heard more standards such as:

The Trolley Song
Let’s Get Away From It All
One Morning In May
A Musical Tribute To Cole Porter
The Song Is You
Fantaisie-Improptu

As planned, after the Fantaisie-Improptu, I began the patriotic tune, “The Washington Post March,” which I followed with “Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor,” and “God Bless America.” Predictably, the audience clapped in time to the march, and then sang along with the other Irving Berlin patriotic standards. The end of God Bless America was highly charged emotionally, and I had a great sense of completeness at the conclusion of the program.

After the concert, many people expressed their gratitude for the evening’s performance, and I tried to convey to them that I, too, had greatly benefited from it. A group of about 20 people went out to a Denny’s restaurant after the concert for a late-night dinner, after which I went back to my hotel and collapsed into bed, thoroughly exhausted – yet very much refreshed – from the performance.

Sunday, September 16, 2001

The Return To Hoboken

For most of the six-hour return drive from Rochester to Hoboken, I did not focus or dwell on September 11th. Rather, I listened to various recordings in my car, spoke to several friends on the phone, and enjoyed the very sunny Sunday afternoon. I felt very much on a “high” from the performance in Rochester, almost as though things had started to normalize again for me.

As I neared Hoboken and came within the range of a New York City National Public Radio frequency, I began to return to “reality” with a broadcast of a 5:00 p.m. memorial service from St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Manhattan. I listened to the parts of that service that were broadcast.

After I returned to Hoboken, I decided to tend to a few errands, which brought me near to the center of town. As I was only a few blocks from the Hudson river, I decided to walk over to Frank Sinatra park, which is directly across the river from lower Manhattan. Hundreds of people had gathered in the most south-eastern point of the park in front of a makeshift World Trade Center memorial. The memorial – which consisted of hundreds of flowers, candles, photographs of the missing, written prayers and memorabilia, stood facing Manhattan’s financial district, and without a doubt provided the most unobstructed and sobering view of Manhattan’s new skyline.

I was particularly struck by the immense activity that was underway at the rescue site. Although it had started to grow dark outside, the entire rescue area was brightly illuminated by search and rescue lights. The flashing red and blue lights of scores of emergency vehicles were clearly visible, and a constant flow of military and rescue helicopters went in and out of the area. Although it had been more than six days since the attacks, thick white and gray smoke continued to billow into the sky from the fires that raged under the debris. A very acrid and distinctive smell of burning ash, metal, and plastic hung heavily in the air. In fact, that acrid odor, which I later referred to as the “World Trade Center smell,” was present throughout Manhattan (even in midtown where I work) as well as in Hoboken for many, many weeks following the attacks.

As I returned to my car to go back to my apartment, I saw for the first time in many days a commercial airliner flying directly above Hoboken and along the Hudson River. An obvious uneasiness remained for many weeks each time a commercial airliner passed overhead in the vicinity of Manhattan.

Monday, September 17, 2001

Ground Zero

I decided to leave work early again on Monday in order to make a “pilgrimage” downtown. I very much felt the need to return to lower Manhattan (or at least as close as possible) in order to reach a sense of closure and understanding about what had happened. Earlier in the day, I had spoken with a friend of mine from work, and we planned to return downtown.

We left the office just before 7:00, and the sun was beginning to set. We wanted to arrive downtown before night fell. As a result of the collapse of the towers, subway service throughout the city had been thoroughly disrupted, and it was difficult, if not impossible, to know which subway line would continue into, or even near, lower Manhattan. Based on the most current information on the MTA website, it appeared that the best route would be to take the 4/5/6 line to City Hall/Brooklyn Bridge, and then walk from there.

Fortunately, our intuition about the subways proved correct, and the train did stop at City Hall/Brooklyn Bridge before crossing the East River into Brooklyn. As soon as my friend Steven and I left the train and arrived on the street, it quickly became clear that lower Manhattan had quite literally been transformed into a war zone. There were police officers as far as the eye could see, and countless police barricades blocked traffic and pedestrian routes in numerous places. The acrid “World Trade Center smell” hung ominously in the air, and I could feel a dusty, grainy particulate that filled the air downtown. Many people on the streets—particularly firefighters and police officers—wore protective mask filters to keep the particles in the air out of their lungs.

The police had blocked the easiest route into lower Manhattan (along Park Row and Broadway), so Steve and I decided to take a side street as far as possible. We walked along Nassau Street—a narrow street that parallels Broadway from north to south, two blocks east of the disaster site. It was a very strange sight as we progressed down this street. The first and most noticeable sign of the disaster was the pronounced absence of the two 110-story twin towers. Prior to September 11th, it would be impossible to walk around the streets of lower Manhattan without noticing the towers, as those buildings dominated downtown in every respect.

Although it had now grown almost entirely dark outside, the streets in the area were illuminated by enormous overhead electrical lights that had been installed for the rescue operation. Despite the darkness, there was an eerie glow from the massive floodlights that illuminated the streets downtown.

Every building along Nassau Street, as well as the surface of the street and sidewalks, was covered in at least a quarter-inch of light-grayish brown soot which remained from the enormous cloud of dust and dirt that settled on the area shortly after the collapse of the towers the week before.

As we progressed along the street, there were numerous people walking around, but hardly anyone was talking. It seemed as though people were wandering around in a hypnotized, catatonic state. Heavy machinery also lumbered through the narrow streets of downtown Manhattan, hauling away from the disaster site huge loads of twisted and deformed metal and large chunks of broken concrete and other debris.



At this point in our journey, hardly anything of the disaster site could be seen from our vantage point, and the police did not permit anyone to walk much farther west along any of the side streets. As we passed Liberty Street to the south, we caught a glimpse of one the many bone-chilling sights of the evening. From a certain position, it was possible to look between several buildings and see into the disaster site. In the center of the disaster site surrounding what appeared to be the remains of the South Tower, a huge portion of the outer skeletal structure of the tower stood in the grayish-white smoke illuminated by the search lights. The skeletal remains—frequently featured in television news reports—stood approximately 6-7 stories high and were relatively intact around the base, but singed and splintered along the top, which roughly formed an inverted “V” shape.

A crowd of people had gathered in this spot, along with several news reporters, to gaze into the disaster site to view the remains of what once were the tallest buildings in the world. After a few moments, Steve and I continued south along Nassau Street towards Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange, which had just reopened that morning. In the typical patriotic spirit that had been unifying the nation since September 11th, the NYSE building sported a huge American flag.

At Wall Street, Steve and I turned to the right in order to continue our journey behind the World Trade Center site. As we made our way closer to the site, the amount of paper and clutter on the street increased dramatically. Regardless of the direction in which one looked, soot, ash, and paperwork were strewn in every direction. Although the rescue efforts had reportedly cleared away much of the debris since the preceding Tuesday, there was still an incomprehensible quantity of paper everywhere.

In fact, I began to think of my own office uptown and the volume of loose paper I have sitting on my desk or in my files. I then tried to extrapolate mentally and imagine all of the loose paper in our roughly 50-story building, which I had to try and multiply by a factor of four to comprehend the quantity of paper that was ejected from the towers during the catastrophic collapse of September 11th. It was truly incomprehensible to attempt this feat.



As we continued along Wall Street and crossed Broadway, I observed the morbid sight of several abandoned street vendor carts—all covered inside and outside with ash, soot, and other debris from the World Trade Center collapse. These carts, which remained full of pastries, bagels, and newspapers

ominously bearing the date “September 11, 2001,” represented a moment frozen in time from the prior week.

The proximity to ground zero that we were able to reach surprised me. After crossing Broadway, we followed a jog in the street which put us on Rector Street, which we were able to follow directly behind the WTC site. As we turned left onto Greenwich Street, we stood directly behind the skeletal remains of the South Tower. The twisted, charred remains of the once-proud WTC extended like a ghost into the night sky, illuminated from all angles by flood lights and surrounded by the ever-present smoke and haze.

Proceeding along Greenwich Street was by far the most difficult part of our return to ground zero. On both sides of the street, we passed large piles of debris of every sort imaginable – from paperwork to pieces of clothing. At one point, I saw a single shoe sitting on top of a 3-foot high pile of debris. The most disturbing experience, however, was the ever-increasing and oppressive odor of organic decay, which we could only attribute to the thousands of victims whose bodies had not yet been recovered from underneath the rubble.

After spending several minutes pondering the aftermath of the tragedy we saw, we slowly and quietly walked back along our route to the subway. Steve took the subway to his apartment, and I transferred to the PATH train to Hoboken.

When I arrived at the station in Hoboken, the first sight that greeted me was hundreds of “missing persons” posters that covered most of the interior of the station. Each of the posters featured a picture of a friend or loved one who was missing as a result of the attacks, provided some descriptive information (age, height, hair color, etc.), and also identified contact telephone numbers in the hope that someone would be able to provide some helpful information. As I skimmed the wall and looked at the photographs and descriptions, I was shocked at the number of young people who were missing – people in the 25-30 year-old age range. Although most of the posters disappeared over the course of the next month, several remained well into December and January.

Skimming the names and photographs of those who were missing was a somber reminder of how fortunate I had been, not only to have survived the attacks, but also to have escaped losing any friends or family in the disaster.

* * *

Concluding Observations

Over the course of the months that followed the attacks, the spirit of New Yorkers changed noticeably.



In many respects, those who had shared in the experience of September 11th were joined in a bond—as an extended family of survivors. Obviously, the fierce patriotism of everyone from street vendors to investment bankers was astounding. In other respects, New Yorkers became much more “on edge” and concerned about their personal security.

It did not take long for the specter of terrorism to rise again. Within a few weeks of the attacks, a few cases of anthrax surfaced, ultimately striking

major news organizations in New York City a few blocks from my office. Additionally, on November 12, 2001—two months and one day following the terrorist attacks—New York City awoke once again to the image of thick black smoke billowing into the air as a result of the crash of fully-loaded American Airlines Airbus upon take-off from John F. Kennedy International Airport. Although authorities have publicly stated that there were no signs of terrorism, many New Yorkers remain unconvinced.

* * *

September 11th has affected me, as well as the entire country, in unimaginable, and yet untold, ways. More importantly, the tragedies of that infamous day have emphasized the fragility of human life, the need to live life fully, as well as the importance of maintaining closeness with friends and family.

Let us hope that the yet unwritten chapters in our nation’s history will never contain another September 11.