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‘I will never forget...’

This story was originally published on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2011, as a part of the Ludington Daily News’ coverage of the 10th anniversary of 9/11

BY MELISSA KEEFER

Vickie Raven is brought to tears by the memory of what happened in New York City 10 years ago on Sept. 11.

“It’s devastating,” said Raven. “I remember it like it was yesterday. Any-



FILE PHOTO

Vickie Raven was in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001.

time someone talks about what happened on Sept. 11, I get goosebumps.”

For this year’s 10th anniversary of the terrorist attack, Raven said, “I am going to try and not cry when I see everything come up again.”

Raven said, “It’s forever changed my life.”

BEING THERE

Raven was in New York with her Raven’s Men’s, Women’s and Shoes store manager Debbie Perow the day the towers were hit by the planes for New York’s Fashion Week — which brings about 300,000 big-name fashion designers and celebrities to town.

She was at Tommy Bahama, about six blocks from the World Trade Center towers for a meeting about the brand she sells at her downtown Ludington store.

She and the others in

the building could see smoke from their location and comforted each other as they learned what was happening. Everyone in the building seemed to have a family member they were concerned about. “Somebody had an uncle, somebody had an aunt,” she said. “They all had relatives there.”

“I will never forget it in my life,” Raven said. “We walked past the big ticker tape of the New York Times and it said 10,000 people dead...

was talking about who and what and how it affected their lives and who in their family was involved,” said Raven.

Her hotel was near a firehouse.

“The sirens ran all night,” she said. “We could see from the hotel room, the smoke and everything coming down billowing, and you just felt helpless because there was nothing you could do. And then you had family calling...”

She said it took about two hours after the attacks before they could get a phone call to their families who were back in Ludington concerned whether they had been hurt.

Raven said she talked to her father and he sang to her.

“I talked to him about 3 in the afternoon and he started singing this song, something about ‘This is the sweetest thing I have ever heard’ and I was like, ‘What are you talking about?’” said Raven. “He said, ‘Oh The Sweetest Thing I’ve Ever Heard. It’s a song.’ And he said, ‘Your voice. You’re alive!’”

Raven said that lack of communication was difficult. With so many people trying to get through to family members, systems were overloaded and not always working.

“We were stuck there and they were worried about us, and we were worried about them,” said Raven.

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WAITING

She said she went to the airport to try to get a new flight out but with air traffic grounded, she couldn’t get a flight out for days.

“It was chaos,” said Raven. “The people (in Ludington) didn’t know what was going on here and didn’t see what we saw because they were closing bridges and tunnels because there were bomb threats and it wasn’t broadcast.”

Raven said she remembered walking to LaGuardia Airport to try and catch a flight, then seeing a bunch of people running out of the airport because of a man who had a box and threatened it was a bomb.

She said they then went back to the hotel and again sat and waited.

“We didn’t get a flight until Saturday, but there was nothing you could do,” said Raven. “It’s just forever embedded in your mind. I can remember every step I took, every phone call ... you just are helpless, I couldn’t do anything. A lot of people lost their lives helping others and there was nothing you could do.”

She said Friday night she and Perow made a decision that either they would get a flight or get a ride to Dayton, Ohio, with someone they met who had gotten a car. They’d figure out the rest from there.

Raven’s husband, Chris, said he would come get her in Manhattan, “but I told him, ‘You can’t, the bridges are closed.’ But nobody knew that except us. It was really hard, they weren’t keeping up on what we were keeping up on.”

She said they sat at LaGuardia Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

“We called it the rocking chair brigade because there were six of us waiting there for a flight.”

Raven said they let one flight out Friday and one



FILE PHOTO

Vickie Raven talks about 9/11.

flight out Saturday “and we were on that flight Saturday.”

Before they got on the plane, Raven said the passengers all still thought there could be more attacks coming and worried, “What else are they going to do?” But she said they were scared, but there wasn’t much choice.

She said the flight arrived in Chicago and she and Perow had to rent a car to go to the Grand Rapids airport where Raven had left her car. They

finally home to Ludington at 6 a.m.

THE WEEK

Raven said hotel employees couldn’t get across the bridge to wash the linens or to cook the food.

“We were there clearing tables, helping the cooks, taking food to the tables. You know, you just did what you had to do.”

She said everyone pitched in and didn’t think twice about it.

“There was not a bus, car, or cab. Nothing was moving Tuesday night. That city was shut down, no clothes stores were open or anything,” said Raven. “Debbie had bought clothes on Sunday, a new sweater or top or something. I only brought clothes for two days, so for seven days I wore the same clothes over and over, I just switched.”

Raven said one night they didn’t have a hotel room to stay in and a girl who was waiting to leave for Arizona heard their story and let them stay at her apartment.

“We didn’t even know

“We didn’t even know

He said she had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and treated her for it. She said while she was there, she had been making phone calls to airlines, hotels, families and even making phone calls for others. It didn’t all sink in until she got home.

It took her about two months to really realize what had happened and get to a point where she was OK, she said.

For a while, she just “nested,” at home with her family. She said not only did she have to work through what she went through, but what her family dealt with not knowing where she was and wanting her home.

She said she has gone back to the memorial three or four times and has taken her daughters to show them where it was and what it was like.

“There is a steel girder shaped like a cross and it is the most affecting thing when you see it because of all those lives that were lost,” said Raven, tearing up. “And maybe they are in a better place now. I feel bad for their families though. It’s been 10 years and there are kids that never knew their dad.”

Raven said she has flown since then and said she doesn’t have a problem with being searched or having to throw things away at an airport security station, because of what she saw happen in New York that day.

She said an example was an experience she just had, where the security guard asked if she had anything metal and then looked through her purse. “I just flew last month and I just got a manicure set and forgot I had it,” said Raven. She said the guy looked at it and let her keep it because there was nothing that could kill anyone in it.

“Every time I fly in a plane I don’t care because I was there,” said Raven. “It doesn’t bother me. I don’t think there can be enough security.”

From the attack, Raven really realized what she has and how easily it can be lost.

“You think 3,500 some lives were lost and you think, that could have been me,” said Raven. “You just never forget those moments.”

She said through the years she has learned by talking to people just how many were affected.

After a long pause, Raven said, “I wish that day never happened.”

AFTER 9/11

Upon returning home, two weeks after she had gotten back, Raven said she had gone to the doctor to pay a co-pay. He asked how she was doing, knowing she was in New York during the attacks.

“I told him I am crying every day, I just don’t get this,” she said.

Air Force Major recalls Pentagon terror

This article was originally published in the Sept. 12, 2001 edition of the Olean Times Herald, a publication of Community Media Group

BY CHUCK POLLOCK

OLEAN, N.Y. – Years from now, the question will be a cliché.

Where were you when the World Trade Center was attacked?

Liz Rodriguez won’t have any trouble remembering.

The Air Force major, an attorney for the Judge Advocate General Dept. at the Pentagon, was glued to a television watching the horror unfold in lower Manhattan.

“All of a sudden,” the 1978 Bradford High graduate recalled, “There was a loud boom like somebody slammed a door really hard.

“I had left my office and was in a joint staff area watching the TV report when all these people came hustling down

the corridor.

“My first thought was that it was a bomb threat and I started back to my office to get some personal things. But I ran into a guy I work with and he said, ‘No you’re not ... We’ve been bombed. We’ve got to get out of here.’”

Yet, that was easier suggested than accomplished.

“You’ve got to remember the Pentagon is a huge building. Thirty thousand people work there. “It’s like a small city,” explained the UPB alumnus. “There are only certain places where you can get out. We headed toward the closest exit which, unfortunately, was in the same direction as where the plane hit. Although we didn’t realize that’s what it was at the time.

“There was a lot of smoke and because of the aviation fuel the fire spread really quickly,”

recalled Maj. Rodriguez, who appeared this morning on NBC’s Today Show. “What impressed me was that everybody was so calm and orderly. We did a 180 and headed the other way.

“Once we got outside, you almost got disoriented. There was smoke and ash everywhere. You couldn’t see and you couldn’t breathe.”

But eventually she spotted the gaping hole in the building.

“It was odd. You couldn’t tell there was a plane in there, but there were shoes and plane parts on the lawn,” she recalled. “And within 15 minutes they had erected a fence and the building was locked down.”

Maj. Rodriguez, who normally has a 10-minute walk to work, took 90 minutes to get home as a number of nearby government buildings and their access roads were sealed off for fear that they were

targets.

Maj. Rodriguez changed from her dress uniform into work clothes and went back to the Pentagon where she was recruited to help on a rescue crew.

“There were eight of us, all from the Air Force, and they told us we would go in as a team and search for survivors,” she said. “We were really fired up to get in there, but they said we had to wait two hours while they set up medical units.

“Yet as we looked at the wreckage, we realized that we weren’t going to be rescuing anybody - that we were going to be recovering bodies.”

But even that didn’t happen.

“Just as we were ready to go in,” she remembered, “the FBI came up and said, ‘No way. This is a crime scene and we have to investigate it first. You can’t go in there.’”

Instead, Maj. Rodri-

guez and her friends watched and waited.

“I was able to get up close to the building and was amazed, with all the damage it was still standing,” Maj. Rodriguez said. “The Pentagon has five corridors ranging from E, on the outside edge of the building, to A on the inside. To me, it looked like the plane got as far as the B corridor, but not all the way through.

“I could see a (letter) C on a piece of fuselage so I knew it was an American Airlines plane,” she said.

And she also has a theory.

“I’m convinced the guy (flying the plane) didn’t know where he was going,” Maj. Rodriguez speculated. “Supposedly, his target was the White House, but I don’t think he could find it. Coming in as low as he was, I don’t think he knew where it was. But everybody knows what the Pen-

tagon looks like.

“A friend of mine was driving on Interstate 395 and he saw the plane coming in and watched it go into the building. He said it was like a movie. The plane was so low it clipped off the lights on the helipad like they were sawed off.”

And while there were no known survivors in the impact area, there was one encouraging recovery.

“At one point,” Maj. Rodriguez said, “a guy came out with a flag from the Army area of the building (that was hit by the plane). The flag and its pole had been in an office, but were unscathed.

“He jammed the pole into the ground and as the flag started waving we all cheered. It was like, ‘You bastards still didn’t win.’”

Sacred Ground: The ring that survived the inferno

This is the story of a ring.
It's a story of love.
A story of how love triumphed
over terrorism on the day
America lost its innocence.

BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA

This article was originally published in the Sept. 8, 2011 edition of the Waverly Democrat, a publication of Community Media Group

WAVERLY, Iowa – The sky was cloudless that morning, peaceful and promising.

Five hijackers passed through security at Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Va., at about 7:35 a.m. and boarded American Airlines Flight 77, bound for Los Angeles.

It was September 11, 2001.
At 9:37:46 a.m. the plane crashed into the Pentagon, hitting the west side of the building at a speed exceeding 345 mph. Among the 58 mothers, fathers, children, educators, military personnel and professionals aboard the doomed flight was Waverly native Karen Ann Kincaid, 40, an accomplished lawyer, a beloved wife, an admirer of plants, animals and kids.

When crews eventually cleared the debris, among other personal effects on the site of the tragedy, investigators found a one-carat ring, size 6.8, its band bent, its prongs crooked but still holding firmly in place the solitaire diamond.

Looking at the picture of the ring, in a binder of images of personal effects FBI agents discovered at the crime scene, Peter Batacan, Karen's husband, could hardly believe his eyes. He took a closer look at the serial number.

It was the same ring he had surprised Karen with on June 27, 1995, when he dropped on one knee under the elm tree in one of their favorite parks in Bethesda, Md., and asked her to marry him.

"A lot of emotions went through me at that time," he says. "I felt anger because that was the only physical thing that I could see of the horrible crime that had been committed. I felt anger, I felt joy that something that she was wearing in her last moments had been returned to me."

The symbolism of the ring was overpowering. "What a blessing it was to have the ring," he said. "For anyone who loses a loved one, objects gain an increased meaning and take on a life of their own, and you appreciate more what you have lost, you appreciate that object in a whole different way."

The couple had planned to tell the story of their engagement to their grandchildren one day. But it wasn't to be.

So here it is, an eternal story of love, shared for the record, in the belief that everyone who reads it will become a witness to the power of good and the powerlessness of evil in the face of the human bond.

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THEY MET at a party thrown by a mutual friend, a birthday party of sorts for Karen and an election celebration for Bill Clinton's first term in office.

Peter, then in his early 30s, could not take his eyes off of Karen, so stunning did she look, her petite frame carrying the crown of blond hair, shining in stark contrast with her dark sweater.

Add to this Karen's acuity and the fact that she had all this law experience under her belt—she had worked for FCC—and it would be fairly easy to see how a budding lawyer, like Peter was at the time, could be both intimidated and drawn to her.

Eventually, he mustered the courage to introduce himself, cracking the ice with a joke about two guys at a bar he could no longer remember.

"I must have masked my nervousness pretty well because later she told me she was nervous talking to me," he said. "She had this magnetic quality about her. I definitely thought I was in over my head."

Once they got past the trepidation and the anxiety of the first conversation, it soon became clear that theirs was a match made in heaven. She was from Waverly, Iowa; he was from Michigan City, Ind., 365 miles apart, but still in the heart of America where family matters.

Then came that one day when Peter packed lemon cake, Karen's favorite, in the picnic basket, and made that turn into the park where he pulled out the engagement ring he had bought from Tiffany's.

"It was a total surprise," he said, "she started crying. It was a standard solitaire, but she cherished it."

Two years later, they were married in a modest ceremony at the Holy Cross Church in Garrett Park, Md., in the presence of 80 guests, waltzing to their favorite song, Moon River, after Karen's eldest brother, Kasey gave her away.

"It was a postcard perfect day," he said of their July 6 wedding day, "like a box of chocolates, like a box of treats, to go to your wedding."

In marriage, they jogged together, explored music, took dance lessons, but for the most part, they relished in the simple joy of being around one another when they immersed themselves in their pastimes.

"I liked being in the garden with her and helping her out," he said. "She liked to watch me golf, I'm a terrible golfer but she liked to see me happy, trying to play golf."

Peter had grown up in the Roman Catholic Church and Karen in the Missouri Synod, but two years after they had said their vows, they started their own tradition and converted to the Episcopal Church, joining the congregation at St. Columba Episcopal Church, in Washington, D.C.

They also visited Waverly as often as they could, spending memorable times on the Trail Bridge, retracing some of Karen's favorite jog-



Ten years ago, 184 people lost their lives when Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. Karen Kincaid was among the 64 people who perished on that flight. For each life lost, a cantilevered memorial bench engraved with their name hovers over a shallow reflecting pool and pays tribute to their sacrifice at the Pentagon. Karen Kincaid and husband, Peter Batacan, loved nature. Here, they smile on a biking trip they took on Block Island, R.I.

ging paths she discovered while training for cross country at Waverly-Shell Rock High School, visiting with her sister, Karyl, and reading poems to her father, Grant, and remembering her late mother, Arlene, in a fallen leaf or in a stray rock.

In those precious trips back home, they also enjoyed eating at the Brandenburg on Bremer Avenue, the signature eatery, now closed, which hearkened back to the town's German heritage.

As they grew as a couple, Peter and Karen reached a place in their lives where they could shift their priorities away from the pressures of intense professional obligations and focus on their personal growth. They were thinking about starting a family.

An introspective thinker and writer, Peter describes the summer of 2001 as a Renaissance for Karen.

"She really enjoyed decorating the house," he said. "She had taken piano lessons as a girl in Waverly and wanted to take piano lessons again. She had big plans for gardening."

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ON 9/11, Peter dropped Karen off at Dulles Airport so she could leave for a meeting of the trade association of the personal communications industry, her passion. As a lawyer at the FCC, and later at a private firm, she had written the agency rules, which eventually became part of the laws for the operation of family radios and emergency devices.

Peter drove back home that day and settled in his study. A distressed call from one of Karen's co-workers came in. "Did Karen get on her flight?" the friend wanted to know.

Peter went downstairs to grab some coffee when a second phone call came, this time from the friend who introduced them. She sounded nervous and scared, saying that she had heard that "a bunch of planes were being rerouted to Canada."

He then called the airlines, a wasted effort, before turning on the television.

"The first thing I see is the Twin Towers in flames," he said. "I freaked out. I punched the wall, from that moment on, it was totally surreal."

The news had spread around Waverly as well, and Pastor Larry Sipe, at St. John Lutheran Church, which the Kincaids had attended, held an evening sermon, praying for the lives lost in the attacks.

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REMEMBERING is soothing for the soul. It was an Easter sermon given by the Rev. Jim Donald, the pastor at the couple's church, that helped Peter start to cope with grief.

It said in essence: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

These words gave him strength to help with the eulogy the pastor wrote for a memorial service dedicated to the victims of 9/11 four days after the terrorist attacks.

"Life is short," the pastor said quoting a Celtic proverb, "and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So be swift to love, and make haste to be kind, and the peace of God will be always with you."

Receiving Karen's ashes and having them placed in her final resting place in the niche in the church, where on the 10th anniversary congregation members will lay flowers, gave Peter some level of comfort as did a memorial service he and Karen's family attended later in Waverly.

A decade after the tragedy, Peter said he has learned to function, but nothing can make his heart whole again.

What thoughts could he think that he hadn't thought?

What words could he say that he hadn't said?

What feelings could he feel that he hadn't felt?

But the thoughts, the words, the feelings, keep on coming.

"The anniversaries have been a process for me," he said. "At first, I really dreaded them, and now I kind of think of them as markers in a marathon... I've come to view each year as a marker. I've chosen to keep living, to keep going."

In 2008, a memorial was inaugurated at the point of impact at the Pentagon displaying steel benches, which illuminate at night. Karen's name, engraved on her bench, faces skyward, like those of her fellow passengers, who perished that day. Another set of benches commemorates the lives lost inside the Pentagon, their engraved names face the building.

On the 10th anniversary of the attacks on Sunday, as the official commemoration goes on



This is Karen's ring that survived the 9/11 inferno. (courtesy of Peter Batacan).



A modest plaque on the side of the Waverly-Shell Rock High School commemorates Karen Kincaid, who died on 9/11.



The 9/11 Memorial in New York lists the names of those who perished that day. Among them is Karen Kincaid. (Photo by Anelia K. Dimitrova)

in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, Peter will be following a family tradition he established with Karen. But instead of going for a fun jog through the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., he will be "Running with the Bulldogs," in a 5K run in Chicago at the Lincoln Park Zoo to benefit children.

He sees affirmation of life every passing day.

Peter, who now lives in Chicago so he can be closer to his family and Karen's, no longer practices law. He uses his knowledge and talent to help friends and charities as an advisor or a personal trainer.

Two memorial bricks in a park near his house, called OZ Park, after the world's most celebrated wizard-one close by the sculpture of Dorothy, and another one not far from the sculpture of the Scarecrow-are daily reminders for joggers and passersby of Karen's life.

Peter walks past them sometimes, but mostly, he draws a lot of positive energy from the ring, which he brought to Tiffany's in Chicago, where he had it restored, without erasing its history.

He has put it on a necklace, which he took to his mother's recent funeral. Occasionally, he just pulls it out to look at it.

"It gives me a sense of strength and grounding and memory," he said. "I was in a bereavement group and the counselor gave us each a rock and told us to hold it now and then. It feels smoother with time. I hold it [the ring] in my hand some evenings and just feel the energy from it, very good, positive energy. I've gotten in the habit of doing that. The ring symbolizes all these days that I was blessed to be with Karen."

"Nothing could have stopped September 11," he added. "Yes, there could have been better security, but nothing could have stopped the hatred that was behind it. And the stories that were left were stories of love, not the stories that Osama bin Laden wanted to have the world believe."

5:45 A.M.

Mohamed Atta and Abdul Aziz al Omari boarded a 6:00 A.M. flight from Portland to Boston's Logan International Airport. Atta was selected by a computerized prescreening system known as CAPPs, created to identify passengers who should be subject to special security measures. Under security rules in place at the time, the only consequence of Atta's selection by CAPPs was that his checked bags were held off the plane until it was confirmed that he had boarded the aircraft.

6:52 A.M.

After arriving in Boston, Atta took a call from Marwan al Shehhi, a longtime colleague who was at another terminal at Logan Airport. They spoke for three minutes.

7:59 A.M.

American Airlines Flight 11, a Boeing 767 with 92 people aboard, takes off from Boston's Logan International Airport en route to Los Angeles.

Timeline of Attacks

On September 11, 2001 al Qaeda terrorists aboard three hijacked passenger planes carried out coordinated suicide attacks against the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing everyone on board the planes and nearly 3,000 people on the ground. A fourth plane crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing all on board, after passengers and crew attempted to wrest control from the hijackers. Below is a chronology of the events of 9/11 as they unfolded.

8:15 A.M.

United Airlines Flight 175, a Boeing 767 with 65 people aboard, takes off from Boston; it is also headed to Los Angeles.

8:24 A.M.

Hijacker Mohammed Atta makes the first of two accidental transmissions from Flight 11 to ground control (apparently in an attempt to communicate with the plane's cabin).

8:20 A.M.

American Airlines Flight 77 takes off from Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C. The Boeing 757 is headed to Los Angeles with 64 people aboard.

8:19 A.M.

Flight attendants aboard Flight 11 alert ground personnel that the plane has been hijacked; American Airlines notifies the FBI.

8:40 A.M.

Air traffic controllers at The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) alert North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)'s Northeast Air Defense Sector (NEADS) about the suspected hijacking of Flight 11. In response, NEADS scrambles two fighter planes located at Cape Cod's Otis Air National Guard Base to locate and tail Flight 11; they are not yet in the air when Flight 11 crashes into the North Tower.

8:41 A.M.

United Airlines Flight 93, a Boeing 757 with 44 people aboard, takes off from Newark International Airport en route to San Francisco. It had been scheduled to depart at 8:00 am, around the time of the other hijacked flights.

8:46 A.M.

Mohammed Atta and the other hijackers aboard American Airlines Flight 11 crash the plane into floors 93-99 of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

9:02 A.M.

After initially instructing tenants of the WTC's South Tower to remain in the building, Port Authority officials broadcast orders to evacuate both towers via the public address system; an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 people are already in the process of evacuating.

8:50 A.M.

White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card alerts President George W. Bush that a plane has hit the World Trade Center; the president is visiting an elementary school in Sarasota, Florida at the time.

8:47 A.M.

Within seconds, NYPD and FDNY forces dispatch units to the World Trade Center, while Port Authority Police Department officers on site begin immediate evacuation of the North Tower.

9:03 A.M.

Hijackers crash United Airlines Flight 175 into floors 75-85 of the WTC's South Tower, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

9:08 A.M.

The FAA bans all takeoffs of flights going to New York City or through the airspace around the city.

9:21 A.M.

The Port Authority closes all bridges and tunnels in the New York City area.



9:24 A.M.

The FAA notified NEADS of the suspected hijacking of Flight 77 after some passengers and crew aboard are able to alert family members on the ground.

9:31 A.M.

Speaking from Florida, President Bush calls the events in New York City an “apparent terrorist attack on our country.”

9:37 A.M.

Hijackers aboard Flight 77 crash the plane into the western façade of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing 59 aboard the plane and 125 military and civilian personnel inside the building.

The Changed Flight Paths



American Airlines Flight 11
Boston to Los Angeles



American Airlines Flight 175
Boston to Los Angeles



American Airlines Flight 77
Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles



American Airlines Flight 93
Newark to San Francisco

9:59 A.M.

The South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses.

9:45 A.M.

Amid escalating rumors of other attacks, the White House and U.S. Capitol building are evacuated (along with numerous other high-profile buildings, landmarks and public spaces).

9:42 A.M.

For the first time in history, the FAA grounds all flights over or bound for the continental United States. Over the next two-and-a-half hours, some 3,300 commercial flights and 1,200 private planes are guided to land at airports in Canada and the United States.

10:07 A.M.

After passengers and crew members aboard the hijacked Flight 93 contact friends and family and learn about the attacks in New York and Washington, they mount an attempt to retake the plane. In response, hijackers deliberately crash the plane into a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, killing all 40 passengers and crew aboard.

10:28 A.M.

The World Trade Center’s North Tower collapses, 102 minutes after being struck by Flight 11.

11:02 A.M.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani calls for the evacuation of Lower Manhattan south of Canal Street, including more than 1 million residents, workers and tourists, as efforts continue throughout the afternoon to search for survivors at the WTC site.

5:20 P.M.

The 47-story Seven World Trade Center collapses after burning for hours; the building had been evacuated in the morning, and there are no casualties, though the collapse forces rescue workers to flee for their lives. It is the last of the Twin Towers to fall.

3:00 P.M.

Rescuers free Port Authority employee Pasquale Buzzelli from the rubble of the North Tower. Buzzelli had been in the process of evacuating the North Tower when the building began to collapse from above. Situated somewhere between the 22nd and 13th floors, Buzzelli crouches into a fetal position and, hours later, wakes up on a slab in the building debris, 15 feet above the ground.

12:30 P.M.

A lower section of the North Tower’s stairwell B survives the building’s collapse, protecting a group of 13 first responders and one civilian who had been attempting to evacuate down the stairs. Within hours of the tower’s collapse, the first responders emerge from the debris and direct rescuers to the civilian.

8:30 P.M.

President Bush addresses the nation, calling the attacks “evil, despicable acts of terror” and declaring that America, its friends and allies would “stand together to win the war against terrorism.”

10:30 P.M.

Rescuers locate PAPD Officer William Jimeno and PAPD Sergeant John McLoughlin, injured but alive in the debris of the World Trade Center. They free Officer Jimeno after three hours of dangerous tunneling work. Sergeant McLoughlin’s rescue will take another eight hours.

Workers will extricate the 18th survivor, Genelle Guzman, on the afternoon of September 12. She will be the last person rescued.



First-hand witness reflects on tragedy

This article was originally published in the Sept. 28, 2001 edition of the Times-Republic, a publication of Community Media Group

BY HELEN TODD

WATSEKA, Ill. - It had finally happened. New York City Opera hired me to sing the role of Queen of the Night in their production of The Magic Flute. It will be my Lincoln Center debut. I had been in Manhattan for about three - four weeks when Sept. 11 happened. I had not gotten used to the rush and bustle, the noise, and the incredible speed of the city. I found it unnerving to walk down the street with so many people rushing to their homes or jobs. The noise from the trucks would always bother me. Needless to say, I had been craving the sights of Watseka since I arrived here in late August. One day, I had actually sat down and envisioned a country road outside of Watseka, west off Rte. 24, where I used to go to sing by myself and look at the corn growing and the expansive land. I missed home.

I woke up Sept. 11 like most days around 9 a.m. and turned the TV on to catch the news. The TV showed the first tower of the World Trade Center smoking and on fire. The news anchors were saying something about a plane hitting the tower. I picked up the phone and called Mom at the Emergency Room at the hospital in Watseka to let her know what had happened as an interesting news story here in the city. We spoke briefly and then hung up.

Minutes later I saw the second plane plow into the second tower. I knew then that this was no accident. I sat here in my one room apartment and watched the events unfold. News came over that the Pentagon was hit. Then, I saw the second tower collapse and soon after the first. I was just shaking.

I tried to call family members, but the phone lines were jammed. I tried my cell phone but there were no lines available. My agent called and told me that of course, my audition for today would be canceled.

He then said something that terrified me, "If there is anthrax on that plane, we're all dead."

A cold sweat ran through me. I felt every fiber of my body quiver.

All I could think of was "I have to get out of here." I thought about the possibility of never seeing my husband again, my parents, my brother and his family. I started to panic. I picked up the phone and tried to call

again but no phone lines.

I thought the whole city was under attack. I didn't know which building would be next. They announced on the TV that all transit was stopped, that the bridges were closed. I was trapped on Manhattan Island.

Then, as my fears started to run away with me, I felt this strong presence in my room of God telling me, "I am here. I will protect you. Lean on me. Have faith." It felt as if someone had laid a hand on my back and told me to sit down and relax.

I continued to watch the news coverage, which was agonizing. I finally got a phone line through and called my husband's school where he was teaching in Ohio but got an answering machine. I left a message to please tell him I was in my apartment and safe. He finally reached me about 12:30 p.m. When I heard the sound of his voice, I just broke down.

In that moment, all I could think of was my wedding vows, that I had promised God that I would take care of this man for the rest of my life. I desperately wanted to be with him to make sure that he was safe. We were both shaken but held each other on the phone as best we could and said we would speak again in a few hours. He said he would come and get me by car if need be.

I received another call from another singer who told me that the grocery stores were jammed full of people buying water and food. I told her that I didn't have any cash. She urged me to go get some just in case.

I expected the worst when I went outside. But everyone was calm. I walked to the ATM and got my cash without a problem. My friend David urged me to go to a café and have lunch with him. My stomach was in knots, and I couldn't imagine that I could eat anything.

We walked down the street and I was totally amazed. Everyone was so calm. They were walking slower but they were stopping people on the street and talking about what happened.

There was an overwhelming feeling of kindness, love and utter calmness. We went to the café, and it was the same. The traffic had slowed down to almost nothing. The trucks were gone.

As I walked back from the café, I passed a man covered in ash. He looked like a ghost out of a movie. He must have walked two miles home. He was standing in front of his apartment building stomping his feet trying to get the ash off. I'll

never forget that sight. He was so white, from head to toe, suit to shoe.

I had tried to reach my longtime Watseka friend, John Whitman, who was working in the Empire State Building, early on. I tried to call him but couldn't reach him. I wanted to make sure that he had gotten out of that building in case it was another target. I left messages for him with his roommate, knowing that he would be trapped in Manhattan as well. I told his roommate to tell him to come here and he could stay all night. I finally reached John about 3:30 p.m. He was going with a group of volunteers to help save any injured people or help anyone who needed a translator for Spanish. This did not surprise me at all, knowing John. I told him to come here whenever he could.

After many hours, John arrived here about 10 p.m. He had waited for hours to help but there was no one to help. We didn't know at that time that that would hold true. We both went to sleep that night about 1 a.m. wondering if the morning would indeed come. Before we went to sleep, we hugged, and I said a prayer.

In the coming days, John and I were inseparable. We had spent a lot of time together already in NYC. But John gave me the kind of comfort that everyone needs in times of crisis, the comfort of home. John reminded me of home, of Watseka, of high school events, Lantern's Lane, Pictionary tournaments at the Whitman's, county fairs, show choir contest, VIPs, my parents, so many things that I love about Watseka. He made me feel safe when I was with him. I am so thankful that John was here.

We went down to the many memorials together. We walked over to Union Square and saw the many candles and artwork that had already started to crop up all over the park. I heard a marching band coming up the street. Everyone started walking towards it. It was a group of college students from Alabama. They marched into the square. It was the most beautiful sight. They looked so young to me, not much older than 20. They had full drums, cymbals, and trumpets. The sound of the brass playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" put a lump in my throat.

We saw the Armory where family members went to register their missing person. Thousands of faces Xeroxed on white pieces of paper with their descriptions and the



Helen Todd witnessed firsthand the terror of 9/11. She is pictured with her husband, Daren Stahl, and their two daughters, Isabella and Julianna.

floor they had been working on at the World Trade Center when the disaster happened.

Face after beautiful face. Pictures of people at weddings, birthday parties, happy moments captured on film now taped to brick wall seven feet high.

The pictures lined the buildings for three blocks all around the Armory. There were people singing in the street.

My husband had decided to drive into the city from Ohio that day and called me on my cell

phone to tell me where he was.

I heard his voice and just broke down on the street. "It's just horrible." I was leaning on a parking meter. This stranger heard me and came over to me and just held me until I stopped crying.

I used to think that New York City was a big city, very cold and lonely.

But for the first time, I have seen New York City as a small town, full of people who just want to pursue their lives and love their families. They walk slower now. They smile

more. They are more patient. They look up at the blue sky and exhale.



John Whitman worked at the Empire State Building on 9/11.

20 years later: Real heroes don't seek the spotlight

BY HELEN TODD

WATSEKA, Ill. - It is hard to believe that 20 years has passed since the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001. When this anniversary occurs each year, I try not to watch TV.

When people or newscasts post footage from that day of burning buildings, it takes me directly back to that day in New York City and still fills me with fear. When I see the footage, I think of the mothers and fathers who died in those buildings and the footage to me is an active record of their death.

I had hoped that years later the world would have respect for those people who died and that this footage would not be shown as it further traumatizes their family members to see each year.

Instead, I wish they would talk to those who lost loved ones and ask them who they were and what they meant to them.

That is the kind of remembrance that we should all do on 9/11. Remember the incredible and the simple lives of the people who died on that day, NOT of the final terrorizing moments they spent on earth.

Even though I did not have a family member in one of the towers that fell, I was in NYC to sing at Lincoln Center and I feared that the city would be bombed and I would not see my husband and family again.

It took many hours before I heard their voices on the other end of the line as helicopters and planes flew over Manhattan. The anguish of New York City will never leave me and the heroism of New York's FDNY and police will be with me forever as they were the only trucks on the streets.

The rest of the world watched the pain on the news.

But I was in NYC and felt the pain and saw the pictures posted to fences and poles all through Manhattan.

New York City was a loving place after 9/11 and it reminded me of what happens when unimaginable tragedy brings people together.

This feeling lasted a few months in America but unfortunately for all of us, it did not hold forever.

Tragedy either brings you closer or pushes you further apart.

I pray that this year as we look back at 9/11, we pause for a moment to find the ways we can come closer together.

Our world desperately needs us to do this. Life is an incredibly delicate and fragile gift.

I learned from 9/11 that tragedy can be an opportunity to heal each other.

I learned that unless you see the pain you might not understand how deep the pain goes.

And I learned that real heroes are the ones who don't have the spotlight. I strive to be one of those.

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Close to the terror

This article was originally published in the Sept. 11, 2001 edition of the Ludington Daily News, a publication of Community Media Group

BY CHERYL HIGGINSON

Ludington area residents were not isolated from the tragedy which struck the nation Tuesday. Former residents now living in New York and near Washington, as well as residents there on business, will carry their own private nightmares with them forever.

Vickie Raven, owner of Raven's in downtown Ludington, was in New York along with her store manager, Debbie Perow, for 'fashion week' in the city. The two had looked forward to the trip to buy clothing for the store.

Instead the trip turned into a nightmare and this morning the pair were still not sure if they would be able to get home today or not. Perow was especially upset she could not get home as scheduled Tuesday because her father is undergoing open heart surgery at Mercy Hospital in Muskegon today.

The two were in a cab headed to an appointment at Tony Bahama's clothing when the first tower fell. They had been aware that something was going on but were unsure

of what, until that instant.

"We were six blocks away from the towers and all of a sudden we started seeing people just running hysterically in the streets, crying, screaming. There were just people everywhere. We got out and went upstairs to our appointment and there were so many people affected there, ones who had family or friends that worked in the towers."

Raven said the pair went back to the Omni Hotel where they had been staying the two nights previous. Hotels were letting anyone who had stayed the night before to check back in.

It took the pair over an hour to get through to their families in Ludington to let them know they were OK.

"Chris (my husband) thought that maybe we were in the World Trade building," Raven said. "I hadn't left my appointment schedule with him and he was really panicking by the time I got through to him."

Raven said the scene Tuesday night in the city was eerie.

"The whole town was in a somber state. There was absolutely no traffic except police were everywhere. We could have walked across the bridges. The only restaurants that were open were the

ones that were in the hotels. I've never seen anything like it. Debbie and I went out and walked around last night and it was just plain spooky.

"We stopped when we were out walking last night and were looking one of the huge TV screens when they announced there could be as many as 10,000 casualties," Raven said. "And the crowd standing there just gasped and people started crying. It was terrible."

"I guess the one good thing about all this is seeing how the people of New York came together. It became a small town. There were customers waiting on customers in the restaurants because there were so many people who couldn't get into the city to work."

Raven said this morning that lower Manhattan was shut down. People already there were allowed to leave but no inbound traffic was being allowed into the city.

The pair were scheduled for a 1:30 p.m. flight today, but early this morning did not know if they would get out or not.

"They say everything is shut down until noon, so we're not sure what's going to happen, but we're determined we're going to get out of here today," Raven said. "We'll

either take a different flight and have somebody come after us, or rent a car, if we can find one, and drive home.

"We want to get out of here. We weren't close enough to get dust on us, but we were too close for comfort."

One former Ludington resident described the scene in New York City Tuesday as 'surreal' as he surveyed the chaos in the streets from his apartment window only a couple blocks away from the World Trade Center.

Michael Lee, son of Dr. and Mrs. Khang Hoon Lee, felt his apartment building shake and heard a loud boom when the first plane hit the tower Tuesday morning.

Lee, who graduated from Columbia University last spring with a degree in architecture, is self-employed.

He said he couldn't see the World Trade Towers directly from his apartment. He got the news on TV and realized exactly what had happened.

"It was weird because I was watching the 'Today' show when I heard this really low jet flying literally right outside my window and then I heard a boom."

"I ran down the street and could see the fire and smoke and the chaos," he said. "Then I ran back to my apartment and went

back about 10 minutes later and the tower was already gone. There were floods of people scurrying everywhere. People crying, screaming. Just hysteria."

Lee said Tuesday afternoon that the city was completely shut down with all the bridges, tunnels and subways closed off.

"The only thing I can see is emergency services people, firefighters and police," he added. "It's just a constant stream of them."

Debris and dust shrouded his apartment building.

"This is something I will never forget," he said. "It's like the movies we've all watched about something like this happening and we think it never will ... but it did. I think it makes us all realize how vulnerable the U.S. really is."

Ed Kruska, who serves in the United States Coast Guard and works at the service's Washington headquarters, was on his way to work from his home in Alexandria, Va., when he heard an explosion and saw the smoke when the Pentagon was hit.

"I thought it was probably a fire in Crystal City which is just a little way away from the Pentagon," Kruska said. "But

then I got by National Airport and as I got closer I could see that it was the Pentagon.

"I could see people just streaming out from that area and all headed back over the 14th Street bridge," Kruska said. "And I just couldn't believe what I was seeing."

As he talked Tuesday afternoon two American F-16's flew over his home, doing surveillance work. He was one of thousands of federal employees who were sent home as a precautionary measure Tuesday.

Kruska said that had his day been a 'normal' one he would have already been at work when the plane hit. The Coast Guard headquarters is about four miles away from the Pentagon.

"I had to take my wife into work this morning and then drop our car off for some repairs," he said. "Had I not done that I would have already been at work. I don't know if that would have been better or worse."

"I, like everybody, am just stunned," he said. "All the flags are at half mast and it's eerily quiet. Just kind of spooky."

Nightmare revisited: Terrorist attacks bring back memories of 1963

This article was originally published in the Sept. 16, 2001 edition of the News-Gazette, a publication of Community Media Group

BY BRETT DAWSON

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. - Just like you, Jim Grabowski sat in stunned silence Tuesday, his jaw dropping and his stomach twisting much the way yours were.

Just like you, he listened this week, in the wake of terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, to debate about whether sports should have been played this weekend.

Just like you, he saw a college football Saturday come and go this weekend with hardly a game taking place.

Just like you. Only Grabowski was here before.

"It feels very different this week," said Grabowski, who played on the last Illinois team to see its season put on hold by a national tragedy. "But it does feel similar in some ways."

It was 1963 when Grabowski and his teammates saw college football come to a halt, when the most important game of their football lives was rendered meaningless after an assassin's bullet killed President Kennedy.

To this day, he remembers the numbness of stepping off a bus in East Lansing, Mich., and being told the president had been assassinated.

Tuesday, he was numbed again, this time by news footage of airplanes striking the World Trade Center towers in New York, and by news of two other hijacked planes, one crashing into the Pentagon, the other going down in western Pennsylvania.

In the wake of that, sport became meaningless. Grabowski could relate. He had been here before.

A changed world

On Nov. 22, 1963, the Illini landed in East Lansing, Mich., unaware the world around them had changed completely during their short flight.

There were no TVs or radios on the plane, nor on the bus the team boarded at the airport. And there was no hotel stop on the UI's itinerary.

From the airport, it was straight to Spartan Stadium for a light afternoon practice.

"I remember sitting on the bus on the way to the stadium noticing that the flags were at half-mast," said George Donnelly, a defensive back on the '63 team. "I remember asking the guy sitting next to me, 'I wonder why they're doing that?'"

He found out when the bus reached the stadium.

Donnelly can't remember any change in emotions so swift or so dramatic.

The Illini weren't coming to Michigan State for just another regular season game. The contest would decide the Big Ten champion, the winner punching a ticket to the Rose Bowl.

"The combined emotions conflicted there probably even more so than they did for the average individual," said Mike Taliaferro, the UI quarterback in 1963. "What you've wanted to do all your life and is now right in front of you is suddenly overshadowed by the assassination of the president. So how do you get rid of those emotions? It was very confusing emotionally."

Nonetheless, the team prepared to play Saturday. And for a time, it appeared it would.

Games go on

Only one of Bob Hammel's 42 years in the newspaper business was spent outside the sports department. That year was 1963, and Hammel was working in the news department at the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel.

He remembers Nov. 22, 1963, vividly, remembers scrapping his morning edition and scrambling to finish an afternoon paper with details on the Kennedy assassination.

An ardent Kennedy supporter, Hammel remembers the adrenaline of that task got him through the hours after the shots were fired in Dallas.

And he remembers when his work finally was done, he went to a high school basketball game that night.

"I just kind of woodenly went through the motions of what I was going to do all along," Hammel said. "The only thing I really remember from that is how poignant playing

the national anthem was. And then it was right back into the game, and there was a certain catharsis to that."

Hammel, a Big Ten historian, didn't stop to think about whether college football games would be played that Saturday in '63. It seemed apparent they would.

Iowa was set to play Notre Dame. Traditional rivalries Indiana-Purdue and Michigan-Ohio State were set to renew. And, of course, in East Lansing the most important Big Ten game of the year was set to kick off little more than 24 hours after the assassination of the most powerful man in the world.

"Sports seemed completely separate in those days," Hammel said. "We didn't even consider the possibility at first that the games would be canceled."

To play or not to play?

At first, neither did the Illini.

Donnelly says now he never thought the game should be played that Saturday, but he and his teammates went through their rituals Saturday morning as if it would.

Several players already had ankles and wrists taped by the time the Illini were told the game would be postponed.

"I think, to a man, we were all happy that it didn't go off," Grabowski said. "I don't think any of us felt like playing. Even at 18, 19 years old, I think we understood, with the tragedy of the assassination, how unimportant the football game was."

Unlike this week's terrorist attacks, which happened four days before college football was set to play, there was little time to make such a decision.

And that limited time didn't allow for the same sort of united front presented by the NCAA on Saturday.

"It was Friday when it happened, so we were right into the weekend," Hammel said. "There was no precedent and no over-riding policy that covered everything. It was just a series of individual decisions."

That's why some games were postponed and others were played. Michigan-Ohio State and Indiana-Purdue were pushed back a week. Iowa and Notre Dame canceled altogether.

Other teams, though, elected to play. The entire NFL schedule moved forward, and several college teams played.

"I don't think it was necessarily easy for anybody to move forward with that," said Nebraska football coach Frank Solich, who suited up for the Cornhuskers a day after the assassination for a game against Oklahoma. "When you have things happen like happened recently to this country or like Kennedy, there is concern and there are different ways to possibly go on it. The decision was to go. We went forward, and I guess that's it."

Illinois and Michigan State elected to move forward less than a week later. The game was moved to Thanksgiving Day in East Lansing.

Duffy Daugherty, then the coach at Michigan State, contended for years after the game that the Spartans would have won had it been played as scheduled on Saturday.

If so, much changed in less than a week.

The Illini dominated from the opening kick, beating Michigan State 13-0 to claim a berth in the Rose Bowl, where they beat Washington 17-7. And by the time it was set to play Michigan State, Illinois was ready to go.

"I think by that time we had started to move on somewhat," Taliaferro said. "The intensity of (the game), from an athlete's perspective, I don't think was diminished in any manner. Just the very nature of football, though, is that you're going to get your block knocked off if you're thinking of anything other than what you're supposed to be at the time."

Grabowski said it might have been hard to find the necessary focus one day after the Kennedy assassination.

"It just wasn't the right time," he said.

And the same might have been true of this weekend.

Moving forward

In the sense that the Kennedy assassination and Tuesday's attacks rocked the nation to its core, in the sense that both rendered sports insignificant, the two are similar.

But there are differences. "I would say that they are

qualitatively different," Donnelly said. "In '63, it was an internal kind of thing. As horrible as it was, it was basically contained within the country. You didn't know what was going to happen, but clearly back in '63 you didn't think that the country could be at war. This may be an even more uncertain time."

And just as it had in 1963, the combination of sorrow and uncertainty form a powerful argument against playing football. But there were arguments to the contrary as well.

"My thought is not to let the terrorists diminish the American lifestyle in any way, and what better symbol of that than athletics," Taliaferro said. "But I can understand people who might not want to play. They may have had friends and relatives in those buildings or on those planes."

Even those who didn't will find it hard to keep Tuesday's images out of their memories.

For a younger generation, Tuesday will carry the same kind of horrific residence that Nov. 22, 1963, did for its parents.

Luke Butkus, Illinois' starting center, is the nephew of Dick Butkus, the star linebacker on the '63 squad. Now their careers have another common thread, one neither would ever have imagined.

"That's something you probably don't want to bring up," Luke Butkus said. "I'm not going to ever want to bring this up. I know that it happened. It's a tragedy. You don't want to talk about it."

Soon enough, though, we'll all be talking about it. Already we've done it in our homes and schools. And someday soon, we'll do it at filled football stadiums, sharing our grief while the game tries to take some of the pain away.

Jim Grabowski knows it will happen. He's been here before.

"I don't know what the right amount of grieving is. Is it a day, is it two days, a week, a month?" Grabowski said. "Are you going to call off a whole season? No, you're not. Eventually, like we did in '63, you have to start to move on. I don't know when to do it, but eventually you've got to move on to show the people who did this that life will go on over here."

Reflecting on a community newspapers 9/11 coverage, Tom Clancy interview 20 years later

A day to rise above and a day to remember

BY STEVE BEGNOCHE

Extraordinary events require extraordinary effort to report on them for the community you serve.

The 9/11 terrorist attack proved such an event.

Reporters in New York City, Washington, D.C. and in Pennsylvania found themselves in the midst of horrific tragedy.

Reporters and news teams in communities across the nation, had a role to play, too: to inform our community what happened nationally and, in particular, to members of our communities at those sites, how our communities mourned the losses and responded to the attacks with that American determination to do what we could wherever we lived.

For the news staff at the Ludington Daily News, a small community daily newspaper on the shores of Lake Michigan, Sept. 11, 2001 started out like

many other beautiful late summer days. We had stories to complete and pages to finish in order to meet our late morning press time.

The work was nearly done when the first word that a plane had struck a tower at the World Trade Center in New York City.

Our news editor at the time, Patti Klevorn, recalled thinking that's very sad for the pilot and people in what she at first presumed to be a small plane.

I found myself ensconced in a meeting with a telephone company representative trying to resolve a problem that couldn't wait. That completed, I walked out of my tiny office to my work desk in the newsroom and was informed something was up and the television in the conference room was on following the breaking story.

I walked back and watched as a second plane hit the second tower.

Stunned like everyone else, I didn't quite know what was happening, but I and all knew it was big, substantial and sickening. We also knew we had to tear apart the

almost completed edition and get the story out as best we could.

As we worked, more news came across the Associated Press wire. Reporters Kevin Braciszewski and Cheryl Higginson and photographer Andy Klevorn headed to Ludington High School to see how students were reacting as they watched with the rest of the world the events unfold on television.

In discussion with then publisher David Jackson, we decided to add pages for a special report edition and to delay the morning's scheduled print time until early afternoon.

I'm not sure what we did with the scheduled page one stories that day. Some undoubtedly were moved inside, but most of the inside pages we let stand - you can only change so much.

As we pulled photos and stories from the AP wire to tell the national story, we added the local school story and Andy Klevorn scored a bit of a national scoop. A fan of best-selling author Tom Clancy, Andy thought the events reminded him of a

story line in Clancy's seventh book, "Debt of Honor," so he emailed Clancy on a hunch to see if the author - whom had no connection to Ludington or Klevorn until the email - had anything to say.

Clancy took the bait and called the Ludington Daily News where Andy's wife Patti got the call. She recalls thinking why is this person calling now? But she yelled out, "Andy, Tom Clancy is on the phone and wants to talk to you" - only then realizing it was the national best-selling author and that, yes, Andy would try to call him.

Clancy was livid about the morning's attack and wanting to talk to someone-even a little daily newspaper he'd never heard of. "Somebody just awoke a sleeping giant," he told Klevorn, "and they are going to get burned." Prophetic again.

While the Clancy story became only a small part of the day's coverage and ran on page 3, national media later made the same connection and in ensuing days Clancy talked to far larger national outlets.

Meanwhile, the LDN

staff talked to local people near to or at the sites of the New York and Washington, D.C. attacks telling their stories to help local readers understand the emotions and reality all Americans were connected - and targeted that morning.

We covered vigils, talked with ministers, emergency response personnel, lawmakers and local residents. We editorialized about not panicking about safety or gasoline supplies, and our shared sorrow and resolve.

The attacks didn't take place in Ludington, but we were part of it, we were - and are - connected as citizens of the United States of America.

I can't say enough about how the staff worked so hard not only that morning - when like everyone else we were stunned and wanted to watch and consider what was happening - but in the ensuing days, weeks and months as the stories continued.

The 9/11 attack was the LDN newsroom of that generation's Pearl Harbor.

The losses of innocent lives remain so sad. The emotional loss of so

many also is heart-breaking.

Sadly, that feeling of being a united people that followed in the wake of the attack has been under attack for years by those wishing to divide us for their own purposes.

The fact it takes these violent attacks to reunite us, also is sad. Can't we see we are one even when we differ?

But Clancy, who has since died, proved correct, a giant was reawakened - for a while, at least.

And the little Ludington Daily News that day came out in early afternoon with a special report edition that served the community well on a day that so horrified the nation and the world.

We kept at our work as did community newspapers throughout the nation, being there for our community readers in good times and the bad ones.

God bless the USA ... and all you readers in communities across the nation. We're best working together for a common good.

Putting minds and hearts at ease in the aftermath of 9/11

20 years later, clinical social worker reflects on volunteering for the Red Cross at Ground Zero

BY ANELIA K. DIMITROVA

WAVERLY, Iowa - Susan Kosche Vallem has a compassionate heart. Trying out various majors as a college student, the Spokane, Washington, native ultimately decided to pick a professional path that would put her skills in service to others at times when they face turmoil.

Social work became not just her major, and then her occupation, but also her lifelong mission.

Everything Vallem had learned in her long career as a practitioner and a teacher about soothing the pain of mental suffering in traumatic times was put to the test in the aftermath of 9/11, when she, like many others around the country, volunteered to join the Disaster Relief team of the Red Cross in New York City.

When she arrived at the Brooklyn Headquarters, she was assigned to do outreach and provide "brief crisis intervention" to those in need.

That description clinically captures the duties of the job but not the depth of the connections that Vallem, then a Wartburg College professor and head of the Department of Social Work, established with New Yorkers of all walks of life.

Some of the everyday memories have faded over 20 years since she volunteered, and the few items of memorabilia she had brought back are still in boxes after a recent downsizing move in retirement.

But the stories of the people have remained with her despite the relative brevity of their encounters.

The goal of an outreach mental health professional at the time, Vallem said, was to help the people process what had happened and "get some sense of control in their life." Like her peers, she pulled in 10-hour-long days, seven days a week for a fortnight.

She had worked in crisis intervention before--

and since-- but nothing has come close to what she saw after 9/11.

The magnitude of the need was mind boggling.

"So many people were affected," she said.

The resilience of New Yorkers turned out to be the main recurring theme of her experiences from the very beginning until the end of her stint two weeks later, the maximum length of time volunteers were allowed to work.

In fact, her work as a counselor started before she got her first assignment. Her taxi driver, a man of Arabic descent, told her he loved America, but in the aftermath of the attacks, some riders avoided him.

"Let's go have a cup of coffee and just tell me what you're going through," she told him. The guy welcomed the opportunity to pour his heart out.

"The poor guy, he was also suffering."

Eventually, Vallem reported to the headquarters for duty.

Her first assignment was to visit a young couple in the Tribeca area who had been struggling with processing the terror attacks that had hit in their neighborhood. As she listened to their story, Vallem learned that the wife, a petite woman, had found the physical toughness in her seemingly fragile frame to push her husband's wheelchair, through the flying debris and the descending dust, into a store to safety.

"You always hear about superhuman strength, she did that," Vallem said. "She had to have a lot of adrenaline because she literally picked him up -- and he was a big guy. She didn't remember the details, she remembered the panic and what it took to get to safety."

As part of her work, Vallem took families of victims into Ground Zero, to a small viewing platform, to help them process what had happened.

One mother, who had lost her only child, a son,



Susan Kosche Vallem volunteered for the Red Cross in the aftermath of 9/11.

who worked in the South Tower, went with Vallem to the platform that was closed to the public. The mother was struggling with grief, her pain deepened by the fact that there was no body to mourn over.

The extent to which Vallem's work helped is attested to in a handwritten card the woman left for her at the headquarters' office.

"A thoughtful act or a kind word may pass in a moment, but the warmth and care behind (it), stay in the heart forever," the mother wrote. "Thank you for giving so freely and putting my mind at ease and for your support and strength at Ground Zero."

Re-reading that card 20 years later, Vallem says the mother's words summed up well the healing work mental health professionals do.

"Listening and affirmation are the most important part of crisis intervention," she said. "Helping them to find any resources they would need is the next part."

Vallem also took to the viewing platform at Ground Zero a group of nurses who had worked in the South Tower. They were evacuated, along with other civilians, but they were experiencing survivor guilt, among other issues.

"We were nurses, we should have helped, they made us leave," the nurses told her.

Vallem listened, then reminded them of all the good they had been able to do. That perspective brought some comfort, she said.

In another memorable moment, Vallem met an elderly, immigrant couple who needed her services. Their apartment overlooked Ground Zero, but the husband, a blind veteran, followed one healing routine: Every morning, he went to the balcony to raise an American flag as a way of uplifting the spirits of the first responders who worked in the ruins below.

"I want them to know what they are working for and how wonderful this country is," the man told Vallem.

As she worked, Vallem also found creative ways to help her clients.

On one occasion, she brought a stuffed pig toy to a former editor at Meredith Publishing, who, during a therapy session, held onto a fond memory of admiring the pigs at the Iowa State Fair.

"This is the first time I've laughed since this happened," the woman told Vallem.

Checking up on her later, Vallem found that the stuffed toy had made a difference.

"I want you to know I took that (stuffed) pig and I slept with it and I slept well," the woman later reported.

Near Ground Zero, it was clear that pets, too, were distressed, dislo-

cated and depressed. Vallem saw some of them as she helped a former EMT care for pets who had lost their owners.

The EMT no longer worked in that capacity as she was hit by flying debris in the head when she was rushing to help during the attacks. Helping with the animals was her way of contributing.

To help her, Vallem got a pet food company to give the improvised shelter free pet food so the woman could have a renewed sense of purpose.

"She didn't feel guilty about not being able to help people," she said.

One day, Vallem even worked with a handler who told her his search-and-rescue dogs were getting depressed because they could not find anybody in the rubble. So she agreed to "hide" in the park and let the dog find her in order to give the canine a sense of purpose and reward.

"Credit and kudos to all the people, including the dog handlers, who were working at Ground Zero," she said. "They were amazing."

Amid the grief and the overbearing sense of loss, there were also some rare, light-hearted moments that showed the spirit of kindness and grace that strangers extended to each other.

When Vallem was trying to cross the street once on her way to Ground Zero, an officer,

who saw her Red Cross badge, stopped the traffic so she could cross safely.

"You go, honey, I want you to know they wouldn't do that for you in New Jersey," the officer quipped.

Looking back at her time at Ground Zero, Vallem is gratified that she was able to apply her skills to the lives of the people she met.

"I witnessed a lot of resiliency and strength at that time and a lot of cooperation, too bad that sometimes it takes tragedy to bring people together," she said.

In the years since, she has moved on with her life, but she remains grateful for the opportunity to help survivors cope with the unthinkable.

"I learned a lot from them," she said. "The stories, the people, I can still see them today, I could still smell what it was like, it is embedded in my brain. So many people were there helping but also, New Yorkers were helping each other."

"I really feel blessed to have the chance to meet people and to sort of be with them in the crisis they were in," she said. "It was sad and heartbreaking but fulfilling as well, knowing that I had found the right calling but also seeing the good in people. There are good people and there are resilient people and it was affirming in that sense."

Vallem said working with trauma survivors can eventually weigh on the counselor as well. She said the Red Cross debriefing sessions were helpful to her, as was her faith.

"My own Chrtian faith helped me, too, knowing that God is somehow there helping in the worst of situations."

"I didn't always know what to do and say, but I did a lot of praying. That's one thing about therapy, if you listen enough, it comes to you. That's also part of my faith and belief, I know it's not everybody but that's just me."

Walked out of Manhattan

PENTWATER RESIDENT WAS IN WORLD TRADE CENTER

This story was originally published on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2011, as a part of the Ludington Daily News' coverage of the 10th anniversary of 9/11

BY BRIAN MULHERIN

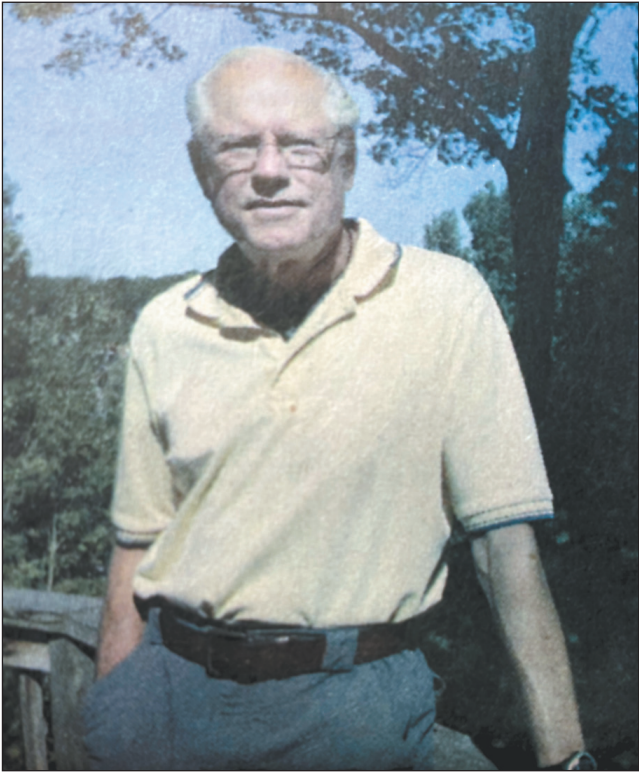
“Unfortunately I was one of those at the WTC on that morning and felt the impact of the first plane that hit the North Tower and saw the second one hit the South Tower right above my head.”

Thus began an e-mail to the Ludington Daily News from Pentwater resident Jerry Saylor about his experience on Sept. 11, 2001.

Saylor was a Moline, Illinois resident at the time and was working as director of marketing economics for John Deere & Co. which is headquartered there, but was in New York City attending a trade conference in the Marriot Hotel situated between the twin towers. He was listening to a speaker that morning. A loud explosion shook the chandeliers and chased the 200 National Association of Business Economists out of the room.

His story was recounted in Sept. 15, 2001 article in the Quad City Times based on his account given to 1,400 John Deere employees in Moline and the Quad Cities via audio and computer that Friday.

“The first thing we saw were taxis, cars, trucks, a number of different ve-



Jerry Saylor, Pentwater resident

FILE PHOTO

hicles, and all of them were on fire,” he told the Quad City Times. “It was an amazing sight.”

What followed was described as a three-day odyssey “that took him on a long walk out of Manhattan with the panicked masses and eventually to Allentown, Pennsylvania where he was able to rent a car to drive back to Illinois.

“Many of my colleagues waited around in a vain attempt to retrieve personal items and have suffered long term effects from the collapse of the South Tower,” Saylor told the Ludington Daily News. “I had witnessed a

major fire in Sao Paulo, Brazil in the early 1970s when more than 100 people were trapped on top of a burning building and many jumped to their deaths. After watching five trapped individuals jump from the South Tower and two from the North Tower, I knew that I could not stay there and watch more jump. With three other friends we walked and finally arrived at midtown and left Manhattan about 3 p.m.

“The image of falling bodies is something I hope to never see again.”

What follows is a reprint of his story as told

to the Quad City Times.

“I saw two people leap from the first tower and tumble down and I knew they had no other way of escaping.” Minutes later he witnessed the second jet crash into the second tower and it “simply disappeared” with a “huge ball of fire.”

At first he did not realize it was a terrorist attack, but it soon became apparent as he joined the exodus from lower Manhattan. By foot and taxi he reached a hotel in midtown Manhattan and attempted to call his family at home. His phone card

did not work, and twice he had to stand in line to use a pay phone, finally reaching his office in Moline where an assistant was able to relay information to his family.

As he made his way north he was struck by the number of shoes he saw, both in pairs and singles. “Some people must have literally run out of their shoes or they must have decided that they were not suitable for running and just abandoned them.”

Hotel room and rental cars were “not to be had” he said, but a friend of

someone in his group offered his apartment where they were able to make phone calls, arrange transportation and borrow a van to get out of the city. The wife of a member of his party picked them up near the New Jersey-Pennsylvania border and from there he went to Allentown where his office had arranged for a rental car. He then drove the 880 miles to home.

“The thing that really strikes you ... is I came out without a scratch. I lost some possessions, but many people lost their lives.”

