

September 11th

There are two pieces here, each written in the three days immediately after 11 September 2001 – when, as it happened, a deadline for *Trust & Foundation News* was due.

The first article is our news report, which appeared on the front page, as we realised with horror that some friends and colleagues might have been caught in the World Trade Centre disaster. I personally knew the WTC area well, as my brother-in-law had lived in an apartment (now derelict) in Battery Park City virtually next door, 100 yards horizontally but rather more distant upwards and downwards, through pathways that no longer exist. Not only that, in 1992 I had spoken at a foundation conference, whose celebration dinner had been in the *Windows on the World* restaurant at the WTC. The destruction felt personal.

I framed the article, emailed New York colleagues back and forth, and my colleague Sue Benson did some research. But the main view comes from my friend Maddy Lee, then President of the New York Foundation, which is based in the Empire State Building, now once again New York's tallest building; her office faced South, and had a clear view across to the World Trade Center towers. Her words as eye-witness, not to the collapse of the towers but to the feeling in New York in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, were not written for publication, but are moving even at two years' distance. I am grateful for her permission to reproduce them here.

The second piece is my editorial for the same issue of *Trust & Foundation News*. It brings back the question all of us now ask: '*What were you doing on 11 September 2001?*' For people running ACF, it was the night of our annual meeting of foundation chairpeople.

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Foundations buried in New York rubble

The destruction of the World Trade Center has engulfed the offices of many voluntary organisations and as we go to press many staff are unaccounted for. At least 30 non-profit organisations were based in the Center or the nearby area. Those in the 'twin towers' included several international friendship organisations, the One to One Foundation, and the US headquarters of Deutsche Bank which had a noted corporate giving programme. 13 grant-making foundations had addresses in the neighbouring streets, where many buildings are destroyed or unusable. Among these, the Trinity Grants Program, which has been working since 1972 from a base immediately opposite in Trinity Place has reported after anxious hours that all its staff are safe. The picturesque small church from which it takes its roots is however destroyed. Other grant-makers very nearby, whose survival is

unknown, include Charles Hayden Foundation and Robin Hood Foundation which was the inspiration for the UK's SHINE (Support & Help in Education). The Robin Hood Foundation was formed by investment experts who wanted to use their special skills in derivatives for philanthropic purposes. Its base in the New York financial district thus has a special significance, and we have no information about the fate of its experts.

The New York Regional Association of Grantmakers (NYRAG) is acting as a clearing house for contact information for directly affected foundations and for philanthropic initiatives. Its website at www.nyrag.org is seeking and giving information. NYRAG's chief officer Barbara Bryan and Chair Kimberley Otis have said: *"In the days and weeks ahead, we will all be called upon to respond to the emergency, to grieve together, to reach out to help people and organizations to rebuild, and to begin a long healing process"*. A 'September 11th Fund' has been established by The New York Community Trust and the United Way of New York to help the victims, accessible through www.uwnyc.org. The first donation was \$1million. The Washington-based Council on Foundations and Independent Sector are co-ordinating national non-profit and philanthropic initiatives. The Council reports that the staff, but not the offices, of its own member foundations in lower Manhattan are all safe. A UK-based fund, 'Helping USA' has been established by Charities Aid Foundation at onlinedonations@cafonline.org

Over the three days since the event, accounts have come into ACF from friends and colleagues. Staff at Rockefeller saw the second plane fly by and into the World Trade Center - then vacated their own Rockefeller Center on the assumption that it would be next. ACF's Vice Chair John Wates, one of many British people with friends and relatives in the locality, waited anxiously for news of his son. *"He set off from his Wall Street office to go to the World Trade Center for a 10am appointment and so became a spectator to the awful events. His apartment block has been evacuated and he is staying with friends mid-town. I guess he just has the clothes he stands up in. Our thoughts are with the many thousands who weren't so lucky."*

Christopher Harris at the Ford Foundation in East 43rd Street reports on Thursday: *"Smoke is still visible from downtown and the UN [next door to Ford] is still blocked by trucks. We're meeting midday to decide Ford's best response to the needs here in New York City."* Further south, the staff of New York Foundation had a horrific view of events from their office window halfway up the Empire State Building, which has a clear panoramic view across to the financial district three miles south. Director Madeline Lee, a frequent visitor to Britain whom many colleagues will have met at our 2000 Conference in Southampton, sent us a moving email the day after the disaster; short extracts give the flavour:

"Emotionally, things feel worse this morning than during the whole terrible day yesterday. The city is eerily quiet. The Empire State Building is still closed, so I won't be at work. Most of my staff wouldn't be able to get to work anyway - subway service is sporadic, no bridges open to traffic incoming, and everyone had pretty hard days yesterday trying to get home to their families... Some of them watched the whole horror from our office. When Martin and I finally went out yesterday, on the most beautiful day you could imagine, there were people on the street, people shopping - but there was no bread or milk, since no deliveries had made it in. But you could see the famous New York grit - theories, ideas, suggestions (not all printable) - and everyone had a story, of

someone who didn't go to work at the WTC that morning, or someone who did... As we reach out to friends, the stories just keep cascading over us...Our friend Ruth Abram opened the Tenement Museum to the steady stream of refugee-like pedestrians streaming from downtown Manhattan. One friend's daughter emerged from the subway - which was halted at 14th Street - to look south and see her husband's building collapse. Miraculously, he had stopped to vote, and was not in the building, but she is still in a kind of numb shock. Another friend spent the day at a school for K-3, and had to act as though nothing was wrong, while survivors of downtown Manhattan trickled in to be with their spouses, covered in cement dust, saying 'I can't talk about what I saw...' Another friend in a bluecollar neighborhood is waiting for news of two firefighters and 3 cops - no word of any of them. She was in Manhattan - saw the whole thing from a subway train on the East River Bridge - and couldn't get back to her kids in Brooklyn for 6 hours. Thank god for neighborhoods - one neighbor picked up one kid at school, another picked up the other... Another friend was on the street, two blocks from the WTC, when the second plane roared over her head..she saw the hit, eventually ended up walking to Brooklyn, much of it in the pitch dark. She too is in shock. If you pray, don't just pray for New York: pray for the country, pray for the world. Everything has changed."

Editorial

When we sat down early on Tuesday 11 September to make the final plans for this issue, we realised that we had no news at all for the front page. We were drawing on the 'dead' month of August; all suitable material had been covered in our July issue or specially posted to members, with new developments expected in October at the earliest. 'Something will turn up', we said, without much hope. It did, and we wish it hadn't. On the way across London to ACF's annual meeting of trust chairmen late the same afternoon, we could barely hear what sounded like a play on the taxi radio. The traffic was unusually heavy and some roads were oddly closed. When we arrived, we found out why. The radio had been playing news, not fiction. As the terrible facts became clear, the chairmen's meeting began with a minute's silence. A lively discussion about promotion of philanthropy ensued, but several of our participants began worrying about friends and family in New York.

The events are unimaginable. Three days later, we have done our best to report on what is happening to our friends and colleagues in the philanthropic community and elsewhere. The financial effects of the disaster are of course taking second place to the immediate emergency. The consequences on, and of, a closed New York stockmarket, can only be guessed. Foundations, already concerned about falling income this year, unprecedented in recent times, will now face more difficulty, especially those with significant holdings in insurance. But this is no time for number-crunching. Some foundation offices and staff are unaccounted for as we go to press.

The World Wide Web operates, but a few websites are eerily out of date, perhaps ominous ghosts of their creators. The Internet has functioned, as intended, as a means of communication protected from central attack because it *has* no centre. Our colleagues in the US have much appreciated our concerned enquiries. As the full scale of the tragedy

emerges, they have told us what they know, in snippets and moving accounts. In horror and sympathy, we send them our very best.

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