



Families, friends and survivors of September 11th reflect on living with loss



Edited by Susan Wilkes and Jim Burke

Table of Contents

Welcome	2
Introduction	3
Cancelled Plans	4
by Elizabeth Dickey	
To Annette	6
by Cynthia Bruckman	
Two Pieces of Cake	10
by Margaret Mauro	
Dear Todd	14
by Herb Ouida	
Walls	16
by Michael Cook	
9/11: Reflections on the Journey	20
by Marie Mitchell	
Sitting on the Same Park Bench	24
by Judy Posusney	
Falling Together	26
by Elia Zedeno	

Memory List	30
by Wendy Ingersoll	
Some by Sonar	34
by Karla Linn Merrifield	
A Little Piece of Heaven	36
by Teresa Ivey	
Prayer for March 11	40
by Lisa Fenger	
St. Peter's vs. St. Mary's	42
by Daniel Seaman	
9/11: The Road Back	46
by Maria Ragonese	
Morning	52
by Kathleen Gerard	
Photograph: A Tribute in Light	52
by Kathleen Gerard	
Acknowledgements	56
Your story	57

Welcome

Welcome to Our Family...

"Everyone Stays Connected" is a phrase that has grown to have meaning for us. This is our way of letting people who lost someone know that they are connected to others -- all of whom can help them heal and who they can help heal.

Our family has grown tremendously since we lost our dad on September 11th. We continue to be proud to share his story. Using his story of holding the door for others to help them return to their loved ones, we hope to inspire people whether or not they have a direct connection to September 11th.

Immediately following September 11th, the United States was a community where caring, connecting, and random acts of kindness were commonplace. Our vision is to create communities that exemplify what America was at that time. We are determined to help others grow from their

experience and to create every day heroes who reach out to help others.

Each of our journeys through loss presents us with many pathways from which to choose. We face difficult and painful decisions on a daily basis. One choice our team encourages you to make is to believe in yourself and your natural ability to grow through loss. We have walked with many people who have suffered a wide variety of losses, ranging from loss related to cancer that was stretched over years, to accidents that were sudden and traumatic.

We invite you to learn from the authors in this anthology and their stories of living with loss. It is our privilege to welcome you to the Doorway and introduce you to the variety of ways in which people are able to move forward in their lives despite their anguish and grief. It is your choice to walk through the

Doorway and challenge yourself to grow through challenging times.

As you are reading these stories and reflecting there may be times that you feel you would like to learn more or seek assistance in your journey. Please do not hesitate to contact us through our website (www.holdthEDOOR.com), and we would be more than happy to provide you with resources or help guide you toward professional support.

Welcome to Our Family where Everyone Stays Connected...

Lauren, Ron Jr. and Rob Fazio

(children of Ronald C. Fazio Sr., South Tower, 99th Floor)



Introduction

Whenever we step into another person's life, especially when it holds pain and loss, we walk onto sacred ground. While life changed for all of us on September 11th, the anguish of those closest to the events makes their experience unique. In these 15 pieces, the authors invite you to walk with them as they remember their loved ones or share their stories of survival and reflect upon how they might still live fully after such an experience. We invite you to sit and listen – listen closely as you read and you'll hear the basketball banking off the old wooden backboard in Danny Seaman's gym. Stand beside Marie Mitchell as she watches firefighters ride a cherry picker over the "pile" to drop in flowers in honor of her brother.

Hear the voices of people whose hearts have been broken and yet are trying to create a life that must somehow be lived in light of that loss. Sometimes, as for Herb Ouida writing about the loss of his son Todd, "The only answer we have is to try to fill the loss

the world suffered when you were no longer here to add joy and love."

Each piece offers a message of hope, a doorway toward living with meaning. You'll find stories about the peacefulness of a starry lake and a growing sapling, the deepening of the spirit through meditation or prayer, and the healing found through reaching out to others. Several writers offer beautiful ways of honoring loved ones and powerful rituals of remembrance.

We hope that those who lost someone they cared about on September 11th or anyone in the midst of grief may find acceptance here for where they are in their journey. While each person travels a unique path, you may hear echoes of your own footsteps in these pages. Embrace those similarities, while honoring the differences.

We have included some questions that you might want to reflect upon after you read each piece. We encourage you to follow your inclinations and use this anthology to

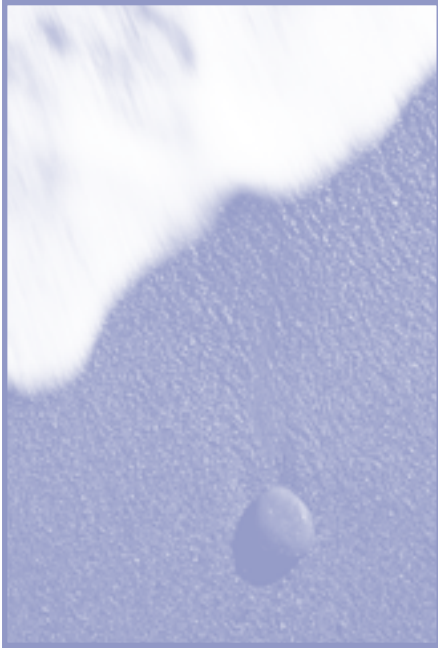
serve you and your journey. There is no order to either the path of grief or to the selections offered here.

We encourage you to write your own story as well. You might find the beginning of such a piece in your responses to the questions or in a moment of connection (or disconnection) with one of the authors. Any way your inspiration comes, give it words on a page or computer screen. One of the driving forces behind this anthology is our belief in the healing power of writing from the heart. You may even wish to share your story with others and, in this way, participate in the healing of a very broken world – a world, though, where love, life and connection are still possible.

May these stories further open your heart to yourself and to others. May they lead you to the discovery of your own doorways to living fully.

Canceled Plans

by Elizabeth Dickey



In a photo you stand
on the beach next to me,
Sea Bright, nineteen-sixty-seven,
the color faded.

I imagine us wrinkled,
your graying temples matching mine,
years around our middles
standing at the water's edge.

On 9/11, a scene
from the film "Independence Day"
plays on CNN instead of HBO.
That night you don't call,
I go to the train station, find your car:

Your clean clothes lie folded,
waiting. No reason to assume
you wouldn't be home
for a catch with the boys
before dinner:

The first Thanksgiving after;
I plant a Norway Spruce.
Spade-fuls of dirt
dumped around roots
anchor your spirit for a while.

Another photo, a birthday cake
perched on a high chair tray.
You gouge a bite
out of its chocolate side
while the single candle burns.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. If you were to select a couple of favorite photographs of a loved one you lost, which ones would you pick? What is it about those photos that make them treasured for you?

2. The author writes about planting a tree in her brother's memory. What rituals or ceremonies have you engaged in that "anchor the spirit" of your loved one for awhile? What other rituals can you envision that would be meaningful for you?

3. The poem ends with an image of a single candle burning. Reflecting on your own experience, what might the candle represent for you?



About the Author

Elizabeth Dickey is a graduate of Georgetown University and Manhattanville's Master's of Arts in Writing program, where she is also poetry editor for the literary journal "Inkwell." Her brother worked at Cantor Fitzgerald, WTC North Tower; 104th floor and died on September 11. Elizabeth notes that the images and impressions from 9/11 haunt her and that poetry has allowed her to explore and express her reaction to the events of that fall as she tries to make sense of the senseless. She lives in Old Greenwich, Connecticut with her husband and four children.

To Annette

by Cynthia Bruckman



This is for Annette, who held my hand as we fled Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge.

Annette, you prayed loudly to God, so that you might be heard through the dust, your face pressed against a closed door in the sepia-colored altered reality that I stepped into seconds after the first tower collapsed. You said:

"Please, Almighty God, our loving Savior, please let me live! Let me see my mama again! Spare me, Jesus!" as I stepped up next to you in slow motion and found a tiny pocket of air to breathe in the indentation of a doorway. I stood there, thinking quite calmly that I might die, having a second-by-second dialogue with a voice inside of me, telling myself to just take tiny breaths into my hand, and to stay calm. Then, as if the answer to your prayer had been sent by the speed of light, the door opened a crack, and a construction worker told us to hurry up and come inside.

Inside, there were four or five guys wearing dust masks. They handed masks to us, then bottles of water. The building was gutted out, and these guys seemed to me to be like some kind of tattered urban angels from Armageddon. The door opened five or six times, and each time, someone else would come running in, a cloud of dust swirling around them. We stood there hacking, but grateful to be alive. I wiped droplets of water onto a shocked, hyperventilating woman's forehead very gently, as if she were my baby. This seemed to soothe her. **And** me. Jennifer, a reporter from CBS, announced that people could call their loved ones on a special radio that she had.

Annette, you called your mother: "I'm alive, mama! Praise God, I'm alive!" you said.

When the dust cleared, we stepped out into a lost planet, blanketed in ashes. You and I instinctively held hands. A lone fireman stood in the middle of the street, shouting for us to run to the East River; moving his arms mechanically, covered like a snow man in ash, his face on automatic. So, we ran with our group of new friends from the building. One guy from our group looked like a Great Depression farmer – he had just emerged from the subway underneath the World Trade Center when chaos rained on him – he didn't tell us anything else but that as we all began the exodus from the island.

"I don't want to get on that bridge," I said to you. "They're going to hit it next!" My maternal grandfather was killed building The Iron Workers' Memorial Bridge in Vancouver, Canada when it collapsed. My

surname means "Bridge Man" in German. There was more than fear or superstition in my thinking when I said this to you, Annette – there was a solid sense of history running through me. I was fully prepared to jump into the water and swim if I had to. We were about a quarter of the way across the Brooklyn Bridge when the second tower collapsed. That's when my entire being kind of morphed into jelly. "I told you so! I told you so!" I slurred, as the bridge shook and people started running, screaming. We didn't know what was happening; we couldn't see the tower falling, we could only feel it and hear it. You told me that I was going to be all right, and we squeezed each other's hands. I squeezed yours probably very hard so that I wouldn't fall, but you never said I was squeezing it too tight.

When we stumbled into downtown Brooklyn, still holding hands, people stared at us, probably because we were covered in dust. I let you use my cell phone, but it didn't work. I said goodbye to you and the others as you headed off to Crown Heights by foot. You all said, "God Bless you", and I thanked you for holding my hand.

I have thought a lot about you since September 11th, Annette - how we found each other; two very different women whose *hands* had found each other's. I think it must be a basic human instinct to reach out for someone else's hand when you think that you might die. It's actually quite a beautiful instinct if you think about it. We don't want to die alone – we would rather die holding another human being's hand.



About the Author

Cynthia Bruckman is a playwright, poet, and actor. She holds a B.A. in Drama from the University of Washington and an M.F.A. in Acting from the American Conservatory Theater. This anthology holds particular meaning for her since September 11 opened her eyes very personally to just how fleeting and precious life is.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. One of the images in this piece is when a door opens just a crack to allow the author and Annette to escape. The door opens again and again as more people come running into the room. What doorways have opened for you, even just a crack, since September 11? What does the door represent for you? What do you hope might be in the room on the other side?

2. The author describes the way she gently helps another woman and how it is soothing not only for the other woman, but for herself as well. Think about times since September 11 when you have reached out to help others. To what extent does soothing others help soothe yourself as well?

3. Reflect on one or two people who have "held your hand" during this time. In what ways is your experience consistent with the author's suggestion that reaching out is a basic human instinct? Is it, for you, a way of finding meaning in your experiences? Write about a time when your sense of connection with others helped.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Two Pieces of Cake

by Margaret Mauro



After 2 ½ years, I look back to the events of 9/11 and wonder how I got through losing half of me. I lost my twin sister, my best friend, my confidant, and the person I shared 55 years of my life with. Even though Dorothy lived in Brooklyn and I live in a suburb outside of Nashville, we visited each other 4 times during the year and we spoke to each other often. In the weeks and months after 9/11, I existed. I wasn't living. My main thoughts were getting my life in order and wrapping up what was left of my sister Dorothy's life. I don't remember much of the first year; only that I had to do a host of unpleasant tasks.

In November of 2001, I made one of the most important choices that probably helped me change the course of my life. I decided to seek professional help. I was having recurrent nightmares of the planes hitting the buildings. I had problems sleeping and concentrating. I consider myself very lucky, for I found the

most caring, compassionate therapist who helped me get through some of the roughest times of my life such as the first Thanksgiving, the first Christmas, our birthday and the first anniversary.

I think the most difficult time was our birthday, which is just 12 days before 9/11. At first, I thought I would just ignore that day, and discussed this with my therapist. She told me if I didn't celebrate our birthday, it would be as though Dorothy never existed. So I celebrated my birthday and Dorothy's memory by hosting an open house. I invited all my friends who sustained me in the days and weeks after 9/11. I also invited a girl who lost her brother on 9/11. After having birthday cake (of which I had 2 pieces, one for me and one for Dot), my guests and I went out to the front yard and set free helium balloons. I ordered 56 helium balloons, the age Dot would have been, and the age I had reached without her beside me.

On some of the balloons I wrote some of my thoughts and on one I attached a recent picture of Dorothy. We all watched as the balloons took flight and I imagined my sister smiling down on me. So now, every birthday I honor my sister's memory by releasing helium balloons.

During 2001 and 2002, I made many choices that helped me get through my grief journey. I had to find some positive things to come out of the events of 9/11. I realized none of us is guaranteed tomorrow or the next day. Many of my friendships became stronger. Finally, I understand how important it is to tell people you love them now while they are still with us, something Dot and I didn't do very often. I learned how important laughter in my life is, so I make sure I do it as often as I can.

I did a great deal of reflection on the direction I wanted my life to take. After continuing to work at my job through 2001 and part of 2002, I decided I needed to do something I really enjoyed. I want to live life to the fullest and be an active participant, not just an onlooker; both for me and for Dot.

Neither my sister nor I ever married and we always promised to take care of the other in the event something horrible happened. Well my horrible day came only too soon. Because of 9/11, I was able to retire early and find something I could do with a passion. In November of 2002, I started my own pet sitting business, which was slow in taking off but I loved being around the dogs and cats. I also started volunteering as a reading tutor at one of the local elementary schools. I felt this was

my way of giving something back. After 6 months of volunteering in an unstructured environment, I realized I wasn't happy doing this. I started looking for a different volunteer opportunity, and I came across the Lupus Foundation looking for someone to do general office duties. I thought I would give this a try and it has been a good fit for me.

My journey is not quite over; I am still in therapy, which has helped me to grow and understand myself better. I still miss my sister a great deal; there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about her. But I have 55 years of beautiful memories to sustain me, until it's my turn to leave this earth. My sister is now one of God's angels and I know she is with me everyday. People die but the love we have for them continues.



About the Author

Margaret Mauro grew up in Brooklyn, New York. On September 11, 2001, Margaret lost her twin sister Dorothy who was at work in the North Tower on the 97th floor. Clearly, the connection between Margaret and Dorothy was and continues to be strong and loving. Margaret currently resides in Antioch, Tennessee.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The author documents a very real and very painful struggle with loss. She keeps going, however, by balancing caring for herself and tending to others at the same time. In what ways have you been able to attain this important balance? What makes the balance difficult to attain?

2. On the birthday that the author shares with her sister, she releases helium balloons to honor her sister's memory. What kind of ritual do you do to honor the memory of your lost one? What might letting go of the helium balloons represent for you?

3. In the last paragraph, the author notes, "My journey is not quite over." This is clearly a journey that does not end. The pain of separation and loss remains, but the journey goes on. In what ways has your journey gone forward? In what ways has that been both difficult and comforting?

[illegible]

Dear Todd

by Herb Ouida



January 9, 2003

Dear Todd,

We miss you more each day. We are working hard to do good in your name. Our loss is beyond any ability to understand or tolerate. The only answer we have is to try to fill the loss the world suffered when you were no longer here to add joy and love. We celebrate your life everyday and want you to know that your goddaughter Ashley will know her "Uncle Todd" as will your new nephew Christopher Todd.

Love,

Daddy

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The author has been a particularly active force for alleviating the suffering of others largely as a response to the loss of his son on September 11. How have you used your loss to help others?

2. In what ways can giving to others be an effective doorway to living more fully, even with the pain of loss?

3. Each year, on Todd's birthday (May 18), Herb, his family, friends, and countless others do something for others in memory of Todd. How would you choose to honor someone you lost on their birthday?



About the Author

More than 30 years of Herb's professional life as an attorney and businessman was spent working at the World Trade Center. This started when the complex was opened in 1970 and tragically ended on September 11, 2001 when he escaped from the 77th floor; but lost his beloved son Todd who worked for Cantor Fitzgerald. Herb's family now seeks to translate their pain into hope for others through the Todd Ouida Children's Foundation whose mission is to help children who suffer from anxiety disorders.

Walls

by Michael Cook



(This is an excerpt from a journal I'd written in the days and weeks following September 11, 2001, as I repeatedly visited my apartment in an attempt to locate our cat left behind in the hasty evacuation from the closest residential building in New York to WTC tower 2.

10/03/01

Exiting the subway train at Fulton and Broadway, we were detoured underground for two blocks in order to exit to the street. Security seemed tighter than usual here, and the smell of burnt wood and metal permeated the entire station. Once above ground, winding my way back to Fulton and Broadway to get an escort in, I passed by walls on which people had been allowed to write their messages. It was probably a mistake to stop and read some. There, along with the hand-scrawled sentiments – many of them religious, many of them patriotic, many optimistic, many just heartfelt expressions of grief and mourning – were the obvious indications of disorientation,

confusion, disbelief, fear, hostility, hate, rage, and awe. I took a few seconds to add my own: "Beyond all our grief, let compassion, justice, and reason prevail."

And then it hit me all over again – like a wall, like this wall, inscribed by visitors and volunteers, relief workers, office workers, and tourists from all over the world – these were the expressions of the people on the street who have gotten close enough to witness the ruins where so many thousands had perished. Here they were able to register their thoughts, and are being allowed to do so because it is important for them, as a spontaneous acknowledgement of our collective pain.

It took longer than expected to regain my composure. Gradually I became aware of all the sidewalk life swirling about me, as people went on with their daily business. Despite seeing walls, phone booths, bus stop shelters, and utility poles everywhere papered with images of the missing persons for the past two and a half weeks, this wall, on this day, really got to me. Suddenly, the enormity of everyone's loss was truly unbearable. And too real to deny. In the face of this horrific reality, all of our stupid little stories, all of the "where I was when the planes hit, and what happened next" anecdotes – are of no consequence

whatsoever now. Maybe because so much of my energy and emotional resources have been devoted to just getting on with life, the grim reality of it all continually gets pushed aside. Only on occasions when the extraordinary totality of it all sinks in, do I forget those things that are only superficially important now – our home, our possessions. It sickened me to realize that to a large degree, I had been too busy to feel. In any case, that facade now had large, gaping holes punched in it.

Eventually, I pulled myself together; and joined the "business-as-usual" parade down the sidewalk.

*"Beyond all our grief,
let compassion, justice,
and reason prevail."*



About the Author

Michael Cook is a painter; poet; writer; and graphic artist. He moved from San Francisco to downtown New York in March of 1979, at a time when very few buildings south of Liberty Street were inhabited. The turn-of-the-century converted loft building at 125 Cedar Street that he called home for 24 years earned the dubious distinction of being the closest residential building in New York to WTC tower 2, which stood approximately 60 yards away. Eleven large windows in his loft facing the trade center were immediately blown in by the collapse of the towers, and the interior of Cook's home and studio was submerged beneath three feet of debris inside. September 11 was his son's first day of high school.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The author notes that he felt "sickened" to realize that he "had been too busy to feel." How often this can happen to any of us in response to upheaval, loss, and trauma! We get into a kind of survival mode and forget to be compassionate enough to ourselves simply to feel what we feel. In what ways can you relate to the author's experience? If it applies to you, what helped you wake up to yourself and your feelings again?

2. Some awakenings to the pain of loss can be so acute that we put up walls around ourselves. These walls are often helpful and we need them for a time. What walls are you finding coming down and which ones are still up? Try not to judge yourself either way. Just recognize what is true for you.

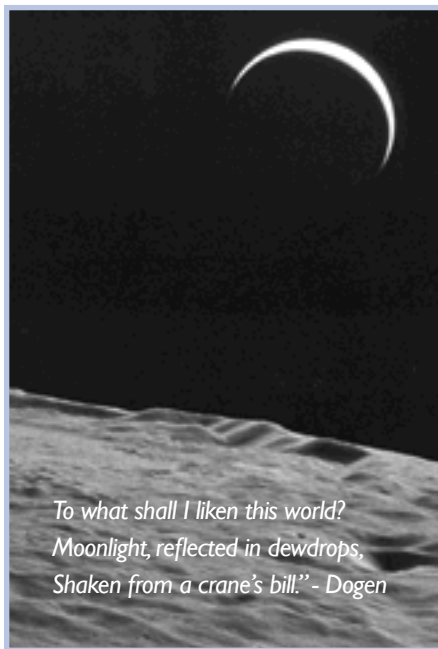
3. What specifically has helped you to rejoin the "business-as-usual parade" and somehow hang onto your feelings so you can still live and love in this world?

4. If you had a wall to write on, what would you write?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings present. The paper appears to be a standard piece of stationery used for writing or drawing.

Reflections on the Journey

by Marie Mitchell



My experience of September 11th, by some "amazing grace", began in a state of meditation. I was at Shasta Abbey, a monastery in Mt. Shasta, California, where I frequently go for morning meditation. The bell, which announces the start of the meditation period, rang at 5:45am PST - 8:45am EST. Typically, we bow when the bell rings and then begin to meditate. On September 11th, my bow went deeper than usual as something inside of me released and let go into tears. I noticed this with a thought that something big was about to change or happen and that I was opening up spiritually in preparation for whatever that might be. I figured it was just something inside of me and sat through the meditation period with tears softly flowing down my cheek.

A couple of hours later, someone rushed in to where I was working to tell me the news. I "knew" instantly that my brother

Paul, a lieutenant with the FDNY, was there. As the Towers tumbled one by one I "knew" he was gone. Over the next few days as I waited for the first plane that I could get to New York, with phone contact difficult to impossible, I got ready.

Mt. Shasta has always been considered sacred by the indigenous people of the area, and for me, the mountain has often served as a refuge at difficult times. This day, I spent time on its slopes, wanting to be somewhere that could hold the immensity of the magnitude of what was happening; somewhere that could hold me! At higher elevations, where the atmosphere thins out and silence is deep and physical, there was room for the feelings and emotions that were rising and falling like the waves in a storm at sea. With the mountain, there was enough purity and emptiness to somehow formulate prayers, prayers that didn't need

the words that I couldn't yet find, prayers that the mountain breezes would lift to the heavens for the benefit of all who were too devastated to pray. So I spent time with the mountain and at the monastery in meditation. During one meditation I "saw" my brother's death and again bowed deeply.

I packed my bags as if I might be gone for a long time, because time and all sense of order had been shattered. As soon as it seemed that flights to New York might actually depart, one of our local doctors flew me from Mt. Shasta to Oakland airport and I flew out of San Francisco airport the next morning. My airline ticket was a gift from many donors, known and not known, from the Mt. Shasta community. I headed east filled with the spirit of the mountain and the generosity and compassion of friends and neighbors. I arrived 9 days into the rescue operation ... Everyone told me to be hopeful that Paul and others would be found. It was possible, I was told. For the sake of my family I went along with that, but I had already faced my brother's death. I was so grateful, in the midst of it all, to feel Paul's presence still with

us, something being up on the mountain had given me time to make contact with.

On my first of many visits to the site, I was escorted past the National Guard by a firefighter who had been there since day one. He took me as close in to the pile as we could go before "our shoes would melt". With his arm around my shoulder he talked me through exactly what happened trusting me with the details that the media had buffered in its reports. A couple of firefighters, hearing that my brother was "in there", took the flowers I had up in their cherry-picker and swung way around over the rubble and dropped them in. We hugged and cried - such deep tenderness in the midst of such horror.

The prayers and heartfelt compassion that arose on 9/11 filled the entire site with a light that persists to this day. Life is a blessing, a gift not to be wasted. While death is inevitable, how we live and respond to what life offers is all-important and is something we can do something about. My brother died wholeheartedly engaged in service to others - doing what he loved

to do. I pray, in my own way, to be able to do the same. As my own experience and feelings sort themselves out and heal, I am grateful to be able to find ways to be of service to others.

And, I am more committed than ever to my spiritual practice, which continues to help me see the events of 9/11 as a doorway to a journey towards greater wisdom and compassion.

Postscript

In the small mountain town of Mt. Shasta, CA, which I have called home for the better part of the last 24 years, the post office is a hub of activity and connection for our community. People seem to go out of their way, more than any place I've ever been, to "hold the door open for others" (literally!) as they enter and leave the building. I have always joined them in going out of my way to hold that door for someone else as a way of connecting with neighbors and, perhaps, brightening someone's day. Holding the door open at the Mt. Shasta Post Office now also means holding my heart open, too, as we all go through the various doorways life opens on our way "Home".

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The author cites several instances where people showed their compassion to her through simple acts of kindness. Recall three instances in which people showed you compassion in the wake of September 11. What is important to you about each of those instances?

2. Spiritual practices, such as meditation, can assist us in living more fully in the present with both the joy and the sadness of life. What spiritual practices help you to be more fully alive? In what ways can a spiritual practice help to buffer some of the acute pain of loss?

3. In what ways have you found that some aspects of your pain partially healed with the passage of time? In what ways have you been patient with yourself in this process?

4. In the postscript the author links a simple act of kindness to the opening of the heart. How have acts of kindness since September 11 helped to open your heart – especially when you feel your heart closing?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

About the Author

Marie Mitchell lost her brother, Lt. Paul Mitchell of the FDNY, when the World Trade Center collapsed. He, like so many other firefighters, had just finished his shift and was on his way home when the attacks occurred. He went back in. Marie and Paul grew up together with their sister, Susan, in Brooklyn, NY. She currently resides in Mt. Shasta in northern California. She has worked mainly in healthcare (a burn unit, cardiac unit and with hospice as well as being an EMT and a physician's assistant) and with non-profit organizations. She noted that the impact of the events of September 11 and the loss of her brother opened her eyes and her heart in ways she could never have expected. She is currently studying Trauma Awareness and Recovery and Conflict Transformation through Eastern Mennonite University as a way of healing herself and developing the compassion, wisdom and skill to be of service to others.

Sitting on the Same Park Bench

Judy Posousney (nee Pansini)



For months, I watched the sapling grow



Leaves moved in the wind
Snow covered the branches
Buds came forward
Sun reflected in the leaves



Time has gone by
As it always does
Moving the hurt



Images still flash before me
The tears remain in my throat
sometimes
Wondering where to go

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The cycles of nature remind us of the endless process of growth and change. In what ways has nature been a part of your own healing?

2. The author gives us an image of healing but she is also haunted by painful images. Both aspects are true for her. How is this true for you? How do you experience healing even in the presence of painful images?

3. The author captures an important aspect of the grieving process when she writes, "The tears remain in my throat sometimes / wondering where to go." In what ways do you relate to this experience yourself?



About the Author

Judy Posusney worked for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for 15 years and has always been dedicated to protecting the health and safety of workers. She worked for a week at the WTC site in January 2002. She noted that she has never regretted her time spent at Ground Zero as it has had a profound effect on her. She seeks solace through writing.

Falling Together

by Elia Zedeño



After 9/11, I spent many days crying in front of the television set, watching in disbelief what had become of a place I called home. My phone only stopped ringing when it was busy. My house never emptied. Yet, don't be fooled, I felt very much alone.

I finally felt rescued by my job. This was my opportunity to be of service during the crisis. I concentrated on seeing to it that the companies who had contracted with us would continue to receive compensation for their work. I developed strategies and scenarios to maintain the integrity of the work. Less than two weeks after the tragedy, we were running full speed ahead. Although I still cried and had panic incidents at work and while riding public transportation, I thought time would heal me.

By early February of 2002, I was fully engrossed (buried) in my work. There was no time for tears and fearful thoughts. There was also no time for, or thoughts of,

God. Right around that time, I developed an increasingly serious sore throat and high fever for which I was taken from work to the hospital by ambulance in April.

One week earlier, I had visited the medical department at my job because I had chest pains. In addition, I felt edgy and was engulfed by sadness. Upon physical examination, an electro cardiogram and some laboratory work, the doctor referred me to a counselor on staff. At her advice and realizing a strong sense of despair, I sought outside counseling.

During my visits with the counselor, my main objective was to arrive at a point where I could recall the experience of 9/11 without getting emotional. In the beginning, I felt helpless and out of control. Many spiritual, psychological, social, and professional symptoms also plagued me.

I was angry at myself for feeling all of the symptoms and for having returned to the

towers after the 1993 ordeal. After all, I regarded myself as intelligent enough to know better and resilient enough to overcome problems on my own.

On May 10, 2002, I felt the urge to again pick up my journal and write. However, all I wrote was "Sadness befriends me." A few months later, on the one-year anniversary of the attack, I attended a memorial service. There, I confronted the New York skyline and learned more about myself.

Although I did not write again until January of 2003, I noticed a positive change in my thinking and my general behavior. The pain was alleviated. A form of clarity began to emerge and freedom to choose became a reality.

Practicing meditation techniques, positive thought phrases, and envisioning a safe place during therapy sessions also helped to clear my mind by allowing me to sit in stillness. Thoughts flowed easily and turned positive once I identified and dealt with the negative feelings I had about myself. Further, in talking about myself, I discovered who I am and identified experiences from my childhood that affect my behavior in adulthood.

Today I find myself asking who I am in comparison to an experience. Then I ask myself, "Whom do I choose to be in the moment?" Upon recalling my desperate attempts to forget the past, I see now the point is not in forgetting but accepting the event as part of my history.

I have been able to take several positive steps as I think about who I am now. This month I was elected to the position of Vice President of Public Relations at our Toastmasters Club. This is the first time in my life I have become an active member of anything, and I realized I have spent my entire life 'living in the background'. I have also made the decision to apply for graduate school. This is a stepping-stone for eligibility for higher-level positions at my workplace, as well as a step closer to fulfilling my dream of teaching at a college. Finally, my co-worker and I decided to form a meditation group at work. We plan to meet once a week at lunchtime. I'd like to see this expand into a book study group where all are welcome to attend. She is also a 9/11 survivor and has summed up our 9/11 experience as "we did not have a break-down, we had a break-through."

Today, my original objective 'to arrive at a point where I could recall the experience without getting emotional' has been met. Additionally, I no longer have the symptoms I listed. Where I once felt out of control, I no longer feel the need to be in control. In fact, the less I push myself to be in control, the more in control I actually feel. Where I felt helpless, I now feel useful. Where I once searched for answers, I now know the answers were always there, long before I even asked the questions. All I need do is listen. I now know that the power is inside me.

Presently, I welcome and enjoy spending time with friends, family, co-workers and pets. I have chosen to take responsibility for every chapter in my life on a personal and professional level. Where once I saw misfortune, today I see opportunities for growth. Anger has turned to thankfulness that has moved me to a new level of understanding.

Once I struggled to return to a time and place prior to 9/11. I even struggled to be who I was then. Yet, one morning I awoke to find myself leaving behind whom I once was and welcoming an entirely new person.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. Using some of the techniques the author mentions or other methods of your own, try quieting your mind “enough to listen for answers.” When you do this, what do you experience?

2. List some concrete, positive steps you yourself have taken to help move forward. Write about the impact taking these steps has had on how you see yourself and on how you feel.

3. A key time in the author's journey is when she stops trying to forget about what happened to her and accepts the events of 9/11 as part of her personal history. She is then able to concentrate on who she is now. Write about your own progress toward integrating what has happened and moving toward “welcoming a new person.” What comes to mind as you think about answering the question “Who am I now?”

[illegible]

About the Author

Elia Zedeno was born in Cuba and entered the United States with her family in 1971. She is a survivor of the bombing at the World Trade Center in 1993 and later the attack on September 11, 2001. At the time of the attack, she had completed her 21st year working at the WTC. She currently serves on the steering committee of the World Trade Center Survivors' Network. Elia also serves on the executive committee of the Gateway 2 Toastmasters Club in Newark, NJ. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from St. Peter's College and credits her past experiences and the variety of people she has met for playing a role in shaping who she is today.

Memory List

by Wendy Ingersoll



I remember my husband and I getting our bikes out
when the telephone rang.
I remember a woman's voice
"this is the police there's been an accident."
I remember she said
"your sister's husband was driving the boat
he survived
their son did not."
I remember my sister crying into the phone "my little Teddy's dead."
I remember I phoned our parents and Mom thought I said
my sister was dead too.
I remember we drove all afternoon to my sister's house full of people.
I remember the lines of mourners who couldn't fit into the church.
I remember my nephews carrying the casket down the aisle.
I remember singing "He is the Lord of the Dance."
I remember Teddy's brothers at the altar;
Deeg the oldest saying
"Teddy has climbed the hill before me
he's waiting at the top."

I remember just fourteen months later September 11, 2001.
I remember my daughter phoned "mom turn on the tv."
I remember telling her
"that's where Deeg started his new job last week
World Trade Center South Tower."
I remember it falling on TV,
falling again, falling again.
I remember I called my brother because I was afraid to call my sister.
I remember my sister drove to Manhattan, phoned me
"he's not in any hospital."
I remember she said "this is the worst day of my life."
I remember once more we drove south.
I remember my sister's house was full of
the same people.
I remember the lines still
couldn't fit into the church.
I remember she chose
different hymns this time.

I remember there was
no casket this time.
I remember my sister's third and last son
standing alone at the altar.
I remember my sister's husband
talking with her friend late into the night.
I remember weeks later
my sister's husband left her for her friend.
He said it was because my sister was too good.
I remember three months after that
when my own husband left.
He said it was because I grieve too much.
I remember all that year
and ever since
my sister lifting and lifting her face to life.
I stand next to her;
trying to lift my face too.



About the Author

Wendy Elizabeth Ingersoll of Newark, Delaware is a piano teacher; mother of three, and grandmother of three. She has several publishing credits and placed fourth in the Writer's Digest 1996 Annual Poetry Competition. Her sister Gail's son, Davis Grier (Deeg) Sezna, Jr., was killed on September 11 at the World Trade Center; having started his first post-college job there just one week before.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The repetition in this piece of the phrase “I remember” turns the reader again and again back to painful losses. It also suggests the way telling and retelling the story is often part of the necessary process of grief and traumatic loss. In what ways can you personally relate to the insistence on replaying the memories and to the need to tell your story again and again?

2. The author of this piece speaks of the painful, compounding effect of several losses. How has your own process of grieving been influenced by multiple losses or by the way this particular event may connect with other painful events in your past?

3. The author is one who honors grief and sorrow, and perhaps that is why her head is bowed as she stands by her sister. Yet, the sister’s lifted head suggests the necessary step of trying to find hope. How do both actions take place for you? How do you both honor the sadness and also lift your face to life?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

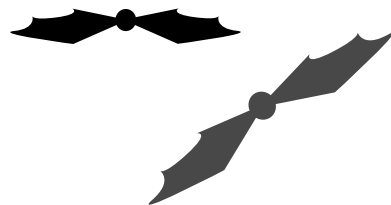
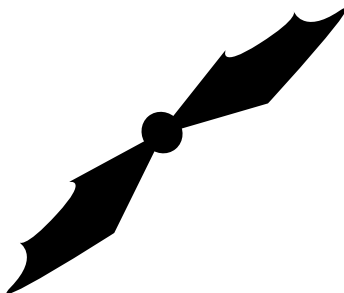
Some by Sonar

by Karla Linn Merrifield



Just when we needed them,
they came, the bats at dusk
skimming a starry lake
in their need for sustenance.

In more than two years,
we had only seen one until then,
a rogue, disoriented, most likely
rabid, hanging on our patio umbrella



in noon sunlight. I remember
it now as like us and am grateful
for the cloud of bats that later skittered toward
normalcy last weekend at the right time, right

place. I had just about gone batty
myself until that moment before night
when Nature took hold again of the paths
from hell toward heaven and peacefulness.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. During the first years after September 11, in what ways did your own path feel “rogue” and “disoriented?”

2. Reflect some on the phrase “skittered toward normalcy.” Can you make a connection between the movement of the bats in the poem and your own journey toward wholeness? How is it that you are skittering toward normalcy?

3. In her poem, the author is describing how, for her, nature offers a sense of healing and peacefulness. To what extent do you too find comfort in nature? Select a time in nature that seemed to offer just what you needed at the time. Describe the scene and its effect on you in some detail.



About the Author

Karla Linn Merrifield holds a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from SUNY College at Brockport. She has been published in national publications such as *Earth's Daughters*, *Negative Capability*, *Blueline*, *Paper Street Press*, *Boatman's Quarterly Review*, *Mediphors*, as well as in several anthologies. Foothills Publishing (NY) will be bringing out *Midst*, a collection of her poems. She is a retired marketing specialist who now teaches writing at SUNY Brockport. She travels widely the other six months of the year.

A Little Piece of Heaven

by Teresa Ivy



Dear Teresa,

It has been 41 weeks, 287 days, 6,888 hours since we've been together. I know because I have watched you from the moment I was lifted from your world and brought into mine. I have watched you cry and I have watched you laugh. I witnessed your grief before you even knew that I was not coming home. That day, I saw you cry because you thought your father and sister were not going to come home. I also saw your cries of relief when you found out that they were both alive. I was in your kitchen when your neighbor brought champagne over for the family so you could celebrate that everyone had come home safely. You took a glass, raised it, but put it down without taking a sip. You said, "I'll drink mine

when I hear from Mike." "Don't worry about me," I tried to tell you, but it was already too late. I could see the fear in your eyes and hear the tremble of your voice each time the phone rang and it was not me on the other end. You can't imagine how hopeless I felt that day. I was afraid for you because you had no idea what the following days, weeks, months held in store for you. It was the first day of your new life. You woke up in a world you recognized ... a world you adored and loved ... and by sunset of the same day, the world as you knew it was gone. My world was gone too.

I remember talking to you just minutes before we got the call that morning. I had seen the visions of hell on TV, and I knew we'd be called to help with the rescue. Part of me was frightened, but the other part of

me was excited. I remember feeling terrified for all the people who were trapped, but I was confident we'd get them out and they'd all be safe. When we arrived on the scene, we were quick to get our equipment and head towards the building. Heading into the building, I could feel the adrenaline racing through my veins. There was too much going on and too much to take in to really comprehend what was happening around me. I had a job to do ... this is all I knew.

Suddenly, a thunderous roar broke my focus. I had to catch my balance because the ground started to vibrate. At first I thought another plane hit the building, but the roaring increased and dust began to blur my vision. The sound became deafening. The cloud of dust became dense and the

shaking forced me to the ground. Just as abruptly, it stopped and my fear vanished. It was as if all my troubles were lifted and pure innocence was returned to me.

The first few days here were difficult. I did not want to accept that I was gone from the ordinary world. I was concerned about you and what I had left behind. People say that we don't feel sorrow here, but we do. I have felt your pain and loss as much as you have felt mine. We were and still are, after all, soul mates connected by a love that cannot be severed.

Although you cannot see me, I know you feel my presence. I was there the first time you held your nephew and wiped your eyes when you saw him. I've listened to you sing while you drive and say, "Hi Mike!"

when you see a car like mine pass on the road. I know you carry a picture of us in your wallet and casually glance at it when nobody is looking. I've held your hand when you walk aimlessly searching for answers. When you look up at the stars, I know you feel me looking back at you. Every time you've said, "I love you," I've responded, though you could not hear me.

I am with you always. Our physical bond may have been broken, but our souls are entwined. In time, we will be reunited. Until then, keep living and keep loving.

All my heart,
Mike
xo

About the Author

Teresa Ivey is a resident of Rockland County, NY and a middle school teacher. She holds a B.A. in Communication Arts and a teaching certificate from St. Thomas Aquinas College. Teresa's father and sister thankfully survived the WTC attacks but her fiancé, Michael Roberts, sadly did not. Writing letters from his point of view has brought her comfort since September 11 and she is pleased to honor Mike by sharing one of those letters in the anthology. She is honored to have had the chance to know him and says that despite the pain, she'd turn back time and meet him all over again if she could.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. In what ways are those you loved and lost still with you?

2. Many people talk about a sense of connection with their loved one that transcends death. Some talk about feeling the presence of the person and others about the continuation of the spirit of the one who died through the lives of others. What is most true for you?

3. Knowing your loved one as you do, how would he or she convey to you the importance to “keep living and keep loving”? If it works for you, write it as Teresa did – as a letter of love from the one whose physical presence you lost.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Prayer for March 11

by Lisa Fenger



For all who died two and one-half years ago in New York and Washington and Pennsylvania

And for all who died today in Madrid

And for all who died in previous terror attacks which I ignored because I didn't understand

And for all who will die in future terror attacks which I am helpless to prevent
And for their families and friends who love them

My prayers

For all who are haunted by what happened two and one-half years ago in New York and Washington and Pennsylvania

And for all who will be haunted by what happened today in Madrid

And for all who are haunted by previous terror attacks which I ignored because I didn't understand

And for all who will be haunted by future terror attacks which I am helpless to prevent

And for their families and friends who love them

My prayers

For all who do not understand what it is like
May they never be killed or haunted

By terrorist attacks anywhere in the world

May they always remain unaware

For them also

My prayers

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The use of the word "haunted" is very powerful. What continues to haunt you? How do you live as fully as possible despite being haunted?

2. In what ways have the events of September 11 made you more sensitive to the suffering of others?

3. The author prays for those "who do not understand." What do you think she means by this? In what ways are you glad for your ability to understand? In what ways do you wish you were "unaware?"



About the Author

On September 10, 2001, Lisa Fenger flew from Minneapolis to New York for a business trip. When she looked out the conference room window the next morning, one tower was on fire and the second about to be hit. She noted that since that day, so many things in her life are different and continue to change ... but she has begun to write.

St. Peter's vs. St. Mary's

by Daniel Seaman



You can always tell an old gym by a wooden backboard. There is something reassuring about the sound of a basketball as it is banked in off the old lumber. St. Peter's was an old gym.

On a very cold Sunday in February, St. Peter's best 5th grade boy's basketball team was playing the Cardiac Kids from St. Mary's of Manhasset. They were called the Cardiac Kids because in nearly every game they just barely eke out a win. Jokingly, their patient coach Joe Glavine said they would give him a heart attack. The game today is the playoff game between two leagues and the kids are playing for "All The Marbles". {Maybe with today's kids, it might be better said they are "Playing For All The Videos."}

My brother Mike's son, Eddie, has been having a tough time since his dad died on 9/11. Before September 11th 2001, he always wore a happy face with a big smile as

engaging as his Dad's. After 9/11, he smiled and laughed but it was never the same as his pre 9/11 joyous laugh. I missed that trouble free smile of a very happy child.

My brother Mike was a very talented basketball player. So good he played on 5 college teams. Hoops were one thing. Books were another! And that is why Mike had a multi college career. Mike had many personalities. He had one as loving father and husband. He had another as a very savvy executive down at Wall Street. His most revealing personality was on the basketball court. Give Mike a basketball and stick him in a competitive game and he completely changed. To his opponents, he appeared fragile and a bit awkward. That was the image Mike wanted to convey. Let them find out his fluid motion and his strength when the game began. From the starting tip-off to the final buzzer, Mike was on a different planet. He

had total concentration and a court sense that was finely tuned by years of competition. But most of all, Mike had a desire to win. This combination led to quick passes, shots with lethal accuracy and sharp elbows that would spear an opponent's rib cage. When Mike was in his "ZONE", he confidently did everything to make sure his team won. How he ever attained this confidence or super basketball ego, I'll never know but it seemed a perfect athletic gift.

From the time his young son Eddie was strong enough to reach the rim Mike loved tutoring Eddie.

"Keep your head up when dribbling. Don't look at the floor: Who are you going to pass to on the floor? Dribble with both hands. Stay between your man and the basket. Don't be afraid to use your body. Box Out!"

Eddie might not always listen to his Dad around the house but when it came to hoops, both of them were on the same wavelength. He also told him, "Trust your shot. Always want to have the ball and take the last shot to win the game."

Now Dad was gone and well-meaning coaches were telling him different things.

"Pass the Ball. Take only good shots. Look for the open man."

All good basketball advice, but it was not what Dad said. Eddie was terribly frustrated. Many times in a practice Eddie would just start bawling. He would cry his poor little heart out. His face full of tears had nothing to do with the practice or what the coaches had told him. Its cause was simply that he was a young boy who terribly missed his Dad. He would cry for 10 or 15 minutes. I would take him outside the gym, hold him and tell him it is alright to cry. Then he would be okay till the next meltdown.

As the season progressed the tears turned into determination. Game by game, he got a little better and so did the team.

Now to the game: St. Peter's was a much stronger team - better players and better coached. As the game progressed, Eddie was floundering. He would get his rebounds but was hesitant about shooting. Then something happened in the second half. Eddie hit one shot. Then another shot. He stole passes. He

grabbed just about every rebound. He got into the "ZONE" just like his father. Whatever it took to win this game, he was going to do. A confidence or a trust in himself appeared. What a remarkable transformation. As the game went down to the last seconds, I could see my brother Mike transformed into his son and he wanted the last shot. He took it. It went swish. His team won. Eddie scored 14 points in the second half.

His teammates, the coaches and fans went wild. Eddie had won the game. Eddie was beyond happy. A smile as big and wide as before 9/11 stretched across his joyous face. As his Mom went to hug him he said, "Mom, I did what Dad had told me. I trusted in myself and I wanted the last shot."

After the game, I went into my car and cried my eyes out. I was crying because I miss my brother and I wish he was there to see his wonderful son who remembered what his father had told him.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. In the closing moments of the basketball game described in this poignant piece, the author sees how aspects of his brother are living on in his nephew. Thinking about your own experiences, can you think of any ways in which some particular essence of your loved one is reflected in someone else still living? Jot down a few thoughts about who this person or these people are and what about your loved one seems to live on in them.

2. Over the course of the basketball season and the game, Eddie learns to trust in himself again. What times can you point to since September 11 where you felt for a moment like you "wanted to take the last shot," where you regained a sense of confidence in yourself? Write about one or two of these times.

3. Think about a person whom you lost and cared deeply about. Was there anything that person told you that you want to remember? If so, what?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

About the Author

Prior to September 11, 2001, Daniel Seaman served in the First Air Cavalry in Vietnam and worked for thirty years as a conductor on the Long Island Railroad. He has a B.A. from St. John's University and a M.A. in International Affairs from NYU. Danny was at Ground Zero on September 11 and witnessed the destruction first hand. His brother Mike died at the World Trade Center that day.

9/11: The Road Back

by Maria Ragonese



It is still hard to believe, even after all this time, that my best friend, Laura is gone. I can remember clear as day the last time we stood in her kitchen, loading the dishwasher; talking about my daughter's first days of kindergarten. That was on Sunday, September 9, 2001. Two days later, my life changed forever. Standing in front of a big screen TV at the resort where I worked in the Pocono Mountains, my eyes were transfixed to a surreal scene. Smoke and flames billowed out of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City where Laura worked on the 101st floor of the South Tower for AON Consultants. My mind struggled to comprehend what I was seeing, while my best friend struggled for her life.

Laura and I knew each other for 27 years—18 of which we were sister-in-laws. We were more than family. We were

more than friends. We were confidants and soul sisters. That this could actually be happening to her—to us—was beyond comprehension.

That was 2 ½ years ago. Unfortunately for my family there was no happy ending. There was no phone call from Laura saying she had made it to safety. Laura never came home (nor were her remains ever recovered). Ours was the nightmare come true.

The process of grief is different for all of us simply because the circumstances surrounding death are always different. Sometimes, death is predictable as with a terminal illness. There is time to prepare and more importantly, time to say goodbye. In other instances, death comes without notice and claims a loved one through an unforeseeable accident or incident. Then there is the extraordinary situation—as

in the events of September 11th—that completely destroys the template on coping with loss and trauma. No matter how the loss occurs, the common thread is that grief puts you at a crossroad within yourself. It challenges you to either stand still and let the pain destroy you or to move forward and find a way to rebuild your life.

My journey began in the Spring of 2001, when my mother's breast cancer metastasized. From her diagnosis to her passing was a mere 7 weeks. She died on June 10, 2001. As I mourned her loss, barely coming to terms with my grief, the fury of September 11th was unleashed on our nation. And in this violent and devastating act of terrorism, another significant person—Laura—was taken from my life. This sent me into an emotional tailspin. (I was later to learn that my Cousin Nicholas, a firefighter with RESCUE 5 in Staten Island, NY was also a victim of the terror attacks).

Sometimes I wonder how I made it through those first few unbelievable days. In hindsight, I realize, I was in shock. My

perception of the traumatic events existed in a dream-like state, making it possible for me to survive the initial impact. But as days turned into weeks, with no news of Laura, the shock began to wear off. Despair set into the core of my being, wreaking emotional havoc on me.

It usually takes someone outside the situation to help you begin to cope with reality. A friend, a mentor or a counselor; willing to listen and comfort, can work wonders—it did for me. The kindness and compassion of a grief counselor brought me back to a “functioning” level. However, just because I could function, did not mean the grieving was over. This was only the first step in a very long journey. To recover from loss you must walk “through” the pain and come out on the other side. There is no way “around it”. If you want to live again, you must be willing to follow an uncertain path that is, at times, a long dark road.

For awhile, simple tasks such as getting out of bed every day, putting my daughter on the school bus, and cooking meals were

only a façade at best. Each morning the sun rose on my awareness of the tragedy and set on the reality of Laura's death. I didn't want to face life without my best friend. Worse, seeing how her death had broken our family was just too much to bear. The depth of my grief would not diminish. I did only what I had to do to keep my immediate circle going, and the rest just piled up. My life was indefinitely “on hold”.

In my case, because the events of September 11th affected an entire nation, there was no escape from the recurring images of destruction or the pain of the affected families! As the weeks passed, my sorrow gained momentum like a tidal wave. If I had any hope of surviving this horror, I would need to find a way to ride the wave or else have it swallow me up. I needed a cause. I needed something that would distract me from my own unbearable sadness.

My cause became taking care of Laura's family. I focused on the people most shattered by her death: her husband, her

son, her mother, her sister and brothers (one of which was my husband, Michael). I became the liaison for the family, gathering all available information and then, issuing instructions on what needed to be done by whom. This endeavor alone resulted in an unending amount of paperwork. Next, was to make sure Laura was included in every tribute and memorial that rose out of the ashes of that first year. This was my way of keeping her alive and present in my life. If I could not bring her back, I was going to make sure her name lived in infamy forever.

Driven, I spent far too much time on the Internet. I lived for anything that was 9/11-related and detached myself from all else, even my own well being. Essentially, I cut myself off from the “real world”. I was oblivious to all the warning signs regarding my mental and physical health. In my eyes, I was surviving. But in truth, I was just hiding from my anguish. When I finally bottomed out from mental and physical exhaustion, a good friend dragged me off to the family

doctor, who put me on a low-dose anti-depressant, and gave me some simple advice: Focus on yourself.

Rebuilding your life after a loss is first and foremost a decision that you want to live again. Second, it is a commitment that you are willing to face the worst before you can once again find the best. Once I made both the decision and the commitment to do this, things slowly got better. It did not make the uphill climb out of the sad and painful abyss any easier. However, this time it was truly about healing.

As I returned to simple things I once loved, like reading books, I found myself drawn to a different venue. Before 9/11, I loved to read fiction, usually adventure or romance novels; the more fantasy, the better. In the aftermath, however, I began to read tales of survival. I read about “Lisa Beamer”, “Jessica Lynch”, “Elizabeth Smart” and “Trisha Meili” (who for the last 15 years has only been known as “The Central Park Jogger”). I looked to their

wounds as a source of inspiration. I saw how human suffering strengthens the spirit. How collective prayers and compassionate strangers have helped to heal other shattered lives. How people can be reborn through a senseless tragedy. This gave me hope and led me to ask the questions: What would it take to make life worth living again? And just what will ease this pain?

The answers were found in my return to faith. Acknowledging my faith again, reminded me of the bigger picture and my place in it—that I am connected to so much more than my own world! For reasons unknown to me, I was given this experience. Now, it was my obligation to carry it forward and help close the gaping wound created by September 11th. But what did I have to offer? I’d become a veteran on coping with grief and loss. How could I use this to serve others?

The answer came early in the summer of 2002, when my grief counselor suggested I volunteer at the local hospice where she

worked. She was going to be piloting a monthly workshop for bereaved children, and thought my experience could be a valuable asset in helping develop the program. Accepting this opportunity opened a new door: I discovered that when I reached out to others in need, trying to ease their pain, my own pain also subsided. I had found the key. My grief counselor has since moved on to a new position with another hospice, and I run the very workshop I helped to create. Once the ball started rolling, many other opportunities came my way, each one offering a more extensive forum and the prospect of reaching a greater number of people.

Throughout my grieving process, the quest has been to return to the person I was before September 11th. I wanted to reclaim what was stolen from me—my sense of self—my identity. I thought this would signify healing had finally taken place. But, I was wrong. I could not go back to who I was before. That person perished

forever with my best friend, beneath the rubble of the World Trade Center.

The stark reality is that you can never go back to your old life. Some things run too deep, and are well past the point of return. The only option is to start anew. To look in the mirror, see the battle scars and accept them as part of who you are now. And even though the scars set you apart from other people, they also serve as a constant reminder that you have survived the impossible and continue to survive it every day of your life.

At last, I realize that the “Road Back from 9/11” is not a return to the past, but a step forward into an uncertain future. It is the ongoing challenge to reinvent my life with this new thread -- the tragedy of September 11th -- woven into the fabric. Grief baptizes with fire. Keeping that in mind, you can be “reborn” as someone who has been “scalded” by the flames or someone who has been “reshaped” by them. The choice is yours!

“Rebuilding your life
after a loss is first
and foremost a
decision that you
want to live again.”

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. The author's path toward healing is intimately connected with coming closer to the balance of caring for both herself and for others. This can be a difficult balance to maintain. What do you do to keep these both in balance for yourself?

2. The author writes, "I looked to their wounds as a source of inspiration. I saw how human suffering strengthens the spirit." This may or may not be your experience. If it is, how has this been true for you?

3. In what ways is your life a daily testimony to the ability to survive terrible loss and still live and love in this world?

4. In what ways have you returned to yourself? In what ways have you reinvented and reshaped your life? What is comforting about this? What is painful about it?



On September 11, 2002, Maria spoke about Laura at the "Candles for Freedom" Ceremony held in Harrisburg, PA. In 2003, with the help of family and friends, she undertook a yearlong project of creating 3,000 angels for the 9/11 Victims' Tree, which were proudly displayed aboard the USS INTREPID.

Doorways 51

Morning

by Kathleen Gerard



The vigil of a police widow on the final night of a “Tribute in Light” (World Trade Center Memorial)

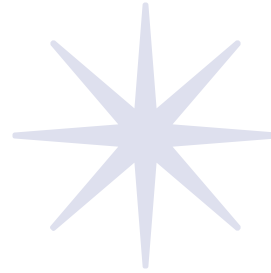
On the last night of “A Tribute in Light” – a temporary memorial erected in 2002, which graced the area where the World Trade Towers once stood – I drove to Hoboken, New Jersey, in order to photograph the site from across the Hudson River. Despite a rainy mist and moving clouds, I set up my tripod and attempted to shoot pictures. When I finished, I sat on a nearby bench and disassembled my photo gear. As I did, I realized that on the other end of the bench a woman was crying. I learned that her husband was a Port Authority Police

Officer whose body was never recovered from the World Trade Center attack. She had come to this spot in order “to spend the night with her husband – in prayer and remembrance – until the lights were swallowed up by morning.” After listening to her story, I set up my camera again and photographed the memorial from her vantage point on the bench. The single pillar of light captured between two barren trees – like the skeletons of the fallen towers themselves – seemed to mirror the stoic strength and resolve of this woman.

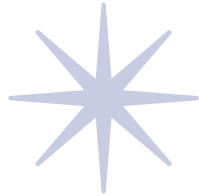
She waited all night
in the rain
waiting on a vista
far away from the city



Twin beams of light converged
into one. The monument resurrected
her memory of how blue the sky
was that morning and the look



on his face as he watched the world
change on a small screen. Summoned
to work, she sent him off with a shield,
a kiss and a prayer. But even



the longest night must give way
to dawn. As those last wisps of light faded
with morning haze, his exit was
as seamless as tears in the rain.



About the Author

Kathleen Gerard has had work featured in various magazines, literary journals, and anthologies. One of her short stories was recently nominated for "Best New American Voices," a national prize in literature. The story of "Morning" was inspired by a police widow's vigil on the last night of "A Tribute in Light." Gerard's photograph of the moment is presented here as well.

Reflective Journal Questions:

1. What range of emotions do you imagine the woman felt as she sat on the bench in remembrance of her husband?

2. The poem describes sorrow, remembrance, and the almost imperceptible beginnings of morning. Have you felt any such subtle shifts, where you began to feel that the “night was giving way to dawn,” where a sense of hope - however small - emerged? If so, describe one of those moments.

3. Spend a moment reflecting on Kathleen Gerard’s photo of the Tribute in Light. Write about what it might signify for you. You might reflect on questions such as: What does the light of the memorial represent for you? How do you interpret the symbolism of the two trees in the foreground?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no vertical margin lines or other markings present. The paper appears to be a standard sheet of notebook paper.

Acknowledgements

This anthology is inspired by the selfless actions of Ronald Fazio Sr. as well as by the ongoing vision of his family. Many additional doors were held open for us during the project. Margaret McNicholas' dedication, insightful commentary and administrative support were invaluable. We also are grateful to Lauren Fazio for her excellent attention to detail and organizational skills. The visuals and graphics are the result of the contribution and support of VCU Creative Services at Virginia Commonwealth University. We would like to offer a special thank you to Trina Lambert for the wholeheartedness and creativity she put into the visual aspects of the project. Each submission for the anthology was reviewed and sent a personal note of response thanks to the energies and caring spirit of Kathy Benham, Matt Bitsko, Amie Donah Burke, Kay Davidson, Susan Fox, Lenore Gay, Jordan Kilgour, Elaine Kiziah, Natalie McCoy, Nancy Millner and Susanna Owens. Thanks also to Kathy Ingram for her helpful feedback in shaping the final product and Elizabeth Roark for her advice on technology. The generous financial support of John and Dianne Brock as well as the sponsorship of Barlatt Events, Fannie Mae, McFadden's, and SDR Solutions made the project possible. Finally, we thank those who, with courage and creativity, share their stories in this anthology. It is their hope, and ours, that their words might help others find an open door.

Jim Burke

Susan Wilkes

Summer, 2004

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]



Hold the Door For Others, P.O. Box 755, Closter, NJ 07624
www.holdthedoor.com

Hold the Door for Others is a nonprofit organization inspired by the acts of Ronald C. Fazio, Sr., who was last seen holding the door for his colleagues to escape the World Trade Center on September 11th. Hold the Door for Others is dedicated to empowering people to grow through loss and achieve their dreams. The Hold The Door team provides resources and hosts events for people regardless of how they lost a loved one. In addition to the Doorways anthology, the organization has published a workbook, Living with Loss, The Journey Through September 11th and an interactive CD-ROM, Gaining from Loss: Our Journey Continues. Hold the Door Day is an annual event where interactive workshops encourage people to turn to one another, connect, and learn how to grow through loss. You can stay connected to us and learn more about Hold The Door through our website.