



GROUND ZERO
Firefighters at the
collapsed Twin Towers
in New York City

Empty Sky

Junior Scholastic's editor recalls how the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, changed her family—and the nation

BY SUZANNE McCABE

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headed to downtown Manhattan when the first plane struck the North Tower. It was 8:46 a.m. I knew that my brother, who had started a job as an equities trader at Cantor Fitzgerald a week earlier, would already be at his desk. I would soon learn that he was on the 104th floor of that 110-story building.

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THE PENTAGON
America's military headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, outside Washington, D.C.



SHANKSVILLE
Mourners at the site where Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania

Mike, an avid bodysurfer, surely would have noted, it was a perfect beach day, crisp and cloudless.

I tried him on his cell phone several times but couldn't get through. Service had already become sporadic so I couldn't reach his wife, Lynn, or any other family members either.

As the ferry continued across the Hudson River to New York, we watched smoke spewing from the upper floors of the North Tower. At first, it seemed as if the crash had been some terrible accident. Then, just 17 minutes later, a second plane sliced through the top of the South Tower.

Everyone gasped. America, we realized, was under attack.

Still, we sailed on. We passed the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, all eyes glued to the two towers. While smoke billowed from one, orange fireballs ringed the other.

Paper and shards of glass began to rain down on the streets, and thick black soot coated much of

the sky. I tried to picture Mike and his best friend, Michael Tucker, or "Tuck," who also worked at Cantor, racing down the stairs to safety.

When our ferry docked in Lower Manhattan, we were instructed not to get off. Instead, we would take on people who had fled the Trade Center and nearby office buildings, and head back to New Jersey.

Other Attacks

I looked for my brother and Tuck in the crowd on the pier. If anyone could escape that building, I thought, it was those two guys. Mike had lifted weights since high school and was a great basketball player. And Tuck was as big and strong as the guys on the Syracuse University football team he once roomed with.

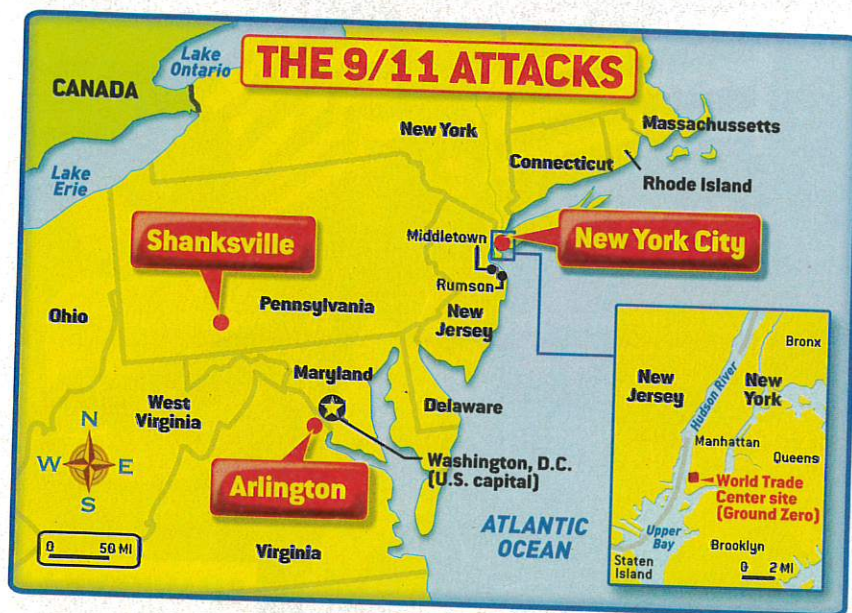
As we sailed back to New Jersey, the smell of death and burning plastic began to fill the air. But nothing prepared us for what happened next. We watched in stunned

silence as the South Tower collapsed in a massive swirl of ash. It was 10:05. Less than a half-hour later, the North Tower fell, leaving us, in the words of Bruce Springsteen, with nothing but an empty sky.

We soon learned that there had been other attacks. Shortly after 9:30 a.m., hijackers had crashed a plane into the Pentagon, the U.S. military headquarters outside Washington, D.C., killing 189 people. And in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, passengers on a fourth plane, known as Flight 93, brought down their hijacked jet in a field when they realized it was headed for either the White House or the Capitol. All 44 people onboard died.

That morning, my brother's three children and thousands of others were called from their classrooms. My niece Regan, then 8, remembers an unfamiliar teacher arriving at the door during art class.

"Come with me, please," he
continued on p. 8 →



said, "and bring your belongings." When Regan and her brother and sister got home, their mom was in the driveway, her face ashen.

They went inside and turned on the TV. "I'd never seen those two buildings before," Regan says. "Flames and chunks were tumbling down. 'Your father is in there,' my mom managed to say. Then she burst into tears."

A decade later, those memories are still raw for everyone who lived through that day. "Any time I hear '9/11,' it just brings everything back," says John Pollinger, who was the police chief of Middletown,

5 Ways Life Has Changed Since 9/11

The 9/11 attacks have had a major impact on America and the world

1. WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

After the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush said that the U.S. would wage a "war on terror" and hunt down Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups around the world.

In October 2001, the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan, where the Taliban government was sheltering Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The Taliban was soon overthrown, but bin Laden escaped. Last spring, U.S. forces tracked down bin Laden in neighboring Pakistan and killed him.

U.S. treatment of alleged terrorists and fighters captured on the battlefield has been called into question worldwide. Under the Bush administration, harsh interrogation tactics were used that some say amounted to torture. Many detainees are still being held, as U.S.

officials debate whether they should be tried in military or civilian courts.

The war in Afghanistan is now the longest in U.S. history. More than 1,500 U.S. troops have been killed and more than 11,000 wounded. Nearly 100,000 troops are still stationed there.

2. WAR IN IRAQ

In 2003, a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq overthrew dictator Saddam Hussein. Iraq was not involved in the 9/11 attacks, but Bush claimed that Hussein was a threat because he could supply weapons to terrorists. Hussein was later captured and executed, and Iraq has since become a fragile democracy.

Today, 46,000 U.S. troops are still stationed in Iraq. More than 4,400 Americans have been killed, and more than 32,000 wounded.

3. HEIGHTENED SECURITY

A month after the 9/11 attacks, Congress passed the Patriot Act, which, among other measures, broadened the federal government's power to listen in on personal communications and investigate people's financial records.

In 2002, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created. It's now the third-largest Cabinet department, with more than 230,000 workers and an annual budget of nearly \$100 billion. Homeland Security oversees border and transportation security, immigration, and emergency-response efforts.

Americans have grown used to stricter security measures, such as removing shoes and going through body scanners and pat-downs before boarding airplanes. In New York City, police officers can inspect the backpacks and briefcases of people entering subway stations.

New Jersey, in 2001. His town of 68,000 lost 37 people that day.

Pollinger was at the ferry landing when my boat got back. "People were shell-shocked, stunned, covered with dust," he says. "I told my detectives, 'Get on the ferry. Go over there. See what you can do.'"

In the end, there was little anyone could do besides tend to grieving families and try to recover the bodies of those who had died.

Life Without Dad

My brother's children have had to grow up without their dad. He has missed their field hockey

games, skateboarding competitions, proms, and graduations. He didn't live to see their funny texts or Facebook posts.

Most important, he's missed seeing the extraordinary young adults they've become. Thousands of other families have faced the same heartbreaking loss.

More than 400 firefighters and other rescue workers who went into the burning buildings to try to save people like Mike and Tuck also died on 9/11. Countless others spent months at the site, which came to be known as Ground Zero, searching through the rubble for bodies,

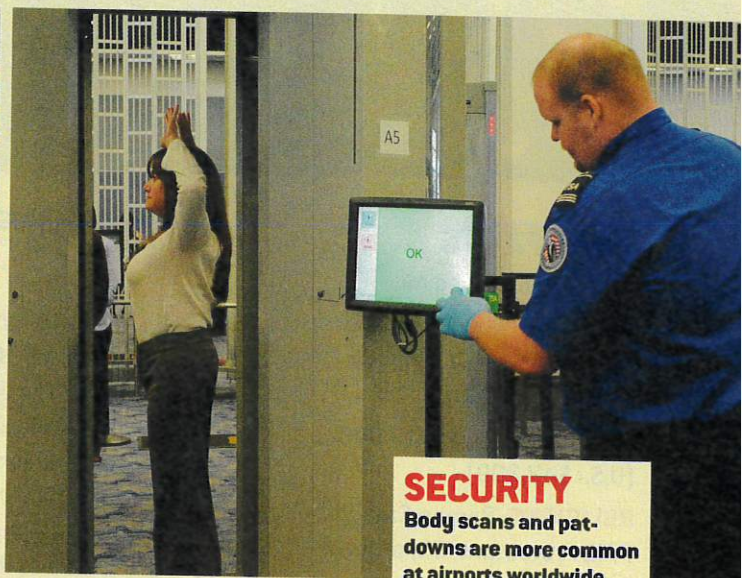
trying to give families some measure of peace. Often, all they found were bone fragments.

Many Ground Zero workers have since developed severe lung ailments from the pollutants they inhaled. Some have died. Those remaining live with the trauma of what they saw.

If there's a silver lining, it's that our friends and people we didn't even know were there to look out for us. They stuck by us when we needed them most. My family and so many others lost a lot on 9/11. We also incurred a debt that we can never repay. •



SUSPICION
Anger at Muslim terrorists has led some Americans to become suspicious of Muslims in general.



SECURITY
Body scans and pat-downs are more common at airports worldwide.

4. IMPACT ON MUSLIMS

Because Islamic extremists waged the 9/11 attacks, some Americans began to fear—and retaliate against—all Muslims. The FBI recorded 481 hate crimes against Muslims in 2001, up from 28 in 2000.

"Definitely, things changed for Muslim students [after 9/11]," says Feemun Doger, 22. Originally from Pakistan, Doger was in middle

school in Southern California at the time of the attacks. "My parents told us to keep believing in what we believed in," she says, "because there was nothing wrong with being Muslim. That's entirely separate from being a terrorist."

President Bush and President Barack Obama have affirmed that idea. "Islam, as practiced by the vast majority of people," Bush said in 2002, "is a peaceful religion."

5. FREEDOM VS. SECURITY

"We're turning into a police state," a retired U.S. intelligence analyst recently told *The New Yorker*. He and others object to some government security measures. But, says President Obama, "Al Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us. We must, and we will, remain vigilant." How the U.S. can strike a balance between freedom and security remains a topic of debate.