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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Sep. 07, 2011



I wasn't in New York City 10 years ago. In fact, my first trip to the city wasn't until 2003, on a fall day similar to what I saw two years earlier, when I watched the towers fall on tv. In July 2003, I went to Ground Zero, well- as close as I could get, which was about half a block. But I could see there was a hole- mostly from the construction at that point – but I cried. I wasn't there when it happened, and everybody's got their own personal history for 9/11, some much closer to the tragedy of that day.

[This article first appeared in September 2011.]

I did know a few people in the city, former colleagues, distant acquaintances. I reached out in the weeks following, and all were safe. But I was weary to even intrude

and ask, because their proximity meant that they likely did know somebody, or had a

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now while we debate and debase about politics and storm relief. And the world was outraged at the attack and stood by us. The attack hurt us, without a doubt. But it made us stronger.

A Father Recalls His Fallen FDNY Son: <http://www.firehouse.com/...>

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, I woke up, showered, got ready for work. I was a tech nerd even then, so I checked my email, browsed the Yahoo! News page and saw an article headline that said that a “small aircraft“ had reportedly struck one of the World Trade Center towers. So, in curiosity, I turned on the morning news to a reporter speaking over video footage that clearly showed the results of a larger impact, and more accurate reports started to come in. I continued watching in horror as the second tower was struck. As they collapsed.

I went to work for about an hour. Was out of it on the way home. I was in a short-term position doing media relations for a university's college of engineering, but had some flexibility- and needed it that day. As the shroud of dust and smoke hung over Manhattan for hours, and days, I collapsed a little more, and more. The damn music fest thing on *every* channel didn't help- but eventually I found my resolve, just as I think many other Americans did.

As painfully, and achinglly tired as I was, watching from more than 1,000 miles away in Oklahoma City, where we'd experienced the Bombing only a few years earlier, I still could not even begin to understand how New Yorkers felt, especially those who lost loved ones. Or those in the Pentagon on that Tuesday morning. I will never be able to express enough, my respect for the firefighters, police, EMTs, volunteers and other responders who gave more than was ever asked. Nor will I forget the “Let's Roll” bravery of the passengers on Flight 93, whose sacrifice prevented even greater loss.

Monuments will be built; new towers will pierce the sky. But I think the most

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perspective of members of FDNY. Eisner has been a member of the Tenafly, NJ, Fire Department since November 1975, where he has served as Fire Chief for 12 years, Assistant Fire Chief for two years, Lieutenant for three years, Captain for eight years and currently Assistant Fire Chief. He was a firefighter in the Stillwater, OK, Fire Department for three years while attending Oklahoma State University in the 1970's.

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