

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 11

BY MAGNUM PHOTOGRAPHER

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stam

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I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

.....
Into this neutral air
Where blind skyscrapers use
Their full height to proclaim
The strength of Collective Man,
Each language pours its vain
Competitive excuse:
But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream...

—*W. H. Auden*



NEW YORK SEPTEMBER 11

by David Halberstam

The date, September 11, 2001, now has a certain permanence, graven on our collective memory, like a very few others December 7, 1941, and November 22, 1963, dates which seem to separate yesterday from today, and then from now. They become the rarest of moments; ordinary people will forever be able to tell you where they were and what they were doing when they first heard the news, as if the terrible deed had happened to them, which in some ways it did.

Up until that moment America had been spared the ravages of the last century of modern warfare. The bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon ended an amazing historical period in American life, one which I place at 87 years, beginning with World War I (we actually entered it three years late) during which we rose to unwanted superpower status, became the most powerful nation in the world, and yet none of the terrible carnage of that era took place on our soil. We had come to believe as a people, protected as we were for so long by our two great oceans, that we were immune to the awful dangers and cruelties and viruses of the rest of the world.

That sense of immunity, as these photographs so dramatically show, ended on September 11, 2001; for New Yorkers more than most Americans, what happened was particularly personal. The World Trade Center was a unique landmark for us, a wanted and needed guiding beacon, to be seen, when we had been out of the city, and when making our return, a sign that we were finally approaching the city in which we lived.



Each tower was in its own way a marvel of what man can do in reaching to the sky from a city where space was always of the essence; each reflected the talents and sheer hard work of thousands and thousands of men and women who never knew each other but were bound together in something larger than themselves; each became in the end a symbol of what man can do to man when he acts upon his cruelest impulses.

Each building was also in its own way a universe, a small self-contained city. To understand why the rubble is so enormous, imagine if you will ten skyscrapers of twenty floors each, destroyed in one stunning, frightening moment.

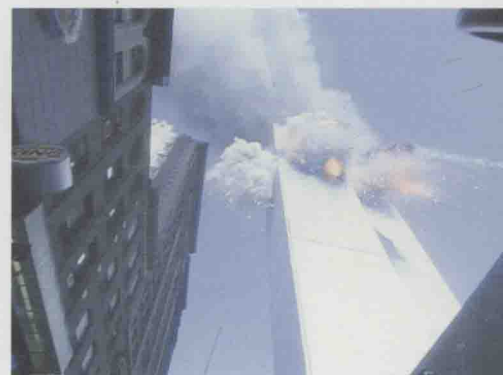
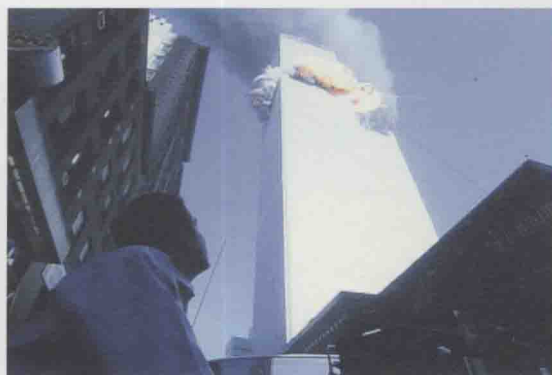
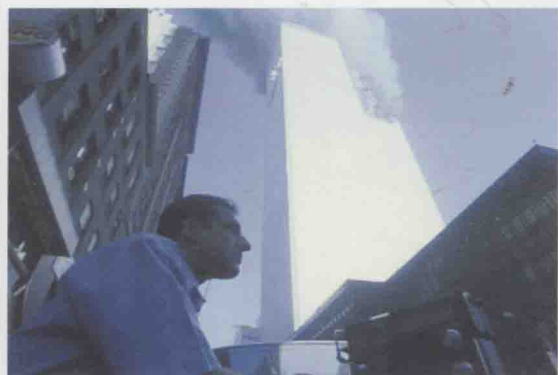
Each tower was in some way a part of our lives. I, like almost all New Yorkers, had not just been guided back to the city by them, but had been there often, eaten at their restaurants, grand and lowly, from those with three stars to those which offered only slices of pizza. I had attended business conferences there, had interviewed a visiting VIP for a book there. For several years I worked out at a gym in an adjoining building, a building which itself may not last and may have to be torn down.

All of us have certain earlier memories of being there, and of the wonder of what the buildings represented architecturally: I who am fearfully and pathologically acrophobic can remember about ten years ago giving a lecture there, and finding to my extreme discomfort that it was scheduled for the very top of one of the towers. I was so terrified that I held on to the table in front of me as if for life itself for the full hour.

And now those two buildings are rubble, and New York is not the same, and in that part of our brain where we have catalogued the other clips of our saddest moments—the Zapruder film, and the film clips of the Challenger disaster—we place the images of this moment, ever real, forever immediate, never to be forgotten. We also add the phrase Ground Zero to our language.

I am reminded as I write this, about something that has always moved me in our society: the nobility of ordinary people in times of great crisis. The people who were the architects of this attack sought among other things to show the rest of the world how weak and decadent a nation we had become. Yet in the immediacy of the crisis, firefighters and police sacrificed their own safety (and the security of their own families) in order to save complete strangers; as they did that, they provided the evidence that was the exact opposite of what the architects of violence hoped for.

As I write, it is only 16 days since it happened, and the city—always, I think the most energized place in the world—is slowly and steadily coming back, returning to its million



smaller daily human concerns and crises. Being a New Yorker is as much a condition as it is a geographic description of where you choose to live. Millions of us are people who have come here from all over the world, most of us I think by choice, more often than not, among the newer and poorer among us, because they want to be here, and because they believe, that unlike in the place where they originally started out their life's journeys, if they work hard here, they can rise above what they were when they were born, and most assuredly their children can rise even higher. That makes it, ironically enough, freedom's place, and I cannot think of a stronger force with which to bond people together.

Cameraman Evan Fairbanks had been working in downtown Manhattan on the morning of the attack and ran out with his video camera when he heard the commotion. As he was filming the towers, the second airplane appeared and crashed into 2 World Trade Center. Fairbanks called us that evening, and when we saw his extraordinary footage we concurred that it was a good fit with our documentary tradition. So Magnum agreed to distribute his videotape and the still images from that shoot, including those reproduced on these pages.





immediately, instinctively understood as soon as the tower collapsed that our lives would never be the same again.



STEVE McCURRY: Who would have ever dreamed that one tower would have come down, let alone two? It was just indescribable, the terrible sadness. You might just as well have told me that my mother or father had been killed in an accident, or that my best friend had died. It was a sorrow of that magnitude.



STEVE McCURRY

When this happened, I was in my office on the north side of Washington Square Park. You can actually see the World Trade Center from my office. I had just gotten back from China the day before, and I was opening up my mail. My assistant's mother called and said, "Look out your window." I did. And then I immediately grabbed my camera and ran up on the roof. I have an unobstructed view of all of downtown from the top of my building.

When I reached my roof, both buildings were already on fire. I started shooting as fast as I could. Between the time I got up on my roof and the time the first tower collapsed was probably thirty or forty minutes. To see it actually come down was absolutely unbelievable, one of the worst things I've ever witnessed. To just see it collapse, knowing how many people there must have been in the building—and the spectators, emergency workers, firefighters, police, who were there.

I had seen these buildings every day from my window. They were framed for me by the Washington Square arch below. In the Village, when you're on Fifth Avenue, Sixth Avenue, Seventh Avenue, you see them constantly; they're a part of your life. To have them crumble, it's like ripping your heart out.

Immediately after the towers came down, my assistant and I collected the equipment and walked downtown. The police had cordoned off the area, but we were able to get through. We stayed until about eight-thirty that first night.

The next morning I knew that I had to go back again. I could not leave it at that. So I got up at about three-thirty in the morning and walked down there in the darkness, because I knew the only way to get down there would be under cover of darkness. We walked down the West Side Highway and got to the press pen. I surveyed the situation, and then I crawled along a concrete barrier for about a hundred yards. At the end of the barrier there was a cyclone fence with a wire holding two parts of the fence together, so I cut my way through the fence. I just was not going to be stopped. A police woman yelled out to us, but we just kept going. We walked along beside a group of National Guards. We sort of blended in. I was dressed mostly in khaki. I hid my cameras.

There was a question about the buildings we were shooting from. Were they safe? Were they going to collapse? There were a couple of buildings nearby on fire. We were continually being asked to leave. I probably spent as much time just avoiding getting ousted from the area as I did taking pictures. They kept saying, "You have to leave. You have to go back." We would retreat for a moment and then double back immediately.

I worked all Wednesday morning. By afternoon, there were a lot more police officers, National Guard, firefighters. It became very difficult to walk around. On Thursday we were actually escorted from the zone. By that time, they had gotten much more organized.







topped at the last thirty floors, or the last ten. There was only this shell. You couldn't believe your eyes.





time in a state of shock and very business-like. This is what they were trained to do, and they were doing it.

