

“An insightful and chilling survivor’s account of the world before, during and beyond the life-changing minutes of Sept 11, 2001!”



# When The Walls Came Down

A Black 9/11 Survivor’s View  
of Life in America

**Ken Greene**

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*a 9/11 Survivors View of America*

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## INTRODUCTION

I am one of the fortunate survivors of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. I was a manager at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and I happened to be in my office in the north tower when the attack occurred.

Like the thousands of others who survived my story will be with me forever. I assisted in the evacuation of the north tower, which was the second tower to fall during the attack. Unlike many other people I am one of the lucky few individuals who crawled out of the north tower after the adjacent south tower fell, and in the process devoured the base of the tower where I was standing.

I barely escaped the north tower before it collapsed.

I waited a little more than two years before writing this book. My intent was always to write it, and waiting a couple of years provided me with enough time and distance from the events of 9/11 to be able to write clearly. It also gave me an opportunity to observe what life in America would be like in the post 9/11 world.

My principle motivation for this book is the continued contradiction between the themes of unity and patriotism in this country since the attack on 9/11, and the reality of the 'business as usual' aspects of everyday life in America. By business as usual I mean the continued discrimination and racism that is perpetuated by too many Americans in the post 9/11 world, as well as the lack of honesty and integrity that is exhibited by many of our government leaders.

## When the Walls Came Down

The September 11th attack created an environment of self-examination specific to how we live our lives, and how we relate to the world around us on both an individual and collective basis. But unfortunately while much has changed at the core nothing has changed.

Since 9/11 I have seen the best and worst of this country. On the one hand Americans responded with compassion and empathy for the thousands of individuals and families that were directly affected by the attack. Conversely, after 9/11, the very racism that is endemic to this society in many ways found its way into the forefront.

In particular, people of Middle Eastern decent were collectively branded as suspects and potential terrorists. The hostility they experienced and continue to experience is strong and driven by fear, anger and what some folks would call patriotism.

It is clear to me that we still live with a racial and ethnic divide in America. Part of the reason for this divide is rooted in two distinct versions of history that are taught in this country. The majority of Americans are descendents of the original settlers and immigrants who have experienced America as the land of opportunity. Others of us have had ancestors who had to struggle in order to achieve basic human rights in this country.

Most Americans learn, believe and perpetuate the version of history that is taught in our education system, a version that is espoused as something to be proud of. And for the most part they have bought into this romanticized version of history that is very easy for them to swallow. Others of us look at American history through the eyes of our ancestors, which for blacks and Native Americans in particular is not a history that we would view

with such high regard. The near destruction of the Native American civilization and ensuing enslavement of Africans certainly is not a history that I would feel good about.

There are also folks who believe that all of this history is simply ‘in the past’ or, as I was once told, ‘over rated’. Yes, too many of us live with the illusion that all is well in this country. They really believe that we are all harmoniously united with no issues of race, religion, economic class or any of the other categories that have historically created walls between people.

But some of us know better because we see and experience racism--ranging from subtle to overt--just about every day of our lives. Consequently, it continues to be a struggle to reach the point where race is no longer an issue in America.

I want to be clear that I do not hold discrimination and racism as being the *entire* reason for the plights of many people in this country. I’ll be the first to admit that it is all too often used as an excuse for the failure to progress socially, educationally and economically. For my fellow black Americans, the opportunity to get a good education, start a business or secure a rewarding job or career, and enjoy economic success is significantly better than it was for the generations that have preceded us. We owe it to ourselves to take advantage of each and every opportunity that is available to us, and demand opportunity when and where it is denied to us.

However, this reality does not excuse the behaviors of a large segment of this society.

## When the Walls Came Down

We are Americans. We profess this country to be the land of freedom, equality, and goodwill toward all men. We claim that we would never intentionally bring harm to innocent people, or deny them their freedoms or destroy their lives. In America we are all equal. Everyone is innocent until proven guilty, etc., etc., etc.

But this belief is not everyone's reality.

And instead of dealing with these issues in a constructive manner, many Americans are quick to jump to the moral high ground based on principles rooted in the revisionist version of good ole' American history. They chose to retreat to the old refrain 'America is the greatest country in the world', as if Americans are the only folks on the globe who think that their country is the absolute best. And as a consequence of their self-righteous attitudes they become barriers to the social progress our society needs.

I understand that in this day and age whenever an issue of race, discrimination, or prejudice comes up, a lot of people still get very uncomfortable. In their minds, we're not supposed to discuss it. We should simply see it as a subject whose relevance is long past.

In addition, I know that as a black person when you raise the subject in some circles it is assumed that you are a militant. You are very quickly labeled as an anti-establishment, anti-American militant who is simply looking to provoke people into confrontation. This is often a very unfair and inaccurate categorization of someone who simply speaks to the subject. I have had frank and meaningful discussions with my friends, both black and white, over the years, and I have not lost a friendship that I can remember because of our discussions. In fact we

probably learned a few things about the world and each other in the process.

I fully recognize that, overall, race relations in this country have improved over time, and that there are people in this society who do not exhibit the attitudes and behaviors that I take issue with. For these folks, treating all people with respect is fundamental to their way of life. In an ideal world *they* would represent what every American aspires to across the board.

Ironically, one of the aspects of actual day of September 11, 2001 that I will always remember is that for one snapshot in time, race didn't seem to matter. We were simply people who were doing everything that we could to assist one another through an unimaginable crisis. What the world saw was emergency workers helping to save lives, and rescuing people who were in danger. There were thousands of individuals who didn't know each other offering assistance and encouragement throughout the day and immediately thereafter. The 9/11 timeframe was a snapshot of what his country professes to represent on a normal day. During the following months, our collective sentiments seemed to be consistent with that theme.

However, since that timeframe, much of America has regressed back to the pre-9/11 world.

Not all American. Just *too many* Americans.

And as for the majority of Americans I ask myself what the difference is in their attitudes, politics, and behavior in the post 9/11 world. Honestly, there is no difference. They live comfortably within our society, among the many hypocritical Americans who say one thing on race and politics, while they practice or support another.

## When the Walls Came Down

Like all Americans, the shock and dismay after the attack on 9/11 was overwhelming, and the event will last with me forever. The attack was a despicable act that it is still hard to grasp.

Tragically, the walls of the World Trade Center came down. Unfortunately, many of the walls that need to come down in this society have proven to be much harder to destroy.

The time for these walls to disappear is long past.

When will they come down?

# **PART I**

## **SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **5:00 A.M. Alarm Clock**

On September 11, 2001 my wife Gina and I were living in Fairfield, Connecticut, which is approximately fifty miles north of New York City. The alarm clock rang at 5 o'clock that morning, my normal workday wake-up time. As always I eased out of bed as delicately as possible, not wanting to disturb Gina, the world's lightest sleeper. I have to admit that I was rarely successful in my attempts to do so, and that morning was no different.

After whispering good morning in her ear I tiptoed in the dark to the bathroom, and then I took a shower and went through the usual morning ritual. When I finished I tiptoed into the guest room to dress for work. I always watched the local news while getting dressed, and I was looking forward to the fact that the weather forecast called for a warm and sunny day.

My routine was measured down to the minute as a result of day-to-day repetition. The walk to the train station was precisely twelve minutes long during good weather days and walking conditions, twelve to fourteen minutes in the rain or snow to accommodate puddles along the way, and fifteen to eighteen minutes if there was ice on the ground after a snowfall. I factored in a four-minute early arrival time at the station in the event that the 6:08 a.m. commuter train to Manhattan was running ahead of schedule.

The train, which is the main commuter line servicing Connecticut, originated in the city of New Haven and worked its way south along the Long Island Sound. It traveled through lower New Haven County into several of the affluent bedroom towns that comprise Fairfield County, otherwise known as the ‘Gold Coast of Connecticut’. From there it continued through Westchester County, New York and down to Manhattan.

I found myself running approximately three minutes late in my routine that morning, and quickly headed for the front door without fully buttoning my shirt and fixing my tie. Gina was already out of bed and standing in the vestibule by the front door.

“Honey, I’ll lock the door when you leave. Give me a call later when you know the train that you’re going to catch tonight,” she said. Gina was headed to the city later that morning and planned to meet me for the return trip home. She locked the door behind me as I hurried off to the station on my way to the World Trade Center.

As I headed to the station a thought crossed my mind. I had failed to kiss her good-bye that morning, the most important part of my morning ritual. I could not remember the last time that I had failed to do so. But it was clearly an

oversight that I couldn't correct that morning without missing my train. And besides, in my mind she would understand. I could always apologize when I got home, and continue the practice the next day. September 11<sup>th</sup> would be like any other day, and I was sure that I would be getting out of bed to go to work for years to come anyway. At the age of forty-two I had a long time left in the work world, and I would just make sure to kiss her twice the following morning. That was the plan.

*So I thought.*

Gina had and continues to have her own business working out of her home-based office. She provides consulting services to not-for-profit foundations in the areas of marketing and communications. Unlike my near two-hour one-way commute to the World Trade Center her commute to the office was approximately ten seconds. However, she typically began her day shortly after I left for the train and was often still working when I got home.

I have to admit that on occasion I fumed about the imbalance in our respective commute times, especially when there were train delays or cancellations. However, I knew the best thing for me to do was to suffer in silence.

Back in 1997 when I was working for Supervalu, Inc., a Fortune 100 company in the grocery retail and distribution industry, we relocated from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in a job-related move for me. When we began to look for a house in Pittsburgh, I was emphatic that the best neighborhood for us to live would be a location where the average commuting time for each of us was no more than one hour. In my mind a total of up to two hours between the two of us seemed perfectly reasonable.

Gina didn't necessarily see it that way, but after some debate she ultimately went along with my brilliant theory.

During the year 2000 I accepted a position with a Connecticut based "dot-com" company that was also in the grocery industry, and Fairfield was a town that I was familiar with. It was perfectly situated. Gina could work from home and my commute was only eight miles up the highway. Unfortunately, the "dot-com" venture lasted only five months.

My next opportunity was with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, whose corporate offices were based in the World Trade Center. I had worked for the agency from 1981 through 1995, and decided to take advantage of an opportunity to return.

Shortly after re-joining the Port Authority I hinted at the imbalance in our commute times, and was reminded about my 'average of an hour each' theory. Gina said, "You know, our total one-way commuting time is less than two hours. If you remember, I wasn't sold on your idea but you were adamant that it made sense. Well?"

What could I say? She was correct. My one-way commute was an hour and forty-five minutes and she commuted for fifteen seconds at the most.

So much for my commuting time logic!

### **6:08 a.m. - Train to Manhattan**

The 6:08 train pulled into Fairfield on time. I took my jacket off, and put it on the overhead rack and sat in a seat by the window. As always, I was certain that a predictable aspect of my morning commute would take place.

I was one of the few black commuters on the train, and the white commuters would almost always *avoid* sitting next to unless there were no other seats available in the car. There were mornings when I would sit by myself during the entire trip to Grand Central Terminal in midtown Manhattan. Even though I was neatly dressed in a business suit and tie and carrying a briefcase like everyone else something about me was clearly uncomfortable for my fellow commuters. The only difference that I could determine was the color of my skin.

After surveying the car, and in many cases walking to the car either in front or in back of me, some of the men would resign themselves to sitting next to me. The usual approach was to put their briefcase on the floor or on the overhead rack, sit down and stare straight ahead, or read a newspaper opened just wide enough to ensure that there could be no eye contact between us. They would do whatever was necessary to avoid eye contact. I always said good morning, because it was the friendly, neighborly fellow-American thing to do.

A high-end response was normally a grunt at best. However, the more typical response was absolutely no recognition that I had uttered a word.

But I have to admit that the men weren't nearly as bad as the *women*.

The women were even more uncomfortable sitting next to me. Many would prefer to stand station after station until a seat became available somewhere else. Sometimes they would stand directly in front of me. I supposed that they feared being harassed, propositioned, or maybe even mugged. Imagine that. Being mugged on a crowded commuter train in full view of dozens of hostile commuters

as the train moved along. Clearly, I was someone to fear. Maybe they thought I would grab a handbag, kick out the window, and leap onto the tracks while we were moving at sixty miles an hour. Makes sense to me.

I have to admit that the dynamics of my commute to New York were not the least bit surprising. I commuted from Edison, New Jersey to the World Trade Center in the early 1990's and the dynamics were precisely the same. Being black has been a life long affliction when riding the commuter lines in the allegedly cosmopolitan, highly sophisticated New York City metropolitan area.

Admittedly, there was a time in my life when my experiences on the train would have bothered me. But as I have grown older I have learned to recognize how things *really* are in too much of America, and do what I need to do in order for me to be happy and successful *in spite* of the some of the people around me.

And besides, who was the disaffected party on the train? Was it me, who made myself comfortable in a seat that I paid for, or my fellow commuter who also paid for a seat but chose to stand for an hour? I would simply put my headphones on and listen to music and gaze in their direction in amazement every now and then, as they stood by the door tired after a long workday.

I once heard a joke that the only thing more threatening to some white folks than a black man with a gun in his hand is a black man in a business suit with a briefcase and a college degree. My life long observations have validated this 'joke' as having merit. Back in grade school we were all taught the 'all men are created equal' version of good ole' American folklore. I guess that exclusions to that rule include 'commuting while black'.

We are all familiar with the ‘driving while black’ phenomena, which occurs when a black motorist is pulled over by a police officer for no other reason than being black, and often times questioned about driving in a certain community or made to prove that we own the vehicle that we’re driving. Sometimes we’re searched and/or detained for no apparent reason.

I have had that experience on at least five occasions and never received so much as a warning from a police officer! I was simply driving a Nissan 280ZX sports car, which was a warning sign to some people that given my race either an auto theft had occurred or a drug dealer was in the vicinity.

When I think about I suppose that I can’t complain. I have never been pulled off of a train and held by police officers for ‘commuting while black’. Not yet. I guess that ‘CWB’ can be *offensive* without being an offense.

### **No Room At The Inn**

Unfortunately, the commuting phenomenon was certainly not inconsistent with other experiences in Fairfield.

In July 2001, just *two* months before 9/11, Gina began the process of finding an assisted living community for her mother who is in her eighties and required help with managing her day-to-day affairs. Her mother lived in an apartment in Westchester County for thirty-four years, and was and continues to be very independent. However, the effects of the aging process and a recent hospitalization for a heart condition made it very difficult for her to fully function on her own.

Gina and I felt that it would be best to find an assisted living community in the town of Fairfield. Like many other families facing the same situation we wanted her to live near us, and to be confident that she was in a high quality facility that would meet her needs. Terry, Gina's only sibling and older brother, happened to live quite a distance away in Alabama.

We also felt that keeping their mother in the region that she had lived in all of her life was the most logical approach to take. This wasn't an unreasonable desire. Children of the elderly make these kinds of decisions all of the time.

Gina called an assisted living facility in town to get information about their program. She spoke with the head administrator and told him that we lived in Fairfield and wanted to find a good place for her mother to live. The administrator was all too happy to tell her about the living options and amenities available to the residents, and invited her to come in for a visit.

"Your mother would enjoy it here" he told her, "We have very good programs for seniors. The nurses and support staff are always available to assist the residents. Once she gets situated she will be able to make friends in the community. You'll be satisfied that you made a good decision." He also *assured* Gina that there were units available if her mother needed to move in quickly. It could be arranged with no problem. "Let's schedule an appointment for you to come in and visit with us. I can't wait to meet you."

Gina stopped by the facility to pick up an application on the way home from her exercise class at the local YMCA. When she arrived she was greeted by a receptionist who

provided her with an application package. She took it home and filled it out, and called for additional information and to schedule an appointment to see the facility.

When she reached the administrator the story changed entirely. “Um, Miss Toppins” he nervously stumbled, “um, there was a mistake with the information that I gave you. Unfortunately, there are, um, no units available at this time. Apparently, we, we um, had committed them before this appointment. I’m sorry. We will let you know if things should change.” There was no friendly chitchat, no invitation extended to tour the facility and no follow-up information. And there wasn’t any discussion about putting her name on a waiting list.

Strange how the situation immediately went from having *several* units still open to having *nothing* available in the same day! There was no room in the inn! The very same administrator who handled the enrollment process was in error about having *several* units available!

Let me guess what went on here. It couldn’t have been the fact that a black woman walked into the facility. It was the year 2001.

This is America – that couldn’t possibly have been it.

Besides, I personally know that black women were welcome in the facility. I had seen them with my own eyes enter and exit the facility as I walked home from the train station. They cook meals, clean floors, change bedpans and iron clothes. I’m sure that they also make wonderful nurses and aides. I bet that the residents just love having them around to meet their needs.

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But live there? Now that was another story – the message was clear: *no room at the inn for a black person unless they are wearing an apron or a nurse's uniform.*

Maybe Gina should have told the administrator that we were one of the black families that snuck into town under the cover of darkness before scheduling an appointment.

As it turned out we found an assisted living facility in Westchester County that was better suited to her mother's needs. She is able to socialize comfortably with her fellow residents, and she is unlikely to have a visitor ask her to take out the trash or fix their parent a meal if they should see her in the hallway.

## Chapter 2

### **7:20 A.M. - Grand Central Terminal to the World Trade Center**

The train made its way down the coast through Greenwich, Connecticut; Westchester County and then continued through the Bronx on its way to Manhattan. As we passed by the Kingsbridge Station in the Bronx I was whisked back to my childhood growing up in that neighborhood. Being a kid from the Bronx was a great experience for me. If I had to do it all over again I would chose the same neighborhood, same friends and schools.

When we finally reached Grand Central Terminal it was the usual scene. During the morning and afternoon rush hours it is an incredible maze of commuters walking a mile a minute in seemingly every direction. The place is all business. The world's busiest train terminal, used by an estimated seven hundred thousand people on a daily basis, was fully alive as the New York region began the workday.

I got off of the train and walked briskly across the main concourse headed to the subway platform, and I rode the escalators down to the hot and crowded platform on the sub-grade level of the terminal along with a sea of commuters headed downtown. Although the subway trains typically ran two or three minutes apart the wait on the platform always seemed to take much longer, especially on

those warm mornings when the hot stale air just sat in the station. We were all pushed together, typically jockeying for a spot on the platform where the doors opened. This was all a part of the commuting game. Having grown up in the city and ridden subways most of my life, I considered myself an expert in the art of ‘platform jockeying’.

I didn’t have the usual success that particular morning. The line was three deep when the first train entered the station. The second train was equally as crowded, and after a few dozen people pushed their way off a few of us pushed our way on.

It was just another day in paradise.

The ride south to the Fulton Street Station was shoulder to shoulder, and as always I was more than happy to get off of the train when we arrived. The World Trade Center was only one block from Fulton Street, and I took my time and enjoyed the little bit of gorgeous weather that I thought that I would be able to take advantage of that day.

I crossed Church Street and walked across the World Trade Center plaza. It was one of my favorite places in the city. The plaza was a wide-open space, with a circular black marble fountain in the center surrounded by concrete benches to sit on and enjoy the weather and people watch on a nice day. During the warm weather months free midday concerts were performed on the plaza. It was a very popular gathering place.

I loved working at the World Trade Center, which was built by the Port Authority and opened in the early 1970’s. The complex was the agency’s flagship, and our employees took a certain pride working there. The entire world knew where the World Trade Center was and what it represented

to New York and the country. It was the international symbol of American commerce.

Whenever anyone asked where I worked I simply replied, "The World Trade Center". Once said, no additional details were ever required.

For me it was the most unique place on the planet, and was much more than the two one hundred and ten story towers. The concourse level of the complex had a terrific mix of retail stores and restaurants. Hundreds of tourists could be found walking around the concourse shopping in the stores and patronizing the restaurants, or simply marveling at the incredible design of the complex. An estimated one hundred and forty thousand people visited the World Trade Center on an average day.

The concourse level entrance of the north tower where I worked faced West Street and was connected to the World Financial Center. It was just across the street from Battery Park City, a beautiful high-rise development with a park, boat marina, and scenic walkway along the Hudson River.

Windows on the World was the restaurant at the top of the north tower. The Observation Deck was atop the south tower. Both offered an incredible view of the region.

Workers as well as tourists also enjoyed being outside on the plaza level, which was the level immediately above the concourse facing east. Sun up to sun down cameras snapped pictures of the towers and their incredible surroundings. I cannot remember how many times I was asked by a tourist to take a picture of them standing in front of the tower. I often took pictures while I was in a squatting position, looking up at them in an attempt to capture the entire height of the tower in the background.

## When the Walls Came Down

After a while some of us who worked at the World Trade Center probably took for granted how unique the complex was. When you work at a particular location for a long period of time the environment can wear off on you. But the relationship that we all had with the towers was one that you would have had to have worked there to understand. When we were within the four borders of the complex it was a different world.

The World Trade Center had energy and vibrancy that you could feel every day of the week. Approximately fifty thousand people worked in the complex, enough people to fill Yankee Stadium. And there were over four hundred businesses from close to thirty countries that had offices in the complex. The complex was a mini-international city unto itself.

Gina and I had been away from the New York area for five and a half years, and although I had lived in other parts of the country my re-engagement with the World Trade Center environment was immediate. I had a new appreciation for how truly special a place it was.

But beyond working there it held a much more *important* significance. The World Trade Center where I met Gina.

My wife Gina is also a former Port Authority employee. She was a manager in the aviation department when I was working in our general services department during my first stint with the agency. Although I met Gina in 1981 we did not become close friends until 1992. We used to meet for lunch on the plaza during the warm weather months. The plaza was where I asked her for our first date. We went to a

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New York Jets football game, and it took me about a week to get up the nerve to ask her to go with me.

We eventually got engaged in 1993 and were married on New Year's Day in 1994. Gina and I purchased our wedding bands from the W. Kodak jewelry store that was located on the concourse of the World Trade Center.

We are not an unusual couple by Port Authority standards. There are several current and former employees who met and married while working for the agency.

I was initially hired by the agency when I graduated from college at the end of 1980. I spent fifteen years there before relocating to Minneapolis, and worked with some very good people during those years. However, my return in May 2001 lasted for a period of one year. Given my time away working in the private sector for a Fortune 100 company, and subsequently for an entrepreneurial start-up business, the processes and constraints of the government made for a very difficult transition. I knew at some point the private sector would be the best long term fit for me.

Career preference notwithstanding, I took pride in the work being performed by the Port Authority. The mission of the agency is to provide a high quality service to the commuters and other travelers who use the tunnels and bridges that connect New York and New Jersey, as well as the airports and bus terminals in the region in order to conduct their day-to-day affairs.

The New York region is both tough and demanding, and the responsibility for managing major transportation facilities requires a level of resilience and determination that would be our saving grace as the day unfolded.

## 7:50 a.m. – The Work Day Begins

I took an express elevator from the concourse to the forty-fourth floor of the north tower, and a local elevator from there to my office on the sixty-fifth floor. I enjoyed working on a floor that high up in the tower in a nice office in the northeast corner. The view was fantastic – I could see the George Washington Bridge to the northwest, midtown Manhattan up to and beyond the Empire State Building, and the East River.

Every morning when I arrived I took my jacket off, put it on the back of my chair, and looked out of the window for a moment taking in the view and thinking about the day ahead. On September 11<sup>th</sup> the sky was so clear that I could see the frame of the George Washington Bridge, which was approximately twelve miles away. I thought to myself that the day was going to be especially beautiful, and that during my lunch break if I could find some time I would take a walk east to the South Street Seaport.

The second half of the morning routine was a quick trip down to the cafeteria on the forty-third floor. It was time to satisfy my one-cup-of-coffee-a-day fix. The usual group of employees were scattered around the cafeteria, and I was always amazed by the folks that went for the full course breakfast spread: eggs, bacon, toast, orange juice, coffee, etc. I would probably myself sinking into a lethargic mode after eating that kind of breakfast.

Cup of coffee in hand, it was back to the office to read through my e-mails and start the workday. At that time I was the Assistant Director, Aviation – Operations for the agency, and I was working on a variety of initiatives in support of the operations, maintenance, security, and

airfield technology functions for the New York metropolitan area airport system.

The job was quite interesting. The airport system is among the busiest and most complex in the world, and the day-to-day activities associated with being a part of the management team were rewarding. Like any job it had its frustrations but I learned that the best approach was to ensure that I kept an appropriate balance between my professional and personal life.

And on that day I was about to learn something else.

*Little did I know that the same person who wasn't 'good enough' for his fellow commuters to sit next to on the train, and whose mother-in-law wasn't 'good enough' to live in a senior citizens environment with their parents, was about to be 'good enough' to find himself helping save the lives of folks like them.*

## Chapter 3

### 8:46 A.M. – The North Tower is Hit

#### Ken

I had just finished reading through my e-mails and some of the administrative work on my desk. Jeanne, a fellow department staff member, had returned to work that day after being out for several days dealing with a family matter. She and I had just begun working together in August, and had become very close colleagues in a short period of time. Jeanne was under a lot of pres-sure and stress while tending to her family's affairs, and I was very concerned about where the situation stood upon her return. We spoke in her office, which was the second one down from me on the east window line of the tower.

As we were speaking we heard and felt an incredible explosion. The tower actually moved to my right, and then recoiled to the left before steadying. For a fleeting second I had the distinct feeling that it was going to fall over. The explosion moved furniture and file cabinets, and rolled people sideways who were sitting in their chairs.

It was a *major* explosion.