

THE NEW YORK POST, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

'WONDERFUL'

Upbeat Rudy working in reopened City Hall

By TOM TOPOUSIS

Mayor Giuliani reopened City Hall yesterday morning when he bounded up the front steps, hugged the building's veteran custodian and conducted a morning meeting of his top aides.

The flurry of activity was the first business conducted at City Hall since the building was evacuated during last week's attack on the World Trade Center, just a few blocks away.

"It's wonderful to be back and to see it open. This is a beautiful building. It's a symbol of New York," Giuliani said.

The mayor and his commissioners held a relatively routine meeting that seemed to signify that city government was operating at its "normal" rate more than anything else.

During the meeting, Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen and Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik were welcomed with a standing ovation.

Outside, the building, acrid smoke wafted through the air as the sound of emergency crews and diesel generators pounded away. City Hall and its park had been scrubbed clean of dust and debris.

A large flag hung on each side of the building, and black and purple bunting was lashed to the portico over the front doors as a handful of staffers reported for work.

Access to City Hall was limited more than usual, with cops checking each individual package going past the parking lot gates. Phones were spotty and reporters in the press room had to rely on wireless phones.

While Giuliani spent most of his day out in the streets or at his emergency command center, the mayor's aides met City Council Speaker Peter Vallone's staff to talk about rebuilding downtown.



SMELL OF DISASTER: The still-sooty air forces a worker yesterday to shield her face as she emerges from the subway. AP

Officials from both sides of City Hall spent the day hammering out details for what will be a World Trade Center Reconstruction Commission to oversee new construction on the city-owned property.

Vallone, a candidate for mayor, said if it were up to him, Giuliani and the rest of the city's elected officials would stay put in their current jobs until the crisis is over.

If elected, Vallone vowed to ask Giuliani to serve in a high-profile role in the reconstruction efforts. He also pledged to keep several Giuliani aides, including the police and fire commissioners.

"I see him [Giuliani] very much involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the city, like anyone who loves it," said Vallone. "If I'm fortunate enough to be here in a governing capacity, I certainly would call on him."

In another sign of a shared

bond, the council speaker's press secretary, Michael Regan, was appointed deputy commissioner of the Fire Department.

Giuliani shot down suggestions that his term should be extended because of the crisis.

"I think what I should do is do the job until Dec. 31 and prepare someone else, whoever the citizens select, as the next mayor," Giuliani said.

In another sign that life is slowly returning to normal, the mayor caught up with a missed birthday for long-time custodian Johnny Zissel — an event Giuliani usually makes note of each year. "Johnny gave me a big hug and a big squeeze and reminded me that last Friday was his birthday," said Giuliani. "So, we're going to have a birthday cake, which I will get."

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BOTH LARGER THAN LIFE: An NYPD officer guards Wall Street near the George Washington statue. N.Y. Post: Michael Norcia

Small biz struggles to get back on its feet

By ERIKA MARTINEZ and DENIS GORMAN

The owners of a computer software consulting company, shut out of their Financial District office, have all they need to set up shop elsewhere crammed into three duffel bags and a knapsack.

"This is our business," said Lev Saks, 43, owner of New Age Network, pointing to the bags he and his partner toted to the center set up by the city to help small businesses affected by the World Trade Center disaster.

The center, at 80 Pine St., is staffed by representatives of the federal Small Business Administration, which is offering low-interest loans, and various city agencies, as well as Verizon and Con Ed.

Saks and partner Michael Fridland said officials had allowed them to return to their offices at 111 Broadway for just five minutes to gather up essentials.

But they and their 60 employees cannot yet go back to work in the building because of its proximity to ground zero.

"We came here to find out what kind of help we need," said Saks. "We need a place to operate from, a way to pay our people and place our people. We are looking for an office right now."

Paul Lee visited the center to see what help was available for his restaurant, Scups, Etc., at 77 Pearl St. "We're wondering if we could get a loan because 90 percent of my inventory was damaged and my gross was sabotaged," said Lee.

The office was busy all day, said Chris

Mercurio, an SBA loan officer. He estimated he saw "over 150 people."

All over the lower downtown area some of the merchants opened their doors for the first time since the tragedy. Others had to stay shuttered.

"They may let us back in," said Daniel DePrima, who works at Ashburns Inc., a manufacturer and engraver of plaques at 49 John St. "We were told if the building couldn't be used, the city would relocate us. We've been here 50 years."

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TO BE BACK'



BACK TO THE RAILS: Commuters walk through the Bowling Green subway station on their way to try to resume a normal work life. AP



SILVERSTEIN
Has 99-year lease.

Magnate pledges to rebuild towers

By LOIS WEISS,
KRISTEN DANIS
and BRAD HUNTER

Real-estate kingpin Larry Silverstein tearfully vowed yesterday to rebuild the World Trade Center and its glorious Twin Towers — even though he only leases the destroyed property.

Silverstein repeated his promise throughout the day at two different functions, including an emergency meeting of the New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce.

"We fully expect, hope and pray to rebuild Number 7 and the World Trade Center and, if we have cooperation, we can get this accomplished," an emotional Silverstein told the city's financial elite.

He said if the city does not rebuild, "we'd be giving an incredible victory to those who want to destroy our way of life."

Silverstein Properties leased 7 World Trade Center on Dec. 31, 1980, and completed it seven years later.

In July, Silverstein Properties and the Port Authority agreed on a 99-year lease deal that included the Twin Towers and the two nine-story office buildings at 4 and 5 World Trade Center.

Meanwhile, at the Real Estate Board of New York meeting, Chairman Burton Resnick advised brokers to provide emergency leases of up to a year at "cost."

About 25 million square feet of office space was damaged or destroyed.

'I saved her —and she saved me'

By LAURA ITALIANO

He doesn't know her name, and she was burned so terribly, he couldn't tell if she was black or white.

All Manhattan Supreme Court Officer Ty Bacon knows is he dragged a screaming young woman in a chair stretcher through dense smoke as the World Trade Center's south tower began falling.

Only later did he learn that the three court officers who stayed behind to save those still injured in the crumbling shopping mall of 5 World Trade Center are among the heroic missing.

He'd have been with them, Bacon knows, if not for his scorched guardian angel.

"I saved her, and she saved me — and now I'm desperate to find her," Bacon said yesterday of a woman who managed to say only that she was 32, and worked on the 78th floor.

"But these guys," Bacon said of the three missing officers — Capt. William "Harry" Thompson, Thomas "Tommy" Jurgens, and Mitchel Wallace — "are the real heroes."

"I'm proud of them beyond words," agreed their commander, Maj. Reginald Mebane, recalling how he and nine officers piled into a jury bus and rushed 10 blocks south toward the twin infernos.

Outside crumbling 5 WTC, a woman who Officer Edwin Kennedy was leading to safety was struck by a falling steel beam. He was left holding only her arm.

It was so dark with opaque smoke that when Sgt. Richard Rosenfeld shined his flashlight, "All I saw were eyes."

With them was Jurgens, 26, a newlywed ex-Army combat medic and volunteer fireman from Meadowmere Park, L.I.

Another was Wallace, 34, a Mineola, L.I., EMT who calls his fiancée, Noreen, "Cinderella," and

was on the job only six months.

Thompson, 51 — a father of two adult sons who has been a court officer since 1974, had run to the scene from his teaching job at the Court Officers Academy on Williams Street.

"Their last words," recalled Rosenfeld, "were, 'We can't leave, there's people screaming in here.'"

Bacon said he asked Cornell Burn Center for help finding the injured woman. He believes she is burned over 60 percent of her body.

Cornell said it had no one who fits that description.

"I got about 15 seconds away from the missing officers. Somebody yelled 'Get down!' I crouched down and all hell broke loose."

"The building collapsed. Me and the woman got blown 25 feet along the floor. She was screaming, 'Don't leave me.' I told her, 'Don't worry, sweetheart, I promise you're going to get out of here.'"

When he last saw her, she was being cared for by EMS inside the Chase Bank at Fulton Street and Broadway.

"I'm here today," he said, "because our paths crossed."



'WE CAN'T LEAVE': The last words of heroic Court Officers (from left) Thomas Jurgens, Harry Thompson and Mitchel Wallace were: "We can't leave, there's people screaming in here."

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