

DAILY NEWS, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2001

Refugees head home

Homeless in sad trek

By BOB HEISLER
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Lower Manhattan came home yesterday, temporarily.

Some of the more than 25,000 people made homeless by the attack on the World Trade Center were allowed to visit their apartments to pick up clothing and medicine.

With friends helping, they carried out pets and photos, special blankets and unpaid bills.

They walked through dark, odor-filled apartments coated in the thick, gray dust that blew through their lives Tuesday.

They saw the smoking rubble that was all that remained of their towering neighbors.

They also saw how their lives have changed — and began to consider whether they could ever return.

For some, especially Battery Park City families, the proximity to the twin towers — once a selling point — makes a quick recovery impossible. Officials told the crowd at a community meeting at the basketball court on Canal St. and Sixth Ave. it could be weeks before those apartment buildings are opened.

The line to get into the neighborhood around Battery Park City began at Pier 40 just south of Christopher St. Each resident was allowed to bring one person to help and one suitcase. Each would have 10 minutes in the apartment. Carrying pet food and cages and flashlights, they rode into the hot zone on a flatbed truck.

William Singleman, 55, and his wife, Pauline DeVita, 52, have lived in Gateway Plaza for nine years.

"It's a slice of heaven," Singleman said. "That's what it was. We belong down here. It's our home. There's no place else."

They have been staying with DeVita's parents on Staten Island. Her office, on Rector St., was severely damaged, too.

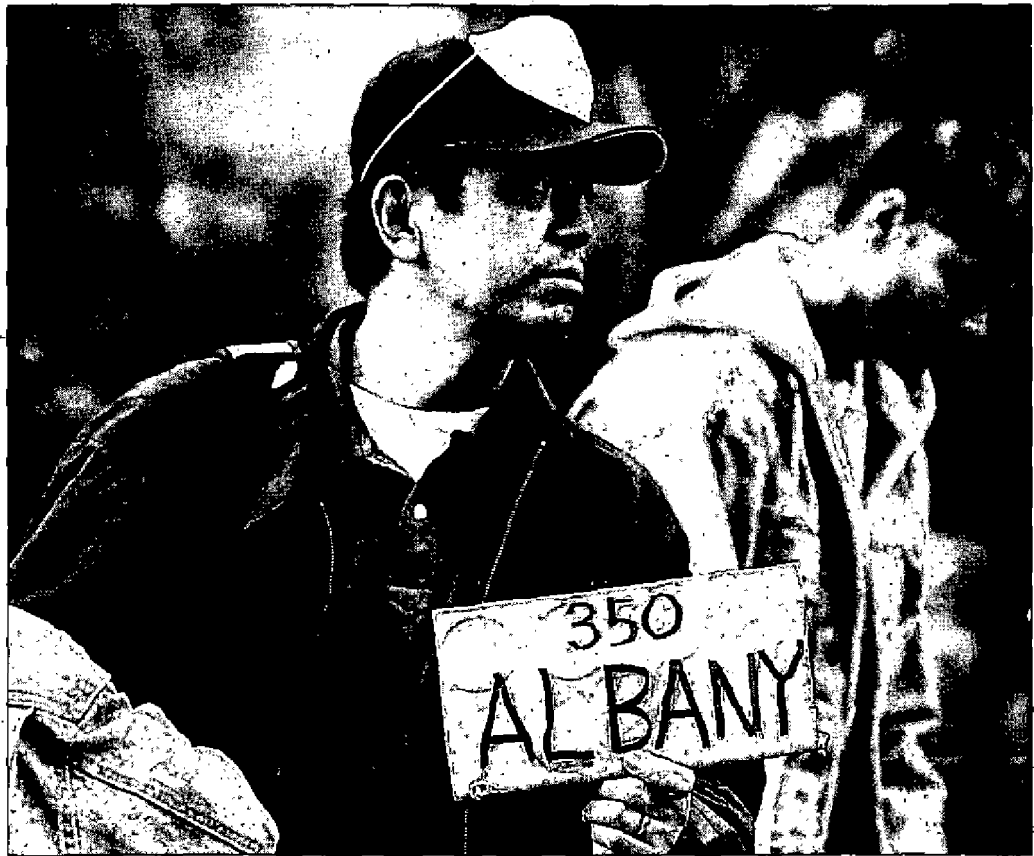
"They're not going to take this from us," she said. "They're just not."

They won't have neighbor Luis Ramirez when they return. The 44-year-old food service worker at the GE building in midtown ran home Tuesday to get the stroller, the favorite blanket and the Barbie dolls that form the world of his 3-year-old daughter, Amanda. Wearing borrowed clothes, he returned for what he believes could be the last time.

"I don't want to live there anymore," he said. "That used to be home, and there's no way I'll bring my kid back there."

Faruk and Firuza Amin lived in nearby Gateway Plaza for six months. Faruk Amin is an investment banker with Lehman Bros. a block away in the World Financial Center.

They're looking for a new home. "We're not coming back here," he said. "We need another place to stay."



SIGN OF GRIM TIMES

Man waits to be checked out yesterday by authorities before he's allowed back into his building to reclaim belongings abandoned after the World Trade Center's destruction.

But he's thankful. "Compared to what has happened here," he said, "we're not complaining about anything."

Four blocks north of Ground Zero, the lobby in the south tower of Independence Plaza stinks of rotting food and sewage. There's a grocery store on the first floor. Electricity won't be back until tomorrow.

Ellen Rosen, who works for the Board of Ed, lives there. So does her 90-year-old mother. Her daughter Bonnie, 40, a Brooklyn school teacher, has an apartment in another building in the complex.

The Rosen women left their apartments Wednesday and stayed in the shelter at Washington Irving High School. Ellen Rosen returned to pick up medicine for her mother and some clothing — and bills. She used a flashlight to find her way up darkened stairs to the fourth floor.

She found her apartment door and opened it wide.

Her windows framed the rescue site and the smoke.

"It's sad," Rosen said. "It's pathetic, disturbing."

Bonnie Rosen said the pile of girders

and waffle-shaped chunks of the facades looked like the barricades at the French Revolution must have.

"I'm concerned about the rat problem," she said. "It's stressful to be exposed to the chemicals in the air. As a resident who lives in the area, I feel overlooked."

Artist Jim Gilroy, 35, walked up 32 flights to his apartment in the 39-story building to see his two cats. ASCPA volunteers implanted coded microchips in the pets they have rescued, to help unite them with owners who register at (212) 878-7700, ext. 4741.

Maura Cox, a jewelry designer, fled Tuesday with her passport and her 2½-year-old daughter. She returned alone.

"The streets look better than I thought, but it's still a war zone here. The smell of garbage is terrible and I'm concerned about asbestos — no matter what authorities say."

"Mainly, we're safe," she said. "I want to be flexible and not be in a rush to move back."

"I'm nervous for New York."

Roommates Jesse DeLeon and Richard

Mendles, both 36, paid \$2,800 a month for their 27th-floor apartment at 22 River Terrace. It faced the twin towers.

"The view was the only reason we took that apartment," DeLeon said. "We had a choice of a water view or a city view but with that view it felt like you could reach out and touch the World Trade Center."

Chances are they won't be back. "I don't like the thought of looking out at where 5,000 people were killed," Mendles said.

Robyn Cooper won't be back to her apartment at 400 Gateway Plaza, either.

"I'm not going to be some pioneer," she said. "It's going to be years and years before they rebuild, and then I may be looking over a graveyard."

Cooper left her apartment yesterday with Sketch and Skirtish, her 10-year-old daughter's hamsters.

"She's lost her home," she said. "She's lost her security. But those hamsters mean something to her, I don't care about anything else in that apartment."

"She desperately wants to go home and sleep in her bed and be with her things."

"I'm just trying to break the news that we may not go home again."

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— for 10 mins.



ROBERT ROSAMILLO DAILY NEWS

LONG WALK HOME Couple return to their home in the Wall St. area yesterday. People were allowed just one suitcase for a 10-minute retrieval of their possessions from their apartments in the devastated neighborhoods.

Stuyvesant HS, others relocate

Stuyvesant High School and seven other city schools near the World Trade Center are closed today.

Students at these schools will report to class Thursday at the following new schools and times:

■ Stuyvesant High School students report at 11 a.m. to Brooklyn Technical High School, 29 Fort Greene Place, in Brooklyn.

■ Public School students 89 should report at 8:40 a.m. to PS 3, 490 Hudson St.

■ Intermediate School students 89 should report at 8:40 to IS 70, 333 W. 17th St.

■ Students of PS 150 in Manhattan should report at 8:40 a.m. to PS 3, 490 Hudson St.

■ PS 234 students should report at 8:40 a.m. to PS 41, 116 W. 11th St.

■ High School for Leadership and Public Service students should report at 10:30 a.m. to Fashion Industries High School, 225 W. 24th St.

■ High School of Economics and Finance students should report at 1 p.m. to Norman Thomas High School, 111 E. 33rd St.

■ Students of PS 721M at Stuyvesant should report at 8:30 a.m. to PS 79M, 55 E. 120th St.

■ Murry Bergtraum High School students will reopen at the regular time Thursday.

Faculty at the evacuated schools should report to the new locations at 9 a.m. today. Staff from Murry Bergtraum should report at 9 a.m. today to the Art and Design High School, 1075 Second Ave.

Manhattan schools below Canal St. will reopen at their regular times today: PS 1, PS 2, PS 42, PS 124, PS 126, PS 130, PS 131 and the Manhattan Academy of Technology.

Alison Gendar

Closed for the day in lower Manhattan

The following will be closed today in Manhattan.

■ Schools — Stuyvesant High School, Murry Bergtraum HS, High School for Economics and Finance, High School for Leadership and Public Service, Public School/Intermediate School 89, PS 150, PS 234, PS 721M.

■ Streets — south of Canal and west of Nassau for all nonemergency auto and foot traffic.

■ Banks — south of Canal and west of Nassau.

■ Mail — No delivery to Manhattan zip codes 10004, 10005, 10006, 10007 and 10038. Residents can pick up their mail starting at 10 a.m. today at the main post office, 380 W. 33rd St., between Eighth and Ninth Aves. For information about Manhattan mail delivery, call (212) 967-8585.

■ Businesses — south of Chambers St. and west of Broadway.

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