NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK POST, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2001

HE'S GONE: Still clutching family snapshots of her missing husband, Isidro Hidalgo, Ana Rosario goes to Pier 94 yesterday to seek a death certificate for him. N.Y. Post: Francis Specker

HUNDREDS ACCEPTING SAD TRUTH

By CLEMENTE LISI, LARRY CELONA, MARK STAMEY and ANDY GELLER

They live in an emotional twilight zone.

They cling to hope that their loved ones are alive.

But they are coming to accept that they are dead.

So, by the hundreds, they are coming to the Family Center on Pier 94 to seek death certificates for the victims of the World Trade Center tragedy.

There were 305 on Wednesday — when the process began — and another 260 by yesterday afternoon.

Among them was Routhier Louis, 37, of Brooklyn, whose sister, Farah Jeudy, 31, worked in the south tower.

She was the fire warden on her floor and helped many others escape the burning structure.

But not herself.

For the last two weeks, her brother nursed hopes that she was alive, but this weekend he realized she might be dead.

Still, he found it very strange to be at the Family Center.

"My family has no body. We don't have anything to say goodbye to," he said: "I feel like I'm letting my sister down. I want tangible proof that's she's no longer with us."

At ground zero, the toll of confirmed dead yesterday was 305, while the number of missing fell to 5,960.

Before yesterday, the number of missing was set at 6,437. Mayor Giuliani said the number dropped as duplicate names were removed from the list.

Relatives have registered 4,620 people as missing, leading Giuliani to suggest the true death toll may not be as high as 5,960.

Among the 128,050 tons of debris trucked to the Freshkills Landfill on Staten Island, workers found a body yesterday. It was taken to the medical examiner's office for an autopsy.

To make it easier for workers and residents to get around, the city has cut the size of the frozen zone, opening up a swath from Chambers to Murray streets and Greenwich Street to Broadway.

And to cut down on gridlock, it has revoked permits for Manhattan street fairs.

In the morning, Hector Barreto, a Small Business Administration official, toured the disaster area and spoke with business owners.

He stopped at Cucina Bene, a pizzeria that has lost more than 50 percent of its business.

Owner Augustino Scuzzari said he usually makes 90 to 100 deliveries a day. Now, he's doing a dozen.

But Scuzzari vowed to go on.

"New York can't stop being New York," he said.

Cruel fate hit Kosovo refugee due to retire

By CLEMENTE LISI

Mon Gjonbalha was there the day the World Trade Center opened and the day terrorists destroyed it.

The 65-year-old Kosovo refugee spent 30 years working as a maintenance man on the 86th floor of the south tower.

He was going to retire on Oct. 1. But on Sept. 11, fate intervened.

At 9 a.m., he called his wife in The Bronx to say he thought a bomb had gone off in the north tower. Ten minutes later — after a hijacked airliner had smashed into the south tower — he called again.

"He sounded very panicky," his son, Sammy, recalled.

"He said, 'I can't find the exits. There's too much smoke. I can't see where I'm going. I don't know if I'll be alive, so keep the family together.'"

Mon Gjonbalha was never heard from again.

Yesterday, Sammy, 31, began the process of obtaining a death certificate.

He also brought his father's comb and toothbrush to the Family Center on Pier 94 so officials will have DNA if his father's body is found.

Sammy said that, ironically, his father had gone back to Kosovo this summer to fix up his brother's house, which was damaged in the civil war.

SAMMY GJONBALHA
Mourning for dad.

Sammy had been planning a big party for his dad's retirement.

"Now we have to plan his funeral," he said.

Brother finally seeks hero's death certificate

Carlos Lillo rushed to the World Trade Center as soon as the first plane struck.

To begin with, he was an EMS paramedic.

Secondly, his wife, Cecilia, worked on the 64th floor of the south tower.

She made it out. He is among the missing.

His brother, Cesar, said Carlos, 37, must have been frantic as he tried to help the victims of the unthinkable tragedy.

"He loved his wife; he would do anything for her, but here he was saving dozens of strangers," Cesar said.

After enduring a roller-coaster of emotions, the 38-year-old West Babylon, L.I., resident came to the Family Center on Pier 94 yesterday to seek a death certificate for his brother.

He says it was the hardest thing he has ever had to do.

"I had to come down here, even though we still have no body.

"I thought I would be blessed by finally getting a body, but we haven't even been blessed with that," he said.

"He's my hero," Cesar added. "He was helping other people when he thought his wife might still be in the building.

CESAR LILLO
Hope at an end.

She's devastated, but I need to be there for her, because my brother would do the same for me." *Clemente Lisi*

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