NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

Hope, like the smoke,

Compelled to see horror

By RALPH R. ORTEGA
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

When Lindsay Pearson got to the corner of Broadway and Liberty St. yesterday morning, she stopped in her tracks, looked west and burst into tears.

"I've seen this on TV so many times that it was beginning to take on the quality of a show," said Pearson, 57, as she stared at the rubble that was the World Trade Center.

"So I had to come to see it in person," said the teacher, who lives in the East Village. "It's too heartbreaking."

Lower Broadway was open to pedestrian traffic yesterday for the first time since last week's disaster. But instead of bustling, Broadway slowed to a crawl at Liberty and Cedar Sts., where hundreds stopped for a glimpse of the wreckage barely a block away.

"I think it's important that we see what terrorism does. Reading it in the news is bad, but seeing it first hand is devastating."

ED POIRRIER

Some, like Pearson, cried, while others stared blankly. Many people snapped photos as cops and National Guardsmen struggled to keep a path clear for emergency vehicles.

Legal assistant Anne Knight, 24, had been trying to get close to the scene of the disaster since Wall Street returned to business Monday. She said being near the destruction has helped her cope with grief.

"It clears my head," she said yesterday, while sipping iced coffee. "I say a little prayer, and it helps me sleep."

Crossing Cedar St. and Broadway, 7-year-old Brigitte Beegle demanded of her grandfather, "Lift me up, so I can see!"

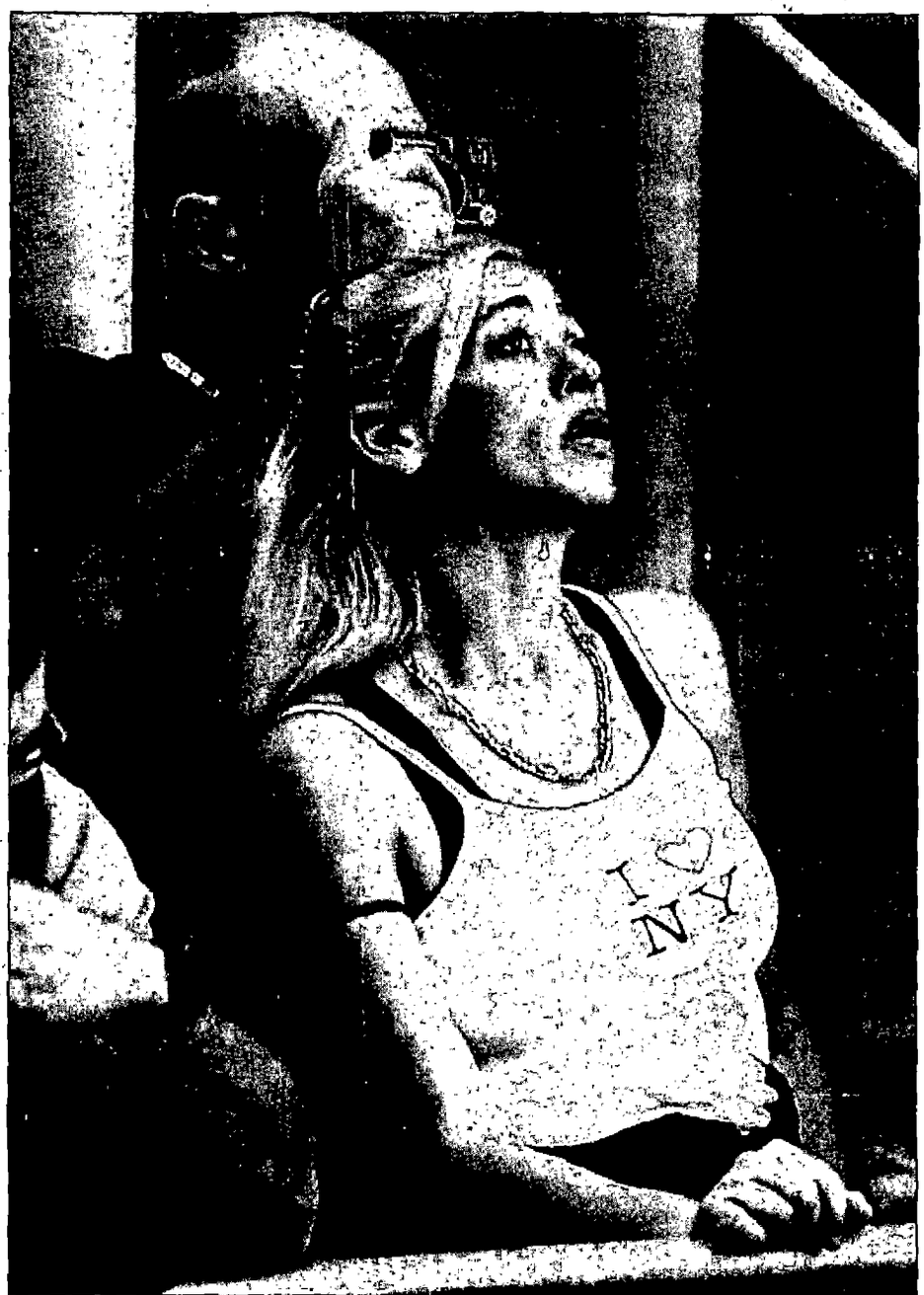
The sad-faced grandpa, Ed Poirrier, moved to a break in the crowd. The girl saw a huge crane swinging over the skeletal remains of one of the towers.

"She just finished handing out flags to the rescue workers," said Poirrier, a 54-year-old tourist from Canton, Ohio. "I think it's important that we see what terrorism does. Reading it in the news is bad, but seeing it first-hand is devastating."

Nearby, Eric Kamisher, 42, of Rowayton, Conn., spoke to his wife on his cell phone. "The pictures on television don't even capture the sense of total destruction," the software company CEO told her.

Kamisher hung up and continued to stare. The sight, he said, made him feel worse than a recent tour of the Nazi concentration camps in Dachau, Germany.

"There's 5,000 people buried in there," he said, pointing to Ground Zero. "It's a tomb."



MIKE ALBANS DAILY NEWS

BEARING WITNESS People have been flocking to points close to Ground Zero, where they can view the devastation

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dwindling to a wisp



SUSAN WATTS DAILY NEWS

firsthand. Some visitors say TV does not convey the real dimensions of the calamity.

Crews pull steel, find body parts

By GREG GITTRICH and BILL HUTCHINSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Smoke from underground fires dissipated to a rancid haze yesterday as hopes dwindled that rescuers would find anyone alive under the World Trade Center rubble.

The work at the epicenter has become a numbingly organized routine of lifting hulking pieces of twisted steel, sifting through the rubble underneath and finding only the occasional body part.

The last time a survivor was pulled from the wreckage was eight days ago. Still, Mayor Giuliani said, "The rescue effort continues," noting that nearly 60,000 tons of debris had been hauled from the scene by yesterday afternoon.

"It would be great if we could find just one more survivor," said crane operator Guy Donohue, 63, of Rockaway Beach, Queens. "It would lift everyone's spirit. We're getting discouraged and guys are getting tired."

Donohue said that every time he moves a giant piece of rubble with his 250-ton crane, teams of workers and dogs quickly move in to search for signs of life.

During a shift change at dawn yesterday, there were noticeably fewer firefighters making the trek to Ground Zero than in days past. Construction and utility workers took their places on the heap and stood patiently.

Several workers said there was not much for them to do yesterday, as cranes did most of the heavy lifting.

"We didn't see any bucket brigades," said Lt. Tom Pettigrew of the Hartford Fire Department. "It was heavy metal day. They were moving the metal most of the day, and we couldn't be anywhere near there."

Foul weather

At least two dozen Secret Service agents, walking in teams of twos and threes, entered the scene without revealing their mission.

The black boxes from the jets used by terrorists to ram the twin towers still have not been found.

The work likely will get even more dangerous today when the weather is expected to turn nasty. The National Weather Service is forecasting heavy rain throughout today and into tonight, with gusting southeast winds.

One Bronx firefighter, a 15-year veteran, emerged from working in the rubble yesterday with nothing positive to report.

"We're getting down so low in some areas that I think they [the missing victims] have all been pulverized or blown up," he said.

French President Jacques Chirac took an aerial tour of the site yesterday and came away shocked by the devastation, but uplifted by the determination of workers digging for survivors.

Words can't suffice

At a news conference with Giuliani, Chirac expressed his country's "concern and admiration" for how courageously New Yorkers have reacted.

"I think it was quite effective," Giuliani said of the tour with Chirac. "I think the view from the air shows that this is much more devastating than words or photographs can convey."

NYPD Detective Tony Barksdale, 39, of the Manhattan South Precinct, dug through the rubble from Tuesday night into yesterday morning. He said workers now have to cope with the stench of decaying remains along with frustration.

"The smell has changed," Barksdale said. "When you get close, it's sickening."

But he refused to abandon hope of finding anyone alive.

"They say there are air pockets underground," he said. "Hopefully, there are some people down there holding on."

Gov. Pataki visited the scene again yesterday and thanked the hundreds of rescuers for their work.

"They're still out there risking their lives, and we are just awfully proud of them," Pataki said.

He said he was astonished that so much of lower Manhattan has bounced back so quickly.

"It hasn't taken a miracle," he said. "It has taken a herculean effort by thousands of people."

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