NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Out of the pit, back to the floor

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MY first week back to The New York Stock Exchange was sad, emotional and strengthening.

The first person I ran into was the security guard who had grabbed me from the dust when the first of the towers collapsed. It brought back all of the visions of the week before.

When the attack first hit, I was in my office which overlooks the NYSE floor.

When I saw the first tower on fire on television, I ran outside to the corner of Broadway and Wall Street so I could call CNBC.

I was standing in the same spot on Broadway, watching the tragedy unfold, when the first of the two towers collapsed, causing the earth to shake and the air to turn black with dust and debris.

Everyone I was standing with on Broadway ran for their lives, including myself. We weren't sure if the earth beneath us was exploding upwards.

We ran with nowhere in mind, until one person noticed a small stairwell going downstairs into the basement of a building across the street from the NYSE.

I ran for cover into that stairwell and stayed put for the next 15 minutes of the explosion of flying steel and papers. I didn't know any of the five or six people I was huddled with. I just remember one woman crying loudly.

I did eventually get the strength to cover my face and make it across the street to finally see the closed doors of the NYSE, and run to my favorite security guard. My clothes and hair were covered in white soot and smoke.

Most people I ran into that first day were sympathetic and seemed somewhat fragile. There were hugs and handshakes everywhere, with traders who may have been stark competitors thanking God their rivals were still alive and well.

I arrived to the NYSE earlier than normal, about 5:30 a.m., and already, **Dick Grasso** and Treasury Secretary **Paul O'Neil** were walking around the empty floor, getting ready to go on camera with CNBC and The Today Show and every other media outlet to discuss the opening. They wanted it to be orderly, and they were ready to lead. Their leadership and, mostly, Mayor Giuliani's will be long remembered.

Everyone expected a sharply lower opening for stock prices after not being able to trade for 4 days — and that is exactly what we saw.

No surprise, The Dow lost 668 points on Day One. But no one cared, really.

People were sad over losing friends and colleagues and basically in shock that the trade towers could actually come down.

The opening bell on that Monday was incredibly patriotic. No one made a move during the 2 minutes of silence at 9:30am and there was a sense of pride on the floor as Mayor Giuliani, Gov. **George Pataki**, Treasury Secretary O'Neil, NYSE CEO Grasso, Senators **Chuck Schumer** and **Hillary Clinton** all praised the firefighters, EMTs, and NYPD who rang the bell. They are our heroes.

Comments such as "battling back," and "The strength of America" emanated after we all sang "God Bless America" before the official start to trading.

For the first three days of the week, some people just went through the motions and didn't really care to get busy as much as they cared about commiserating.

Throughout much of the week of the tragedy, I had gone from task to task, covering every event and comment from people involved.

It wasn't until last Thursday — two days after the attack — that it began to sink in on another level: Many of my friends were gone. Suddenly the situation took on a different feeling for me.

A long-time high school friend, 33-year-old Jackie Sayegh, is one of the most innocent women you would ever meet. She remains missing. God please bless her.

Visions of so many others that I am not able to mention here dominated my thoughts toward the end of the week and into next.

By Thursday and Friday, it appeared that people, while still hurt, wanted to move on.

The major affected brokerages had opened makeshift offices in uptown areas of New York and in New Jersey. They were even generating analyst research in an attempt to get back to normalcy.

I have walked by the site of the trade towers several times since the incident and I continue to be in awe at the sight of so much steel and debris piled maybe 40 stories high with who really knows how many bodies underneath.

It is a strange feeling and simply unreal.

As amazing as the scene looks, it does not even reflect how deeply this has hit so many people. The memorials began this past weekend and I suspect will be going on for some time to come.

In retrospect, as tough as this has been to endure, Wall Street reacted in typical form. People embraced one another. They have pulled together, have become more patriotic than ever and have recognized what is important in life.

Incidentally, the stories of gentlemen's agreements not to sell stocks into this market in my opinion have been greatly exagerated. This is a business, and markets will go where they will go. No one group is dictating where a $15 trillion market will move.

The good news is that at the end of the day, America is the strongest nation in the world. I am not sure how this incident will be written about in the history books, but I think I know how Wall Street will be characterized: strong, patriotic, unified. Perhaps, down but not out.

■ *Maria Bartiromo is an anchor at CNBC.*



SOMBER: During the moment of silence before the opening of trading, everyone on the floor of the Exchange was motionless. Reuters

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