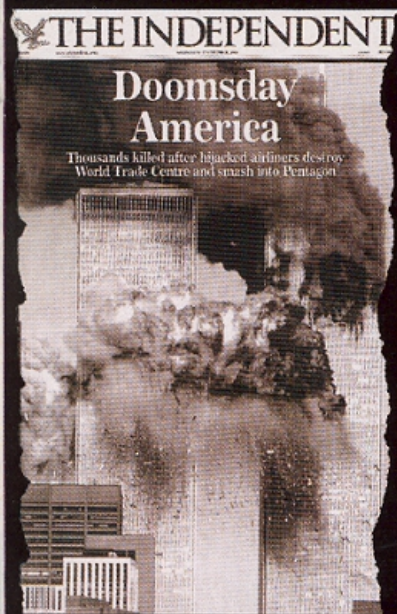


THE DAY THAT TOUCHED US ALL

September 11: one day in history that remains very much in our present. But how are those events still affecting us, one year on? And can the victims' families ever find it in their hearts to forgive?

Words: LESLEY THOMAS and JANE HUGHES





'While, intellectually, you can take in what has happened, your emotions will not believe it. What people were doing when they were glued to their television sets was trying to make it sink in'



The world became a different place for all of us on September 11 2001. After two hijacked planes smashed into the World Trade Centre and another into The Pentagon, causing the collapse of New York's Twin Towers, global politics were transformed. But in our everyday lives, too, we were all affected, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Everybody seemed to know someone who knew someone who was killed or had miraculously escaped. In the weeks that followed, we clung to our friends and family – not just because we thought there would be more attacks, but also because we all thought: 'There but for the grace of God go I.'

'It was as though nearly the whole world was traumatised,' says Gladeana McMahon, a psychologist who specialises in trauma. As a nation, we displayed classic post-trauma behaviour, she says. This is why, for days after the attacks, we seemed gruesomely transfixed by the images of the atrocities. According to McMahon, 'In such situations, it is typical that while, intellectually, you can take in what has happened, your emotions will not believe it. What people were doing when they were glued to their television sets was trying to make it sink in.'

Once we had got over the shock, security was uppermost in our minds. 'People became preoccupied with safety,' says McMahon. 'If they could do nothing about global security, they would do something about emotional security, and they focused on their relationships. People wanted to live for the day. The downside was people thinking there was no point in planning for the future. More positively, people made a point of telling loved ones how they felt.'

Materialism and conspicuous consumerism became dirty words. Fashion houses toned down their collections accordingly. Parties were cancelled. But how long did it last? After a few weeks of touchy-feelings and comradeship, for those of us lucky enough not to have lost friends or relatives, our worlds returned to normal. New York cab drivers went back to being rude, and sick Twin-Towers jokes began to circulate. Six months after the attacks, touts were selling 'souvenir' photographs around Ground Zero. A handbag was produced by an Australian fashion label, earlier this year, with the image of a plane heading for the World Trade Centre.

Others bounced back in a more positive way. Dozens of charities have been set up in memory of those that died. Cantor Fitzgerald, the city broker that lost two-thirds of its staff, set a target of raising \$130 million for bereaved families.

But when the words 'September 11' – or '9/11' as Americans call it – are dropped into conversation now, few of us really think about what happened that day. Though deeply shaken, we recovered quickly and threw ourselves back into our lives.

While there is clearly no limit on grieving time, it usually takes around two years to accept the loss of a loved one. Relatives of the British victims (67 Britons; plus 20 more with close UK family ties) have suffered a strange and public bereavement over the past year. Here, two women who lost family members reveal how they have tried to cope.

Maureen Maddison, 38, lost her husband and the father of her three children Caileigh, eight, Kyle, five, and Sydney, two, in the attack. Essex-born Simon Maddison, 40, worked in New York as a computer consultant. He was on the 103rd floor of the north tower when it was hit.

Seeing Simon's building on fire is an image I'll never forget. It is seared in my mind forever. I tried frantically to contact him. My heart raced each time the phone rang. Then people stopped ringing, and that was worse. I had to be strong for the children, but I was on automatic pilot.

The first time I saw Simon, at a beach house party in New Jersey in the summer of 1993, I was struck by how handsome he was. Better still, he was clever, funny, caring and thoughtful. We would meet every day, even though he lived in New York and I was in New Jersey.

Once I cut my finger badly and had to go to hospital. There was a snowstorm, but Simon came out by train and walked the last two miles to see me. When I went to Ireland for a week with my brother, Simon gave him little presents and letters for me to open each day.

We got married in April 1994. Simon and I only spent one night away from the children in eight years. We went away for his 40th birthday but all he wanted to do was rush back the next morning to see the kids. It was wonderful to watch him watching them grow. One of my lasting memories of him is our last evening together. We weren't doing anything special – but the way he beamed at the children will always stay with me.

Simon's body has never been found. I can only hope and believe he died instantly. In the first few days following the incident I took Sydney, my youngest, to a lab so that her mouth could be swabbed for DNA. Eventually, I had to tell the children that God had taken daddy up to heaven the way he was and that we will make a special place for him when we're ready.

Even as I said it, it was a struggle to accept that we'd never see him



again. Simon was always at his happiest with his family around him. It hurts terribly that he was robbed of that and can't be there for them.

At the memorial service for British victims at Westminster Abbey last year, Caleigh and Kyle presented a posy to the Queen. They were so proud of their father and meeting the Queen reinforced their sense of how special he was.

I started going to a September 11 survivors' group. It was difficult, because I felt so raw, but it felt comforting to be with people that I didn't have to explain myself to, because they knew how I felt. I feel more ready to deal with things outside now, but we still meet once or twice a month.

Being bombarded with media images of the attack has made it difficult for us to move on, though I know it's important to keep these events in the public mind. In May, for the first time, I forced myself to watch footage of the planes going into the towers and the buildings collapsing. I needed the half-bottle of wine in my fridge after that.

I've gone back to my part-time job as a speech therapist, which helps me focus on the moment. But I hear Simon in my head all the time. When I pull a pair of Kyle's

'Simon was always at his happiest with his family around him. It hurts terribly that he was robbed of that'



trousers from the washing machine, I hear him saying, 'Are you sure you checked his pockets?' Kyle is a collector and I do inadvertently put his latest treasure through the wash. When I find something, I'll say out loud: 'I know Simon, I know.'

My parents, sisters, brothers and their spouses have all stepped in to be at my side. Simon's family have come to see me, and call and email all the time. Friends, neighbours, even strangers have given me new faith in the human spirit. A couple in North Carolina I have never met asked if they could send money each month. Adults and children have sent cards and gifts and, when it snowed, our driveway was cleared in the middle of the night.

Kyle is a real healing force. Once the doorbell rang, there was no one there. Kyle said: 'Don't worry, it was just daddy calling by to say hello.'

Those responsible for the attack

have done irreparable damage to each life touched by those who died. I don't think I could ever forgive them. There has to be some responsibility.

No one could have imagined the horror of what happened, but I'm angry that, with the intelligence they had, the government did not tighten security at airports. It's now being tightened, but could still be better.

I've had to relearn everything. I no longer have someone to cuddle up to in bed. I can't think, 'Well if I get half the parenting right, Simon will take care of the other half.'

Yet even with all the support, I'm profoundly sad. The Maureen I was – fulfilled, contented – died that day too, hand in hand with her husband.

The kids are my strength. Caleigh reminded me that Simon tickled them all the time. So each night we have a tickle fest. On our big bed we say, 'The daddy tickle fest has now begun.' It's amazing how laughing on the bed together purges the bad things of the day and gives me hope for the future.>

THE PERSONAL FALLOUT OF SEPTEMBER 11

BECKY JEFFERY, personal trainer 'It was my 30th birthday on September 11 last year; I was on holiday with my boyfriend. My birthday has become a very negative day. I can't mention it without people being shocked and saying, "Poor you". How the world deals with it will affect the way I feel about it.'

DOMINIC HOLLAND, comedian and author 'I had a gig that evening, which couldn't be cancelled. The comics backstage, and the audience, were wondering just how appropriate it would be laughing and joking with the news of the towers' collapse still ringing in our ears. It was a while before anyone felt they could let rip. Some things can't be made light of.'

EVE REPORT

Sarah Redheffer, 35, from Enfield, was in the south tower of the World Trade Centre on the 106th floor on September 11. Recently married, she was at the height of her career as a conference organiser and was looking forward to starting a family. Her mother, Sue Prothero, 57, tells her story.

When Sarah got married she wore my wedding dress. We didn't have to make a single alteration. It fitted perfectly. It seemed a very natural thing for her to do, because we were so close. Wherever Sarah was in the world, she would talk to me two, maybe three, times a week. That Saturday she had called and said: 'I'm leaving to go to New York in half an hour Mum.' It was the last time I spoke to her.

Every mother imagines improbable things happening to their child, but when it really does, you can't take it in. The realization that Sarah was never coming home again didn't happen suddenly, it sort of seeped into my brain.

September 11 started as a typical day for us. My husband, David, a vicar, was out in the parish. I was shopping. David passed a shop that had a television on. He saw the news clips of the Twin Towers and thought: 'Golly, Sarah's in New York today.' But he didn't fully connect the two things.

I knew Sarah was in the World Trade Centre, but even then I didn't automatically think that she could have been killed. Images of the towers collapsing kept appearing on the television over and over, but we weren't really watching. We just couldn't take it in. I thought about the family holiday that we'd all just been on. It was unusual for the family to go away together, but my younger daughter Jane was getting married in Cyprus. I had images of Sarah, laughing and joking with her sister and husband, Eric, in my head. I started ringing her mobile and carried on doing it all day long. Eric rang to say that he was trying to reach her, too. I just kept thinking: 'I know she'll phone to let us know that she's OK. But, of course, she didn't.'

Even days after September 11, I couldn't accept that she was gone. I tried to work out how long she could still be alive in the rubble. In my head that was three or four

days: you hear of people found weeks later, after earthquakes. I thought: 'Sarah could last that out. She's a strong person.' But, of course, this wasn't just a collapsed building. The phone didn't stop ringing and I still kept thinking it would be Sarah or a call to say she'd been found and was in hospital suffering from amnesia or something. It wasn't until a week later that we realised what floor she'd been on. The plane hit at the 98th floor. Sarah was on the 106th. But even then, there was a part of me still hoping she was still alive. If I'm honest, I still think I might wake to find it has been a horrible dream.

We received hundreds of letters from Sarah's friends and colleagues. Each morning we would spend an hour opening post. They brought a lot of tears but many held stories of Sarah that I didn't know. The despair I felt, that her life had been cut off like that, turned into realising that her life had been so full – full of things I didn't even know about, and that really, really helped.

A lot of British families flew to New York, but I didn't want to. When something like this happens, you imagine another member of the family could easily be taken away from you at any moment. We just wanted to cling to one another.

We couldn't hold a funeral for Sarah, because there's no body. But we held a memorial service. I still hope they might find something. I have a letter from the Mayor of New York's office saying they've removed the rubble from Ground Zero. It says, 'Investigations will continue.' How will they do that? Where do they take the 'rubble'? I know what jewellery is missing

VICKY KNIGHT, British firefighter 'We've had nothing on the same scale, but you go through the same emotions and do the same job. We have a quote: "Remember the dead and fight for the living." It didn't make me think of quitting – fire fighting is a vocation rather than just a job.'

SARAH NELSON, Samaritan 'There was an increase in calls after September 11. We ran an awareness campaign around it and had Samaritans at airports, at the American Embassy and at the remembrance service at St Paul's Cathedral. The anniversary could provoke another increase in calls.'



Sarah Redheffer's mother Sue Prothero has set up a charity in her memory



'Repeated references to September 11 don't help... It could be about property or holidays – September 11 is always part of the story'

from her collection, so there's still a chance that they'll find something.

It would be wrong to say life without Sarah has got easier. The number of times I cry during the week has decreased. I can smile and laugh now; but this is too big a thing to just let go of. Repeated references to September 11 don't help. Just as you're thinking 'I'll sit down to *Morse*' or something, it's suddenly there. It could be an item about property or holidays – September 11 is always part of the story.

It's hard to connect losing Sarah with the conflicts that arose after her death. It seems as if the world was normal until that day and since then it has gone mad.

I'm not angry with the terrorists. I'm just very sad that people can feel such hatred. I am very aware that there is a lack of concern and care in the wealthy West for the rest of the world. For the children's charity set up in Sarah's name, we earmarked £5,000 for children in Afghanistan. Sarah loved children. Babies were definitely on the cards for her. It was something that was about to happen. She contributed to Save the Children and Christian Aid herself, so I wanted that to continue in some way.

People say: 'You'll feel better soon,' but it's not something that I want to recover from. ☹️
Donations can be made by sending a cheque or postal order to: The Sarah Redheffer Appeal, St Mary's PCC, Bathwick Rectory, Sham Castle Lane, Bath, BA2 6JL