

Eternally Connected to the World Trade Center

Contributed by Sue
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I had the pleasure of taking my two young sons on a field trip to New York City recently. My sons, ages six and three, were thrilled to ride on the trains to the city. I decided to take them to the Hudson River Playground as our destination. While I thought of every mobile convenience, such as drinks, handi-wipes, snacks, cell phone and backpack, what I failed to think of were the powerful emotions that would be stirred by the sight of Ground Zero. On the morning of September 11, 2001, I was home with my newborn son (now six). My husband had just left home to begin his commute to work in New York. He would catch a train to Hoboken connecting with a PATH train to 23rd Street in the Chelsea district, NYC. It was a stunningly beautiful day, weatherwise. Newsradio was on as I got myself ready for the day. I heard a report of a plane hitting the 'Twin Towers', so I turned on the television for a look. Early reports suggested this was a small charter plane. The pictures showed a tower charred from impact of what I thought was a single engine plane. 'Oh geeze', I thought, 'that's gonna leave a mark'. And so, as the reports of the event kept me glued to the television, I began to think of my history with the 'Twin Towers'. In the 1970's, my neighborhood friends and their father invited my brother and me to join their family for a pre-opening tour of the amazing 'Twin Towers'. Living in New Jersey, we had been watching the construction from nearby and were honored to have a private tour. We piled into their station wagon and had a wonderful time. From that day on, I felt a special connection to the World Trade Center. In the early 1980's my parents treated me to brunch at Windows on the World, the world class restaurant at the top of the North Tower. In the late 1980's, I was a young adult. I commuted to the the Wall Street district via PATH train into the WTC where I would ride the steepest escalator up to the shopping mall, and on to the street level. I loved being part of the ultra-hip, suit-scene in the financial district. In the 1990's, I worked for American Express. Though I mainly stayed in New Jersey for my job, the American Express offices and training facility was in the downtown district, where I easily attended several training classes and meetings. The WTC parking garage car bomb in 1993 made me think of New York as being as much a target as any international city, but I maintained that false sense of security of thinking - "this is the United States, THAT doesn't happen HERE!", Prior to the having my first child, I considered pursuing a job in the 7 World Trade Building. It was an exciting, historic and professionally fulfilling place to be. I took pride in showing out-of-town visitors the impressive towers and the memorable view from high above the city. August, 2001, two weeks prior to the September 11th events, my husband took his teenage daughter, visiting for the summer, to the South Street Seaport and Wall Street district for a tour. The two of them ended a marvelous day at the top of the World Trade Center observation deck during sunset. They took dozens of photographs and even had their picture taken outside the elevators on the observation deck. We still had that souvenir photograph on the refrigerator at the time of the attacks. September, 2001, my brother invited my parents back to the Windows on the World for a wine tasting event. I watched as the second plane hit. Oh my God! It's a suicide mission. We are under attack! My husband was now on his way into New York. I wondered if he knew what was going on from the train. I had no way to get in touch with him because we didn't have cell phones yet. Not fearing for his immediate safety, I knew he was en route to Chelsea, and not the WTC. Still, it was obvious, the city was going into a lock-down, and he needed to just get back home. As the catastrophic events unfolded on live television, with the threat of hijacked planes crashing in other locations, I looked at our newborn child, knowing the world as we knew it would never be the same. I wondered what kind of world he would grow up in. Like so many that day, I was continuously on the phone with frantic family and friends accounting for everyone we know, exchanging info, and sharing emotions. My brother-in-law worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 102nd floor of the North Tower. He was late getting out the door to work that morning, and it saved his life. Cantor was one of the hardest hit companies in the Twin Towers. I kept even-keeled so as not to upset my newborn baby. (That's an honest excuse for the shock I was in over it all.) Now my baby is a fun, six-year-old boy with a little brother. Our train-riding field trip to New York this summer was an adventure for them. It occurred to me during this innocent field trip that my children represent the post-9/11 generation. They will always have security issues, communication devices, suspicions and fears of something like this happening so close to home again. They may learn the history of these horrific events as they grow, but they may never fully feel the deep emotional connection, nor will they ever look across the river upon the famous skyline as it once was, but I promise they will always share my pride in it.