

[Kincey's story, with a few supplementary and editorial comments by me --- in brackets bp]

...

So, I had arrived about 8:30 a.m. on the 64th floor [of World Trade Center Tower

Number 2 where Kincey has been consulting four days a week to Morgan Stanley/Dean Witter since March] and was calling Diana [Josephson] and talking with her secretary when I heard an explosion (but not a big deal, more like a pop) and saw flaming papers blowing around to our side of the Tower. It didn't really look that serious, but clearly something had happened.

I got off the phone and grabbed my purse, palm [Pilot] and phone.

When I came out

into the corridor there was an alarm (not the one I had heard before in drills) sounding and I proceeded to the staircase. I got inside and realized that I had not brought my computer. I stood there for about 5 minutes waiting for someone to come into the stairwell so I could get back out and get my computer. There was a steady stream of people moving down the stairs--many of whom urged me to move down. So, I said to myself, "This is crazy, leave the computer" and started down the stairs.

When we reached the 59th floor, someone in communication with the authorities got the word that everything was ok, and we came out of stairwell on 59 and got into the elevator and went to 44. Since 44 is the place where the big elevators drop you off to get to the local elevators, that was the only place we could really go.

There were lots of people on 44 and when we got off the elevator, a guy is speaking to people over a bull horn telling everyone to go back to their offices. "Tower 2 is secure, the best place for you is in your office. If you want to evacuate, you will have to use the stairs, you cannot use the elevators." (Another example of where listening to authorities can be a very bad thing.) The woman standing next to me (who might have survived the '93 bombing) says, "I smell electrical smoke and there's no way I am going back to my office."

I, however, am strongly considering it because I left my computer. Just at that moment (and I am glad it wasn't a minute later), the second plane hit. Glass didn't break, but there was a huge pressure wave that came across the floor--strong enough to make the floor boards in front of the big elevators flap up. Everyone panicked, started screaming and running to the other side of the floor. The guy with the bull horn calmed people down and told everyone to move to the stairwells.

(When I got to a TV and saw the video, it was hard to believe it wasn't worse. The pictures of the plane plowing through the building were incredible. In retrospect, I said "How could a building as big as the WTC come down in 50 minutes?" After reading that the building was built to handle a 707 and it was the steel melting and the top 30 stories collapsing that caused the collapse, I was impressed that it lasted for as long as it did.)

[In Grenada, in the Eastern Caribbean, I was staying with Alister and Margaret Hughes, just outside the capital of St. George's, and Margaret got a

call from a friend to
"Watch the TV, there's a plane just hit the World Trade Center."
---we started to
watch the live cable TV on four or five different channels, including
CNN and the BBC
just about the time that the second plane hit Tower # 2. I didn't know for sure
which Tower Kincey was in (or which Tower was actually hit when), but
I did know
she was on the 64th floor, and I sure thought the second plane cut into that
building close to there. To this day, I do not know exactly which
floor(s) each
plane hit.]

The descent was very orderly. People didn't panic. There was a black woman
singing Jesus hymns next to me and I noticed that she was passing me. She
dropped a bunch of papers, and people stopped and helped her pick them up.
There were women's shoes on every other landing--they discarded the high
heels and the uncomfortable open back shoes. (Why they didn't just carry
them, I don't know and they probably didn't either when they got to the
street. In fact, later when the tower fell and we all turned and ran, I
overheard one woman say, "I should have grabbed my shoes before I started to
run--that's the second pair of shoes I have lost today, and I am really
pissed.")

By this time people are saying that the first explosion was a plane, but
there were different stories about whether it was a small plane or an
airliner. It was such a beautiful day, but it never occurred to me to
think that it couldn't have been an accident. Instead I am thinking, "Where
were the air controllers?"

Our stairwell ended on the mezzanine level which is at the plaza level above
the ground floor. They led us down two tiny escalators that the tourists
use to get up the the mezzanine level. . I am thinking "what a
bottleneck--they don't have this evacuation drill very well planned" There
was debris on the plaza and also on the first floor, but in retrospect it
doesn't seem as great as I would have thought.

Then they led us through the shopping center under the plaza to the exit
away from the towers. It was all very calm, but there didn't seem to be
that many people. I kind of expected there to be people pouring out of
multiple stairwells, but it was only the stream of people coming from out
stairs. (I don't know how that worked because there had to be a lot more
people when you consider that 35,000 to 40,000 people got out.) I didn't
look at my watch. I thought it took me about 30 minutes to get down, but
since it was a total of 50 minutes before the building collapse, I think it
must have been more like 35 minutes.

[I also doubted that they could have evacuated the towers so quickly, or
that they would have started evacuating Tower #2 as early as they
apparently did.

[I kept thinking of Kincey's first experience at the World Trade
Center when we moved to New York City in 1980. She came back from a job
interview there, and imbued with all of the skepticism nurtured by five years
of living in the US Virgin Islands (rotating power outages for most of the last
six months), she said, "This place just can't work---they told me when the
wind blows over 35 mph, they even have to stop the elevators to the

top of the World Trade Tower!"]

When we got out of the building I looked back and saw both towers burning. I still didn't know that a second plane had hit and thought maybe the first tower had blown fire over to tower 2. It was a sickening site though--I didn't see any way the firemen could put out that fire. It reminded me of the Angelina Lauro. . . . [An Italian cruise ship that burned at the dock in St.

Thomas in 1978. Our apartment in Charlotte Amalie had a great view of the whole thing, which took about three days to burn out. In a small irony it was the sister ship of the Angelina Lauro---the Achille Lauro---that was hijacked by Arab terrorists in the Med, and on which a Jewish-American tourist was killed.]

. . . It seemed like a very bad movie.

There was a lot of glass on the street from windows in other buildings that had blown out.

I decided to try and get back to my apartment [in Battery Park City --- about four blocks straight line from Tower #2, but probably 10 blocks on the route Kinsey had to take around both buildings and emergency vehicles.] . . . making a big circle around the emergency workers. I really wanted to be able to listen to the news and thought I would be safe in the apartment. I was walking pretty fast, but got turned around at one point. There were lots of people on the streets--clearly other buildings were being evacuated. From someone I heard that the second tower had been hit by a plane.

I was about a block from my apartment when I heard a huge roar--like a train. I looked up and saw cloud of ash/smoke barrelling down on me. I and everyone else turned and ran as fast as we could. It was like a volcano. I ducked behind a building thinking that I would be protected from the debris. The cloud reached me and I put my jacket over my head and over my nose to breathe through it. I knew where I was and started walking down to the river away from the towers. People were trying to get into buildings, but I thought "No this is too close and the air conditioning is going to go off." [Very cool thinking---maybe all those power outages in St. Thomas taught us something!] So I kept walking.

At Battery park, a policemen was giving away the contents of one of the vendors' carts. There was no water, but I took an iced tea. Then I saw a bottle of water on the ground--maybe someone dropped it in panic. I picked it up and then saw two people sitting in the brick window of the fort with a screaming child. So I took the water over to them saying I hoped it would help.

When I got as far as I could go--right across from Roosevelt Island [I'm pretty sure this should be either Governor's Island or Ellis Island in NY Harbor---Roosevelt Island is up the East River, north of the UN]--I hung out. Eventually the cloud dispersed--thankfully there was a strong breeze. There were a fair number of people, but most people must have started walking north. Several people had dogs, so they were clearly residents of the area. The ash was bad--it stuck in your throat, and felt gritty on your skin. Fortunately the vendors who sell to the Statute of Liberty trade started handing out the water they had to anyone who wanted it. So you

could use that to wash out your eyes and throat. People were in shock. Someone said that the Pentagon was on fire. All I could think was "George W is in charge, he is not going to be able to handle this."

I pulled out my phone and kept trying to dial Diana to have her send a email to you, since I thought that was the best way to reach you. A while after I hung up after talking to her, I began to wonder if I had given her the right address because I never type it. But I couldn't get through again until I was walking from Jersey City to Hoboken. Which messages did you receive? I felt so badly that you had to go through the whole day without knowing.

[Kincey had never gotten the Hughes's phone number in Grenada. I tried her cell phone several times, but was never able to get through. In the early afternoon, I asked our neighbor Steve Fuller in Annapolis to check the answering machine at home to see if there was any word. Finally about 6 PM I borrowed the Hughes's computer in St. George's and checking my e-mail I learned from messages from Diana Josephson, Joan Geer and Peter Potter that Kincey was OK. Pete provided some details . . .]

The second tower fell and there was another wave of ash. Everyone just hunkered down and put cloth over their face.

[I thought Kincey was dead. I didn't believe that the towers could have been evacuated as well as they were, and that people would have been far enough away to be safe when they collapsed. I told the Hughes's that I thought the death toll would be in the 10's of thousands.]

I am still thinking that I can eventually get back to my apartment, and I was talking to firemen and local residents to see what they thought. When the boats started coming in the firemen are saying, " you should leave, spend a couple of hours wherever they take you and then they will bring you back". That didn't seem right to me--I knew once I got off I wouldn't be able to get back.

So this big Army Corps of Engineers work boat pulls up and we are told everyone should get aboard. The New Yorker next to me says, " Where is this boat going to take me." The crewman says, " I don't know--away from Manhattan." The New Yorker said "That's not good enough. I'm not going to get on just any boat. I want to know where I am going. Let me speak to the guy who is driving this boat." Love those New Yorkers.

Someone said the green boat was going to Jersey City. I said ok, that's for me because I can get to Hoboken from there.

Other refugees on the boat, kept asking me if I was ok. I said yes, I'm fine I like boats. [Sounds like a line from the unsinkable Molly Brown. Is this a tough lady or what? . . .]

We landed right next to Exchange Place which is where the Sapiant offices [a sub-contractor on the project Kincey was working on at Morgan Stanley] are. I thought this is great, I'll just go up to Sapiant and I can use the bathroom (all that water and tea) and use the phone. But all of the offices on the water and for several blocks back had been evacuated. It was like a ghost city. We were dumped off the boat with no place to go. I kept asking the policeman where I could find a bathroom and no one had any ideas. I walked back away from the water and the only building that didn't seem to

be abandoned was housing for the elderly. I asked if I could use the bathroom and the woman manager told me where to find it. I was washing my face when she came in and said she needed to make a copy of my id for the record. So the nation is under terrorist attack and she needs to get a copy of my id--this lady follows the rules.

I was directed to the spot where buses to Hoboken were supposed to pick up passengers. Then the policeman said they were coming, but he didn't know when and suggested that we walk--it was only a mile. So I started walking, but it was a lot more than a mile. About three quarters of the way, buses started passing me. When I got to Hoboken, I tried to flag down a taxi, but he wouldn't stop--he was the only one I saw the entire time. There were a lot of people walking, trying to get to a train station to catch a train home.

It's a good thing that I could stay with Charlene [Haykel, a friend of 30-years standing who has lived in Hoboken for the past 15 years or so. Charlene also works in Lower Manhattan, but had been late getting to work that morning and was still in Hoboken when the first plane hit.] . . . because there was absolutely no way to get back into Manhattan. Diana, David and MB offered me a place to stay, but I couldn't get there. And I don't think they made any provisions for the refugees. I don't know what people did who didn't live in NJ. As I walked through Hoboken (which seemed much more normal than Jersey City), I noticed people sitting at outdoor tables with the "badge" of WTC ash.

I was worried about Charlene since I thought she was downtown also. Turns out she was late and was in the Path station when she got the word about the first plane hitting. She was so concerned about me that she, Marianna, Howard and a couple visiting them had gone to church. She was in tears when I got upstairs.

A number of people reached me when I was walking including David, Carolyn, Sandy Devine, John Switzer, Diane Hartingh, Rick the exAmser who is now at the Skin Clinic who PJ had called. Joann reached me in mid afternoon after I had reached Char's. I didn't talk to Elizabeth until I got back to Annapolis, but she had called the woman who used to take care of her mother in Mississippi and had the black church praying for me.

It was so frustrating to see the number of mail messages constantly going up on my cell phone and not be able to get back to people or even know who was calling. Both the land lines and the cell lines were totally jammed. We went out in the afternoon to find a charger because my phone was running down, but the only one I could find (and that was the last one at Radio Shack) was a plug in for the car. It worked the first time, but not later. We finally went out the next day and got a wall plug charger. I woke up at 3:30 a.m. the next morning and when I couldn't go back to sleep realized that it was a great time to get my voice mail over the land lines. I had 16 messages and from some people that still didn't know I was ok. The level of concern is probably the thing that has had the most impact on me. For some people it was about having someone you knew in the WTC, but most of it was genuine concern for me which is quite touching.

[Kincey and I were able to talk

first about 8AM on Wednesday after the disaster, when I called from Grenada. She spent Wednesday and Thursday with Charlene, and then on Friday (I think) she made her way into midtown Manhattan to buy a replacement computer, and then got a train back to Maryland.]

So, that's it. It is wondrous to me that so many people got out. I think the earlier bomb experience helped a lot--most people didn't hesitate, they immediately moved to get out. But is also horrifying that over 350 firemen died, as well as many policemen. And they were probably doomed from the beginning.

The logistics of the rescue/recovery operation have been impressive. The first night they took out over 100 dump trucks as the workers moved the large debris to try and get to people. In the end they only pulled 5 people from the wreckage alive. The two towers contained enough concrete to build a 5 ft sidewalk from NYC to DC; 14 acres of glass and enough steel to build 14 Eiffel towers. Not to mention all the furniture, file cabinets and computers.

And Juliani [Giuliani]]is some kind of leader. He was on the scene from the beginning--very emotional but saying all the right things a leader should. Unlike GW who looked like a scared little boy. GW is getting better, but when he talks about "leading the world to victory and eliminating evil" I shudder.

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[... and thanks to all of you and to the church in Mississippi for your concern and prayers. I think they worked]

God Bless us all. ...

Kincey and Bruce

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Potters
818 Bywater Road
Annapolis, MD 21401

Home Phone: 410.280.6254 home fax: 410.268.2640

Bruce's Office: 202/265-9712 off fax: 202/232-0748

Kincey's Cell Phone: 703 919 9738

E-mail: <kincey@kincey.com> <bpotter@irf.org> URL:<http://www.irf.org>
