

TOWER STORIES: An Oral History of 9/11

By Damon DiMarco

INTRODUCTION

by the author

THE stories you're about to read are distilled from interviews conducted in the year following September 11th, 2001. In every case, great effort was made to capture the speaker's inimitable tone, viewpoint, and rhythm of speech.

If, while reading, you begin to imagine what the speaker looks like, or the particular gestures he or she might make to illustrate a point—if the voice you are experiencing begins to take on a life of its own in your mind—then perhaps this book's mission has succeeded.

Previously, this book was published under the title *Tower Stories: The Autobiography of September 11th, 2001*. This second edition features slight revisions of certain interviews to clarify ambiguities in chronology and meaning. Additionally, a few stories have been graced with codas in this version by virtue of subsequent conversations that took place in late 2006 and early 2007. The result is, to my mind, a superior book to the first edition and a document that more roundly addresses the impact of 9/11.

The *Tower Stories* project sprang from the disturbing notion that the memory of September 11th might one day quietly fade from world consciousness. Human history crawls through the sands of time like a snake towing a trowel in its wake. Despite the best efforts we exert to preserve our tracks, they inevitably disappear, wiped clean behind us or forever blurred into causal statements devoid of human feeling and as mysterious as ancient Zen koans.

Pearl Harbor was the event that prompted the United States to enter the Second World War . . . the Holocaust claimed the lives of six million people . . . JFK was assassinated in Dallas, Texas . . . Harry Truman dropped the bomb . . . the United States was attacked on September 11th, 2001. . . .

And so on. Long ago, our species learned to boilerplate tragedy.

The mission for *Tower Stories* was to create a book that was personal, real, accessible, and nonpartisan—something reflective of human nature as it manifested itself on the 11th—full of foibles, fear, longing, community, sorrow, and yes, a considerable amount of pride where heroism warranted it.

Or, if you prefer, the mission could be stated like this: to write a book that someday our grandchildren could read. Because when they start to ask questions—and they *will* ask questions—how much better would it be to pull a copy off the shelf, hand it to them, and

say, “Here. Maybe this will help. These are the voices of the people who were there. I bet they’ll tell you what happened much better than I can. When you’re finished reading, come find me. Let’s sit down together. We can talk for as long as you like.”

If we give our grandchildren free access to our history, maybe they’ll come up with better answers than we have. We might just save them a few mistakes.

After all, what else are we here for? ■

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www.towerstories.org