

September 20th, 2001

Sue Parker, What was your first reaction when you saw plane hit the North Tower?

I was outside in Lower Manhattan, taking photos and videos for a news article that I was writing about life in NYC when I heard the first plane hit the North tower. Fortunately, I was already filming for my article so I followed the plane. It was unusual: airplanes do not usually fly so low in Manhattan due to the lack of airports so to see one flying so low was out of the ordinary.

Watching it hit the tower, was like nothing I have ever seen before in real life. Sure, in the movies but not right before your very eyes. I was scared for my life but I was told by the police officer, standing on the corner, that it was a freak accident; there was nothing to worry about and that we should all remain calm and carry on with what we were doing. Not everyone listened though, and I could see that people were starting to panic and moving away from the scene with great haste. I stayed where I was, far enough away to not be in any immediate danger but close enough that my journalistic instinct could be satisfied. I continued to film, certain I must be one of very few journalists able to capture the initial impact.

It wasn't until the second plane hit, around 9:03 am, that the authorities realised we, as a nation, we're under attack and ordered an emergency evacuation of both Towers and the surrounding area, including me. By this point, the South Tower looked unstable and I could hear chatter nearby that there was the possibility of an imminent collapse. Mad panic began to spread and as the tower came plummeting down, people started to run as the plumes of acrid smoke and debris came racing towards us. People were screaming, shouting, crying, and running in any direction they could. I stopped filming and just ran with them.

Personally, I was especially worried as my husband worked on the 49th floor of the World Trade Centre (WTC) but fortunately, he came back home safely as he was below the point of impact. I cannot say the same for others.

Laura Bush, Wife of George W. Bush, what are your initial thoughts on the incident?

My husband spoke on the situation we as a nation find ourselves in this week. He spoke of 'our freedom coming under attack, and commented on the 'evil and despicable acts of terror' we have faced. However, even though I was not present in New York, Washington, or Pennsylvania when these atrocities occurred, I have friends who did and who have been through what thousands of Americans and people from all over the globe did yesterday and I am inspired by those who have shown great courage in the face of great adversity and the strength of character to support their fellow citizens. From the office workers who rescued colleagues, to the courageous emergency service personnel who have committed the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duties, to even members of the general public who have volunteered in their masses. My husband commented on 'how we will find those responsible and how 'we have directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement

communities to find those responsible and I wholeheartedly agree. Yet we must not forget their intent was to create chaos, to scare us; however, we the people of the United States are strong. They have failed. Today, as my husband said, our nation saw evil and we responded with the best of America. With the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbours who came to give blood and help in any way they could. It is these memories we must take with us of helping our fellow neighbour, for that is what America is about.