

9/11 museum weaves stories of sorrow, survival



9/11 Memorial pools are on the footprint of the Twin Towers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

NEW YORK – Voices overlap. Memories of Sept. 11, 2001, echo through the chamber. The chaos, the uncertainty, the fear, the loss.

“Regardless of where you were, you were there at that moment,” says one person.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum that opened in May is a collection of stories from that day going forward of the carnage, the rescue, the rebuilding – and of those responsible for the destruction.

Hearing what people experienced is so much more powerful than just reading the volumes of material provided.

Visual reminders of that day are everywhere. Steel tridents salvaged from the facade of the North Tower loom overhead as visitors descend into the museum.

The first overlook is almost like being at a construction site. In the center is the Last Column. This was the final steel beam removed from Ground Zero after the nine months of excavation ended. It weighs 58 tons and is 36-feet tall. Then there is the slurry wall.

It wasn't just buildings that collapsed that September morning, but thousands of lives were lost and even more were changed forever. The museum, most of which is 70 feet below ground, will be a lasting testament to this country's ability to overcome such a tragedy.

In hushed tones masses of people are wandering through the multilevel museum. At times it is overwhelming – the words, the images, the artifacts. Graphic details are not spared.

The shell of Ladder Company 3's truck shows that first responders had no idea they were entering their tomb as they ascended the stairs of the North Tower. All 11 died when the tower collapsed.

Video shows people jumping from the burning towers. Quotes are on a wall.

"You felt compelled to watch out of respect to them. They were ending their life without a choice and to turn away from them would have been wrong."

Louisa Griffith-Jones, Lower Manhattan resident

The personal items can give visitors goose bumps. They make the human carnage real, whether it's items from a wallet, shoes or glasses.

Then there are the handmade postings of people missing. Most died. And some of those remains are behind a wall within the

museum.

A room with walls of photos of those who died is chilling. It's possible to find out more about them so they aren't just a name or face.

The 9/11 Memorial, which is outside, opened on the 10-year anniversary of the attack. The two pools, each with 30-foot waterfalls, are on the footprint of the Twin Towers.

Etched into the side are the names of the nearly 3,000 people who died, as well as those killed in the 1993 World Trade Center attack. One says, "Rahma Salie and her unborn child." Roses have been left next to names.

Nearby is the Survivor Tree. It was salvaged from the ruins, a testament to how resilient New York is.

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