

Prepared December 29, 2001

FROM 9-11-2001
Edward R. Sabala Jr.



Route

VESEY – ST. ANN – NASSAU – JOHN – PLATT/GOLD

My Itinerary

SEPT. 10, 2001 NYC TRIP

Expedia.com booking ID: 7R24HB

Tracking number: E-TICKET Main contact: Edward Sabala Jr

Mon 10-Sep-01

314 mi (505 km)

1hr 16mn Cleveland (CLE)

Depart 5:35 PM to Baltimore (BWI)

Arrive 6:51 PM

Flight: 156

Economy/Coach Class (23F), Boeing 737-300, 80% on time

Total miles: 314 mi (505 km)

Total flight time: 1hr 16mn

Fri 14-Sep-01

314 mi (505 km)

1hr 21mn Baltimore (BWI)

Depart 7:35 PM to Cleveland (CLE)



Arrive 8:56 PM

Flight: 757

Economy/Coach Class (Seat assignments upon check-in), Boeing 737-300, 90% on time

Total miles: 314 mi (505 km)

Total flight time: 1hr 21mn

Your reservation number is: 08E5B1

Reservation made on : Aug 31, 2001

Please pick up your ticket(s) at the station from a Quik-Trak machine or from one of our ticket agents.

Train: 182

From: Bwi Airport Rail Station on 09/10/01

To: Newark on 09/10/01

Departs: 8:25pm 09/10/01

Arrives: 10:45pm 09/10/01

Additional Services: Unreserved Coach

Train: 121

From: Newark on 09/14/01

To: Bwi Airport Rail Station on 09/14/01

Departs: 4:15pm 09/14/01

Arrives: 6:34pm 09/14/01

Additional Services: Metroliner Business Class

Reservations for Holiday INN is set for September 10th arrival for four nights stay and departing September 14th. Confirmation number P4841700. Please keep in mind they require 48 hours cancellation at 212-232-7800.

Offices

C&P Press, Inc.

One World Trade Center

Suite 5151

New York, New York 10048

September 10, 2001

I arrived at the Newark train station Monday night at about 10:45p. As usual, I found the driver for the limo service and went to the Holiday Inn Wall Street for the evening.

September 11, 2001

It was now Tuesday morning and time to go over to the office for the week's series of meetings and discussions. After getting ready, I left the hotel for the 3-block walk over to the office. This morning I was running a few minutes late and I phoned Bron Zienkiewicz from the street to let him know that I would meet him in the fountain area outside building #1 for a cigarette. I told him to "Drag [his] feet as [he] came down" since it was already a few minutes past 8:30 and I was still a little way from crossing the street to the fountain area behind the office.

Bron and I would regularly meet outside Tower 1 to chat, every time I came to New York. We would usually discuss what had been going on in the office and any business concerns that needed to be addressed. We lit our cigarettes and commented on "What a glorious day it [was]." It was a deep blue sky with absolutely no clouds. It was a relatively warm morning and Bron was just in his shirtsleeves. I had a light jacket on, along with the communications gear I always seem to have at hand. This would turn out to be the last time I'd see the computers, Palm Pilot, Cell Phone, etc. Bron mentioned, "We're going to be focused today and get a lot accomplished". I agreed and we just briefly chatted as we finished smoking.



While we were standing there, Serge Arkhipov, our Director of I.S., came over on his way into the office. Serge mentioned that we needed to discuss the computer server when I came upstairs. I gave him somewhat of a hard time for coming in late that morning, although it was all in jest. Serge took off for the offices as Bron and I put out our cigarettes and headed into the building for the NEW YORK COFFEE HOUSE. The shop was on the first floor of the World Trade Center, Tower 1. Serge went to the elevators and on upstairs.

After ordering our coffees and an almond cluster, Bron and I proceeded to get cream and sugar and then sit down. I was cursing since I had spilled the hot coffee on my hand and grabbed a napkin as I sat down. Unlike other days when we sat in the coffee shop, this day we sat at the front of the shop behind the half-wall where they kept the sugar, cream, etc. I know that every other time we sat here for coffee, we sat at the opposite end of the shop. This day it was a fortunate change on our part. I had just taken a second sip of coffee when Bron looked at me and said, "Did you feel that?" "Feel what?" was my response. No sooner did I get the words out than the entire area seemed to explode in slow motion. Dust, debris, tiles, marble, glass and people were sort of floating by. We both squatted down behind the half-wall for what seemed to be a minute or so, but in reality was mere seconds. My first thought was of the nuclear test pictures we have all seen on TV. The one with the mushroom cloud, followed by the tree and house which first bend to the right and then immediately vaporize as they bend the other direction. I was just waiting for the second stage of the blast at that moment. After a few seconds, when no further explosion seemed imminent, my comment was "They're blowing up the place...we have to get out of here!" It was also hard to breathe since, I assume, the explosions had vented much of the air. We stood up and ran to the coffee shop doors, took an immediate left and headed towards the opposite end of the Mall towards the exit doors. We ran past the PATH TRAIN subway entrance and towards the back of the building. While I was aware of all the people around us, I was focused on only two things; the exit and Bron. I knew where Bron was at every moment and watched for him during the entire escape. I was much less aware of the detail and people around me, other than the fact that it seemed to be a somewhat calm exit, although we were running. My greatest fear at that time was that we would suffocate, since it was still extremely difficult to breathe and the dust plumes seemed to be all around us.

As we burst into the revolving door at the back of the building, there were people just coming into the offices. We shouted to them to turn around and get out. As we got outside of the building, we immediately crossed one of the two pedestrian streets by Borders Book Store and Church Street. This was an area that Bron and I often bought hot dogs from the street vendors and then sat and ate while people-watching and chatting. Today it was a WAR ZONE!



As we looked up at the building, my first reaction was that it looked just like a ticker-tape parade. The thousands of pieces of paper against the navy blue sky looked just that way. In retrospect it was entirely surrealistic; a strange beauty and calm in the center of an inferno. This was also our first look at the damage to the building and I said to Bron, "They're blowing the whole place up...we need to get farther away from here. They'll blow everything up!" We figured there had been two bombs in our building since there was damage at the top of the building too. By this time the crowds were increasing and I was startled by the number of police and fire vehicles already at the scene. It seemed like it had only been a few minutes and there were so many. We then crossed and stood on the corner of Church Street while we looked up at the building and tried to count the number of floors in order to see how close the explosion was to the 51st Floor offices that C&P Press, Inc. occupied in the building. We were having great difficulty counting with the chaos around us. It was around this time that we took notice of the fire fighters gearing up to go into the building. I recall mentioning to Bron "They're dead and they know it. You can see it in their eyes". We were standing next to one of the fire vehicles that I would later be reminded of each time we saw it crushed and burned on every news report.

While I did not seem to take in all the detail, Bron certainly did. He has much more vivid memories of the inside of the building and what was going on all around us; the victims, etc. As we stood there trying to comprehend what was taking place, people started to jump from the tower. I vividly recall how they were fully dressed in their business attire and the fact that the women just seemed to float down with their backs facing the ground. The men, on the other hand, were falling face-first and moving as if they were swimming. I am not sure what that meant other than maybe the women I saw had accepted their fate more so than their counter-parts. At that moment, I realized that comments I had heard in the past, “You’re probably dead before you hit” were a far cry from the truth. That certainly was not the case here. We were watching people make a conscious decision to die this way and I remember wondering if I would have had the guts to make a decision like that. I guess they really did not have any choice. It was probably the lesser of two evils.



After what seemed a long time, and after we saw the tenth or twelfth person fall by, Bron said, “God I can’t watch this anymore”. We then turned and headed up the street.

I said we should head for the hotel and try to call home. I mentioned, “You don’t want to just stand and look up. Especially if the next explosions go off while we’re standing [there].” I recalled one bomb threat we’d had Diamond Shamrock Corporation, in Cleveland, and the fact that all our employees evacuated the building only to stand in the park across the street. I remembered bringing them together after the fact and reviewing our Bomb Threat procedures, as well as the need to get as far from the scene as possible. At that moment, I knew we should be doing the same thing, but we were somewhat mesmerized, as was the whole world. Bron stopped to help one young girl to her feet since the sidewalks were quite crowded at that time and she had been knocked over in the crowd. We stopped in a copy store on the street and asked to borrow a phone. Unfortunately, the phones were not working and one girl offered her cell phone to Bron. Following a few attempts to get a line, we gave up and decided to head towards the hotel.





As we started down the street, we must have heard the second impact since we both darted left into one of the building overhangs along the way. As we did this, it seemed like the entire street exploded next to us.

This was the second time in mere minutes that we once again assumed we were dead. I do not recall my life flashing before my eyes at either time, and I remember that I thought that was strange; I had heard about the experience all my life. I guess we were just wondering what would come next...and then afterwards. Car and store windows were exploding and dust and debris was once again floating by in slow motion. While I have few memories of the detail, Bron has asked me quite often if I do not recall the sound and the heat. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately for me) I do not. At that instant, it was just confirming my initial impression that they were blowing up the entire complex.



It was a little ironic since just two weeks earlier we had been disagreeing with one individual as to whether or not they would ever attack the World Trade Center again. This individual said there was no reason to since it really was no longer a world trade center, but merely an office building. I had mentioned that it was the SYMBOL that someone would be interested in and that the World Trade Center represented exactly what it was named for. Little did we realize then that we would be in the midst of this attack on the soul of America. I am confident the legacy will be debated for generations.



As soon as the fallout died down, we headed down the street again. I must admit that it was at a much quicker pace than before. The enormity of the situation was beginning to sink in and we were now moving on adrenalin. It was somewhere along the way that we got the first indication that planes had hit the towers. Someone on the street was saying this and we heard them in passing. It would not be until we had gotten back to the hotel that we would actually begin to understand what was going on. At that moment they were just blowing everything up.

Bron and I got to the hotel rather quickly and immediately headed to the 12th floor where my room was. I tried a call and the phone did not go through so Bron tried calling a couple times to his home. He finally got through to his wife and told her what was going on. I know she was panicked by the conversation. She asked Bron to have me come home with him. When I told him I needed to stay and try to find out what was happening to our people, he handed the phone to me. I thanked Virginia for the invitation and told her I had some things to do in the city, but that I would call later if I were going to try to come over. She asked me a few times to reconsider. After we hung up the phone, I called home and told my wife Sue that we were fine and that there was no need for worry. We'd be just fine and we were away from the offices. At the time I did not realize that my daughter had witnessed the entire event live in her office conference room in Atlanta. While the terror I heard in her voice on my phone email a few days later will live with me forever, it was fortunate that my wife could contact her and ease her fears within the hour I called. Family life in Westlake, Ohio would be a conglomeration of phone calls, messages, personnel coordination and hundreds of concerned people calling in; so many that Sue lost count along the way.





We then went back down to the lobby and then on to a conference room on the second floor where some company had been having a meeting. The TV was on in the room and we wanted to see what was on the news. The reports on the TV were somewhat confusing and there were ongoing reports that there were explosions in Washington and a plane down in Pennsylvania. They were also confirming that jumbo jets had struck the Trade Center. As we watched, we were assuming they were attacking the entire country. Which in retrospect, I guess they were. At this time, we decided to go down to the lobby and we took the stairwell, only to find that it exited to the back alley versus the main lobby. As I opened the exit door to go out, the giant gray plume was totally enveloping the door and I slammed it shut. As I did this, there was pounding on the door and I re-opened it to find a young couple, drenched in gray powder. We would later discover that this was the result of building #2 collapsing. A couple of the women who had been in the conference room earlier took the couple down to the washrooms to get them cleaned up and the rest of us went back up to the conference room to try and get a further sense of what was happening. This is when we saw that building #2 had collapsed and we saw the first photos of the jet airliner crashing into building #2. While I recall not being too surprised at the collapse of building #2 due the devastating destruction it had received, we were totally dumbfounded as we next saw Tower #1 collapse. The reality of what was happening was beginning to sink in. The collapse of our building also proved to be a troubling blow to some of our employees since they had only been out of the building for about 10 minutes before it collapsed.

While I was watching TV in the conference room, Bron said he had decided he was going to try and find a dust mask and make his way to the ferry and then home. As I recall it was about 11:15 or so that morning. A short time later Bron returned with a dust mask in hand and once again asked if I wanted to go along with him. I said I did not, at least not then. I was going to make some phone calls and see if I could find out anything about any of the folks from the office. We shook hands and he took off. He asked if I would call Virginia and let her know he was on his way. I finally did get a hold of her a little later and relayed the message. I was now realizing that my only form of communication was a pay phone, since I had left both of my bags of equipment in the coffee shop. While we had been on the street I had been complaining so much about forgetting them that Bron asked if I didn't want to "...just go back in the building and find them?" It had also occurred to us that since Serge had left us shortly prior to the explosion, that he might not have made it up to the offices. Along with the folks in the office, he became a prime concern since he might have been in the elevator shafts. I guess this is the first time that the event was beginning to take its toll on me. I was beginning to feel quite all alone now with few options at hand. I now realize that Bron's presence had afforded a feeling of companionship. Alone in the midst of thousands; a strange sensation.

I went to the pay phone and called home. By this time both our French Parent Company and some of the employees had started to call around and relay status. To my relief, most people had been accounted for by this time. There had been calls to my wife, Bron's wife, our past President now living in Florida and to the French. I made a few calls from the pay phone and then went back up to my room to try to make more from there. While I spoke to Dominique Lérique in France, he had Mary Conway on the other line and turned the phones on each other so that she and I could speak. This was the first time we had a sense of everyone making it out of the office. I voiced my concern about Serge and fortunately, Mary was able to tell us that he was in the office, but she did not know whether he had made it out or not. She was relatively certain everyone else had. It would be about 4:00p before there was word from Serge that he was fine and had made it out. The phone calls would continue for a while.



Some time during the afternoon, I went down to the restaurant to see who was there and what was going on. There was a crowd in the restaurant and we were getting drinks and relaying what each of us knew. The hotel had opened the restaurant and bar to everyone at no cost. This is where some of the timeline begins to blur. One result to me from this event has been a lack ability for keeping time and event sequences in order. I am not certain why that has happened, but it has.

As I sat in the restaurant and various people began to filter in. There were six of us that would soon establish a bond and walk out together the next day. This HOLIDAY INN SURVIVORS group has remained in close contact since that day. Those individuals are:

Mark Abernathy
Sherri Alsfeld
Christine Russian
Ed Sabala
Gene Turner
Burt Wiand



As we sat, I ordered food from the kitchen along with a glass of wine. At the next table there were two women talking and ordering food too (Christine / Sherri). People were now beginning to chat with each other and introduce themselves. Eventually the six of us gathered around the same table and began to discuss what was going on. At some point during the discussions and drink orders, we decided to take a walk and see what was going on outside. It was difficult just sitting and wondering. We felt we would be a lot better if we could get some feel as to what was going on around us. Only an hour earlier the air conditioning and electrical services at the hotel had gone out. While the hotel insisted that utilities would be restored in 20 minutes or so, it had been quite some time and we were not convinced they would be coming back on. The hotel was now running everything from their emergency generator and figured there were only a few more hours of fuel for it. We were in the middle of the yellow-gray air that had a unique odor all its own. It's a image you see repeatedly in various photos from the day. Soot laden people staggering around in a heavy yellow mist. An odor and feel I can't relate to anything else I've ever experienced, but one I'll know IF I ever sense it again. I guess it was as unique as the events unfolding around us.

We knew it was going to be hard to breathe when we got outside the hotel so we quickly gathered up some towels and face clothes to cover our faces as we walked. We left the hotel and headed towards the South Street Seaport that was not too far from the hotel. The streets were gray and there was about two inches of gray dust everywhere. This dust would kick up and blow all over us every time another vehicle rushed by. What really stood out was the fact that other than the streetlights, there was no color, just a couple inches or so of gray soot everywhere. I am sure we each wondered to ourselves what the soot was made of. However, that question was never voiced. I am afraid we all knew too well. The entire scene reminded me of the photos I'd once seen from the aftermath of Mt. St. Helens. It looked like what you might expect to see from a nuclear winter. Sherri had mentioned a number of times that she felt she was in the middle of a scene from the movie INDEPENDENCE DAY. I am certain everyone had his or her own unique perspective as to what it was like. Everyone did agree that it was like "nothing [they] could imagine before." As we walked to the harbor, we noticed we were virtually the only people out, except for some scattered police officers, photographers and various emergency vehicles that would fly past from time-to-time; and the lone individual covered with soot and looking for a place to stay. It was a sense of isolation with only questions and no answers. When we reached the harbor, we found that the air was no better there. It was still difficult to breathe and I know that we kept our shirts and towels over our noses to try for some clean air. We stayed only a few minutes at the docks, and then turned to go back to the hotel since it was now starting to get dark

outside. On our way back we ran into one police officer who suggested that we head north until we found “the barricades”. The quandary was that we had heard that everything south of 14th Street had been closed and we were afraid that if we left, we could not get back. At that time our entire lives were bundled in a bunch of suitcases at a hotel in the middle of hell. The officer stated that the fires were still burning and that there was a good deal of concern about the gas lines in the streets exploding. He assured us that they would figure out what to do with us once we got to the barricades. There was a short discussion as to the merits of his suggestion. I know we talked about the fact that being out on the street under some light post all night was not a great idea, especially since none of us was from New York and really had no idea as to what was out there. As we got to the front door of the hotel, I suggested we get a second opinion as to what we should do. The hotel manager was at the front door and we asked him whether he had been ordered to evacuate or not. He assured us that he was in contact with the local authorities and that there was not any order to evacuate any of the hotels there. He insisted that remaining at the hotel would be the wiser decision. I walked up the street about 50 yards where three New York police officers were manning the barricade cordoning off Ground Zero. I relayed what we had been told as far as staying or leaving the area. The one officer said that they had not been given any orders to evacuate and that surely they would not be left in harms way if there were a need to leave. She assured me they would come into the hotel were an evacuation necessary. The group discussed this and agreed that staying at the hotel probably made the most sense. Then we headed back into the bar.



As the evening progressed, we chatted amongst ourselves. We also had an opportunity to talk to other folks who had been in the buildings. There was one guy who had been on the 108th floor of one of the buildings and had gotten out. There were also folks from both buildings who had escaped from above and below the impact areas, so we were somewhat optimistic that there was a better chance to have escaped than we initially thought. This would later prove to be more hope than fact. I recall the group commenting on the 108th floor guy since he was relatively intoxicated at this point and had a news reporter as a captive audience; something she was looking for a way out of. The fact that he was speaking at least 50 decibels over the balance of the crowd also made him stand out. I suppose with what had transpired we all should have been highly intoxicated...especially since the hotel had opened the bar to patrons earlier in the evening and now people were mixing their own drinks.

We continued talking for some time that evening. We discussed what little information was available to us at the time. Unfortunately along with the electricity stopping, so did the information flow from the outside. Any information from the outside came from police and rescue workers passing through the lobby for water and a little rest. Later that evening the hotel manager said that they were going to close the restaurant and bar and that all guests should go to their rooms. We asked about staying in the lobby and were told that was not an option. Since it was going to be very dark on the floors of the hotel, we asked if we could have candles to walk to the

rooms with. We were informed that no candles were allowed in any of the hotel rooms. The person at the front desk who was now busy giving flashlights to every guest soon addressed our concern. It was a sense of relief to see that the hotel had some small details like the flashlights available. At this point we discussed plans for the next morning...provided there was one. I do not believe we were in the best of spirits and the one nagging effect was the feeling that one could not escape the situation. There was no closure to the events of the day; they just seemed to be going on and on. It was decided that we would let each other know if we heard any additional news regarding the situation. We took room numbers and promised to let the others know anything we found out. It was decided that if everything was OK in the morning, we would meet about 8:00a and try and walk out together. At this point everyone headed off to the rooms. With only one elevator working off the emergency generators, each guest was escorted to their floor section by hotel staff. We had been in the room no more than 15 minutes before there was a knock at the door. Gene Turner had stayed down in the lobby to finish a cigar when some police officers came in and said that there were bombs in the local police stations and that the Federal Reserve Bank, which the hotel is next to, was also a potential target. To further add to the fear at the time, Gene had also heard one of the police officers mention that a van had been stopped at the Lincoln Tunnel with explosives in it. Without the radio, we had no idea that this had actually taken place earlier in the day, so the level of desperation continued to climb. Discussions did not last long that time.

Three of us decided we would take our chances down in the lobby; no matter what the hotel had said. It was our opinion that we would not stand a good chance at getting out if we were on the 12th floor...especially with the exit to the back alley. We had all been concerned about exiting to the street with the strong possibility of not being able to get back into the hotel. After the experience earlier in the day, going out on the street during an attack was not the course we wanted to take. We also had come to the realization that it "would be over quickly" on the first floor, should it come to that. Quicker escape...or quicker ending...whichever. The events of the day had numbed most of us to the situation. I cannot say that we had given up, just that we were more realistic regarding ALL of the possible scenarios. On a personal note, I had come to the realization that our lives were in the hands of someone else at this time. The women gathered pillows to protect themselves from debris, should it come to that, and everyone headed down to the lobby for whatever fate had in store.



Originally, there were about eight people in the lobby. Christine, Sherri and I were on the couch and a couple other folks were in the other lobby chairs. This time was also a point of great frustration since we were totally cut off from any news as to what had taken place since we last heard news on the radio. We pleaded with the hotel personnel for a few hours and kept asking them to try to find a portable radio so we could at least have some sense of the situation. Finally, at about 2:30a they found one and set it up. For the first time that day, there was some sense of relief. I will point out that there was very little sleep that night. There was a continual stream of exhausted police and rescue workers throughout the night. Every once in a while a lone person, still covered with soot, would stop to inquire about rooms, or just wander on past the windows looking for Lord knows what. And that, along with the ambulances, rescue vehicles, and other assorted sirens gave us time for only minutes of sleep. One consolation was the fact that the air in the lobby was easier to breathe. The dust from the buildings collapsing was so fine that it actually rose and was thicker the higher you went in the hotel. But at least we didn't need masks on the first floor. At one point, we offered our rooms to the rescue workers since we were not using them, but they all chose to grab a few minutes of rest in the lobby. The hotel was also trying to find as many places as possible for the rescue workers to lie down for a brief rest. There was not a lot of talk during the early morning hours. We had already expressed the understanding that if President Bush were to retaliate, our chances of seeing the morning light would be minimal. Those thoughts, along with the stream of rumors regarding car bombs from the radio served little more than to increase the tension and feelings of hopelessness. Although it was never mentioned, I believe everyone had made certain to get his or her final prayers said for the evening.

September 12, 2001

Finally 8:00am arrived and we could see the light out on the street. We went and knocked on the various hotel room doors and agreed we would meet downstairs at 8:30a to begin the trek out. With all of the debris in the streets, it was apparent that we could not take anything with us since it was going to be a 50-block hike as near as we could tell. We had heard rumors that the subways were running at the edge of town and that there might be a way to get to New York's Penn Station. Sherri turned out to be the only one with any outside contact through her BlackBerry wireless device. She had been emailing back and forth with her husband and sister-in-law all evening and on into the morning. Her husband George had managed to get six AmTrak tickets to Baltimore's BWI Train Station, provided we could get to Penn Station by noon. At that point each of us gathered up our belongings, which for the most part consisted of one item. We were forced to leave the balance of our belongings at the hotel and hastily filled out shipping forms so they could be forwarded on to our homes, whenever the city was opened up again and life returned to some sense of normalcy. Before taking off, we went out from the lobby to see if it was possible to drag a wheeled-computer bag through the debris. The couple of inches of gray dust looked like it would make taking anything along quite difficult. In this case, however, it looked like it would work, so off we went.



There were a few final provisions stuffed into the backpack one of us was fortunate enough to have. We had been told to head towards the South Street Seaport and then take a left on Water Street and follow it until we reached the subway. As we walked along, the level of debris was unimaginable. There were to-do lists and personal memos from people's desks in the towers. All kinds of items, as though they had just dropped out of a window from one of the buildings along the street. One marked difference was the fact that all four sides of each piece of paper were charred from fire, as though you had run a match along each of the 4 edges of the paper. One girl in our ever-growing group was picking things up and looking at them along the way. I suggested to her that she might pick up something she would wish she had never seen, so she quickly abandoned that effort. What was also amazing to see was the level of military presence along the entire route. Although the news was never permitted to broadcast their presence, it was clearly a state of Martial Law at that time. There was a continual stream of buses unloading both police and military personnel at various locations along our route. There were also Humvees, armored personnel carriers, all with 50 caliber machine guns mounted, at almost every corner along the way. There were 10 to 15 military personnel there too, all carrying automatic weapons. It reminded me of some of the trips to various Latin American countries where this show of force is the norm. I guess a side benefit of this was that there was some sense of security as we walked out. There was also the continual presence of F-16 fighters in the skies. It appeared that the military had the place relatively well locked down. As we continued, we were finally beginning to see less and less evidence of the events from the day before. The air was getting cleaner and there were more people out along the way. We were also busy giving Sherri a hard time for her continual stream of emails, although everyone was grateful for the ability. As we finally got close to the subway entrance, life of the street actually appeared somewhat normal. We were now in Chinatown and the fact that there was absolutely no evidence of anything out of the normal caught all of us a little off-guard. The weather was nice and people were going about their business as if nothing had happened. It was refreshing in a strange way. A sense of normalcy was a welcome relief. Unfortunately, this came to an abrupt halt the first time they stopped the subway in transit. The conductor merely announced an emergency stop for "things on the tracks" and then the lights went out and the train came to an abrupt stop. Our first thoughts were of the subway attacks with Saran gas in Japan. We all assumed this could only mean that further acts of terrorism were going on...and once again we were in the middle of it all. Expectations of getting out alive were beat into submission each time we had any false sense of security. It would not be until we later passed Newark on the train that we would finally have any sense of relief as to having actually escaped the cascading events. During each of the 3 emergency stops along the way, our nerves were tested over and over. Although it seemed forever, the subway ride was quick and we arrived at Penn Station to be met by the throngs of people trying to get out of New York. There were thousands of people in unimaginably long lines. Fortunately for us, our advance tickets could be retrieved from one of the kiosks in the station by using a credit card. This alone probably gave us the ability to make the train. It was about 10:40a when we got to the station and this was going to be the first chance we had to get a snack and rest a little. We took turns going out to get food and drinks. The only occurrence at the station was when one of the women said she would be gone for a minute and then ended up visiting more stores than anticipated. We quickly sent out a scouting party since we were still overly cautious about remaining together.

Christine had to take a train in the other direction from the rest of us, so we said our farewells and the five remaining members of the group waited to board the train. This was the first time the group would begin to split up. At noon we boarded the trains. It would be a 2 hour and 40 minute train ride to Baltimore, although it

seemed to go much quicker than that. Once again we figured that beer and snacks were in order, so we took turns making beer-runs to the dining car. We did take note as we road along that we had never before seen a sky without any air traffic. No planes, and for that matter, nothing but clouds. Life, and our surrounding, seemed to take on a surrealistic feel. The first stop along the way was Baltimore, where Sherri got off the train to meet her husband and head home. Mark had been selected as the keeper of the email addresses and he said he would get the information out to each of us as soon as we all reached our final destinations. As we headed towards BWI rail station, we discussed what our next moves would be. Burt had decided he was going on to Washington DC to find a hotel or stay with a friend. Mark and Gene were going to try to get a train to North Carolina and I was going to see if I could find a car and hotel in the Baltimore area. This would turn out to be more of a challenge than originally anticipated. When we arrived at BWI, we said our goodbyes to Burt and went over to the pay phones. Gene talked with Hertz Car Rental, who informed him that there were plenty of cars at BWI airport. However, when he and Mark tried to get a taxi to take them there, they were told that no taxi, or for that matter, no one was allowed at the airport. It was closed and under military control. One taxi driver said when he had taken a passenger over there earlier in the day; "I was stopped and asked to roll down the window by an army guy. He said if I opened the door to exit the vehicle that I would be shot. We were asked to turn around and leave the area." Obviously after that story, the aspect of car rentals dissipated. In the meantime, I had called home via 1-800-collect and asked my wife to see if she could find a car and room anywhere in the Baltimore area. To my relief she eventually found what would turn out to be one of the last cars and rooms available. Both were in Annapolis, so I was going to get a cab and head over there. Like Gene and Mark, I had checked into getting a train back to Cleveland, only to find out that the next one I could get would possibly be on Saturday, and there was no guarantee on that. In the meantime, Gene and Mark had gotten train tickets heading south to Charlestown where they hoped they would have a better shot at getting a car to finish their trip home. It was probably about 4:30p by that time. I got a cab and headed to Annapolis.

Arriving in Annapolis was probably the first time I began to feel that there finally was an escape from the chaos of NYC. Unfortunately, this feeling would only last for a little while. Somewhere along the way that day I had heard mention of the fact that the old capitol dome at Annapolis was a potential target, and looking directly on top of it from my hotel room certainly did not add any sense of calm. I was beginning to think that I was being a little too paranoid and quickly dismissed any concern. It had now been two days of minimal sleep and food so I thought I would go get a bite to eat. I only had a toiletry kit with me so I figured I should purchase a shirt at the hotel store. I did that and headed over to the restaurant. I was seated outside along the dock. Calm for the first time. The sky was clear and all looked at peace. I ordered dinner and as I was sitting there watching the boats come in and out I suddenly heard broadcasts from the Coast Guard coming over the public address system. They were announcing that there had been a boat explosion in the harbor that was suspicious. They were asking all ships in the area to remain at a distance. At this point in time, all of these situations were beginning to get old. I just figured that it was not worth the effort to worry about these things anymore. Whatever was going to happen was going to happen...without any input from me. I decided to enjoy the meal, go upstairs, and get some rest. I got back to the room about 7:30p when my pager went off indicating a phone call. It turned out to be a good friend of mine from Atlanta (J. Neal Butler). Neal had heard about the events of the day and was calling to see if things were all right and whether or not there was anything they could do to help. I assured him everything was fine and we chatted a while longer. Right after that I must have merely fallen right to sleep...clothes and all.

September 13, 2001

It was now 7:30a on Thursday morning, September 13th when the phone rang and awakened me. It was Bron checking in to see what had transpired since we last spoke. I filled him in on the employee contacts and told him that I was going to try and call each of them before I left Annapolis and headed for Cleveland. We talked a while about the events and I took note that we were both still quite shaken.

I then attempted to talk with each of our employees, called the offices in France, spoke with my wife and then headed off to the car rental place. Thanks to one of the Hertz employees extra efforts, there was a car being held in my name...that is...as soon as the forms for signing up would arrive from another part of the city. It would be somewhere around 11:00a before a car was ready and the paperwork was done. While I waited a number of us at the establishment talked about what was going on. It seemed that everyone was in the same position; trying to get home with no guarantees as to how. I ended up taking two other individuals along with me for the ride. I dropped them off at the airport in Columbus, Ohio and then headed for Cleveland. It was around 9:00p when I got home that evening. To my surprise, there were yellow ribbons and flags draped on all the trees and at the entrance of the house. Inside were a few neighbors, my brothers, sister-in-laws, and my wife. I will admit that this was the FIRST TIME I really felt at ease in a few days. Somehow the sanctuary of home has a settling effect; even during the most stressful times.

I had survived..."WE had survived!"



E. R. Sabala Jr.
PERSONAL JOURNAL From 9/11/2001