



Notes from the Editor

Scott L. Melnick

When I was growing up on Long Island, we never referred to New York City; no, it was just: "the city". The sheer density of magnificent skyscrapers was an awe-inspiring sight—and nothing more so than the Twin Towers.

The Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, CitiCorp Center were all magnificent, but because of their location in midtown, they were less dramatic as merely the tallest among the tall. But the Twin Towers, because of their lower surrounding neighbors, always seemed even taller than they were...and they were always mighty tall.

The collapse of the Twin Towers may have been the single most shocking event of my lifetime. The Vietnam War produced more than its share of horrors, but they were wartime horrors occurring halfway around the globe. The Space Shuttle Challenger explosion was a tragedy, and one that riveted the nation, but no matter how many rockets we've launched there was never a guarantee of safety. The collapse of the Twin Towers was different. This was a horror that hit too close to home. And it was a horror that we all witnessed together as it was happening.

My friend and colleague, Tom Faraone, is also a native New Yorker and still lives on Long Island. In an email a few days after the collapse, he wrote about how the view both from the Towers and of the Towers was part of his life. Indeed, it was part of many of our lives.

"I have viewed the Twin Towers for many a year from all angles, 0 to 360 degrees," Tom wrote. "From the bottom and the top. I have viewed them on foot, from the seat of a bicycle, from my car and from many an airplane window. I have viewed them by day and by night. I have also enjoyed the views from the Towers as well, from the offices of my friends at the Port Authority and from the observation deck. The view was part of my life.

"There were views I've never seen. I was told of the view of the Twin Towers from the

Pennsylvania Turnpike at the crossing of the Delaware River. 65 miles. 'Amazing' I thought. 'I'll have a look next time I'm there' I said to myself. Or, how about from the new Suffolk County Court Complex? That must have been nice!

"The Twin Towers were my North Star. I once missed an exit while driving in New Jersey and tried to turn around. After a dizzying combination of exit ramps, I had no idea if I was heading North, South, East or West. I looked up for the Towers. On my right! I was heading north, as hoped.

"I think my most enjoyable view was the view from the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, traveling from Brooklyn to Staten Island. I've done that one hundreds of times. I've done that from the bike also, stopping at midspan. Looking north across New York Harbor, there they were. All ships arriving in New York were welcomed by them. I always remembered to enjoy the view. Always! Just ask my kids. 'Yes Dad, we see them.'

"I also viewed the Twin Towers as a symbol of strength, not only from a structural engineering point of view but also from a more symbolic, patriotic view. I took great pride in the strength they showed after they survived the 1993 bombing. 'Is that the best you can do?' they replied. 'Is that all you've got?' they boasted. They were tough New Yorkers.

"My final view of the Towers was the one and only view I'm certain I shared with all my fellow countrymen. To see them crushed to rubble equally crushed my heart.

"May we finally put an end to this needless suffering and may a new tower rise from the ashes, stronger and taller than ever!"

AISC is partnering with ASCE/SEI and other organizations to study the mechanism of the collapse. As new information becomes available, we will publish it both in print and on the web.

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