

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001*An eye-witness report...**by Marnix Somsen [228]*

Eight o'clock in the morning. A beautiful Tuesday-morning. The sun is shining. I kiss Alette [3757] (my dove) goodbye and walk to Merrill Lynch where I have a temporary job. Only 500 yards and I will be there. As usual the way there is inspiring: to the right there are the Hudson River and the Statue of Liberty and to the left there is the World Trade Center.

Merrill Lynch is situated in the World Financial Center, next to the WTC. I buy myself a coffee and a bun, go to the 16th floor and start my day. Have a look: What to do about the rating of non-cumulative perpetual preferred shares?

I don't get much time to think about it. At about a quarter to nine I feel a dull blow. Earthquake? Gas leakage? Like at the window of a toyshop some colleagues and I look outside with our noses against the window on the north side to see what is happening on the east side. This seems to be impossible, so back to work again.

But not for long: Alette is still at home and from our apartment she has a splendid view of the WTC, but by now this has changed into a horrifying one. The direct distance between the two buildings is about 300 yards. My telephone rings, Alette is calling, giving an eyewitness account. 'Did you feel that bang? A plane has crashed into the WTC, there is fire and smoke'.

Then things go fast. First I think 'pilot error', must have been a small plane. I walk out of my room and see on a colleague's computer that I am wrong; the picture on the CNN website definitely looks very much different. A secretary is scree-

ming: 'Terrorist attack, I'm from Israel, I know these things', but nobody believes her as yet. But then: More internet pictures, mobile phones ringing, someone calling: 'Which tower was it, my wife works in tower 1!' This question soon turns out to be irrelevant for another plane strikes deep into tower 2 with a loud bang. I see people running from our floor to the exit and I call to my colleagues: 'I think we've got to leave!' Somebody says: 'No, no, we should only leave if the fire-alarm rings'. There is no need for further discussion: The boss is running towards the exit. We follow.

The lift (!) takes us down fast. I lose my colleagues immediately. Meanwhile hundreds of people are walking all over outside. Crying, swearing, bleeding, making phone-calls or talking, but in any case: Looking at the two 400-yard-columns of burning steel in which at the least fellow citizens are trapped, but very often also friends, mothers, daughters, fathers, sons, wives or husbands.

By now it is a quarter past nine and I want to go to my wife. On the way home I bump into my boss again and I take him with me because he has to make some phone-calls. After a few calls we decide to leave our apartment building. The television is not working anymore and we are afraid of more attacks. Besides Alette and I have to be at Upper East Side at half past eleven and it is already a quarter to ten.

Having come outside the chaos is even bigger now. Sirens, ambulances, police cars, helicopters, police officers, fire fighters, citizens, everybody is rushing, driving and walking all over. It makes me think of the movie King Kong in New York. Holding tight, Alette and I are heading east and then north. Through the West Side Highway, Chambers Street and Broadway we get to the City Hall. Police officers are shouting: go north, go north or – for those without a compass – 'Get the fuck out of here!' That's easier said than done. Traffic is completely jammed and several streets have been closed. Yet we manage to find a taxi. We make slow but steady progress. Looking back through the rear window we still see the burning towers of the WTC. I say to Alette that the transmitting mast on tower 1 might collapse because of the heat.

draftsman: Peter in 'Vrij Nederland'

This turns out to be an enormous underestimation: a little later we hear on the car-radio that tower 2 has collapsed. We look back again, terrified. Then only one was left over...

We arrive at Upper Side Street half an hour late. In the waiting room we learn that tower 1 has also collapsed in the meantime. The television is on showing a smoking Pentagon.

A nurse beckons us into a dark room without windows. A little later Alette and I are for the first time watching a fast beating heart in her belly on a monitor. This is the reason why we wanted to go to Upper East Side...

My colleague's wife appeared not to have been in tower 1 that morning. She had gone to a meeting in midtown Manhattan. She is still alive just like so many others who missed their trains, went out for a coffee or who had an appointment at the dentist's. Over 5000 people were not so fortunate. ■

*Downtown Manhattan with the
World Trade Center
Arrow shows : the apartment of
Marnix and Alette Somsen*

DONATION 2002

The donation has been fl. 25 or \$ 15 for four years. In the meantime expenses have risen. The cost of printing, for instance, and postal expenses, especially for abroad, have risen considerably.

Apart from the cost of printing the expenses for the production of our family magazine have been raised.

A brief glance back in time:

You may still remember that the first *Somsen Horizon* appeared in May 1998. Sixteen pages with black and white pictures.

By now our family magazine has twenty pages and a cover in colour.

We would like to extend the number of coloured pages.

In brief, we are really at a point of adjusting the annual donation.

As from the year 2002 the annual contribution will be:

- **15 Euros** for residents of the European Union;
- **20 US dollars** for everybody else.

These amounts for 2002 are also mentioned in the enclosure with instructions for payment.

We hope that we may count on your understanding.

The Board.

SALE: PHOTO CD-ROM

John Howard Somsen [2353] put a lot of energy into the making of a **picture gallery of the Somsen family**. All the people whose pictures he has in his possession are on a CD Rom now. You can turn over page after page and you can look at one picture after the other on your screen.

You will find a collective page at the back of this Somsen Horizon.

Readers who are interested in this CD can order it by transferring \$ 10.- at:

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