

Name: Brendan Chellis

Date: 9/24/12

Location at time of attack: Entering the lobby of Tower One

1. Where were you on 9/11 and why were you there?

I worked for Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield on the 30<sup>th</sup> floor of Tower One. Obviously you guys read my story but I'll send a copy also as an attachment. You can quote from that if you need to.

2. How did 9/11 affect the way you personally live today?

Even 11 years later, I look at the world completely differently. I don't think there is any way you could truly describe to somebody what it's like to live through such a horrible event. But it changes you immensely. There were 2 times that morning I thought I was about to die – when the lobby exploded, I was pretty sure I wasn't going to make it out of that concourse. When the second jet hit and I saw that fireball over our heads and all the debris coming down, I was certain that I was looking at the last few seconds of my life. But somehow I lived.

I now look at every day as a gift. I call this “bonus time” because it's time I never thought I was going to have. Things that used to bother me, I let go. I find it almost nearly impossible to hold grudges against people – because I don't want to lose them. I'm not afraid of death anymore – if I die tomorrow, I got 11 extra years. I've learned to appreciate the little things in life – if you have a roof over your head, your health, people close to you, a job – you're doing so much better than most of the people in the world. Material belongings rarely mean anything.

3. Do you believe that America acted correctly in response to the attack? Did you support the war in Afghanistan, and in retrospect, how did it affect America as a whole?

I think that's a 2-part, one for Afghanistan and one for Iraq. We were absolutely justified for going into Afghanistan. That's where the attacks were orchestrated from. For years, to these Islamic fundamentalists, we were considered a paper tiger. A bloated giant that could be attacked again and again with little or no response. On September 11, 2001, they crossed a line and hurt us very badly. Right in the heart of our own country. To not respond and avenge what happened, would have just set us up for more and more attacks. And where would it stop? When they go nuclear? We did what we had to do and this country is a safer place because of it.

Iraq, on the other hand, was a really bad idea. What I found most disturbing was not only how we were able to go in there with so little evidence that they had any involvement in the 9/11 attacks, but how the majority of the country bought the story without even questioning it. And because we started a second war with little support from our allies, we pulled away precious resources from where they should have been in Afghanistan. I'm convinced that's why we're still there. We should have won that war a long time ago.

4. Do you believe that 9/11 contributed to a downturn in the economy? If so, how did it personally affect you?

9/11 definitely hurt the economy. One only has to look at the stock market right after it happened. This had a ripple effect that affected everyone. I was quite lucky that I kept my job and never lost a day's pay. Since I work in IT, my services were needed immediately to rebuild our company. Our corporate headquarters was at the WTC. Maybe 9/11 doesn't affect the national economy anymore but it still affects New York, especially Downtown. 50,000 people worked in the WTC. If you include all that lost office space and the buildings around it that were damaged or destroyed, that's easily 100,000 workers that were no longer there. Add the people who relied on them for business and you get the idea. The area is definitely coming back but it will still be years before it's back to what it was.

5. How have you connected with other survivors, did you lose friends or coworkers?

I lost my cousin Chris Lunder up at Cantor Fitzgerald and my company lost 11 people (3 who I knew personally).

Of course I was immediately surrounded by survivors – they were my co-workers. As time went on, I helped form the WTC Survivors Network too and met survivors from other companies and walks of life. After 9/11, especially in the first few months, I had a hard time relating to anybody who wasn't there. It seemed like the entire world was getting on with their lives and we were just stuck in that day. It helped so much to have other survivors to talk to who went through the same experience I did. As much as other people tried to help, there was only so much they could do without going through what we did. And I hope to God that they never have to.

6. How do you feel about the increased security and defense measures that the government has taken? Do you agree or disagree with them?

It's hard to argue with results. With all of the increased security, there have been no more domestic terrorist attacks. What does concern me is that it would not surprise me if the government has overstepped their bounds and done things that are not Constitutionally legal. With all the technology these days, it would probably be quite easy for them to spy on us with no record of them doing so. Where do you draw the line? Is it worth it?

Please write any comments about the social, economic, or political impact that you personally think 9/11 had on America:

9/11 obviously had a huge impact on this country in every way imaginable. I always say that morning showed us the absolute worst followed by the absolute best the human race has to offer. We got to see what unchecked fanaticism and hate can lead to. We also got to see what ordinary human beings can accomplish when put through unimaginably horrible circumstances. It was our country's finest hour.

As time has gone on though, I find it really disturbing how people have forgotten what happened on that day. For the first few months, the first few anniversaries, we saw “never forget” everywhere. Now it seems like “never forget” has already been forgotten. On the anniversary this year, most people went about their lives as if nothing happened. People went shopping, TV networks premiered new shows, the news broadcasts covered other stories before they even got to the anniversary. Have people already forgotten how badly we were hurt that day? And then how this nation pulled together to honor those we lost and rebuild?

I have to tell you it’s depressing to see. I feel like 11 years later, very few people have learned a lesson from this. Unless they were directly affected, most people don’t seem to care anymore. And they’ll be just as surprised when it happens again.