

Mr. and Mrs. Rau

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

I am a retiree from the U.S. Customs Service and had been hired by the law firm of Serko and Simon as a consultant. On the morning of 9/11 I was taking the elevator to work on the 33rd floor in the North Tower (1 World Trade Center). There was shaking in the elevator and I thought it was malfunctioning. I didn't know that at that moment that the attack had began. Fortunately, the doors opened and I walked to my office.

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

I have become more spiritual and never take life for granted. I am more active in charitable activities and pray more fervently on a daily basis. This is my way of "paying it forward". Memories of that day bring me to tears, especially when I think of the firemen who were climbing up the stairs to help while everyone else was walking down. I am fearful of entering skyscrapers and the thought makes me very emotional.

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?

America acted correctly and I did support the war in Afghanistan.

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

The 9/11 attacks did affect the economy and fortunately, my family was not affected by the downturn because I am a retiree.

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

Fortunately, I did not lose anyone personally. I survived the attack with two female coworkers, helping them down the stairs and then out of Manhattan and across the Brooklyn Bridge. One of the women was too traumatized to return to work. Over the years I have kept in touch with the other. We have a permanent life-connection because we faced hell but were able to survive together.

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

Terrorists armed only with box cutters and hatred were able to execute an attack on American soil. It is frightening to realize how vulnerable our country was. As a survivor, I feel that the government must continue to protect and improve security measures even at the risk of intruding on civil rights.

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

The impact of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 has faded over the years. The sense of freedom, devotion and patriotism has declined. What you are doing, as young students, is remarkable and important. All Americans should remember 9/11 as vividly as they might recall or were taught about the attacks on Pearl Harbor. America's sovereignty and power were muted. Remembering will keep us sharp and alert to those who would destroy us. The current administration's policy of paring down our military in any form is counterproductive and increases America's vulnerability.