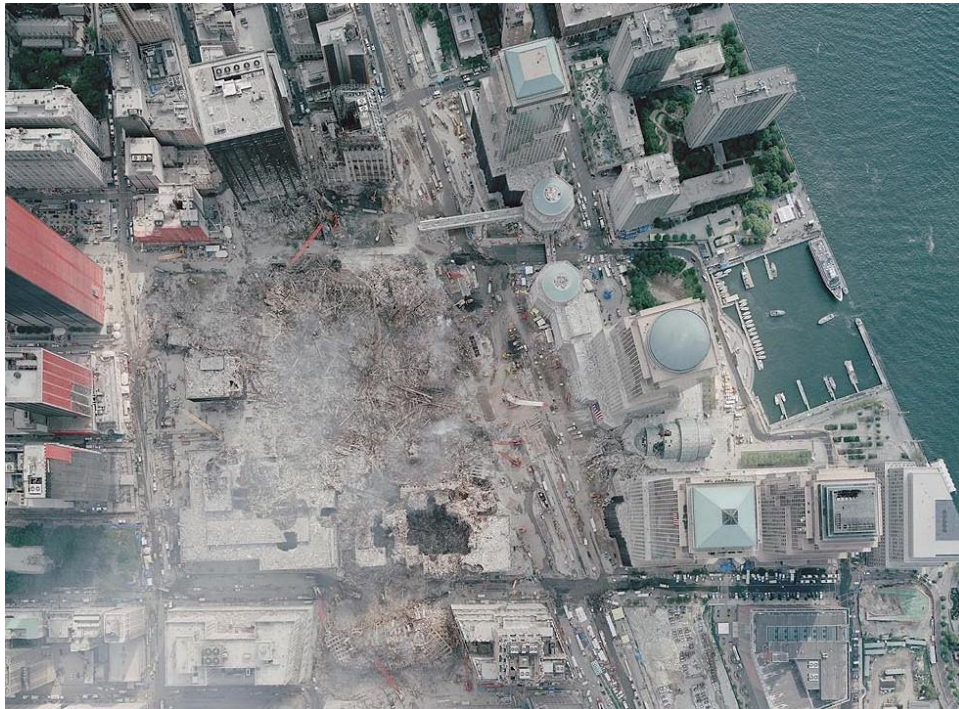


Schaffer Visits Ground Zero October 8 - 9, 2001



Aerial view of World Trade Center aftermath.

[Congressman Jerry Moran](#) (R-KS) organized a delegation of Congressmen to convene in New York City on October 5, 2001, four weeks after the terrorist attack upon America, for the purpose of visiting Ground Zero. Our tour would last one day and have us back in Washington, D.C. in time to answer the week's first House roll call vote. Members of the delegation arrived independently the prior night. Participants included [Reps. John Shadegg](#) (R-AZ), [Jim DeMint](#) (R-SC), [Ander Crenshaw](#) (R-FL), [Bob Ehrlich](#) (R-MD), Moran and me.

Day One: October 8, 2001

Late flight

Taking a late flight from Denver to New York seemed the most prudent in order that I might maximize time with my family in Fort Collins. In the days and weeks following the September 11, 2001 attack, every minute with my wife and kids seemed more precious than ever. Americans were still uncertain just who was responsible for the attack, or why.

The uncertainty led to intense public speculation about subsequent waves of terrorism. Attempts could occur at any time, so leaving home was not something I was too eager to do. Nonetheless, I was required in Washington, D.C. the next evening. We had been encouraged to go to Ground Zero by New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and the Bush

Administration. The presence of Congressmen there was reassuring to the people working on the cleanup, we were told.

Remembering 9/11

My family needed reassurance, too. I was in Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, in the basement of the Rayburn building in the House gym. I had just come out of the shower and was getting dressed after a Tae-Kwon-Do work out, my daily exercise routine. News of the attack came on the television there.

Several Congressmen were glued to the screen. The image of the Pentagon engulfed in flames hit us all hard. Headquarters for the world's most lethal military, the edifice was just a few miles away. We had all been in that building at least a few times. I raced to my office as soon as it became clear the incident was more than a plane crash. America had been attacked.

A Capitol police officer informed me the Cannon Building had just been closed. I told him I just wanted to make certain my staff cleared out. He let me pass. The office was empty. I grabbed my briefcase, pager, cell phone, and wireless e-mail communicator, and left. I asked the officer, "Where are we supposed to go?" "Just get away," he said. "Anywhere but here. We need the Members to disperse to avoid being a target. There's another airplane way off course and headed this way right now. The Capitol might be its objective," he said.

Briefly, I stood on the corner of First and C Street watching people rush off with panicked looks on their faces. Some were crying. Everyone was orderly, however, and polite. I remember how eerily quiet it was except for the sounds of sirens and police officers managing and directing the mass of pedestrians. I proceeded to a place called "C Street."

"C Street" is where I meet twice a week with two different small groups of Christian Congressmen for prayer and fellowship. Many of them were there, too.

Phones didn't work. All lines were overloaded and jammed. Not even the familiar, "all circuits are busy," recording would answer attempts to get through. Cell phones were useless. Email pagers were unresponsive. We gathered around a television. About 15 Congressmen and some congressional staff floated through the house like ghosts. We all know people who work at the Pentagon. Several in the room knew people who worked at the World Trade Center.

All of us understood we'd soon be at the center of the country's response, and our instincts were to get started right then and there, but we were trapped. We were locked out of our offices, advised to split up and disperse. The phones were dead. We wanted to call our families back home and let them know we were okay.

The news said the president was somewhere in the air between undisclosed Air Force bases. The vice president was in an undisclosed bunker. We wanted to be with the rest of

our colleagues and do what we are elected to do -- lead the country. Scattered and isolated though, we all felt useless and disconnected. We were at C Street for several hours.

[Rep. Zach Wamp](#) (R-TN) took charge at C Street. "Okay people, turn the TV off and let's get everybody in here," he shouted from the biggest room in the house. "Everybody take a knee and bow your head." Zach led us in a prayer, a portion of which was answered the moment the appeal left his lips. By God's grace, we were calmed, reassured, and unafraid. We felt connected.

About an hour later, [Sen. John Ensign's](#) (R-NV) cell phone rang. Everyone listened in on the first message anyone had received in hours. "We're at C Street," he said. "There're -- I don't know -- maybe 15 Members here." It was the largest group of Congressmen Capitol police had been able to locate. "They're coming here to pick us up," he announced. A few minutes later, white vans with police escorts drove up. "We need you to come with us, now," an officer said.

The motorcade whisked us to the Capitol police headquarters. Congressmen were being collected in a conference room. One by one, and sometimes in small clusters, lawmakers trickled in after being located and retrieved from throughout the city. There were about 5 television monitors set up bombarding us with images and reports from several networks.

I learned a couple of briefings had already taken place. I attended the next one. Most questions posed by Congressmen were unanswerable. Most information was already on the TV news. Frustrating. We would receive dozens of these briefings every week for the next month.

Eventually, we were offered a desk and a phone. Since most of the officers were on the street, their desks at the headquarters were abandoned. We called our families, district offices, state officials and returned media calls.

Our constituents wanted to know everything and their hunger for news was insatiable. I must have called into every radio station in Colorado and interviewed every newspaper. I was on the phone for a few hours stopping only for periodic briefings in hopes I might learn more to report to the people back home.

Congressmen were still trickling into the headquarters late in the day. One guy, a Member from California, burst through the doors, "people are saying both towers collapsed. Is it true?" He had been stuck in a restaurant since morning. All his news came off the street. The House Sergeant-At-Arms confirmed. "Have a seat, sir. Somebody get him some coffee." His face fell as he learned what the rest of us had known for at least eight hours.

By the end of the week, there were still no airplanes leaving Washington, D.C. My scheduler, Krista, finally found a way to fly me back to Denver leaving late Saturday, but I'd have to make multiple connections. (I didn't make it home until Sunday morning).

For the next month none of us would spend much time at home with our families. That's not what we were elected to do, especially during a national emergency.

Now, a month later, things had settled slightly. I finally had an extra Monday to be at home in Colorado. Jerry's suggestion that we meet up in New York meant sacrificing a portion of that precious Monday, but I didn't hesitate to schedule the trip.

The first responders, emergency crews, and sanitation workers had been on the job non-stop since 9/11. They had become national heroes emblematic of America's resolve. I really wanted to let those guys know how appreciated and admired they are by people way out in Colorado. I regarded it a high honor to carry the message of grateful Coloradans to [Ground Zero](#).

I savored being home with my family that Monday at dinner. I started missing them terribly before I even got to the end of our street on my way to the airport and my flight to New York City.

Three hours in line

Even in the evening, the line for security screening at the airport was extremely long -- ridiculous. It snaked its way around the corner and out the great hall of the main terminal at Denver International Airport. It seemed like I walked a mile just to get at the end of it. It moved slowly. Of course the plane was late, too. Most of the passengers on that same flight were stuck in line with me.

Final approach

By the time the captain announce we were beginning our descent, it was already 01:00 Tuesday morning. This was my third time in New York. My previous visits were quick -- once it was in and out for a dinner with the President of Taiwan, the other time to change airplanes. I'd never actually seen anything of New York except the interiors of a hotel, an airport and the darkened bus I rode between them through a hard Atlantic storm.

The Statue of Liberty stood stoically outside my window, then dropped low as the plane banked left over the East River. When the pilot leveled, passengers on the left side of the plane gasped and pressed their faces to the windows. It was Ground Zero. I couldn't see it. Then the guy across from me pulled away from his window, sat back and said aloud, "Those sons of bitches."

From across the aisle, I could see out his window. Smoke and steam rose up in a great column above our plane and into the clouds. The site was lit up bright as midday and I could see cranes, trucks and other equipment working down there. Even though this was my first glimpse of New York, New York I recognized the absence of the distinctive [Twin Towers](#) that had defined the city's skyline in photographs.

Nobody said a word. I noticed a lady two rows up and across the aisle from me make the sign of the Cross in conclusion of her prayer. Good idea. I started mine.

Cashing in on fear

I had the address of our hotel, but no idea where in New York it would be. I got in line for a cab. A guy came up and hit me with his heavy New York accent. "Anybody need a ride? How 'bout you, pal? Where you going?"

"The Marriott Marquis."

"Mid-town?"

"I don't know."

"What's the address?" I told him. "Sure. That's mid-town. I'll get you there for the same price as a cab." I said thanks, but no thanks.

I had already observed others in line decline his proposition; so I thought I'd best do like the locals. He could tell I wasn't one of them. "Come on! You wanna spend more money? I'll save you a few bucks." "No thanks," I told him. "A cab will be fine." I was getting annoyed. "Get out of my face!" I told the guy.

About ten minutes later, I was at the front of the line. My cab pulled up. The driver seemed pretty friendly. He learned I was from Colorado and began telling me how great New York is. Nearing 02:30, he was energetic, cheerful and kind. He was proud to be a New Yorker, proud to be an American. The second New Yorker I'd met, he almost made me forget about the first one.

Check in

Checking into my hotel room hardly seemed worth it. It was now 03:15. The woman at the desk gave me an envelope. It was from Jerry Moran. "Meet in the lobby at 7:00 a.m., for breakfast," said the note inside. Good grief. Should I even bother going to sleep?

Day Two: Tuesday, 9 October 2001

Breakfast

After three hours of sleep, I walked out of my hotel room and noticed how ugly the hotel is. It looks and feels like a prison -- massive. Every floor looks the same. Every room door looks like the cell door. I checked out and saw Crenshaw in line.

We noticed Shadegg and headed down to the hotel restaurant, got seated and waited for the others to find us. Moran and DeMint found us. Moran had a suit and tie on. No kidding. The memo from his office specifically said, "dress casual and wear comfortable shoes." We harassed him sufficiently. A simple breakfast cost us about \$20 per person. Ah, life in the Big Apple.

Wall of the Missing

A guy from [FEMA](#) met us in the lobby and directed us to a van waiting by the front door. We drove to a place set up to process information and assist families of the victims. Constructed along the sidewalk is "[The Wall of the Missing](#)." It's a long bulletin board made of two-by-fours, and plywood. On it, families posted information about their missing loved ones.

We walked the sidewalk along the wall like it was a graveyard. Most flyers posted included photos of the victims and crushed us with the reality that the terrorists had killed ordinary, innocent civilians. The victims were a cross-section of America. The posters were homemade. Many were written by hand, perhaps by the victims' spouses, children, or parents. Some were made with computers. They told stories.



REUTERS/Shawn Best

Zhanetta Tsoy was pictured holding her two-year-old daughter. The mother's description: Brown eyes, black hair, and 32 years old. "Tuesday (9/11) was her first day."

Craig Staub was 30, 6'1" 210 lbs. He was pictured in his wedding-day photo with a gorgeous blonde bride. In the margin, alongside the photo and in her own hand, written in purple ink - "Expecting first child this week."

Two golfing buddies posed in front of a putting green. Their photo must have been taken at a golf tournament. They had their arms around one another, shoulder to shoulder, like best friends. Their happy smiles and goofy golf outfits made me think of my dad. They looked like they could be grandfathers. Sam Salvo, and Nick Massa. It looks like they might have worked together.

Oleh Wengerchuk was pictured with his family - a bunch of kids and some others. He left a large family. The photo looked like it was taken in a kitchen during a holiday of some sort, maybe a birthday, maybe his. "Please call (631) 271-5994," wrote a desperate relative on Oleh's flyer.

Deryck Lindo made out a poster hoping for information about his wife Nickie. She was striking: 5'4" and 30 years old. The photo of the beautiful pair in a warm embrace was touching. He's pictured standing behind with his arms around her, holding her close. Her hands were lovingly folded over his. Their bodies conformed perfectly. Both were beaming. Now, she's gone. Deryck asks anyone with any information about his beloved to please call him at (718) 258-2620.

The FEMA people pulled us away. "Sir, we need to move on." We're already getting behind schedule.

Coloradans everywhere

The first person we met was Leslie Bailey. She came right up to me, "Congressman Schaffer, I'm from Fort Collins." Leslie knows some of my staff there that she had met during the [Fort Collins flood](#). Leslie works for FEMA.

As she led us to a pier on the Hudson River, she noticed a guy from the Salvation Army. His name is Jon Wallace, also from Colorado. Wallace had been in New York for three weeks and he was going home Thursday. He was sent to maintain canteens, assistance centers, and counseling services at the morgues. He was coordinating relief aid and money from throughout the state of New York. He said, "From Colorado, we're getting lots of prayers."

Leslie introduced us to the guy from the [Army Corps of Engineers](#) who is the project coordinator for the Ground Zero cleanup. He would be the agency's top expert, and the one to lead us on our tour from there. His name is Steven Browning. As delegation members introduced themselves, I was surprised when he preempted me, "Congressman Schaffer, we've met before in Fort Collins. I'm a graduate of [CSU](#)." Moran was certain I had called ahead and arranged for all these Coloradans to be on hand.

Near the pier, a poster was tacked to the wall. It was a "Wanted" poster featuring Osama bin Laden. Under his photo: "Wanted dead or alive," but someone crossed out "or alive."

Browning briefed us on what we were going to see. Some other FEMA people, a representative of Mayor Giuliani's office, and a photographer, joined us. We boarded a FEMA boat and cruised south down the Hudson River passing the Empire State Building on our left. On 9/11 it became New York's tallest building, again.

Approaching Ground Zero

As we proceeded down the river, Browning described the cleanup operation starting from day one. He showed us maps of the city, the position of the buildings and described how they collapsed. He told us about the several agencies - state, local, and federal -- that

were working on the site. The coordination is complex, something most Americans will never know nor appreciate.

We received safety gear: Hard hats, safety glasses, and dust masks. No photographs allowed. As the boat approached the harbor, we could see the column of smoke, steam and dust spiraling up from behind the first row of buildings. As we got closer, we could see broken windows on buildings located more than a block away from the towers.



The Manhattan Skyline after the attack on September 11, 2001

Terra firma

At the harbor, we disembarked and someone pointed out the dust all over the sidewalks. Greater amounts had accumulated in corners and crevices, almost like little snowdrifts. Browning explained how the force of the collapsing buildings pulverized concrete into an extremely fine dust. These particles are everywhere and in everything. To clean it up, workers soak the dust then shovel it up.

We walked through a maze of temporary chain-link barriers and barbed wire toward the site. Police officers and military personnel watched us carefully as we made our way. There were lots of National Guardsmen carrying M-16s.

Spontaneous memorials

As we came closer to Ground Zero we were struck by the sight of mountains of flowers, teddy bears and other items. They were stacked atop nearly every planter and landscape feature. "You'll see these things everywhere," one of our escorts told me.

Taped to the wall near one of these monuments were more flyers about lost victims. There was a poster with three photos of Rufino Conrado F. Santos - "Roy." He was 37. "Please call (604) 724-4093 with any information."

Shadegg whispered, "Schaffer, come see this." It was the saddest thing I can imagine -- a letter from a little girl named Amanda to her dead father. The note was attached to a teddy bear. "Dear Daddy: How much I miss you. I hope heaven is a wonderful place, and I hope I live a life good enough to join you there someday." She loves him. She misses him. She said she hopes he didn't hurt when he died. She remembers all the good times they had playing. She was 12 years old. The letter was wrapped in a plastic sleeve to protect it from the rain -- maybe from our tears. Shadegg and I have kids. Amanda wasn't much older than my Sarah.

Ground Zero

We turned a corner, passed through a checkpoint, and straight away was Ground Zero. Browning led us up a wooden staircase to an observation platform. It was still under construction. Surveying the rubble from this vantage point, the delegation was stunned, saddened, angry, overwhelmed with emotions. It was mighty difficult.

October 9, 2001



A crane removing rubble replaces the silhouette of the World Trade Towers.

The workers impressed us. Everyone had a job and a purpose. They were dedicated and made us proud. Even a carpenter pounding the final nails into the platform below us worked like he was rebuilding the country. Browning began explaining the scene from an engineer's perspective.

Well-built towers

The buildings collapsed “perfectly,” straight down, indicating expert construction, architecture and engineering. If they had fallen over, tipping in any direction, the number of lives lost would have been exponentially more dramatic. Such a fall would have initiated a “domino” effect spreading the destruction horizontally and outward a few more blocks -- maybe several more blocks, depending on the direction of the fall.

Unsung heroes

Browning told us how the New York sanitation crews are real heroes. The media had chronicled well the heroism of the first responders, firefighters, police, and the military, but few appreciate the sanitation crews, he said. They are the guys who pick up the debris, haul it out, and deal with issues like water runoff, sewage leaks and other sanitary matters. “They have saved as many lives as anyone else,” said Browning.

Still burning

Four weeks after 9/11, Ground Zero was still smoldering. Just a day prior, according to Browning, the crew pulled out a section of box beam that was still glowing red. “Our probes are still detecting hot spots in the rubble measuring 1800 degrees,” he said.

Clean up

Several teams of construction contractors were working different areas. The debris gets trucked to an off-site facility to be sorted, sifted, and examined for evidence. The FBI building, for example, which stood across the street from one of the towers, was destroyed, and with it, lots of crucial evidence needed for pending prosecutions and investigations. Some criminals will go free because of the attack. Every square inch of that area is being inspected by hand.

The surrounding buildings were all draped with netting to contain falling windows. Windy days are dangerous. American flags hung from all the surrounding buildings, too. The center of Ground Zero looked like a mountain. The debris field looked like soil. Browning said there were relatively few solid concrete chunks. It was all pulverized. He reminded us that these buildings had several sub-floors, basements and utility tunnels below the sub-basements. Those lowest levels collapsed, too, and were filled by material from the upper floors. This made the height of the debris pile even more remarkable.

Conflicts

Workers seemed like they were working on a deadline. Nobody was standing around. When I mentioned this, Browning said he’d never seen anything like it himself. Impressive as it was, the efficiency was also the cause of conflict between workers and firefighters.

Construction workers are eager to remove debris and haul it out. They get into a rhythm. Firefighters keep a different cadence. To them, this is a crime scene. They want to investigate every shovel-full.

If a fragment of a firefighter's or police officer's remains is found, everything stops. The remains are draped with the flag and reverently removed. The construction crews sometimes get impatient with this, we were told. We stood silent, just looking and taking it all in for quite a long time. Amazing, just amazing, and very painful.

Japanese families

Our briefing was winding down. A large group of mostly Japanese people was being led to the observation platform. I examined their faces as their eyes set on this hallowed ground -- the place where their family members perished. They seemed to float into the area and up the platform stairs. They had bewildered, empty expressions never looking down at their step. There were about 70 of them carrying teddy bears, flowers, and other items. They held these objects tight, like babies.

This scene reminded me of how many other nations were affected by the attack. Other countries, like Japan, had trade, diplomatic, and consulate offices in the World Trade Center. Several foreign companies were headquartered here, too.

Iron Cross

One of the FEMA guys pointed out a piece of debris that had become a symbol of inspiration, comfort and hope. A cross piece of I-beam stood erect among the rubble as a crucifix. Its proportions were nearly perfect and it tilted only slightly. Workers rallied around [that Cross](#). A priest had blessed it. It was far across the debris field from where we were standing and difficult to see, but once it was pointed out to us, it was unmistakable.

Standing in silence

The briefing was instructive, but most of our time at Ground Zero was spent in silence and awe. I experienced a wide range of conflicting emotions, emptiness yet determination, anger yet love, fear yet comfort, shame yet pride.

Every sense was sharpened. A pungent musty, chalky odor of concrete dust blended evenly with the distinct smell of mildew, ash, fire and fuel. It was a textured stench that stuck inside your head and after awhile you could taste it as much as smell it.

The air was humid. The sounds of equipment, and men shouting to each other echoed slightly as if we were indoors. And the absence of typical big-city background noise was peculiar.

Out of respect for the dead, everyone was careful not to speak or make noises not absolutely necessary in conducting the serious, solemn business of recovering bodies and cleaning up Ground Zero. People whispered to one another. It felt like being in a massive church.

Independence

In preparing to come to Ground Zero, I wedged 52 copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution into my pockets. I handed these neat little booklets out

to all the workers I saw. One woman with the Red Cross said, “This means so much to me.” A couple weeks later, I received letters from a few of these people. One guy’s wife wrote to tell me how her husband read the Declaration to his kids that night.

One officer almost didn’t want to accept one as I held it out to him. Initially, he must have thought I was selling something. Once he realized what I was offering, he took it. His attitude changed and he said, “Thank you, sir. Thank you a lot.” As we walked on, he said to me, “Hey, make sure you guys follow this in Washington.” I told him I’d do my part.

Liberty

Back at the New York Port Authority harbor, we boarded the FEMA boat. Moran asked if the skipper could take us past the Statue of Liberty. No problem. The pilot swung the boat around in a U-turn.

We could see the statue ahead in the distance and off to the right. Up ahead, a large Coast Guard cutter slowly patrolled the harbor. The Coast Guard’s mission was to monitor and patrol all water traffic into and near Manhattan. Past the cutter, we had an awesome view of Lady Liberty. She’s majestic. We posed for pictures, but mostly we just stood and looked reflecting on the day’s observations, contemplating the powerful images of the devastation, and the triumph of the fine Americans who were responding to the attack’s aftermath.

What a day. The first time I’d seen the Statue of Liberty, I saw her from the air in the early morning, then from the sea that same afternoon. I saw her standing boldly at America’s gate beside this most awesome and powerful display of raw heroism, courage and valor. She’s radiant, inspiring and beautiful, absolutely beautiful. Seeing her for the first time is surely memorable under any circumstances; but for me, meeting her upon such a solemn and poignant occasion is something I suspect I’ll always recall with vivid sentiments.

Regarding New Yorkers, Moran summed them up perfectly: “I don’t think there’s anyone who just can’t be proud of New Yorkers and how they’ve responded. They define the American spirit.” Amen. He was still wearing his tie.

Heading back

We felt fortunate and blessed to see Ground Zero. City officials were debating how to deal with the massive numbers of people who wanted to do just what we had done. To some, at first, there’s an assumption that observers just want to witness the spectacle of the devastation and gawk just like voyeurs do when passing an auto accident. No.

There is a spiritual transformation that takes place at scenes of carnage and desolation on this scale. On different levels, I’ve felt it before at cemeteries, battlefields, and massacre sites. I had a similar experience just two weeks earlier at the Pentagon where I was among the first group of Congressmen to visit.

Ground Zero is an intensely profound and hallowed place. This space now focuses the attention of the world. It awakens the resolve of the America spirit, summons the courage of all history, and it has become a part of the human conscience. It takes in the Pentagon, and [Flight 93 which crashed in Pennsylvania](#). All those victims, their spirits radiate here, too. Their souls sing out in glorious unison from this place. It's a palpable impression too powerful to deny, and I now understand those who say they somehow felt driven to experience Ground Zero.

Prior to the visit, some had tried to describe this feeling to me but I just didn't get it. Now I do. I wish every American could have stood where we stood, and saw, felt, heard, smelled, tasted and sensed what we did. We discussed these things during our return trip to Washington, D.C.

The company was important to the moment, certainly. My companions are some of the truest heroes of the Congress in my judgment. They're the ones you don't need to question. They are men who would sooner lose an election and disappoint their friends than abandon just and righteous causes. They love Liberty. They're motivated by an unyielding devotion to America and a solid faith in the God of our Founders. They're the ones who won't forget the historic significance, importance, and meaning of 9/11.

October 9, 2001



Congressman Schaffer is joined by Rep. Shadegg, Rep. Jim DeMint, Rep. Moran, Rep. Crenshaw, along with FEMA workers at the New York Harbor.

In Washington, D.C., I meet and pray weekly with these guys at C Street (twice a week with DeMint), and we've become brothers in Christ. Together in New York, we came to understand America better. We grew in faith, and we were enriched, becoming more boldly equipped to do our jobs on behalf of our constituents, and the country. It was one of those defining moments - an uncommon experience that transformed the bonds of friendship into an institution of brotherhood.

Can't be described

On a cell phone, I returned a call to a reporter in Colorado. I had promised the reporter I'd call from New York after I'd seen Ground Zero. Now, I dreaded making the call, but I had promised. I knew I couldn't adequately answer the likely questions nor judiciously describe the things I'd just seen. The experience was just too overwhelming, but I tried. In the months since, I've thought about these moments almost every day, and I can recall - in intense detail - what I saw and felt, but I still can't seem to find the words that convey it all. It's too big, too complicated.

May God bless them

Americans have been motivated by New Yorkers and inspired by the memories of the victims. Some seek vengeance. Oh, these lives will indeed be avenged. But more than that, Americans have a clearer insight about God's blessings on a nation, and about the unalienable rights to life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, and of all other natural rights. We acquired a keener appreciation of just how precious these qualities are, and why a great nation like ours must exist to honor God, protect human life and advance human dignity.

Evil tyrants took advantage of America's complacency. It's hard to imagine Americans being complacent again. To become so, would be to trivialize the deaths, sacrifices, and heroism of the victims and our defenders -- and it would betray the compassion of a gentle God who gave America Liberty. The victims were just normal people, going about their daily routines and doing their jobs. They're dead now.

Any one of us might have been in their places. It hurts that they're gone.

May their souls, and all the souls of the faithfully departed, through the Mercy of God, rest in eternal peace. May the responders and soldiers who keep us safe enjoy the powerful and Divine protection of the Creator. May the Almighty bless them all, and may God bless America.