



As We Mark the Anniversary of the 9/11 Terror Attacks

Here is the story of how the events impacted
Soroptimists

This is the story you never heard...

My husband I had just returned from a 3 week trip to Europe one week to the day of 9/11. We felt so fortunate we had not stayed another few days or we would have been stranded there for many days. Later we heard the stories of those who had been affected by the restrictions of flights in the wake of the attacks. But for every bad story there were good ones.

Many Americans who had just landed in Frankfurt, Germany were faced with the reality of having to remain in the airport until flights were allowed again. All the hotels in the city had already been filled. But to their amazement citizens of the city started coming to the airport to offer them accommodations in their homes for as long as they were needed. The people in Europe were as shocked as those from the U.S. and they wanted to do what they could for anyone who needed help.

Later I also heard stories of Soroptimists who were traveling and reached out to the clubs in each European city and asked for help. Of course they were welcomed by the Soroptimists who gave them all the assistance they needed. Many of them are still keeping in touch by email or letters.

At this time I was serving on the SIA Federation Board of Directors. A few months later I flew to New York for the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.

My roommate in New York was a long time friend, I asked her if she wished to go down to Ground Zero and she said yes,

The first day we were there, we went to the UN and was put through their rigorous process of securing our credentials. Then we went down to Ground Zero. It was not just to see the destruction but also to say prayers and pay our respects to all those world citizens who had died there. Looking into that pit where those two towers had stood was a moment I will never forget.



We had another reminder of the events of 9/11. We went to see Rent,. Standing on Broadway after the play was over, several police cars, fire trucks and ambulances went by. People just stopped and stood still. I think we all had the same thought What now!



Going to ground zero was only one task.
The other task, the harder one, was going to the Trinity Church
to view the memorials posted on the fence there.
Family members and friends were honoring those they lost that



The number of items was overwhelming
They were from all the countries of the world.

**We sometimes forget it was
The World Trade Center.**

There were people from all over
the globe working in the Towers that day.

It was a solemn crowd viewing all those
items placed along the fence.
As we walked slowly around the church
we heard people speaking in
many different languages..
We noticed as we had tears in our eyes
others were weeping too.
It made no difference that months
had passed.



**These were the tributes
to the
victims of terror.**

There were cards,
ribbons and balloons
that had gone flat. long
ago. Flowers had
withered and faded.

There were posters and
letters. Some of the
mementos were heart
shaped lockets with the
photo of the lost one .



It was difficult but a
pilgrimage we felt we
needed to take.

To honor not only the
victims working in
the Towers that day
but for all those brave
first responders who
tried to help.

Most of these items
now reside in the
museum in New York.

I will write about the meeting at the UN another time. The meeting 's subject was Prostitution and Poverty. I was impressed with all the work being done globally on this issue.



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Each Board member has her own room. As there are so many time zones members have to travel long distances,. As a courtesy we are housed separately. It is a very good policy when some arrive after flying for more than 13 hours, they need rest and quiet.

Next morning we were ready for our 8 hour meeting and 4 hours for dinner. Yes it is a 12 hour day. It is also a 12 hour day for our hard working interpreters. How many we have at a meeting depends on the make up of the Board each time we meet. We always have a Japanese interrupter and also a Spanish interrupter. Most members coming from Brazil speak Spanish as their second language as their native tongue is Portuguese. Usually English is their third language, The interpreters join us for lunch and dinner.

At one meeting the Spanish interrupter asked to be excused. She did not come back into the room for awhile so I went looking for her. Found her in the rest room crying. She explained to me how hard it is to interpret in real time when Americans speak so fast and use idioms. She also had her son in the hospital ,so she was feeling a lot of stress.

Then she asked me something I was not prepared for. She said, "How come I can always translate what you are saying?" I had to think about that ,then I said, "Because I have a Japanese Mother In Law." She said "Of course you do. Why did I not think of that?" We started to laugh and I think she felt better that someone was concerned for her. She pointed out something I was doing unconsciously I had slowed down my normal rate of speech because I was very conscious of the Japanese members in the room.

So the morning after New York we gathered for our meeting. After everyone got coffee or tea and exchanged some gifts, we settled into chairs around round tables. . Seeing the meeting set up we knew what we would be working on.. At that time we were being coached by a professional person constructing our Strategic Plan. He worked with all the large companies in the US and we were very fortunate to have him. The first thing he asked us was this.

"How have the events of 9/11 changed your Strategic Plan? Or does it?"

We were stunned. No one said anything, we were all thinking. That came at us without warning. Then we got to work and those terror events did change it. We worked on the Goodwill and Understanding section first. We took some items out of other sections and placed them there. We worked hard that morning.

We had noticed that 2 Board members were missing.

Our Director told us that their families would not let them travel to the US.. It was unsafe they said.

So 9/11 did change Soroptimist It was one of the most memorable meetings I have ever been apart of. And it changed me. I was flying to Board meetings and to regions. I never once complained about the added security at the airports.

The next summer we went to Europe again. Everything was different., armed solders and police everywhere. Even the crowds at the Eiffel Tower were smaller. The world was afraid!