

The Haberman's

Midwestern Parents of 9/11 Victim Are Now Linked to New York - Sep 11, 2004

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September 11, 2004 -- ANDREA Haberman was not a New Yorker. She was a 25-year-old Wisconsinite turned Chicagoan who came to New York for the first time on a business trip on Sept. 10, 2001. She was murdered 10 hours later by al Qaeda at Carr Futures on the 92nd floor of One World Trade Center. Three years on, Andrea's parents, Gordon and Kathy, and her younger sister, Julie, are forever linked with New York and with New Yorkers.

The Habermans checked into their hotel three blocks from Ground Zero last Wednesday to do what all of 9/11's perennial pilgrims to New York must do: thread their workaday 9/11 chores — incomprehensible to anyone else — throughout six more days of sustained heartbreak.

Yesterday, regular New Yorkers who had thought wrongly that the third anniversary of 9/11 would be easier than the second and the first observed moments of silence at their offices all over the city. While they were doing that, the Habermans attended a seminar held by the New York City Medical Examiner at the Marriott World Financial Center in Lower Manhattan.

Andrea's family learned in March 2002 that the ME's forensic team had identified a piece of Andrea's body. "We did not have any physical evidence that she was even in the building" before then, her father said. They are still agonizing over when to bring Andrea's remains back home.

For even as New York rebuilds — 9/11 family members from around the world are viewing the new PATH station and the new Seven World Trade Center for the first time this week — the ME is still sorting through al-Qaeda's proud handiwork.

Scientists are conducting a *new* round of forensic tests on unidentified remains next month. The Habermans, and hundreds of families like them, don't know if they want to have Andrea's remains sent home this year — only to have to re-bury *more* of her next year.

Andrea's younger sister Julie said that it's hard for her to reconcile the physical tasks with the enormity of the reality behind them. "You bring dental records, you give your DNA," Julie said yesterday in the graveyard of St. Paul's Chapel. "It's hard to connect emotion with action . . . that they have to identify her by one cell."

"We've been dealing with the ME for three years now," Gordon said. "Nothing that I will learn [from] them is worse than what I already know about my daughter's death."

The Habermans come to New York regularly now, partly because they do feel close to Andrea near Ground Zero.

They've also embraced New York as a haven away from home — because New Yorkers understand what happened on that day. "We feel like aliens" in Wisconsin sometimes, Kathy said — because well-meaning people there can't comprehend the strength of the visceral connection she feels to New York City and to 9/11.

Julie said that her sister would have fallen in love with New York during the days Andrea was to be here that week. "She would have come out on subsequent visits. She would have loved the hustle and bustle . . . she would have loved to shop."

The Habermans try to see a bit more of New York each time they visit — and they've made dozens of friends here, from the tireless ME workers to regular people who hug them on the street when they hear their story.

The Habermans never saw the WTC — they've only seen the hole above which Andrea died. Kathy would like to see pieces of the WTC brought back to Ground Zero — "because this is what hate really is." But they are quick to point out that they are not the true victims of that hate — beautiful, brilliant young Andrea was.

Andrea loved kids, and would have been a great mom. She had bought a house with her fiance, Al Kolodzik, two months before 9/11. "She couldn't wait" to start planning her 2002 wedding, Kathy said. Kathy said she can't look at brides or babies — because she knows that "Andrea's and Al's life together would have been perfect."

But gorgeous, and exquisitely alive, Andrea ascended into that tower on that September morning just as Mohamad Atta and his team of black souls took off from Boston to kill her.

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