

★ An American Story ★



Petra Bartosiewicz

**ORIGINAL
REVIEW
COPY**

At 8:45 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time on September 11, 2001, a Boeing 767 passenger jet slammed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. As people below gazed in horror, a second plane collided with the South Tower. Soon afterward, a third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. At 9:50 A.M., the South Tower collapsed in a billowing cloud of dust and debris. The North Tower fell about 40 minutes later. The collapsing towers killed thousands of people, burying them beneath a vast mound of rubble. The next day, journalist Petra Bartosiewicz filed a report from New York City:

☹☹ I am at the foot of the smoking wreck. . . Buildings on either side rise silent and black, their windows shattered. . . Everywhere is frantic activity. . . Firefighters fan out in teams, sliding across the girders and beams, prodding the ground, looking for bodies, guided only by the smell of death. But the odor is everywhere, and there are many false alarms—"Got one here, chief!"—a team descends, search dogs are brought in, a frantic digging ensues, yielding nothing, a scrap of skin, a leg. . . Many firefighters have succumbed to exhaustion and lie sprawled on makeshift cots. . . I, too, am tired. . . [and] my bones feel ground, my nose numb from dust and asbestos. ☹☹

—quoted in *The Atlantic Online*, September 19, 2001

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Todd Beamer

**FINAL
VERSION**

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The airplanes did not crash accidentally. Hijackers deliberately crashed them into the buildings. Hijackers also seized a fourth airplane, United Airlines Flight 93, probably hoping to crash it into the White House or the Capitol. Many passengers on Flight 93 had cell phones. After hearing about the World Trade Center, four passengers—Todd Beamer, Thomas Burnett, Jeremy Glick, and Mark Bingham—decided to do something. An operator listening over a cell phone heard Todd Beamer's voice: "Are you ready, guys? Let's roll." Soon afterward, Flight 93 crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. At that moment, Vice President Dick Cheney was in a bunker under the White House. After hearing that Flight 93 had crashed, he said, "I think an act of heroism just took place on that plane."

—adapted from *Let's Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage*