

The massive assault by terrorists Sept. 11 on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., has affected gay and lesbian Americans as much as it has their fellow countrymen.

The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund is headquartered at 120 Wall St. in the financial district, and the American Foundation for AIDS Research has offices in the same building. It is a half-mile or so from what used to be the World Trade Center complex.

That building was evacuated after the second plane hit but before either structure collapsed. "Our lobby was full of that terrible smoke, dust and particles from the buildings," said Peg Byron, Lambda communications director. "Here was this incredibly beautiful day, and we walked outside and it was like winter. It was dark; the air was heavy with this stuff."

Byron spoke of walking along the east side of Manhattan toward her home to Chelsea. Most people were trying to cover their nose and mouth with shirts to screen out the noxious particles. She was under the elevated FDR Drive and did not see the towers collapse, but colleagues walking home across the Brooklyn Bridge saw the horrific spectacle.

Activist attorney Bill Dobbs lives just below Greenwich Village in SoHo, about 15 blocks from the World Trade Center. "A neighbor told me that the second tower had collapsed. That just seemed beyond comprehension."

Dobbs grabbed his bike about 10:30 that morning and peddled down toward City Hall. "There wasn't panic but incredulity on the streets down there. My most vivid memory is of the silt and sediment. It was fine in texture, very uniform, light beige in color. All I could think of

Dozens of people come together for "A Service of Faith in the Face of Terror" on Sept. 11 at the Metropolitan Community Church of Portland

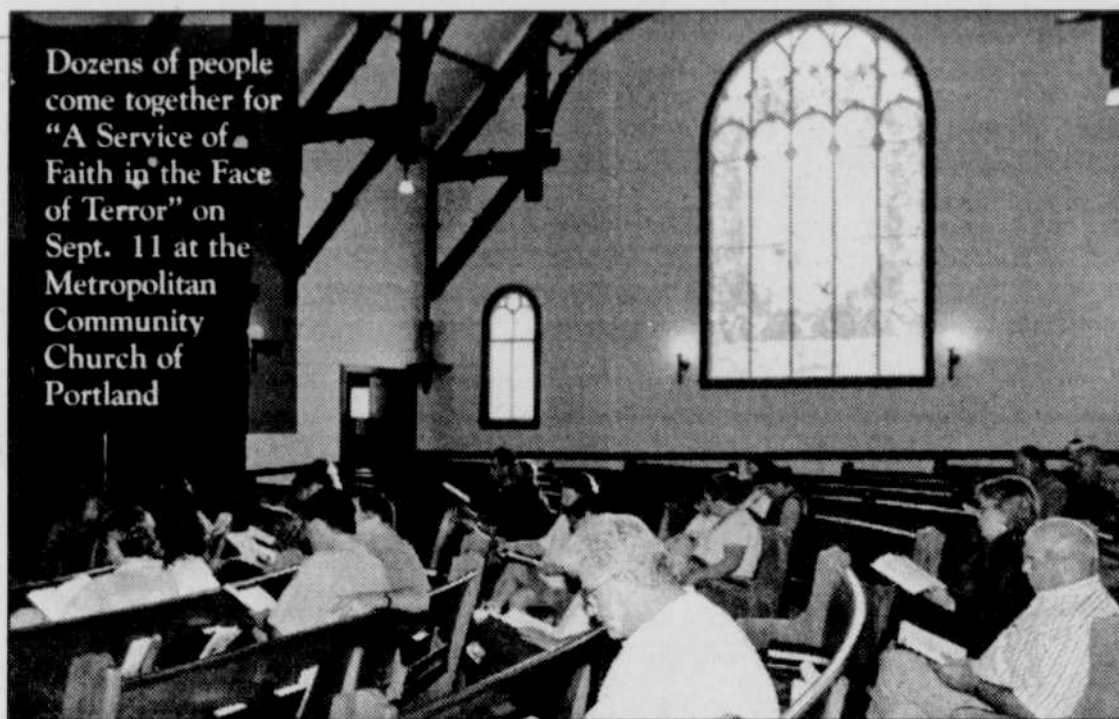


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

## THE HATE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

**Terrorists attack New York and Washington, D.C.**

by Bob Roehr

was cremated remains. It's inches deep on the streets down there."

Dobbs grabbed a few sheets of paper that were strewn everywhere. One carried an address of the 99th floor of the World Trade Center, about a quarter-mile up in the air. "It had made its way down from a place that no longer exists."

That evening, walking around Chelsea, the streets were half-deserted, cars and taxis sparse. Gay bars stopped playing music videos and turned to news coverage; patrons sat rapt.

Byron saw "yellow school buses lined up for medical triage" to carry the wounded to medical facilities, but unfortunately there were few survivors to use them. Above all, there was the unnatural calm.

The police set up checkpoints restricting

entry to SoHo that night, Dobbs said. They required a photo identification with an address south of the checkpoints in order to let people through.

In Washington, the streets were filled with people streaming out of the business district as the city shut down. Even the ubiquitous Starbucks closed. The afternoon was eerily quiet, frequently punctuated by the wail of sirens as police and medical vehicles raced one way or the other.

An immediate call went out for blood donations. But all gay men are ineligible to make blood donations under current screening policy, regardless of their HIV status or sexual monogamy.

"I was in tears when I heard the call go

out," Vermonter Steve Swayne said. "I would donate blood in a heartbeat."

The Pentagon, however, has issued an order allowing openly gay and lesbian soldiers to serve during the war against terrorism. But the government isn't doing this out of the kindness of its heart, said Charles Moskos, a Northwestern University military sociologist. It suspends discharge procedures during wartime to prevent straight soldiers from bolting.

"People say, 'I'm gay, let me out,'" Moskos said. "So they put this stop-loss in effect, which is kind of hypocritical."

Aaron Belkin, Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military director, said the situation reveals the discriminatory nature of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. "Such differential behavior draws into question the military's argument that gay and lesbian servicemembers compromise the morale, cohesiveness and operational effectiveness of their units, since it is during periods of conflict that morale, cohesiveness and operational effectiveness are most vital."

Dobbs frets about how the United States will respond to the tragedy. Can it do so "without eviscerating civil liberties?" Comparisons with the attack on Pearl Harbor also raise the specter of tens of thousands of Japanese Americans being hauled off to internment camps created in Wyoming and other isolated areas.

During the "red" crackdown of the McCarthy era of the 1950s, gays were among those singled out for persecution. Byron hopes this time the approach will be more thoughtful, "an inclination to move away from petty hatreds and differences." □

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