

ORANGE COUNTY EDITION

Los Angeles Times

Out of Sight, but Never Out of Mind

By BARBARA
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In the weeks since the Sept. 11 attacks, a few New Yorkers have complained that the rest of the country has forgotten about them and no longer cares.

We may live 3,000 miles away, yet how could we ever forget? Granted, we don't have the glaring reminder New Yorkers have: That space where the Twin Towers once stood must shock them daily. So while the attack may no longer be a major topic of conversation for some, our hearts remain broken.

Since Sept. 11, most everyone I know has experienced two—rather than six—degrees of separation: Everyone knows someone who knew someone who died or whose life was changed in untold ways.

As we drive the streets and freeways of our county, flags continue to fly from car antennas and houses. People wear flag pins and clothing with flag designs, and plaster their car windows and

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briefcases with flag decals.

They're flocking to blood banks and donating auction items on eBay. It's enough to choke up the most formerly nonpatriotic person.

Surely, the children remember.

Since Sept. 11, at daily opening ceremonies at my 7-year-old son's school, groups of children hold flags high as everyone recites the pledge of allegiance. They sing patriotic songs. And when I asked my son Travis what he did at school one day, he said his class drew pictures. His was of a beach in Hawaii. "A plane flew into the sand, but sand doesn't burn, so there wasn't a fire," said Travis.

Later he asked how we would know if his dad were bombed

where he works.

"If he's not home by his usual time, I'll call," I said.

"What if they don't answer?"

"Then I'll call the police. But it's unlikely Daddy will get bombed at work. We're lucky that way."

At least for now, I thought.

Travis appeared satisfied with my answer, yet I couldn't help wondering how parents—or relatives and social workers—told those children who lost a parent in the attack that their mommy or daddy wouldn't be coming home because something horrible happened at work.

Often it's the simple things that serve as sad reminders of what others have lost.

For me, my intact family reminds me of too many families who are no longer together. Since Sept. 11, our prayer before dinner now includes the words: "And God, please take care of all those people who need your help now, more than ever."

In a picture my husband took of Travis and me in New York last May, the Twin Towers stand in the distance, directly behind our heads. That image is now the desktop on my computer, the first thing I see when I turn it on in the morning, and the last thing I see when it goes off at night. It's my own personal reminder.

The Sept. 11 events inextricably bind everyone in this nation together. Someone from Illinois said, "We are all New Yorkers now." I would say it better if I could.

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