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The following is an article we received from Dr. Christopher Rickard as a follow-up to his initial article on his experiences at Ground Zero (Visions, Winter 2001 issue). Dr. Rickard will be a featured speaker at Alumni Weekend 2002, at which he will share poignant stories and original photographs taken at Ground Zero, from September 11, 2001 to the closing of the site in June of this year.

I can still remember the smell. It's been almost a year and I can still taste the heaviness of the air. It's hard to believe that a year has passed since that September morning that changed our lives. I remember waking up to the events of September 11, 2001, and 2 days later standing with the stunned masses on the streets of New York. The air filled with the smell of a stale campfire and the sound of sirens. The sound seemed to be everywhere and never ending. The blank looks on the faces of New Yorkers as they stared at the endless sea of missing posters covering the city, and the debris cloud hovering over Ground Zero. The candle drenched memorials on every street, and the ones that seemed to grow like wild flowers and take on a life of their own. The images of New York in my first few trips into the city after 9/11 were like watching a movie. You try to take in as much as you can, and at some point you try to make sense of it all — but you can't. I tried to see, experience and photograph as much as I could, and tried to bare witness to the events of September 11th. Within 3 weeks, I would become an integral part of American history.



Dr. Rickard in front of "the pile"

After the Red Cross pulled out of Ground Zero in mid-November, the relief efforts were left up to the Salvation Army and St. Paul's Chapel. The Salvation Army had a tent that filled up an entire city block and they served over 8,000 meals a day. Mayor Giuliani served Thanksgiving dinner there to the workers. It was on the West Side Highway and was close to the north end entrance to "the pile". They eventually allowed chiropractors to work there, but not until April. No one really knows why they waited so long, but I was there for as many shifts as I could arrange. The majority of my time was spent at St. Paul's. From my first shift on October 4, 2001, until the site closed on June 2, 2002, I spent every Thursday at St. Paul's Chapel as a chiropractic volunteer. I also spent a few other shifts there on the weekends when I had time, or when they would be short-handed and needed someone to fill-in on a Saturday or Sunday. I remember how desperate I was to get there and to help out in any way I could. The scene was so unlike what we are accustomed to in America: the security check points; the car search for bombs just so you could park the in the garage; all the people in military uniforms carrying automatic weapons lining the streets surrounding Ground Zero looking like somewhere other than New York. The silent strength of all these men and women made me feel safe, but there was an almost tangible tension in the air. You don't know what to make of it all; you just know that you are there to do what you can to help. Once you're in the church, you're in another world. Once you put your hands on your first patient and they feel relief from the healing of your hands, you never want to leave. A spirit comes over you like you have never felt before. To know what is just outside the doors of the church, and to be able to help workers go back out into the hell of "the pile" and "the pit", you feel the true meaning of being a chiropractor and a healer. There were chiropractors at Ground Zero on September 11th, adjusting people right on the street, and I was still adjusting people there as recently as June 2nd. In the beginning, the firemen were sleeping on "the pile" and using their helmets as a pillow. They would not leave the site. The chiropractors were there the longest, and were the strongest health care group active at Ground Zero. I remember the smell on my first shift. The pungent, sickeningly sweet smell of death and decay. I would smell it and taste it when I got off the subway at the start of my shift, and I could still smell it on my clothes when I got home. My nose would be thick with black debris, and my hair tacky and dry. I heard that many people were suffering from respiratory problems as a result of the air at Ground Zero. Many people would wear respirators to protect themselves, but while on "the pile" many would not wear them because, as the workers were looking for remains of the dead, they would find them by the smell of their decaying flesh, rather than by sight. One

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afternoon I was treating a man who had just come from “the pile”, and as I was working on him I asked him what his job was. He answered that he was a “spotter.” I asked him, “A spotter for what?” “A spotter for bodies” he replied. As the cranes and claws were removing debris it was his job to spot any remains in the debris. If he did, they would stop the work and remove the remains. The pile burned for almost 3 months — the longest a building had burned in American history. It was “like a giant crematorium” — one description I heard of “the pile”. Then one worker I talked with described the Towers coming down as “one big meat grinder”. He said that in the early days of the recovery they weren’t finding anything bigger than the front plate of a phone, and even that was all chewed-up. One worker said that the one thing he would never forget about 9/11 was the *sound* of the towers coming down, the horrible sound of twisting steel. One of the volunteers I worked with in the church,



The area known as “the pit”

Marjorie, was there when the towers came down and she remembers how she ran for her life from the debris cloud. She didn’t know what was in it and she was scared to death to be caught up in it. One thought that crossed her mind was that after living in Israel and surviving, she was now going to die here in her own hometown. Every Thursday I would smell “the pile”, and as the time went by, the smell lessened, until you could only smell it if the wind was blowing just right. I could still smell it at the closing ceremonies, however, on May 31st. After all that time, when I smelled that pungent smell of decay, I still got a bit weak. It brought back so many feelings. When I first started working at Ground Zero, I heard that the clean-up could go on for a year. I thought, “Can I do this for a year?” After working one shift I knew that I would be there until they told me to stop coming.

St. Paul’s Chapel is a place that has been touched by God. Many pictures will be seen and many stores will be told of this little Church which is only one block from Ground Zero, but anyone who has worked, prayed or cried there during the relief effort will tell you that there is something there which is beyond words. There is a feeling, an *energy*, and a spirit that is St. Paul’s. You have to feel it to understand it. It is a feeling I will take with me throughout my life. It’s a feeling I share with the Ground Zero family I have become a part of. Every week, this family would grow in size and affection for one another. There were certain people I would see every week, and there



Dr. Rickard working in St. Paul’s

were those who could only make it there every few weeks. Every week there would be a group of 10 to 12 general volunteers who would work a 12-hour shift. Usually this was from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm. I worked through the holidays at St. Paul’s, and the season went by quickly. I worked on Thanksgiving, and was treated to a wonderful dinner and entertainment by some of the volunteer musicians. Some of the food was donated by the Waldorf, so you can imagine how good it was, and how much weight we all gained. The workers were moved to see us there on the holidays, but they knew that we needed to be there. One of the most moving events for me was when The Vienna Boy’s Choir performed at the church around Christmas time. It was not publicized, and the church was only half full with workers. The lights were low and

the Choir stood in the front of the chapel. They sang for about half an hour, and between each song they would have one of the boys do a reading from different religious texts. At the end, they sang Silent Night —

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first in English, then in German. I was standing in the back of the church next to a fireman. He was in full gear, covered with debris from “the pile”, and holding his helmet. As they sang, I looked at him and then at all the banners and letters covering the walls and pillars of the church from all over the world. At that moment I realized that the entire world was there in St. Paul’s. The spirit of the world and those who were lost were there at that moment. It’s a feeling I will never forget. Earlier in the concert the music had been so inspiring, I called a friend on my cell phone so that they could share in the event. At the end of the concert, the boys all got hats from the FDNY and NYPD and they posed for pictures with some of the uniformed officers from both departments. One of the men with them was one of the firemen who survived being inside of the towers when they came down: a group of firemen came upon a woman coming down the stairs as they were going up. They helped her down a few more flights when she was too tired to go on. She had already come down several flights on her own. The men decided to stay with her to make sure she was safe. They were all in that stairwell when the tower came down on top of them. By some miracle, the stairwell was not destroyed and they all survived. The men call her their guardian angel. Had they not stayed with her, they would have died.

One other story of the holidays was when I was *almost* filmed for the national news while working on a fireman. A week before Christmas a crew was in the Church from World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. They asked if I would mind being filmed for the news while I worked on someone? I said no, I don’t mind, but let me get the OK from the fireman I was working on. He didn’t want to be filmed. Even when I told him that he would be face down and no one would know who he was, he still said no. Well, I thought that they would wait for me to get another patient when I was finished with him, but not a chance. They picked up their stuff and went right over to Dr. Frank Tortora’s table to film him. Of course his patient had no problem with being filmed. The segment was aired on Christmas Eve, and of course everyone saw it. The next Thursday that was all you heard, “Hey, Frank — did you see yourself on TV?” I’m happy for him, really I am. I was filmed for the news, but it was for an NBC affiliate in N. Carolina. Sure, I finally get on the news, but it’s in an area where no one I know will ever see it.

In the evening after my shift was over and my relief had arrived, I would walk around the area. I would walk through the Wall Street area and look at the Christmas tree in front of the NY Stock Exchange, and the lights on the pillars of the exchange, which spread across all of the pillars and was in the design of an American flag. I would walk around Ground Zero and look at all the candlelight memorials still there and at all the firehouses. There was a large memorial over by the boat basin on the Hudson River. There were candles and pictures and stories about the men and women who died, like the story about the cop who had retired from the FBI and had only just started working for the Port Authority Police. I would look at a banner with the names and faces of all the cops and firemen who died as well as the personal letters from loved ones expressing their love and sorrow. There was an area that had a whole bunch of teddy bears with letters and messages on them. There was another area where they put all the fire trucks they recovered. They were lined up side-by-side — some smashed beyond recognition, others with different degrees of damage. I would walk up Broadway from the church and I noticed that as I got closer to Canal Street, there were more and more people. Many people were still avoiding lower Manhattan, and the stores and restaurants were suffering. During the day, there would be lots of tourists, but in the evening they were all gone. I would make my way up to Mid Town, Times Square and Rockefeller Center and see the tree. It seemed like a world away from Ground Zero. I guess that most people needed to try and get on with the holidays as best they could. I guess I just look at things a little bit differently now. You learn to really appreciate



Chiropractic volunteers Dr. Paul Lentini, Dr. Rickard and Dr. Rennie Statler

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life and people more, and you realize that it could all be gone in an instant, as you are riding in your car to work or on a plane for vacation.

As the warm fall turned into the cold winter, the weeks turned into months, and I watched as lower Manhattan struggled to survive. Every week it seemed that the streets got a little busier and more accessible to the public. The stores lining Broadway were cleaning up and trying to come back to life. Each week I would walk around Ground Zero to see how it was changing. What was open this week that wasn't last week? I remember seeing these big signs on Broadway with the name of a restaurant on it in big orange neon paint with their address and the line, "Yes, we are open!" On the bottom was a big arrow that led to other arrows and smaller signs — all in neon orange — that lead to their entry door. As the area became more and more accessible to the public, the checkpoints became fewer in number. Eventually, the only checkpoint left was at the entrance to the church. It stayed closed to the public during the entire relief effort. Every Thursday I would catch the 11:14am Metro North train from Stratford, CT, and arrive in Grand Central at 12:40. I would go downstairs to the food court and grab a slice of pizza from Two Boots Pizza Rest. Then I would head for the subway. I would eat at Grand Central because it would never fail that when I got to the church, as soon as I sat down to eat, someone would want to get adjusted. When I was there by myself, I didn't eat a whole lot. They have erected a memorial to 9/11 in the terminal at Grand Central, and I would, and still do, pass by it to look at the faces and names of those lost on 9/11, and to pay my respects. It would remind me why I was there and how fragile life is. As you walk through the terminal you would see lots of police and the National Guard. There are also K-9 patrols there even now. Over the P.A. every 10 - 15 minutes you would hear a woman's voice saying that any unattended luggage would be picked up and searched by the Port Authority Police. I felt like I was at the airport. I would catch the downtown #4 subway train and head to Fulton Street. The church is on the corner of Fulton and Broadway. It's 3 stops from Grand Central. I get off and the first thing I check for is the smell. How has it changed since last week? Can I still smell it? I head for the street and into the crowd, heading for St. Paul's. Each week I look to see how "the pile" had changed from the previous week. The building at the end of Fulton, 5 World Trade, was always a little more disassembled each day. Eventually the building was completely torn down, and you could see the faced of the North Tower. I remember one night when I was leaving after my shift at about 8:30 pm or 9:00 pm, I could see a man up on the tower cutting it down. There was a waterfall of sparks pouring from his torch as he worked. This was made more dramatic in contrast to the dark evening sky. The next week, the tower was gone. I would wonder what the people who were there for the first time were thinking. Is this "the pile"? Is this how it looked on 9/11? No matter when they came, this was their first impression, everyone taking with them their own thoughts and feelings of Ground Zero. I would head for the gate and see if I knew any of the cops working by the church. After a while I would be greeted by Mariann or Carol of the NYPD with a big hug and, "Hi Chris, I guess it must be Thursday again." When they put up the public observation ramp on Fulton Street, it made their jobs a lot harder. At first, people would wait for hours in line just to get 5 minutes on the ramp. After a while they were issuing tickets at South Street Sea Port for time on the ramp. That worked a lot better. I remember one time when they were still waiting in line and Mariann told me to come up the ramp when I had a break. The line went right up the sidewalk in front of the church and went on for several blocks. I went out and, as I made my way through the crowd, I heard someone comment that they had been in line for over 3 hours. I got to the barricade and the cop said "Hi doc, go on up." I felt a little bad for that woman in line, but it gets better. On the ramp I'm looking at the site and realize that people are taking pictures. I look at Mariann and she said, "Did you forget your camera? Go get it and come on back up." So I did. I walked past that woman in line for the second time. I didn't hear her say anything. The view from on the ramp was OK, but by the time it was up, "the pile" had become "the pit". Because of the angle and the presence of the trucks, you could see how big the site was, but you couldn't really see into "the pit".

At the gate I would still have to show my ID and a copy of my chiropractic license in order to be admitted. Even though I had been there for months, the people working the gate may be there for their first time, and they had their job to do. I didn't mind. Once in St Paul's, you entered another world. The interior did not change during the entire relief effort. You would come off the street, from all the noise, confusion and devastation, and enter a sanctuary of peace and

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compassion. Usually Brenda would be playing the piano, something classical, and I would walk past and whisper to her, "it must be Thursday," she would look up and smile. I would occasionally see Katherine Avery, one of the coordinators, who would greet me with a hug and "It's so good to see you". I love this family. I would make my way to our area and get it cleaned up and ready for my shift. It's now a little before 2:00 pm. Dr. Frank Tortora would arrive a little while later and we would be open for business. During the shift I would be focused on my job, but I would occasionally read some of the letters on the walls, and in the last week of the relief work they let us have one or two to take with us. One of them is in the shape of an American flag and on the inside it reads, "Dear Hero's, if I could be like 21 I'd be just like you." Below this is a flag and "USA" in red, white and blue crayon. This is from a 5th grader from Snellville, Georgia. Another one is a drawing of the towers with a person between them saluting a flag. On the top it says, "God Bless New York." This is also in crayon. This is from Tiffany Tilley from Stewart Middle School in Douglasville, Georgia. There was a letter that reads, "Dear friend, I am sorry about the people you have lost in the destruction if any. I live in Oklahoma City where two people set off a bomb in one of the biggest buildings in down town Oklahoma. So I know what it is like. I hope that you are OK, but who ever did this will be stopped by the army navy etc. So don't worry the nation will put a stop to this." This was from Zack Tillery, Oklahoma City, Sept. 20, 2001. One afternoon one of the workers picked a letter from a bunch and handed it to me and said, "Thanks". He was joking a bit, because that's what the envelope said. But the card inside was very appropriate. It read, "Hi, I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work and helping to make a difference. Thank you so much! God Bless, Theresa from Charleston, N. Carolina." There were candy bars with special wrappers with messages. One read, "Thank you for all your hard work! Hope you don't get hurt." This was from Alyssa from Robertsville Elementary School in Morganville, New Jersey. One of my favorites was the teddy bear I received from the "bear lady". She had a huge bag of all sizes and shapes of bears, all with little notes on them. She had put bears on all of the cots and in all of the pews for the workers. She gave me one and the card was from two sisters in Missouri, and they named the bear. "My name is T.J. Brownie! From Jessie and Tyler Friedrich. We are 11 and 7 years old. We live in Harrisonville, Missouri. We live just south of Kansas City. We were sad to see the news report about the events of September 11. It made us a little afraid, too. We are proud to be



Dr. Rickard with a few of New York's finest

Americans and we are happy to be able to share this bear with you. We hope that it can help to make you feel a little safer and a little better. We named the bear T.J. Brownie for Tyler and Jessie and because he is the color of a brownie-one of my favorite treats! Take Care and you can write to us and we will write back! God Bless America! Love, Jessie and Tyler."

When the weather got colder, the food service was moved from the front porch inside to the back of the church. We were set up just next to the food. How convenient. The church was still covered with banners and letters from all over the country and from all over the world. The pews had letters all along the inside of each for the workers to read as they sat and rested. The pews also had chips and notches all along the backs of the seats, about waist-high. This was from the gun belts and gear the workers would be wearing. It also always seemed like no matter how hot or cold it was outside, the inside of the church was always at least 10 degrees warmer. The chiropractic area took on a life of it's own. We had 3 tables, face paper and a few large signs announcing "Free Chiropractic Care". There were also signs at the front door of the church to let the workers know that we were there. After a few months, some people donated a hydroculator, a box of biofreeze, a box of orthopedic braces and supports, a

thumper and someone donated a box of EMS stim. Pads. There was no stim unit, but we had a few hundred sets of pads. Doctors would leave their business cards on the case where we had our stuff and eventually they were taped to the chiropractic sign. We even had a national directory of chiropractors. Many people we would work on wished to con-

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tinue with their chiropractic care after the site was closed. Many wanted to come see me, but when I told them I was from Connecticut they would say, "that's too far, do you know anyone in the city?" Other times they were from out of town or out of state, and we would try and hook them up with a DC in their state. Many people had their own chiropractor who they were seeing, but since 9/11 they weren't able to go because they were working 12- to 14-hour days, 6 to 7 days a week. Whether they were established chiropractic patients or first timers, they were all so very thankful for our presence and for donating our time and skill to help them. I can't tell you how many "thank you's" I received, and what a humbling feeling that is. To be thanked by these guys when you think about what *they* are doing day after day. One afternoon in late spring, I had finished working on a fireman and he sat up and said he felt great. He shook my hand and looked me in the eyes and said, "Thank you for being here and doing what you're doing. It's really appreciated." I felt something different in this thank you. I felt a warmth come over me. I felt like he was saying thanks for everyone. In that one "thank you", I felt a peace in my soul that told me our work really made a difference.

As the weeks turned into months, and the year ended, I developed a routine when going to work at Ground Zero (as if going to work at Ground Zero could ever



Group of volunteers at St. Paul's picnic, June 1, 2002

be *routine*). I looked forward to it every week. I would think that Wednesday was the end of the week. I would ask my patients on Wednesday what they were doing for the weekend, not realizing that it was only mid-week. I had to be at the church early one morning, and I arrived early for a 6:15 am train to NY. I can't even get to my office in CT early. That time I went early to the city was because I had been invited as the only chiropractor to participate in a documentary of the work at St. Paul's. It was a great honor. It was an oral history of the events of 9/11 and what it was like to be involved in the relief effort. I was asked how it felt to be a health care provider there and to have the opportunity to touch and help to ease the pain of the workers. You can't help but feel their pain and anguish both physically and emotionally. As a chiropractor, your purpose is to ease that pain and to almost take it into yourself so that they can be relieved of their discomfort. You do what you can and draw on all your skills to comfort and treat your patient. That's the real power of chiropractic, to feel and become one with the person's pain, no matter what it is, and alleviate it. It meant so much to me to be there. I would try to be early every week, and when I was running late, I would feel like I was letting them down. Some weeks were very busy, and others weren't. But we would usually experience waves of patients when our shifts would change. After a while you would expect to see the same people at the same time. Usually about 6:00 pm you would see the next crew coming on. They would work 7:00 pm – 7:00 am. I would see Haydee Diaz outside the church and she would say, "I'll be right in to see ya." I would work on her and other workers, they would get something to eat and they would be off to their shift. One week, I treated this Polish woman who was with Tully. She liked the way I worked on her so much that a half hour later two Polish men came in and, in broken English, told me that their friend told them to come in to see me. I worked on them every week for the next several months. You could sit and talk to the workers and hear their stories of 9/11, or they would talk about their families. I would see Mariann from the NYPD every week, and we became good friends. She told me about her sister's husband who had been killed in the towers. On the evening of 9/11 when she realized that he was probably dead, she went through his clothes looking for things that still had his smell. She needed to find things that she hadn't washed. It was horrible, she said. She is still not

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over it, but who can say when any of us will be over this. There was the cop I worked on who was a firearms instructor at the police academy. He was doing drills with 45lbs of body armor for special training since 9/11. That's why his back hurt. On 9/11 he was ordered to break out the M60's to secure parts of the city. That's a pretty big gun. The average cop uses either a 9mm or the 38mm handgun and only wears about 5-10 lbs of shielding. There was the fireman who told me that they found the upper torso of a man whose hand was clenched shut. It took them a while to pry it open and in his hand was a picture of his daughter. The remains of one fireman they found included only his lower torso. They identified him by a tattoo on his leg. I heard that they found a suit jacket with an engagement ring in the pocket. There are so many people with so many stories. Many of the cops and firemen were there on the 11th and saw everything. The planes hitting, the raining down of body parts everywhere, being chased by the debris cloud, and seeing people jumping. A good friend of mine from CT works in NY and was in the Verizon building just across from the north tower. He told me about evacuating from his building and seeing people jumping from the towers. He remembers seeing a group of about 18 people jump together. One of the cops told me that after they found the body of the only female cop to be killed, he realized that he knew her. It hadn't been real to him until they found her body. Many officers and firemen were given "battle field" promotions, since so many of their senior brothers had been killed. I was up at a firehouse in midtown in March to see the different houses and to see if they were selling shirts to raise money for their house. It was Engine 54/Truck 4. Their motto is, "Pride of Midtown, Never Missed a Performance." They lost 12 guys. I spoke with one fireman that I was treating at St Paul's and I asked if he had been working at the site. He said that he worked there in September and October for a few weeks and at one point had helped cut up a body they found melted to a beam. He found out later that it was one of his own men from his house. He never went back to Ground Zero. On Duane Street are the #1 and #7 house — Ladder 1/ Engine 7. They didn't lose anyone. The 10/10 house is on — correction: *was* on — Liberty Street. They were across from the South Tower and were almost completely destroyed. They moved to the 1/7 house and their new motto is, "Still Standing." Their patch is a picture of the tops of the towers with a fireman standing on top of them with a hose and an axe and there are flames coming out of the towers. They have decided to keep the same patch. They had been using the South Tower as an earth ramp to get into the pit and when they put in the steel ramp and began to excavate the South Tower, they found lots of bodies. Most of the firemen they found were still fairly intact because they were protected by their bunker gear. The civilians were in pieces. They were finding several bodies a day, and for a while that was the first topic of conversation in the church. How many did they find today? As the South Tower was cleared out, the recovery slowed down quickly.

Every few weeks I would ask one of the workers to take me into the site to see how it was progressing, and I was amazed at the changes. Since the winter was so mild, they were able to clean up the site much more quickly than originally thought. The thing that was slowing them down was the slurry wall. This was the outer rim of the pit, also known as the "bath tub." If they pulled too much debris away too soon, the wall might give way and the Hudson River would flood lower Manhattan. They installed tie-backs to hold the wall in place. It worked, and the clean continued. Some of the workers we came to know— like Bovis and Tully — were with the construction companies. Jim Traynor was an engineer I got to know well and he would always look for me every Thursday. He was a big guy and not everyone could adjust him, but I could. He would tell me about his family and his son's hockey team that he was coaching. Manny Rodriguez was a truck driver who grew up in the Bronx and he would talk about how tough it was



Dr. Rickard and a steel worker who was on the original towers construction project

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when he was a kid growing up in the area known as "Fort Apache" in the Bronx. Guy was an operating engineer I would see every week. One week I was working on an EMT from the FDNY and someone said Guy wasn't doing so well. We went to see what was happening and it seemed like he was having a stroke. The EMT's took him to the hospital and in 2 hours he was back at the Church. I asked him how he was and what happened and he explained that he had been working 16 hours a day the past few days and he was on his way to the balcony to sleep. However, the fatigue got to him while he was on the stairs. He said in a calm but determined way, "I got a cousin and a nephew buried out there, and I want to find them." I heard later that they found his nephew, but not his cousin. He had been there since the 11th. He walked over the Brooklyn Bridge to get to Ground Zero on the 11th. He has been there every day. The thing that he was most moved by was how quickly the country came together to organize and show its support for NY. I met a



Dr. Rickard with Scott Fields and Bear

steel worker who helped to build the towers. He said to me, "You remember that beam we took out for the memorial? Well, I remember when we put it in." He plans to be involved in the rebuilding of the site, whatever it becomes. During the winter I met officer Mark Restivo of the NYPD. This guy was great. I asked him about the NYPD turtleneck shirts and how I might get one. He said that they were uniform issue and only available to members of the NYPD. There was a store called NY Ironworks where they got their stuff and he gave me his ID # and badge # and he sent an email to the store informing them that I was going to get a few shirts, on his authorization. Not a problem. I went and picked it up the next Thursday and headed for the church for my shift. The city by now seemed like it was getting back to business as usual. However, when I was walking past the NY City Hall, I noticed a cop at one of the side entrances in full gear, with a ski mask over his head and holding an M16. It seems like some things will never be the same again.

Working in St. Paul's gave us all a great education. I had a guy come in once, look at me and asked, "Are you the chiropractor? I have had a headache for 2 days and I have taken an entire bottle of Aleve and it's done nothing. Can you help?" I worked on him for a few minutes, adjusted him and his headache was gone. One Thursday right after arriving at the church, I saw a worker looking for aspirin at the front table to ease his shoulder pain. He had never seen a chiropractor before, but he let me work on him. He was amazed. He had no idea that it would feel as good as it did. He was a crane operator and had slipped and fallen on his elbow and jammed his shoulder. I saw him

regularly at the church and he always thanked me for helping him. I need to say one thing about shoulders and firemen. I think it must be some kind of a job pre-requisite for these guys to have shoulder problems. Every week I would work on these enormous guys, and they all had a history of shoulder dislocations from ice hockey, rugby or lacrosse. Needless to say, I got pretty good with shoulders, and with adjusting big guys. We treated all kinds of problems and people. A priest, Father Frew, would be in the church as a counselor and at times he would be out in the pit raking through debris with the firemen. There were people from Verizon who were trying to fix the phone lines. When the towers came down it left 900,000 people without phone service. There were church groups helping people clean their apartments of all the debris that had covered everything they owned. Cops would come in with sore arms and backs from standing at attention for 20-30 minutes on the ramp while a body was removed from the pit. All these people were helped by what we could do as chiropractors. I heard two stories which reminded me of the way the events of 9/11 have indirectly affected the lives of people. One of the chiropractors I met at St. Paul's told me that his brother died because of 9/11. He was not in the towers, nor was he killed by falling debris. He died from a heart attack as a result of the stress and anguish of losing all his friends in the towers. All his neighbors and all his friends died in the towers. I had a patient come into my office in CT in January. She had severe low back pain with no trauma or specific cause. Films were negative and I

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treated her gently. She came in the next day feeling a little better. I mentioned that I was working in NY at Ground Zero and I asked if she had been there. She said, "No, I don't want to see the place where my brother almost died." Her brother was a fireman from Brooklyn who was buried in the pile with 2 other firemen for 14 hours. The other 2 men died while waiting to be rescued. He has retired from the FDNY, and they are both getting counseling to deal with 9/11.

One of the things I will miss the most about St. Paul's is the music. Brenda playing classical piano, Bob playing pop music on the piano, especially "New York State of Mind", Ulla playing classical flute, and Al on blues harmonica accompanied by Sister Helena Marie on piano. That was a site to see. As Al tells it, he asked Sister Helena Marie if she knew how to play any blues on the piano. She was straight classical and always appropriately dressed in her habit. She said no, but when Al described a basic blues line for the piano to her, she began belting out blues like a pro. Some afternoons people would be around the piano singing show tunes, or one evening there were these two women playing violin and viola. They played like they had just come off the Carnegie Hall stage. They were amazing. I called my sister in CT to let her hear them play but I had to share the moment with her answering machine. One afternoon in the church, the FDNY had a memorial service for EMS workers who had died. When they were done they had a trumpet play Taps



Inside St. Paul's

in the balcony, followed by Ulla playing Amazing Grace on the flute. It was hard to find a dry eye anywhere. I heard that on Easter Sunday they had a marathon concert of St Paul's musicians all afternoon. At the end, they all got around the piano and — with a church full of workers — they sang "Danny Boy". I wish I had been there. I did work the Saturday night-into-Palm Sunday shift from 8:00 pm Saturday until 8:00 am Sunday. It was much different working an overnight shift. It's not as busy, and the church has a different feel. The pace is slower, and you don't see as many people. The guys still come in covered with debris from working in "the pit", but most of them would get a bite to eat and then seek out a place to sleep. I recall 3 firemen who came into St. Paul's around 3:00 am. They left a wake-up call request at the

front table to awaken them in 2 hours, and then they proceeded to the balcony to find a cot. There weren't any open, so they came back down and slept in the pews. Two hours later they were up, had some food and were back out to "the pit". I slept for a short time on the adjusting table, but sleep alluded me. I needed to take in as much as I could while I was there. In the early evening I went out back into the cemetery of the church to see the tower lights. They were set up on the West Side Highway, and they were on every night for a month. They were a haunting blue color, and they seemed to reach right up to the heavens like two beacons. You couldn't help but stare up at them and remember that these were symbols of what we have lost, and that the spirit of the towers and the victims will live on.

Dr. Frank worked with me until the end of March. He then had other commitments he needed to tend to. I cannot thank him enough for the time I spent working with him and the things I learned from him — not only as a chiropractor, but also as a person. Everyone should be so lucky to spend time with a man like Dr. Frank Tortora. After he left, I worked by myself for most of the remainder of my time at Ground Zero. There would occasionally be docs from out-of-state or the tri-state area, but as time went on they became fewer in number. However, every Thursday night I would be relieved by Dr. Rennie Statler and Dr. Paul Lentini. They were there from October until June. They worked the 8:00 pm — 2:00 am shifts. When the closing date for the site was announced, we all started making plans to be there for the ceremonies. Thursday, May 30th was the date for the beam ceremony, and on Saturday St. Paul's was to have a picnic for the volunteers. Sunday there would be services in the church and at the Ground Zero cross. I was able to watch the beam ceremony from Church Street, next to the morgue. It was also next to the Ground Zero cross. You could catch the

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faint smell of the pile and you could hear the sound of drums and bagpipes in the air. The service began with the ringing of a bell at 10:29 am, the time the second tower fell. It was rung in groups of 5, the firemen's signal for a man down. There wasn't much talking, just the heaviness of the emotion of the moment. This was it — no more relief effort. We were told to stop coming. The sight of these enormous men crying will stay with me forever. They knew that a lot of their brothers were not coming home, and they were being told to stop looking. When it was over, I went back to the church. It was Thursday and I had my last shift to work. This was the first time I had the chance to meet some of the family members who lost loved ones. They were wearing purple leis, and they were allowed into the church to see the relief effort first-hand. I was talking to one woman who had lost her son. She was there with her husband and daughter. I worked on them, and they were very glad that we were there to help and volunteer our time. A man I spoke with was from Philadelphia. He had lost his wife and they had not found any of her remains yet. This was the first time he had come to NY since 9/11. Another woman I spoke with and worked on thanked me for being there and doing what we could for the workers. She said that they had found the remains of her brother. I told her that I was very happy to be there and do whatever I could to help. She then said, "I really want to thank you for what you are doing. You were able



Dr. Rickard with Frank Silecchia, who found the WTC "cross"

to keep the guys healthy and out there working. You may have been the one who worked on the fireman who found my brother's head." I didn't know how to respond.

On Wednesday May 29th, the church held a mass of thanksgiving for the relief ministry, which had been working in St. Paul's. I was not able to attend, but special prayers were read for all the groups who worked in the church. The Intercessor posted where the chiropractors worked read, "Oh God, your healing touch is made manifest in so many ways. We pray for the ministry of the chiropractors who renewed so many with their skilled hands and their adjustments. We pray for those who received healing and transformation on these benches and that all may be spiritually healed and transformed as well." On Friday, May 31st the official relief effort at Ground Zero ceased and St. Paul's Chapel and the Salvation Army tent closed. On Saturday, June 1st, there was a picnic at the church for the volunteers. As fate would have it, I didn't get there until 2:00 pm, which had been the usual start time for my shift. I walked up from the Wall Street area to the church, almost the same route I walked to get to the church during my first shift eight months prior. It was very nice and I had a chance to relax with the other workers and volunteers for the first time. The party lasted all afternoon, and people were exchanging addresses and phone numbers and getting lots of pictures of people, as well as of the interior of the church. There were musicians taking turns playing in front of the church, and people had the opportunity to address the people gathered there and express what their time at St. Paul's had meant to

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them. There were people who had been there almost every day. There was a massage therapist who was there all the time. There were gifts to the volunteers from St. Paul's, and artists giving out copies of their impression of 9/11. No one wanted to leave. At about 4:00 pm it hit me. I suddenly felt wiped out. I went walking with some friends near the end of the evening, and when I got back I sat in the church. No one was working, there was no steady stream of workers coming and going through the church, no one loading a cooler with water or preparing the line for dinner. There was only silence. I sat there and felt completely overwhelmed. I read some of the cards in the pews and looked around at the banners, and for the first time really took it in. I stayed in the city that night with some friends, and the next morning went to an 8:00 am mass at St Paul's. Later that morning I was able to get into the last mass at the Ground Zero cross at 10:30 am. We were driven in by members of the Department of Sanitation. They had held these masses every Sunday since "the cross" was found by Frank Silecchia. The service began with the Julliard Choir singing, and in the distance you could hear drums and bagpipes. The mass was conducted by Father Jorden. He is the priest who took over for Father Judge. He set the stage for the mass. The families and workers were in the front, followed by the volunteers, and the media was told to stay in the back. He said, "I'm only going to ask you this once. This mass is for the families, so media get in the back. There are enough policemen here to move you, so get in the back". Once he was ready he called in the FDNY bagpipe and drum band. They played Amazing Grace (which brought everyone to tears) and the priest then began the mass. He spoke for a while, and then Mayor Giuliani spoke. At one point during the mass, they asked people to say aloud the name of the person they were praying for. I recalled Michael Miller, and said his name. He was the friend of my coworker who died with CanterFitzgerald. They had lost almost 700 people. Some family members had pictures of their loved ones with them. Some had their picture imprinted on their shirts. When the mass was over, the choir sang "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah". Then one of the Sanitation workers, Andrew Machio, led us all in "God Bless America". We then went back to the church for the 12:00 pm mass with Father Harris. During the Eucharist, a small group was singing at the piano. A woman from the Met sang "Ave Maria". This was followed by a performance by three women singing a soulful version of "Amazing Grace". When the mass ended, we all realized that this was truly the end. This was when the emotions erupted. People were hugging and crying, sharing stories and making plans for reunions. No one wanted to leave. Around 4:00 pm, the staff of St. Paul's was closing the doors. Not for good just yet, but to take down the banners and letters from the walls of the church. I stayed to help. I am so glad that I did. Removing the letters and banners was therapeutic. To be a part of the archiving of this moment in history was a rare honor. I stayed until 11:00 pm when I had to leave to get my train home. My hair was dry and tacky, and my nose was full of black debris. Taking down the papers had stirred up dust and debris that had been buried and hidden in the church from last September. We had taken everything down from the walls and were archiving it all for Trinity church. Some of the banners and letters will be going to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. I don't know how I will feel seeing that.

I think it will take a long time to come to terms with what I have experienced, as a Chiropractor, a person and as an American. So much of what we did there is beyond words. It's a gift I carry with me and I hope I can share it with as



Dr. Rickard in front of the WTC "cross"

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many people as possible. I would like to share some of the feelings the workers had expressed about St. Paul's. This is from a booklet compiled by St. Paul's, which was given to the volunteers: "St. Paul's is a place where we find peace, rest and comfort. It's a place that lifts our spirits in a great way," Lt. William Gleason, FDNY. "Since 9/11, the support and comfort that has been given cannot be put into words. The people have given their hearts out to us in support of what we are doing. There are no negative feelings or thoughts, but all positive. St. Paul's has opened its doors to all and to that I say 'thank you'. May we keep the faith and God Bless us all," Sgt. Jim Mirro, NYPD. "St. Paul's will always be, in my mind, heaven's outpost. By entering through the gates out front one can leave behind the terror and destruction that leaves you with a feeling of severe loss and find a place where everyone has a smile. It has also allowed me a place to sit and feel the presence of my fallen brother firefighters missing in the pile." The chiropractors asked the workers to give us their feelings about our work at Ground Zero. This was from Haydee Diaz, a worker with Tully Construction, and a patient of mine for months: "Because of the tender loving care I and my friends received, I don't think I could have worked for 8 months without this type of attention to us all. I'd feel like I could put in my 12 hours and not feel bad. God Bless the chiropractors who have volunteered their time at Ground Zero."

I would like to thank some of the people I worked with all those months: Karin Zinner, Dave Klein and his wife Barbara, Al Frankle, Joe and Eric, Kathleen and her sister Else, Katherine Avery and Diane Reiners, Father Harris and Father Frew, Dr. Stattler and Dr. Lentini, and Dr. Frank Tortora. Thank you all for being my family and helping us all come through this.

No one knows yet what will become of the 16- acre site that is Ground Zero. I know that I am a member of a privileged family that is St. Paul's, and I know that wherever I go in life, this experience has affected me in ways that I have yet to see. I know that I have had a positive affect on the people I met and worked on at Ground Zero. One example is from the article I wrote last fall, which appeared in *Visions* and on the WSCC web site. I met Dr. Todd Sheets while working at St. Paul's. He had come out from California to work for four days and stayed for two weeks. In my article I mentioned that he was living in California, but he is originally from NY. When I spoke with him a few months later he told me that an old girlfriend found him in California after reading my article. She entered his name at a search engine web site, and up came my article. He said that he was very happy to hear from her. He hadn't seen her in 30 years, and she was the love of his life. She was coming out to California the next week to see him and he couldn't wait. She still lives in NY. It turns out that their reunion was wonderful, and he is planning to move back to NY to be with her. I hope I'm invited to the wedding. Sometimes some good can come out of tragedy.

I have continued to go into the city almost every week since the site closed. With all the time I have spent in NY, I feel like I have become a New Yorker. I feel such a bond with the city now. I have begun my own memorials to the city. I have collected many reminders of my time at Ground Zero and have received certificates of appreciation from the CT Chiropractic Association, the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, the New York Chiropractic Council, the NY Department of Sanitation and St. Paul's Chapel. I have been collecting patches from many of the NY City firehouses, and memorial pins, and I plan to put them together into my own memorial. I continue to be involved in the ministry that was St. Paul's in any way I can, and I will be at St. Paul's on Wednesday, September 11, 2002, for the one- year memorial. I look forward to seeing my "family" again and to remembering the souls we lost at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and on Flight 93. May their spirits live on in each of us long after September 11, 2001.

God Bless all those I have met at Ground Zero. Your spirit has carried me to places I never thought I could go, and your compassion has shown me the true meaning and purpose in life.

Sincerely,
Christopher Rickard, D.C.
Ground Zero Volunteer