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By

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**An Album of Tragedy: How the Photographs from  
September 11<sup>th</sup> Reunite the National Family**

**by**

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**An Album of Tragedy: How the Photographs from  
September 11<sup>th</sup> Reunite the National Family**

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Rebecca L. Bollom, who stood by me through my journey toward this degree. She has been my motivation, inspiration, copy editor and so much more. Without her love and support, I would not have survived through two years of graduate school.

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## Preface

Just two weeks after the start of my continued education as a graduate student at The University of Texas in the fall of 2001, the unthinkable happened. I was finally getting comfortable with my new environment and was planning to start my first session as a lab instructor later that day when I decided to take a break and read over some entertainment message boards on the internet. The first message I read was a little out of the ordinary. The person posting this message said that he had just seen things that he could not describe. He was walking around New York and was witness to the first airplane hitting one of the World Trade Center towers. He wrote in curt, short sentences and then he signed off, telling the readers to check the news for more details.

Not understanding what was going on, I immediately tried to log on to CNN.com; the server was busy. ABC.com, CBS.com, NBC.com, USAToday.com and every other news site I tried to access greeted me with the same response. This was the first time I had ever witnessed such a mass outage of the internet and it frightened me. There were no television sets in my immediate area, but I remembered the pocket radio that I carried in my backpack. I grabbed it and ran down the stairs and out the back of the building to get a good signal. Sitting there on the benches of the Communication Center at The University of Texas, I listened as America was changed forever.

Being a photojournalism student allowed me to understand the significance of what we began to see over the next hours, days and weeks. I decided almost

immediately to focus my research for that fall semester on the photography of that single day in September. The research of that semester led to future studies in other classes and finally to this thesis. This is the culmination of the work I have done over the last two years about various aspects of the photography of September 11, 2001.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. People from all walks of life were at work, on the streets, in the subway, and generally going about their daily lives that morning. In moments, “daily life” changed for all Americans. From the initial impact until the dust began to settle, most people ran away, trying to escape the carnage. A brave few including doctors, police officers, firemen, rescue workers and photojournalists ran toward Ground Zero, all trying to do their jobs under the worst possible circumstances. Many were at a complete loss as to what should be done in a situation the magnitude of which we, as Americans, had never experienced before. Those stranded at ground zero took comfort in things as simple as comforting one another, listening to the radio and, important for our historical record, taking photographs. We became a family again that day as the sometimes estranged “American family” was reunited. Brotherly love was not something known only to those sharing a bloodline, but to all who shared the experience of the attacks.

As such, photographs from that day as well as the days following the attacks, serve not only as historical documents, but also as an “American family album,” which can be viewed by all Americans to remember this important time in our lives. The photographs taken that day were captured by everyone from experienced war photojournalists to every person on the street and with equipment ranging from top of

the line digital gear to children's toys. In the following chapters, I will report on three studies focusing on the different types of photography from September 11, 2001 to discover how these images work together to form a hypothetical "American family album."

The first study will deal with three professional photojournalists who were in New York at the time of the terrorist attacks and who, for their own individual reasons, made their way to Ground Zero in an attempt to record the events as they unfolded. The most appropriate way to study this very specific group of individuals was through a qualitative analysis of e-mail interviews which I conducted with each of them. Background research into types of journalism comparable to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> is included in an attempt to fully understand the circumstances they were forced to endure that day.

The second study needed to be broken down into two parts to fully explain the relevance of personal photography. In the first part, the genre of personal photography will be examined in order to determine how to properly analyze this unique type of image. The second part will then take this analysis and apply it to the personal photography from September 11<sup>th</sup> in order to determine what part these images will play in the historic recollection of the events of that day.

The third study will then attempt to examine the differences between professional and personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup> by including both genres in a quantitative survey. By conducting this survey, the similarities and differences between the two types of photography should make themselves apparent and I will be

able to draw conclusions as to what images are most likely to be included in the  
“American family album.”

## Chapter 2

### At Ground Zero: How Photojournalists Survived the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist Attack on the World Trade Center

#### 2.1 Introduction

“On television ... those images flash by. They’re here and then they’re gone. But still photos hold still. They freeze those moments and permit you to study their horror and poignance”(Carlson, 2001).

On September 11, 2001, everyone at Ground Zero was forced to deal with unpredictable changes and uncertainty, but why did photojournalists *choose* to be there? Traveling as quickly as possible from all corners of New York and beyond, photojournalists flocked to the site, willing to risk their lives in search of the “perfect photo.” What follows in this chapter is an in-depth study of this single event, attempting to explain what goes through photojournalists’ minds during such high stress times.

This study, covering the extremes endured while dedicated journalists photographed the moments of September 11, 2001 as they happened, should explain how the images produced that day have since become an integral part of our “American family album.” It is a day that will never be forgotten, but what role will professional photographs produced that day play in the long-term memory of our society?

## 2.2 Statement of the Problem

Through personal interviews conducted with photojournalists who were at ground zero, interviews by others, and historical research, I have come to the conclusion that throughout the age of photography, there has never been a tragic event quite as widely covered as the World Trade Center attacks. The terrorists chose to set the scene so that all eyes, and more importantly all cameras, would be focused on the Twin Towers when the second airplane made its impact. This type of planning ensured that all of the American media would have an ample view of the horrors the terrorists are able to inflict. What can be learned from the thoughts and actions of photojournalists called to duty that day? The following three research questions will be the principal focus of this part of the thesis:

1. How were photojournalists able to cope with the physical and mental obstacles of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center and still complete their assignments?
2. How did the photojournalists' coverage of this event relate or compare to any other type of news coverage in their past work?
3. How were decisions made by the photojournalists as to which images would be photographed and by newsrooms as to which photographs America would see?

One relevant way to come to definitive answers to these questions will be by using A.L. Strauss' process of "in vivo coding." Strauss defined in vivo coding as a term for respondent answers that include imagery and analytic potential (Strauss, 1987). This type of coding constantly compares data from different sources covering

the same topic in order to extract and correlate similar information and generate theories.

### 2.3 Historically Related Studies

There has never been an event like that of September 11<sup>th</sup> in the history of photojournalism. Throughout my research, the only event remotely resembling the World Trade Center attack is combat photojournalism. War places photojournalists in the same elements of danger and the unknown as were present on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Many great combat photojournalists have gone into the line of fire, risking their lives for that same “perfect photo” that the photographers in this study sought.

The mental and physical obstacles of being a photojournalist during wartime have been written about for as long as there have been photojournalists. Some war photojournalists felt that because they were carrying a camera, they were protected from the violence, but that did little to dissuade their fears. World War II photojournalist Carl Mydans said, “I had that great protective instrument in front of me – a camera. The camera was my reason for being there. It was a justification against personal fear. Fear takes place mostly when you are uncertain of what you are doing, uncertain as to why you’re there, and you wish you could get out. We all had fear”(Loengard, 1998). Another World War II photojournalist, David E. Scherman agreed, “Fear did not happen when I had a camera in my hand”(Loengard, 1998).

More recently, photojournalists have begun to disagree with the idea that having a camera was protection from war. James Nachtwey, who has covered wars of recent years, commented, “I never feel invulnerable because I am behind a camera,

never. I am astonished every time I hear someone say that. I don't think a camera protects you from anything. ...What really happens is, because you are concentrating so much on working, it takes your mind away from the danger"(Miller, 1999). This is a more likely cause for the ability of photojournalists to charge impetuously into combat zones to get the "perfect photo."

One other possibility is the theory that photojournalists in war situations get addicted to the adrenaline rush associated with being close to death. Many photojournalists have said that they have never experienced a rush like that of covering war. Myron Davis, a World War II photojournalist said, "...if you don't experience fear when strafing bullets are cracking all around you, when bombs are coming all around you, when you see tracer fire coming at you, you're not a human being. Your adrenaline begins to pump. The nearer you are to death, the more you feel alive, because your adrenaline is pumping to the level that you never experience in any other way"(Loengard, 1998).

Editing decisions in war photography have not always been deliberate ones. With action happening all around, a good photojournalist runs on instinct and attempts good compositions, but without the atrocities of war, there would be no photos to show the world. This has been the case throughout photojournalistic history, as far back as Spanish War photojournalist Robert Capa who sent photos showing war as it had never been depicted before. His photos were "so close to the action you could see the fear in the eyes of the troops and almost feel the boom of the artillery, the blast of exploding shells and the rattle of rifles"(Miller, 1999). He shot with

compassion, never holding back the horrors of war, but showing the children, refugees and wounded soldiers with extreme humanity and, when appropriate, humor. Capa brought back one of the most famous wartime photographs in history, and the decision to take that photo was not a conscious one, it was pure instinct. “The machine guns rattled, and Capa automatically snapped his camera, falling back beside the body of his companion. Two hours later, when it was dark and the guns were still, the photographer crept across the broken ground to safety. Later he discovered that he had taken one of the finest action shots of the Spanish War”(Whelan, 1985). Capa’s theory on what photos to take during battle was very simple, saying only, “No tricks are necessary to take pictures in Spain. You don’t have to pose your camera. The pictures are there, and you just take them. The truth is the best picture, the best propaganda”(Whelan, 1985).

Other photojournalists were more specific in the type of photos they wanted to bring back to show the world. World War II photojournalist W. Eugene Smith’s theory on shooting a war was to make a statement against war itself. “Most certainly I did not cover this war to give people a thrill, and I certainly received no thrill from it myself. I wanted pictures of the emotions of war, that would reach and grasp people by the throat until the nature of war was forced into their thought channels – I wanted somehow to make those people think...”(Miller, 1999). Along those same lines, Philip Jones Griffiths, in his book *Vietnam Inc.* said, “To me, there is no point in pressing the shutter unless you are making some caustic comment on the incongruities of life. That is what photography is all about. It is the only reason for

doing it” (Griffiths, 1971). It is not always possible to come back with the photos that you want under the extreme conditions of war as Mydans discovered. “It may not be commonly known how often photographers see pictures that they very much want, they cannot get, and that those lost images seem to cling to them forever”(Loengard, 1998). Mydans was convinced that what he was doing was important. He felt that if he had ever reached a point in combat where he wasn’t doing important work, he would have simply left.

Often, photojournalists arrive after the actions of war have already taken place. It is then their job to capture what is left behind, and this is often when the photojournalists’ editorial discretion comes into play. Upon arrival at one war zone during World War II, Myron Davis had some tough choices to make. “I saw a body on a stretcher that had been brought down the ramp of the LCI and was lying on the beach there. I walked over and saw a head with the brains exposed. Parts of the face had been blown away. I was so shocked I turned away and said ‘I cannot photograph this.’ Then I thought, ‘No, this is war. I’ve got to try to deal with this.’ I was truly shocked. Fortunately I had the judgment to get down at a low angle and photograph from the feet so you could see that part of the boot had been blown away, and you could see that shrapnel had removed some of the clothing, but you couldn’t see the top of the head. There was no way I would take a photograph of that”(Loengard, 1998). More recently, in her book *Shutterbabe: Adventures in Love and War*, Deborah Copaken Kogan described several experiences as a photojournalist in Afghanistan. She explains how she went from one extreme to the other, initially not

being able to photograph a man whose leg was blown off by a land mine while he was taking her away for a restroom break. She questions her ability to be in a profession that requires the photojournalist to cast aside personal feelings in order to capture the moments on film. She later discovers in herself the ability to do what is necessary to get the shot she wants, even though she is definitely not proud of her actions. “Instinctively, I grab my camera and start shooting, crouching and circling in a small orbit around the dead man, trying to get the best angle so that the bullet holes feature prominently in the frame. I circle the body again, my movements like a feverish waltz – circumnavigating, twirling, whirling, spinning around and around and around. I am a vulture. I don’t even try to pretend otherwise”(Copaken Kogan, 2000).

#### 2.4 Related Studies of September 11<sup>th</sup>

Though the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> are related to war, there truly has been nothing exactly like it in the history of photojournalism. The photojournalists covering the World Trade Center attack had to rely on past experiences, possibly in war coverage, but also had to develop new paradigms for working in this environment. No one expected to be dealing with this type of death and destruction when they started their day that morning, but by the end of the day all of America had been changed. The planning of this attack, by successively hitting both towers of the World Trade Center, ensured that all photojournalists in the area would instinctively journey to the site (if they were not already there as it happened) and capture some portion of the event. Once they were at Ground Zero and had to bear witness to these

heinous actions, how did the photojournalists cope with the physical and mental trauma they had to endure? Interviews with photojournalists who were at the site have been sparse, but those posted on internet websites proved to be the most in-depth.

Lucian Perkins, shooting for *The Washington Post*, first viewed the images on television and was then sent to the site. “I was in a state of shock when I saw the images of the World Trade Center burning on TV. And that feeling never left me,” said Perkins. “This was a very difficult story to cover, but it was important for all of us to stay focused on our job”(Perkins, 2001). Several photojournalists from the *New York Times* were at the site of the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and have since been interviewed about their experiences in the city that day. One such photojournalist, Ruth Fremson said, “I opened my eyes but couldn’t see anything...everything was completely black. My eyes were burning; I couldn’t breathe. I wondered for a second if this is what death is like and was afraid”(Raines, 2001). Another *New York Times* photojournalist, Jose Lopez compared his experiences that morning with the horrors of war that he has seen on previous assignments. “They are caked in a gray, concrete soot; wearing a look of horror I’ve seen only once before in my life – in Bosnia, where I was sent in 1995 as a staff photographer for *The Times*”(Raines, 2001). Veteran war photojournalist James Nachtwey was accustomed to being in life-threatening situations, but having this happen on U.S. soil was something new and disturbing to him. “So this kind of destruction was familiar to me, but now, it was literally in my own backyard. And I think that one thing that Americans are learning from this is that we are now part of the world in a way in which we never have been

before”(Howe, 2001). Another photojournalist who was shocked and confused by this situation unfolding in America was Allan Tannenbaum. He had covered the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993, but never expected something this devastating to happen here. “It seemed like the end of the world. I said to myself, ‘This is how the world ends.’ It was just unbelievable, and then it became deathly quiet and pitch black. I’ve been to a lot of places where there’s been conflict and war and seen a lot of destruction, but I was not prepared for this, especially something so familiar”(Howe, 2001). *New York Daily News* photojournalist Richard Drew chose to blend in with the crowd. Being at ground zero, he deliberately did not wear his press pass, and instead of photographing people, concentrated on imaging the wreckage at ground level from the impact and explosion of the airplanes. Drew would later turn his lens toward one of the most graphic images of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the people who chose to jump from the twin towers (Howe, 2001).

When questioned about whether there was any similarity between the intense circumstances of September 11<sup>th</sup> and any other past work they have done, most professional photojournalists cited their coverage of war. David Turnley, a Corbis photojournalist who has covered almost all recent conflicts, noted, “I have been in the midst of shells landing in Chechnya and Grozny, and I have been in the shelling in Bosnia, and the sound was very familiar, but what was unfamiliar was the incredible sensation of seeing 110 stories falling in front of me...the impact and the ominous sensation of the size of these things, and then the abstract idea there were human beings in them”(Halstead, 2001). Lucian Perkins has covered every aspect of life, and

stated that he endeavors to show the finest possible images whether they are of weddings, war or anything in between. His coverage of the horrors of war, especially having just come back from Afghanistan in February, helped him in covering the World Trade Center attacks, and he hopes that his images will do some good by conveying the atrocities of this event (Perkins, 2001). James Nachtwey has spent much of his career covering war, but this attack was much different from anything he had seen before due to one major difference, the absence of visible casualties. “I didn’t feel it as strongly as for example when I went to someone starving to death, to see people cut down by sniper fire. It hadn’t hit home like that yet. It was really more kind of shock and disbelief”(Howe, 2001).

With an event as graphic as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Center, there was obviously going to be controversy in deciding what photos would be run in the various news media. Were photojournalists editing themselves on the spot? Would the newsroom edit out what is deemed “too graphic” for the general public to see? Would some photos be allowed on websites that were not allowed to be printed in newspapers or magazines? The answer most often given seems to be “shoot first and ask questions later” but this is not always the case, especially in the unique situations that the ground zero photographers were to encounter. Lucian Perkins seems to have stood by this common theory, stating, “I try to photograph what I can at the time. We can later decide whether an image should be published or not”(Perkins, 2001). The only time he feels that he hesitated in taking a photograph was when it could put someone else in danger. Another difficult but important part of

his coverage was capturing survivors grieving at the site. His key to photographing these people was getting the job done quickly and stealthily so as not to intrude on the people in pain. Perkins also said that there were things happening at the site that he could not find a way to make an image of. “The scope of the site of the World Trade Center is very difficult to capture on film. You almost have to see it to believe it. Throughout the city you could smell the smoke and feel the dust. When I left on Sunday smoke still bellowed over the skyline”(Perkins, 2001).

Richard Drew captured some of the most controversial images of the World Trade Center attacks on film, and they were published both on the *New York Daily News* website as well as in the late edition of the newspaper. His photographs of people jumping from the burning and soon to be imploding twin towers were about these people’s lives, not their deaths, according to Drew. “This was a very important part of the story. It wasn't just a building falling down, there were people involved in this. This is how it affected people's lives at that time, and I think that is why it’s an important picture”(Howe, 2001). *New York Daily News* Director of Photography Eric Meskauskas agrees with Drew. “Look, an incredibly disturbing thing happened and that is the truth of the matter,” explained Meskauskas. “We did not take this lightly for one moment, but we agreed to run both of these images. As a general rule we know that people see us as being gritty, but there were 20 or so people in the room when we made our decision”(Irby, 2001). The other controversial photo that ran on both *The New York Daily News* website and in the late edition of the newspaper was Todd Maisel’s graphic close up of a severed but completely intact human hand. Ed

Kosner, editor in chief of *The New York Daily News*, said bluntly, “You can’t do the story without doing the story, it’s not time to be squeamish”(Irby, 2001). Meskauskas recapped their argument for running these graphic photos by saying, “This was a tragedy of epic proportions and if we are not going to show the horrible pictures now, when will we ever do so? Sure we did get some calls and they said they were upset. But what all of those that don’t call, but are moved to do something about the situation and volunteer?”(Irby, 2001).

### 2.5 In Depth Interviews with Photojournalists

Though the interviews with photojournalists who were at ground zero that I found on the internet were helpful in creating a general idea of what they went through on September 11<sup>th</sup>, I needed answers to questions that I hadn’t seen asked by others. I created a list of 34 questions through previous research and discussions with fellow journalists that would bridge the gaps in information that I already had discovered and questions that were still left lingering. I e-mailed this list of questions to a dozen photojournalists who were at the World Trade Center attack and had agreed to take part in this study, but only one quarter of them followed through with this agreement. So with the help of three photojournalists willing to bare their souls and relive their experiences of this tragic event, I have been able to draw parallels and show relationships between my historical research, interviews done by others and these new, never-before-seen interviews. The three photojournalists that I interviewed were Ricky Flores of *The White Plains Journal News*, Todd Maisel of *The New York Daily News* and Steven Frischling of Corbis Sygma photo agency.

At home in Westchester County, N.Y., not scheduled to shoot again until the nightshift, Ricky Flores received a call from his wife who was on her way into the city the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>. With stunned disbelief at what his wife was telling him, Flores turned on the television only to see the second airplane impact live for himself. He called the office and made the spur of the moment announcement that he was headed to Ground Zero. On his way there, he witnessed the first tower fall from his 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Bridge vantage point. With some effort, Flores was finally able to convince the police to allow him to travel down the emergency vehicle channels into the heart of the attacks. Upon his initial arrival at ground zero, Flores describes his reaction as “complete dismay and shock...Once you got past the perimeter, the streets were virtually empty and filled with this dust and paper that literally covered everything. And the dust permeated every part of your exposed flesh and eyes. The chalky dust was the obvious first sign of the collapse. Then the details, the office memos with hand written instructions next to a machine typed sentence. In the background you hear the sound of multiple alarms. The dust covered every part of your body. It got into your eyes, into your mouth, into your lungs.” Through cautiously checking everywhere he stepped, Flores was able to complete his work virtually unscathed, only suffering trouble breathing for a few days afterwards due to the vast amount of dust and smoke. Flores says that the thought never occurred to him that he could be risking his life for these photos, but that would not have mattered during an assignment as important as this. “I knew that what I was witnessing was an historic event unlike anything I had ever witnessed. I felt it was important to try to

document what took place to the best of my abilities.” As a documentary photojournalist, he did not have experience with combat photography to help in dealing with the events that day. More important to Flores was the fact that he lived and played in abandoned buildings in this same area of New York as a child. “I grew up with the sounds of fire trucks outside my window in the middle of the night. I used to play in abandoned buildings and learned about the inherent dangers in doing so. That allowed me to feel fairly comfortable with entering one of the buildings to make photographs from one of the windows and to explore a little. It allowed me to really evaluate the buildings that I was walking near or into and check for any dangerous situations” (Flores, 2001). Though Flores stated that he did shoot everything that he saw at the site, there was one subject that he would not have made an image of had he come across it. “Probably the only thing that I would not have shot was a body part. I think that I wanted to give the dead some form of dignity and respect because these people were the very ones who protected me when I was growing up and I owed it to them to carry out my job to the best of my abilities” (Flores, 2001). Though Flores feels that photojournalists at the site of the World Trade Center attack should not have edited themselves as far as what images they would take, he does think that running some of those photos crossed a line. “I heard about one of a severed hand [by Todd Maisel] that was talked about and shown at Poynter.org, I thought that was a photo that crossed the line. Should have it been taken? Absolutely. Should it have been shown? No”( Flores, 2001).

While driving around New York City on September 11<sup>th</sup>, Todd Maisel heard of the attacks by way of the police radio in his car. Even though his first impression was that a small airplane lost control and crashed into the World Trade Center, he felt that it was a big enough story and followed a police emergency truck to the site. With this impromptu police escort, Maisel arrived at ground zero after approximately 15 minutes of navigating barricades, at one point even using a yellow light on his dashboard to appear more official and be allowed through a police checkpoint. He recalls that most of the police officers were too busy with their own duties to stop photojournalists, but the FBI firmly did at one point because they were considering the area a crime scene. Maisel's comparison of being at the site to watching it on television was that the full sensory overload he received could not be adequately depicted for home viewers. "The sights could be seen on TV, but without the sounds, smells and tastes, it couldn't be so real. It seemed like a dream. There was the smell of smoke everywhere initially. The sounds of the fire above" (Maisel, 2001).

Due to arriving at the site so quickly, Maisel feels that he was in constant risk of serious injury or death, especially during the collapses of the Twin Towers and subsequent buildings being damaged or collapsing as well. "I was on Liberty and West Street when I saw the building falling towards me and the firefighters. We ran. I dived into the lobby of 90 West Street and then was nearly killed by falling walls and ceiling. We were in the dark. I couldn't breathe and my throat was coated with ash and dust...a chalky taste. Upon finding my way out of the building, the air was thick with dust and smoke. An eerie quiet, except for a lone voice calling for help. You

could hear the crackle of fire from fire trucks and ambulances crushed by debris” (Maisel, 2001). Miraculously, through the collapse of both towers and collateral damage of surrounding buildings, Maisel was not injured.

Even though he was constantly risking his life for the perfect photo, Maisel feels that there was no other way to approach this terrorist attack or anything else that photojournalists cover. “We have a sacred obligation to the public to document history - what may be the newest testament. How can we know? A photojournalist either gives 150%, or he should get out of the business, regardless of the risk” (Maisel, 2001). Maisel’s 17 years of shooting spot news helped him in his coverage of the World Trade Center attacks. He always carries tools, water and other items that made his stay at ground zero easier, but nothing in his past work had prepared him for seeing so much death and destruction and for feeling that much danger. Maisel did not stop shooting photographs for any reason while at the site, except in instances where the rescue workers needed his assistance. At those times, the camera went away until his help was no longer needed. “Helping is the only human thing to do. How can you shoot if you are needed? If there are injured and dying people needing your help? If one thinks back to the Princess Di accident, how could photographers, first on the scene, not try to help in some way? I can't fathom that” (Maisel, 2001).

Maisel had no problem shooting everything that he saw at ground zero and letting the editors decide what was appropriate to run on the website or in the newspaper. “One photo that ran in the paper was of a hand of one of the passengers from the plane. It was pointed at me. It was disturbing to people in newsroom and to

readers later. I think it was appropriate. There is nothing we shouldn't show to tell the true horror of what we saw”(Maisel, 2001).

While dropping his daughter off at daycare in Northampton, MA, Steven Frischling simultaneously received a frantic phone call from his editor and heard reports of the World Trade Center attack on the radio. He knew instinctively that he would be driving the two and a half hours to ground zero before his editor assigned him to cover it. Facing heavy inbound traffic, several New York Police Department checkpoints, and having to drive the wrong way across the Brooklyn Bridge, Frischling finally arrived at the site, only to be horrified by what he saw. “As a native of New York I was in complete shock and disbelief. When I saw the plume of smoke from the Bruckner Expressway, in the Bronx I had to pull over, shoot it, and try to assure myself that it was not as bad as it looked...when I got to the scene I was devastated” (Frischling, 2001). Once at the site, the obstacles Frischling had to overcome became much more personal than just congested traffic and barricades. “The scene was extremely loud, but not a busy loud, more a white noise loud, the smells were horrific, I smelled only ash for days after leaving New York” (Frischling, 2001). Though he encountered a few close calls, Frischling was able to escape the event with only negligible injuries, breaking a few toes and receiving minor burns on the back of his neck when the 7 Trade Center building collapsed. His motivation for risking life and limb to get the perfect photo at this dangerous event was summed up with one word, “instinct.” Frischling had covered many violent situations and disasters in his past work, but none of those events prepared him for covering a

terrorist attack on his home. While this previous work might not have helped him deal with the emotions of covering this attack on his homeland, Frischling's extensive photojournalistic experience allowed him to get the job done, citing experience, common sense and oftentimes reflex as his most useful gifts on September 11<sup>th</sup>. As far as the decision between self-editing or editing in the newsroom, Frischling said it was an easy one for him, shooting nearly half a gigabyte of digital images before returning to his office to burn them to CDs and turn them over to his editors. He did not choose to self-edit at the site, saying that there were additional graphic images that he wanted to make, but couldn't due to the extreme conditions at ground zero. "I stopped to look at a leg not attached to a body, covered in ash in the street, and was unable to shoot it as a heavy dust cloud rushed down with wind. When the dust cleared I could not find it again" (Frischling, 2001). Frischling went on to add that intense situations such as the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks should not be kept from the general public, going so far as to praise *The New York Daily News* for its editorial decisions. "No, I do not believe a situation such as this should be edited for content. This was terrible and I think the public should have the ability to see it in all its reality. I think *The New York Daily News* did an outstanding job in printing the severed body part photo [by Todd Maisel]" (Frischling, 2001).

## 2.6 Summary and Results

After conducting these interviews, gathering additional interviews from varied sources, and combing through historical data, the three research questions can be answered. Photojournalists are a special breed of photographer. They know that the

situations and events that they cover are in the real-world and have real-world consequences. Photojournalists also understand that the most important images, the “perfect photos,” are only possible to achieve when they are in the midst of the action and, consequently, the danger.

Though most people would, and did, run away from the horrors inflicted on the World Trade Center on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the photojournalists had a job to do and were willing to risk their lives to do it. There had never been an event of this magnitude on United States soil during the age of photography. The photojournalists knew that this was a historic occasion and that people would be discussing the event through the use of their photos for the rest of time. For most photojournalists, avoiding risk to find that ideal image was not an option. They were unceasingly dedicated to their craft on that day. They were also very careful in the risks they took, drawing on any knowledge they had of previous events in their lives or careers to keep them safe in the most unsafe of environments. The only time they stopped shooting was when they were needed to assist in saving the lives of others. Even though these photojournalists were on a mission, they understood that life is more important than any photograph. They were willing to risk their own lives, but not the lives of those others who did not choose to be in the middle of this devastation.

If the photojournalist interviewed had experience in war photojournalism, that was the experience they most related with while covering the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. Photojournalists covering war are in constant danger and while they might not have non-stop action, when the battles are raging they said it had a similar feel.

My hypothesis that war photojournalism would be the most often cited experience related to their coverage of the World Trade Center attacks did not hold true for the three professional photographers that I was able to interview. None of them had extensive experience with war photography, but they all found a way to cope with each intense situation as it arose at Ground Zero. The reason for this is not necessarily that it is an invalid comparison but more importantly, that many of the photojournalists at the site have never had war photojournalism experience. Because every photojournalist in the New York area flocked to the site of the attacks, the elite photojournalists who have covered war were there shoulder to shoulder with everyone else, vying for the images that they thought best portrayed this horrific event. Sights, sounds and smells also separated the September 11<sup>th</sup> coverage from almost any event other than war photojournalism. These people were witnessing the type of carnage only imagined in Hollywood previous to this attack, and were determined to create images adequate in portraying the real-life horrors around them.

Many of the photojournalists agreed that everything they saw at ground zero was acceptable to photograph due to the nature of the event. Nothing that you would see the next morning in the newspaper could compare to the dreadfulness witnessed by everyone at ground zero. Even the photojournalists that I interviewed who refused to take images of such things as body parts or people jumping from the burning Twin Towers conceded that the images were valid representations of the events that unfolded. Those photojournalists felt that images of body parts and the people jumping from the burning towers were unnecessary to run on websites and in

newspapers, but at the same time agree that the photojournalists who took them should not have done anything differently. Newsroom editorial decisions are where most of the differences of opinions lie, and that will, in the majority of cases, be true. The editorial staff that decides to publish such graphic images runs the risk of offending its readers, and possibly losing future sales. Drawing from my research, I found that editorial decisions in this case were made under the assumption that the world had never seen an event this tragic and if images, graphic or otherwise, were going to be published, this was the time to do it. The world had to understand just how heinous this attack was. Professional photography by photojournalists was the most appropriate means to immediately convey these images to America and the rest of the world.

Though professional photography is the main category thought of when discussing photography of an event as important as September 11, 2001, it is not the only category which should be studied. For the terrorist attacks in New York to be remembered as a part of our national “family photo album,” this selection of images must also include the photography of non-professionals who just happened to be at Ground Zero with a camera when the events took place.

The way images are selected to include in family albums is complex. A study needed to be conducted to determine exactly what those primary criteria were so that they could then be applied to the personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Chapter 3 will explain the requirements that have to be met by personal images to be included in a general family album. Chapter 4 will then use those requirements in examining the

personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup> to determine what type of images should be included in an “American family album” so that future generations will have the greatest opportunity to understand the impact that the terrorist attacks had on this nation.

This preliminary study was needed in order to analyze previous research on the topic of personal photography and to determine how those images were categorized and critiqued. The major problem with a study of this subject is the lack of information available on the topic. There has been very little academic research done on personal photography, but that which has been conducted is quite significant. A series of questions would need to be devised from this initial research which could then be applied to the personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup>. That follow up study of the personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup> could then provide some insight into what the average people in New York were going through that day.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Personal Photography: How Theorists and Professional Photographers Define and Critique Snapshots**

#### 3.1 Introduction

Through extensive research and thorough discussions with professionals as well as students in the field of photography's history, it has been determined that the genre of personal photography has been studied far less frequently than the other major genres of photojournalism, art photography and commercial photography. This deficiency of in-depth research and criticism could be due to the relative ease in which personal photographs can be produced, the lack of skill or technique needed to create them or even their pervasiveness throughout American households. Though why they have been studied so infrequently is not the main concern of this chapter, it is a necessary detail to understand in the course of any study of personal photography.

In the limited amount of examination which has been done about personal photography, studies tend to fit into one of three broad categories. The first category deals with personal photography as a reflection of the improvement of camera technology and the coinciding decrease in camera price. As cameras become both portable and affordable, they find their way into the hands of more people and therefore an increasing number of photographs are produced. In the second category, researchers focus on the aspect of personal photography as a form of casual observation. The difference between personal and other forms of photography,

according to this category, is a lack of technique on the part of the photographer. The third category treats personal photography as solely a form of familial record. In much the same way that cave paintings were the folk art of history, these photos become a documentation of events and people at a certain place and time.

In this chapter, I have set out to classify the critiques that I have found according to the three categories listed above, analyze each to determine which would have potential value in a cohesive theory and then formulate a set of criteria for future criticism of personal photography. By discovering what theories have come before, eliminating unessential components and adding my own ideas, I believe that a set of essential criteria can be produced. Those critical elements can then be applied to the study of personal photography of September 11, 2001, in order to determine what type of images could be included in an “American family album” as a historical record of the events.

### 3.2 Improved Technology

The improvements in camera technology and subsequent price reductions made it possible for a greater percentage of Americans to own their very own camera. Personal photography has been examined by some as strictly a result of these changes. This type of study is beneficial in explaining why people were able to make photos without the need for a professional photographer, but limits itself to only financial and technological reasons.

Richard Chalfen, in his book *Snapshot: Versions of Life*, tells us that camera manufacturers brought about the rise of personal photography with their continued

development and production of automated and inexpensive cameras. Due to these advances, Americans have become the most photographed group of people in history. In Chalfen's opinion, the 1888 marketing campaign of the Eastman Kodak company which coined the phrase "You press the button – We do the rest" was key in encouraging Americans to try their hand at photography. Our constant access to cameras gives us a form of expression which can be viewed currently as well as by future generations (Chalfen, 1987).

His theory incorporates two vital concepts which work together to explain the rise of the "snapshot" in America. Kodak Culture is Chalfen's term describing what people have to learn, know or do in order to take part in group communication based around a family setting. Chalfen's term Polaroid People is used when describing his study of the lives of people as depicted in personal photographs as opposed to the actual lives that they live. This is integral in determining the difference between true-to-life scenes and ones that have an altered appearance due to a person performing for the camera. Another important aspect is who the audience of these photos will be. When the viewer knows the subject of the photos, it becomes easier to overlook imperfections caused by an amateur photographer.

Also integral to Chalfen's theory is that the photographers who are able to make a true snapshot cannot be professionals with any background in visual communication. Even subjects who are members of photo clubs or who have entered photo contests are excluded from the snapshot process. Only completely amateur photographers with no training whatsoever are considered in his study.

The most important idea that I gathered from Chalfen's work is that when the audience of a group of personal photographs knows the subject, the technical details become unimportant. When a familiar connection is able to be made between the person in the photo and the person seeing the photo, it is much easier to overlook the fact that it is indeed a snapshot and not an art or journalistic photograph produced by a professional.

Professional photographer Paul Strand explained his idea of personal photography as a question. "When is a photograph a snapshot and when is it not a snapshot?" (Green, 1974). His answer harkens back to the technological advances made in the new age of portable cameras. Strand felt that "snapshot" should not be thought of as a derogatory term, but instead it is just the type of photo where it is necessary to stop motion.

The technological developments allowed for continually shorter exposure times necessary to produce good images. Strand did not believe that a snapshot was something taken only by an amateur photographer because artists and documentarians could find uses for stop motion images. Casual photographers as well as professionals can produce snapshots under his theory, with only the adjustment of a few manual settings on their new camera.

I did not think that Strand's critique of personal photography was quite as well thought through as most. It seems to place no weight on the photographer and is only related to technical aspects of the camera being used. I found this critique to be interesting but irrelevant to the overall theme of my hypothesis.

### 3.3 Casual Observation

The category of casual observation can best be described as a critique that explains personal photography in terms of the skill level of the photographer. A photographer using the casual observation method is shooting what is seen in the viewfinder with no thought going toward how to better compose the image. These photographers have no formal training and are taking these photos for personal use only. Many critics of personal photography seem to believe in the casual observation theory, as will be shown.

Though he delves more into finding the meaning behind the images seen in personal photography, Robert Akeret is a proponent of the casual observation theory. The images that he finds to critique in his book *Photoanalysis* are simple snapshots taken from family photo albums. Akeret created a set of five ideas which can be applied to personal photographs in an effort to discern what is happening to the subjects in their real lives by examining their photographic world. The first is that a more precise recollection of the realistic history can be determined through photoanalysis. Second, distortions of the subject's life as it is remembered can be assimilated with reality. Third, subconscious memories can be triggered and brought into the conscious mind. Fourth, dramatic changes can be measured by comparing a set of photos of the same subject over the course of time. Lastly, relationships with others can be examined through photoanalysis.

Akeret's five ideas are important in discerning what is happening in personal photographs. As critical issues, they would be useful in any further analysis of

photography. Akeret attempts to apply his ideas to more public and professional photos as well, but they seem more geared to work with personal photography than any other genre.

A more straightforward approach to the casual observation category is by John A. Kouwenhoven. He explains his theory of personal photography as, “predominantly photographs taken quickly with a minimum of deliberate posing on the part of the people represented and with a minimum of deliberate selectivity on the part of the photographer so far as vantage point and the framing or cropping of the image are concerned” (Green, 1974).

This is one of the most eloquently worded theories on personal photography that I was able to find. Kouwenhoven gives a concise explanation of the fact that in this genre of photography, it is all unrehearsed and taken by an amateur photographer. He does not make any mention of the audience or how they should attempt to read the photos, instead focusing on how the events of taking the photo would happen. It works well as a theory of the shooting aspect, but leaves out many additional details that are needed to form a cohesive hypothesis.

A similar idea in the category of casual observation was produced by Jonathan Green. In it, he stated that personal photography implies both a quick glimpse as well as a “treasured keepsake” (Green, 1974). He goes on to explain that a snapshot can either look backward to family history or it can be a current view of experiences. Green does not make any definitive conclusions in his statement about personal photography, but it was important for creating the category of casual observation. He

was the only one to state his ideas in such strong terms. The only real use that I had with Green's statement about personal photography was in setting this category. His other ideas are also useful, though without any major conclusions, his points were often made more clearly by other critics.

While writing for a catalog which was to accompany the Museum of Modern Art's Photography Center's 1944 presentation of "The American Snapshot," director Willard Morgan addressed the visual properties of the images in a way which fits the casual observation category. Morgan stated:

The snapshot has become in truth, a folk art, spontaneous, almost effortless, yet deeply expressive. It is an honest art, partly because the natural domain of the camera is in the world of things as they are, and partly because it is simply more trouble to make an untrue than a true picture. Above all, the folk art of the camera is unselfconscious. It may be a significant form of self-expression, but the snapshotter doesn't think of it that way. He takes pictures merely because he likes to. (Chalfen, 1987)

This explanation fits into the category because of its clear definition that this is not a professional operation. These "snapshotters" are people who are not trying to shoot in a specific style or for a specific purpose other than to have a record of the events of their lives. The spontaneity is key to Morgan's definition and makes it an integral part of my overall hypothesis. Another interesting note in this statement is that personal photography is looked at as "folk art." They are not merely pictures to Morgan, but a type of art form tied to both heritage and self expression.

Photographer Lisette Model has a very important point to make in her ideas about personal photography. She states that, "It has no pretence or ambition. It is

something that happens to the taker rather than his performing it. Innocence is the quintessence of the snapshot” (Green, 1974).

Model’s main idea is that most of what we see in personal photography is just a representation of everyday life and in that simplicity comes their power. The imperfections caused by an amateur photographer should be taken as a strong point instead of a weakness. A lack of composition and set style is part of the appeal of personal photography.

In these ideas, I have to agree with Model. When you find that captured moment that strikes you as a strong photo, it does not always matter if every technical detail was properly composed. In some instances, especially with personal photography, the looseness of the photo can add to its attractiveness. People are more willing to believe that this was an actual occurrence instead of something that was created by a professional photographer to reenact a “moment.” This gives a feeling of vitality to personal photographs that is not always possible when the photographer is attempting to fit his or her shots into a certain style or theme.

Model also enjoys images without text, allowing the audience to discover meaning for themselves. This works well especially with personal photography where the audience would most likely also know the subject in the photos. It can be a joy to try to decipher what is happening and why the subjects are reacting the way they are.

Another photographer who supports the imperfection of personal photography as a form of casual observation is Tod Papageorge. In his critique, he appreciates the “graphic audacity which shocks us in frame after frame of these pictures” (Green,

1974). He lauds the crooked frames and cut-off edges as being part of the photo making process instead of mistakes.

Papageorge also begins to show some evidence of another category, the familial record. He feels that the person creating personal photography for a family album is “love blind” (Green, 1974) and not necessarily needing the perfection of a professional photographer. His statements make for an interesting addition to the set of essential criteria for examining personal photography. Going along the same lines as Model’s themes of imperfection and innocence in personal photography, Papageorge expands on them by giving them the emotional “excuse” of being for the family.

### 3.4 Familial Record

The category of familial record is important, but has many fewer supporters than casual observation. Going into the research for this chapter, I felt that a familial record theory would be strongly supported by most critics that I would find. When I got into it, I only found a handful of supporters, and even fewer worth mentioning. The familial record category is just as it sounds; personal photography as a way of preserving the heritage of a group of related people.

The best example of familial record comes from Steven Halpern. His thoughts are that personal photography consists of two main traits; “a constant focus on family life and an informal, casual style that was consistent with the new freedom within the family and derived from the mobility of the hand-held camera.” (Green, 1974) He adds some points that would fit in the casual observation category, stating that

personal photographs are just fleeting moments in time and often the captured images include blur. Halpern also leans toward the belief that precise technique is very unnecessary in personal photography. It is acceptable to him if the subject is cut by the edge of the frame or the horizon line is not perfectly horizontal.

Halpern is the main proponent that I found of the familial record category. If this was not the category that I felt would be most often cited, I would probably have deleted it from the set, but fortunately there were some critics using this idea. Halpern does a fine job of explaining the familial record theory while also getting into other categories. “A constant focus on family life,” is likely the most appropriate way of explaining this category and it truly is an important one. Most personal photography is of people that the photographer knows and as such would fit in this category even if it is not mentioned by the critic. This lack of familial record by most critics could be due to the fact that they were unsure of the family status of the subjects in the photos they were critiquing in relation to the photographer.

Another photographer whose personal photography critique fits into the familial record category is Wendy Snyder MacNeil. She states that personal photography is akin to modern day cave paintings. The same needs and desires would have been present in the production of both. They become a record of events for both cave people and modern man; a way of communicating to their contemporaries and future generations exactly what they went through during their lifetime.

MacNeil is on target with her comparison of the two ages of people and their need to communicate visually with others. A record has been left behind as far back

as we can trace. Anytime people have something to say, he or she finds a way to record it for posterity. Modern photographers have it much easier with the speed and efficiency of cameras, though the lifespan of a photograph not properly produced is much shorter than records from days past.

### 3.5 Criteria for the Study of Personal Photography from September 11<sup>th</sup>

After reviewing many criticisms of personal photography, and attempting to formulate a set of criteria for use in the study of personal photography of September 11, 2001, I have been able to come to several conclusions. The three main categories that I began this essay with have, after all of the research, remained as these: improved technology, casual observation and familial record. Those three categories, while not evenly discussed amongst the critics that I reviewed, are the basic breakdown of how personal photography is critiqued. Almost every criticism that I found would fit into at least one of these categories and many overlapped into more than one category.

Although those are the main categories that most critics focus on, one of them can be reduced in stature or possibly eliminated. Improved technology could possibly be unnecessary in the further study of the criticism of personal photography. Unless there is a major example of a personal photograph in the sample that I choose to study which has obviously been affected by a certain camera technology, this category will most likely go unused in the study of personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and therefore, will be eliminated from my set of essential criteria.

After reviewing all of the research that I have compiled, I have formed a list of eight questions which will be the basis of Chapter 4, the study of personal photography of September 11<sup>th</sup>. By answering these questions when conducting a personal photography criticism, the critic should come away with valuable information about the event which was photographed as well as the audience, subject and photographer.

*Who is the audience?*

This question was addressed in Chalfen's book and the basic idea behind asking it is that if the audience for the photo knows the subject then the technical details and especially flaws become unimportant. A photograph composed beautifully will be admired just as much as an improperly composed one if the subject is important enough to the audience. If the audience, on the other hand, does not know the subject, flaws become more important. A personal photo with an unknown subject, even if it is an attractive photo, will not be held in the same light as one with a known subject. Chalfen stresses this fact in his book and I have to agree that the audience is quite important when discussing personal photography.

*Is the photo deliberately posed?*

Personal photography can be both posed and unposed, but both should be used in a loose and free way to still be considered for this genre. When amateur photographers begin to learn more, they want to set up groups of people for impromptu family portraits. These begin to cross the line from personal photography to portraiture, but some posed photos do still fit. How is the pose or non-pose used in

the photo and does it work as related to Kouwenhoven's theories on personal photography?

*Is the image spontaneous?*

As Morgan emphasized, spontaneity is the key to good personal photography. These images are supposed to be on-the-fly records of life's events. If the photos look contrived, the photographer is not handling their spontaneous subject matter properly. Use of stop motion or action, even if inappropriately by professional standards, is a common way to capture the spontaneous events. The subjects can be photographed in many different ways, but the key is whether the image captured the event happening at that time.

*Is there an innocence or non professional look to the photograph?*

Once images start becoming too sleek and stylized, they lose the essence of a personal photograph. According to Model, these photos should look like they were taken by someone who is not completely versed in the ways of the camera. Point of view, focus, depth of field and all other typically controlled aspects of photography can be left completely to the whims of the camera. Model described this best when she said, "It is something that happens to the taker rather than his performing it" (Green, 1974).

*Does it need captions?*

Another important question from Model is whether the image needs written explanation. Most personal photo albums do not contain much writing, though some minor notes like names and dates may be scribbled on the back. The photograph,

however poor the quality of image is, should elicit a response in an audience that is familiar with the event or subject in a personal photograph. There should be no need for text in personal photographs aside from their use in jogging the audience's memory to dates and other minute detailed information.

*Are there imperfections and "graphic audacity?"*

This question was brought up by Model and Papageorge as well as others throughout my research. Though it is not a necessity to find imperfections in personal photography, almost all examples will have some imperfections. The idea behind this is that the photographer should not fully understand the workings of their equipment to be a true personal photographer. If they are guessing at what proper settings are then they could possibly get it right and get a lucky framing situation. Another key to this is the mass production of fully automatic cameras in recent years. It is now much easier for a personal photographer to get proper exposures than it has ever been before.

*Does it serve as a record for future generations?*

This does not mean that the entire world must want to see the image for it to be considered as good personal photography. Instead, as MacNeil explained, it should be a record for future generations of the family and friends depicted. The audience is very important in this question because an audience that does not know the subject will not care about the photo and it will not be a historical record for them. As with all personal photography, the audience is key to creating a successful image.

*How can Akert's five ideas be used to find meaning?*

Though Akert uses these five questions which I briefly discussed earlier in this essay as the basis of his book Photoanalysis, I feel that the questions would be more efficiently utilized in conjunction with other equally important questions. The content of any personal photograph is relevant, but that is not the only way to critique the image. Personal photos should be passed through a photoanalysis just as the critic should ask all of the other questions I have posed.

### 3.6 Summary and Results

Though other questions could be debated depending on particular personal photographs or collections, I feel that these eight main questions form a solid base from which to work. Some cases might need to include a question about the technological advances which allowed a photograph to be shot in a certain way, but for the most part, that will be an unnecessary question to ask.

The specific set of questions established in this chapter can now be used for analyzing personal photographs in general, and, for the purpose of this thesis, the personal photography of September 11, 2001.

The personal photographs from September 11<sup>th</sup> that I have selected to use in the following study were chosen as a representative sample of the different types of images available. Some were selected for their more professional look and others because they are quite obviously from the camera of an amateur. Some are from very close to Ground Zero while others could have been taken at any location on earth. I also wanted to have a representative image from several unique points in time of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, from before the impacts through the rescue attempts at the

end of the day. Five personal photographs were included in the group to be analyzed because they form a manageable yet significant representation of the terrorist attacks.

All images in this study were used with permission from the gallery presentation, and later published book, titled *Here Is New York*. Each image for *Here Is New York* was donated to the gallery by a person who happened to have a camera with them on September 11, 2001, and wished to be included in the presentation. With this type of open environment for the gallery, they were able to display many images that would have otherwise never been seen outside of the photographer's personal circle. This opened a vast pool of images to select from for the purposes of this study.

*Here Is New York* could, itself, be seen as an "American family album" of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> because of the vast number of images it contains, but the reason that some images work better for the purpose of this study will be seen in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### America as Family:

#### Personal Photography of September 11, 2001

##### 4.1 Introduction

Photographs from September 11, 2001, as well as the days following the attacks, can be seen not only as historical documents, but also as a family photo album, which can be viewed by all Americans to remember this important time in our lives. The photographs taken that day were captured by everyone from experienced war photojournalists to every person on the street and with equipment ranging from top of the line digital gear to children's toys. In this chapter, I will take a look at the personal photography of September 11, 2001, to discover what the non-professionals were seeing during those trying times.

For most of us, the phrase personal photography gives the feeling of scrapbook pictures which might not look like much to anyone outside of our immediate circle of friends and family. Those closest to us cherish them throughout our lives and even after. Almost every American family has albums full of photos from the good times and bad which are valued much more highly than the paper they are printed on. They become a record of who we are and where we have been. The closest form of this type of album from the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> comes in the form of a book titled *Here Is New York: A Democracy of Photographs*.

## 4.2 Here Is New York

The photographs housed in that book were first compiled in gallery form by Michael Shulan and three friends. Sitting in a vacant store in Soho just blocks north of Ground Zero, Shulan decided to tape up an old, ordinary photo of the World Trade Center which he had purchased. The photo was taped to the inside of the window facing out toward the street and in a short amount of time, people were gathering outside just staring at the image. After speaking to his friends Gilles Peress, Alice Rose George and Charles Traub, they all decided to use the unoccupied building space to set up a gallery “open to ‘anybody and everybody’ — not just photojournalists and other professional photographers but bankers, rescue workers, artists, children, and amateurs of every stripe”(Shulan, 2002).

Their plan was to scan and print all photos, donated from anyone who produced them during the events occurring at Ground Zero, on inkjet printers and then hang them throughout the gallery, like laundry, on wires. The prints would also be available for purchase to anyone making a \$25 donation to their selected charity, The Children’s Aid Society, which was funding children whose parents were killed in the attacks and who would not receive aid from other sources. Three months after the opening of the gallery, they had sold over 30,000 prints and set up a tour of the exhibit set to show in major cities around the country and the rest of the world.

Shulan describes *Here Is New York* as “not an art exhibition in the conventional sense, partly an impromptu memorial, partly a rescue effort, and partly a testimonial of support for those who were actually doing the rescuing; it became a

rallying point for the neighborhood and for the community at large”(Shulan, 2002). For this study, those ideas must obviously all be taken into account. But in a different perspective, the photographs will be looked at as a family photo album. Though the people in the photographs may or may not be ones the viewer knows, the common bond shared by all Americans who bore witness to the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> created a familial condition that is not formed during everyday occurrences. From that point of view, the audience for these personal photographs can be seen as America as a whole.

#### 4.3 Functions of Personal Photography at Ground Zero

The audience is not the only link between common personal photography and personal photography taken during September 11<sup>th</sup>. Access to the events at Ground Zero was available only to those who live in or were visiting New York at the time of the attacks. The lack of access does not discount the personal effect on our nation as a family. Due to the continuous coverage in all forms of mass media during and after the attacks, all of America watched these pseudo “home movies” for days.

The ability to have personal recall through the use of photography is essential in personal photography. If it does not trigger some memory in the audience for which it was produced, then the photo fails as a good example of personal photography. A quick glance at the photographs included in *Here Is New York* will let any viewer from our “family” see that they are almost all excellent examples in this regard.

The possibility for discovery is also important in most personal photography. The viewer should be able to see things he or she would not have had the time to notice during the actual events. Of course, this will be a very common factor in personal photography at Ground Zero due to the rapidness of events happening at that time. These photographs give the viewer the time to look back and take a moment to see things as they really were and not just as they hazily remember.

On a similar line of thought, the ability to stop time at the precise moment when a photograph was taken also allows the viewer to see things that they were too excited, worried, upset or just not in the right frame of mind to comprehend during the time of the actual events. This is typically used in personal photography when things are fast paced or when the participants were just not noticing what was going on around them, but it becomes even more important to this study. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were so hard on so many people, not just those “family members” who were at Ground Zero, that the important details were often overlooked and can only be fully realized upon utilizing this stoppage of time provided by photographs.

This point leads directly into the idea of attendance. Most of our American family was not physically present at Ground Zero during the attacks. Those members are able to relate to the part of the “family” that was there through these personal photographs. Much like family members will take personal photographs while on vacation or visiting distant relatives to show the rest of the family upon their return, the September 11<sup>th</sup> photographs show that same link. Those who were at Ground Zero have the proof which they are able to show to those who were not. The separation due

to distance is lessened through personal photography regularly and is no different in this case other than the vastness of the scale of our “family photo album.”

#### 4.4 The Eight Questions of Personal Photography

There are many other functions of personal photography, and when compared to personal photography at Ground Zero they are all found to fit just as they would with more typical examples. The questions which will be asked during the critique of the sample photographs from *Here Is New York* will include both the functions listed above as well as several other functions of personal photography. These questions were devised through a previously conducted analysis of the genre of personal photography as a whole and will now be applied to this specific set of photos. By answering these questions when conducting a personal photography criticism, the critic should come away with valuable information about the event which was photographed as well as the audience, subject and photographer.

*Who is the audience?*

When answered, this question, from Richard Chalfen’s book *Snapshot: Versions of Life*, explains that if the audience for a personal photograph knows the subject then the technical details and especially flaws become unimportant. Chalfen stresses this fact in his book and I have to agree that the audience is quite important when discussing personal photography. Essential to this study is the fact that the audience is “America as family” and therefore anyone who witnessed any portion of the attacks either first person or via the media could possibly have an emotional connection to the subject of the photograph.

*Is the photo deliberately posed?*

Personal photographs can be either posed or unposed, but either technique should be used in such a way as to maintain the looseness found in the genre of personal photography. Most of the personal photography from September 11<sup>th</sup> will be unposed, but examples of posed photos will also be critiqued to determine if that factor makes a difference in whether it becomes true personal photography for our target audience.

*Is the image spontaneous?*

In the Museum of Modern Art's Photography Center's 1944 presentation of "The American Snapshot," spontaneity was shown to be the key to good personal photography. Personal photographs are "on-the-fly" records of life's events and if they appear contrived, the photographer is not handling their spontaneous subject matter properly. The key to this question is whether the photographer's image captured the event happening at that time. This will relate closely with the previous question, though both must be asked due to the circumstances of both standard personal photography and personal photography at Ground Zero.

*Is there an innocence or non professional look to the photograph?*

Once images start becoming too sleek and stylized, they lose the essence of a personal photograph. Most personal photographs taken during September 11<sup>th</sup> will have this non professional quality, but the importance of the events themselves tends to give more weight to even the most unprofessional photos. Examples from the full range of "professional quality" photographs will be selected for critique in this study

to determine what impact this question has on the acceptance of personal photography to the audience.

*Does it need captions?*

An important question from Lisette Model is whether the image requires a written explanation for it to be adequately understood. There should be no need for text in personal photographs aside from its use in jogging the audience's memory to dates and other minute detailed information. None of the photos in the book *Here Is New York* have captions. The producers wanted there to be a level field where it was truly a "democracy of photographs" as the subtitle of the book states. Not even the name of the photographer or subject is stated which creates a generality to the image, allowing the audience to more easily relate to the events depicted.

*Are there imperfections and "graphic audacity?"*

Almost all examples of personal photography will have some imperfections because the image was not produced by a professional photographer. The selections from September 11<sup>th</sup> will most likely show imperfections due to all of the chaotic and emotional events surrounding the taking of the photographs.

*Does it serve as a record for future generations?*

The audience is very important in this question because an audience that does not know the subject may not care about the photo and it would then not be a historical record for them. As with all personal photography, the audience is key to creating a successful image. The belief in the "American family" as audience for

these photos makes the actual identity of the subject less important than the fact that the audience relates to the subject through their own experience of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

*How can Akeret's five ideas be used to find meaning?*

Robert Akeret's set of five ideas can be applied to personal photographs in an effort to discern what is happening to the subjects in their real lives by examining their photographic world. While this is a reasonable place to start in the analysis of personal photographs, I feel that the questions would be more useful when asked in conjunction with the other equally important questions listed above. The content of any personal photograph is relevant, but not the only way to critique the image.

Akeret's five ideas are first that a more precise recollection of the realistic history can be determined through photoanalysis. Second, distortions of the subject's life as it is remembered can be assimilated with reality. Third, subconscious memories can be triggered and brought into the conscious mind. Fourth, dramatic changes can be measured by comparing a set of photos of the same subject over the course of time. Lastly, relationships with others can be examined through photoanalysis.

These ideas will be used throughout the critique of personal photography produced during September 11<sup>th</sup>, but will not make up the totality of the analysis proper according to Akeret. His are important ideas but the addition of the other seven questions makes for a more complete critique of personal photography both in general and in this specific study.

#### 4.5 Personal Photograph Selection #1



The photographic selections will be presented for critique in chronological order as close as is possible through the use of context cues presented in the images. The first selection was taken moments before the second plane impacted the World Trade Center. It shows the back of one man on the far left, indistinct in the shadows, looking through a window at the carnage of the first attack while the second airplane is on course for further destruction. Another figure is partially shown on the far right edge of the frame though it is uncertain what he or she is doing.

The audience of the photograph when it was taken was certainly for just the photographer and his or her close circle of friends and family. It was most likely meant to be a record of them being there during these attacks. The audience grows when presented in a broader context. For the American family discussed in this study, the ambiguity of the people in the photograph becomes essential. Without

recognizable faces or features, these people could be anyone who happened to witness the attacks. They become the everyman present in New York on September 11<sup>th</sup> while the aspect of looking through the window allows for further abstraction to the rest of the nation which was watching at home on television.

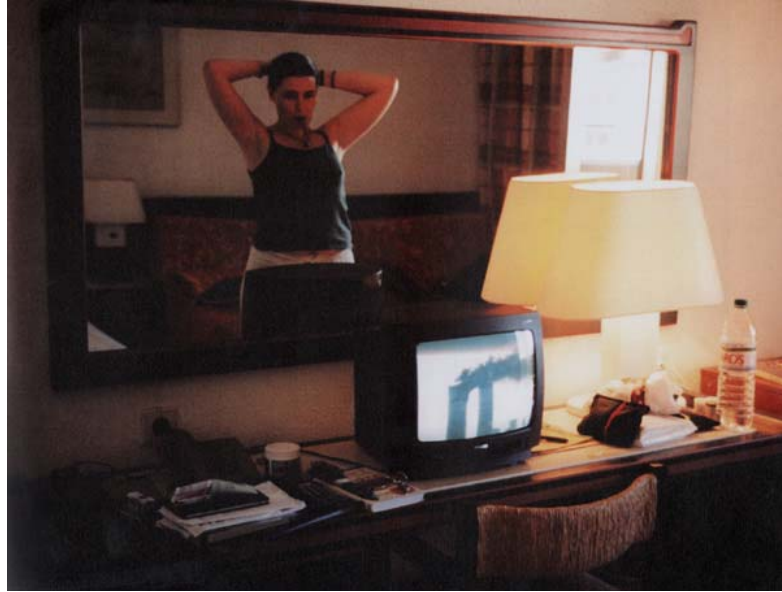
This photograph does not appear to be deliberately posed. The figures give the impression that they were just watching naturally as the events unfolded and one member of their office community happened to have a camera and decided to record the image. It does seem very spontaneous and the second aircraft could not have been situated any differently due to the photographer. It was a moment in time which was captured spontaneously and the photographer possibly did not even know what he or she had taken until the film was developed.

The composition and framing of this selection lead to the assumption that this was a non professional photographer. The top portion of the frame where the windows meet the ceiling is not quite level as would most likely be seen in a professional photograph in this same environment. Also, the crop of the figures on the bottom edge of the frame is awkward, as is the crop of the figure on the far right. Other imperfections include the building in the middle ground appearing as the focal point, thus creating a slight blur on both the figures in the foreground and the World Trade Center in the background. Also, the lack of a fill flash keeps the human figures in shadow while the outside world is properly exposed. A professional photographer would have either made the foreground figures a complete silhouette or filled with

flash to bring them out more. Instead, they are in a middle area where some, but very little, detail is present.

This selection does not require captions. Any verbiage here would add to the amount of knowledge about the subjects in the foreground, but because they represent “everyman,” words become unnecessary. The main subject of the photo is the airplane about to collide with the World Trade Center and for the audience, this needs no further captioning. Even without words, this serves as an excellent record for future generations, becoming a “moment in time” photograph that will be remembered by all who view it. It activates memories which most Americans have of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. This can also be described by Akeret’s idea that subconscious memories can be triggered and brought into the conscious mind. It allows for further analysis of a moment in time that happened so quickly that a photograph becomes the best form of examination.

#### 4.6 Personal Photograph Selection #2



The second personal photograph selected shows a woman in a hotel room, getting ready for her day on the morning of September 11, 2001. The audience for this photo was initially likely to be just the photographer (not pictured) and the woman watching the attacks unfold on television. The act of continuing her morning routine while such devastating events take place elsewhere relates directly to how Americans outside of New York were reacting. It is easy to understand her situation and feel a connection with this photograph. The unintended audience can become the “family” of America.

The photograph does not appear to be posed, though it is possible that the camera is actually on a tripod and the photo is being taken by the woman in the picture. In that case, it could be a posed photograph, but would still hold the same essential meaning. It appears to be a spontaneous moment. If you look closely at her

eyes, she appears to be staring intently at the television coverage of the attacks. Her arms are above her head working on her hair while a hair tie hangs from her mouth. The room is fairly dark with just lamplight and some sunlight from a window illuminating the subject. It appears to be a “moment in time” captured by the photographer to remember where they were during the attacks.

The framing again with this photograph appears slightly askew. The frame of the mirror starts below and then cuts into the frame of the film showing the work of an innocent photographer not completely concerned with making a perfect image. The lighting is also dim, and there does not seem to be a true focal plane in the photograph. Both the subject in the mirror and the television set are slightly out of focus. There are also several areas of mostly dead space, which only serve to reinforce the idea that they are in a hotel room.

This image also does not need captions to have an impact on the audience. It is not necessary to know exactly who this person is to relate to the emotions they were feeling when the photograph was taken. Her face seems to show hints of worry and confusion at these early stages of the attacks, but she is determined to continue with her day. She embodies the strong-mindedness of the American people. The photograph could become a true record for future generations of the emotional impact of the early hours of September 11, 2001.

Through analysis with Akeret’s ideas, we can also assume that the distortions of memory, which happen over time, could be corrected through the viewing of this photograph. The audience, through careful examination of this photograph, could

trigger their own memories of where they were and what they were doing when first learning of the attacks. It then becomes a conversation starter for the audience, whether they know the subject personally or not.

#### 4.7 Personal Photograph Selection #3



The third photograph selected for critique shows a female subject on the lower left of the foreground while the World Trade Center is smoldering in the background. The photograph has an eerie quality to it due to the facial expression of the female subject. She appears to be smiling for the photographer while all of the death and destruction continue behind her.

The audience for this photo was not meant to be the American family. It is obvious that this personal photograph was only meant to be seen by the subject and a select few in her close circle of friends and family. Taking it out of that context and attempting to place it into a broader audience creates a disturbing atmosphere.

The image was deliberately posed and therefore does not have the spontaneity of most images selected thus far. The reason this photograph was selected over the hundreds of other possibilities was its uniqueness in the subject. Most other posed photographs taken at or near Ground Zero have a somber mood depicted, but this one seems quite the opposite.

A caption line would help tremendously in this particular instance. If it was known what circumstances caused her to smile, the image might be less distressing to the audience. There are several possible explanations, but without text, they are all conjecture. In this way, the photograph does not serve as a good record for future generations. The image as it is seen now, sans captioning, gives the audience a perspective unlike that of any other photograph taken during those same moments.

This photograph does seem amateurish in its technique. Nothing is completely focused, while it is close enough to allow for a good read of the image by the potential audience. The subject is facing into the sunlight with unsympathetic lighting being produced on the right side of her face while equally harsh shadows fall on the left side. Also, the solid white block near the center and beneath the World Trade Center provides an obtrusive focal point which draws attention away from the actual subject matter.

The use of Akeret's five ideas would be wasted on this image as an example of personal photography meant for the selected audience. These ideas would work well with captions and in the intended audience of her inner circle of friends and

family, but taken out of that context, the image is disturbing and Akeret's ideas would not divulge any relevant information.

#### 4.8 Personal Photograph Selection #4



The fourth selection appears to have been taken shortly after the first tower collapsed but before the second followed. It is a scene of a boardwalk overlooking a vast body of water. Smoke from the World Trade Center can be seen from this great distance and most of the people there are watching the events unfold.

This photograph has no central subject and is more like any other travel photo which could have been taken on any day by any photographer if not for the attacks. If the viewer was to cover the top portion of the image, it would be indistinguishable from any other photo taken at this location. The audience can easily be seen as the “family” being discussed in this study.

No figure in this photograph has been posed and all the actions are spontaneous. There is very little action here except for the bike rider in the foreground and the attacks at Ground Zero, so any posing would not have added to the impact of the image.

Captioning of this personal photograph would not be necessary due to the number of figures in the foreground and the understanding of the events by the selected audience. Any text added would only repeat the obvious and would serve no relevant function. As a record for future generations, it is weak, but in the context of this book, it serves its purpose as an establishing shot. It is not an extremely dramatic photograph which will be remembered for all time by its audience but it is yet another view of the events as they happened.

As stated above, the framing of this photograph is of a type very common to the travel and personal photography genres. It is unspectacular, drawing only on the weight of the events in the far background for any relevance. It is in focus, though there is entirely too much dead space to be considered as anything more than a personal photograph. It looks like the common shot of the New York skyline as seen from this boardwalk everyday.

Akeret's idea of triggering memories could be used here, especially for members of the American family who have visited this place and have seen this unique view. If anyone from the audience has stood in this same spot and seen the New York skyline, he or she could be moved by seeing such a drastic change in the location they remember.

#### 4.9 Personal Photograph Selection #5



The fifth selection depicts the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. It is a blurred and very grainy image only recognizable due to the remains of the World Trade Center which became a trademark icon of Ground Zero. Without that likeness, this photograph would most likely have been passed over as too abstract to represent anything significant.

That same abstraction is what allows the audience for this personal photo to become the American family. The subject in the foreground is an out of focus authority figure with added blurred motion. The intangible nature of the figure allows for further abstraction in the audience's mind as it becomes the everyman at Ground Zero. The abstract icon of the World Trade Center grounds the viewer in the reality of the locale while keeping enough distance to allow for a mental recreation of the events.

The photograph does not appear to be deliberately posed. The odd framing, motion blur and large grain tend to suggest a very spontaneous act of photography. The silhouette of an authority figure trudging through the remains of the attacks also implies that this is a person at work and under these circumstances would likely not be up for posing for photographers.

The innocence of this photograph comes mostly from its unique imperfections. The large grain, tilted framing, lack of focus and blur all suggest an amateur photographer was operating the camera. While these could have all been deliberate decisions made by a professional, it would be more likely that it was an accidental image shot in extreme lighting conditions by someone who did not understand fully how to control them. All of the innocent mistakes combine to form a very powerful image of the people working at Ground Zero in the days after the attacks.

Captions would be wasted on this photograph, as information such as the identity and profession of the person depicted would not enhance the impact it

already has. The person becomes the embodiment of all officers and rescue workers toiling at Ground Zero for seemingly endless days and nights after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The ability to see this as a historical record would not be improved either. The photograph is very useful as is and any additions would only serve to muddle the effectiveness of this stark image.

Akeret's ideas of a more precise recollection of history and triggering subconscious memories could be applicable to this image at some future date. As a historical document, future generations could see this photograph as an iconic symbolization of the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Memories of the television footage that most Americans viewed, or first hand experiences that those in New York had during the attacks, would be easily recalled through simply viewing this photo and ones similar to it. The event itself becomes more important than the political debates and war against terror which followed, and would be seen as an important single event in history.

#### 4.10 Summary and Results

Personal photographs created during the events of September 11, 2001, and the days that followed will serve as historical documents of this event for the photographer's family and close friends. Looking a little more closely at the images shown in *Here Is New York: A Democracy of Photographs* allows the audience to be adjusted from not just the original, intended group but also to America as a family unto itself. This unique family photo album becomes a personal historical treasure for any and every citizen who witnessed the events either live or via the mass media.

As has been shown, not all of the images in this book are true personal photographs for America as a family, but most would easily qualify. The more abstract and oftentimes amateurish photos become easier to relate to, while more standard fare is most important to the audience of original intent. This adds validity to the comparison of *Here Is New York* to a family photo album because most images in those books are unprofessional but loved none-the-less by their audience. Almost every American family has albums full of photos from the good times and bad which are valued much more highly than the paper they are printed on. They become a record of who we are and where we have been. This book becomes a unique memorial of both our darkest day and our finest hour.

## Chapter 5

### Survey of Professional and Personal Photography of September 11<sup>th</sup>

#### 5.1 Introduction

Since the studies of professional and personal photography had to be approached in completely different ways, a unique method had to be used to bring them together into a cohesive analysis. I needed to find a way to examine the impact of these two different forms of photography. The technique I relied on was a survey which would include examples of both professional and personal photography of September 11, 2001.

This survey would take these images, which were meant for very different purposes, and pose the same questions for each to the survey takers. These respondents, during the course of the survey, would have to compare their reactions about each single image to their reactions to the others. A study of this type would likely yield the most pertinent data about the reactions viewers have to professional and personal photography.

It was decided that the most effective way to conduct this survey to allow the maximum number of participants and efficiency of analysis would be to present it online. The web-based version of the survey was produced and maintained in conjunction with doctoral candidate Cindy Royal. The survey included six total photographs taken during the events of September 11, 2001. Those selected images include three professional images, one each from the three photographers interviewed in Chapter 2, and three personal images selected from the *Here is New York*

photographs used in Chapter 4. The images and the labeling used to identify them in the tables throughout this chapter are included in the Appendix at the end of this thesis. The survey was then submitted for approval by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas.

After approval was received from the IRB, the survey was e-mailed to a random sample of 1,300 University of Texas students. A response rate of over 10% was achieved, a number judged to be adequate for analyzing the reactions to the images selected for the survey.

The results of this survey reveal many intriguing insights into the thoughts and feelings that people have about the images they were shown by the media covering the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. The range of reactions to the images included in the survey and others the respondents had seen was extreme, and set the stage for the results that follow.

### 5.2 Question #1

<i>Have you seen this image before?</i>				
<b>Personal 1</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	10	6.8	6.8	6.8
<b>No</b>	125	85.0	85.0	91.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	12	8.2	8.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Personal 2</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	15	10.2	10.2	10.2
<b>No</b>	121	82.3	82.3	92.5
<b>Don't Know</b>	11	7.5	7.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Personal 3</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	18	12.2	12.2	12.2
<b>No</b>	113	76.9	76.9	89.1
<b>Don't Know</b>	16	10.9	10.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 1</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	10	6.8	6.8	6.8
<b>Yes</b>	7	4.8	4.8	11.6
<b>No</b>	112	76.2	76.2	87.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	18	12.2	12.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 2</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	17	11.6	11.6	11.6
<b>Yes</b>	16	10.9	10.9	22.4
<b>No</b>	82	55.8	55.8	78.2
<b>Don't Know</b>	32	21.8	21.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 3</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	20	13.6	13.6	13.6
<b>Yes</b>	33	22.4	22.4	36.1
<b>No</b>	66	44.9	44.9	81.0
<b>Don't Know</b>	28	19.0	19.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Question 1 was asked in order to determine whether the personal and professional images selected for the survey were common enough to be recognized by the general public or whether they were images that the respondents had never seen before. It was assumed that the professional images would be recognized more often than the personal images, but in the best case scenario, the majority would not recognize any of the images, thus creating an environment without preconceptions.

The mean “no” response for the personal images was 81.4% while the mean “no” response for professional images was 58.9%. These percentages, while not as comparatively close as would be ideal, still show an overall unfamiliarity with the images utilized in this survey, which should therefore yield satisfactory results. Out of all six images, only Professional 3 had a “no” response of under 50% with 44.9% showing that the majority of the images were relatively unknown to this sample audience.

### 5.3 Question #2

*Is the subject matter of this photo appropriate to present to a mass audience?*

Personal 1				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Yes</b>	136	92.5	92.5	92.5
<b>No</b>	3	2.0	2.0	94.6
<b>Don't Know</b>	8	5.4	5.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Personal 2				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Invalid</b>	15	10.2	10.2	10.2
<b>Yes</b>	90	61.2	61.2	71.4
<b>No</b>	24	16.3	16.3	87.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	18	12.2	12.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Personal 3				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Invalid</b>	18	12.2	12.2	12.2
<b>Yes</b>	68	46.3	46.3	58.5
<b>No</b>	41	27.9	27.9	86.4
<b>Don't Know</b>	20	13.6	13.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Professional 1				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Invalid</b>	10	6.8	6.8	6.8
<b>Yes</b>	122	83.0	83.0	89.8
<b>No</b>	3	2.0	2.0	91.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	12	8.2	8.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 2</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	17	11.6	11.6	11.6
<b>Yes</b>	112	76.2	76.2	87.8
<b>No</b>	2	1.4	1.4	89.1
<b>Don't Know</b>	16	10.9	10.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 3</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	20	13.6	13.6	13.6
<b>Yes</b>	111	75.5	75.5	89.1
<b>Don't Know</b>	16	10.9	10.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Question 2 attempted to determine whether there was a difference to the respondents in the appropriateness of the images to be shown to a mass audience. The mean “yes” response percentage for the personal images was 66.7%, showing that overall, the respondents feel that these images would be appropriate to be shown publicly. For the professional images, the mean “yes” response percentage was 78.2%. This 11.5% difference was to be expected due to the skill required of professional photographers.

The most interesting data for this question was found in the personal image section. The image with the highest “yes” response of all six images used in the survey was Personal 1 with 93.5%. This can be partially explained by the complete lack of “invalid” responses for this image. Invalid responses occur when a respondent

discontinues the survey before completing it, resulting in the remaining questions being given an “invalid” response instead of “yes,” “no” or “don’t know” as would occur with a completed question. Taking that into account, Personal 1 is tied for second lowest number of “no” responses with 3. This shows that a personal photograph can be seen as just as acceptable for a mass audience if the photograph is of a high enough quality.

Also interesting in the personal image section was the result for Personal 3. With a “yes” response of only 46.3%, this image was determined by the respondents to be the least acceptable for presentation to a mass audience. This is only the first of several questions which select Personal 3 as the most obviously personal image and therefore unsuitable for use in the public consciousness – a point I will discuss further at the end of the survey analysis.

5.4 Question #3

*Does this photo need additional text or photos to be clear and effective?*

<b>Personal 1</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	40	27.2	27.2	27.2
<b>No</b>	95	64.6	64.6	91.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	12	8.2	8.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Personal 2</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	15	10.2	10.2	10.2
<b>Yes</b>	64	43.5	43.5	53.7
<b>No</b>	51	34.7	34.7	88.4
<b>Don't Know</b>	17	11.6	11.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Personal 3</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	18	12.2	12.2	12.2
<b>Yes</b>	60	40.8	40.8	53.1
<b>No</b>	49	33.3	33.3	86.4
<b>Don't Know</b>	20	13.6	13.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 1</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	10	6.8	6.8	6.8
<b>Yes</b>	57	38.8	38.8	45.6
<b>No</b>	67	45.6	45.6	91.2
<b>Don't Know</b>	13	8.8	8.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 2</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	17	11.6	11.6	11.6
<b>Yes</b>	31	21.1	21.1	32.7
<b>No</b>	81	55.1	55.1	87.8
<b>Don't Know</b>	18	12.2	12.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

<b>Professional 3</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Invalid</b>	20	13.6	13.6	13.6
<b>Yes</b>	23	15.6	15.6	29.3
<b>No</b>	88	59.9	59.9	89.1
<b>Don't Know</b>	16	10.9	10.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	147	100.0	100.0	

Question 3 seeks to find out whether any additional information would be required to accurately understand whether the image conveys its message effectively. In a world where the saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words” has become a cliché, it was expected that the percentage of respondents needing additional information would be fairly low, especially for professional photographs. Holding true to these preconceived notions, the data reveals that 37.2% of the respondents on average feel that the personal images need additional information, while only 25.2% felt that the professional images needed more. Most personal photo albums do not have much additional information, so if these images were going to be seen as components of a national album, it is appropriate that the respondents overall did not see additional information as necessary.

#### 5.5 Question #4

*Who do you feel is the intended audience for this photo?*

1 = Personal Use, 2 = Local Publication, 3 = National Publication, 4 = International Publication					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Personal 1</b>	113	1.00	4.00	3.06	1.1042
<b>Personal 2</b>	100	1.00	4.00	1.77	.9305
<b>Personal 3</b>	101	1.00	4.00	1.15	.5364
<b>Professional 1</b>	106	1.00	4.00	3.26	.7078
<b>Professional 2</b>	100	1.00	4.00	3.47	.6269
<b>Professional 3</b>	103	2.00	4.00	3.67	.5312
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	70				

Starting with Question 4 and running through the end of the survey, the questions asked were on a numerical scale, in an effort to determine each image's place on that scale. Question 4 shows that there is a wide range of expected audiences for the personal images, while the expected audience for the professional images remain fairly consistent.

Personal 1 is the most "professional" in appearance, of the personal images, according to the respondents, receiving a mean response of 3.06, which places it in the "national publication" category. The other two personal images fall between "personal use" and "local publication" on the scale. The three professional images all fall between "national publication" and "international publication" showing that the respondents were able to determine the intended use for these images. These results were consistent with what was expected, except for the high ranking of Personal 1 which was placed in the same portion of the scale as the professional images.

## 5.6 Question #5

*Does this appear to be an amateur or professionally produced photograph to you?*

Amateur: 1 = Definitely, 2 = Likely, 3 = Don't Know, 4 = Likely, 5 = Definitely :Professional					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Personal 1</b>	130	1.00	4.00	2.07	.5454
<b>Personal 2</b>	113	1.00	4.00	2.00	.8128
<b>Personal 3</b>	111	1.00	3.00	1.27	.5213
<b>Professional 1</b>	111	2.00	4.00	3.01	.4954
<b>Professional 2</b>	130	2.00	4.00	3.06	.4783
<b>Professional 3</b>	110	2.00	4.00	3.48	.5373
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	93				

Similar to Question 4, Question 5 attempts to determine the professional or amateur status of the photographers who produced the selected images. Interestingly, while most of the results correlate between the two questions, the respondents reacted differently about Personal 1 in this question than they did in the previous one.

With Question 5, Personal 1 was placed in the “likely amateur” category by the respondents, while they placed it in the “national publication” category for Question 4. This one deviation was interesting, but the response for Question 5 was more in line with the anticipated results. The two additional personal images were placed in the “definitely” to “likely amateur” range, while the professional images were placed in the “don’t know” to “likely professional” range. While the results for professional images were lower than expected, they still fall in the appropriate categories overall.

### 5.7 Question #6

*Does this photo appear to be deliberately posed or spontaneous?*

<b>Posed: 1 = Definitely, 2 = Likely, 3 = Don't Know, 4 = Likely, 5 = Definitely Spontaneous</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Personal 1</b>	127	1.00	3.00	2.92	.2983
<b>Personal 2</b>	113	1.00	4.00	2.08	.8466
<b>Personal 3</b>	112	1.00	4.00	1.29	.6797
<b>Professional 1</b>	113	1.00	4.00	2.98	.8236
<b>Professional 2</b>	130	1.00	4.00	3.12	.6102
<b>Professional 3</b>	110	1.00	4.00	2.64	.8097
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	86				

Question 6 was asked in order to determine whether the respondents would be able to identify the images as being either spontaneous or posed. This was a unique question, as almost all of the images could appear to fit in both categories depending on how the respondent interpreted the question.

While most of the images fell in the range of “likely posed” to “don’t know,” the one that produced the most varied and interesting results was Personal 3. This image received a mean response of 1.29, placing in very close to “definitely posed” which was expected from previous analysis of the image.

## 5.8 Question #7

*Does this photo serve as an effective, historical record of the events of 9-11?*

<b>1 = Not a good record, 2 = Below average record, 3 = Average record, 4 = Good record, 5 = Very good record</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Personal 1</b>	133	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.1239
<b>Personal 2</b>	116	1.00	5.00	2.26	1.1043
<b>Personal 3</b>	112	1.00	5.00	1.83	1.0474
<b>Professional 1</b>	120	1.00	5.00	3.64	1.0273
<b>Professional 2</b>	130	1.00	5.00	4.02	.7873
<b>Professional 3</b>	114	1.00	5.00	3.98	1.0969
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	101				

Question 7 produced results that were significant for the overall purpose of this survey. The survey itself was designed to determine what type of images the respondents felt were most effective as historical records of the terrorist attacks. This question was asked in an attempt to determine what type of image the respondents felt comprised a meaningful documentation for the national family album.

The three professional images' mean response ranked from the upper portion of "average record" into the "good record" range. At the same time, the personal images ranged from the "good record" (with Personal 1 at 3.68) all the way down to between "not a good record" and "below average record" (with Personal 3 at 1.83).

These results show that, from the previous questions, the respondents had a good idea as to which images were professional. They selected these professional images as being a better record of the events than the personal images in a majority of the cases.

### 5.9 Question #8

*Does this photo trigger any of your own personal memories of the events of 9-11?*

1 = Not a memory trigger, 2 = Below average, 3 = Average, 4 = Strong, 5 = Very strong memory trigger					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Personal 1</b>	140	1.00	5.00	3.35	1.1248
<b>Personal 2</b>	117	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.1371
<b>Personal 3</b>	113	1.00	5.00	1.88	1.0276
<b>Professional 1</b>	122	1.00	5.00	3.01	1.0325
<b>Professional 2</b>	116	1.00	5.00	3.28	.9583
<b>Professional 3</b>	113	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.1735
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	106				

Question 8 starts delving into more personal experience with the events of September 11, 2001, than the previous questions. It was asked in an effort to determine how the respondents reacted to photography of that day and how they react when seeing those photographs after the events.

The results from this question correspond fairly closely to the results from previous questions. The professional images received mean responses that ranged between “average memory trigger” and “strong memory trigger” while the personal images followed the same results as before with Personal 1 being in line with the professional images and Personal 2 and 3 trailing behind. Personal 3 was the least likely to trigger personal memories for the respondents with a mean response of 1.88 which places it between “not a memory trigger” and “below average memory trigger.”

### 5.10 Question #9

*Does this photo produce an emotional impact?*

**1 = No emotional impact, 2 = Below average, 3 = Average,  
4 = Strong, 5 = Very strong emotional impact**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Personal 1</b>	137	1.00	5.00	3.15	1.0678
<b>Personal 2</b>	117	1.00	5.00	2.09	1.0135
<b>Personal 3</b>	110	1.00	5.00	2.26	1.2465
<b>Professional 1</b>	123	1.00	5.00	3.05	1.0469
<b>Professional 2</b>	114	1.00	5.00	3.36	1.0401
<b>Professional 3</b>	113	1.00	5.00	3.45	1.2464
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	101				

Question 9 is another used to determine the personal reaction the respondents had to images from September 11, 2001. Fascinatingly, the responses were not in line with previous questions.

The professional images stayed approximately in a range of emotional impact rating between “average” and “strong” but the results from the personal images deviated from the expected. Personal 1 remained in line with the professional images, but the ranking of Personal 2 and 3 was reversed. Personal 3 received an emotional impact ranking of between “below average” and “average,” probably due to a negative emotional response to the image. This assumption is backed up by qualitative responses to the survey, including one quote from an anonymous respondent. “...[Personal 3] angered me in the sense that it seemed almost like a tourist photo. When I think about 9-11 and all the people that lost their lives and the heroes that emerged, it seems almost like an insult to purposely take a photo of a smiling person with such devastation in the background.”

### 5.11 Question #10

*What is the likelihood that you would talk about this image in future discussions of 9-11?*

1 = Would not talk about this image, 2 = Probably not, 3 = Don't Know, 4 = Probably would, 5 = Would definitely talk about this image					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal 1	127	1.00	4.00	2.31	.8684
Personal 2	110	1.00	4.00	1.57	.7717
Personal 3	110	1.00	4.00	1.80	.9655
Personal 1	111	1.00	4.00	2.15	.8334
Personal 2	130	1.00	4.00	2.53	.7695
Personal 3	102	1.00	4.00	2.69	1.0047
Valid N (listwise)	91				

Question 10 was asked primarily as a follow-up to the previous questions to determine which images the respondents would most likely reference in future discussions about September 11, 2001. It is an attempt to see if there is a relationship between emotional response, professionalism and other criteria and the respondents' idea of what would be important to pass along to others.

While the mean ratings were lower than expected, they remained in approximately the same order as the previous questions' responses. The professional images received the highest mean ranking, ending up between "probably not" and "don't know" while the personal images ranged from "would not" to "don't know." The slightly higher mean response for Personal 3 is likely due to the respondents believing they would remember this image because of the unique impression it creates on the viewer as opposed to the other, more general, images used in the survey. One anonymous respondent said, "Many of the images are very similar to

those that I have seen, but they were not exactly the same. The photos, in general, did not capture the magnitude of the event. Most of the photos were either too close or too distant to capture the significance of the event.”

#### 5.12 Summary and Results

The results of this survey show that a sample of the student population of The University of Texas can detect the differences between professional and personal photography a majority of the time. This sample also believes, based on the survey results, that professional photographs are often more useful as a historical record of events.

The difference in results between professional and personal photographs is not always extreme and some examples of personal photography are seen by the respondents to be just as effective in conveying emotion and historical significance as professional images. In this case, the impact is not due to the profession of the picture taker, but the content of the image itself. If the image appears to be insignificant, the respondents did not see it as having importance in the historical record, while if it contained significant information, it was more likely to be seen as having importance whether it was a professional or personal image.

This survey shows that no matter the source of the image, if its content is deemed worthy, it can hold a place in the unique “American family album.” Even though, based on their responses to an optional qualitative survey question, the respondents did not have an emotional response to all of the photographs, the ones they said that they responded to least were also the ones that provoked the most

heated emotional responses. Thus, their recorded responses did not always mirror the true feelings they harbor for an event as emotionally charged as the attacks of September 11, 2001.

All of the images, no matter their original intended audience, in this case become important to all Americans as a way to remember what was happening in our country that day. Whether the image is simple or complex, the content still marks a moment in time of one of America's darkest hours.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions**

Professional and personal photographs from September 11, 2001, and the aftermath of the attacks can serve as simple historical documents from this one devastating event. When the viewer takes a moment to look a little more closely at the images of that day, the audience shifts away from the original, intended group and becomes the national family itself. The photographs shown throughout this thesis are all a part of the “American family album,” as are countless others. This unique family photo album becomes a personal historical treasure for any and every citizen who witnessed the events either live or via the mass media.

An analysis of my interviews with professional photographers shows what these people went through to create images that will stay with us for a lifetime. They brought out photographs that were not intended as entries into a family album, but when removed from their original context, they serve that purpose perfectly. The less refined amateur photographs become easier for the national family to personally relate to and are as much or more meaningful to this family album. The comparison of the two genres in the form of a quantitative survey of students from The University of Texas shows not only that the respondents often were able to recognize the difference between professional and personal photographs, but also that they could have strong feelings for certain images no matter who produced them.

There is an obvious, valid comparison between the images of September 11<sup>th</sup> and those of a typical family photo album because, while most images in those books are unprofessional, they are loved none-the-less by their intended audience. Most American families have photo albums depicting not only the good times but also the bad. They are valued much more highly than other genres of photography because they are personal to this family audience. The images created by both professional and amateur photographers on September 11<sup>th</sup> have become a unique memorial of both America's darkest day and its finest hour.

Over the course of my two years as a graduate student at The University of Texas, I have witnessed many events that have changed the world. From just two weeks after I started graduate school, when the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred, through the protests and eventual war on terror in Afghanistan and to the current times of the war in Iraq, it has all been brought to us live and in living color. Through television and radio broadcasts and photographs and news reports being transmitted back to the United States immediately upon their production, we have all had a chance to see things that no one outside of a war zone has seen before.

My studies in the realm of photojournalism allowed me an opportunity to delve into what was going on behind the cameras on many occasions. I have been granted interviews with skilled professional photographers, read countless articles and books about September 11<sup>th</sup> and discussed the events with the everyday people who just happened to be there with a camera.




These powerful events have completely altered what I expected to be studying while pursuing my degree and I have grown through my research experiences. The writing of this thesis has allowed me to reflect personally on all of the events and my experiences during these traumatic times. The one major thing that I have realized over the past two years is that every image has a lasting impact on someone. Even if the community as a whole does not feel that one single image is important, there will be someone who sees it as the most important image in their recollections.



The gallery presentation and book *Here is New York* is a very important collection of photographs for the “Family Album” of America because it allowed anyone to submit images for the set. Even the hundreds of images amassed there do not create a perfect historical unit as you have to then add in the professional works published throughout the world in the days and weeks following the terrorist attacks. There are also professional and personal images that have never been seen outside of the photographer’s personal circle which could be added to the album. There is almost no end to the number of images that could be added to this album and it will still not give the complete picture of what life was like on that day.

There is truly no way to completely describe in words, pictures, audio and video, exactly how the world was feeling on September 11, 2001. The best that can be done is to keep it forever in our memory through whatever means possible. In these highly technological days, there are more ways than ever to relive the events. The world will never forget what occurred that day, and Americans take comfort in the fact that the horrific acts brought out the best of us all.

## Appendix

### Photographs Used in the Survey

		
Personal 1	Personal 2	Personal 3

		
Professional 1	Professional 2	Professional 3

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## **Vita**

Brandon Wayne Bollom was born in Richmond, Texas on July 31, 1975, the son of Keith Wayne Bollom and Aimee Bollom. After completing his work at Brazos High School, Wallis, Texas, in 1993, he entered Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. He received the degree of Bachelor of Environmental Design from Texas A&M University in December 1998. In September 2001, he entered The Graduate School at The University of Texas.

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