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Raymond Hammond

Graduate College learner, stationed on Liberty Island, worked triage and guarded the Statue.



COURTESY RAYMOND HAMMOND

Raymond Hammond, a Graduate College learner who is a National Park Service ranger stationed on Liberty Island, was pressed into service immediately after the second World Trade Center tower was struck on September 11. "The plane flew right over my house and I got outside to see it right after it hit," Hammond says. He was sent to a triage center on Ellis Island where about one hundred "walking wounded" had arrived by boat. Immediately, Hammond boarded the next boat to help ferry more wounded from Battery Park—but no more injured came. The boat returned to Ellis Island, where Hammond and nearly 150 emergency medical service (EMS) workers spent the day frustrated at being unable to help and fearing the worst about the number of casualties.

"After several hours of waiting and watching, we all began to realize that people either got out quickly or they never got out," he recalls. "No injured meant no in-between, which hurt us all."

Hammond, whose doctoral studies stem from his creative side and focus on poetry, paints a surreal scene around Ellis and Liberty Islands during that initial 24-hour shift. "People were expressing the

whole gamut of emotions," he says, "and emotions are especially tricky for us law enforcement types." At one point, while on a marine unit, Hammond tried to wave away a boat near the Statue of Liberty. "They waved back and snapped their photos, but then decided they should hightail it when the shotgun came out," he says. On Ellis Island, police with rifles walked amidst the EMS workers. "We had reports of car and truck bombs, and could take no one for granted," Hammond says. He gratefully retired his weapon when he switched over to an EMS function.

A few nights later, around four o'clock in the morning, Hammond was reading in preparation for a class he would soon teach at New York University. His flair for creative writing is evident in a late-night e-mail dashed off to fellow learners:

"At my feet the bomb dog, Sheba, was asleep. Her handler, Steve, had laid his head on his desk for a moment and was snoring. I walked out for a patrol through dispatch, where one marine unit officer had passed out in a chair, and a SWAT officer was kicked back asleep with his machine gun across his chest, holding it like a teddy bear. As I stepped out, the other marine unit was quietly cir-

cling the island, cutting the flat, black water with its vigilant wake. The sergeant was standing watch on the stoop, smoking. There was nothing to say between us as we both cautiously looked skyward at the sound of another fighter jet passing overhead."

During his first trip into the city on September 19, Hammond was overwhelmed by the "unnervingly loud quiet" coupled with the posters of the missing hanging everywhere as a constant reminder of what he witnessed from Liberty Island. Still, he found signs of recovery already taking place. "The whole city came together in a very unconsciously quiet union, people working alongside one another without really talking or saying much—a lot of contemplation in everyone's hearts, and everyone taking care of business. This city is amazing for that," he says.

"The trip in was healing, though, as I had been on the island since September 11, working 13-hour shifts with nothing to do but watch the smoke rise from the void and protect the Statue like never before." ♦

—MARY BETH ORTH