

Where I was on September 11, 2001?
By Carol Lee Brunk (non-fiction)

On September 11, 2001, the start of the day had blue skies, sunshine and a wonderful cool breeze, no rain yet though it was monsoon season in Florida, where it rains on and off all day long. All Disney parks were open to guests with theme park tickets.

That morning my older sister and I got up, dressed in short outfits, ate breakfast (Mickey Mouse waffles with maple syrup). The All-Star Disney Resort buses, where we stayed, were parked out front of the building; we climbed aboard the bus to the theme park Animal Kingdom.

“Let’s go on the Safari.” We both agreed on the ride. “That was fun!” We both agreed again. It was warm out and we walked, looked around, and found Disney’s Tree of Life. “Look a fun movie!” Into the side of the building adjacent to Disney’s Tree of Life, we grabbed the 3-D glasses offered on the outside, walked into the semi-dark auditorium, sat down, relieved it was air conditioned, and watched a wonderful cartoon movie of life. The 3-D movie looked like we or anybody would be able to reach out and grab whatever was in front of us or them. At the very end of the movie, the grab if you could grab was a beautiful monarch butterfly. The symbol of life that blossomed into life’s beauty and celebration of new life.

“Wow,” that was great we both agreed.

“I got ‘a make a call at the pay phone collect, I’ll be right back.” My older sister turned away and walked over toward the pay phones.

“Ok,” I said. I walked around nearby and wondered why she needed to use a pay phone when she had her cell with her. The sun got hotter and the sky was blue, really blue without a cloud of rain. A light trail of white smeared the sky... jet(s)... maybe? It was not even a 5-minute call. I saw her walk toward me, said she called her husband, my brother-in-law. As she approached me, she informed in a low voice, “Somebody flew a plane into one of the Twin Towers in New York; one of the World Trade Center buildings,” with a blank look on my face and worry, she continued to inform me. “They’re gonn’a close the parks soon.” “They think it’s a terrorist attack.” “Let’s start walking toward the busses.”

“Ok,” I said. We started toward the buses. Worried. I was worried. We were nervous.

The large speakers in the Disney park went off loud, very loud, “DUE TO A NATIONAL TRAGEDY THE PARKS ARE CLOSED.” “PLEASE WALK CALMLY TO THE BUSES TO RETURN TO YOUR MOTELS.”

The announcement went off continually until boarded and after we boarded our bus to the Disney Allstar Resort where we had checked in the day before.

Upon the entrance of our motel room, my older sister flipped on the television. I sat on the end of the bed. News coverage of a replay of a plane hitting the first twin tower of the World Trade

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Center was shown quickly, then was instantly redirected to the news cameras and news persons that talked to everybody from the outside sidewalks below the burning building.

“What is that?” my sister asked in a panic and looked directly and got close up to the screen.

“What?” I asked and looked with her.

“Oh, my God!” “Those are people jumping off the building!” she exclaimed.

“Why are they jumping off the building?”

“I don’t know!”

“Why are they jumping off the building?”

“Why would you just start jumping off the building?”

There were 6 to 7 people at least that we watched on the television commit suicide that jumped. Then there were a few more. We sat there and asked a television screen why people jumped off the side of the building. We knew there were no way anybody would survive that type of fall.
Internal Panic of helplessness and no way to help!

Then, it hit the second plane, we watched it hit the second twin tower.

My sister left the room; she went to call her husband on a pay phone. She was not gone long. When she returned, we watched the first tower fall, people screamed, ran, some fell from the unbelievable catastrophic smoke mixed with building debris. Copy paper littered like floating feathers of confetti in the air of the aftermath. Buildings located next to the fallen tower had broken windows and structural building damage showed by those that coughed into the camera that tried to breathe.

We shut the television off a couple of times. I watched as my sister paced, then exit to call home to her husband again.

The second tower fell. *Internal Panic of helplessness and no way to help!*

My older sister informed me that her son got the flag out of the closet in the living room and placed in its holder on the front porch of the house, she tried not to cry. I just wanted to go home; I missed my cats.

Announcement from the television, “No travel for air, No ground travel...NO TRAVEL.”

We took a walk, got some laundry done, hopped up and down in the pool a little, and ate supper. It was the first day of our vacation together (theme park Animal Kingdom, the safari and *Disney’s Tree of Life*. We were scheduled to be there till the end of the week, and we wanted to go home to be with and near family. Chicago northern suburbs in Illinois were a long way from Orlando, Florida that day!

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We heard about the other two planes that went down later that evening. We checked the airlines, NO TRAVEL.

Disney announced in the lobby for those that arrived and those stranded, Disney would help with the extended stays – NO ground or air travel. Though it was not Disney's fault for the early theme park close our first day of vacation, my sister and I were given a complimentary theme park pass to use any time in the future, no expiration date, for either Disney location, Orlando, Florida or Anaheim, California; I never used mine, but gave it to a friend several years later.

Surprised...the parks were opened the next day with heightened security. No Travel still for air or ground. Disney's buses operated to go to the theme parks. For the next three days, we decided to visit a different theme park each day, every night we checked for air travel and ground travel, NO TRAVEL.

It was Friday morning, we checked the airlines all night long, NO TRAVEL for air. Ground travel was possible that day. "Let's get a rent a car and go home," my older sister. She looked up a car rental place and reserved a car. We took showers and packed. After we checked out, we took a curbside taxi to the rental car place.

Almost every car on the highway had a red, white and blue flag perched on its passenger window! Military vehicles in sand and dust color of camouflage ran up and down the roads that included the Appalachian area, not a public announced exercise! A lot of military vehicles marched as they roved! We stopped at a gas station; a huge grey hound bus opened its door and all military uniformed personal stepped off for a break.

Before we stopped at a restaurant much like Bob Evans, an enormous red, white and blue flag flapped and waved in the wind off the end of a huge wrecking ball crane...no good byes, I am here. We are here. The USA is here.

It was two days with one stop over at a motel on the way, late at night we arrived at my older sister's home in the northern suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. In the dark with the porch light on, a red, white and blue flag was on the porch in its holder by the front door. She asked if I would like to stay the night. I went home to see my cats.

On September 11, 2001, a lot of people started to die when the first commercial jet plane hit the first twin tower of the World Trade Center. My location and my older sister's location was in *Disney's Tree of Life* as we watched a 3D cartoon on how life revolves in the circle of life. At the end of the movie, we grabbed at the 3-dimensional space of life in front of us. We tried to grab the life of life we created in visual 3-dimensional form with glasses on while unknowingly others grabbed for their own life in a tower. If we were able to, we would have grabbed them in the towers- too soon for the circle of life in reality that day.