

## Middletown, America: One Town's Passage from Trauma to Hope

Gail Sheehy

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Fifty people never came home to Middletown, New Jersey, after September 11th. Wall Street fathers, young Port Authority police, single working moms, the beloved coach of the championship girls traveling basketball team. Three toddlers in one church pre-school lost their daddies. Dozens of widows, young and beautiful girls in their 20s and 30s, some still nursing newborns, watched their dreams literally go up in smoke in that amphitheater of death across the river.

Gail Sheehy traveled to Middletown shortly after the disaster and began in-depth interviews with many of the bereaved.

*Middletown*, *America* was written as the year progressed, following parallel and intertwining stories of selected individuals and their families. A mother who was doubly bereft when she lost her only son as he tried to fill the shoes of her absentee husband; the sole survivor in an office of 67 people who escaped the 88th floor of Tower 2 seconds before the floor was decimated.

Here are the fire-fighters, rescue workers and front-line public health volunteers, now training to be soldiers in this new war.

Of equal importance, however, is the way these very real individuals dealt with this disaster and the trauma that followed. *Middletown*, *America* is also a story of recovery and of the ways people finally learn to deal with seemingly insurmountable grief and an incomprehensible physical and financial disaster.



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