



Marguerite Webb

Parent

*Interviewed by Amelia Tavarnesi
April 6, 2015*

Marguerite Webb has lived in Westport for over 25 years with her husband Alec Head and their two sons, Tyler and Ben, who are now living on their own. Marguerite is an owner of J&L Orchids, which is located in Easton, Connecticut. On the morning of September 11, 2001, Marguerite was on a plane to Durham, North Carolina, for an Orchid talk.

Where were you on September 11, 2001, and what happened?

On the morning of 9/11, I went to the airport early in the morning from LaGuardia Airport in New York. I boarded the plane, flew to Durham, North Carolina, and landed around 8 am. Because my Orchid talk was occurring later in the afternoon, I decided to go check into my hotel. I remember checking in, going up to my room, and turning on the TV. At that point, only the first plane had hit, and I thought that it was some sort of movie. Quickly, I realized it was not a movie when the second plane hit. I then tried to call Alec, my husband, but it rang through. I called again, and I reached him, and told him that I was OK.

I remember afterwards, I visited Tyler at Duke University. We spent the day together, and we comforted one another. One thing I vividly remember was seeing the long lines at the payphones. Not a lot of people had cell phones, so people had to nervously wait to call and see if their family was ok.

For a week, all flights were canceled so I could not fly back home. Eventually, I decided to rent a car and drive back home. I did this because in my mind, when something terrible happens like 9/11, family wants to be together. I felt that by driving home, I was accomplishing something rather than just waiting.

I also remembered that my younger son, Ben, who was a sophomore at Staples, was very upset. He knew his mother was on a plane that morning, and without having a cell phone, he could not easily reach me and know I was safe. But he had good support from friends, teachers, and guidance counselors.

What did you know about terrorism before 9/11 and how did that change?

Mainly, I knew about minor instances. There was the USS Cole and the Oklahoma Bombing, but the worst I can remember is the 1993 World Trade Center parking garage bombing.

What changes did you experience?

I think the biggest change was the increase of security. For example, I used to have an Orchid Show at the winter gardens every year in New York City, where I used to be able to drive our van up and drop supplies off. After 9/11, we were required to park away from the building and carry our supplies to the building for security reasons.

What were some of the your thoughts during and after the tragedy?

This was something we and the rest of the country had never seen before. Which is why I originally thought it was just a TV show. The thing about it was I never thought it could actually happen and impact us, but it did.

Something I still felt months later was a fear to drive over the GW Bridge, as it was vulnerable to attacks. Also, I felt an immense fear of flying for a couple months. But a few months later, I needed to go to an Orchid Show and I had to fly there. I was nervous, but it went smoothly. 9/11 did not stop me from flying, however I am conscious while flying.

How did you talk to your kids about 911?

I don't remember exactly what I said to my children. We were talking about it, but we were mostly comforting one another through this tragedy.

How did Staples and the Town of Westport respond?

I remember that they both responded very well. I felt a strong cohesion that was extremely supportive. For example, there were many candlelight vigils all over town and a concert at Staples. Many locals were extremely affected, and I remember two brothers from the area perished in the Twin Towers. Therefore, everyone was supporting one another.

Did it change your perspective of Staples and the Town of Westport?

No, because I was very pleased with the town of Westport's response. The responses made me feel comforted and in a good place. Having known some people and having seen the cars at the train station that were not picked up that night were just a few of the things that really shook them, but everyone in Westport came together, no matter what religion, backgrounds, or impact.