

• Chapter Nine •

“If Not Today, When?”

For the record, Barney Calame maintains that he did *not* cry when his close friend and boss, Paul E. Steiger, finally contacted him by phone early in the afternoon of September 11. He does acknowledge that he was emotional.

I was really broken up. I was really worried. I was afraid he was dead because the last report had him outside the [Journal's offices] directing traffic. And now it was 1:30 or 2:00. And so the truth was, I was afraid he was dead.

Calame and Steiger traced their friendship back to 1967 when Calame worked in the Los Angeles bureau of *The Wall Street Journal* and Steiger, three years younger, was a 25-year-old cub reporter in the paper's San Francisco office.

The two met and periodically collaborated on stories when Steiger was loaned to Los Angeles as a temporary fill-in. Both men, who were the most junior members in the bureau, hit it off, as did their wives socially.

Calame and Steiger traveled different paths to *The Wall Street Journal* in New York and, as it were, to Calame's apartment on September 11.

Two years after joining *The Wall Street Journal*, Steiger left the paper for the Los Angeles Times. He spent a total of 15 years with the Southern California daily, including seven years covering economics in Washington D.C.

Calame transferred from L.A. to Washington to cover labor, where he, Steiger, and their wives again saw each other socially.

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From Washington, Calame did a stint in Pittsburgh as the Journal's bureau chief, and eventually returned to L.A. to run the bureau there.

When Steiger completed his time in D.C., he also returned to L.A., to become the Times' business editor. Once again, the move put him in a head-to-head rivalry with Calame.

Whether working for the same newspaper or competing dailies, the two men remained good friends. When Steiger was promoted to managing editor in 1991, he asked Calame to be his deputy managing editor, the position Calame still held on September 11, 2001.

Calame and his wife, Kathryn, a professor of Microbiology and of Biochemistry & Molecular Biophysics at Columbia University's medical school, lived in a so-called "Classic Seven" apartment on the Upper West Side.

Their pre-war unit consisted of a living room, a formal dining room connected to the kitchen through a glass-paned door, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a maid's room and bath just off the kitchen that he used as a home office.

As the attacks on the World Trade Center evolved, Calame's goal was to find Steiger and drive a group of editors in his car over the George Washington Bridge into New Jersey and make their way south to the Journal's administrative offices in South Brunswick. He knew that South Brunswick was the fallback facility that had been designated for just such an emergency, and emails he monitored that morning from his colleagues made it clear that Steiger — before he went missing — was encouraging everyone who could get to South Brunswick to do so.

A couple of other Journal staffers who lived nearby met up at Calame's apartment and planned to catch a ride with him.

At 11:45 a.m., Calame emailed the paper's senior staff, subject line "Getting Organized."

I'm at home in Manhattan and haven't had contact with Steiger, Pensiero, or Hertzberg. Bill Godfrey says Pensiero is enroute to SB. Here's what I do know:

We are setting up a newsroom in S.B. Building Three. If you can get there safely, please go.

Editors in Manhattan who can't get to SB because of closed bridges and tunnels should plan to work remotely until transportation works....

Please don't send any reporters into the area south of Canal until we know it's safe to report there.

More info as soon as possible.

The Calame apartment was reasonably well-suited to serve as a satellite "office," given

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the limits of remote technology at the time. His unit was spacious. His shiny mahogany dining room table was easily converted to a workstation capable of accommodating his colleagues and their work sprawl. He had a laptop and a desktop computer, an inkjet printer, two phone lines, a functioning Blackberry for sending and receiving text messages, and a decent internet connection.

The early arrivals at his apartment included his fellow deputy managing editors, Steve Adler and Dan Hertzberg, and Page One editor, Michael Miller. They'd be joined a bit later by Joanne Lipman, who first stopped at home to hug her husband and children, whom Distler had picked up from school.

The four men were in frequent contact with Jim Pensiero and the other senior staffers who were setting up the makeshift newsroom in South Brunswick; Marcus Brauchli, the national news editor, who was coordinating coverage from his home in Brooklyn; and Alan Murray, the D.C. chief whose team was responsible for the much of the front-page content and major inside stories.

When the phone rang, just past 2 p.m., it seemed as if everyone froze.

Hello?

It's Paul.

Paul?

Paul Steiger.

We thought you're lost. I thought you might be dead.

Well, I'm not lost.

At least that's how Steiger recollected the beginning of his phone conversation with Calame. Then, according to Steiger's version, which he later recounted to *The New York Times* and others, Calame broke into sobs.

Steiger very well might have been crushed by the World Trade Center fallout or taken seriously ill from the lungs-full of nasty smoke that he inhaled. He escaped the conflagration covered from head to toe in soot. Sound in body, he had witnessed death and carnage that he still wishes he could unsee but never will.

Unbowed, Steiger made it to his Upper East Side apartment that day and was now checking in, ready to resume command of his widely dispersed crew of reporters, editors,

designers, and production staff.

The George Washington Bridge had closed to traffic. The surface streets in upper Manhattan were gridlocked with vehicles trying unsuccessfully to escape the city, so Steiger vetoed any attempt he and his fellow editors might have made to drive to South Brunswick. Instead, he declared, they would work from Calame's apartment.

After a shower and a change of clothing, Steiger hailed a cab and arrived at Calame's apartment. Originally, Calame planned to drive to the East Side to retrieve Steiger.

But I crashed our car in the gridlock on Central Park West, parked it, and walked back to our apartment for the rest of the evening.

The senior newsroom management of *The Wall Street Journal*, each of whose name appeared daily on the paper's masthead (except for Michael Miller), was now laboring on the most critical news day of their careers not from their well-appointed 9th-floor, state-of-the-art offices in Lower Manhattan, but from a dining room, featuring floral wallpaper, an antique rug, potted plants, and a wall shelf displaying some of Kathryn Calame's antique plates and glassware.

Those who could fit, at times, squeezed into the maid's quarters — teeming with shelved file folders and back editions of the Journal — to read Calame's desktop computer screen over his shoulders or sit at the keyboard to correspond with their remote colleagues.

In truth, there was only so much the six editors could accomplish. Had it been a regular weekday, at best, they would have been only peripherally involved in putting out the September 12 edition, leaving most decisions and tasks to the hands-on teams that functioned perfectly well without their direct involvement.

By the time the Calame apartment brain trust convened and was fully engaged, roughly 2:30 p.m., many of the most important decisions had already been made by the triumvirate of Jim Pensiero, Marcus Brauchli, and Alan Murray, and their assignments were well along the way to being completed.

Everyone in the Journal universe was greatly relieved that Steiger had risen from the presumed dead. His reappearance was a rare piece of good news on an otherwise dismal, emotional day.

Steiger, Calame, Lipman, Adler, Hertzberg, and Miller fielded whatever questions came their way and reached out to various editors and others to offer their help. Calame's son, Jon, made a pizza run, keeping the six well-fueled.

Steiger was in particularly close contact with the South Brunswick contingent because the team there had the responsibility for editing, laying out, and getting the content to

the printer.

The decision was made that the next day’s paper would be printed in only two sections, running a combined total of 34 pages. The second section, *Money & Investing*, would feature a black-and-white AP photo of the two stricken towers. Running photos in the Journal was a rare occurrence in those days.

One reason the September 12 edition was so thin is that Steiger’s counterparts in the paper’s advertising sales department pulled many of the scheduled placements, feeling it would be distasteful to include them. Most of the ads that did run were house ads for the Journal or its Dow Jones siblings, including *Barron’s* and *The Wall Street Journal Online*.

The decision to use a six-column front-page headline was Steiger’s. He had been stubbornly pushing for it from the moment that morning when it became apparent that the planes that hit the World Trade Center were deliberate terrorist actions, not some fluke airline disaster.

There was one big problem, however. The tightly designed front-page template for the Journal had no elasticity to accommodate Steiger’s desired two-line, all-caps headline running from left-to-right across the entire top of the first page.

Indeed, multiple editors in South Brunswick pleaded with Steiger to drop the headline idea. They were short-staffed as it was, and no one there felt comfortable trying to redesign the classic Wall Street Journal front page on the fly.

Steiger was unmoved.

If we’re not going to put a banner headline on the paper today, when are we going to do it?

Enter Joe Dizney. He had stayed behind in his Greenwich Village apartment when Lipman pushed on.

Years later, he would be formally diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder dating back to that morning. At the moment, he was glued, almost hypnotically, to his sofa, staring at the endless loop of television coverage of the two towers’ collapse.

It eventually dawned on Dizney that his building had an unobstructed view of the Trade Towers site from its rooftop, so he made his way up and absorbed the grim scene.

Downtown is just such a mess. I have to do something.

Trying to reconstruct his actions almost two decades later, Dizney was unsure whether

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the idea of walking to the paper's midtown advertising offices to lend a hand was entirely his, or whether someone, perhaps Jim Pensiero in South Brunswick, had requested that he go.

The advertising office, a four-minute walk from Times Square, was at 1155 Avenue of the Americas, near the corner of 44th Street. It was located on the fifth floor of the 41-story, granite-clad high-rise above the distinctive, hexagonal street entrance to PINK, the upscale shirtmaker and retailer.

Dizney was familiar with the office and some of the Journal ad executives who worked there. He first began with the paper as a freelancer and helped design some of its special Monday sections from the facility.

While the editors in South Brunswick had been resistant, when Steiger put the request to Dizney to prepare an instant template to accommodate a six-column headline, the veteran design director was sanguine.

Sure. No problem.

Dizney was fluent in the Journal's typography. He served as the lead designer of the paper's *Weekend Journal* and was, as noted, deeply immersed in the "Project 2002" make-over of the entire paper and the planned introduction of the *Personal Journal* section.

Among the challenges he faced when rejiggering the front page to make room for a two-line, six-column headline was lowering the tops of the actual columns and discarding the uninterrupted top-to-bottom "silos" that normally confined each column.

The September 12 front page broke the mold. It contained six separate stories, two beginning below the fold; the two-column *What's News* menu; a special two-column box at the bottom of *What's News* indexing the 9/11-related stories that appeared inside the paper; and a small box at the bottom of the fourth column, letting subscribers know that delivery of their papers might be delayed, but the entire September 12 edition would be available for free at WSJ.com. The front page also ran a two-column infographic illustrating where the hijacked planes originated and where they crashed.

Dizney commandeered a standard Apple Macintosh computer from the ad sales office. He booted up QuarkXPress, a desktop publishing application used by amateurs and professionals alike, and rapidly created a couple of iterations for Steiger and the cohort at Calame's apartment to review. Steiger was pleased.

I looked at it, and it was great.

Dizney, perhaps overly modestly, says the instant redesign was a snap.

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His new template served as a roadmap for the editors and layout personnel in South Brunswick. Once he faxed them the design and included specs such as the correct point size and spacing, it was a breeze to use.

The only remaining challenge was deciding what the six-column headline should say and ensuring that the phrasing fit the allotted space. That duty fell to the sextet of editors gathered at Calame’s apartment.

The five men and Lipman realized they were crafting the heading not only for the next day’s edition but also for posterity.

Just shy of 60 years earlier, Barney Kilgore and William H. Grimes, then the Journal’s two top editors, wrestled with a similar decision: What to declare in the Journal’s front-page, six-column headline on the day after Pearl Harbor.

Kilgore and Grimes used a three-line, all-caps banner, with a heavy focus on the business and financial ramifications.

U.S. INDUSTRY’S SOLE OBJECTIVE: ARMS PRODUCTION SPEEDUP;
CONGRESS PREPARES TO ACT; TAX BILL WILL BE RUSHED;
N.Y. STOCK EXCHANGE TO OPEN AS USUAL TODAY, SAYS SCHRAM

[The identity of the page designer who in December 1941 stepped up for Kilgore and Grimes has been lost to time.]

Steiger, who has always struggled to accept credit for most of his accomplishments without sharing it with one or more colleagues, attributes the September 12 headline to all six editors. They settled on a hard-news approach, foregoing any allusion to the probable business and financial consequences.

I participated in writing the headline. But nearly everybody in that room and maybe somebody in South Brunswick had a hand in that headline. I think we each wrote one word.

Maybe. Maybe not.

News accounts from 2001 and 2002, when memories were fresher, credit Steiger alone as the final arbiter of the headline’s wording.

Three days after the 9/11 attacks, *The New York Times* published a story by Felicity Barringer, its media reporter, describing the role that Steiger and the others at Calame’s apartment played in producing the Journal’s September 12 edition.

And it was there that they wrote and rewrote the headline, finally agreeing on “Terrorists Destroy World Trade Center; Hit Pentagon in Raid With Hijacked Jets” — Mr. Steiger’s version.

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Steiger himself, as quoted in 2002's "running toward DANGER," bared his role.

I said I wanted a six-column headline on Page One, which we very rarely do. We wrote the head. I don't remember what it said. They humored me and said they liked mine the best, so that's the one we went with.

Putting the day in perspective was complicated for the senior editors gathered at Calame's apartment. Given what they had personally witnessed and experienced, it was especially difficult for Steiger and Lipman.

On the one hand, September 11 was undoubtedly the most emotionally wrenching day of their professional careers and perhaps of their lives.

But it was also one of the most rewarding. They had done what great journalists are meant to do. They set aside personal considerations and overcame enormous obstacles to pull together a quality newspaper that shouldn't have been possible under the circumstances.

Thanks to adrenaline, and in Steiger's case, plenty of Diet Coke, they found the clarity and energy to complete their tasks.

It was after 11 p.m., and the presses at the paper's 17 print plants were rolling when Lipman bid her colleagues adieu and made her way home.

Before retiring, she wrapped all the gifts she had purchased for Rebecca's 11th birthday, including the two magnets she bought at Lechters. And then, exhausted though she was, she baked her daughter a birthday cake.
