

Ceremony Remembered Three Court Officers Who Perished

By Jonah Bruno
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

ADAMS STREET — There were no ceremonies, no presentations or speeches at Brooklyn Supreme Court on Friday to mark the third anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Instead, officials set up a small memorial to the lost court employees and their family members, and lit three white candles, which burned all day.

A large space, normally filled by x-ray machines and metal detectors, was cleared, and two glass cases of photographs were set up in front of a makeshift wall that had pictures of the Twin Towers and the city's skyline.

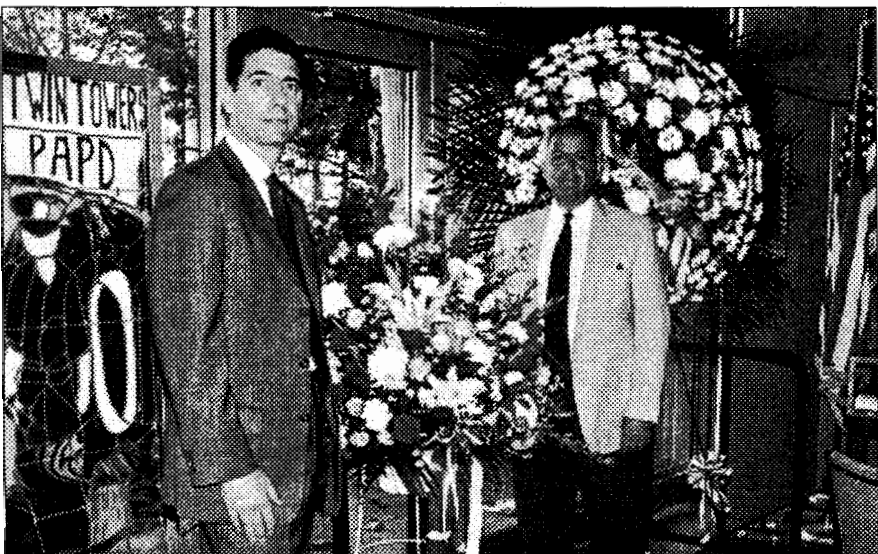
Among the thousands who died in the towers that tragic day were three Manhattan court officers who gave their lives trying to save the lives of oth-

ers, even though court officers are not typically considered first responders. Several Brooklyn Supreme Court employees lost family members as well.

"We try to set a meditation area, where people can come to remember and show respect for our fellow employees," said James Imperatrice, chief clerk, Criminal Term. "We try to do something special."

The memorial is erected annually at the courthouse, the glass cases brought downstairs from the eighth and 11th floors where they spend the rest of the year.

In one glass case are pictures of the three Manhattan court officers who died in the terrorist attacks: Senior Court Officer Mitchell Wallace, 34; Capt. William Thompson, 51; and Senior Court Officer Thomas Jurgens, 26. The other case has pictures employees' relatives lost in the attacks and pictures of memorial services held



Chief Court Clerks James Imperatrice (Criminal Term), left, and Ed Volpe (Civil Term) took part in the 9/11 memorial ceremony at Brooklyn Supreme Court.



Court officers from Brooklyn Supreme Court also took part in a 9/11 memorial ceremony at St. Andrew's Church, Manhattan. At center is Captain Mike Maglione.

Eagle photos by Mario Belluomo

in their honor.

Between the two cases are three candles: one for the three fallen officers, one for Brooklyn Supreme Court employees family members, and one for everyone else who died as a result of the attacks. A small row of chairs was set up before the cases.

"I don't know anybody that doesn't have a family member or a friend who died that day," said Edward J. Volpe, chief clerk of the Civil Term.

Volpe's brother, a firefighter for more than 20 years, lost several friends and colleagues in the collapsing buildings, he said.

"I don't think anybody outside the city could fully understand how deeply this affected everyone in the city to this day," said Volpe.

Immediately after the towers fell, when people began walking across the Brooklyn Bridge in droves, the courthouse staff set up a triage center in the building and brought all its water coolers outside and lined them up along Adams Street, Volpe said.

Courthouse personnel also gave directions to people unfamiliar with Brooklyn's streets, he said. Most wanted to find

the Long Island Railroad and go home.

"As it turned out, we did not need the triage center, as there were not that many casualties who made it across the bridge," Volpe remembered.

Gerard Suijker, a court officer from the Netherlands, visited the memorial at Brooklyn Supreme Friday. He said his first trip to New York, in April of 2002, was for a pipe and drum march up Sixth Avenue. Initially, the march was intended to raise money for cancer research, but after the events of the previous September, the funds collected were split with the families of victims of the terror attacks, Suijker said.

This was his third trip to America, and he came to write a story for his union's magazine on court officers, he said.

"I was surprised what court officers were doing at the Twin Towers," said Suijker. "Firemen, policemen I could understand, but why court officers?"

**Senior Court Officer
Mitchell Wallace, 34
Capt. William Thompson, 51
Senior Court Officer
Thomas Jurgens, 26**