

ONE OF THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS the mayor faces is finding a place where the families of more than 5,000 victims can come to get comfort and information. Governor Pataki offers him the National Guard Armory on Lexington Avenue. The mayor spends hours there on Thursday, comforting family members of victims like 23-year-old Brooke Jackman. Three months earlier Jackman had started working as an assistant trader for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 104th floor of the north tower at the World Trade Center. She's missing, along with hundreds of other Cantor Fitzgerald employees.

Now her family gathers around a table at the armory and holds hands in a circle with the mayor. "I don't think the city realizes yet what it's going through," he tells them. "Fifteen minutes before the collapse, I was standing in front of the World Financial Center with the fire department's team, running the evacuation. We left to go to the command post. I took the fire commissioner with me and left his deputy there. He's dead now. The fire commissioner and I are alive. We left the department's priest there and he said he'd pray for us, that he always prays for us. He's dead now too."

As the Jackman family leaves, the mayor removes his glasses and rubs his eyes. He has barely slept since Tuesday. "The pain is just immense," he says. "The pain is unbelievable. And do you know what the worst part is? These people are going to live with this the rest of their lives."