

PlanDome CC is located on Long Island in Manhasset, N.Y., about 15 miles from lower Manhattan. On a clear day from the top of the course's fifth hole, superintendent Tom Nelson could see the World Trade Center's twin towers rising majestically above the New York skyline.

Unfortunately, the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, was the start of a sunny and clear day in New York. Nelson watched from the top of the fifth hole as the World Trade Center collapsed into a plume of smoke and fire.

The tranquil setting of the golf course was a strange place to watch the most violent attack ever on America unfold. It was even more haunting for Nelson because he knew many of the course's members worked in the towers.

Several members of PlanDome CC were in the World Trade Center that morning, and many of them escaped the buildings before they crumbled. But six members did not get out in time. Nelson remembers them fondly. They weren't just members of the club, he says. They were *members* of PlanDome's extended family, where everybody knows everybody.

"This is the nicest membership you can imagine — anywhere," Nelson says, noting the handshakes, waves and even pecks on the cheek he often receives from members when they spot him on the course.

It's hard to believe a year has passed since the terrorist attacks. Sept. 11, 2001, is still fresh on many peoples' minds, especially people like Nelson who were close to the tragedy.

Nelson mourns for the surviving children of the PlanDome members killed in the attack. One member had a 5-day-old baby. Nelson worries about the members' families and their financial state.

"We all take it for granted that you're rich if you're a member of a country club," he says. "It's not that way at all."

Understandably, PlanDome CC and other golf courses and clubs in the New York area have had difficulty getting back to normal. Rounds have increased at PlanDome from last fall, but rounds were next to nothing after Sept. 11.

"This place hasn't recovered yet," Nelson says, noting that the lockers of the members killed re-

Finding Strength, Hope — a Year Later

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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main unoccupied as a tribute to their lives. "I don't know if it ever will."

John Carlone, certified superintendent and past president of the Metropolitan GCSA, which includes members from New York-area golf courses, says superintendents don't talk much about 9/11 at chapter meetings. Like Nelson, many of the superintendents work at clubs that lost members in the attack. But Carlone says the clubs have tried to put 9/11 behind them.

"Everybody is moving forward, but nobody is going to forget," he says. "We will *never* forget. We think about it every day."

Carlone says he senses that life at his course, the Meadow Brook Club, is slowly getting back to normal because members are back to complaining that the greens are too slow, the rough is too long and the bunkers have rocks in them. Carlone laughs at his observation. He never realized he'd find comic relief in golfers and their incessant demands.

Nelson, Carlone and many of us took a deep look inside ourselves after 9/11 to try and draw something meaningful from the tragedy. We came away with two reaffirmations — two intangibles that help define our lives. Sept. 11 reminds us how fragile life is. And it reminds us how much our families mean to us, especially when we heard from so many people who lost loved ones so unexpectedly. In the end, we found strength and hope in those reaffirmations.

"Not that I wasn't before, but I'm even more tickled with my children," says Nelson, speaking proudly of his two young daughters. "I pick them up more and kiss them more, even though I did those things a bunch before."

You know where Nelson is coming from.

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