

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

We Will Be Together: Cape Cod, Massachusetts resident Lora Brody recalls the day the distance between her and her grandson suddenly grew greater than a grandmother's love could bridge.

Tony Kahn:

Hi everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories*, from WGBH in Boston. The twin towers of the World Trade Center fell on 9/11/2001 and today we're still arguing about what should take their place. Some people say that it needs to be a kind of structure that recalls a tragedy, that's a memorial, but that also offers a vision of hope and peace in the future.

Others say that that empty space that got punched into our skyline is already full. That the instant those towers collapsed a solid wall of fear and anger reared up in our hearts that's made it even harder for us to see beyond our own borders to what life is really like all around the world. Well, for each of us who lived through that day, there's of course a personal story to tell as well – a sort of before and an after 9/11 – and maybe until we hear all those stories, then the full story what did happen that day will never be told.

Today's Morning Story comes from one of those people; she's a writer and a grandmother who lives near Boston, Massachusetts named Lora Brody. We call her story: *We Will Be Together*.

Lora Brody:

September 8th, 2001: Dear Ben, I love your first day of school photo. You've grown so tall since your grandfather and I saw you last Thanksgiving. I bet you're the only boy in Taipei who wears a Red Sox hat to nursery school. I'm counting the days until you come. I'll be waiting for you when you get off that airplane. I'll give you a big hug and a million kisses and then we'll go home. I'll fill you up with turkey legs [Lora's words begins to echo eerily] then jelly beans... [a very loud solo violin begins to play, soulfully], Love, Grandma

[Music continues, softening as Lora's words continue]

September 12th, 2001: Dear Ben, In the room where I am writing there is a map of the world that fills the entire wall. I can see Taiwan (light green) and Massachusetts (burnt orange). The turquoise ocean cradles your coast and flows across the map to touch mine and in between are places where maple trees sing a rainbow death song. The Northern Lights dance across black skies and mountains wear cloaks of snow all year long.

I am sad that I won't be seeing you on Thanksgiving. You will come to me when your parents think you will be safe and I will come to you when my need is powerful enough. To slay the dragons of terror, I now associate with things I used to love; suitcases, fat envelopes of plane tickets and blue leather passport covers. I will come when I can look at an airplane and see just an airplane.

How I will miss taking you to Provincetown to Grandma's ocean where the bright cold polishes your cheeks just like rosy plums. I will miss the solid weight of your body in my lap, feeling the hardness of your head under my chin. Smelling your hair and sweet pie sticky-mouth and fingers. I will miss hearing the way you turn Chinese into English as quickly as car lights flick from low to high beam.

"Grandma! You look," you command pulling on my sleeve, "The blanch dog is sleeping, the pearl bird is eating a banana."

[Soulful violin continues to play] Yesterday I picked up a photo of you that had been forgotten on top of a sunny shelf. You were blowing at a dandelion, your cheeks puffed, your eyes squinted closed against the afternoon light. I had just taught you how to make a wish before using your breath to send the seeds sailing across the emerald grass. Each a tiny ship destined to get the attention of either some disgruntled gardener or a little boy who believes in wishes, just like you. But the colors had disappeared from the picture the way the sun's slipping below the horizon drains color from the sky. Just the way I feel you are slipping away from me.

Then I turned the picture over to find that the image was as clear and bright as the day it was captured and that I had been looking at the back side of the paper which had somehow absorbed part of the front's likeness. You were there all along.

Men following orders born from insanity can do unimaginable things, turn airplanes into missiles, smash buildings, smash people. But a grandma filled with love and hope can build a bridge of words that are able to fly over that blue water until you and I can do it ourselves. [music intensifies] And then, we will be together.

[Music continues and fades]

Tony Kahn:

That was today's Morning Story from Lora Brody: *We Will Be Together*. Gary Mott, where were you that day?

Gary Mott:

I was coming into work and I walk right by *The World*, the international news program...

Tony Kahn:

Hmm,mmm.

Gary Mott:

...and as you can imagine *The World* was all abuzz and one of the reporters there, said to me, you know, "Did you, did you hear?" And then I looked up at *CNN* on the TV screens and I knew.

Tony Kahn:

I had that day off. I was going to see my mother who is in a nursing home in New Hampshire, so I heard the news on the radio about 8:40 in the morning. I heard about the first plane hitting and

by the time I got to her nursing home the second tower was collapsing on television. This was a place where mostly people who are quite old, live kind of in isolation, you know, you pass by their open rooms and you see them sitting in front of their television sets generally or even alone staring off into space in, in their beds.

That day people were in each other's rooms watching the news together. It was amazing how small the world got that day. When I went to New York the next day to go to Ground Zero with my friend Mark Grashow, who's done a piece or two for us on, on *Morning Stories*, New York was a, a village. Everybody was on the same wavelength in a sense and yet I heard a lot of personal stories. I talked to a lot of people that day and they all had their own "before and after" to talk about and we're gonna play some of that tape next week. We'll have a chance to hear some of their stories too.

Gary Mott:

My brother was about to get on a plane in L.A., bound for New York. I had to call and ...

Tony Kahn:

Ohhh, my God.

Gary Mott:

... to make sure that he was okay. He fortunately was still at the, at the airport, when I called him in LA.

Tony Kahn:

Boy. When, when I went to the nursing home one of the nurses there had a brother who was in the Army and they don't let people know when the Army is flying someplace generally even in peace time. All she knew was that he was leaving from Boston and might be headed to the West Coast, so she didn't know at that point if perhaps he had been on one of those planes. Boy, did that bring it home too.

Gary Mott:

Yeah, definitely. My wife and I, you know, we had very small kids in the house at that time and we were very concerned about protecting them from...

Tony Kahn:

Whatever.

Gary Mott:

Whatever!

Tony Kahn:

Yeah.

Gary Mott:

You know, from knowing about this event, from needing to explain it to them because it's just...

Tony Kahn:

Mmm.

Gary Mott:

... you know, it, it would be beyond their comprehension. So it was very much not spoken about. Until another accident, another crash, within the week. I don't recall what flight number it was but it was also in the, a plane bound...

Tony Kahn:

Yeah, it was in the Burroughs.

Gary Kahn:

...for the Virgin Islands.

Tony Kahn:

Yeah

Gary Mott:

...it just went down in flames.

Tony Kahn:

Yes.

Gary Mott:

And I was reading about that and my daughter was at the kitchen table with me and I read about, you know, finding the bodies and finding a guy with his infant daughter in his arms and I just started bawling. That was really my first release of emotion.

Tony Kahn:

Mmm, hmm.

Gary Mott:

And it was right there and my daughter immediately got very concerned...and, you know, we spoke a little bit about the sort of state that all of us were in whether we knew of anyone who was a victim of the attacks or not.

Tony Kahn:

Everybody, I'm sure has their own moment where all of a sudden they felt that icy finger touch them and they knew that what had happened had happened to them as well, even if they didn't know anybody who'd been there. Those are the stories that I wish could be collected somehow. That would be so much a part of the history of that period, a chance for people in the future to relive what it's like to have such a profound before and after, in your life as a, as a nation. As a people.

So we'll be back next week with Chapter Two I guess, on, on 9/11 and for today and for, we hope, for many weeks to come we'd also like to express our, our gratitude to Ipswich, a leader in

file transfer software. I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H dot com, <<http://www.ipswitch.com>>. Check 'em out if you'd like to know more.

Gary Mott:

And we have a website as well: <wgbh.org/morningstories>. Give us a visit. And also send us an email at <morningstories@wgbh.org>.

Tony Kahn:

See you next week.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Lynn Relyea

Note from Liz:

This is one of the few shows I had not listened to before. I think it's so fitting that it be the 50th of the transcriptions, not only because the prolific Lynn did the transcribing, but because the show itself is so representative of *Morning Stories*. Deeply thoughtful expressions of love and something all of us can find connection with (centering on an important subject), followed by the kind of discussion by Tony and Gary that it seems most of us listen to *Morning Stories* for as much as the actual story.