

Valerie Dorr, Principal's Secretary

They swooped in and turned our lives upside down. "Please sign this so that we can put a tap on your phone line." "We need to be able to search these rooms on Tuesday and nobody can be in them. Make sure everything is left unlocked." "We need to have a list of everyone who is invited to be in the Media Center faxed to the White House." "We are going to need three rooms for staff during the visit, in this office we need to have the desks cleared off on Friday." "Can you move the furniture out of this area?" "Fox News called and we need to install 49 phone lines" My head was swimming. How were we to get all of this and everything else done? New names, new faces. From Treasury, the Secret Service, the White House...THE WHITE HOUSE!!!! Which one is Matt and which one is Mike? "No, we can't confirm that the President is coming to Emma E. Booker" (When can we say that he is?) "Pool camera? I'm sorry, I don't know what you're talking about --who did you say you were with?" "There are some guys in suits who look like they are Secret Service and we wanted to shoot some video of them." "I don't think that would be a good idea." "Hi, I'm a children's author and wanted to donate these books to your Library...and please give this to President Bush. (Why haven't we ever seen you here before?) What happened to attendance, School Improvement Plan Reports, Payroll, INSTRUCTION???? "Can I talk to you about that on Wednesday?" The pile of mail on my desk climbed to 8 inches.

Tuesday morning September 11, 2001 6:30 am. A mist is in the air. The campus is swarming with men in suits and earpieces. Against a gray sky, they look like silhouettes. Federal Marshals, Sheriff Officers, men and women in gray fatigues opening file cabinets and shining their flashlights. "You can't come in here--I have to search those purses." "We need to see inside the display cabinets in the Media Center--do you have the keys?" What a beautiful dog! Hard to believe it is trained to sniff for things you don't want to know about. "I saw you on TV last night!" "We're all wearing navy blue!" "When are you going to open the security screening? --I have a pool of substitutes waiting for assignments." Then everyone was in place. The room was buzzing with anticipation. "You won't believe this, a plane has hit the World Trade Center--it's not a joke". Cameramen and reporters whipped out cell phones and rushed to the one room where there was a television and started videotaping the TV images. The word spread around the room.

They swooped in and turned our lives upside down. The chart about reading was moved aside. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a difficult moment for America. I, unfortunately, will be going back to Washington after my remarks. Secretary Rod Paige and the Lieutenant Governor will take the podium and discuss education. I do want to thank the folks here at Booker Elementary School for their hospitality." "It's a great day at Emma E. Booker Elementary, how can I help you?" "No, we haven't had a bomb threat.....No, I'm not lying (I hope)." In the background the TV is projecting images of the burning World Trade Center, Pentagon and smoldering wreckage outside of Pittsburgh. "It's a great day at Emma E. Booker Elementary, how can I help you?" "No, we are not closing school early". "If you want to sign your child out early you may". "It's a great day at Emma E. Booker Elementary, how can I help you?"

Planes plummet.

Buildings plummet.

Spirits plummet.

Stocks plummet.

Patriotism soars.

"They are all out of flags".

They are all out of flag poles".

"Where did you get your ribbon?"

Faxes to school advertising merchandise:

Flag T-Shirts--Special--\$4.79 per

100 Flag pins--\$2.00.

God Bless America.

Gradually, we get back to our routines. The mail is all processed. The gifts left behind are sent to the White House. The Media Center is slowly put back to its original state. But nothing is normal. They swooped in and turned our lives upside down.