The building evokes the murder and dispersal of the German Jews, and thus the destruction of the culture that gave meaning to these artifacts. This is not a poetic reverie over time's passage; the building refuses to make sense of the Holocaust.

The question of preserving the ruin of the south tower will probably be settled less through aesthetic and philosophical debate than through politics and logistics. Architect Bart Voorsanger, who is advising the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey on what objects and building fragments might be saved from the wreckage for use in memorials or archives, points out that the fragment almost certainly cannot stand through the entire cleanup and reconstruction work which extends seven stories beneath the street. And tidy disassembly, storage, and rebuilding would be highly expensive and time-consuming.

Position: Each structural column weighs some 1,700 pounds per linear foot. As for politics, early polls of those directly affected by the attacks—families of victims and downtown community organizations—show a marked distaste for the whole idea. Ray Gastil of the Van Alen Institute, working to create a framework for the memorial building process, says, "Of the ones we've spoken to, the overwhelming majority is absolutely opposed to using a ruin."

While many in New York's design community have spoken in favor of preserving the ruin, they may not be in a position to decide. In the wake of the much-lauded process that created the memorial to the Oklahoma City bombing (which was led by a 350-person team dominated by families of the dead), the design process in New York will very likely have powerful citizen involvement. That will mark a major shift in our reckoning with the atrocity. We first saw the ruin as a backdrop to heroism, with rescue workers as figures in that landscape. Images of firefighters and rescue workers pushing past exhaustion to save those who could and respectfully disinter those who couldn't first pushed the ruin into popular consciousness.

The role individual mourning has played in the creation and use of recent memorials will be strongly influential here. In the temporary tributes at Columbine High School, and in the gifts left at Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, mourners personalized and democratized grief and memory. The inexorable regularity of Lin's sunken black-granite wall—which can be read as an unearthen ruin—is complicated by the individual offering placed by the names of fallen soldiers. Group memory and personal tribute intermingle. In New York, we find parallels in the missing persons posters clustered at multiple locations around Manhattan, widely referred to as the catastrophe's first true memorial. The posters established the magnitude of lost life while recognizing the victims as individuals in a way the ruin of the south tower never could. The NYPD's approach to the attack, which involved booking each death as an individual homicide, and the short biographies of victims published daily in the New York Times echo this sentiment. This modern form of public, individual grief over collective death is a more potent signpost toward a World Trade Center memorial than any simple ruin.

The Specialist

Charles Harper does a job no architect would envy.

BY JACOB WARD / PHOTO: JONATHAN WORTH

> REBUILDING On April 10, 1979, the city of Wichita Falls, Texas, was hit by a tornado. Wichita Falls sits in the rolling plains section of Texas, part of what meteorologists call "Tornado Alley." The city, roughly 13 miles long and about a mile and a half wide, had felt its share of windstorms before. This tornado, however, was a multivortex F-4, a mile across, and impossibly ferocious.

"We call it Terrible Tuesday," says Charles Harper, an architect and one-time mayor of Wichita Falls. Twenty-five thousand people lost their homes that day, and nearly 50 people were killed. Harper had some experience with disaster-relief work before Terrible Tuesday. After responding to a string of disasters, culminating in a three-day hurricane that battered Corpus Christi in 1970, he was called upon to create a disaster program within the Texas Society of Architects. But the Wichita Falls tornado was the worst sort of crash course in devastation. Harper and a team of 15 architects sorted through the rubble of thousands of homes, assessing damage, fighting with insurance adjusters, and generally trying to put the city back on its feet.

Since then, Harper, now the chair of the AIA's national disaster response team, has embarked on a terrifyingly challenging second career. When not running a practice in Wichita Falls, "I go to about three or four major disasters a year," he says, ticking off his recent visits. "There was the Oklahoma City tornado last year, this last week was a tornado in Cordell, Oklahoma, and there was that flood in Houston." Harper receives no pay—the AIA compensates him only for his airfare. In exchange, Harper travels to affected areas and trains local architects to act as damage inspectors. "I show them how brick falls off, how a 2-by-4 can break through trusses, how the roof is about to fall," he explains.

Harper divides the aftermath of a disaster into five stages: the emergency stage, which ends when the dead are buried; the restoration period, when the economy gets going again; two phases of reconstruction, in which buildings and related urban projects are replaced; and finally the creation of a memorial, typically five years afterward.

In 30 years of responding to disasters, Harper has learned more than anyone would ever want about the psychological damage a disaster does to the inhabitants of a city. "People are always traumatized, and they do things they wouldn't normally do," he explains. "We find that murders and rapes and child abuse and all the other bad things people do— that all quadruple, typically."

These days, Harper prefers to travel with his wife in their motor home rather than fly, and he finds it important to take well-prepared weekends and recuperate. "I'm a very emotional person. It's not unusual for me to shed a tear or two at a site," he says. In September, "after a FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] meeting near the Pentagon, the other folks were all going down to the crash site, and I had to say no." And although he's been in regular contact with the state and city AIA presidents in New York, he says, "If I had gone to the site, I would have just broken down."