This is my final issue as the editor of Traumatology. I will discuss this fact and my tenure as editor at the end of this editorial. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, it is the third in a series on campus trauma, beginning with Virginia Tech (Figley & Jones, 2008). The second special issue focused on New Orleans’s Tulane University (Figley & Marks, 2008). As with the previous two, the present issue provides a forum for members of the university community to discuss the trauma of 9/11 from both personal and professional perspectives. They have remarkable stories and insights. They are also inspiring.

Their stories remind me of my own experiences responding to this cataclysmic event as the first team of Green Cross responders led by my wife Kathy Figley. We were having breakfast at the Lunch Box, after attending my first Parent Teacher Student Organization at Saig High School as President. “A plane just flew into a building in NY,” she said when I returned to the table after parking the car. We watched, transfixed in that little restaurant the tiny television mounted in a corner. Within minutes Kathy suggested, “We need to get to the Green Cross office, we need our traumatologists to be ready when we are called.” As she predicted, in 2 days Green Cross (Figley, Figley, & Norman, 2002) had received a formal request for services from a local union (32BJ SEIU) who sustained considerable loss of its members working in the Towers and surrounding buildings and the responsibility for caring for the survivors and the victim and survivor families. The Union’s Manhattan office was and is 101 Avenue of the Americas with 800 headquarters employees and witnessed the 9/11 Attack from their offices. As noted elsewhere, the deployment went well and provided the kind of emotional support and structure needed during those darkest days (Figley & Figley, 2002). In addition to the achievements of the Green Cross was the collaboration among colleagues in New York that resulted in this special issue and a number of scientific contributions (e.g., Boscarino, Adams, & Figley, 2001; Boscarino, Figley, & Adams, 2003).

Three things stand out for me personally. First was the unexpected calm we found when we arrived midday the Sunday following the attack. It was a beautiful fall day with everyone going about their lives with normality and with an extraordinary display of civility unlike the typical, busy New Yorker. And then we began to see the fliers of missing family and friends feared killed in the attack. Hundreds of fliers everywhere, but especially where many people would likely see them (Figley & Figley, 2001).

Leadership is for me the second thing that stood out from the 9/11 catastrophe over the decade since. After being involved in trauma and disaster studies most of my 30+ years I have had the opportunity to witness disaster resilience leadership. New York’s Mayor Rudy Giuliani and first responders immediately stand out. However, there were the unnamed nurses, physicians, and other professionals who tended to the injured despite the obvious distractions, as well as inventing and leading the production of new and better procedures for helping survivors—both in body and soul.

This special issue is full of excellent examples of leaders who outperformed expectations; the leaders coped with not only those testing moments but also well beyond 9/11 by the kind of values and ethics they were demonstrating. Someone who demonstrated leadership but did not receive as much widespread recognition were the college presidents, including NYU (this issue) and Florida State University where I was a professor at the time. FSU President Sandy D’alemberte and former Law School dean immediately spoke out the need for all faculty and students to do their best to contain and dissipate any hostility toward Muslims, emphasizing that they also died in these 9/11 attacks. Dr. D’alemberte was among the few voices among the country’s leaders calling for such action, though he would be joined by others within weeks. It was during those early days when there was considerable fear and calls for revenge.

The final thing that stood out for me personally was the amount of fear that was everywhere, including my home town of Tallahassee, Florida. For example, I presented an educational workshop that discussed the Green Cross efforts in New York, the services provided, and offers of the same services to any employee who might need stress management. The workshop was located in the Capital Building, and I was invited by the State Senate staff who reported widespread fear about their personal danger because they worked in a 22-story building where Governor Jeb Bush worked. Jeb Bush was the brother of U.S. President George W. Bush whose election was won in part because of his brother’s help. An entire state government was in jeopardy because of predictable media coverage and the endless showing of clips of the jet plans flying into the World Trade Center twin towers.

As I noted at the start, this will be my final issue as editor of Traumatology. Fortunately, the new editor, currently editor-elect, is Brian Bride. Dr. Brian Bride is a celebrated scholar at the University of Georgia where he specializes in scholarship focus on traumatized populations, including social workers.
working with high-stress populations including mental health and substance abuse service providers. He has a particular interest in studying traumatic stress/compassion fatigue in human services professionals and is the developer of the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. For this and other work over the past 5 years he received the University of Georgia’s highest honor for a scholar: The Creative Research Medal for outstanding research and creative activity.

Professor Bride’s tenure as editor begins October 6, 2011, as mine ends. Traumatology emerged as a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal of innovations in the study and treatment of trauma in 1995. Although the date of April 24, 1995, was set months earlier as the journal prepared to go online as one of the first of its kind, it happened to be 5 days after the bombing of the U.S. Federal Building in Oklahoma City. It was the same event that led to the creation of the Green Cross (Figley, 2003; Figley & Figley, 2002) because after a needs assessment many of us who studied disasters as trauma knew domestic terrorism was a game changer in our field and that we need to be better prepared to respond to such events with the best people and tools possible. It was with that spirit that the journal began (see Denny, 1995) and continues with the publication of this special issue.

I want to thank the members of the editorial board of Traumatology who helped select the new editor and provided excellent consultations over my 16-year tenure as founding editor. Thanks to all our many hundreds of reviewers spending thousands of hours of free service in the field to help SAGE and our editorial team do the important work that enabled us to understand and help the traumatized. Finally, thank you, as reader, for caring enough to read these words and the thousands of words that filled pages of this journal for so long, so long.

Charles R. Figley
Editor

References