

# 9/11 Memorial Treated Like 'Disney Attraction'

Show some respect.

That's the message family members of those who died in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center have for tourists they say are treating the National September 11th Memorial like a "Disney attraction."

One week before New Yorkers will gather to mark the 11th anniversary of 9/11, the New York Post reported that visitors to the year-old memorial are treating the somber site as a playground or a picnic area. The newspaper said visitors have been seen splashing water from its two huge waterfalls to cool themselves off and have placed their children's derrieres on the bronze engraved names of the dead.

In a letter to Memorial President Joe Daniels, the head of the the FDNY EMS Retirees Association said she saw visitors acting "like this was a park or playground."

"People laughed and took pictures smiling, and so many people leaned on the tablets with all of my friends names engraved in them, holding Starbucks cups, like it was a kitchen table," wrote Marianne Pizzitola.

A relative of one victim wrote to Bill Doyle of the Coalition of 9/11 Families that a tourist "spilt coffee all over my son's name . . . after she arose from sitting on the names," the *Post* reported.

"They're taking pictures -- very happy, They could be in Times Square," Mike Burke, whose brother Billy was among the first responders who died that day, told PIX11.

Although visitors are directed to the memorial's rules of decorum when they reserve their passes, some have been booted for boorish behavior. In June, a group of junior high school students from Brooklyn were kicked out of the memorial after throwing trash in its huge fountains.

Not everyone objects to picnics at the site. The *New York Observer* condemned the "disrespectful, even deplorable behavior" described by the *Post* but said, "bemoaning the picnics is going too far. When the World Trade Center site is eventually finished (assuming it ever will be), there will be a brand new eight-acre park in the heart of downtown — a place, like so much of Manhattan, that is starved for open space. It is a destination to rival Bryant Park or Union Square.

"The centerpiece of this space will be the memorial. It deserves all due deference, but it should not be treated as a cemetery. Thousands of bodies may be interred on these 16 acres, but just as children frolic on the National Mall, the Vietnam and Korean war memorials are no worse off for it. The same goes for the 9/11 Memorial."