

# Hi-Riser

SERVING THE CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITIES OF FORT LAUDERDALE, POMPANO BEACH,  
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## Piece of history travels through condo areas

### Photographer taking banner to New York on Sept. 11

By **CHRISTINA SANTARPIA**  
STAFF WRITER

Michael Joseph could not shake the feeling he got when he walked past the World Trade Center with his camera in October 2000.

So, as the sun began to fade, the Fort Lauderdale photographer trekked back a block and snapped his last five frames of the two towers in front of the historical Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church.

Now, he's turned that image into a banner, and is taking the banner from

state to state for police stations, fire stations, schools, hospitals and churches to sign and send their love to victims and families of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Joseph plans to present the banner to the people of New York City on Sept. 11 of this year.

### Like a dream

"I was in New York City on a photography assignment to make photographs of landmarks," Joseph said with a starry look in his eyes. "[And] it was the end of my second day. ..."

It was Oct. 19, 2000, and Joseph had just finished photographing the Brooklyn Bridge. A dark blanket was beginning to settle in the sky.

It was time for him to go home.

He strolled down the city streets, tired, his mind wandering. He walked past Saint Peter's Church, the oldest church in New York City.

He was almost to the subway. But something was nagging him. Something he couldn't place. He turned around.

With his last five shots, he captured the church's cross hovering in the sky between the two towers of the World Trade Center. An image he had no idea would no longer exist less than 11 months later.

"All the way back home it was still on my mind," said Joseph, who wound up not using the photograph in his landmark exhibit. But the image



**PIECE OF HISTORY:** On Oct. 19, 2000, Michael Joseph of Fort Lauderdale took a photo of the World Trade Center Twin Towers in front of the historical Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church.

Submitted photo

stuck with him.

Then, tragedy struck.

"Coming out of the

shock of Sept. 11, I know now I had a signature

■ **JOSEPH** continues on 29

## JOSEPH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

image," said Joseph, who said he struggled with what to do with the picture in the weeks following the attacks. He said he didn't want to sell the image, to exploit it or to gain off peoples' pain.

But he wanted to do something.

"We knew we wanted to do something more of a tribute, like a memorial," Joseph said.

"I wanted to share it. I wanted it to be personal."

Joseph and his girlfriend, Paige Obrig, decided to go back to New York City. They began taking copies of the image to police and fire stations all over New York.

The reaction they got was overwhelming.

"We went through a whole period where he didn't want it to be a part of the journalistic realm," said Obrig. "Finally, it just came about. Most of the fire stations downtown still have the poster up."

Some people, however, felt the image of the Saint Peter's cross was saying something about religion.

"There's always that extremist," said Joseph, who explains to people that the cross is a landmark and he didn't intentionally insert it in the picture.

"But we braced ourselves for that. It's out of compassion for our country. I was completely moved by the historical events that happened."

### Another journey

Joseph knew that his journey with the image wasn't over. He still wanted to do more, to share the image with more people.

**"The photo in this mass display of color [signatures] would be an artifact. So, it would be like a giant love letter."**

#### MICHAEL JOSEPH

FORT LAUDERDALE RESIDENT,  
PHOTOGRAPHER

He took the image and put it on a 9 foot by 12 foot banner and began bringing it to public places. He brought it to the Las Olas Riverfront, the Fort Lauderdale beach and Miami's South Beach. With colorful markers in hand, he asked people to sign the banner.

Joseph is now traveling from Florida to New York, stopping in each state along the way, until he reaches New York City on Sept. 11. He laid the banner on the state capitol steps in Tallahassee on July 15.

After reaching New York, he plans to take the banner throughout the

rest of the country, adding 5 foot by 7 foot pieces to the banner as needed, until he has been through every state. The end product is expected to be around 40 feet by 60 feet.

"It's a grassroots effort," said Joseph laughing. "But it's not grassroots 1967, it's grassroots the millennium."

Joseph would like to donate the banner to the Smithsonian Museum when it's complete, as a relic for future generations to cherish.

"The photo in this mass display of color [signatures] would be an artifact," he said. "So, it would be like a giant love letter."

He is also petitioning to have the image created as a commemorative U.S. postage stamp.

"It's our gift from Florida to bring it to New York," said Joseph. "This is what's in my heart."

## Inside



### Local photographer captures image of World Trade Center.

PAGE 3

CLASSIFIEDS	31
CONDO LAW	5
OPINION	8
SOCIETY ACCESS	13