

I Was At The Cafe

A Personal Account of the Pike 7 Run Starbucks Cafe and Connection to September 11, 2001 -Patrick Rael

The September 11 tragedy has been seared into everyone's memory. But there is a detail I am aware of that doesn't quite seem to add up to the events as they have been reported. As the evidence was gathered and shared on TV, the terrorists were reported as being extremely frugal with their money. There were reports the terrorists didn't merely take their credit cards with money to their death; the news reported they transferred the small balances of their cards back to somewhere so it would not be lost, even though small amounts. These were not high-class terrorists throwing money around. They were very frugal. High-class and expensive things would attract attention, so it made sense they would be low-spenders and avoid being noticed. But that doesn't match up with something I saw, because by sheer accident it turns out I was there on the day the terrorists got their marching orders at the Cafe. One detail flies in the face of what was reported. This extra detail could provide a clue as to perhaps who was in the loop. But first I have to give an account of how I pieced together after the fact that I was there, for at the time I merely had two pieces of information that I certainly would have simply forgot except one was highly unusual and the other was bright Red and attention getting.

Some weeks or months after the Sept. 11 attack in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania, it was reported in the TV news that the terrorists had some kind of significant meeting at a Starbucks in the DC area. I recall the news story saying that location was a ***Starbucks in the Beltway of Washington, DC***. With high certainty I recall the TV news report said that was an ***important meeting*** at the Cafe some short time before Sept 11. It didn't say how many days, weeks nor months before Sept 11 that meeting happened, just "before". I clearly recall "in the Beltway" was reported, or at least that was how I interpreted the news report. I thought how unfortunate that cafe was in the Beltway, because I frequented a Starbucks right outside the Beltway and if those terrorists frequented my cafe, I might have noticed something and could have warned authorities. I recall the news story said there was an adjoining ***exercise gym behind the cafe***. That sealed it for me, because I recalled no Gym at my Starbucks cafe. Case over, no connection. Or was there?

Now, back to the Cafe in the year or 2 years after Sept 11, 2001. Something was bugging me about my cafe and Sept 11. Perhaps my subconscious mind figured out something that my conscious

mind wasn't yet able to acknowledge, so **I decided to rule out my Cafe** and lay it to rest. On that day I exited the cafe through the side doors so that I could verify no Gym was back there. It was a rectangular strip mall building with a space and another building and surely the Cafe must go all the way to the back. I pushed through both glass side doors, the parking lot was to the left, so I looked right. To my surprise and astonishment, far, far back about 40-60 yards was an "appendage" attached to what I assumed was a simple rectangular building with front-facing stores. The sign on it said it was a Gym! Uh-Oh! Red-Alert!

It was almost as if that appendage was an after-thought addition to a simple rectangular building, or perhaps it was a loading dock at one time. A semi truck trailer could conceivably back up right along the side of the cafe of the building all the way back to that appendage, and had it been a loading dock it could unload hidden as it was 40+ yards back there. Perhaps long ago this was a supermarket and that was its loading dock, I suspect so. But it wasn't a loading dock now. The sign said "***** Gym". I thought, "Wow, this Cafe has a Gym in the back just like that other cafe the news reported on, except the news reported that it was inside the beltway." This cafe in Tyson's Corner is just outside the Beltway by about 1 mile. I thought, "What is the chance that this actually was the Starbucks with the Gym in the back, but that the news report was inaccurate about being inside of Beltway to just outside the Beltway". That got my mind thinking. I started exploring my memories over the next months.

One memory I have at this Cafe came to mind. This would align perfectly with the news reports of the terrorists meeting at the Cafe that had the Gym. This seems to be that eventful day the news reported that the terrorists met for something of "importance". Here is what I recall of that day at the Cafe, pieced together from memory 1-2 years after that day by two key factors that stood out. I have some details as I was seated next to the wall on my left facing the back of the Cafe. I recall I got my coffee and then I was seated. At that time I was using my green notebook to write my ideas old-style. I hadn't yet cut over to laptops and computer writing. A group of about 10 people of a language I couldn't identify were seated in an extended cushioned bench on one side with small tables and chairs on the other about 10-15 feet from me. As I do a little bit of people-watching, I quickly sized them up as Middle Eastern without them knowing I was sizing them up. That is, I didn't attract their attention, and why would I since my focus was on my notebook and deep thought. They were talking, conversing, a normal background chatter of a language I did not understand. They were not all listening to one person talk, but had about 3-4 conversation in parallel. I got used to that background noise, and that is key: constant background chatter from the group because that background noise was about to be shattered.

At some point I got up and went to the condiment station. The layout of this cafe is I entered from the two front glass doors. The entire front is glass looking out to the very big parking lot. The

station of condiments is to the right near the entrance but not at the entrance when coming in. While at the condiment station something catches my eye from the left: a bright red convertible (RC), Mercedes (98% certainty of that brand), enters the parking lot from the left. It almost passes in front of the Cafe and turns away down a parking lane and pulls right into a parking slot. No cars block the excellent view, empty parking spaces.

A man exits the car, about 5' 8"-ish. He is very thin, no more than 160 lbs. His complexion is about the same as the group of about 10 in here. I size him up as also Middle-Eastern too. He's walking with a bounce in his step, and his face expresses happiness. This is a happy person, maybe he just got a raise to account for this happy face and bounce, or maybe he just got a new red Mercedes convertible, probably that. This is definitely an up-scale convertible, attention-getting Red, saying Look At Me Everyone, attracting attention. This is one piece that is out of place NOW after I analyze this, but not out of place at the time. At the time, no attack had yet occurred so there was nothing to indicate out of place. But I did like that car. It was memorable enough for me to store it in my memory. Had the color not been red, I surely would have ignored it and missed this detail.

So far, nothing is out of place. Ten-ish people are chit-chatting in a Cafe and a nice looking red convertible just pulled up and that person is approaching straight to the Cafe. I return to my work, deep in thought, background conversation ongoing from the group. I don't even notice if the RC person ordered, I'm deep in my work. Then it happened. BAM! Pure silence! One second there is chit-chat, the next is absolute silence from them all. I can't estimate the time between RC entering the store, nor even if that person joined the group of 10. What I noticed is that as they all stand up simultaneously and head towards the side door. I don't notice if RC person went with them. There is no chit-chat, not 1 word, just complete silence and neutral faces. No conversation continuing while heading out, just abrupt silence. Not a smile nor opposite, just stand up and walk left across my field of view to the side door as if in quiet escape under silence. The thought that crossed my mind at that instant is why I remembered this at all, "That's how the revolution starts." And I promptly returned to my writing.

It's an unusual thought, not something one reaches every day or year or even lifetime. It seemed to reach my consciousness from the depths of sub-conscious background chit-chat of people talking about whatever, casually, because I wasn't actively listening to their chatter, only in deep thought with that background noise. Because it's an unusual thought, that's why I remembered it. It's like when you are in a forest with birds chirping, walking a trail, then all of a sudden you notice all has gone silent, no birds, nothing, you notice the change from normal forest sounds to silence.

Those are the facts. Now, after the fact, looking at all the data I recall, I will draw some deductions. I separate this from above as those are the facts. Now I attempt to interpret them with

some guesswork to make all the data points meaningful and rational. First this location is 1 mile outside the beltway, so close that a news reporter could easily be forgiven for calling it “inside” the beltway, or maybe that news person was told it was inside for who knows what reason. I deduced the red convertible person was delivering the news to the team that the attack is on, and the shock of the delivery of it in a public Cafe with people present caused them all to go silent and quickly exit the Cafe. I deduce the messenger was probably not even in the loop of what was happening, but was merely a human messenger of a “message” that had to be delivered, else electronic eavesdropping might catch them. I also deduce that the originator of the message who knew the meaning of the message wouldn’t likely deliver it, else they get caught up in the web and arrested if that cafe group was under surveillance. No, better to send the message with some dupe who doesn’t even know what the “message” means nor the nature of the team that he’s delivering it to, thus no reason to not take the attention-getting red convertible.

That dupe drives an attention-getting red Mercedes convertible, doesn’t even sense danger, meets the group he is supposed to deliver it to, surely doesn’t know the nature of who the group is he is delivering a message to, and then delivers that message right inside the Cafe with people present, me present. He surely doesn’t know the meaning of the “message” so why hide it. It was probably a coded message the messenger couldn’t guess. But the terrorists know the meaning, that’s why they are caught off guard, and silence is required as they rapidly but calmly exit thru the side door. If this deduction is correct, then the messenger has to be accounted for. That is what I deduce is the meaning of what happened on the day I was at the cafe to explain that unusual rapid silent transition exit and the fine attention-getting red convertible.

Now I’ve sat on this story long enough, time to clear it from my plate. I should point out concerning the issue of whether my failure to mention anything at that time would have made a difference. After watching the hearings on Sept. 11 some years later with the NSA director, there was a discussion of a security expert the summer of 2001, unsure if he was in the govt, who was sounding some pending doom alarm before 9/11. I recall it was mentioned he went to New York and setup in the World Trade Towers, where he died in those attacks. I recall the NSA director said about his attempts to raise the alarm about some danger of some kind , “I told him to shut up!”. So, suppressing alarms was the norm at the time before the attack, so I’m consoled NOW that had I mentioned anything THEN it would have amounted to “shut up!”. Curious how the NSA director, whose job is to chase these threats and alarms down with teams who are expert in that, was instead telling the person sounding the alarm to “shut up!” That doesn’t add up IMO.

I must digress how I came to be in Virginia. I lived in Reston, Virginia, which is about 10 miles outside the Washington DC beltway on the road towards Dulles Airport. I was a Software Engineer at AOL, back in the glory days, part of a crack-team of SAPI (Server API) Tools Development. The

highly scalable POD server back-end complexes used our tools to scale and distribute the load of up to 42 million users simultaneously online. Our tools team made the tools that the admins used to manage the actual software that serviced AOL user requests. At that time it was cutting edge to have that many users simultaneously active. On September 11 morning, I recall I was in my office busy at work when someone came through the hallway and yelled quite loud, “A PLANE CRASHED INTO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER!” I brushed it off, crashes into skyscrapers have happened before, even into the Empire State Bldg. A few minutes later, “ANOTHER JET PLANE CRASHED INTO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER!”. Somewhere in that confusion either before or after that 2nd crash was another report that “A JET PLANE IS FLYING LOW IN THE AREA” or something to that effect. That would be the jetliner that crashed into the Pentagon. I recall I didn’t stop working, we had deadlines, but after some minutes I made my way down several hallways to a room with a TV where many had gathered to see the live footage of the Twin Towers in New York. When I arrived, there was only one of the two towers visible, and a lot of gray dust in the air. I asked where was the other tower. “It just collapsed!” someone replied with disbelief. A few minutes later, the 2nd tower collapsed in on itself. Everyone present was in disbelief, but we all knew by now this was an attack.

A second digression is why I frequent the cafe? I was there almost every evening after work at AOL. I’m a solitude type of person, INTP in the Myers Briggs test (Scientist), and one of my favorite things is spending time at the cafe to work on impossible projects out of my own sheer curiosity. One thing I had been working on since 1991 was a new model of the Universe, a lower-level of physics than was currently taught. I work on these projects quietly, “under the radar”. Another thing was I had recently finished the M1-Architecture for a Sentient Android’s mind in 1999. I had also just started that year 2001 on solving Labor, that would eventually turn into UTOPIA Androia. That is what I like to do at the Cafe, let my mind advance as far outside the box into theoretical technical space. I excel in that space. I’m not at the Cafe to socialize. But I do have an observant nature, that’s the Scientist in me. These two digressions establish why I was in the area/state at that time and why I was frequenting the Cafe.

The drawing diagram below is my memory of the layout of the Cafe and its location in the bigger building of other stores. I enter through the two front doors, go straight ahead to the blue counter and order my drink there. I go to my seat which I colored green. Sometimes I’ve sat at the cushioned sofa (here colored red), but this time I go to my other favorite colored green seat. Some times I sat often at either circled table (colored blue). The condiment station (green) allowed one to stand and look out the front glass on the entire front, so I easily saw the red convertible approach from the left through all that glass. The group of 10-ish sat at the comfortable high-back bench sofa with many little tables in front and chairs opposite. I recall that area they had was all seated. The restrooms are at the right back corner rectangle near the circle table.

If corroboration is possible from other people in the Cafe that day, my information should match up with theirs. I don't know if others in the Cafe noticed the red convertible. I was a loner at that time so I wasn't making friends with all present. I recall one barista had a very big afro hair style and it was very stylish, but I wasn't on first name basis. She might have been present that day, but not 100% sure. If anyone there remembers the quiet guy writing in his green notebook, that's me. I still have that notebook but don't use it anymore. I have my notes written by date prior to 9/11, but none mention anything of that event. I'm not there to write about what is happening around me, I'm writing about advanced outside-the-box ideas like the M1-Architecture for an Android's mind, Physics, solving Labor, tornadoes, etc. I did email this account in 2020 to a major East Coast news paper, nothing came of it. I corrected a few typo dates in it, maybe that's why it went nowhere, and added more detail here. I would be happy to give this account to authorities if asked.

Now, is it possible this wasn't the Cafe mentioned in the news reports? If the reported cafe was in fact inside the Beltway, that would refute my story. The Gym supports my account, but many cafes can have Gyms so it isn't hard proof. My crystal clear recollection of that group of Middle Eastern men abruptly getting up with 100% silence and grave looks on their face lacking all emotion is striking, but not proof. The red convertible and happy person stand out as orthogonal, that would seem to detract from a connection, and could be unrelated. It's possible a different person like the leader of the group came in and gave their team the message, except you wouldn't do that in public unless you are amateurs. The convertible guy as duplicitous messenger of nothing of importance to him makes the most sense why he had no secrecy but instead the opposite attention getting car. But he couldn't be in the team, they were reported as being very frugal and such a car isn't frugal, therefore merely messenger person. But messenger person from who?

Lastly, I sat on this for a long time because in the 8 years after 9/11 there was a pattern of Rendition Protocols, where anyone in the world could be quietly disappeared with no accounting. When I pieced this account with my deductions to account for Red Car person, I couldn't figure out that connection. If there was more to this person, something secretive that tracked back to something or someone who needs secrecy, someone still in power perhaps, then my account would open that up, and if I was on the wrong side of the them there was the chance of being rendited. Now, 20 years later, those chances are less and I'll take that chance.

Starbucks, 2001, at
Pike 7 Plaza Shopping Mall
Tysons Corner, outside DC Beltway.

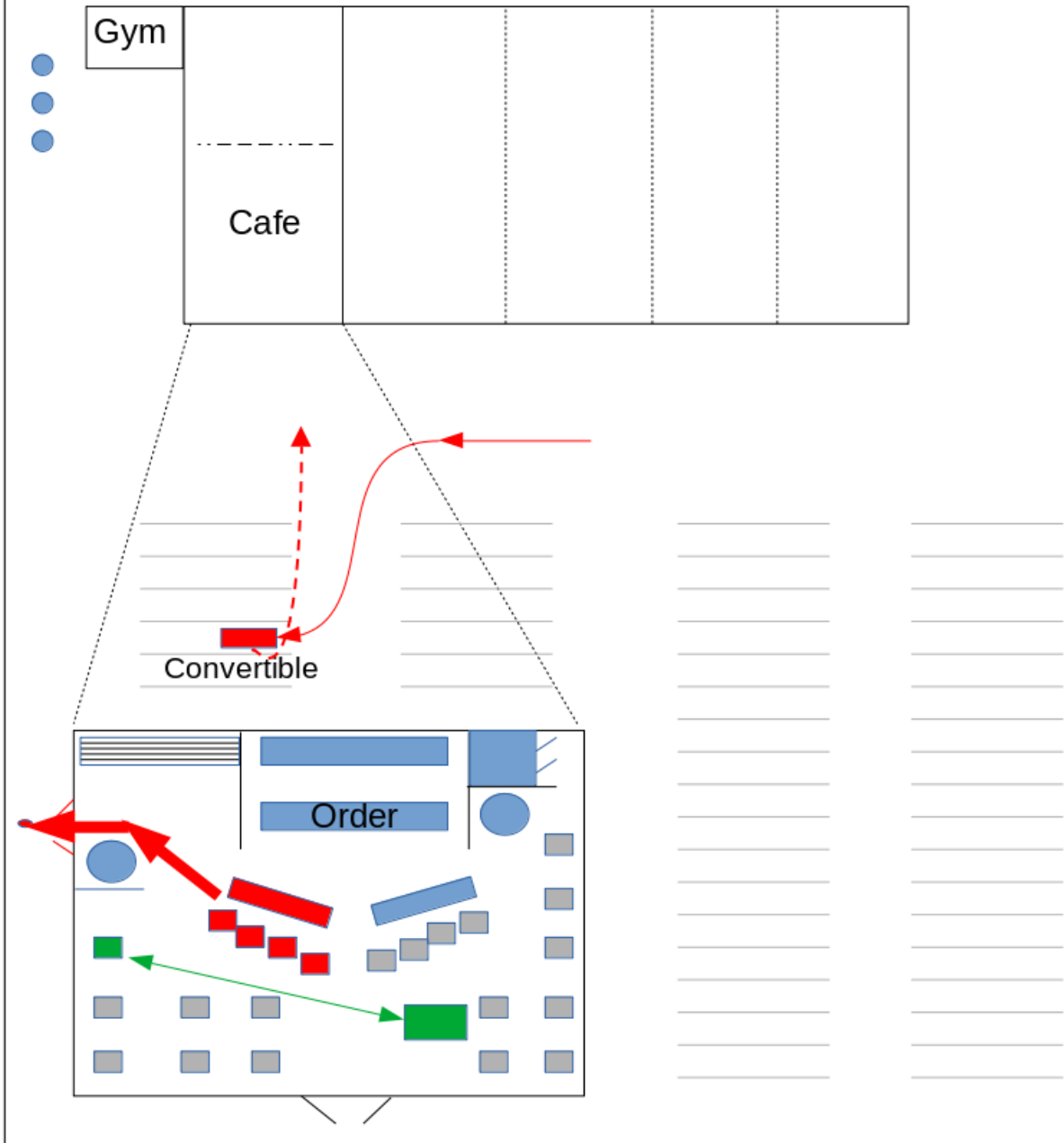


Figure 1: Tysons Corner Pike 7 Plaza strip mall (Virginia) outside Washington DC.

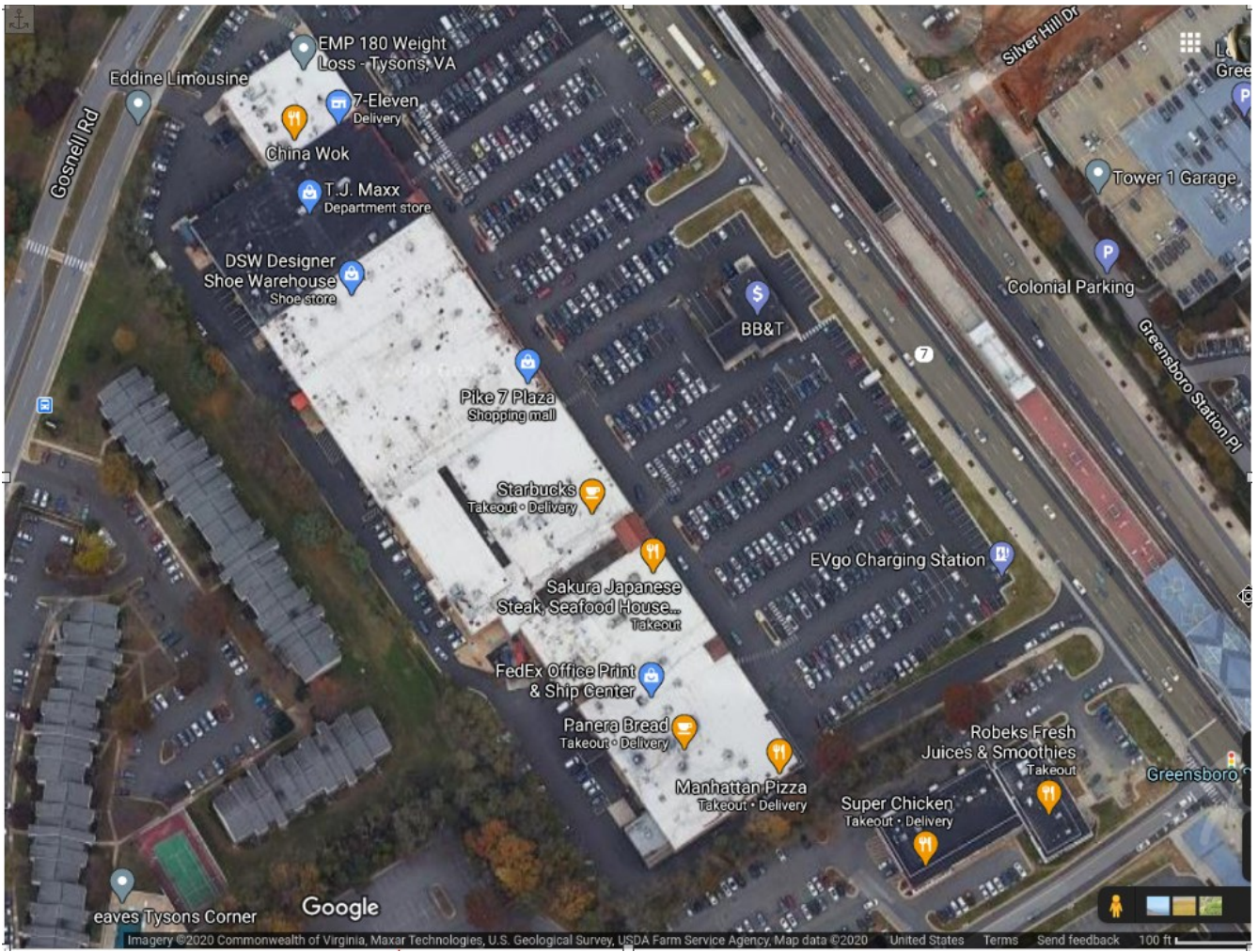


Figure 2: Google Maps 2020 of Pike 7 Plaza mall, Starbucks at center.