

New app will give voice to Sept. 11 oral histories

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(AP) -- Their voices tell their stories - witnesses and first responders recounting where they were and what they saw when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center.

Now, a web startup called Broadcastr is putting those oral histories on the Internet and on [smart phones](#) for the world to hear.

When it opens to the public next month, Broadcastr will already be a repository of thousands of audio clips linked to specific geographical spots. The National September 11 Memorial & Museum, meanwhile, has collected some 2,000 oral histories of witnesses, first responders and others who shared their experiences of Sept. 11, 2001.

Thanks to their partnership, the memorial's oral histories will become available to ground zero tourists and on the Web.

"This is a way to get these stories out to people who are visiting the city or who are halfway around the world," said Joe Daniels, president of the foundation that is building the memorial. "It's pretty powerful stuff."

In one audio clip on Broadcastr's site, city police Detective David Brink describes the moment when the trade center's south tower collapsed.

"I looked at one of the guys that was on my team. I said, 'Bobby, what the hell was that?' And he goes, 'Dave the whole tower is coming down.' I said, 'You've got to be kidding.'"

Brink describes finding himself at the nearby St. Paul's Chapel, where he used holy water to wash the toxic dust out of his eyes.

"All we wanted to do was find some clean air to breathe," he says in his just-the-facts-ma'am New York accent.

Broadcastr is the brainchild of Scott Lindenbaum and Andy Hunter, who met in a creative writing graduate program and founded a literary journal called Electric Literature.

Broadcastr seeks to make the human voice as ubiquitous as videos on YouTube or photos on Flickr.

"It's the oldest form of communication, the oral tradition," Lindenbaum said in an interview. "Every person in the world participates in oral storytelling all day long. And yet social media is missing an oral storytelling component."

Broadcastr.com has been open to invited users since last month and will be available to the public on Feb. 8. About a week later, it will be packaged as a free [app](#) for the iPhone and Android.

Users can upload audio and "pin" it to a geographical location. When you visit a location either physically or with your web browser, you will be able to listen to stories pinned to that spot.

"If you go the West Village and you're going to have brunch and you just want to hear love stories you can filter for love stories and just hear love stories the whole way," Lindenbaum said. "You'll be walking by a restaurant and suddenly someone will be telling the story of how they proposed to their fiancée at that restaurant."

The startup has been working with staff members at the Sept. 11

Memorial to upload oral histories onto its site.

Even before the memorial opens later this year on the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, visitors to the trade center site will have access to the stories through their phones.

"They'll plug into this invisible layer of history and memory," Lindenbaum said.

He explained: "I can just filter for 9/11 stories, and then I put my phone in my pocket and I walk. And as I'm walking through the space and I get to the place in reality where the story's pinned virtually, it automatically plays."

Visitors to Broadcastr's website will be able to hear the same voices by zooming in on a map of lower Manhattan.

Brooklyn-based Broadcastr is operating with seed money from investors, Lindenbaum said.

In addition to the Sept. 11 Memorial, its partners include UNICEF and the Shoah Foundation, which has collected testimony from tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors.

More information:

<http://broadcastr.com/>

<http://www.national911memorial.org/>

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