



Adventures

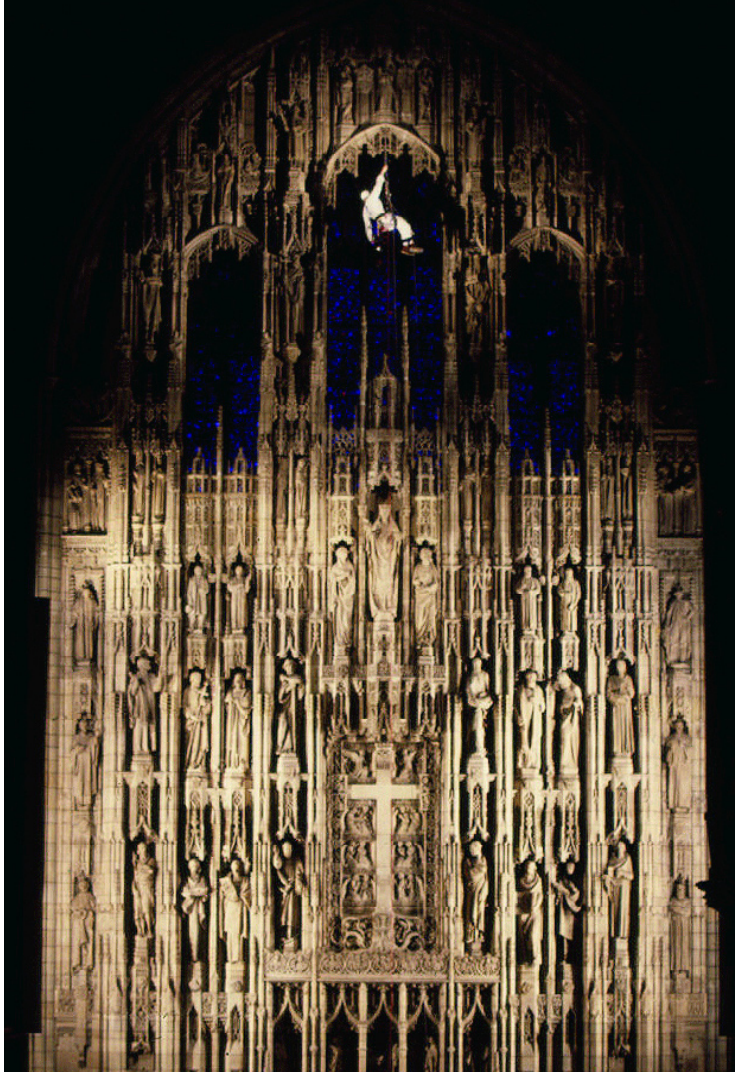
IN THE FIELD

THE LAST PITCH OF THE CLIMB PRESENTS A NUMBER OF TECHNICAL PROBLEMS. THE HOLDS ARE FRAGILE AND FAR APART; THE INCLINE, SHEER VERTICAL. THE SUMMIT IS WELL WITHIN REACH, ONLY A FEW CAREFUL MOVES AWAY. THIS IS NO ORDINARY BIG-WALL ASCENT, HOWEVER. THE PEAK IN QUESTION IS NONE OTHER THAN TRINITY TOWERS, JUST NORTH OF TRINITY CHURCH, A MERE THREE BLOCKS FROM GROUND ZERO. THE NEO-GOTHIC EDIFICE IS ONE OF LOWER MANHATTAN'S ARCHITECTURAL GEMS AND THE CURRENT SUBJECT OF A CAREFUL CONSERVATION AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS. THE COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER ON SEPTEMBER 11 ROCKED EVERY BUILDING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO ITS VERY FOUNDATIONS AND BLANKETED THE AREA WITH PULVERIZED GYPSUM AND DEBRIS.

in Preservation

WITH EXTREME CONSERVATOR KENT DIEBOLT

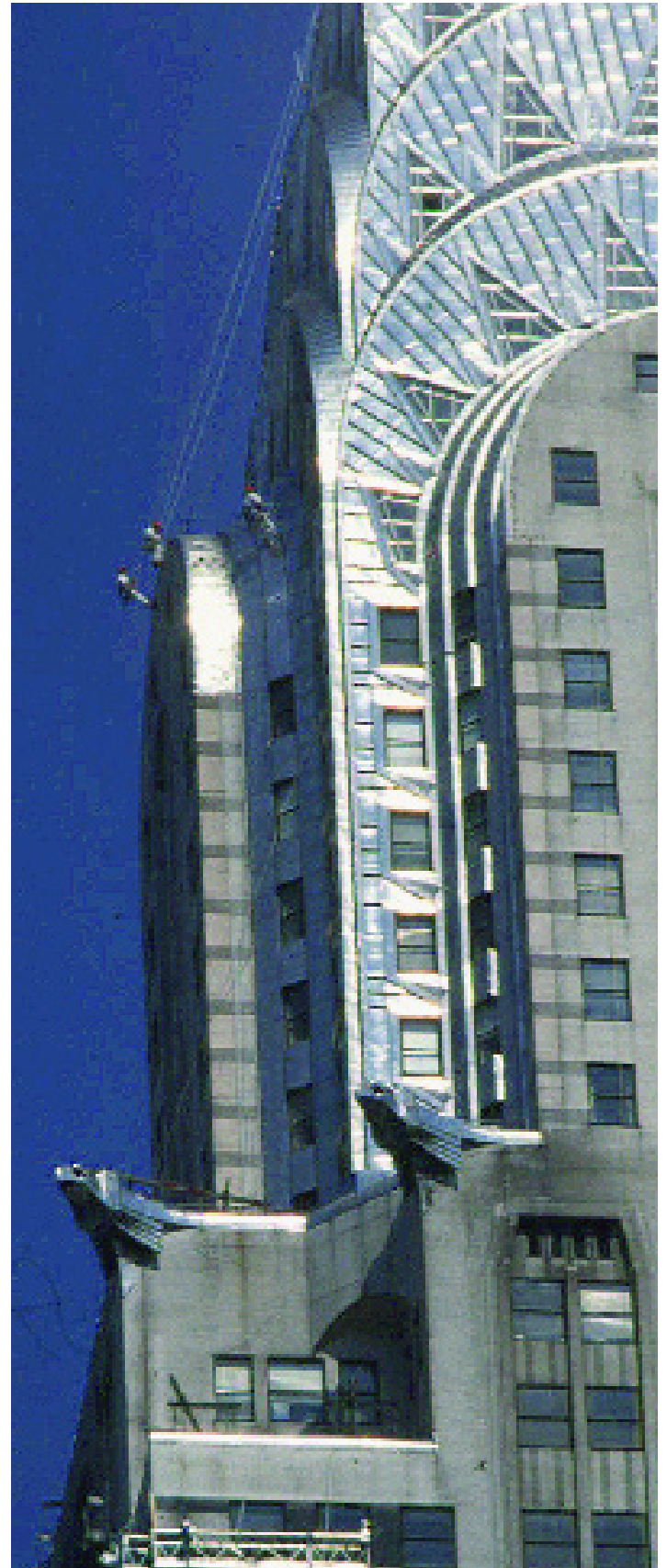
CLEVELAND TOWERS AT
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



ST. THOMAS CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY



NEW JERSEY STATE HOUSE ROTUNDA, TRENTON



CHRYSLER BUILDING, NEW YORK CITY

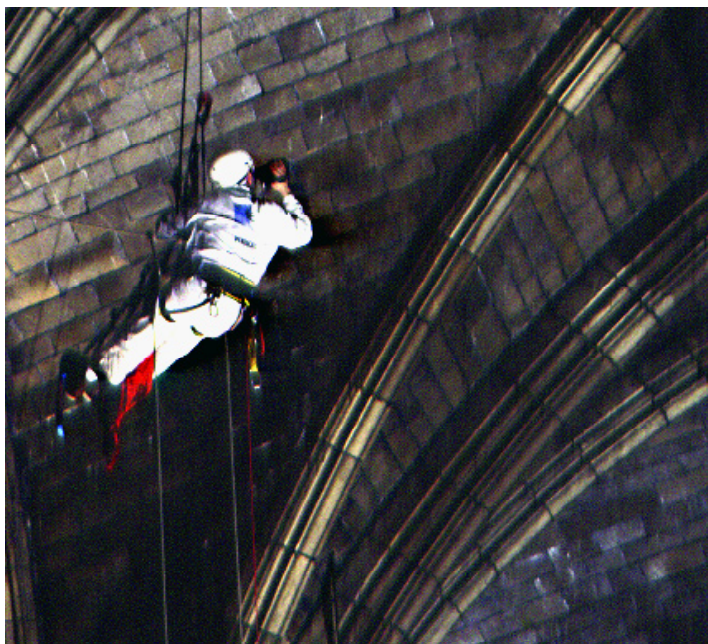
Undertaking the survey is a team led by Kent Diebolt, founder of Vertical Access, a decade-old private firm specializing in building assessments in extreme locations.

"A British mountaineering friend from graduate school suggested I look to ropes as an ideal medium for getting around on buildings," Diebolt told ICON. "Ropes are relatively inexpensive, nondestructive, and afford a level of control and maneuverability simply not available using far more costly scaffolding." Using a range of techniques derived from rock climbing, search-and-rescue, and caving, Vertical Access has devised ingenious methods by which to move about on and within steeples, domes, and towers.

"The ropes are a means to an end," says Diebolt. "We are actually in the business of information-gathering so that our clients can make informed decisions about conservation needs and project costs before construction documents are prepared. We use a variety of methods to gather the information, including photography and live-feed video. We also undertake annotated elevations in CAD format that are incorporated into databases."

A contractor by training, Diebolt readily admits just how much he has learned from the architects and conservators he has worked with on projects such as the Chrysler Building in New York, the Chicago Tribune Building, and the state houses in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Other "peaks" that have appeared on Diebolt's extensive climbing resumé include the High Gothic Harkness Tower at Yale University in New Haven, CT; Low Library at Columbia University; and the Jefferson Davis Monument in Fairview, KY.

In addition to Trinity Towers, Diebolt has undertaken a number of other building assessments in historic Lower Manhattan in the wake of the terrorist attack—among them the gargoyle terracotta facade of 55 Liberty Street—underwritten in part by the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund. Established by WMF in cooperation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Preservation League of New York State, the Municipal Art Society, and the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund makes grants to stabilize, renovate, and restore damaged historic sites in Lower Manhattan. With more than 65 individual landmarks and six historic districts, the roughly 3.9-square-kilometer area of Lower Manhattan is one of our nation's most important architectural zones. On October 11, 2001, the area was inscribed on WMF's 2002 list of the *100 Most Endangered Sites* in recognition of the buildings at risk after 9/11.—AMHS



BELOW: TRINITY TOWERS, NEW YORK CITY
BELOW LEFT: ST THOMAS CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY

