

## Sonnets For Survivors

**A**S ANYONE WHO'S EVER seen a trading floor can tell you, Wall Street stockbrokers and securities traders are rarely at a loss for words.

With the wreckage of the World Trade Center still smoldering in lower Manhattan, however, even this cocky breed has been hushed by shock and grief.

But one New York in-house lawyer, Eugene Schlanger, has been using his way with words to lift the spirits of his shell-shocked peers in the financial district. The deputy general counsel of Nomura Securities International, Inc., one of the world's largest trading houses, Schlanger doubles as a published poet. His newest Wall Street-themed works—passed hand-to-hand and by e-mail—have been widely circulated since September 11.

Known in business circles as "The Wall Street Bard," Schlanger, 45, has been entertaining colleagues with his poetry for nearly two decades, and his work has appeared in *American Arts Quarterly* and *Sewanee Review*, among other publications. "People seem to like reading about both the ordinary and unusual aspects of their lives in poetry's distilled language," he explains.

Schlanger's writing resonates with the business community because of its insider's perspective. "Gene finds poetry in our day-to-day work," says longtime friend Harold Gordon, a New York partner at Cleveland's Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue. "He captures the gratification—the soul food—in our day-to-day jobs that we don't always realize, as well as the mun-

dane things we do that sometimes border on the absurd."

His words have soothed Wall Street in the months since September 11. Many companies, including

Schlanger's, were damaged in the attacks. The business bard catalogued the raw anguish, anger, and resolve of his colleagues in the form of a sonnet cycle.

One poem, "Unaccounted," excerpted here, captures the conflicting emotions of Wall Street warriors returning to work, who

seek restoration in familiar routines yet face constant reminders of colleagues lost:

*"I have correspondence from the dead in / My office, covered in ash; and Outlook / Lists persons and places and companies / That no longer exist . . ."*

Another, "Benevolence and Greed," tracks the uneasy tension between grief and greed as the business world regroups:

*"Restructured committees; a hiatus of terminations, in an industry that / Measures profit and loss hourly/ No matter what relief comes from Washington / Wall Street still devours its young."*

Schlanger says he's hoping to contribute more than words to September 11 survivors. He's been shopping his poetry around to publishers. If he snares a contract, he'll donate any proceeds to charity.

And if not, well, he'll survive, as Schlanger's recent poem "Porters and Promoters" can testify:

*"The reports of New York's death are unfounded / We are as greedy, hungry, and loud as ever."*

—ELISABETH PREIS



Eugene Schlanger:  
The Wall Street Bard