

politician's human touch. "Elizabeth Dole would notice the pin you were wearing, and Dr. Healy would notice the stain on your jacket," the director of one chapter said. "Dr. Healy was not people-oriented, and the Red Cross is all about people."

That day, however, the Red Cross had to be all about performance. And Healy found what she considered a serious wrinkle in an operation otherwise shifting into high gear efficiently. At noon, Healy's office received a call from the Pentagon: "Where the hell are you guys? Where's the Red Cross?" The Pentagon requested "water, food and other things we typically provide," according to an internal memo. Charles DeVita, the organization's security chief, placed a puzzled call of inquiry on Healy's behalf to the Disaster Operations Center, a corporate-style bunker known as the DOC, which is the Virginia-based command center for all disasters. The DOC was run by two women with 60 years of experience between them. They resented DeVita's phone call, a colleague of theirs told me: DeVita was a former assistant Secret Service director whom Healy had recruited just last year. What did the two of them know about activating the DOC?

That evening, Healy, believing the problem resolved, took a police escort to the site. She arrived at a scene of breathtaking devastation, with an army of firefighters "doing everything possible" to battle the blazing building. She saw "the Sallies," as the Salvation Army is called in charity circles, out in full force. But, to echo the caller from the Pentagon, where the hell was the Red Cross?

Healy expected to find the specialized teams usually dispatched by the DOC after plane crashes. Instead she found only four volunteers from the small, local Arlington County chapter—"bless their hearts"—earnestly trying to provide assistance to hundreds of emergency workers. There was no E.R.V., or emergency response vehicle, because Arlington's was in the shop. They didn't have any cots, so some firefighters were stretched out on the ground. Stunned, Healy punched out the phone number of a senior administrator who oversaw the two women at the DOC. She suggested the administrator report immediately to the scene, "get down on his knees and pray to God for forgiveness that we're not here."

Over the next week, Healy also stumbled on other serious problems that originated in the DOC—a failure to dispatch chaplains to the Pennsylvania crash site and a failure to realize that a confidential database of hospitalized victims existed. And by the professional standards of Healy and her executive team, the problems

demanding a swift, sure response: the two women had to go. Although it was not Healy who actually fired the women, she was held responsible by many for what was seen as a coldhearted, ill-timed attack on two women who meant well. Adding a touch of melodrama, one of the women collapsed after she was dismissed and ended up in an intensive-care unit. All told, the incidents served to accelerate opposition to Healy.

Some of the reaction was anxiety. "We're all afraid for our jobs," one senior official at the DOC wrote in an e-mail message that ended up circulating widely through the Red Cross's quite gossipy e-mail system. Some of it was resentment. "We have been silent up to now, but the deeply disturbing news of Dr. Healy firing two of our top people in Disaster Services is just too much," one couple, former co-chairpeople of the volunteer system, wrote in another e-mail message. Referring to themselves as previous victims of Healy's, they asked: "Why isn't the board of governors doing something about her?"

Well before Sept. 11, some Red Cross governors were growing uncomfortable with what they told Healy in her July evaluation was her hard-charging style. She had been encountering mounting resistance from the chapters too. The chapters had always operated pretty autonomously. They did not like it when Healy, who was aghast to learn how much of their financial reporting to headquarters was voluntary, sought to oversee them more closely. Although the Red Cross is effectively a public trust, it has never been a particularly transparent organization, not even internally.

Some chapter directors opposed her oversight for philosophical reasons; they feared that it represented the first steps toward centralization in an organization that should belong to the grass roots. Others didn't want Big Brother peering into their affairs. Or streamlining the chapter system in a way that would reduce their power or cut jobs. And then there were those with something to hide, like the administrator in Jersey City.

Healy thinks that her downfall probably began, improbably, right there in Jersey City when all these tensions exploded. An audit of the small, poor Hudson County, N.J., chapter had uncovered irregularities, suggesting embezzlement by the director; he was a longtime Red Crosser who apparently had treated his fief as a personal charity ward. Healy was horrified, suspended the man and his bookkeeper without pay and hired an outside firm to do a forensic audit. The auditors found what appeared to be significant theft, and the Red Cross turned the matter over to the local prosecutor's office.