PICKING UP THE PIECES – “DISASTER ARCHAEOLOGY”

The Boston Globe is running a piece today about “Disaster Archaeology”[Link]

When Richard Gould, an archaeologist at Brown University, took a walk in Lower Manhattan in October 2001, his trained eye fixed on a gravelly dust strewn on dumpsters and fire escapes that cleanup crews had missed. Looking closer, he saw that the coating contained bone fragments and other human remains mixed in with concrete dust and ash. …

Back in Providence, Gould decided to act on his insight. Working with graduate students, the Providence police, and local volunteers, he formed the Forensic Archaeology Recovery (FAR) team in early 2002, pioneering a new subfield he calls “disaster archaeology.” Like forensic archaeologists who examine crime scenes or mass graves, FAR would collect physical remains to try to piece together what happened to whom at a disaster site. But they would be prepared to dig faster and more thoroughly – while using a stricter scientific protocol than conventional disaster response

teams. Most importantly, unlike any forensic archaeologists before them, their main purpose would be to provide understanding and closure to survivors and families of victims.

Archaeology of the contemporary past (as is all archaeology) and a great exemplification of true academic service. Superb.