



# Live to Tell

Interviews by Lisa Dionne & A.J. Heightman

On Sept. 11, 2001, EMS personnel worked under unimaginable circumstances. Many crews faced death twice within a time span of less than 60 minutes. EMS personnel were forced to render care under true battlefield conditions. While in the middle of patient care, crews had to run for cover to save their own lives, contrary to the usual course of events at an MCI. What follows are their personal accounts: graphic, descriptive and, most importantly, in their own words. You may notice—as we did—inconsistencies among the accounts. As you have probably experienced in your own life—and as providers certainly experienced on the 11th, emotions and stress can inhibit our memories. We attempted to substantiate and clarify incongruities. Consider them part of the inevitable dilemma involved in creating an archive and documenting history. *Caution:* Because we wanted to represent the actions and words of these providers as true to the events as possible, we have broken our normal policy on not publishing profanity. Therefore, some portions of the material you are about to read contain graphic language.



PHOTO GILLES PERESS/MAGNUM PHOTO

FDNY  
Engine 37



**John  
Giordano**  
47  
Firefighter

FDNY  
Engine 40



**Kevin  
Bracken**  
37  
Firefighter



**Michael  
D'Auria**  
25  
Firefighter



**Bruce  
Gary**  
51  
Firefighter



**John  
Ginley**  
37  
Lieutenant



**Michael  
Lynch**  
31  
Firefighter



**Steve  
Mercado**  
38  
Firefighter



**Robert  
Spear Jr.**  
30  
Firefighter

FDNY  
Engine 50



ASAEDA

**Glenn Asaeda, MD, deputy medical director, FDNY EMS**

As I neared the World Trade Center, I parked a block away. I grabbed my helmet and headed toward the Command Post that had been established in front of the North Tower. I talked to the Incident Commander and learned an EMS treatment center had been set up in 7 World Trade. So I decided to go there and assist.

Debris was falling. I looked up to see bodies falling. I initially thought they'd been overcome by carbon monoxide. But then I saw a man climbing out a window, trying to reach another floor. He didn't make it. I've seen people jump before, but never from so high. When they fall from 20-25 stories, by the time you've said, "Oh God, please don't jump," it's over. But this time I kept repeating, "Please don't jump. Please don't jump. Please don't jump." I witnessed dozens of people jumping. And this was just one side of one building.

As I headed into 7 World Trade, an EMT gave me an overview of what he knew—reds, yellows, greens. Soon after I entered the building I heard a crash, and everyone dove for cover. This was the collapse of the South Tower. Everything went black. "Anthrax," I thought. So I sent an EMT for the antidote kit. Then I thought, "What good will a kit meant for 125 people do here? If we're not dead now, we will be."

So we ran. I didn't know the building layout and didn't have a flashlight. But someone had a camera and started flashing the strobe. He said, "I think the exit's this way; follow the flash."

We got out of the building and had to decide which way to go. We picked north, away from 1 World Trade. Had we gone south, the collapse of the North Tower would have caught us.

What haunts me to this day is witnessing people jumping to their deaths from 100 stories. At that moment, I realized all of the medical training that I had was absolutely worthless because I was helpless to do anything for these people.



BECKHAM

**EMT Jennifer Beckham, Flushing Hospital Medical Center, Unit 52 Frank**

I work a BLS unit at Flushing Hospital Medical Center. On Sept. 11, me and my partner Bonnie [Giebfrid] went to our bagel place. We're like, "You know what? We're just gonna have an easy day. We're not gonna buff any jobs. Let's just go do what we're supposed to do and that's it."

I was reading the paper. I said, "Bonnie, look at this. Today is National 9-1-1 Day." We were listening to WNEW, which I never listen to—ever—and we heard this guy go, "A plane crashed into the World Trade Center."

I said, "Bonnie, are you listening to this idiot? Planes don't crash into the World Trade Center."

All of sudden, the radio started to go crazy. You heard everybody getting called to the 59th Street Bridge. We were like, "What the hell is going on? Planes don't crash into the World Trade Center. It doesn't happen."

I got on the radio. Dispatch was like, "Hold on, units!" Then she screamed, "All right, 52 Frank, you want to pick up [52 Edward's] late job? It's on your screen."

I said, "OK, 63 [en route]. We'll take it."

Then I said [to Bonnie], "Let's stop at my car. I went grocery shopping last night, and I have a whole thing of juice boxes in my car. We're gonna be there all day. We gotta have something to drink." I thought we would get some overtime. I wanted to come home and have a really cool story to tell. This is what we live for.

So we stopped at my car. We got the juice boxes. I got my extra camera. We started driving [from Queens to Manhattan]. And everybody was going crazy on the radio. We were high-fiving each other. I was taking pictures [of 1 World Trade].

I was doing my hair. Bonnie's going, "Don't put gel in your hair." I was like, "No, I gotta do it. I just cut it short, and it'll be all over the place." I was thinking we would run into some cute firemen.

So we were driving down Church Street, and Bonnie said, "Oh my God, Jen, there's body parts in the street." I looked into a pile of red mush. Like someone took flesh, stuck it into a blender, put it on high for 10 seconds and dumped it on the street. I looked up at [1 World Trade] and saw the huge hole. The pictures do not do it justice. I turned to Bonnie and said, "I want to go home. I don't want to be here. This is not cool any more."

We ended up at West and Liberty. We parked underneath [the South Bridge] just below the Marriott. We were the first in line; everybody else lined up behind us going south on West. There were MetroCare, Hatzalah and

**FDNY Engine 54**



**Paul Gill**  
34  
Firefighter



**Jose Guadalupe**  
37  
Firefighter



**Leonard Ragaglia**  
36  
Firefighter



**Christopher Santora**  
23  
Firefighter

**FDNY Engine 55**



**Peter Freund**  
45  
Lieutenant



**Robert Lane**  
28  
Firefighter



**Christopher Mozzillo**  
27  
Firefighter



**Stephen Russell**  
40  
Firefighter



Columbia Presbyterian units filing behind us, facing the towers. No one knew what was going on. I was taking pictures, and I saw a jumper come down. Pink shirt; black pants. It took him so long to hit the ground. Four seconds is an eternity when you're seeing someone fall out of a building. When he hit the ground, he just exploded. And we saw three more coming down. I remember going, "No, no, no, no, no—don't do this. Don't do this to me. I can't handle this."

[FDNY EMS] Capt. [Karin] DeShore came over. Apparently they had a person, a victim, in the lobby [of 2 World Trade]. We went in the lobby, going, "Where are all the people?" In the lobby, there was this lady there with a little jazzy wheelchair, sitting with a friend. We put her on the stretcher because the wheelchair wouldn't make it outside with all the hose. She had probably been there for a while watching things fall. Outside, I started to do the paperwork on her, and she said, "I'm not a patient. I just needed help getting out." She said, "Will you help me get in the chair?" Her legs were really stiff, and she couldn't get in the chair. She [asked], "Where should I go?"

I said, "I don't know where you should go, but just get out of here." So she headed west across the street from the towers with her friend. Then Capt. DeShore ordered us to load all our stuff up and go across [West] Street to a little grassy knoll. Then I heard this roar, like a 747 or a fighter plane. I looked up, thinking, "This is really cool, 747s flying around!" Not having any clue what was going on. I looked to the left and I saw the South Tower sinking. I saw three little poofs—I guess probably part of the floors. I can still see them if I close my eyes: poof, poof, poof.

Bonnie grabbed me and shoved me. Then I ran. I saw a big building in front of me, and I took a step to the right and then went to the left, into a little alcove.

There were six or seven people in the alcove. I remember being by a window on my hands and knees, with my window punch and my radio, pounding on that window. I remember looking up, trying to take a breath. I thought, "I can't breathe. I'm gonna die this way. This is really a horrible way to go."

Then I heard a little tiny pop; the window shattered on me. A cop had shot the window out. I crawled over the windowsill and got in [the building] and threw up. I screamed for Bonnie and found her. It was just as dark in there as it was outside. Turns out we were buried under four stories of debris—we'd been standing right across the street from [2 World Trade] when it came down.

We ended up breaking into this bread shop. We walked in and saw a big metal bowl with ice and orange juice. I grabbed an orange juice and started drinking. I didn't even think I should spit it out. I just drank it and blew my nose. When we walked out of the bread store, it was a blizzard of volcanic ash. It was dark, dirty, hard to breathe. I didn't know what to do.

We found a MERV because we needed supplies. We took two O<sub>2</sub> bags, a tech bag, cravats, sterile water, saline. We didn't think we'd need longboards or short boards.

Walking around outside, I heard another loud roar. I knew the

North Tower was coming down. Underneath the bridge was a parking garage; we went in there. Me and Bonnie yelled to see if anyone was there. There were six or seven of us. We used flashlights to get ourselves together.

We went back to the MERV to get more equipment. We walked toward the water. But Bonnie started having an asthma attack. There was an ambulance on the corner. I found it and broke into it. I took the Albuterol, nebulizers and oxygen for Bonnie. I also took their antidote kit because I figured, "What else is coming?"

So I set Bonnie up. And I went back and got their tech bags and took their MAST pants out. Then I threw their MAST pants out, 'cause I figured anybody who needs MAST, they're dead. I just kept taking things I thought we would need.

Back at the waterfront, we ended up with a trauma nurse. I told her, "Listen, you gotta be stingy with this stuff. Don't give the firemen the water to drink. You gotta keep it to wet people's eyes. You cannot give it to them to drink. Just tell them 'No.'"

Then we started loading people on the fire boats to go to Jersey. People came up to me [and said], "I have chest pains."

I told them, "Get on the boat. I can't help you. Get on the boat. Go to New Jersey. I can't help you." What am I gonna do for a heart attack person? Nothing.

I don't know if it's really hit me yet. I've only cried once. I get teary-eyed. I still have nightmares that me and Bonnie are on the 106th floor trying to break a door open. I keep saying, "This tower's gonna collapse. Bonnie, we know it's gonna collapse." I feel like I've been punished by being able to come home. It's so hard to deal with. Me and Bonnie talked the other day that I wish I would have died, so I don't have to deal with all this crap.

My second day back to work, I called Capt. DeShore. I thanked her for saving my life. She said, "I thought I gave you a death sentence. I thought I killed you. I remember sending two girls into the South Tower to get somebody. I don't remember you coming out."

It made me cry because she saved my life when I came out of that building by sending me off the street over to the grassy knoll. She saved all our lives.



**Scott Beloten, EMT-P, Maimonides Hospital Ambulance Dept., Brooklyn, N.Y.**

I had just finished my first shift—I was doing a double. That morning I was working a transfer truck. My boss stopped us and said the World Trade Center had just gotten hit by an airplane. I was like, "Yeah right." We turned on the radio, and—immediately—we found out it was true. So we figured a Cessna. What an idiot [the pilot is]! It's daylight.

When we got back to the garage, the other paramedics and EMTs were watching TV, and you could see that it wasn't a Cessna that hit the building. Alan Simon [our ambulance director] said, "Let's mobilize." So me, Alan, Pete Cuzzolino and a paramedic student, Ralph Bijou, went to the ambulance. We picked up

FDNY Engine 58



**Robert Nagel**  
55  
Lieutenant

FDNY Engine 74



**Ruben Correa**  
44  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 201



**Greg Buck**  
37  
Firefighter



**Paul Martini**  
37  
Lieutenant



**Christopher Pickford**  
32  
Firefighter



**John Schardt**  
32  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 205



**Robert Wallace**  
43  
Lieutenant



paramedic Joe Cutrone and headed into the city. Pete drove.

We got on the Prospect Expressway that leads to the Gowanus Expressway, and it was clear all the way to the city. We got through the Battery Tunnel in minutes. We came out of the tunnel and saw it. You can't imagine. It was horrific on TV, but to look up to the towers to see the huge gaping hole in one and the other one with numerous floors on fire—I said, "Oh my God."

We parked by the [pedestrian] South Bridge on West Street, just south [of the South Tower]. Other ambulances were lined up. Maybe we were 200 feet from the towers.

Ralph said, "I just saw somebody jump." Then he said, "There goes another one." It really didn't register. We got out of the ambulance and started getting our equipment together. I looked up at the tower and saw people jump and got fixated on it. You didn't realize they were coming 600, 700, 800 feet. I watched a person just sail across Liberty Street, right into the parking lot across the street, 100 feet away from us. He landed on a car. I felt like I was watching a movie.

It was so surreal. I watched person after person jump. There were so many. It was horrible watching people land. When they landed, you heard a thud or a bam or a bang. Then you heard a secondary bang. You saw people's body parts going in different directions. I remember one specifically: the person landed behind a car, and I saw their blood and intestines come up five or six feet in the air.

Every time [someone jumped], I was stuck to this person coming down, watching them pray, watching them try to fly. Joe Cutrone turned to me and said, "Scott, you can't do a damn thing for them." So I said, "All right, let's go."

We crossed the street to head through the Marriott World Trade Center Hotel to get to the lobby of the South Tower, where we thought forward triage would be located. Debris was coming down. I was watching so I wouldn't get hit by a jumper. That's when a good friend of mine, [FDNY paramedic] Ricardo Quinn, came walking across the street. Ric and I went to paramedic school together, and we became best friends when we were paramedics. We were about the same age. He was married. I'm married. At that time, his child was four; my child was two. We used to study—all-nighters—together.

Ric walked across the street with us. We walked toward the corner of West and Liberty. There was a staircase and glass awning in front of the building. As we walked in, a flat piece of metal came down at me. Since it wasn't solid, it wasn't coming straight down. It was shifting side to side. I didn't want it to cut my head off, so I blocked it with my arm. I figured it was better to sacrifice my arm than my head. I deflected it, and there must have been a sharp edge underneath that came across four of my fingers. Ric turned to me with his typical smirk and said, "You schmuck, why didn't you run?"

Ric busted my chops about my hand. As we went inside, Joe Cutrone said, "We're gonna stop and bandage your hand."

I said, "No, Joe, people need our help."

I thought, "We've gotta get to forward triage; maybe even up on the upper floors." But Joe insisted on bandaging my hand. It couldn't have taken more than a minute.

While this was going on, Ric said, "Listen, I'm gonna walk ahead and go to forward triage. I'll call you on your radio and tell you where forward triage is located."

Joe finished bandaging my hand, and we went across [the Marriott] lobby. It was massive, maybe two or three stories high. There was no furniture, just large, square marble planters in a row. There was a giant glass wall [extending] the height and width of the lobby.

When we were about to go through the large glass door to enter the South Tower, we heard twisting metal and what sounded like an explosion in the distance. You heard it getting louder and louder and rolling toward you—just like in a movie. I took Ralph and pushed him the other direction back to where we came from. I yelled, "Run!" We all ran back the way we came.

It was just firemen and policemen in the lobby, and everybody ran. It was like slow motion. You were running and hearing this noise rolling and [getting] louder and louder. Ric must have been just on the other side of that wall [in the South Tower] because he couldn't have been more than 30 seconds ahead of us. When you ran, you could sense [the shockwave] behind you. It got louder and louder, and then you heard that glass wall break. You knew the glass was about to hit you. I remember diving behind one of those planters.

I remember lying there, gasping for air. I went to take a breath, and my mouth was filled with all this debris. It was like if you sheetrock a room and sweep up the debris and stuff it into your mouth. You couldn't breathe. I figured, "OK, let me spit this out, and I'll breathe." So I spit it out, and I went to take a deep breath, but I couldn't. I was suffocating. I couldn't breathe, and every time I breathed, I inhaled more of this garbage.

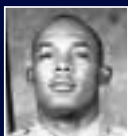
I called out to Joe and Ralph. No answer. I figured they were dead. Now I was alone and scared. The image of my children popped into my head. I wanted to live. So I started walking like a blind man with my hands out in front of me. I saw a fireman with a flashlight, and I grabbed onto him. I wasn't letting him go. We were going from room to room, and there was debris. Ceilings had collapsed. You didn't know which way to go.

Everywhere we went, the building [the Marriott] was plugged. You couldn't get out. We found a staircase that took us downstairs to the lower level. Everywhere we went down there, it was collapsed. You couldn't find a way out. I remember thinking I was in the *Poseidon Adventure* when they walk through the corridors. Finally, we cleared some debris, and we came out by a loading dock on West Street.

When I looked out on West Street, it looked like a giant parking lot. It was quiet except for debris still coming down. It was surreal because the only person I saw was a lone fireman. It was like a bomb hit, and everybody was killed, and you made it out.

The street that was bustling [before] with all these people and

FDNY Engine 207



**Karl Joseph**  
25  
Firefighter



**Shawn Powell**  
32  
Firefighter



**Kevin Reilly**  
28  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 214



**Carl Bedigian**  
35  
Lieutenant



**John Florio**  
33  
Firefighter



**Michael Roberts**  
31  
Firefighter



**Kenneth Watson**  
39  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 216



**Daniel Suhr**  
37  
Firefighter

cameramen, fire trucks and ambulances now [was littered with] all these destroyed ambulances, rolled over. I saw an EMT helping a female EMT who was injured. He said, "Can you help me?" I just wanted to go. But in my heart, I couldn't leave her. I looked at her, and I said, "Come on baby, you gotta get up. You gotta walk."

She said, "I can't."

There was just the two of us, and I didn't know what was next. So I walked over to an ambulance. It was destroyed. You couldn't open the doors to get a stretcher out or anything. But we got a stair chair out. We got her on the stair chair and took her across the street to one of the World Financial Center buildings. As we crossed, we found an intact ambulance. So we took the longboard, collar and stretcher and brought her inside the building. We boarded, collared and secured her on the stretcher. Just as we finished, we heard a ripping sound, and the world came crashing down again. You heard that twisting and the boom, and it just came closer and louder.

We grabbed the stretcher; it was still in the down position. We started running down the hallway. But we couldn't get anywhere with the patient on it. We just wanted to get her and ourselves as far back [as possible]. I don't know why I did this because I [had] always said I would leave a patient behind and save my own life.

We ran down the hallway, and all of a sudden the front windows of this building just blew out. I was praying the glass wouldn't cut me in half. You felt that sensation again, right behind you. I dove, but this time I couldn't dive behind anything. Then the lights went out. My mouth must have been open; it filled up with debris, and I couldn't breathe again. I heard the patient screaming 'cause she was supine on this board, and everything was landing on her face. I felt so bad for her because she was strapped in. I really felt bad.

There was a store with its lights on. One of the guys picked up

something, smashed the front door, and we went in.

They had their air-conditioning on. You could breathe. Their phone worked. A couple of guys looked for food and supplies. They found apples and soda. It was like an oasis. I went to call my wife and couldn't remember her work number.

The EMTs [who had gone to look for a way out] came back. They had found a way out. We went out the back of the building by the Hudson River, and people directed us to a triage center that was in another hotel on Vesey near 3 World Financial. We wheeled the patient over there and got her on an ambulance.

I started triaging people, and—out of nowhere—there was Joe Cutrone. I was so happy to see Joe. He was alive. I wanted to jump up and down like a little kid. We were chased out of the building because there was supposedly an exposed gas line. We got all the patients out. I grabbed a stretcher and two sets of ALS gear, and we started down West Street. We got to Lower Manhattan Community College and started to take care of injured cops and firefighters.

Joe and I went over to help [two] paramedics who had this fireman who was having chest pains in an ambulance they found with all its windows blown out. I looked at Joe, and I said, "Joe what do you think? Let's go over to St. Vincent's with them. They must be getting inundated with thousands of patients. We could help there." He agreed, and the four of us went to St. Vincent's. When we pulled up to St. Vincent's, they had all these chairs and stretchers ready. There must have been 40–50 doctors and another 40–50 nurses. But there was nothing to do. There were no patients. There was nothing.

Joe and I got separated when the ED staff took me to another building to suture me. I finally got in touch with my wife and started crying. I just needed to hear her voice.

I got a ride to Brooklyn. When I stepped out of the ambulance to walk back into the garage, it was the first time I felt safe through this

whole entire thing.

I have a lot of built-up emotion about a lot of things, things that I'll never forget and never be able to escape. If we [had arrived] three or four minutes sooner, I would have been three or four minutes deeper into the building. If I didn't get hit by the metal, Joe wouldn't have made me stop. Had that piece of metal taken off my fingers, Ricardo would be alive because he never would have gone ahead; he wouldn't have left me.

The next morning, when I woke up, I called Ric, figuring that if we got out, Ric got out. I got Ginny [Quinn, Ric's wife], and I said, "Ginny, is Ric there?"

She said, "Scott, he didn't come home."

I said, "Ginny, he didn't come home? He was with me yesterday."

That's when she started making phone calls, and I started calling people I know in the fire department to find out if he was alive. Ric is driven. He wouldn't have called home. He'd be working his ass off like you wouldn't believe. Ric thrived on that.

Ric was the guy you got behind. Ric led the way. When Ric and I were fire department EMTs and in medic school, there was a high-profile call Ric was on. It was a school bus that a giant oak tree fell on with five little girls inside. Everybody was all excited because Ric was there. They all wanted to get the story from Ric, and I knew he was hurting. I walked over to him, and I said, "Ric, how are you?"

With a pained look on his face, he looked at me and said, "Five more faces I have to live with."

Never did I think it would be Ric Quinn's face I'd have to live with.

**Editor's note: Ricardo Quinn's body was found on Jan. 22, beneath the debris of the South Tower.**



DAVILA

**Rene Davila, lieutenant, FDNY EMS**

I was [at Battalion 4], speaking to Lt. [Bill] Melaragno. When [FDNY EMTs Alex Loutsky's and Eric Ramos'] unit first went on the air [with the transmission reporting the first crash], my reaction was, "These guys are bananas. I gotta go over there and straighten them out." I thought they had lost it—until I heard [FDNY EMTs Orlando Martinez's and Frank Puma's] call seconds later. Then the radio started charging up with voices.

I ran out the door and began traveling south on South Street. I passed the projects, and I looked up at the Towers and saw the gap in [1 World Trade]. I called Citywide and said, "I am confirming there is an incident; some type of explosion." I told them it appeared that a couple of floors had blown up.

I told them to send every available resource and alert the senior staff. I said to roll the MERV. I actually used the plural—roll the MERVs because we got MERVs in other boroughs designed to treat a bunch of people and for surgical procedures. I knew we would need two, three maybe four divisions with two, three, four staging areas.

I headed [west] down Vesey toward Greenwich. I noticed bodies laying out. A lot of debris and still [more] debris coming down. Definitely an unsafe area. There was no way we would stage there, which is what the preplan indicated. So I turned left on West Street and proceeded to the entrance at 1 World Trade near the garage on the east side of the street.

I got there within five minutes of the first hit. On my arrival, Loutsky and Ramos' vehicle was the only EMS vehicle I saw. I assumed command of the EMS operation. I called Citywide and said, "Condition 04, I am assuming command of EMS operations at this location." My next thought was to grab a hold of the MCI, grab control of the people responding before everything got crazy. My next concern was communications.

Alex, I made my staging officer. He was to get patients who could walk out of the vehicles. As staging officer, I wanted him to jot down incoming ambulance unit numbers and tell them to get out of their vehicles, get triage tags for incoming patients.

[Ramos'] direction was communications. He was to stand by in case I lost my voice. Eric followed orders. The rest of the day—every time I turned around—we were bumping into each other.

In the beginning, I wanted to start the START system to triage patients. I knew I didn't have the capability to treat any patients. People were coming out with first-degree to fourth-degree burns after the explosion—unbelievable what I saw coming out of this disturbance. All I wanted once I got 10 to 15 units on the scene was to triage because I knew the magnitude of people that [were] going to be coming out of this.

In our 9-1-1 system we also have voluntary units—the St. Vincent's unit, the Cabrini Hospital units. These units operate and transport [the same as any other] 9-1-1 units. But some of them are not as accustomed to our incident command system [as others]. As the patients came out, [EMS personnel] would grab them. I was like, "No—no way." My first objective was to triage—not to treat. Their reaction was, "What's wrong with this lieutenant?"

My concern was triaging patients, but my first concern was everybody's safety. Numerous times I yelled that it was a hard-hat operation. "Get out of that ambulance? Gotta have a helmet on."

When I first got there—five minutes after the first hit—there was no way I was letting my guys go inside the building. I had a couple of guys in our system [who] came to me as a supervisor and wanted to go in [1 World Trade]. I'm like, "No way. I don't have time to explain. *Bottom line:* Either do what I say or you're out of the ballgame." My philosophy and the way I was trained is that we let the trained people go in and bring the patient back.

So I was standing there watching the rescue units run inside Tower 1. I was transmitting and praying to God that I'd get some more bosses to the scene. As I was transmitting, my peripheral vision caught plane number two. Next thing I knew, I lost the plane [from sight], and then the explosion [happened]. Everybody stopped for a second, but the operation kept on moving. Rescue units kept going inside, and you had more fire apparatus going toward Tower 2.

**FDNY Engine 217**



Steven Coakley  
36  
Firefighter



Neil Leavy  
34  
Firefighter



Philip T. Hayes  
67  
Firefighter, Retired



Kenneth Phelan  
41  
Lieutenant

**FDNY Engine 219**



John Chipura  
39  
Firefighter

**FDNY Engine 226**



David DeRubbio  
38  
Firefighter



Brian McAleese  
36  
Firefighter



Stanley Smagala Jr.  
36  
Firefighter





Within five minutes after the second hit, I got relieved. I had seen officers [before then], but they were lieutenants like me. I had them help Alex with staging and triage. A couple of minutes later, I saw [FDNY EMS] Lt. [Ross] Terranova and [FDNY EMS] Chief [Jerry] Gombo, our No. 2 in EMS command of the fire department.

In our system, it's normally a face-to-face hand off of command. I've known Chief Gombo for many years. You gotta understand: We already had Tower 1 hit. We already saw one or two people jump off the buildings. Now you had Tower 2 [hit]. You had hard debris, paper and smoke coming out of both buildings.

He looked at me; I looked at him. Both of our mouths were open. It was the same reaction you probably had when you turned the television on. This is the MCI of all mothers. I gave him my clipboard that Alex had [kept] with all the units already on the scene.

Then he asked me, "Rene, what's on the other side [of the towers]?" I was already so lost in everything that I couldn't recall. I go, "Alex, What's on the other side?"

"Church and Fulton."

"Church and Fulton."

He ordered me to go to Church and Fulton and start the operation there. I wanted to take my own unit with me because these are my guys. [Heading there], I made a right on Church [off Vesey], and we missed Fulton because of all the debris in the street. I drove over bodies and lamp posts. I said, "I'm going to catch a flat." I [returned] to Church and Fulton right in front of the Millennium [Hilton] Hotel. You had people pouring out of every exit, going up every street. I started getting some units to help me. I sent all the walking wounded up Fulton Street.

We set up triage and treatment areas. I was getting volunteer units and the paid-for units, like AMR, that have no concept of our incident command system. They were clogging my egress from the location. I told [Loutsky] to fill those units up [and get them out]. The only units I kept were the fire department units, the Cabrini units, the St. Vincent's units—because these were EMTs I knew within the system.

Prior to the first collapse, the system was starting to fall together: Supervisors were arriving on scene. We had a good triage system operating fairly well. Our LSU had arrived. We were treating people with O<sub>2</sub>; nebulizers—treating a lot of asthmatics. On that intersection, a cop said a patient was having a grand mal seizure. The cop goes, "You better help him."

I said, "You know how you can help? Push him away on the sidewalk where he'll be safe, and you haul ass up Fulton Street."

Fulton Street was basically green tags. You walk? You go. One patient really rattled [me]. He was a Hispanic male. Had no shirt. He had a hole in his upper left chest—the size of my fist. I looked at it as I felt his left shoulder, and I thought, "For all intents and purposes, he should be pneumo, hemo—he should be dead!"

However, he was alive. We treated him. My units wanted to transport this guy. This is one of the positions that I was put into as a supervisor: I had [my people] screaming, "Let's get him outta here. He's gonna die!" But I couldn't use an ambulance to trans-

port just one patient. It was the good of the many vs. the good of the few. I didn't have enough resources in that sector. I walked by, and this guy looked at me, and he had this stare. Every time I went by, I saw the guy getting a little ashier. I know he was going deeper, deeper into shock. I couldn't transport him.

In the middle of this we heard a rumble. The best way I could describe it is driving by La Guardia Airport and all the jets are lined up. You hear the engines revving, ready to take off. I felt the ground shake, and I heard people yelling, "The building is falling!"

I looked up, and I didn't see that building no more. I saw a wave of smoke and debris. All hell broke loose. I ran inside the Millennium [Hotel]. I got knocked down. I don't know what I got knocked down by—the debris or the pressure.

The hotel lobby was dark. I saw a light and went toward a door. I was a chicken-shit scared supervisor. I was panicked. The noise I heard was something like I never heard before in my life. You could still feel the doors shaking, the metal in the hotel bending.

This is comic book, now: In this narrow room there was a bunch of computers and phones. I went to one of the computers to go for help on AOL or something. I'm like, "You dumbass. Everybody is doing this."

I opened up the door. There was a bunch of debris and darkness in front of me. All I had was my Maglite. I moved the debris and tried to walk. I found myself inside an elevator. I go, "This is not good because I could walk into an elevator shaft where there isn't no elevator."

I found my way back and closed the door to the room. I went through a warped feeling. I think we all shared it—all of us there through the collapse period. We're always in dangerous positions, and there's always that life-threatening possibility. But I knew I was dead. All of sudden my feeling was, "OK, I'm gonna die. Calm down. Die with some dignity."

The next thing that came to me was, "Don't defecate on yourself because everybody will be talking [about] how they picked up Lt. Davila body's with shit on it." That's the honest truth. I picked up the phone and got a dial tone. I called my wife. I told her, "I love you. Say goodbye to everybody." You could hear her hysterical because she worked up Church Street and saw the building collapsing. You could hear her tell somebody in her office, "Call 9-1-1!"

I go, "Fern, I am 9-1-1."

Maybe 15 minutes went by. I went from scared to a calmness. Then I got pissed off. I was pissed off, and I'm going, "All right, if I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die fighting." I told my wife, "I'm leaving the phone open, but don't expect me to come back on. I'm getting out of here."

When I opened the door, I saw a little light. The lobby was completely destroyed—a lot of glass and debris. I came out on the side of Fulton Street, and I found [Eric]. We hugged, we kissed, and we married each other! I told him, "What we can't do alone, we can do together."

FDNY  
Engine 230



Brian  
Ahearn  
43  
Lieutenant



Frank  
Bonomo  
42  
Firefighter



Michael  
Carlo  
34  
Firefighter



Jeffrey  
Stark  
30  
Firefighter



Eugene  
Whelan  
31  
Firefighter



Edward  
White III  
30  
Firefighter

Then we did something very stupid: We went back! I go, “Ramos, guess what? My wallet, my [federal tax] refund check is in my vehicle [parked in front of the Millennium]. They’re not gonna write another check. We gotta get it.”

So we went. My vehicle was burnt. The windows were all out. The air bags had exploded. The seats were burnt. But my bag was intact. And my check.

We started walking, holding hands. You heard a rumble. A lady screamed, “The building is leaning.” About that time, the rumble started again. I looked back and saw debris starting to come down.

We ran, holding onto each other. I looked back. You ever go to a beach with a high surf and that big wave is coming and you’re like, “Oh shit”? That’s what this was. This pile of smoke coming—a roar getting louder. It overcame us, and we were in the dark.

I grabbed my handkerchief and put it on my mouth and nose. I told Ramos to grab something and cover his mouth and nose and breathe deep. We walked through this in the dark. My thoughts at that point were worse than during the first collapse. I didn’t know if we were going to make it.

Ramos goes, “Lieutenant?”

“What the fuck you want?”

“I lost my radio.”

“Your fuckin’ radio? If we live through this, remind me to write you up for losing the radio!”

Next I heard hear a boom. I had walked into a lamp post. I didn’t see it. “Ramos, this is not gonna work. Move over to the right and try to feel the buildings.” That’s how we made it up Fulton Street. All the businesses must have closed after the first hit. We finally saw a Subway sandwich store, and the light was on. I looked in and said, “Open the God damn door!”

When they opened the door I go, “Who’s in charge?” An [Asian]

man shrugged. I go, “Well, by order of New York City Fire Department, I’m in charge. Go in your register, get your money and put it in your pocket.” Because we’ve been brought up in a service of civilian complaints, I didn’t wanna hear no comment about no money.

The people in there were happy to see us in our uniforms, and Eric was looking at me because I’m the boss. It helped me keep my composure because they looked to me for leadership.

I was hot as hell. I took my turnout coat off and threw it on top of the food counter. Then the guy threw my jacket on the floor. I go, “What the fuck you doing?” He goes, “The food, the food!” So now I was pissed off. I grabbed my coat, threw it on the counter and told him not to touch it. Then I had everybody go to the back and stay calm.

About 15 to 20 minutes later, I saw a little light in the street. I had the guys in the store get everybody towels, wet them in the sink and cover their faces. I told everybody to hold hands, go out and walk east. That’s when we got out and made it to Broadway. I saw one or two ambulances there. We went inside Chase Manhattan Bank, and I grabbed one of the watercoolers and dumped some on our heads.

We come out, and I’m going, “That Loutsky—he’s one pain in the ass, but I would sure like to find him.” And we went back, looking for him heading back down west on Fulton toward the towers. We found him running like a madman. He was all right.

After the second collapse, I tried to get on the radio. Suddenly it seemed like you could hear Citywide transmitting any personnel in the area go to two locations. Battery Park had an EMS staging area and the other staging area turned out to be the Unified Command Post—West and Chambers at Stuyvesant High School.

We had to regroup, so the best place to go was the closest station or hospital—NYU Downtown Hospital. The picture down

there was unbelievable. These people were prepared for this big MCI. Surgeons, doctors, nurses were [outside] waiting. Debris from the buildings had made it all the way to the East River—even in front of the hospital. You saw the Brooklyn Bridge and people walking out of Manhattan. No patients to treat. There were literally no patients to treat because, as we finally know [now], it was all casualties.

[When I finally got home that night] I turned the TV on. That's when it started hitting me. I knew it, but now I was seeing what had happened around me.

When Chief Gombo told me, "I want you to go around and take command of the other side," I had choices of EMTs to take with me. My choice of EMTs was my guys because no matter what we go through in between [calls] with each other, that's personal. That passes. I'll scream at them in the morning and chase them out of here. They come in, "Oohh, the Puerto Rican Hitler." But it's part of the job. I loved these guys before the event, and now I love them even more because we shared something together. We shared a disaster together. It was almost like an out-[of]-body experience, because these guys felt the feelings, and I felt the feelings.



**Jack Delaney, director of EMS, New York Presbyterian, the University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell**

I was notified by our communication center that a small aircraft had gone into Tower 1. We had one unit responding, and then about three minutes later the comm center told me that we had multiple units responding.

In addition to the 9-1-1 units, we sent 23 EMTs and paramedics. When something like this occurs, the [transfer] units respond back to the hospital and start moving on whatever equipment they think they'll need. Unit 10-David was coming out of [NYU Downtown Hospital]. So they responded down there. When they got down there, the second plane had hit.

I responded with our other units. We parked right in front of Tower 2 on West Street. Everybody was trying to get away from the building. We were probably 1,500 feet away from the building because of the people who were jumping out of the buildings. Then debris started coming down, so some of our units went and parked under the pedestrian South Bridge. That bridge actually is what saved the majority of us. I think we would have lost a lot more if we weren't near it.

I walked to [the Command Post] to get our orders. I was walking back down to the group to tell them what our assignment was, and an ESU cop standing right in front Tower 2 started screaming, "Everybody run for your lives! It's coming down!"

When the ESU cop yelled, you heard a "pop, pop, pop." I looked up to where I thought the noise was coming from. That's when you could see the debris starting to break away at one location. You could see the top of the tower hanging over, not perpendicular with the rest of the building.

We just looked around and saw what we could dive under or run for. Everybody scattered in different directions. Then the tower came down. We had 23 personnel there at that point. And probably about 18 or 19 were there with us on that side. I think that if I were closer to the front entrance of the building, I would have run into the lobby. There was no concept the building was coming down. That would have been my safe haven.

Everybody scattered. As we were running, the smaller debris started landing around us. Then when the larger debris started falling around us—I-beams and that type of material—the three or four guys running with me dove under some stairs that led to the bridge. [After the collapse], I got up and started moving pieces away. There was [now] six or eight inches of this dust from the building concrete on the ground. It was just pulverized. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't hear. You felt your way around.

There was a plate-glass window that had been broken, so we went in and started walking through the [1] World Financial building. None of us could talk. Our mouths were full of this concrete. My ears were full of concrete.

Our eyes were burning. We couldn't see where we were going. Every time you opened your eyes, you couldn't see what was going on. We made it down to a small deli.

We looked for towels so we could put them over our faces. Unfortunately, with modern technology, there were no regular towels—just disposable napkins. So we took off to go back and see if we could find the rest of our coworkers. We went back to where the building came down but couldn't find any of our people. Then everybody started yelling the second building was coming down. So we took off again.

Thank God windows kept breaking. We ran by the Chase Manhattan Bank. I figured, "Bank, secure. Go in there." We dove into the bank. You could hear the ground rumbling and 1 World Trade coming down. The bank started to fill up with dust and smoke. So we went in deeper, into the back rooms of the bank. I shut one of the doors behind us to keep the smoke out. I told Mike [Mokson] to stand under a doorframe, and we stood there as the building came down. The entire building [we were in] was shaking. The ceiling tiles were coming down. The light fixtures were popping out of the ceiling. I actually thought the building we were in was about to collapse. The power in our building went out, but the bank's emergency lights went on. When we tried to get out of the bank, all the doors I closed to keep us free from the debris were locked. We went around some corridors, found an open door and exited the bank.

We walked down toward the New York Harbor. Everybody seemed to be migrating down toward the water zone. Police boats had started to congregate at that location. I ran into a couple of my staff members and [FDNY EMS Deputy Chief] Charlie Wells. I looked at Charlie; Charlie looked at me, and we hugged one another. Then we started gathering [our] staff.

I saw a lot of civilians down at the water. People didn't know what the hell hit them. There was no sense of time down there.

FDNY Engine 235



**Steven Bates**  
42  
Lieutenant



**Nicholas Chiofalo**  
39  
Firefighter



**Francis Esposito**  
32  
Firefighter



**Lee Fehling**  
28  
Firefighter



**Lawrence Veling**  
44  
Firefighter



**Glenn Wilkinson**  
46  
Lieutenant

FDNY Engine 238





People weren't in a total panic. They were walking along asking for directions. We were walking around there looking like snowmen. Literally, the only thing you saw of people was the red around their eyes.

Back at Ground Zero, I could intermittently get through on my Nextel to keep in touch with my dispatcher, do roll calls and figure out who was missing. I had been out of radio contact for more than 90 minutes until then. It took about three hours to account for 21 of our personnel.

We [did] radio roll calls, trying to locate the different staff members. There was a period of time where some of us were not in radio contact. We were hoping that our two missing members, [Keith Fairben and Mario Santoro], were just out of radio contact. They were last seen working near Tower 2. *Newsweek* has a photograph of them treating patients there. The last photograph taken of them was about 12 minutes before the building came down. Keith was on the cell phone with his dad just minutes before Tower 2 collapsed. His dad called him, and he said to his father, "Dad, I'm really busy. There's a lot of people here that need my help. I have to go."

Mario and Keith weren't responding over our private radios. The fire department was calling wondering why they weren't responding to the fire department [dispatchers]. So it was a matter of did they lose their way, or did something happen?

My personal frustration is that we went down there with the expectation of saving a lot of lives. In actuality, for a period of time, we were concentrating on saving our own lives. Anybody we came across, we helped. But we were retreating instead of going in.

I didn't go home for a week and a half after this event. My kids, [ages 20, 13, 9], came to the hospital to see me the Thursday after the event. The following Sunday, I snuck out of the hospital and went home. *Sunday tradition*: Go to mass and then Dad cooks breakfast. I was out of here for about three and a half hours.

Out of our 23 responders, 14 were injured. When you're looking at 10' beams that weigh 13 tons—these things are six inches thick—all you need is one of them to tap you on the shoulder, and you'll never be talking about it. I kept saying to my staff, "I don't want to hear any more bullshit about wearing these damn helmets. If it weren't for the helmets, we all would have been dead."

Throughout the night [of the 11th] and throughout the following days, there were a lot of rumors going around about this one being found, that one being found. There was a tremendous amount of misinformation throughout the EMS, police and fire communities because you were dealing with a lot of emotion.

On [the 12th], I gathered the staff because it was getting to a point where if I left the premises, people were saying, "He got notification." I told them that I made a commitment to the families to stop the misinformation. I told the families I would tell them exactly what was going on at all times because we had been told—unofficially—five or six times within the first 24, 36 hours that they had found their bodies. That was an emotional roller coaster.

After that, I pulled the staff together, and we had impromptu

staff meetings about three or four times a day. I promised them that I would tell them everything, honestly. I told them I had agreed with the families that I was not going to notify them until I personally verified that it was actually their loved one that had been recovered. I also told the staff that I was not going to share with them the discovery before I shared it with the families. That was the only rule I was not going to break.

We lost a total of nine vehicles: seven ambulances and two command vehicles. When I was being treated in the emergency room, the president of the hospital came and spoke to me. He said, "Call and do a verbal order, and we'll replace everything you lost."

We had three or four staff members who wanted to take flyers of Keith and Mario around to the hospitals in Jersey and throughout New York. They coordinated that among themselves, and there was no duplication of effort. This was something they felt they wanted to do. They wanted to make sure their coworkers weren't lying in some ICU on a respirator, not able to speak. They did that on day two, three and four. We gave them the vehicles to take. Kinko's made them free color copies.

The lack of recognition of EMS efforts by the news media and others has affected the staff. I try to get them to put everything into perspective. Had the towers not collapsed, we probably would have gotten a lot more recognition. Mostly, I think people are upset about the lack of recognition for those that have fallen.



**Tamara Drummond, EMT-P, NYU Downtown Hospital EMS Dept., Unit 01 Victor with partner Juana Lomi, EMT-P**

I was working on 01 Victor with Juana Lomi. NYU Downtown Hospital is at Beekman and Gold Streets, not far from the World Trade Center. When we got to Church and Vesey Streets, there were so many injured people running out at us that we just started triaging.

A lot of people had placed tourniquets on [the injured], so we were removing a lot of tourniquets.

The patient volume was getting so heavy that we decided to make a triage area over at St. Peter's Church. If the injured could walk, we told them to walk to the church. We told BLS units to go to St. Peter's and start taking the injured to the hospital by fours.

Somehow I lost sight of my partner because she was triaging on one side, and I was triaging on the other. The next thing I knew, I heard this loud crash. It was the second plane running into the South Tower. All of a sudden there were huge chunks of debris raining down on us. Fiery pieces of metal. A big piece of the plane's fuselage fell to one side of me. The plane came in from the south and when it went through the building, the stuff that came out rained down on us on the northeast side. The pieces of debris were the size of desks.

When the plane pieces started to come down I ran maybe a block. People were getting hit with the shrapnel from the plane. There were big sizzling pieces of metal cutting into people around

FDNY Engine 279



**Ronnie Henderson**  
52  
Firefighter



**Michael Ragusa**  
29  
Firefighter



**Anthony Rodriguez**  
36  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 285



**Raymond York**  
45  
Firefighter

FDNY Engine 320



**James J. Corrigan**  
60  
Captain, Retired

us. When I turned to look up, I realized that I still wasn't in a safe area because chunks of the plane had damaged the building I was standing under. So I went back another block. It was chaos. People were being trampled, grabbing at you, screaming and yelling.

I was trying to process everything that was happening, and I also worried about my partner because I didn't know where she was. I was two blocks away from Church and Vesey. Another ambulance crew came up to me. An EMT from the crew was hysterical, telling me about her daughter and how she [the EMT] can't be out here. I said, "Well, you know, there's nothing you can do. This is your job. This is what you have to do. So buck up, and let's get this done."

My partner was three ambulances in front of me while we were telling them where to go, so she was quite a bit away from me. That's when I heard a sound that was like four or five trains coming. The volunteer crew that I was talking to at the time was getting ready to drive away. I told the driver, "No, no, no, don't drive away. Take me with you." They quickly pulled me into the ambulance across the passenger's lap and down into the small space where the radios are in the cab. The driver was hysterical. As we fled, I could hear big pieces of debris hitting the ambulance, and I began to see a huge cloud approaching. Suddenly, I realized I was leaving my partner behind. So I said, "No, you have to let me out. I have to go back." They didn't really

want to stop, but I insisted. So [the driver] came to a rolling stop and told me to get out. I got reunited with Juana several hours later back at NYU Downtown.



**Louis Garcia, EMT-P, St. Vincent's  
Manhattan, Unit 06 King**

We were getting breakfast on University Place and 12th Street, and my wife called me [on my

cell phone], hysterical, telling me that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. I immediately ran out and told [my partner] Steve [Craver].

We could hear commotion on the radio as we jumped in the ambulance. We went to the West Side Highway and headed south. We were there a minute and a half after the [first] plane hit. We parked underneath the pedestrian North Bridge that crosses near 6 World Trade to Winter Garden and the World Financial Center. Because of the potential hazard of falling debris, I parked under the bridge, near the massive pillar in the center. I figured that would protect the unit and us.

There were people running up to the ambulance with compound fractures, no clothing on, totally burned—third-degree burns. No hair on their heads, no eyebrows, no eyelashes.

Steve opened up the back, and I started filling the ambulance [with people]. Somebody on scene was ordering us to triage, to stay there on scene. But I felt in my heart that wasn't the right thing to do. I looked at Steve; he was trying to help these people in the back, trying to clean their wounds and cool them off. I said, "We're going to transport." I made a U-turn and transported to the hospital.

These patients were from the ground level. They all came out of the elevators or walked by the elevators. The elevators were infernos from the jet fuel. The pressure from the explosion blew out the elevator doors on the main floor. Whoever was walking by those elevators [in the North Tower] was burned or had multiple trauma injuries.

We transported six patients to St. Vincent's. Steve and I had to leave people behind because it wasn't safe. The top of Tower 1 appeared to be leaning—above the fire floors. It's something that's haunting me, and I know it will haunt me until the day I die.

As we left, a woman ran up to us and said, "Do you have sheets?" I said, "Yes."

She said, "I have a woman that's burned here." People were running. It was chaos. I'll never forget that image of this [injured] woman, literally with no clothes on. Her back was badly burned. She had no hair left. No eyebrows left. She was sitting down, like in a squatting position, and her skin had peeled up and was crisp. She sat there and looked up at me, and I felt terrible.

I said, "Ma'am, there's more ambulances coming. There's gonna be people here for you." She was shaking and looked up at me. I took a sheet, covered her and poured water on her to cool her down. The [uninjured] woman said, "I'll stay here; I'll stay here." And we left [with our other patients]. She probably passed away because of the burns. But I also wonder if they [both] were there when the building started coming down.

When we arrived [at the hospital] with the first six [patients], I told everybody, "There's gotta be thousands." At the end of the day, we were very surprised that there weren't as many patients as we expected. Having no patients is probably the most frustrating thing about the incident.

We went back to the scene. We were there before the second plane hit. When we arrived, they were using the outside of 3 World Financial as a secondary triage area. We were directed to turn west on Vesey and back up to the curb near 3 World Financial. As we walked toward the building, I heard a loud rumble. It was almost like an earthquake. It was unreal. But I was so focused on getting us out of the area that everything else turned off—like tunnel vision. You really don't hear much.

I ran into 3 Financial Center initially. I tried to stay focused, but at the same time, I followed everybody. It was probably a bad thing to do, but people were running [and] so hysterical, so confused. Steve and I got separated for a while. I ran in and everybody was running back and forth, hysterical. There are numerous entrances to 3 World Financial, and people were running in from all sides. It was almost like a dream.

My instincts told me to get out of there. When I ran out, it was literally snowing [debris]. I found Steve in the back of our ambulance. We decided to leave the area. As we left, we ran into [St. Vincent's paramedic] Richie [Fellegara]. He was covered in white from head to toe. We also ran into [St. Vincent paramedic] Ken Jaimes. They both kept telling us, "Just keep moving farther north, farther north." Steve and I went west on Vesey to North End Ave. We then followed Chambers Street to West. As we were turning left [north] on West Street, Tower 2 collapsed.

I was very proud of Steve because he kept me focused. It's not anything that he said. It was just the way he acted. I was saying, "Let's get this person and let's go." And he was saying, "Louis, let's just do this." When we came [back to St. Vincent's], everybody was very calm. They were so ready to treat patients or give us supplies. It gave us a sense of comfort.

You don't know what's right or wrong when you start feeling your emotions. I never felt like this before. I was very cocky the first two weeks after Sept. 11, acting like nothing was bothering me. And then all of a sudden, I was like, "Wow! These emotions,

something's not right." [St. Vincent's paramedic] Ben [Shelton] has known me for a long time. I asked him as a friend, "What I'm feeling, is this normal?"

He said, "I've been doing EMS a long time, and I have never, ever felt like this." I was confused by my feelings. Ben gave me very good advice. I felt comfortable with what he said to me. It kind of gave me some sort of closure.



MERCED & GOLDFARB

**Zachary Goldfarb, deputy chief, FDNY EMS**

Monday the 10th we started our 6 Charlie shift [a four-day shift from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.]. Me and my aide, [EMT] Mary Merced, went in at 10 that night. I had just gotten a new Crown Vic, and we had cleaned it top to bottom. The previous day—Sunday—we spent our tour looking at the various LSUs in our area and our two MERVs to see how their stock levels were. I just had this

annoying feeling that they weren't stocked the way they should be. So we spent the next two nights doing inspections.

Tuesday morning we left Brooklyn at 8:30 to drive home when we heard a cop screaming on the police frequency that a plane had just hit the World Trade Center. I listen to the radio a lot, and I know when it's real. This was real.

We turned the car around and told Citywide we were responding. It took us 26 minutes to get there. The sky was perfectly blue—not one cloud. A beach day. Mary's driving; I'm on my department cell phone, calling [FDNY EMS Division Chief] Walter [Kowalczyk]. I said, "Listen. Plane into the towers. Big job. Gotta respond."

My responsibility was to plan this thing. We had to go through the [Brooklyn]-Battery Tunnel because I knew the police would cut off a lane for us. At that point only the first plane had hit. When we saw the plume coming up from the building, we knew it wasn't a small plane.

I was on the phone with the Citywide dispatch supervisor, giving him direction. I told him to put together task forces in the boroughs to support Manhattan. I told him to call 10 units in each task force and put them in each borough at the bridges. You ride the edge of the rail on something like this. If you bring too many [resources] in, you're going to hurt the city; if you don't get them ready, you may hurt the city, anyway. I also told him to activate our regional mutual-aid agreement.

We pulled out onto West Street. From a beautiful sunny day we pulled into Hades. The second aircraft had hit while we were in the tunnel. There was debris in the street and tons of emergency vehicles around. We proceeded north and parked just below the South Bridge before Liberty.

We got out of the car and saw stuff coming off the building: air-plane stuff, building stuff, people stuff. I was there in '93, and on the one hand I'm like, "OK, we've done this already. We know how to deal with this." On the other hand, this was very different. In '93 one of the first things that grabbed me were a couple of windows

FDNY Hazmat Company 1

FDNY Hazmat Operations



Dennis Carey  
51  
Firefighter



John Crisci  
48  
Lieutenant



Martin DeMeo  
47  
Firefighter



Thomas Gardner  
39  
Firefighter



Jonathon Hohmann  
48  
Firefighter



Dennis Scauso  
46  
Firefighter



Kevin Smith  
47  
Firefighter



John Fanning  
54  
Battalion Chief





broken out with smoke showing. When you see that in a high-rise building, you know it's a problem. Here, you had a big chunk of building missing out of two high-rises and a lot of smoke showing.

We put on our helmets, grabbed the command board, IC vests, notepads, phones—the stuff we usually take. We each grabbed our own personal cell phones, which we don't normally do. Later on, those phones worked when the department phones didn't.

The first thing that was awry in this incident was we couldn't get to the preplan location for EMS staging at Greenwich and Vesey. The second issue was what was going on [around us]. I didn't head for inside [1 World Trade]. We went to the area facing the entrance to the Marriott. That's where fire had set up the Command Post.

I told my aide to start setting up the command board. I got on the radio to EMS operations to say, "I'm here. What do you need me to do?" I radioed Chief [Jerry] Gombo, the EMS commander. His aide told me to come to the lobby of 2 World Trade.

I went to walk across the street when Mary screamed, "Stop!" "What?"

"You can't go over there," she said. "Look over your head!"

Big pieces of steel and debris were falling. That was the first time she saved my life that day. I called back on the radio, "I can't get across the street." They told me to stand by at the Command Post. Mary called dispatch to see where the units were. Our protocol is the aide sets up a command board, contacts dispatch, IDs which units are present and tracks them to find out where they are. It also gives us accountability for our off-duty people.

One of my big issues is accountability at the scene. As an EMS supervisor, I never want to be ringing anybody's door saying, "Johnny's not coming home tonight." In '93 I was the commander at the South Tower. We sent a bunch of people in the tower, but we didn't have accountability for who was where. In a review of that job, we decided if there had been a secondary event in '93, we could have lost a lot of people.

I told Mary and two other EMS personnel to move our stuff to the mouth of the garage to protect them from stuff falling. I was talking to Chief [Peter] Ganci and setting up the [EMS] liaison. Walter arrived. He sent me to Vesey and West to take command there. I took Mary and the two guys with me to Vesey and West.

I wasn't seeing patients. At the intersection under the North Bridge in the north-bound traffic lane, I ran into 40 to 50 EMS personnel with their equipment. They had staged their ambulances north of the intersection in the southbound lane facing south. But [there were] no patients. My strategy was to set up a CCP [casualty collection point] and triage area and to make sure we had egress for ambulances.

I called over a couple of officers—[FDNY EMS] Capt. [Jace] Pinkus and a lieutenant. I told them, "Get all the resources up against 3 World Financial to get them out of the line of fire of the debris. Set up triage there. Get accountability; get a list going."

Then I encountered [FDNY EMS] Chief [Fred] Villani heading south on West. I had him recon on Vesey heading west on North

End. My tactic was to get everything clear on West Street.

I was in the middle of the intersection at West and Vesey looking back on the scene, trying to do an assessment. I said to myself, "I don't like the way this looks." I don't remember exactly what I saw. I think I was seeing things that I now don't want to remember. I called Pinkus on the radio and told him to move the operation inside 3 World Financial and do an accountability check. I told him get the whole thing buttoned up in the building.

Almost at the same time, an ESU cop came along wearing ballistic equipment, carrying an MP-5, saying, "This is a tactical area. Clear the intersection!"

We were on the street near a MERV. I don't remember it being particularly noisy or chaotic. My piece of the pie was under control. I was sort of detached. I would have been surprised if it had been different. The only way I can make a parallel is this: If you do a patient assessment, you don't really see the patient's face. Clinically you check the nose, pupils. An hour later, I wouldn't recognize that patient. I think that's a self-defense mechanism. You keep that shield up. At a big incident it works the same way. If you start thinking, "Oh my God, it's so horrible!" it would completely screw you up. You wouldn't be able to work.

I was looking south on West, and Mary was looking up. All of a sudden she shouted, "Oh my God, it's coming down!"

She's got this keen sense of hearing and heard something cracking in that building. I saw this huge smoke thing coming right at us. It went dark on the street. We ran north. I saw the doors to an ambulance open in front of me. I shouted to Mary to come in there. Then I projected myself into this rig and shut the doors. Mary kept sprinting up the street. She looked back at that cloud and was like, "Forget it. I'm going the other way."

The cloud engulfed the rig. I heard debris falling on the roof. Then stuff started coming in the rig. "Why is stuff falling in here?" I crawled in the driver's compartment; both windows were down. The truck was still running, so I powered the windows up.

No way was I thinking the building would collapse. After a minute or two, I heard Mary calling me on the radio. I got out of the truck and went back to 3 World Financial. Everything was covered in debris and dust, but all our people were accounted for. I tried to get through to the Command Post but couldn't. I thought, "If no one's answering on the Command Post, then maybe I should take command." But I didn't wanna be like Al Haig. Then [FDNY EMS Capt.] Mark Stone ran up to me: "I was with Walter, but he's trapped. I gotta go back and get him."

Then I moved the group in the lobby [of 3 World Financial] to the far westernmost point [of the building]. We were getting a few patients. I decide to recon an exit from this area to find a better place [to stage]. Stone had collected himself; Kowalczyk had been found. We found a back exit that put us on Vesey. I sent Stone back to Pinkus and told them to evacuate [3 World Financial] using this route and to relocate to North End Ave. and Vesey.

At Vesey and North End, it had resumed being a beautiful day. Mary and a number of the EMS chiefs and resources were there.

FDNY  
Ladder 2



Michael  
Clarke  
27  
Firefighter



George  
DiPasquale  
33  
Firefighter



Denis  
Germain  
33  
Firefighter



Daniel  
Harlin  
41  
Firefighter



Frederick  
Ill Jr.  
49  
Captain



Carl  
Molinaro  
32  
Firefighter



Dennis  
Mulligan  
32  
Firefighter

The triage team in 3 World Financial had re-established in the lobby of the Embassy Suites building. Now we were getting patients—evacuees. A lot of public safety people, civilians—about 25 to 30 cardiac and trauma patients. We also had a lot of walking wounded drifting in and out. We had fractures. Smoke and dust inhalation. Shock. They were injured in the [first] collapse as opposed to the initial events.

We were on the street at Vesey and North End when my pair of ears—Mary—said, “The other building is coming down.”

“Relax. Get a grip.”

“You know I have very sensitive hearing.”

“Let’s just get everybody inside and under cover.”

We were like, “What the fuck is going on? What is happening here?” Events were outpacing the ability to process them or clearly and definitely react to them. “The fog of war.” We weren’t in the lobby of the Embassy Suites two minutes when the next one came down. It was nuclear winter. It went dark—like black. I have no recollection of sounds. In the ambulance, the only sound I recollected was stuff falling on the roof. Maybe there’s some defense mechanism that doesn’t let you remember.

When it lightened up, everything was coated like it snowed. We were trying to get a sense of what was going on. We realized this wasn’t the place to come up with an action plan; it was too chaotic. We tried to get on the radio, but it wasn’t reliable. Cellular phones weren’t working. How much of our infrastructure had we lost? Who could we talk to? It was a complete absence of information. We didn’t know if we had been nuked, missile attacked or what.

In all likelihood, [the general public] probably had a better idea of what was going on than we did. We went to the back corridor of the Embassy Suites and decided to retreat from the scene and pull back. We didn’t know what the next hit would be. We decided to evacuate

our assets, set up remote staging areas, bring in heavy-duty mutual aid to support staging and set up distant CCPs because we anticipated thousands of casualties—injured. We were trying to figure out where OEM was going to be.

Chief Gombo decided to go to 1 Police Plaza because that’s where the city’s Emergency Operations Center [EOC] was before it moved to 7 World Trade [a few years ago]. Gombo issued assignments. We decided to set up at Chelsea Piers on the north side and on the Manhattan side of the Staten Island Ferry for south side coverage. We decided to leave everything on scene to officers already on scene [and closest to the site]. This was the best possible decision at that point. We tried to broadcast this stuff over the radio.

It was like a black-and-white movie trudging out of there. We were retreating. We never retreat. It was so sad. Mind you, we had no idea what was behind us. We walked up North End with dust masks on. We made it to Chambers and West. My task was to go with Gombo to 1 Police Plaza.

We were the first fire department reps there. We began setting up the larger scale, back-office citywide response. It was about 11:30 in the morning.

At the EOC we looked at the big picture. We had sporadic contact with the scene. Radios, cell phones worked on and off. At one point we lost the TV. We operated on the assumption that whatever happened would generate thousands of patients over several days. We set up the city infrastructure to manage that. Here are some entries from the log I kept that day:

**1142:** Order DMATs, DMORTs and four USAR teams.

**1154:** Morgue set up at Pier 92. (People were setting up stuff independently.)

**1157:** U.S. Park Police set up a CCP at Federal Hall—Wall Street at the Stock Exchange.

**1200:** No contact from any chiefs.

**1200:** Activate three CCPs. (If a patient was in a life-threatening situation, they went to a hospital; if not, they went to a CCP. We had NYPD help us set up the Javits Center [on the east side], the Brooklyn Navy Yard [to cover patients who ended up in Brooklyn] and a minor league baseball stadium [Richmond County Bank Ballpark, aka “Yankee Stadium”] in Staten Island. We sent NYPD to secure the sites and sent state police to secure the Javits Center. We told vendors sending supplies where to go with what. I wanted the CCPs running by 1800. Meantime, we waited to hear about the patients. At four that afternoon, we realized there would be no patients. At that time, we told all the CCPs except Javits to stand down. By 1800, we decided to stand down Javits, too.)

**1207:** Activate regional mutual aid. (In our preplan, a task force is eight BLS units, two ALS units and an officer or task-force leader. I ordered 10 task forces to mobilize: five from Westchester County and points north to Randall’s Island; and five task forces from Long Island, Nassau and Suffolk counties to Shea Stadium.)

**1210:** University Medical and Dental Hospital of New Jersey [UMDNJ] in Newark reports 1,000 patients at Ellis Island getting deconned; 200 patients at the PATH station in Hoboken; 50 to 60 patients in Jersey City at Exchange Place; 150 patients in Monmouth County (south Jersey) at Atlantic Highlands; and an unknown number of patients at Weehawken—where the mouth of the Lincoln Tunnel opens up. UMDNJ runs the EMS Communications Center, called REMS, in Jersey. They’re the mutual-aid response for Jersey.

**1245:** Set up an ESF8 [emergency support functions—function 8 involves health and medical] EOC. (This is basically a place to bring together all the interested health-care parties—hospitals, health departments, EMS, mutual-aid providers, federal public health service, medical examiner, FEMA, etc.—to support the Citywide EOC we had established. We got calls with offers of resources—physicians, medical supply companies—all of this unsolicited. On the fly, we had to come up with a plan for where to mobilize this stuff and make sure it wasn’t a supply of bombs or something, catalog it and safeguard it until we needed it. We also had to control a massive infusion of personnel resources.)

**1247:** Order CISD—call medical services and tell them to mobilize every CISD person.

**1300:** Police telling me they’re sending body bags to Pike Slip, Pier 94, Staten Island Ferry, Chambers and West and Pier 40.

**1315:** Passenger buses sent to the CCPs.

**1328:** Order Verizon to set up 50–100 phone lines at each CCP.

**1500:** Finally get through to the comm center. Hear from a chief at Ferry terminal—ready to move people, no one to move. Also hear from Brooklyn side of Brooklyn Bridge—ready, but no patients.

**1830:** 20 ambulances coming from New Jersey for mutual aid.

Police reporting they have 10,000 body bags.

**1845:** Bodies are being set aside to enable search and rescue. (That told me the USAR search teams were finding bodies and moving them to look for survivors.)

At 1900 Gombo told us that we’d all been relieved. We decided to go back to the scene. Half of lower Manhattan was blacked out. Everything was under maximum security—shotguns and M-16s. We encountered FDNY EMS personnel on Center Street in private cars and looking to work. So we formed a detail of 10 people. Mary took their names, and we all headed off into the darkness.

On Chambers, I heard them calling for EMS resources on the radio. There was a male trapped in Liberty Plaza, and they talked about doing an amputation. We sent some of our detail on a Gator—they were God-sends; you could have traded them for Krugerrands—with a safety officer to assist the victim at Liberty.

We took the rest of our detail to Chambers and West. It was 8 or 8:30, and we were re-energized. We ran into Walter, who was the EMS commander at that point. I volunteered to stay on the overnight shift with him to plan for the next tour. We wanted to get personnel into 12-hour rotations.

Everyone else [left]. Walter and I set up the incident. We were working out of the back of a Suburban. The guys from Essex County had a small Command Post truck there. We adopted that as the EMS Command Post. A while later, they said had a bigger one. At 2 a.m. in rolled this huge command center from Essex County. We moved in and set up the incident command system, spending a good chunk of the night planning; staff schedules, setting up supplies, etc. At this point we were still anticipating and hoping for patients. But we had only seen a few—mostly rescue personnel.

We got relieved at 6:30 or 7 a.m. Mary and I had been up since Monday evening. It was Wednesday morning. We got a Gator operator to give us a ride to find our car. This was the first time we were seeing the devastation—this huge, smoking blitzkrieg of a pile—in the daylight. It was so sad. It was so fucked up. I can’t even tell you. As we drove down Broadway, you could look down side streets and see the remains of the [World Trade Center] complex lying everywhere.

When we got off the Gator, we had our masks on and began to debate where the car was. We have a rule that the aide is always right. Mary didn’t think it was over there, but we went clambering up Liberty, anyway. I was really afraid of what I might step on or find. In front of us was a huge smoking hole; fires burning; smoke; a huge debris field.

Mary said, “I told you it wasn’t over there.” At the South Bridge, we stopped. Both of us saw what looked like a melted light bar. Our car hadn’t been crushed, but it was completely incinerated. Nothing was left in it but an ear piece for the stethoscope and a chip from my PalmPilot. All our personal equipment—everything—gone. Ninety-six miles on it. Toast.

So I took my microchip, and we walked back to the Gator. It was gone. We hiked through Battery Park. It was a beautiful morning. The sky was clear except for this column of smoke over the

#### FDNY Ladder 3



Patrick  
Brown  
48  
Captain



Michael  
Carroll  
39  
Firefighter



James  
Coyle  
26  
Firefighter



Gerard  
Dewan  
35  
Firefighter



Kevin  
Donnelly  
43  
Lieutenant



Jeffrey  
Giordano  
45  
Firefighter



Joseph  
Maloney  
45  
Firefighter



John  
McAvoy  
47  
Firefighter





Statue of Liberty. I remember thinking the guys that did this screwed up because they didn't take down the statue. There were barges lined up waiting to take patients. We just took this long, sad walk down the waterfront. We went to the Staten Island collection point. There weren't any patients there, but a bunch of crews. We talked to the chief there and then hitched a ride with a supply truck to the quartermaster's to get another vehicle.

We climbed into the cab at 9:30. We hadn't slept in 36 hours. We sat back in the seat. That Titanic song ["My Heart Will Go On"] came on. The D.J. said, "This is for all those people who were lost at the World Trade Center." The song started up. For the first time I'm relaxing, off my feet, and it washes over me. I started crying right there in the truck. That song made a connection for me.



**Jerry Z. Gombo, assistant chief of EMS operations, FDNY EMS**

The first notification I received that there was a problem at the World Trade Center was when one of my lieutenants ran down from fire operations and advised me that a plane had just hit the World Trade Center. He was sent by Chief [Peter] Ganci, the chief of the fire department who worked on the same floor as we do—on the seventh floor of fire headquarters operation. Chief Ganci's office faced the towers, and he actually saw the first plane hit and sent someone to inform Chief [Dan] Nigro—who was the chief of operations at the time—and me that a plane had hit the World Trade Center.

On occasion we have a warped sense of humor here. Initially, I thought the lieutenant was joking around. From the side of the building that Chief Ganci was on, I was able to see smoke coming from the World Trade Center. So I knew rather quickly that it wasn't a joke. At 8:55 a.m. myself and Lt. [Ross] Terranova (who shadowed me throughout the entire incident) responded (in separate vehicles) from fire headquarters along with Chief Ganci, Chief Nigro and, I believe, one if not two of the commissioners.

We drove over the Brooklyn Bridge and went directly toward the Trade Center. As a result of the hordes of people and debris, we ended up parking near St. Paul's Chapel (on Fulton Street between Church and Broadway) by the cemetery. As we approached, I was gearing up, psychologically, for a major, major MCI. The only information we had was that a plane had hit the Trade Center. We didn't have any information on the size of the plane or the [number] of people on board. At the time, we assumed it was an accident. At 9:01, I gave an on-scene signal verbally to the Citywide dispatcher.

While walking down Fulton Street toward the Trade Center Complex we encountered hordes of people exiting from every which way. As I approached Church Street near 4 World Trade, several EMS units were setting up a treatment and triage area. I remember seeing two FDNY EMS units and at least two voluntary units [ambulances from private hospitals contracted as part of the New York 9-1-1 system].

Several people were just lying in the street, so I believe the street was already closed. I saw no vehicular traffic, only an unbelievable amount of pedestrian traffic running from the building and debris all around.

I asked [EMS] to relocate because they were impeding the flow of people exiting the Trade Center. The EMS personnel were all wearing their protective helmets. I told them to keep their helmets on and set up triage and treatment area off to the north-east corner of Church and Fulton. It appeared that there was less than a dozen patients, which supported my thought that perhaps it was a small plane and an accident. After relocating them, I felt comfortable with the EMS resources working in that sector. I told them I would go to the other end of the tower and send additional resources as soon as I arrived there.

I continued west on foot, crossing the Trade Center Plaza and approaching West and Vesey streets. At that point, I wasn't looking up at the tower. There was too much going on at street level, and I just wanted to assess the situation and get the other EMS sectors set up. There was no longer debris falling.

When I arrived at West and Vesey, I was greeted by Lt. Rene Davila, who had several units and [EMS] officers with him. He gave me a quick briefing on the resources he had. There weren't a significant number of patients. Several other EMS officers showed up, including [FDNY EMS] Capt. [Janice] Olszewski and [FDNY EMS] Lt. [Bruce] Medjuck. I asked them to go back to that initial EMS group I had encountered on the east side of the Trade Center because I wanted officers there to assist in coordinating treatment and transport and in setting up a staging area on that side.

I inquired as to where the fire Command Post was and was advised that it was located in the lobby of the North Tower. So Lt. Terranova and I went there to meet up with the fire incident commander. In addition to Lt. Terranova, I took [FDNY EMS] Capt. [Mark] Stone and, I believe, [FDNY EMS] Chief [James] Basile and two EMS crews with me.

On our way to 1 World Trade, we saw glass all over the plaza, plane parts on the ground and pockets of different things burning. In comparison, this side of the towers displayed much more of an active disaster scene. There was a significant amount of [human] parts, including arms, legs and torsos. In all my years of EMS experience, I'd never seen a disaster of this magnitude. Other than the cameras not being there, it felt like this was a movie shoot.

From the mechanism of injury, the scenario was painted. I knew there would be fatalities. There was no way we were going to escape this incident without anybody being hurt. We're talking about the World Trade Center—thousands of people [in the buildings]—let alone the number of souls who were on the aircraft.

When we reached the lobby, we didn't even have to walk in through the door [of the North Tower]. The glass was already shattered throughout the base of the building. As I walked in, I noticed the tiles had dropped off of the marble walls. It looked like a building under construction. There were only emergency personnel in the lobby of 1 World Trade. There were no civilians. No patients. It

FDNY Ladder 3



**Timothy McSweeney**  
37  
Firefighter



**Joseph Ogren**  
30  
Firefighter



**Steven Olson**  
38  
Firefighter

seemed a little odd.

The fire incident commander was [FDNY] Chief Peter Hayden. I informed him that I was there. He acknowledged. Our SOP is that we set up the EMS Command Post in close proximity to theirs—within arm's reach. This way, if they're in need of our services, they know exactly where we are. I was the highest-ranking EMS chief on scene and assumed command of the EMS operation.

Then we received a report that there might be civilian patients in an auditorium in the back. I asked Chief Basile to take a crew and go back there. While speaking with Chief Hayden, Eddie Gabriel [deputy director for the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management] approached. He asked if there was anything he could do to support the operation. There was some dialogue as to the activation of mutual aid—to put them on standby but not have them respond because there wasn't a significant number of patients.

Several minutes had passed when Chief Hayden informed me they were going to relocate the fire Command Post across West Street in front of [2 World] Financial Center. He did not specify why they wanted to relocate. I don't believe we had any intelligence as to the building falling at that time.

Several minutes prior to the second plane hitting, we set up EMS command next to the fire Command Post in the driveway of 2 World Financial Center. When I left the initial (forward) Command Post, I gave clear direction that EMS personnel were not to be in the building. EMS personnel are not outfitted with SCBAs and bunker gear. Patients would have been brought out to us—either by firefighters or other public safety personnel.

When I arrived across the street, the fire Command Post was set up, and Chief Kowalczyk was already setting up the EMS Command Post. Kowalczyk was my major chief that day. Chief Ganci and Commissioner [William] Feehan were also there, along with several other ranking chiefs. More of my chiefs started reporting in; the Command Post was set up; the command boards were set up. Although it was one large operation, we had to have multiple treatment and triage sectors set up given the size of the Trade Center Complex. I sent [FDNY EMS] Deputy Chief Charlie Wells to report what was going on [at] the south side of the Command Post at West and Liberty. At that time the three treatment and triage sectors were at Church Street and Fulton (near 4 World Trade), West and Vesey and West and Liberty. Shortly after we [began] discussing strategy at the relocated fire Command Post, the second plane hit the South Tower.

I personally did not see the plane going into the tower. Several others in the Command Post stated they visualized the plane. We knew then that there was some-

thing really bad going on.

With the second plane in, I knew this was no accident. Two planes—that's much more than coincidence. In my mind, I switched from accident to terrorism. Before I had an opportunity to react, another flood of people ran out of the [South Tower]. There were plane parts falling on the ground. Things burning. We weren't even sure what was burning, whether it was jet fuel falling to the ground or plane parts. We saw people ejected from the building and landing in the plaza. I wasn't sure whether these people had been on the plane. There was no way of me telling, other than seeing them flying through the air.

We already had a strategy set up, an oper-

ation in the process of being implemented. The second plane didn't change much of our strategy from an EMS perspective because we had our teams/sectors already in key locations. Subsequently, we were going to need more EMS resources because we did not know how many additional patients would be generated from that second plane or what to expect next.

From a fire perspective, they were confronted with a much more complex operation. As a result of the second plane, they generated additional fifth alarms and calls for a significant number of [additional] fire suppression resources.

I remember conversing with Commissioner Feehan about the EMS

resources that were responding in. It must have been just minutes—at least that’s the way it felt—[from the South Tower being hit] when something very strange started. All of a sudden, the sky got very dark. We felt the ground vibrating and heard a tremendous roar. For a second, I thought it might be another plane. But when I looked up it appeared the sky was coming down. As the South Tower was collapsing, it was like this huge cloud coming down. The noise was as if you were walking on a runway with planes coming down above your head.

Within seconds, personnel [in our area] either retreated down the driveway of 2 World Financial, which I did with several people from the Command Post, or ran toward the street. Several of us dove behind a white van parked at the base of the driveway. The next thing I remember is pitch darkness—no more light.

The majority of the people in the Command Post prior to the first building collapse ran behind us into the underground garage at 2 World Financial. When we stood up, we couldn’t see anything. It was extremely difficult to breathe because every time you inhaled, your mouth filled with soot. Even with a flashlight on, there was so much soot and cement dust and who knew what else was in the air, you couldn’t see in front of you.

We were close to the opening of the garage. We moved everybody in our party toward the back. There was a separate area, an office space, a few steps up. After we made sure no one was behind us, we moved into that office space and closed the door. In that area, we were able to breathe without having to inhale soot and garbage. Walter and Ross were down there with me and about 15 or 20 others—people from OEM, fire officers, firefighters. We asked the firefighters to find us a way out. We didn’t know whether there was another exit.

I did not know the whereabouts of the others who had been in the Command Post. I had to assume that instead of retreating back to the garage, they went forward toward the street. [The time] prior to that collapse was my last encounter with both [Ganci and Feehan].

So we were in this office. There was a phone on the desk that did not work. There was no dial tone. Our radios didn’t work. Our cell phones didn’t work. A pretty grim picture was developing rather quickly.

My wife asked me later, “Did you think that you were gonna die down there?” At no point did that even enter my mind. There were people panicking, and I felt I needed to remain as focused as possible. We had a five-gallon water cooler, so we rinsed our mouths to breathe easier. The firefighters were able to locate an exit on the opposite end of the building, which led us out into a marina area on the west side of the building.

When we exited the garage, there was absolutely no evidence of what [had] just went on. The sun was shining. We saw boats in the marina. I found that amazing. But more amazing than that was the silence. After that rumble of the building [falling], there no sounds. No sirens. No birds. No nothing. It was an eerie feeling.

The plan was to walk around the building and go back to the

Command Post. We exited from the North Cove. We walked through the yacht harbor and turned right on Vesey. There, it was an extremely rude awakening. We went from a beautiful, calm atmosphere with no debris to everything covered with soot and an unbelievable amount of paper.

When we reached Vesey near the New York Mercantile, there were several EMS units treating people on the street and a MERV parked there. They had set up a triage area in the lobby of the building on the corner. They seemed to have the situation under control—[FDNY EMS] Capt. Howie Sickles was coordinating their activities. I needed to be at the Command Post to coordinate this MCI. I had made it several yards down Vesey headed toward 4 World Financial when the second collapse occurred.

It wasn’t as loud, but I saw this tremendous cloud coming around the corner. I said, “Oh my God, here we go again!” We ducked behind the building where they had set up this indoor triage area. After [surviving] that second mushroom cloud coming toward us, we were not going to go back to the Command Post where it had been prior to the initial collapse.

I had several chiefs with me—[FDNY EMS] Chief [Pedro] Carrasquillo, Basile, Kowalczyk, [FDNY EMS Capt.] Fran Pascale, Zach Goldfarb and Chief Fred Villani. We found a private area behind where the treatment and transport were taking place, and we had a quick strategy session. We really had limited information as to the extent of what was going on outside our purview. We had EMS resources here. Clearly, we would not go back to what is now called Ground Zero, although we were on the perimeter. I divided up the chiefs that I had with me. We identified two staging locations that we felt were far enough from the incident site yet close enough [to] them to stage and set up treatment areas and casualty collection points.

I had to make these decisions [based] on what information was available at the time. I didn’t know whether there were planes coming down elsewhere in the city. I was concerned for the safety of my personnel. I did not want my people to be anywhere near Ground Zero due to concern about additional collapses, explosions or gas-main breaks, etc. We identified two locations—South Street Ferry to the south, and Chelsea Piers to the north. I split the chiefs between those two locations. I left one chief behind to make sure the patients were taken care of in [the location on Vesey] and that the EMS crews would [eventually] leave that area [after they had cleared out the patients].

The Emergency Operations Center [run by the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management] was not going to be in commission because of its location at 7 World Trade, where they would be relocated. I tried to think of where it would be relocated. What came to mind was 1 Police Plaza. I informed the chiefs that I was going to 1 Police Plaza to coordinate activities from that location. I took Chief Goldfarb, Lt. Terranova and Chief Goldfarb’s aide, Mary Merced, with me.

The place was buzzing. It was jammed with public safety personnel—primarily police officers from every branch within the

FDNY  
Ladder 4



Joseph  
Angelini Jr.  
38  
Firefighter



Michael  
Brennan  
27  
Firefighter



Michael  
Haub  
34  
Firefighter



Michael  
Lynch  
31  
Firefighter



Daniel  
O'Callaghan  
42  
Lieutenant



Samuel  
Oitice  
45  
Firefighter



John  
Tipping II  
33  
Firefighter



David  
Wooley  
53  
Captain



New York City Police Department, plus representatives from outside organizations—health, sanitation, FBI. They were putting together the war room with different representatives.

First, I told the EMS folks with me to call a relative. Then we informed fire operations, EMS operations and dispatch that we were on site at 1 Police Plaza.

We knew that it was going to take time to get FEMA assistance. But we needed to do whatever we could until those resources reached us. We anticipated thousands of patients. We knew that the hospitals couldn't handle this type of patient load. We met with police and the health department personnel and identified several locations where we could set up large casualty collection points. There was some discussion about the use of Chelsea Ice Rink as a temporary morgue should the need arise.

We identified the Javits Center, on the west side, the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the Yankee minor league stadium in Staten Island to be used for casualty collection points [CCPs].

The plan was that we were going to set these locations up, staff them with hospital personnel—primarily surgeons and doctors—secure medical equipment and have it brought to those locations and send patients there. We planned to activate these locations by 1800 hours.

As time progressed and these plans were put into place, we were informed that there weren't many patients and that the hospitals could handle it. Based on the information we received from emergency medical dispatch, there wasn't going to be a need to activate the CCPs.

One other thing that came to mind shortly after our arrival at 1 Police Plaza was patient tracking. That's always an adventure unto itself. We agreed that the police department would dispatch police officers to area hospitals to assist us in capturing patient tracking and accountability information.

At about 3 p.m., I received the information that Chief Ganci and Commissioner Feehan had been killed in close proximity to the Command Post. I couldn't believe it. One minute we're conversing, putting together a strategy to deal with the situation. Next, I find out that both of those officers perished.

I was in constant contact with emergency medical dispatch as well as the [FDNY EMS] Resource Coordination Center. Additionally, we were trying to account for all of our personnel. Throughout the day, I had been informed that not all EMS personnel were accounted for. The concern was that we wouldn't know all those working on scene because the TV networks were broadcasting that any emergency personnel should report for duty—go to the site. When personnel went in on their own, we had no way of knowing their status and/or their location.

I remained on site at Police Plaza until late that evening. I requested RCC to send me an officer so I could go back to Ground Zero. I had to see what was going on from an EMS operations perspective. We made our way on foot to the EMS Command Post on West and Vesey. There were police officers and state troopers all over. The destruction was incomprehensible. Vehicles turned over,

destroyed ambulances, destroyed fire apparatus. Dark. Wet. Dirty. With rescue personnel all over the place.

On my way over to the Command Post, I had to see if my car was still around. It was! The driver's side window was smashed. Later, I learned that while people were escaping the collapse and passing parked cars, they smashed the windows to stick their heads in to get a breath of fresh air.

At the Command Post around 10 p.m., I saw [FDNY EMS] Chief [Robert] McCracken and some of the other chiefs I was with earlier in the day. We hugged each other to acknowledge the fact that we were there. At that point there were few civilians being treated at West and Vesey. A schedule was being put together so that appropriate relief personnel could be used. But we knew, for the most part, it wasn't going to be a significant EMS operation.

Over the next few days, the only ambulances on the scene of this operation were primarily mutual aid ambulances. Foot teams and triage teams staffed by FDNY EMS personnel were situated in key locations. We also deployed Gators, and they proved to be a tremendous asset. I was there Wednesday and Thursday and then directed back to headquarters on Friday.

Every day I speak to the EMS deputy chief on site at the Trade Center, who functions as the operations officer and medical liaison to the fire chief overseeing the site. I frequently walk the site to make sure we're on top of the EMS resources. We have been steadily de-escalating the amount of EMS resources on site, and we do that in conjunction with fire operations.

We have one EMS captain, one EMS lieutenant, two BLS units and one ALS unit on scene. They have a Gator, as well as a stocked ambulance in the two sectors that we now have operating there—west and east. Those resources are on standby in case anybody gets injured, whether a construction worker or firefighter or any other emergency personnel. In addition, we have two morgue ambulances—the stretchers have been removed. There is one EMT assigned to each of those vehicles. They remove recovered emergency and public safety personnel [bodies] to the [medical examiner's] office.

We'll continue to support the fire operation down there. I know there's still a significant number of firefighters unaccounted for. And they're determined to remain on site until everybody's accounted for. Personally, I don't believe that everybody's going to be accounted for. It's not possible. Words cannot describe what's been going on as far as the operation down there, the memorial services, the families, the media inquiries. Of course we have to pick up the pieces and move on.



JACKSON

**Cosmo Jackson, EMT, MetroCare Ambulance**

Before the South Tower came down, FDNY had all the drivers on the divider in the middle of West Street, near the [back of] our ambulances. Me, being a fool—seeing both towers on fire—I wandered closer and closer to the buildings.

**FDNY Ladder 5**



**Louis Arena**  
32  
Firefighter



**Andrew Brunn**  
28  
Firefighter



**Vincent Giammona**  
40  
Lieutenant



**Thomas Hannafin**  
36  
Firefighter



**Paul Keating**  
38  
Firefighter



**John Santore**  
49  
Firefighter



**Gregory Saucedo**  
31  
Firefighter



**Michael Warchola**  
51  
Lieutenant

My partner [EMT Yamel Merino] was still in the staging area getting instructions.

I heard what sounded like thunder and, when I looked up, I heard the rumbling sound. But, what a lot of people didn't see because they weren't that close, [was that] the whole top of Tower 2 exploded. Completely exploded.

When I started running, I didn't know it was coming down. I ran because it exploded, and I thought I was gonna get crushed by debris falling. I took off down West Street toward Vesey.

I remember jumping across the divider on West Street. The force of the building coming down knocked me down three times. The debris was so hot. I was afraid of getting burned. Each time I got back up and continued running—bam!, I'd be on the street again. By the time it had stopped, both of my hands were swollen from me hitting the street hard. I kept wandering two blocks down West Street and [followed] some people onto a [New York Transit] bus that was there.

As the bus started rolling, the [North Tower] came down. The bus took us as far as he could toward Battery Park, and then the bus stalled on us because of too much of that soot stuff going into the system. There was an EMT on the bus from AMR who lost her partner. She said, "Listen, I'm gonna try to get you some help." By then I was throwing up, could hardly breathe and had gashes on my hands. She put my arms around her shoulders and got the back of my pants and literally dragged me a block. She said, "Listen, if we get out of this, we're gonna be like best of friends."

A Regional ambulance went by us. She chased that ambulance about a block and started banging on the side of it to [make it] stop. They had a DOA in the back. They stopped and rushed me to St. Vincent's Hospital. St. Vincent's was great. They had triage set up right there on the street. Because my breathing so bad, they jumped on me right away. They ran lines, had oxygen on me and gave me medications. Later that evening, my breathing finally got better.

**Editor's note:** EMT Yamel Merino died while working at the Trade Center on Sept. 11.

### Al Kim, vice-president of New York City operations, MetroCare Ambulance

Responding ambulances set up on West Street. We were set up on the furthest southbound lanes near 2 World Trade, in 90° angles. An FDNY EMS officer directed us to coordinate our crew with forward triage in the Marriott Hotel.

Ambulance 15 George, the unit [MetroCare EMT] Yamel [Merino] was on, as well as three of our other 9-1-1 units, were part of the responding units there. A slew of FDNY units and hospital units that provide 9-1-1 response also converged on the same location.

We set the units up in a row. There were units that were 9-1-1 assigned to this area anyway. Obviously, they were the first ones in prior to any kind of official deployment. I found out after the fact that these units had removed patients at least two, three, four times

prior to the official set-up. They found people coming out, started loading up, going to the hospital and returning.

I was under the pedestrian South Bridge, maybe 40 feet from the South Tower. The crews were lined up outside their ambulances. There was a fire chief in the lobby of the South Tower. The planes had hit both towers, and firefighters were already ascending the towers. The goal was that they would send patients down. Then we would get waved from the lobby. There was debris coming down, but nothing that bad at that point.

I was to wave EMS crews in, crew-by-crew. They would get a patient with their stretcher and remove them to their vehicle. Then the next crew would go in. That was the premise of the set-up. Obviously, we were way too close.

Yamel's was one of the first units to park in the area. They were one of the first units waved over to head in the direction of the South Tower. Soon after they left our area, Tower 2 came down and the area became buried along with some of the buses. Yamel's partner, Cosmo Jackson, ran by me. Yamel was between me and the tower. She was buried under falling debris.

I didn't run anywhere. I had no time. When I recovered, I thought I was in a cave. Steve Zakheim, our chief operating officer, was to my right. We were screaming for each other. Brian Washburn, operations director for New York Presbyterian Hospital, was to the left of me. He had just pulled up to look after his 9-1-1 units as well.

I immediately went looking for Yamel and Cosmo. But, the place was on fire. We had to get away from it. I later returned to search for Yamel, but couldn't find her. After I found [my remaining personnel], I turned the crews affected by the collapse into patients and sent them away.



KOWALCZYK

### Walter Kowalczyk, division chief, FDNY EMS

I was working in my office in Brooklyn that morning. I monitor the fire department radio in addition to the EMS frequencies. The first sign that I became aware of [that something was wrong] was when the radio announced the fire department had transmitted a second alarm for the World Trade Center. This was not unusual, but when I switched from the Brooklyn to the Manhattan frequency, it became clear a plane had gone into [1 World Trade].

At 9:01 I was called by Citywide to respond. As I was leaving, a TV was on in one of the offices and [the crash] was already on CNN. Clearly the incident had been confirmed. The route I took from my office to the site put me on the Gowanus Expressway.

As I approached the Gowanus [an elevated part of the highway that leads to the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel], I saw clearly what was going on. [FDNY] EMT Michael Ober was with me, and I told him, "This could be terrorism, and we need to be cautious about protecting ourselves and keeping our eyes open."

Initially when I left the office, I thought it was an accident.

### FDNY Ladder 7



George Cain  
35  
Firefighter



Robert Foti  
42  
Firefighter



Charles Mendez  
38  
Firefighter



Richard Muldowney Jr.  
40  
Firefighter



Vincent Princiotta  
39  
Firefighter



Vernon Richard  
53  
Captain



Vincent Halloran  
43  
Lieutenant

### FDNY Ladder 8

When I got closer and saw the enormity of the event, I was concerned that this was something else. I'm not sure if the second plane had hit prior to my arrival at 9:23, but the upper floors of the Trade Center were well engulfed. From a distance, we couldn't discern the North Tower from the South Tower. I believe the second plane hit while we were on the Gowanus.

I came through the Battery Tunnel, and the police department already had emergency routes in effect. So inbound traffic into the Trade Center was only emergency [vehicles]. Coming through the tunnel were other ambulances, fire trucks, police. As we pulled onto West Street from the Battery Tunnel, we had to use caution and slow our response, given the debris already there from the building, as well as body parts.

I positioned my vehicle on Liberty Street between West and the Hudson River by the Marriott World Trade Center Hotel. I never saw my vehicle upright again.

The radio frequency was inundated with transmissions and dispatch information. From a command-and-control perspective, the first thing we needed to do was identify where the Command Post was. As I walked up West Street, other fire officials indicated to me that the Command Post was in 1 World Trade. Traditionally, from a firefighting EMS operation, we're a joint Command Post. The medical branch is set up in conjunction with the fire command and reports to the incident commander.

As we entered [1 World Trade], we had to be cautious. Although we had helmets and response coats on, there was a lot [of debris] coming down. We were physically walking through body parts, torsos. You had to get focused on command and control, but you had this human element affecting your decision-making.

At that point, Chief [Jerry] Gombo was on scene. As I received information from him, he said, "We need to get out of the concourse level. They reported another plane coming in." Now, that goes back to me being unsure [at this time] if the second plane had hit or, if given the magnitude of the incident, there was a report of a third plane.

The thing that initially surprised me—and I've managed a multitude of EMS operations with high casualties—was you usually get a grip on yourself and know what you have to do. [But] my mouth went dry to the point where I couldn't talk. I couldn't physically get a Lifesaver or piece of gum to try to do the job I needed to do.

With the order to exit the concourse level, we walked across West Street to the front of 2 World Financial Center. We relocated the EMS Command Post to a driveway there with the fire Command Post. Alongside us was Chief [Peter] Ganci, the chief of the fire department.

Chief Gombo and I started to establish command and control. Chief Gombo, the EMS command officer, was to establish and coordinate strategy with incident command. I was the operations officer in charge of implementing the strategy. Chief officers had responded in, and we started to give out assignments that were broad in nature.

At that point, the street extensions were Vesey on the north and

Liberty on the south. There was a multi-prong approach, trying to get face-to-face directions, having chief officers indicating to our Citywide dispatcher where our Command Post was, utilizing cell phones. I remember Lt. [Ross] Terranova being on a cell phone with Citywide giving directions.

Just as we were—I'm not even going to use the word "stabilized"—it started. A noise I can never forget. It was loud, but yet it was soft: The collapse of [2 World] Trade. We didn't know what was happening. We were setting up the Command Post in the middle of the driveway as it started. We saw a plume of smoke erupting, and we ran. Several members, including myself and Chief Gombo, escaped west into the driveway [of 2 World Financial], which turned into an underground garage.

There was a point that was beyond our control: the bodies coming off the Trade Center. I'm not talking about one or two. There had to be half a dozen or more. And there was nothing we could do. That's another sound that I'll never forget. The only sound I can compare it to is the sound of plywood hitting the floor. That noise. Also, in front of 1 World Trade there is a [glass]-enclosed driveway, and the bodies were coming through that glass. Some [bodies] landed on it, some went through it. These bodies were not on fire. I'm not sure if they were jumping, if—in the smoke environment—they saw a light and they thought it was an exit, or if the sheer explosion blew out the windows and the suction drew them out. You just tried not to look. When you tried to focus on what you had to do, the sounds associated with these people making contact with the ground interrupted that sense of thinking.

So we escaped into the garage area. That was scary because I couldn't find my aide. I knew that Chief Ganci and Commissioner [William] Feehan were next to me at the Command Post. Ganci and Feehan were that close. I went into the garage. Obviously, they went toward the Trade Center. People ran in different directions. I didn't know where they were as the mushroom cloud developed.

As I'm running, the life questions are coming to me. I'm recently widowed with two children. So right away, I'm wondering, "Will I ever again see my eight-year-old and my 13-year-old who depend on me for parenting?" In other words, escaping into the garage, I'm saying, "Fool, why am I doing this?" Because, typically in a building collapse, you have a building that's going to arc in one direction or another. My thinking and my training says I'm basically running into a dead end. What's going to prevent this debris from following the natural course of the driveway into the garage?

For a time, that's what we thought was happening. In a sense, the cloud came down—the dust and debris. We were trapped in that garage area, but we weren't sure what we were trapped by. The garage area filled with smoke, and we didn't know how to get out. Probably two dozen people were in there—a cross-section of city government from firefighters to police officers to Commissioner [Thomas] Fitzpatrick.

It was eerie to hear one of the fire officers screaming for his men, "16 where are you? 16 where are you?" This is a man who's trained to get us out and he can't even find his people to aid us.

FDNY Ladder 9



Jeffrey Walz  
37  
Firefighter



John Tierney  
27  
Firefighter



Gerald Baptiste  
35  
Firefighter

FDNY Ladder 10



Sean Tallon  
26  
Firefighter

Chief Gombo stood next to me, gasping for air. The daylight that existed when we escaped was no longer there. The access point to that garage was filled with debris from the Trade Center. Air quality was a little questionable, so we didn't know what our destiny was to be. Everybody maintained their composure. We all acknowledged that we couldn't worry about doing our jobs. At that point, it was our survival. I thought I was living a movie. But this was no movie. It was real life.

I can't tell you how long we were there. It could have been an hour, but I don't think it was more than 15 to 20 minutes. We finally got out. Somebody found a staircase and we exited on the north end of the Financial Center in the area of the Winter Garden.

In the Winter Garden area, we saw the water. I thought we had exited into a snowstorm. The entire air was hazy, filled with dry snow. I thought that breathing outside would be better than breathing inside; [it wasn't].

We started to walk north up West where we met with Chief Zach Goldfarb and Chief [Frederick] Villani. Our objective was to grab whoever we could and hold a strategy session. That's when the second collapse started. We evacuated into the lobby of the Embassy Suites Hotel, which is across the street from the American Express Building [3 World Financial Center].

[When the second collapse occurred] we retreated back into the hotel. In our minds the entire portion of southern Manhattan was questionable from a safety perspective. After some discussion, the decision was made to go to Chelsea Piers, an area between 23rd Street and the West Side Highway. Normally, it functions as a multi-faceted recreation facility—basketball, racquetball, roller-skating. I was directed to go set up operations [there].

We met with the management of Chelsea, who were extremely cordial to us. Whatever we needed, we could have.

Then we started to set up operations on 23rd Street. Within 45 minutes, we had about 75 ambulances from all types of jurisdictions—the hospital-based component to the private component to resources from outside New York City.

We set up an operation with the staging officer, [FDNY EMS] Capt. [Gerald] Gelbard and tried to categorize our resources. At one point, the ambulances went from 17th Street, or maybe even 16th Street, all the way up to 23rd Street. And we're not talking about one row. We probably had three rows of ambulances there.

The people responding wanted to go down [to the Trade Center area] and make a difference. The hazardous materials technicians—BLS units with hazmat certification—got in my face several times. They identified themselves as hazmat technicians and said they needed to get down there. I had to get back in their faces and say, "You'll stay here."

Finally, I hit home to them when I said, "I'm responsible for you going home to your spouse, parents, relatives. Your destiny is in my hands. And until I get directions that it's safe to operate, nobody is moving anywhere."

Chelsea then became a mobilization point for anything medical. We started to give birth in a matter of minutes to an EMS system

almost as large as one of our own divisions; in fact, probably bigger, given the magnitude of the resources there.

Managing those resources was a problem in itself—controlling them, categorizing them. The police or a group of law enforcement officers from the U.S. Secret Service assisted us in crowd control. Here we were in the middle of the only exit from Manhattan. It was an evacuation route and thousands of people were exiting north. Meanwhile, picture the amount of people coming into New York, streaming toward the towers.

When [FDNY EMS] Dr. [Glenn] Asaeda and [FDNY EMS] Dr. [Neal] Richmond from Commissioner [John] Clair's office arrived, I was happy to see them. In addition to the hundreds of EMS providers, we were being overrun by busloads of doctors and nurses. I'm not talking about cars—busloads. Dr. Asaeda took responsibility for the medical professional component.

Now many operations started to come together. We had a staging area for EMS personnel to report to; we had a mobilization point for any medical component. Then we took a portion of our resources to set up a casualty collection point at Chelsea. That did two things for us: It gave us a functional medical sector, and it also gave some of the medical professionals a sense of focus—at least for the next 90 minutes.

Then there were the logistical supplies that came with [the incoming personnel] or after them. I would have sworn there was a manufacturing building around the corner piping out things from IV solutions to hardware to LIFEPAKS to stretchers to oxygen—you name it. We were starting to become overwhelmed. Shortly after that, Chief [John] Peruggia, who worked for Chief Ganci, contacted me over the radio. He was running the EMS operation at Chambers. During this process, I recorded the numbers of resources that we had available for dispatch. At one point, the initial [number] was 40 BLS units, 20 ALS. I gave that report to Chief Peruggia, who then requested I respond to the Command Post at Chambers and West.

On arrival there, I saw somewhat of a Command Post established. I spoke to Chief Peruggia, and we agreed that I would take command of the medical branch of the overall operation. The system there was starting to come together. There weren't any casualties, though. There were reports here and there of a casualty. That was probably most frustrating.

Cell phones were virtually useless, and, for a period of time, a lot of [communication] was face-to-face. Initially, it was almost impossible to run a face-to-face operation, given the geography and the demographics of the [event]. It took some self-starting on the part of all the EMS providers—EMTs, paramedics, EMS supervisors, chiefs, captains—to do what they thought was right for the EMS operation. As we started to get communications back together, it didn't take much to get a workable operation. We started to [operate with] branches and divisions, with mobile sectors in the north and south.

As the events started to unfold, [FDNY EMS] Chief McCracken arrived at the Chambers and West Command Post. About 5 p.m.,

#### FDNY Ladder 11



Michael  
Cammarata  
22  
Firefighter



Edward  
Day  
45  
Firefighter



John  
Heffernan  
37  
Firefighter



Richard  
Kelly Jr.  
50  
Firefighter



Michael  
Quilty  
42  
Lieutenant



Matthew  
Rogan  
37  
Firefighter

#### FDNY Ladder 12



Angel  
Juarbe Jr.  
35  
Firefighter



Michael  
Mullan  
34  
Firefighter



we were getting ready to sit and talk when 7 World Trade began to collapse. We ran north, but then, two or three minutes later, we composed ourselves and returned to focus on strategy.

We had a sense that we needed to get a picture from everybody on what they were dealing with and where we needed to pick up. We needed to regroup. And we came to a mutual agreement, both within the region and outside the region, in terms of resources. We spoke about shoring up the instant mutual aid and trying to get the 9-1-1 system back into place.

You just never know what little component is going to push you over the edge. This event resurfaced many major incidents for me. [For example], the bombings on New Year's Eve 1982 when we were preparing for the Times Square celebration and there were explosions at 1 Police Plaza. One of the things that's always in the back of our minds is the secondary device. At Police Plaza, there were explosions happening all around us. The same thing kept happening to us at the World Trade Center.

The other MCIs [I've worked] were closed incidents. The incident happened; you responded; you mitigated the response; you implemented incident command; you removed the victims. Done.

These were open incidents, and you had no control. At the bombings and at this event, the rescuers quickly became victims. We were there here to help people, but we became victims. I feel for our people. I feel for the people who have gone through this.

**Juana Lomi, EMT-P, NYU Downtown Hospital EMS Dept., Unit 01 Victor with partner Tamara Drummond, EMT-P**

We heard a large bang. We ran outside and saw Tower 1 on fire. We jumped in our bus and started to respond. On the way there, our dispatch alert was already in the vehicle computer. I parked at Vesey and Church, near Borders bookstore, located in 5 World Trade. Initially, the incident didn't seem like it was gonna be something of great magnitude. It seemed manageable. I wasn't getting nervous or anything.

I told my partner, Tamara [Drummond], "Anybody who comes out of there and who's able to walk, have them walk. If there's a fractured arm or upper body trauma with no respiratory distress, tell them to walk to a triage area we set up at St. Peter's Church on Church Street, just north of Vesey." We didn't have to go into the towers because people were running out. It was overwhelming. We had a lot of badly burned patients.

When the second plane hit, I heard this tremendous rumbling—the loudest noise I've ever heard in my entire life. I saw a huge shadow in the trees as it approached. I thought it was an explosion. I didn't see the second plane hit. I heard what sounded like a huge train. When it hit, I didn't have my helmet right there, and things started flying off of the South Tower. There were shoes, cell phones, money, wallets and briefcases dropping.

I ran to our vehicle and got my helmet. Debris was falling in different directions. Everything after that started to move quickly. Everybody started to move. Vehicles started to move away. I lost Tamara after that. I didn't know where she was.

I didn't drive away because I was trying to hide from the beams and other things falling from the sky. I went underneath an overhang at the Borders bookstore. The shape of the building [5 World Trade] helped protect me. I'm only 5'2", so I was able to hide. I stayed there for a little while, but then people started to run and scream and things got worse. Then a police officer yelled across the street to me, "Girl, what are you doing here? Move north." I said, "No, I can't move anywhere. My partner is not here, and I have to help people."

I didn't know what had happened. I was below it. I couldn't see it. All I heard was the sound. So I stepped across the street, and things were still flying. I had little pieces falling on my helmet. It was like a hammer hitting on my head.

Then I saw the flames, and people hanging out the windows, looking down, trying not to move and just waiting. I looked up and saw what looked like a female falling. I turned away, then I turned back and looked again. Sometimes you don't want to see something, but you look just because you want to know what's going on. Then another guy jumped. And then another. That's when I really started feeling uncomfortable and started moving quickly. I told people, "Get out of here! Run to the church. Run to the church."

Earlier, I had told Tamara something wasn't right. In my 14 years in EMS, I have never been in anything like this. I told her, "Listen, if anything happens, don't go too far away from me and head for the subway [entrance]," because it was close. Now she had moved away and disappeared. I was worried. Where was she? I was more afraid of something happening to her than I was about myself.

Then the South Tower collapsed. I thought it was a bomb. I heard what sounded like when they throw pieces of sheetrock right on top of each other at a construction site. It had a domino effect. It was like, "Ton, ton, ton." It got really dark, and there were fumes [in the air]. I didn't know the building wasn't there because it was so dark.

I continued to look for Tamara as everybody started driving off. On the corner opposite me, there were two police officers standing near the subway entrance. I said, "Guys, what's going on?"

They said, "I don't know, girl, but try to keep your eyes open and move away from underneath that store." Then more people were running [down the streets], screaming and yelling. They had fractured arms, head trauma and burns.

Then I saw this big guy, about 6'5", fall on his knees, right in the middle of the street. Beams and debris were falling near him, and this guy started preaching. He opened his arms to the sky and was yelling, "This is the end!"

I said, "He's gonna die; something's gonna fall on top of him."

A cop said, "Come on. Keep going, girl." He wanted me to go across the street. But I didn't. I ran over to the man and said, "Guy, come on. Get up."

He was still chanting, "This is the end." He was gone. I saw in his eyes that he was not listening. Then, I pulled him by the arm. I said, "Sir, get up! Get up!" I hit him on the shoulder. Nothing. Finally, I turned around and gave him a kick with my boot, right

**FDNY  
Ladder 13**



**Thomas  
Hetzel**  
33  
Firefighter



**Walter  
Hynes**  
46  
Captain



**Dennis  
McHugh**  
34  
Firefighter



**Thomas  
Sabella**  
44  
Firefighter



**Gregory  
Stajk**  
36  
Firefighter



on his back. Boom! I hit him so hard that he went forward and hit his face. He woke up, realized he was in danger and got up and ran away, leaving his briefcase behind. I guess I snapped him out of it. Thank God.

Then I ran to the other side of the street. People started coming *en masse*. The two officers and I ran for the subway entrance. I was thinking about getting to shelter, getting to cover. I wanted to use the subway as a passageway to go underneath the debris. I thought it was more protective to walk underground than on the streets. I told people, "Come [in the subway], you can get all the way to North and get off on Chambers from here. Walk underneath the train; protect yourself; get out of here!"

It was already dark, and heavy debris was falling. I still didn't look up to see what was collapsing. I couldn't see. And before I knew it, the second building—Tower 1, closest to us—came down. I saw a dark shadow coming toward us. That's when the two officers, a couple of civilians and I jumped in the subway entrance. We fell all the way down. No, it was more like we rolled down the steps. The only thing I had was a bruised leg.

Then the whole entrance was closed off by debris—beams or something. I tried to look up. There were a lot of people [outside] screaming. I knew we had to go through the subway to get out.

I thought the entrance and everything around us was gonna sink in. Inside the subway, the fumes got worse because the subways were all connected with the World Trade Center. Everybody was screaming; everybody was moving; everybody was nervous. They didn't know what to do.

I told people to keep walking. Nobody could see. You could only hear people. You were bumping into people, and everybody was grabbing each other. So I said, "Listen, I know for a fact that there's an exit north of here. I know the stations. Just lean on the wall, and we'll walk our way out of here." The fumes overwhelmed you. You had to breathe, but you couldn't breathe.

I lost my helmet, my belt, my stethoscope, my cell phone—everything fell off when I fell. And I wasn't gonna look for it. All I had was my pants and my shirt.

We walked only two blocks, but it seemed like an eternity. I thought like I was a blind person. I think that occurred to me because I have two friends that are blind—totally blind. They go in new places and determine the edges, the corners and the doors by touching. I learned that from them. That's why I told everybody, "Touch the walls. You can't see. Touch the walls."

We found our way to the Chambers and Church exit. Everybody got out. We told them to just keep walking north. I also told them where the [NYU Downtown Hospital] was.

When I went to the job, it was daytime. By the time I got out of the subway it was nighttime. It was pitch black. You couldn't see. I thought, "Where's Tamara?" I turned around on Chambers Street and started walking back. The whole street was filled with paper and dust. I thought, "This is the end. There was a nuclear war, and it caught us." I prayed, "God, if my family's dead and if my relatives are dead, I don't want to be alive."

One of the officers followed me, "Why are you going back?" "Why am I going back?" I said, "because my partner's in there."

When I got back to Church and Vesey, the only vehicle left was mine. It was completely covered with dust; the windshield was broken; a little mirror was gone; and it had a flat. I started to drive the vehicle slowly and moved it to Chambers Street and left it there. I continued to look for Tamara.

She [had been] in this area, but then I couldn't see. I couldn't tell where the corners were anymore. I figured there had to be some place where she had hid. I started to look for her like I would a little kid. I wasn't able to walk well. There were too many things on the ground. There were only five or six people in that area because almost everybody had evacuated. Some people were underneath cars. Some were dead.

The more I walked, the more things I started to see on the ground. I was praying that I wouldn't see a blue uniform. I started finding pieces of clothing with body parts. I know from working in the field what pieces of flesh look like even if they're covered by dust.

After 45 minutes, I couldn't look any more. The officer said, "Go back [to the hospital] because maybe she went back. Maybe she drove away with somebody."

I thought, "I can't go back to the hospital without her. They're gonna say, 'Where were you? Why didn't you help your partner?'"

I took a deep breath and started walking back. Somebody had moved my vehicle to Greenwich Street. It was still running. I didn't shed a tear while the commotion was going on. I was being strong. But now I was crying because I knew it was over, and I couldn't find my partner.

I put my head on the steering wheel and said, "Oh God. What am I gonna do now?" Then I turned my head to the side and saw my supervisor, Peter Fromm, coming toward me. Peter had a terrified look in his eyes. I said, "Peter, what happened here?"

"I don't know," he said. "Tell me what happened to you."

I went through the whole thing and told Peter, "I have go back to find Tamara. I'm afraid she's dead." I jumped out to go back. Peter, a soft-spoken guy that I've never seen yell or anything, said, "Juana! No. You listen. We're going to the hospital. She might be at the hospital. You don't know."

So Peter and I rode back to NYU in a vehicle that wasn't doing that well with the wipers on to clear the dust away. On the way we found two firemen and put them in back. The fumes had overcome them both, and one was having an asthma attack. I dropped them off at the ER. I put some water on my face, washed out my eyes and pulled my hair back.

When I finally went back to our garage, I saw Lt. Rene Davila coming out of the garage. He hugged me and started crying. And I thought, "OK, he must know Tamara's dead." But she wasn't. He was just happy to see me alive because nobody knew where I was. He had seen me on Church Street and didn't know if I survived.

I started crying and said, "My God, Tamara's dead. I can't find Tamara." Then, I felt somebody tapping me from the back, and it



Richard  
Allen  
30  
Firefighter



Arthur  
Barry  
35  
Firefighter



Thomas R.  
Kelly  
51  
Firefighter



Scott  
Kopytko  
32  
Firefighter



Scott  
Larsen  
Age unavailable  
Firefighter



Joseph  
Leavey  
45  
Lieutenant



Douglas  
Oelschlager  
36  
Firefighter



Eric  
Olsen  
41  
Firefighter

was Tamara. She was there all nice and clean. I started hitting her, hugging her and telling her, "Don't you ever leave me again."



**Alexander Loutsky, EMT, FDNY EMS**

We were in vehicle 219 at an intersection right by the Brooklyn Bridge. Me and my partner [EMT Eric Ramos] were talking small talk. And I noticed—the World Trade Center was right in our view—I noticed a plane going down. It was flying low, and I interrupted him, "Eric, look at that! Look how low that plane is! It's gonna hit. It's gonna hit!" A few seconds later, it exploded,

just went in and exploded. We just shook. We shook.

Quickly I took my radio, and I thought, "I have one shot to get it right." Because the radios are terrible down here, you always have to repeat yourself, or they put us out with no response and stuff. I said,

"01 Charlie for the priority."

"01 Charlie, go."

"01 Charlie. We have just witnessed a plane hit the World Trade Center."

[The dispatcher's] voice went, "What?!" and then everything went crazy on the radio. You couldn't transmit anymore. A few seconds later, we were trying to transmit that we were staging at Church and Fulton—at the very end of Fulton, aimed at 5 World Trade Center.

About a minute later we were by St. Paul's [Chapel] and the Millennium Hotel. Eric was acting as the triage officer. I was trying to do the transmission and trying to get a spot to start operating until some semblance of command came along. As far as we knew, we were the only ones there. But 01 Adam was just by [us at] Church and Vesey. So we were quite close to one another.

When we got there thousands of people were coming out of the

building after the first plane hit. They had terror and fear in their faces. They were running, screaming. We were inundated. We had no command at that point. We saw fire trucks over on Liberty. According to the MCI plan we have on board that comes through our MDT [mobile data terminal], we were supposed to go to the concourse level in Tower 1. But by the time we got to Church and Fulton, the priority was not, "Let's go to the concourse level." It was, "Look at all these people coming out." You couldn't abandon them.

[At some point we relocated to] West Street right in front of 1 World Trade—underneath the North Bridge between Liberty and Vesey—to assist [FDNY EMS] Lt. [Rene] Davila in establishing EMS operations at that location. He said to me and Eric, "I want you guys to stick to me. You're my staging officers, and I want you to stick to me like glue."

I knew by looking at his face that the weight of us was on his shoulders. I felt good about that and a little safe about that. It reassured us. Lt. Davila had us use MCI triage tags on the victims—about a dozen of them. We sent a lot of the walking wounded—the people that were yellow tagged—out of the borough. So we wouldn't inundate the neighboring hospitals that would have the more critical or unstable patients.

We were in front of 1 World Trade triaging people when the second plane hit. I wasn't aware of it at the time. All of our patients ran away. We had to get out of that area because it was totally unsafe. Everyone high-tailed out of there. We had this [North] Bridge covering us, so a lot of the debris—the metal and everything—didn't hit us squarely. Rene told us to go back to Church and Fulton. We headed south on West Street, but that's where the explosion came from. Things were falling down. We took one look up Liberty Street, and it was total destruction. The building was on the floor. There was no way to get through.

People were screaming. Terror is the word to describe it. You had some people looking up into the building—they just lost it. You had people running for their lives. They knew that this was the end of the world.

When we got back to Church and Fulton, I was the staging officer. My function was getting people out of there. I loaded [private and hospital ambulances] up as much as I could—up to six patients each—to get them out of there, because [the area] was unstable. For example, I said, “Where you from?”

“Brooklyn.”

“Name a hospital.”

“LICH [Long Island College Hospital].”

“Go—that’s where you’re going.”

We saw a fair number [of patients]—in the 10s at a time. Burn victims—second- and third-degree, long-bone fractures, asthma attacks.

Then there was the rumble. It sounded like a volcanic eruption. Everybody started screaming and running up Fulton. I thought I was gonna get trampled. A lot of the patients also ran.

I ducked under a little truck. Everybody went by, like a stampede. When I came out from under the truck, I saw this garage by the Millennium [Hilton] Hotel. It [has] an indentation of about a foot. There was a cop huddled there. I went and huddled next to him. As I looked at the building [2 World Trade], I saw it coming down. I didn’t think we were gonna make it. You couldn’t run away from that. Then the thing came down. Everything was black.

I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t see. I realized with all this articulate matter that I wasn’t going to be able to hold my breath for minutes. I couldn’t hear. I panicked a little bit. I sorta felt like the fish that shakes a little bit because I couldn’t breathe. I took my radio and started banging it around. I cracked glass. When I cracked the glass, I put my hand inside, and it felt familiar. It turned out to be a van. I slipped inside and brought my head down low. I covered my head with my jacket and took shallow breaths. There was a lot of pressure there.

Everything started to settle. It was like being in a fog. I could see 10 to 15 feet ahead of me. I didn’t see anyone. I knew NYU Hospital was two blocks straight ahead of me. I figured I could make it, so I went there. They saw me and washed me down. They stuck my head in the sink. They gave me oxygen. They put a pulse ox on me and tried to get me to stay. I said, “No, I gotta go back to my post. I gotta go back. I don’t want to abandon my post.”

So I went up Church and Fulton, and I saw our ambulance in flames. I met up with a firefighter, Alex Santoro, and a cop. The three of us made a pact not to separate, to stick together. We were looking for, but not finding anyone else.

Then, suddenly, we heard a rumble and high-tailed it outta there. We made it up from Dey Street—that becomes John Street—right at the corner of John and Broadway. We ducked in a store that makes old-fashioned chocolate, slammed the door and everything went totally black. If we had stayed [outside] a second or two more, we wouldn’t have made it.

Even with the door shut, all this pressure was billowing in. We emptied out the chocolate jars and filled them with water before the water main went. We didn’t know how long we’d be there.

As things cleared up a bit, it was like a fog again. We went out looking for survivors again. There wasn’t anyone on the streets, but there were people in the buildings, in the basements, hiding. We got a couple of pipes in case we needed to break into stores to get water and supplies.

As I was leaving, my radio started to work. I heard that they had some kind of triage at South Street Ferry. I told the fire captain that I wanted to go check it out and went to South Ferry. I met up with [FDNY EMS] Chief [James] Basile around noon. There was a MASH kind of triage outside the ferry.

Chief Basile gave me a new set of commands—to help evacuate lower Manhattan. I was directing people—the general public—onto ferry boats to Brooklyn, Staten Island, New Jersey. There were hundreds and hundreds of people. I did that for 12 hours; lost my voice. I wasn’t doing any EMS; I was just working as part of an evacuation operation.

It was there that I found out that Eric was OK and in a hospital. I felt better then. We’re with our partners more than we’re with a spouse or family. We’re on the streets in a small, compact area with that individual for eight hours or more. After a while you get to know each other real well.

I took the ferry to Staten Island. I went home, but couldn’t sleep and went back to Ground Zero on Wednesday. I worked the 9-1-1 system and then went to Ground Zero. You felt that your life was spared, so you should be of benefit to someone who was buried there. On the 12th we thought there were others buried and alive. You wanted to spend as much time as you could getting those people out of there.

But after a week or so, I said, “I don’t want this rubble to dictate my life.” You’re like a zombie, returning to your tomb or something. I didn’t want to be like that. The hypersensitivity to sound, sleeplessness, the nightmares, this, that and the other thing. I remember [FDNY EMS] Capt. [Brian Milzoff] saying, “The best place, I believe, for you is with your peers.” And, it was so true. That’s why, for me, when I got home, I could only sleep a couple of hours. It was better for me to be here.

After a week, I did morgue duty. They had a forensic pathologist—the ME [medical examiner] or a representative from the ME’s office who would open the bag and take out body parts. My job was to identify and document body parts. They had me, a cop and a firefighter working there because we could better identify our own people. For example, I might see shears that belonged to a medic.

I think a good number of people that suffered and who died there were degloved. I witnessed the degloving of a hand, the degloving of bodies: It was like they were pushed out, like a banana from the peel. We actually had pieces of skin. Maybe a six-inch vertebrae and the skin. There were very few intact bodies, and even the intact bodies were not recognizable. Sometimes, a family

FDNY Ladder 16



Robert Curatolo  
31  
Firefighter



Raymond Murphy  
46  
Lieutenant

FDNY Ladder 20



John Burnside  
36  
Firefighter



John Fischer  
46  
Captain/Former Lieutenant



James Gray  
34  
Firefighter



Sean Hanley  
35  
Firefighter



David LaForge  
50  
Firefighter



Robert Linnane  
33  
Firefighter

member would not be able to say, "Oh well, that's my ... whatever." A lot of the firefighters that had their bunker gear on were intact. We looked in their uniforms to see their names and things like that.

There was a lot of mixing of body parts. We had one interesting one—a pair of trousers with a hip bone, two legs and a wallet. It was perfect for us because it had a wallet and we could identify it. They handed me the wallet. I was able to identify the person. Then we looked to see what else we had. We had flesh, bone, other things. But, then we took a second look, and we had two right legs. Two right legs. It was two people.

The thing that really affected me was an intact body that fell out of the building into the Plaza area. The hand was charred black in a grasping position. I could see how the person had been grasping the building—not wanting to jump, but not wanting to be incinerated. "Should I jump or should I burn?" It must have been a tremendous agony. This person was found dead due to the fall—every bone broken—but the hand was charred black. That was very painful. It's not so much what you saw as what you [imagined] that they went through. It's an agony to me. Very difficult.



**Orlando Martinez, EMT, & Frank Puma, EMT, FDNY EMS**

**Martinez:** Before the first plane hit, we were across from Barclay and Church—one block north of Vesey Street. We were getting our breakfast at 8:45. We were at the counter. We usually order BLTs. They were making it, and we heard a rumble. The building we were in—the Woolworth Building—shook. Debbie, the girl [who works at the deli], looks at Pu [Frank Puma] and me and goes, "Shouldn't you guys go outside and check what's going on?" I told her, "If they need

us, they'll call us."

I told Pu, "Pu just go outside. I'll wait for the food." So Pu goes outside and doesn't come [back] for a minute. The food wasn't ready yet. So I said, "You know what? Let me go out and see what's up with Puma." I went outside and looked around the block. I saw Puma. His mouth was just dropped. He was looking up. I look up, too, and say, "Oh shit. That's gotta be bad. I'm gonna be here all night."

The vehicle was parked a block away. I ran back toward the vehicle—01 Adam—because I was driving that day.

**Puma:** When we heard everything, I ran outside to go see what was going on. I thought a manhole cover or something blew off. I saw people flying down Church. What the hell's going on? I ran down there and looked up. I saw the flames shooting out the top of the tower [1 World Trade]. My mouth just dropped. "Holy shit!" I grabbed my radio. I said, "1 Adam. A fucking bomb just went off in the Trade Center!" My dispatcher told me to stand by. I didn't find out until later that people heard my transmission first and then Alex [Loutsky's]. Both of the transmissions cut into each other. My voice stood out more because I was screaming so loud.

Next thing I know, Orlando pulled up next to me in the vehicle. I jumped in and we drove down to the corner and stopped.

**Martinez:** Actually, we went the wrong way on the street. I was cranky—I didn't eat my breakfast. We parked on Church and Vesey. There was some debris. We opened the ambulance doors and were flooded with people asking for help. We tried to treat as much as we could. We got one guy with second-degree burns.

**Puma:** Second- and third-degree burns from head to toe.

**Martinez:** Nasal burns. We got some internal bleeding. We gave





him oxygen. Five minutes later the bus was just crowded with people. We couldn't throw 'em all out. So we treated as much as we could. We doused some water on their eyes.

When we first got to Church and Vesey, I called the station and talked to Lt. [Bill] Melaragno. I said, "Listen, we need backup. There's nobody here. When's the help coming?" But they were already here. This building's so large. As soon as you got close to it, you had to stop and help people. I didn't realize [other crews] were down the block.

**Puma:** There were too many things going on. Way too much chaos. There were units everywhere. We thought we were the only ones there.

**Martinez:** The first units to back us up were St. Vincent's and [NYU Downtown] Hospital—part of the 9-1-1 system. The first units parked on Church and Vesey and came to help us.

When the second plane hit, we got in the back of the vehicle and closed the doors. We heard "clinks" hitting the top of the vehicle. We thought we would be crushed. After a minute and a half, I got out and ran to the driver's seat. We felt like we were in danger. We had enough patients who required critical treatment. One patient had respiratory burns, and we thought he would go into respiratory arrest. So I started driving down Vesey, going toward NYU Downtown.

Twenty feet in front of us, right on the next corner, a man was waving toward me. I looked at him. Then I looked down. There was a female next to him on the curb. She was just laid out. It seemed like she didn't have any legs. But, they were just so badly crushed. They just blended in with the street. I saw her torso: "Oh, she's gotta be dead."

I stopped, anyway. We had just gone 20 feet. I don't know why we stopped. "Puma get the stretcher and get out the back and take a look at this lady." We looked at her. Her legs were crushed. Her pelvis was exposed. She was waving her arms. There was a lot of blood around her, a lot of flesh. And it was just this one man holding her head. But she was screaming, still talking, waving her arms, "Help me!. Help me."

I got the longboard and the stretcher. I told the burn patient on the stretcher to get up and get on the bench. But he was too weak, so I helped him up and threw two [other] people out [of] the ambulance and told them to get the "whatever" out.

**Puma:** They had a couple of scratches on their arms, a couple cuts—nothing big. I told them, "Your injuries aren't serious—get out. The hospital's that way—just run!"

**Martinez:** We tried to board her. We couldn't board her. She was too wet from all the blood. She was very slippery. Finally I just grabbed her hip bone, just kind of picked it up, the best I could. Just slid her on the board.

**Puma:** When we tried to roll her over, we saw that her whole backside was ripped off.

**Martinez:** I said to Puma, "She's gonna stop breathing any minute, just watch her breathing. She's getting ready to die."

**Puma:** Part of the tire and the landing gear [had hit her].

**Martinez:** Part of the landing gear was found on Vesey and Church, right across the street from where we were. It was gray. A large tire was right next to her. A large piece of metal had sliced her back. We got her on the longboard and picked up as much flesh as we could from where she was and put it between her legs. We strapped her down. I remember there was no collar or HeadBed. We just got her on the board. Put her on the stretcher. Put her in the ambulance. Started driving toward the hospital. It's only three blocks away.

We got to the hospital, I opened the back doors. She had a collar and HeadBed on. Puma finished her off.

**Puma:** I'm good like that.

**Martinez:** It was the wrong size collar, but it was a good job, anyway. We got her out [of] the ambulance. We rushed her into the ER. We forgot about everybody else.

**Puma:** It was a traumatic rescue. In the ambulance going to the hospital, I was holding her hand, and she was screaming, "Help me! It hurts! Please help me!"

I said, "Listen, you gotta calm down. It's gonna be all right. We're gonna be at the hospital. Try to stay calm."

**Martinez:** They actually pumped her with 40 units of blood. I turned around before I left the ER, and I saw her raising her right leg. So I knew she had some sensation. She wasn't paralyzed yet.

**Puma:** A couple days later, we found out that she was still alive. She didn't lose her legs, either.

**Martinez:** We get back to the vehicle and all the patients were gone. But, all their purses and wallets and bags were in the back. I took it to the ER and dumped it. I told the nurses, "These are the patients'. Just sort it out. Do what you can."

Then I told Puma, "We gotta go back. But I gotta wash my hands. They're full of blood." I washed my hands. He washed his hands. The stretcher, it was full of blood. We couldn't take this stretcher back. We doused it with water and washed as much as we could. Didn't put a sheet back on. We just took it like that.

**Puma:** We dropped off our patients before the first tower even went down. When [Orlando] started driving to go back in. I knew something was going on, and I didn't want to go back just yet. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw other ambulances going across to Battery Park City. We were going down Park Place and we made a left onto Church—to go back to Vesey and Church. But we were going the wrong way. Fire engines were coming our way, so we had to back up. I said, "No, no. Let's just follow them. That's where our staging is." When we got to North End and Vesey, there were 10 other ambulances lined up.

We got out and looked in the back to see what we needed to get from the LSU. We were missing sterile water, 8x10s, 4x4s, multi-trauma pads, saline and burn sheets. We were pretty much depleted of all supplies.

When Orlando went to get more supplies at the LSU truck, I walked back up to West Street. We heard them screaming over the radio that the first tower was leaning, that it was ready to fall. So I came back up to Vesey Street and ran straight down toward

FDNY Ladder 20

FDNY Ladder 21



Robert McMahon  
35  
Firefighter



Gerald Atwood  
38  
Firefighter



Gerard Duffy  
53  
Firefighter



Keith Glascoe  
38  
Firefighter



Joseph Henry  
25  
Firefighter



William Krukowski  
36  
Firefighter



Benjamin Suarez  
35  
Firefighter



the Hudson River. Orlando ran north. So me and him got separated for an hour and a half.

**Martinez:** I carried three bottles of water four blocks I stopped for a second to calm down, looked at the water: "What am I doing?" I thought Frank was in front of me. I figured he had a head start. I figured if I run, I'll catch up. For a good two hours, we were separated. I thought he was dead. He thought I was dead.

I ran up Westside Highway near West and Vestry. I ended up right by the St. Vincent's garage. I was too exhausted to run anymore.

**Puma:** I was in front of 3 World Trade when I heard them shout, "Start running!" After the first tower came down, I got in the truck to move it. Then I went to look for my partner or anyone I knew.

After that, right before the second tower collapsed, I was at Vesey and North End when I heard them scream, "The second tower [1 World Trade] is coming down." I went to the truck and drove it as far as Chambers and West before the cloud of smoke and debris caught up with me. It was pitch black in the truck. I thought, "I can't outrun this."

I threw [the truck] in park. I didn't want to overheat the engine. I couldn't see my steering wheel. The smoke found its way in. I thought, "Please God, either let me live through this or kill me quick."

About five or 10 minutes later, the smoke started to settle. I could see light again. I jumped out of the vehicle to see if I knew anyone from my station. I found one person, Mike D'Angelo. I grabbed him and said, "Let's get out of here." He jumped in the passenger seat, and I jumped in the driver's seat. I started the truck, rolled down the window and started driving north on West.

I got about 10 blocks north, and I see someone doing jumping jacks in the street. That was Orlando. We gave each other a big hug and said at the same time, "Bro, I thought that you were dead."



**Robert A. McCracken, chief of EMS Command, FDNY EMS**

Normally, I would be in headquarters before 9 a.m., but I went to check on a project in one of our stations. When I was on the Belt Parkway, the signal came down. I got on the Gowanus [Expressway]; they had opened up the [HOV] lane for emergency vehicles only. It was a stream of fire trucks, ESU [Emergency Service Unit], police cars and ambulances going into lower Manhattan.

I could not believe a small plane could do this because there's no way [it] can make that kind of smoke and damage. When I got to the entrance to the Gowanus, my car was being showered with confetti. It looked like nice-size pieces of paper. I was saying, "Where is all this confetti coming from?" The plume of paper was blowing from lower Manhattan into Brooklyn. I'm in the [HOV] lane, saying [to myself], "This can't be an accident. Be cautious of a secondary incident or a terrorist incident." I was hearing the transmissions from [Lt. Rene] Davila about how they were setting up triage.

When I came out of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, I had to stop and park at Rector Street because of the body parts laying all over the ground. We were running over body parts: chunks, flat pieces of skin, no skulls attached to [the body]. You'd just see the head with no skull inside. You could see just their hairline, like a door-mat—nothing else underneath it. I'll never forget that one bad piece I saw. I could not believe it.

There were parts of an [airplane] engine, and then I looked up and said, "Oh, my God, a second plane hit." When I looked to the South Tower, there had to be a hole in the side of that building that was six stories high. Not straight, but on an angle.

When I got out of my car, I saw a couple of firefighters. I said, "Do me a favor. If any more ambulances come out of this tunnel, divert them up South End Ave. Stay off of West Street." I asked a fireman headed for the South Tower to get the ambulances off Liberty and send them back to West Street to go to the south end [of the island].

Then I met Chief [Gerard] Barbara [chief of the Bureau of Fire Prevention] on Albany and West. He said, "They're going to run another third-alarm assignment in the South Tower. I'm going to meet Chief [Donald] Burns [a citywide tour commander]. What do you know so far?"

I said, "I believe the Command Post is relocated from the lobby [of 1 World Trade] to West Street. I'll meet you in Tower 2."

I figured the guys on Liberty and West would be sending everybody down south, which would be a safe haven for them.

When you looked at the corner of [2 World Trade], you said to yourself, "It's like a table that somebody cut [a leg] off. It's gonna crush down. The weight of the [damaged floors of the] building has got to force it to crush the [floors immediately below]." Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think it was going to implode—that the building was not going to support the weight.

When I got farther up toward Tower 2, Commissioner [Stephen] Gregory, [assistant commissioner of communications], was getting out of his car and said he was going to the Command Post. Then a fire marshal called me over—don't ask me why—and asked me for blankets. I said, "Richie, I'm trying to find command. I don't have blankets. All the ambulances down there have blankets. They're looking for live victims."

He said, "There's bodies everywhere."

I said, "I know that."

You couldn't help but look up. All this confetti, all this stuff was showering you. You were seeing bodies fall. I'll never forget the couple jumping out, holding hands, or the guy you saw on TV, swimming all the way down. It sounded like plywood hitting. I didn't realize they were popping through glass, going through glass panels. It sounded like a broken picture tube when they hit that part of the building. That's what it sounded like to me—not broken glass. It sounded like a broken picture tube or a breaking fluorescent bulb kind of sound.

On my side, as long as the walking wounded were moving, we bypassed them. As long as they were making their own way south, we bypassed them. They asked where there were ambulances. We told them, "South Ferry end, South Ferry end."

My main objective was to get everybody off Liberty, get them off West Street. When I met Gregory, he said he had an EMS captain on scene. This was the first EMS supervisor I knew of on scene. What I had in resources on Albany [Street] were Hatzalah ambulances, commercial ambulances, volunteers and only a couple of department ambulances.

I had a firefighter making sure the [EMS personnel] didn't go up West Street, and I had a firefighter getting them off Liberty. To this day I don't know if those two guys are alive. The people were starting to go down south. On each block, we set up sectors. [If there were] no officers, I looked at a group of people and said, "Any medics here? Good, you're in charge. You have medical control. You supervise this group until I get a boss."

There were no bosses. I was trying to find an EMS captain to make him in charge of this whole sector, which was going to be

the south sector. We already knew there was a north sector set up. As I got up to Liberty, Hatzalah must have had 20 trucks—40 providers. Thank God all those resources were there because that's all I had.

A couple of my trucks were on Liberty, facing the West Street corridor. I told everybody to get out of this corridor, get out of Liberty. They thought I was kidding. I said, "Get out of Liberty because [2 World Trade] looks very unstable."

I wanted all ambulances off Liberty, and I wanted everything to face south on South End Avenue. If there was going to be any transport, they weren't going to cross Liberty and they weren't going to go north. Everything was going south.

So I told these guys, "That's your evacuation plan—everybody goes south."

"Where?"

"To the [Staten Island] Ferry. We have to get out of this area."

I also reminded everybody about using [their] natural body senses—hearing, taste, smell. Don't ask me why; everybody thought I was crazy. I've never said that before on a command. But it was something you had to rely on—your natural senses—because this was a bad feeling, all the way around. When I pulled up I said, "This is a bad one."

Just as we got everybody out [of the Liberty area], I got a transmission over the command frequency to go to the Command Post. So [before I left] I got everybody in a little corridor—like an overhanging building. We set up a little treatment area; we put a couple of stretchers in there with all the ambulances facing south.

Just as I got out of Liberty the sound under my feet was like an earthquake. It sounded like a jet engine screaming in my ear. I didn't know Tower 2 was coming down. I thought it was another plane coming in. I had no idea that this roaring sound was actually the building coming down.

All I felt [next] was a fireman pushing me. Other people were running. I found myself around Liberty, back in a corridor, hiding behind a building. And then everything changed. You could feel the atmosphere come and push you. You noticed debris coming at you, but you hadn't felt it yet. I thought it was a bomb. Everything became total darkness. You couldn't see.

All I heard, before the darkness really got in, [was] this woman screaming, "My baby! My baby! My baby!" And while I was in this corner, pulling my helmet down and pulling my face shield down, I felt something between my legs. [I reached down and felt] a child between my legs. Don't ask me how it got there. The baby was lying on the ground between my legs. It couldn't have been more than two years old.

That's where you start to think you're going to die. You want to die in your sleep, and you want to die peacefully. I started to think about my children, and for the first time, I actually prayed to the Mother Mary. That was gonna get me through.

As this force came, I heard windows breaking and it was total darkness. I opened my eyes. It got so quiet. I said, "This can't be death; this can't be death." I didn't hear nothing [and it was] total

FDNY Ladder 24



Stephen Belson  
51  
Firefighter



Daniel Brethel  
43  
Captain

FDNY Ladder 25



Matthew Barnes  
37  
Firefighter



John Collins  
42  
Firefighter



Kenneth Kumpel  
42  
Firefighter



Robert Minara  
54  
Firefighter



Joseph Rivelli Jr.  
43  
Firefighter



Paul Ruback  
50  
Firefighter

darkness. And all of a sudden somebody yelled, “Is everybody OK?” As I opened my mouth to respond, I got this total mouthful—as if I was buried in the sand. I said, “Oh my God, I’m going to suffocate here. I cannot believe it.”

The next thing I knew, somebody broke the window in front of me. I said, “What are you doing?” I don’t know who he was. He had a flashlight and said, “There’s people on the other side of the windows.” It wound up being one of my HazTac guys [FDNY EMS HazTac ambulances are outfitted with hazardous materials equipment].

On the other side of that window was debris from the building. People were trying to get out through the window [directly in front of me]. They couldn’t see that the other windows were broken. That explained why my window was blown in and the other ones were blown out. That drove me crazy—why three of the windows were blown outward. For some reason, the pressure or the atmosphere didn’t break the window in front of me. If it had, it probably would have cut me up.

The next thing we know, we were pulling people out of this building. We formed a human chain. In the human chain, the mother of the small child [who I retrieved from between my legs] appeared, and I handed the child off [to her].

We went inside [the building], and there was a deli. I don’t know what was worse, being outside or inside. So we started evacuating everybody south. I realized it was just [like] a snowstorm. It was quiet. You saw people walking slowly. I didn’t see one EMS provider. I looked down the street and saw all the trucks empty and vacant. I got as far as two blocks and said, “Where are all my people?” There was nobody. I was alone with civilians and some ATF [alcohol, tobacco and firearms] cops. Before this went down, I knew I had at least 40 Hatzalah guys and [FDNY EMS] Deputy Chief [Ulysses] Grant, who I put in charge of the sector [near Rector Street] before I headed up West Street to the Command Post. So I had left Grant with [FDNY EMS] Capt. [Frank] D’Amato and [FDNY EMS] Lt. [Pauline] Cronin in that sector.

I walked back and start searching all the stores. I saw people [who] made it into stores: “Get out, I don’t know what else is coming.” Now people were telling me the White House had been hit; the Capitol was hit—that’s when I realized we were at war.

I ran over to [another] deli, and Chief Grant was in there. He said, “Where you going?”

“I’m going to make sure everybody’s OK, and I’m going to the Command Post. Get everybody reassembled back to the water’s edge. Start bringing them down to the Ferry terminal.”

So he got people going south. I don’t know how long this took. All I know is [as] I went looking for the Command Post here it came again—the sound—a low roar [like] an engine coming at you. You felt like you were getting sucked into the [engine] intake.

I can’t tell you what building I ran into. I was totally lost, because I couldn’t find street signs. You couldn’t see markers or buildings. The most frustrating thing was seeing fire trucks collapsed,

crushed. Firefighters bent over trying to get air. PASS alarms going off. No command structure anywhere. I didn’t see anybody of rank in my area at all. The next thing I knew I was running from the next tower. That’s when it struck me that the *first* roar I had heard was the [2 World Trade collapsin]. This was the *next* tower chasing me.

I didn’t know the first tower had come down. As a matter of fact—talking about senses—I thought it was a flashover. I was waiting: “Where’s the fuel? Where’s the flashover? Where’s the explosion after the darkness?” I had no idea it was a building. Total darkness—like the end of the world.

I saw a door and ran in as hard as I could, as fast as I could. Somebody knocked me down, gave me a push, gave me that last ding. I was in before he was. To this day, I’m still hurting from that push. But I’m lucky. Whoever pushed me probably saved my life.

I ran as far back as I could into a building. You had to pause. It was strange because I had lived through the first one, and I knew [what was coming with] the second one. I was calmer with the darkness and the after-effect. I knew I wasn’t going to choke on this stuff and suffocate from it. I was not the victim now.

I had to get out of there. I somehow got back out on the other side of the building. It started to get light. Visibility got a little better, like a snowstorm. That’s when I went back to the south and made my way down to the harbor. There were little Coast Guard boats and police launches evacuating people. It seemed like a small amount of people. I didn’t see any injured.

When I got down to Robert Wagner Park—by Battery Park—there were close to 1,500 people [there]. You could not see lower Manhattan from there, but for some strange reason, this little piece of real estate had good air quality. Everybody kept saying, “We got to go through [the smoke and debris cloud].”

I kept saying, “I don’t know what’s on the other side of that smoke. We’re not going. We’re staying at least where we’re in a safe haven.” I got somebody to go scream for a tugboat and the next thing you know, the tugboat and ferries started showing up, and we evacuated 1,500 people to New Jersey.

It was rough getting people on the first boat. People were taking time to say goodbye to their loved ones and [asking], “Where are we going?” There were people arguing with us, “How are we going to get back? I’ve got to go back to my apartment. And I’ve got to get my pet.”

I tried to tell them, “Listen, forget all that. We’ve got to get you out of here.”

After we got most of them out, we had about 200 stragglers who still weren’t getting on the available boats. The only way I could get to their emotions was by saying, “People, you have to go now. You have no choice. You’re stopping us from effecting another rescue. By us sitting here, negotiating with you to get on the boats, we cannot move forward. We want to secure this area.” Finally, the last 100–200 people got on the boat.

After numerous boats took them to Jersey, I got reunited with Grant, D’Amato and a bunch of the Hatzalah guys. We made our

FDNY Ladder 27



**John Marshall**  
35  
Firefighter

FDNY Ladder 35



**Frank Callahan**  
Age unavailable  
Captain



**James Giberson**  
43  
Firefighter



**Vincent Morello**  
34  
Firefighter



**Michael Otten**  
42  
Firefighter



**Michael E. Roberts**  
31  
Firefighter

FDNY Ladder 38



**Joseph Spor**  
35  
Firefighter

FDNY Ladder 42



**Peter Bielfield**  
44  
Firefighter

way to the Staten Island Ferry. There must have been 50 ambulances there. They had set up a casualty collection point floor. When I got there, I met [FDNY EMS] Dr. [Allen] Cherson and Chief [James] Basile who had set that up. I said to the guys, "How many patients made it to you?"

"This is it."

"You gotta be kidding me—that's it?"

For the first time, I was [now] able to establish some communications with Chief [Jerry] Gombo via telephone. Somebody had a Gator and took me back to the original Command Post. I found a couple of EMTs and paramedics on the street. "OK, you guys are in charge. Stay here as long as you can. I'm going to try to get you some backup."

When I got to Vesey I saw Chief [Peter] Hayden for the first time. He was standing on top of a rescue unit with all the people trying to regroup and organize a search-and-rescue [operation]. I cannot tell you what a relief that was. He was yelling as loud as he could. He asked me what I had established.

I said, "I've got some partial resources here. I got a casualty collection point here, and I'm being told there's another casualty collection point up at Chelsea."

At that point [Chief] Walter Kowalczyk started calling me. I said, "This is great." I finally [heard] my first transmission. For some reason, I didn't have enough wattage on my portable. I had to walk back to Rector Street and [transmit from] my car. When I got out on the car [radio], Kowalczyk said to try to make my way up to Chambers [and West, the newly formed EMS Command Post]. I made my way up to Chambers. It was probably three in the afternoon before I got there. I was wheezing from all the garbage that I sucked in. I got an Albuterol treatment and eye treatments.

You know what I was frustrated about [when the second tower collapsed]? That I became a victim and not a rescuer anymore—because nobody knew where the hell I was. Nobody knew where I was. That upset me the most. In an earlier transmission, everybody thought I was in Tower 2 because that's [where] I led everybody to believe I was going. Then I got diverted by the [fire] marshal and wanted to get the resources in the south end.

When the first [tower] went down, I didn't know it went down until the second one went down. But I knew then there were at least three- to five-alarm assignments for both of those buildings. What concerned me the most was the high-ranking guys I knew. Chief Barbara had been on his way to meet Chief Burns in [the Command Post], so I knew that those two guys possibly were dead. And if it weren't for Gregory telling me the Command Post was relocated up West Street, and Richie calling me for the blankets, I likely would have gone into [Tower] 2.

I think our biggest urgency after 7 [World Trade] went down [just after 5 p.m.] was regrouping, trying to figure out who was left and making sure we could account for everybody. [Regrouping] goes back to your training. We always tell the guys in ICS training that there are times that benefit outweighs you going further down the tubes. You tell your sector officers to find

the most capable, highest-ranking person to take over your sector. Then you take 10–15 minutes to get debriefed with the incident commander on site so the commander can get a full scope and then come up with a different plan of action.

It's worth it for that 10 minutes—to pull people out of those sectors—to get a sense, rather than you doing personal recon. Get them to come in and find out what your resources are. What are your obstacles? What do you need? Get the brain trust of people that were there at the time to say, "OK, where do we go from here?" We've done that on many occasions. It's always been beneficial. Sometimes people don't want to do that, and you just slide further, lose control and never recover. That's basically what it was turning into. The [regrouping process] lets you interpret: What are your voids? What are your injuries? We asked every person to provide an area report so we could reassess where we needed help.

Early in the event, construction workers stripped our trucks. In a normal situation I'd grab each of them, saying, "What the hell are you doing? Why do you got my helmet on? Why do you got my turnout jacket?" Guys who had surgical masks on—doctors—were just stripping the trucks. I would have loved to just see my people. It was such an eerie feeling to see open trucks, with no providers around, and anybody and everybody trying to grab equipment and just help. Trying to gain control was virtually impossible.

One of the things that really struck me occurred on day nine. It was the first day I was able to walk in my community. I went home, had a good rest and started walking through the community. We lost 81 people in my neighborhood on the 11th—11 of them were firefighters. People told me, "I thought you were dead. Thank God you're still alive." They had never seen my truck move, saw the newspapers piling up and heard all kinds of rumors.

You know, you go to CISD—and I'm not saying it doesn't work because sometimes we see a tremendous turnaround in our people—but you don't walk out with a clean slate. The only reason I'm sleeping a little better today is because I'm taking a muscle relaxer. I have pain in my lower back and my hip, and I have this burning sensation from my hip down to my thigh. I had an MRI the other day. I'm not a person who's afraid of heights, and I'm not claustrophobic. But I got in there, and I felt like I was in a coffin. I said, "Take me out." It reminded me of being covered in the darkness [again]. A couple of deep breaths and I went back in.

So I'm having some problems. I'm sure it'll take a couple of years. It's like the Happy Land fire [a fire at the Happy Land Social Club, a bar in the South Bronx, that killed 87 people]. People were frozen in time. All those people trying to get over each other. Trying to get to the door. It was all smoke, and they were frozen in time.

When you look at the different psychological effects, I look at the guys who were there before the buildings went down, after [the collapses] and [throughout] the complete rescue-and-recovery phase. Those are the guys I'm worried about. That's the fall-out I worry about.

The most amazing thing out of the whole operation is the independent action from the EMTs and paramedics that



Patrick  
Byrne  
39  
Firefighter



Salvatore  
Calabro  
38  
Firefighter



Brian  
Cannizzaro  
30  
Firefighter



Joseph  
Gullickson  
37  
Lieutenant



Thomas  
Kennedy  
36  
Firefighter



Joseph  
Maffeo  
30  
Firefighter



Terence  
McShane  
37  
Firefighter



regrouped, followed their basic training and took a lot of leadership on their own. That's the common aspect [of this event].

We chose not to go inside. There were numerous, numerous transmissions, "Away from the building, stay away from the building—hardhat operation." Normally in a high-rise fire, we go to establish EMS operations side-by-side with the incident commander [IC] at the lobby Command Post and set up a lower triage sector at a floor designated by IC as safe for operations below the fire floor. At this incident, Gombo chose not to do that because of the hazards involved and that made the big difference in the number of EMS injuries and deaths that occurred.



**Amy Monroe, lieutenant, FDNY EMS**

When I turned on the news that morning, I saw a plane burning in the side of the Trade Center. I decided I wouldn't overreact. A plane had hit the Empire State Building years before, but it appeared to me, because I could see the extent of the fire, that it was gonna be a big job. I live in lower Manhattan and Battalion 4 is where I work. So I know the area and the World Trade very well. I picked up the phone and called the Battalion. Lt. [Bill] Melaragno answered the phone. He screamed, "Just get in here! Get in here!"

I threw on part of my uniform and ran out the door. I could've called my husband on the cell phone, but for some reason I stopped by my kids' school. I drove there, ran in barefoot and looked for my husband because I thought he would still be there [dropping them off]. I wanted to tell him where I was going. I couldn't find him. So I jumped in my car and went to the Battalion. I took one of the guys that was there, and I jumped in an ambulance.

At that point, I knew the job was pretty serious. Being on the Urban Search and Rescue Team, I knew it could potentially turn into that type of operation. So I took my bunker gear with me. We actually hid it in a little spot on the ambulance, which is kinda weird, but I knew that if things got crazy, everything would disappear. I found it in that spot eight hours later.

The second plane had hit when we were seconds away from the corner of Church and Fulton. I had a really bad feeling and was trying to call my husband just to say, "Look, this is where I'm going. I don't know if I'm coming back."

When I got down there, I became the transport officer, deciding who was going to what hospital, etc. Units were starting to turn toward the Trade Center. I stopped everybody and made everybody pull back to Broadway because I felt that [the scene] was really unsafe. You could see the debris on the street, the stuff coming out of the windows.

Janice Olszewski was the captain operating at the scene at that time, and [FDNY paramedic] Manny Delgado was there with a lot of officers.

I've worked all over the city, but lower Manhattan is really

MCI City. We do MCIs all the time here. I have to say, for the [scope of the] scene, it really was not that crazy. I thought everybody was really organized, professional. [EMT] Alex Loutsky was even tracking people's names and what hospitals they were going to—that's how organized it was.

We did not have a tremendous amount of units parked underneath that site. They were either loading or moving away from the site. I was standing right in the middle of the street. Most people were back against the Millennium Hotel. A woman who started to walk across the street [from the Trade Center Complex] passed out, right in the middle of the street. I reached down to grab her leg and somebody else did, too, and we were going to put her in the patient care area. She wasn't in arrest or anything, but she was unconscious. As we picked her up, I looked over my shoulder and saw Janice standing there. That's when Janice said, "Run!"

We heard it first. I thought, "Oh Jesus, they're sending in a third plane to wipe out all the rescue workers." I didn't have a visual but I could see the cloud coming. I turned to Fulton Street along with other people, and we just ran. Janice was running with me side by side. We reached out to grab each other's hands, and we were overtaken by this stampede of people. We got separated. I refused to go underneath a car, which is what a lot of people did or down the subway. St. Paul's [Chapel] was there. I saw that wrought-iron fence [near it]. I had a landmark. So I reached the corner of Broadway and Fulton and grabbed the fence to stabilize myself. It had started to get cloudy—not completely dark. The wind hit me. Then it became very, very dark.

The cloud felt thick. It was like stuff was being stuffed down your throat. We couldn't breathe at all. It got really quiet, but the thing you heard in the distance was these very quiet voices saying, "Help me! Help me! I'm dying! I'm dying!"

It was absolutely pitch black. At that point, I chose not to hold onto somebody's hand. I had this lifeguard mentality: Don't hold onto somebody's hand; they'll pull you under. Truthfully, I thought I was gonna die. I couldn't breathe. I thought about my kids: "God, please don't let me die now. I've got two boys."

After that, I saw this orange light. I don't know what it came from or what it was. It got a little bit grayer, and I started to breathe through my shirt. I turned to try to find something and saw this outline of a vehicle. I opened the door, and when I got in three civilians were inside. It was a fire Suburban. Inside was a doctor, an older man (about 70) and this younger guy. One guy was actually hurt and crying hysterically; the other guy was having respiratory problems. We did not see anybody moving outside at all. Nobody. It got a little bit lighter, and we were able to see some things, but we never saw another person.

I told the younger guy, "Hotwire this fucking vehicle now." And then he started crying and said, "I can't! There's a plate!" He looked like this macho guy, but he was so out of control. He leaned over the steering wheel, crying.

FDNY Ladder 105

FDNY Ladder 111



Vincent Brunton  
43  
Captain



Thomas W. Kelly  
51  
Firefighter



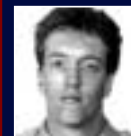
Henry Miller Jr.  
51  
Firefighter



Dennis Oberg  
Age unavailable  
Firefighter



Frank Palombo  
46  
Firefighter



Christopher Sullivan  
39  
Lieutenant



I saw this other vehicle with its lights on. I knew there'd be keys in it if the lights were on. I told the guy who was crying, "Get out and go and see if that vehicle is locked."

He got out of the vehicle and when he came back, he was still crying, saying, "It's locked! It's locked!" So I told the doctor to see if he could find anything heavy [in the back]. He pulled out this huge drill. I said, "OK, let's go." So we all got out and the doctor broke the window. I put them all in the back seat. For some reason, I couldn't open the front door. So I climbed in through the broken window. That's when I cut my hands up.

We rounded the corner of 14th Street and the sky was really beautiful. The vehicle died. It had so much dust in the engine. So we got out. The young hysterical guy was in the middle of the street rolling around, vomiting. He said he couldn't breathe; it was bizarre. This lieutenant came whipping up, stopped and got out. I said, "Look, you've gotta take us to the hospital." The lieutenant said, "First of all, we can't transport him [the hysterical guy] in the Suburban because it's against the rules."

I said, "Look, are you out of your mind?"

He told me, "I've got six ambulances responding now to this location."

I said, "Are you fucking crazy? The World Trade Center collapsed! You think you're gonna get ambulances here now?"

We had four or five patients at that location, and I still had the other two with me. So that was already seven or eight people in his car. I finally walked up to the hysterical guy in the street and said, "Listen, if you wanna live, you better get your ass up off the ground and walk right now."

He got up and we all got in the vehicle and took off. I literally sat in the lieutenant's lap on the way to Beth Israel [Hospital]. At the time, nobody knew the towers had collapsed; they just knew there was a plane crash. We were the first collapse victims at Beth Israel Hospital. They hydrated me, and I was there maybe 15 or 20 minutes. The charge nurse told me, "They just bombed the Pentagon."

So I said, "I gotta leave."

I took the IV out of my arm and walked home. I didn't have any clothes because they decontaminated me. So I walked the five blocks home in my hospital gown. They wouldn't let me off the block, either because they thought I was a psych patient or because they wanted to contain victims. I told one of the cops I worked for the fire department. He said, "Go."

I went home, went upstairs, changed into some clothes and asked my neighbor—he has a motorcycle—to take me back down to where I was. All the highways were closed down, but they let us on because I had my fire department jacket on. I went back in the early afternoon and deployed with USAR. I found the ambulance that I came in with abandoned on the street and almost completely stripped. But I found my gear still in the little hiding place where I left it. I deployed with USAR and went out on the pile.

I was on the pile until five the next morning. On the pile at that time, it was body parts—a hand here and leg there. When

you saw the devastation from on top of the pile, it was a totally different perspective. I hate to say this, but I thought we'd find pockets with people more than they found. What [this event] reinforced for me is that we are in control of nothing—nothing.



**Jonathan Moritz, EMT, FDNY EMS**

I was on 04 Henry, a hazardous materials ambulance. We had heard the boom [of the first plane hitting] and had a thousand people waving to us and pointing to the World Trade Center. My unit was the third or fourth unit on scene. By this time, the entire lower west side of Manhattan was shut down. People had just stopped their cars, gotten out and started running. The streets

were crowded with people, debris.

We got down there, we started hearing Lt. [Rene] Davila setting up his incident command center. We couldn't even get over to where [the command center] had been set up. I believe [we went] up Broadway and ducked down and got to Church and Dey streets.

We saw six people come out of the upper floors of the first tower where we pulled up. We started treating people that had been piling [out of the buildings] and falling onto Church Street. We were just dragging them, literally dragging them away from the scene. People were getting trampled. We would start pulling and some of them would just [get up and] start walking.

We thought we heard a second boom. We looked up and the entire tower was turning into a fireball. My partner and I took off running down Dey Street, trying to get away from the debris, because the plane came from the [opposite] side and blew everything out toward us.

We had a patient, I remember, after the second plane hit. She walked down from the 78th floor. She was in an elevator when the plane hit. How she was walking was beyond me. She was third-degree, full-thickness burns head-to-toe—and walking. She said the elevator lit up like a power light on a hot water heater. Flashed and then stopped. She said doors opened up and everybody piled out. She said she walked down to the 70th floor. We packed [her] up [with] six patients and headed up to the hospital. She was 38. I believe she survived. She was alive and talking when she came to me and was alive and talking when I left the ER. To my knowledge, she's still probably alive.

This debris that looked to be really small [on TV]—those beams were the size of Buicks. You had debris that looked like windowsills and glass and concrete. This stuff was probably the size of an office cubicle, probably an I beam. The magnitude of the debris that came down was unreal.

When we came back after the debris had come down, there was a police officer who came up to me. He had a shrapnel wound. He said that something very small hit him. It put a hole about 6 inches in the back of his arm. It broke his arm in three places and exited out of his elbow. So, I start [immobilizing] his

FDNY Ladder 118



**Joseph Agnello**  
35  
Firefighter



**Vernon Cherry**  
49  
Firefighter



**Scott Davidson**  
33  
Firefighter



**Robert Regan**  
48  
Lieutenant



**Leon Smith Jr.**  
48  
Firefighter



**Peter Vega**  
36  
Firefighter



**Christian Regenhard**  
28  
Firefighter

FDNY Ladder 131

arm. He's regaining strength. We gave him everything. He says he also was hit in the back by something. His bullet-proof vest stopped it from going through his chest.

One of the first pictures I saw in the periodicals that came out, I said to my parents and my family, "I don't know why I'm still standing because I was parked right in front of the building [in the photo]." And knowing where that debris was going and what it looked like afterward, I still to this day wake up and wonder why I'm here.



**Ernestina ("Ernie") Nyquist, EMT-P, St. Vincent's Manhattan, Unit 02 Victor**

Paramedic Humberto Rubet and I were sitting in our unit in front of the hospital and all of a sudden Berto and I saw a huge ball of smoke. The first plane had struck the World Trade Center. I said, "Oh shit, Humberto, just go!" And he flew to the scene.

En route, I said to Humberto, "How are we gonna handle this?" We knew it had hit the 80-90th floors, so we knew we would have tons of patients coming out. I had never experienced anything like this before. I've been a medic for only three years. I said to Humberto, "I'm scared."

He said, "I'm gonna tell you what to do, I'm gonna protect you. Stay with me. Follow my lead." We got there and parked at Church and Vesey, near 5 World Trade and Borders bookstore. We didn't even get out of the ambulance. People just opened our doors and said, "Come with us. Please come with us."

They brought us to a guy burned from head to toe. I said to him, "I know this is going to be a strange question, but I have to know what's going on in those buildings. For everybody's safety, can you please just tell me where you were." He looked at me and said, "I was in the basement of the North Tower."

I said, "My God, Humberto, these people are coming out from the basement. What is going on in that building?"

Within three minutes, we were all blocked in. Ambulances were leaving, fire trucks were coming, people were running in all directions. It was chaotic. It was hectic.

Humberto handed me my hard hat and said, "Here's a hard hat." "A hard hat? I need so much more than this."

Within seconds, it felt like the whole ground was shaking, and I was running for my life. A second plane had struck 2 World Trade. The debris flying over my head was incredible. I saw a mailbox near a building that had construction scaffold next to it. I ran and stayed under the scaffold and behind the mailbox.

The debris lasted so long. Humberto and a paramedic student went behind the ambulance. They later told me the cars that were near them on Church Street were crushed.

I ran about three blocks and told myself, "Get out of here." I wanted to, but then I thought, "I can't be running this way. I gotta go back." I was petrified to come down Church again because I felt like I was going to be hit with debris. I wound up with "Conditions

8," an FDNY supervisor that responds to special conditions, at Washington and Vesey streets, near 7 World Trade. I also linked up with a BLS crew. A lot of private and volunteer units were now pulling up to the scene. We had people that didn't have radios. Communication was difficult. Some people not used to doing 9-1-1 calls were taking this job.

Some crews were saying, "We can't leave; we gotta wait to be told what hospital to take the patients to."

I said, "You don't gotta wait for nothing. If they're talking, put them in your ambulance and just go. Just go!"

When I was on Washington Street, somebody came and said they wanted us in one of the buildings. I said, "They want us to go into that building? We were pulling burned people out of a basement. We cannot go into that building right now." If Humberto and I would have gone in there, I don't think we would have come out.

We were trying to save as many as possible. The Conditions 8 boss and I were trying to get people with broken patellas, ankles—whoever couldn't run—put into ambulances.

Then I got a feeling of impending doom. I ran into Will Neate from Lenox Hill. I was really upset and told him I had to find my partner. "This is not a safe scene. I'm getting my partner, and we need to be at least a block or two away from this." I asked Will, "How do I get back to Humberto?" The Conditions 8 boss said, "I can't get him over the radio."

I thought, "I'll get him over the air myself." I transmitted, "Humberto, 2 Victor. Where are you? This is Ernie!"

Then I heard Humberto on the radio, "Come back to Church and Vesey; I'm here!"

I went back to Church and Vesey, and I met him, "Humberto, before we do anything else, we really gotta get this ambulance out of here and go the other way."

Humberto said, "Just let me find out what's going on." He definitely had a lot of control that day. He was definitely holding up for me and trying to get as many people as he could get to run down Church Street. People were just watching him. I remember him saying to two or three people, "Go! You're holding up. You need to go. You need to get out of here."

One woman said to me, "You transport these people."

I said, "If they can walk, they can go to the hospital. They need to walk. We can't just transport people that can walk." People running were trampling each other. It was chaos.

Humberto got behind the wheel, and—all of a sudden—we heard over the radio, "Mayday! Mayday! The building is coming down! Mayday! Mayday!" I looked at Humberto, and he looked at me. I screamed, "Humberto, this is gonna be the hardest thing, but we gotta go. Put your foot on that gas and go."

I remember turning around, and all you saw was this big cloud of soot and smoke. It was just so hard for him because he heard people saying over the radio, "I can't get out; I'm trapped!"

I said, "Humberto, please, you gotta go. You have to go!" At that point I thought the building was gonna come down on top of us.

FDNY Ladder 132



**Andrew Jordan**  
36  
Firefighter



**Michael Kiefer**  
26  
Firefighter



**Thomas Mingjone**  
Age unavailable  
Firefighter



**John Vigiano II**  
36  
Firefighter



**Sergio Villanueva**  
Age unavailable  
Firefighter



**Michael Cawley**  
27  
Firefighter



**William X. Wren**  
61  
Firefighter, Retired

FDNY Ladder 136

FDNY Ladder 166

I thought, "We're all dead."

There were people jumping on our ambulance. We had a full load of people in the back. People just jumped in; others were jumping on. Humberto was trying to tell people, "You're gonna get hurt. You gotta run. You gotta get off the bus." He couldn't go fast because people were jumping on. It was a mess.

We went up four blocks and stopped near Franklin and Varick streets. Humberto started to set up a new triage area because we still had injured people appearing. [A short time later], he looked at me and said, "Ernie, we gotta go back."

And I was like, "We're going back?"

So we went back down. We were about a block away from where we were originally, and all of a sudden, right in front of us, World Trade 1 started to fall. Humberto had to back the ambulance up to try to get away from this. He said, "Ernie I'm gonna run somebody over."

I said, "Humberto, we gotta get out."

I thought the whole call took 10 minutes, but someone said it probably took three hours. The first time I got in contact with my husband, when I got back to West Street, was around noon. My husband's a firefighter at engine 243 in Brooklyn. So I thought, "We're both gonna be down here." I was thinking, "We're both dead."

I think we did an incredible job by directing people away from there. I think more people would have just stood there and looked in amazement if they didn't have people constantly telling them, "You gotta go. You have to run." I can't believe 25,000 people made it out alive.

My supervisor and I went there that night. I felt like I was in shock from the whole thing. I think I went back a little bit too soon because it really hit me about the number of people that were lost.



OLSZEWSKI

#### Janice Olszewski, captain, FDNY EMS

I had just been promoted, and it was my first week in my position. I was sitting at my desk, and people were running by me. Simultaneously, our pagers all went off. [The pagers] said, "Plane hit the World Trade Center." I didn't really believe it, so I ran down the hall and looked out the window. I saw the hole in 1 World Trade.

A lieutenant and I went to Vesey and West streets. There was a cluster of my supervisors in that area. We ran to [Chief Jerry Gombo]. He immediately said, "Go to the other side." We ran down Vesey and ended up at Church and Vesey. We went one block over [to Fulton and] started setting up on Fulton and Church in front of the Millennium Hotel. We met up with Lt. Rene Davila as he was setting up that corner.

It was pandemonium. We had a lot of units arriving from all directions. As a captain, I was the highest-ranking officer on that corner. People were being evacuated out of the [towers]—both of them. They were streaming out, and the cops were directing them to our triage corner ... with all sorts of injuries; you name it: soft-

tissue injuries, burns, smoke inhalation—just everything. A couple of people started having seizures on the street. We were trying our best to set up a traditional MCI area. I was assigning supervisors to [each] of the sectors.

A couple of police officers came to me and said, "You need to send people inside the lobby because [some of the injured] can't get out. They're too hurt."

It was hard, but I said, "No, I'm not sending people in there because it's too dangerous." Not because I thought the buildings were going to collapse, but [because] I was concerned for our people. The debris [was] falling close and [there was] smoke and they didn't have their protective clothing or training to go in there, so I didn't send anybody in. I'm kind of glad for that because about 10 minutes later, the first building fell.

We were only there 40–45 minutes before [the South Tower] collapsed. We were just starting to get [comfortable with the] pandemonium. I already [had been] thinking that corner was becoming overwhelmed, and we needed to get a bigger boat. I was thinking of [using] a few hotels as a triage area. But just as I had those thoughts, the first [tower] came down. You heard it first—that monstrous roar. I didn't know what it was. It was just a tremendously loud, rumbling, thunderous, growing-in-strength sort of roar. People were moving away from it in a wave. I took one look over my shoulder and saw the cloud of smoke and debris. It was coming right down. You had no choice but to run.

That cloud was so big, and it seemed to envelop so much. As you were choking and not able to breathe, you thought, "I simply will not have time to get out of here."

It got completely silent. There was eerie silence after the collapse, like a snowfall at night. I didn't know if I was up, down. I didn't know if I had turned around the wrong way. I was choking. I couldn't breathe. I was feeling and kicking my way, and the only thing I heard was one or two or three people saying, "Help me! Help me!"

I thought, "I need to help somebody." I couldn't help anybody because I was dying, and I needed to get out of there. I couldn't see them or possibly know where they were calling from. That's the only thing I remember hearing—people calling for help.

I was dying. I was going unconscious. I figured that if I passed out in that cloud, I would suffocate. I found the will from somewhere, and I stayed on my feet. I stayed conscious. I kept groping and feeling. I bumped into some kind of vehicle. It was perpendicular to the way I was going, so I figured I had hit the next intersection. So I turned left, and I followed along the car. Then I saw a red traffic light. That's the only thing [I saw] through all the dust and darkness—one single red traffic light.

That was a fabulous point of reference. It sucked the world back into perspective. I knew I was standing up. I knew I was on a street, and I could follow it. So I staggered toward the light, and then I saw another one, so I followed that. Slowly but surely, it got lighter. I made my way out of the clouds and into brilliant sunshine. It was Broadway. I [had gone east on] Fulton and hit

#### FDNY Rescue 1



Joseph  
Angelini  
63  
Firefighter



Gary  
Geidel  
Age unavailable  
Firefighter



Terence  
Hatton  
41  
Captain



William  
Henry  
49  
Firefighter



Kenneth  
Marino  
40  
Firefighter

Broadway.

My instinct was to not go back right away and [also to] stop people from going in. I was thinking, "Everybody I was there with is dead." You were convinced that somehow you made it out, but nobody else did. I just assumed everybody else was dead: all the chiefs and supervisors.

I was trying to stop vehicles from going down the street toward [the Trade Center]. Half of them went [past me]. Some of them recognized me and stopped. I told them, "You guys, [shouldn't] go right back. Let's treat people that come out right here. I'm still not comfortable with where we are. We need to go farther north." I jumped in the back of an ambulance, sucked on some oxygen and then gave it up after a minute to somebody else. I got back out, and I was walking when there was a rumble again. That's when 1 World Trade fell.

I was still on Broadway, and I ran from another cloud now. I had to jog away. I got three blocks up, and more ambulances were coming toward me. I was again trying to stop them. I jumped in one of the ambulances that stopped for me. I said, "Turn around and drive. They were like, "But, but ... " I said, "No, turn around and just drive." So we went to White Street and set up a casualty collection area to treat people. I told crews, "Get out your water; get out your oxygen, because that's what they're going to need—the people coming out of there."

We must have treated 30–35 patients. I was trying to regroup. I could hardly talk. I couldn't breathe very well. I was covered in—covered in—the dust. People were trying to make me go to the hospital. But I wasn't listening. I just needed to do my job.

I remember saying at the time to whoever was listening to me babble, "I don't know what happened, but there's gonna be thousands of casualties here." [But] you had very [few patients] in between [collapses]; [they] were either crushed by what had happened or got out and were relatively all right.

Finally I got a radio. I heard, "Supervisors should report, and the Command Post is now at Chambers and West Street." I jumped in an ambulance, [and] they drove me toward that area. I got out and saw one of my bosses who physically pushed me back in the ambulance and said, "Go to the hospital." I must have been a mess.

I asked him, "Where do you want me to go? What do you want me to do?" He looked at me like I was crazy and said, "You are going to the hospital and that's that." That same ambulance took me to NYU Downtown Hospital.

There was an army of doctors and nurses at NYU. They opened up the back door and an entire team of doctors and nurses surrounded me. I was attacked with patient care. They were doing everything. They started a line, gave me oxygen and 12-lead. I looked around.

I wanted to say, "Where are your patients? How many have you treated from the incident?" And [then I] remembered, this was about two to two and a half hours later. I finally asked, "How many did you treat?" They said, "12."

Twelve? Twelve? I couldn't believe it. It hit me like a ton of

bricks. Then I said, "I hate to say this, but they're all dead. You're not going to get a lot of patients. You're going to get maybe rescuers later on." It really hit me—the magnitude.

I [later] saw a picture of the Millennium Hotel where we set up [initial triage]. I was stunned at the devastation. There were overturned shells of cars burned out, destroyed. The windows of the hotel were blown out. It looked like a war zone, like it was bombed. You think, "How did I get out of that?" One of our FDNY paramedics, Carlos Lillo, was lost in that area. There are pictures of him in that area with us. It's so hard to come to grips with that.

[When I finally got home], I wandered around my apartment. I bumped into things, literally. I didn't know what to do. I would start to do something, forget what I was going to do, and just go to do something else, forget that. Just completely dazed and shocked and stunned and exhausted and still having the inhalation problem. It was just a combination of emotions. I slept like two hours and got back up. I was too wired, too much adrenaline, too much thinking of what the hell just happened. And all the people who had died, and all the people who they still didn't know were dead or alive. I came back into work. Just to help out in any way, to contribute to this massive thing.



**John J. Peruggia, deputy chief, FDNY**

I was on the Staten Island Expressway on my way to work in Brooklyn. One of my staff called and said a plane [had] just hit the World Trade Center. I was listening to the [AM/FM] radio, and all the radio antennae are on the top of [1 World] Trade Center, so I thought everything was OK. I told them to stay at [FDNY EMS] Headquarters [in Brooklyn], and that I'd be there in 10 or 15 minutes.

I turned on my [department] radio and heard them assigning EMS units on Citywide. At the same time, reports began to come over the radio: "Explosion at the Trade Center. ... Reports of a plane hitting."

As I made my way, I saw the amount of fire and smoke. I knew it was not a Cessna or a small plane. I called my staff person back and told him he and anyone around should go to the World Trade Center, and I would meet them there. I was one of the first EMS officers on scene in '93, so I knew the confusion that would be happening and that they would need a lot of help.

No sooner did I hang up the phone than I got paged to call the Operations Center. They notified me that OEM was being activated for a crash into the World Trade Center. I asked them to page two of my staff and redirect them to OEM, on the 23rd floor of 7 World Trade .

In the [Brooklyn]-Battery Tunnel, the news put out a report that another plane had hit the second tower [2 World Trade]. I knew this was clear, deliberate and had to be some sort of terrorist attack. I got goose bumps. I panicked because I'm thinking, "They methodically just calculated two attacks to the Trade Center, and



**Dennis Mojica**  
50  
Lieutenant



**Michael Montesi**  
39  
Firefighter



**Gerard Nevins**  
46  
Firefighter



**Patrick O'Keefe**  
44  
Firefighter



**Brian Sweeney**  
29  
Firefighter



**David Weiss**  
41  
Firefighter



I'm in this tunnel. If they did that, they could blow up the tunnel." When I saw the light at the end of the tunnel—no pun intended—I said, "Well, at least I could swim from here."

As soon as I exited the tunnel, I parked. I wasn't even going to try to get close. I put on my helmet and turnout gear and started to make my way north. I had heard about the Command Post over the radio, so I was going there and then to OEM.

I was walking over aircraft parts, pieces of building, body parts. People were screaming and running past me. A few people yelled, "Cross the street! Cross the street!" Bodies were coming down. As I got closer I saw [FDNY] Chief [Peter] Ganci and [Citywide Tour Commander] Dan Nigro standing across the street from [1 World] Trade Center at what appeared to be a Command Post. I checked in with Ganci—who I reported to. I said, "I'm going over to OEM."

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Peruggia, be careful going around the corner. There's a lot of stuff coming off the buildings." I didn't realize that would be the last time I'd ever see him.

I proceeded to OEM with a fire captain. When we got to the mezzanine level [of 7 World Trade], they told us the building was being evacuated because of reports of a third plane. Various representatives from the different agencies were trying to group together in the lobby to figure out where to safely move OEM. At the same time I saw some EMS people outside working on some victims. I moved them in the lobby and told them to set up an operational sector there, where it would be safer. Capt. [Mark] Stone was in charge of them. One of my staff, [FDNY EMS Capt.] Abdo [Nahmod], didn't have his [personal protective equipment]. So I put Abdo in charge of that sector and sent Stone to Command Post because he had his equipment.

Subsequent to that, the security people from 7 [World Trade] opened the loading docks so we could move the few injured people there. I think they had three patients in the loading bay. That area was protected by the building and the pedestrian walkway, so nothing could fall on it. Also, the façade of 7 World Trade for two or three stories is all glass. So if anything had crashed into the façade, it would have crashed glass into the lobby.

At that point I went outside the building to see what was going on. I saw [Commissioner Thomas] Von Essen and briefed him on the situation. He asked where the mayor [of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani] was headed. I told him he had left the building to head up West Street. He asked where Ganci was; I told him [Ganci was at] the Command Post. Then Chief Nigro passed by. I did a face-to-face with him. He was doing a perimeter survey of the damage. Then I went back into the lobby to see if we knew anything on the third plane, where were we going to move, etc.

There was a screeching sound—a sound like a jet plane. I saw this huge cloud of smoke and debris heading our way, and I barreled through the revolving doors. The dirt and debris and the pressure of the collapse broke the windows and threw me to the floor. Everything was dark. We couldn't breathe. We heard a few people screaming. I thought a third plane had just hit. We saw a little bit of light; they had opened the door from the loading bay

into the lobby. Everyone in the lobby headed toward the loading bay. They had closed the garage doors [to the outside], and everyone was OK there. We told them to find their way out and walk west toward the water.

I took up a position between 5 and 6 World Trade. I was directing people to stay along 6 and take the outside escalators at 5 to go toward Vesey and Church Street. I knew we had ambulances and other resources at Church that could give them medical [assistance]. As we evacuated people from the plaza, I realized the South Tower had collapsed. I was there in '93 and participated in all the post-incident stuff for that. They told us, "These buildings won't come down; they can withstand anything." So I couldn't believe it [had collapsed]. All those people in the building. I knew in the back of my mind [they couldn't have survived].

Me and Phil decided to go back to the Command Post. As we did, I wanted to go through 7 World Trade to make sure everyone got out. We went back over the pedestrian walkway to 7 World Trade. In the street-level lobby, we saw that everyone was out. We went through the loading bays and saw all the EMS equipment. We exited the loading bays onto Vesey and proceeded onto West Street back toward the Command Post.

At West and Vesey there were injured firefighters. I saw some EMS people operating on Vesey between West and the water—FDNY, Hatzalah, some hospital units. They started treating the firefighters. We said, "Let's get them away from the site." Fire and stuff was falling around us. A Hatzalah ambulance was on fire. A few minutes went by, and I heard that sound again. I knew what that represented now.

I ran north on West, hoping to make it far enough so nothing big [would] land on my head. I hadn't gotten far when I heard someone yell, "Chief! Chief!" I saw a fireman standing near an engine. He screamed, "Get under the engine!" I heard muffled sounds, screaming and then absolute silence. I thought I was buried. I thought, "I hope someone's going to find me. That I'm not going to suffocate. That the tank of water above my head won't rupture and drown me." I thought about the last words [spoken] when I left my family that morning.

Maybe 10 or 15 minutes went by. Then somebody pulled on my leg. It was an ESU cop and a firefighter. "You OK?" They helped me. I went to the truck to rinse my throat and eyes. I grabbed a multi-trauma dressing and threw it inside my helmet because my head was bleeding.

I ran into Mike Butler, the chief of fire prevention. He said the Command Post had been wiped out. "I need to set up a Command Post for fire, and you need to stay with me and set up a Command Post for EMS," he said. Initially, we were going to establish the Command Post on West and Warren, but we moved it up one more block to West and Chambers. My portable radio wasn't [working]. I went over to an EMS command vehicle and tried the radio, which worked. I told the Citywide dispatcher to hit the alert tones and clear the frequency. I told them that unless they were in contact with someone of a higher rank than me on scene who was going

FDNY  
Rescue 2



William  
Lake  
44  
Firefighter



Daniel  
Libretti  
43  
Firefighter



Peter  
Martin  
43  
Lieutenant



John  
Napolitano  
33  
Firefighter



Kevin  
O'Rourke  
44  
Firefighter



Lincoln  
Quappe  
38  
Firefighter



Edward  
Rall  
44  
Firefighter



to take command of the operation, I was going to assume command and give them direction.

They said, "10-4, sir, standby." To me, that meant they weren't talking to anyone else. They cleared the frequency and said, "Proceed."

I assumed command of EMS operations and reported that fire and EMS command were established at West and Chambers. I asked anyone not operating in the immediate vicinity to respond to Chambers and West for an assignment and any ambulances not involved in the immediate vicinity to respond to Chambers and West Broadway, which I was going to make a staging location.

I asked them to begin a roll call of EMS chief officers and their resources. That's when we found out that [Chief Walter] Kowalczyk and Chief [Francis] Pascale were at Chelsea, Chief [Jerry] Gombo was over at police headquarters, and Chief [James] Basile was at South Street Ferry.

A few minutes had gone by, and I was face-to-face with [Chief Pedro] Carrasquillo. He had heard me on the radio. A couple of supers showed up; Chief [J.P.] Martin showed up. Actually, he was part of the task force I had initially called for that was preparing in Brooklyn. He had seen everything fall [from his location] and thought everything was wiped out. Just prior to hearing me, he was going to set up the Command Post on the Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge, but instead he made his way over to Chambers with his task force.

Over the next hour we tried to begin to get organized, to see who was where. I had Kowalczyk come to West and Chambers. I asked Carrasquillo to go to the site and see what EMS people were doing and to send freelancers up and pair them with supers to establish incident command with EMS.

Walter made his way down, and I relinquished command to him. I became the operations officer. I found out from [Deputy Chief] John McFarland [who was assigned to West and Vesey] that Pete Ganci was dead. They let me know that they had found [Ganci]. I went over and gave Nigro that information, and he proceeded down to Vesey Street.

I was there until the following day. My car survived but was covered in four inches of ash. It was the only time I put my lights on—to drive home to see my family.



**Ben Shelton, EMT-P, St. Vincent's Manhattan, Unit 07 William**

Ken [Jaimes] and I were tied up on another job when things started going down. A minute after we gave an available signal, they sent us to the site. We went down 7th Avenue, passed by the hospital and saw Louis [Garcia]. He was wide-eyed and said, "It's horrible; it's just horrible."

We figured the safest and quickest access was the West Side Highway. An FDNY EMS officer directed us to stage on Vesey Street just west of West Street. We entered Vesey, did a U-turn and faced out toward West, in line with other units. A lot of units were already there—at least 20–30 ambulances parked in

a row—and so was one of the city's MERVs.

One of the officers in charge asked us to get our equipment, set up the MERV and wait for patients to be brought over. We worked with a couple of medics from Lenox Hill and an EMT that works for the city and drives the MERV.

People were jumping [as we set up], but for 20 minutes from when we got there, no patients were coming over to where we were. We just watched and waited for something to happen.

All of a sudden, I heard this roaring noise. I thought it was a jet flying overhead. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of the towers start to shake and smoke, "Oh my God, it's coming down!"

Initially, it sounded like a dull rumble; then a roar that everybody thought was a jet. Remember how they did the sound effects with the dinosaur screaming in Jurassic Park? It sounded sort of like that—the sound of the metal ripping and tearing.

Everybody bolted west. I ran behind a movie theater complex [on the north side of Vesey]. Mostly small debris—dust and smoke—blew past. I kept going in a northwest direction, crossing a vacant lot. Then the precipitant came. It was a brownish, grayish, really fine ash. I thought, "I wonder what the hell's in this?" I grabbed my handkerchief and threw it over my face. I walked to the Hudson River, looking for our guys. Our vehicle was still on Vesey Street, but everything was covered in dust.

I grabbed my stretcher and was going to get my equipment out of the MERV. A lot of EMS personnel had come back to the scene by then and were picking stuff up, getting ready to move. All of a sudden the same thing started all over again. I heard that same dull roar. Everybody bolted toward the river again. It took another half an hour before I could go back to Vesey to see what I could salvage. This time when I returned, my vehicle was gone.

#### Charlie Wells, deputy chief FDNY EMS

I went to Barclay and West Streets. I parked, looked up and started putting my bunker gear on. I realized that both towers were free burning. Usually I just put a jacket or pants on, but [that day] I put everything on. I even strapped my helmet to my chin, which I never do. I realized this was going to be something you never really dealt with before. It just looked like too much. High-rise towers, free burning like that.

I proceeded [south] down West Street [and] instinctively started to strategize: This is where we would begin to establish four medical sectors. I got to the Command Post and Chief [Walter] Kowalczyk said to establish a medical treatment sector at Liberty Street and West Street. So I proceeded down West Street, past the Marriott, to the corner of Liberty and West.

When I arrived there, there were two or three FDNY EMS ambulances and about 10–15 [other] ambulances. They were all hugging the World Trade Center side of Liberty and West. I announced who I was and that I was assuming command of this particular corner as a medical treatment sector. I told everybody to get in their vehicles and go to the west side of West Street and Liberty and set up to receive casualties.

#### FDNY Rescue 3



**Christopher Blackwell**  
42  
Firefighter



**Thomas Foley**  
32  
Firefighter



**Thomas Gambino Jr.**  
48  
Firefighter



**Raymond Meisenheimer**  
46  
Firefighter



**Donald Regan**  
47  
Firefighter



**Gerard Schrang**  
45  
Firefighter



**Peter Nelson**  
42  
Firefighter

#### FDNY Rescue 4

[FDNY EMS] Deputy Chief Robert Brown and his aide, EMT Jason Katz, and I directed units to re-deploy to the west side because there was debris falling on Liberty Street. We felt they were a little too close to the complex to be safe. We weren't envisioning any collapse [at this point]. My first impression was, the buildings were gonna burn all day and burn themselves out.

Within a minute, I saw a fireman running toward us from Liberty Street. It was Timmy Brown from Rescue 3. He came right up to me, "Chief! Chief Charlie! Come upstairs! Fifty, 100 casualties in the South Tower lobby!"

I said, "Give me a brief description of their injuries."

He said, "Fractures and burns." I said, "OK, fine. Let me [put together] a triage team. We should be able to get a lot of them out in fairly quick order."

I turned around, "All right, get your helmets on. I'm gonna take 10 people and go into the south lobby and perform triage." [But] nobody had helmets except for the 18 Charlie crews. So I said, "You [two], come with me."

I told Chief Brown, "Bobby, I'm taking this 18 Charlie crew with Timmy, we're gonna go into the South Tower. We'll assess it. I'll get back to you right away with what I'm gonna need."

We got maybe a third of the way, alongside the South Tower and I stopped them and said, "Timmy, Timmy, we can't go any further because there's debris falling in front of us."

He went, "No, no, no, it's all right, just stay close to the wall."

Right after that we felt this horrible vibration and shaking. We instinctively ran back in the direction we came from. We tried to find a doorway into the South Tower but couldn't find one. We kept running. Finally, we found a door. We bailed into it and felt this horrendously powerful velocity of wind, followed by darkness. Then we were hit with dirt and debris.

That [wind] picked me up. I felt like I was rolling in a wave at the beach. I felt myself rising off the ground. It lasted a good 45 seconds, with this horrible, horrible sound [like] a train coming through the subway station at full speed with a jet engine on it.

It stopped and there was dead silence. You couldn't hear a thing. It was the most horrible moment because you could hear nothing—not a breath. You couldn't breathe. Your ears, your nose and your mouth were filled with dirt, debris.

It turns out I was picked up off my feet and was up at the ceiling, about eight to 10 feet off the ground and under debris.

I was upside down. I started to wiggle, and I fell. Every time I wiggled, I fell. So, I found a girder and I held onto it. I kept falling and finally hit the bottom.

I started to burrow and hit a wall. So I burrowed up and was able to stand. I could see light. Then, all of a sudden, I saw a bunch of heads start to pop up at the same time.

I got on top of this girder and started walking across, pulling people up. There were 50–100 people in this area, which turned out to be the Marriott Hotel's restaurant. I looked toward them because I heard a clicking sound. "Click, click. Click, click. Click, click." It was the flashing light on a pumper that got pushed into

the side of the Marriott.

We never got into the South Tower. [When we ran], we actually ran about 10 feet past the South Tower and got into the Marriott. The reason why we weren't killed was because the South Tower collapsed [to the] east. If it went west, it would've crushed us.

We got the group to West Street and told them to just run down Liberty until they got on a boat. There was nobody around on West Street. The 15–20 ambulances, about four or five engines and six ladder companies, were all on fire.

You couldn't see. It was like a snowstorm, but the snow was gray and black. I made it back to the middle of West Street. Now, one by one, everybody started to regroup. There were a couple paramedics and EMTs who were hysterical. We grabbed them and got them to snap out of it. A couple EMS officers were also upset, but we got them composed and back into a leader role.

I said, "All right, let's get the gear out of the back of all the ambulances that are burning and let's go to the front of [the] World Financial Center. We'll set up another medical treatment sector there." We got a significant amount of gear. Then, people started coming. If they were walking and there were no obvious signs of bleeding, we told them to keep walking to the marina.

There were buildings and vehicles on fire on Liberty Street. As we moved people down Liberty Street toward the river, Bobby Brown yelled something to me. Then, all of a sudden, I could hear a sound. Bobby heard it before me and had this look of utter fear on his face. He just started running. Then I started to run. We got to the World Financial Center façade, and the next thing we felt was this strong wind again.

The wind picked us up and blew us through the plate glass windows. I was able to crawl off to the left side. There was a fire lieutenant from hazmat operations that I know well. I go, "Stan, Stan! Just go this way! Left, left!" We went left, found a huge pillar and hid behind it. Then the whole thing repeated itself all over again.

We stayed for a minute while this long, high-pressure debris came at us. And this horrible sound again, this train with a jet engine on it. When it stopped I couldn't breathe at all. It was totally black, I couldn't see. It felt like somebody had just opened your eyelids and poured dirt into them.

I spit everything out. I was lying on top of Stan. So, I rolled over, wiggled off to the side and told him, "Stan, I can't breathe. Give me some of your air." He took his mask off, and we started buddy breathing.

We went outside and across this courtyard. I was looking around, trying to see, calling out for 18 Charlie, EMS, fire, anybody. Everybody was walking around in a daze. No one was talking.

I kept throwing up. Not being able to see, I stumbled into a deli. I went into their refrigerator and started pouring whatever I could find on my face, washing my mouth out. All of a sudden, a voice behind me goes, "Buddy can you help me?"

I turned around and (grayed out with a thick three or four inch coating) was the form of a person lying on the floor. I didn't see him when I climbed through the window. I said, "Hey, sure. I'll help

#### FDNY Rescue 4



**Peter  
Brennan**  
30  
Firefighter



**Kevin  
Dowdell**  
46  
Lieutenant



**Terrence  
Farrell**  
45  
Firefighter



**Brian  
Hickey**  
47  
Captain



**William  
Mahoney**  
38  
Firefighter



**Durrell  
Pearsall**  
38  
Firefighter



**John  
Bergin**  
39  
Firefighter



**Carl  
Bini**  
43  
Firefighter

#### FDNY Rescue 5

you. I'll get you out of here."

All of a sudden, he said, "Are you Charlie Wells?" I turned around and it was Dave Handschuh, a *New York Daily News* photographer. He said the towers came down. He said he photographed the first tower coming down and got hit by debris. I said, "The towers came down?" I couldn't fathom it.

He had a fractured tib-fib. He said three firefighters got him in the deli. I grabbed him and started dragging him out the door. There was nothing to splint him. I said, "Just cross your legs and I'm gonna drag you out head first." He screamed when we went over the lip of the broken door. A couple of firemen and a cop came over and we picked him up and moved him all the way to the marina. We got him on a police harbor unit and that was the last I saw of him that day.

I ran into Assistant Commissioner Steve Gregory. He said, "Charlie, we lost [FDNY Chief] Pete Ganci. The whole command post was wiped out." I told him I was going to try to corral EMS personnel and re-establish a command sector for EMS operations.

I ended up on Vesey Street where ambulances were running, but they were locked up. We had to break windows. I told people to get into an ambulance, find their way to West Street, start getting casualties and head north.

The EMS chiefs had a briefing in the Embassy Suites. I got there after them. I called my wife. I just wanted to let her know I was all right but that it was gonna be a long day. I told her, "Something terrible happened down here. I can't really talk too much."

I spent the next hour gathering EMS resources, relocating ambulances to the south toward the Staten Island Ferry to establish a medical sector and moving crews that were in between buildings and behind the World Financial Center.

I went east to Broadway. There was a large contingent of fire and EMS personnel being mustered and staged with Drs. Kerry Kelly and [David] Prezant from the fire department's medical office. We set up a sheltered triage and treatment center in an office building near Broadway and Reade streets. We had desks brought down from the upper floors to use as stretchers. In about a half an hour we had a very defined medical treatment center for orthopedics, ophthalmology, cardiac [problems].



**Robert Wick, EMT-P, Flushing Hospital Medical Center, Unit 52 X-ray**

I was with Al [Toro, my partner]. We were coming down Church Street. When we got four or five blocks away, the streets were covered with debris, and cars were crushed. We got to Chambers and Church, and we saw a nurse holding up a bag. I told her to get in.

We drove to West Street and Vesey. There weren't many civilians walking around. It was all fire and EMS personnel, police. There was an FDNY captain there—Karin DeShore from Battalion 46—who directed us, "Park your ambulance. Leave your keys."

I had the student help me get the stretcher, all the bags and the boards. Al parked the bus up on Vesey Street, a block in. We got separated. While he was parking the ambulance, they herded us down West Street. We were all in amazement. I didn't ever take my eyes off the top of the building. I could have walked over someone, wouldn't ever have known. I'm watching the top of the building, pushing the stretcher. The medic student was in front of me, dragging me along with the stretcher. I was hesitant to go farther because I had left Al behind. He [finally] caught up.

We made it to Liberty and West, which is at the base of the South Tower. We were there for 10 minutes watching the top of the building. We were all in the street or on the corner—12, 15 units. You could see people coming out of the buildings, two at a time. There was a walkway with covered glass—like an awning over it. You saw the bodies hitting the awnings. The blood was dripping down these awnings.

I looked at Al and said, "Wow, we're really too close." The [FDNY EMS] captain said, "OK, we're gonna back up, 'cause we're a little too close." Then somebody was running around saying, "Terrorists hit the Pentagon."

We started back up to this building, and there was a bridge there—an overhang. I only got a couple of feet when I heard, "Oh my God!" And everybody in my peripheral vision started running.

I didn't think at the time it was the whole building. I ran underneath the bridge, looking at the columns, the size of the cement columns: "My God, I hope it supports the building falling down."

People were scattering. I lost Al. I was with three or four people, between a Suburban and a car parked underneath this bridge. I got as low to the ground as I could. You heard it come down. Seconds later it went from day to night. It was like somebody took a handful of dirt and just threw it in your mouth. You couldn't breathe. You couldn't see. Your eyes were filled, your nose, everything.

Then I went into this one building that I knew was facing west. I said, "There's light; there's light. Let's go to the light." So we crawled on our hands and knees over this debris, holding hands. We got to a fire truck. You could only see six inches in front of you. I got to the bumper of the fire truck, and I looked out and saw a red light on the top. I got to the back of the fire truck, and I was able to stand up. That was a relief in itself because I thought we were trapped.

I had so much stuff in my eyes. I could just make out shapes. I got a little farther, and I found an ESU cop lying facedown on the ground. He was gagging and coughing on the debris. I helped him up to walk a block. That was where the water was—New York City Harbor. Harbor Patrol started putting everybody into the boat. I got on to help this cop. I actually sat there and put the regulator on an oxygen tank. I used the cop's Leatherman [tool] to tighten it down. There was still a lot of smoke, and you could hardly see anything. They took off across the water [toward New Jersey].

We got to the other side and then the other building fell down. I saw the cloud. I [originally] didn't think the whole building had fallen down. I thought it was just the top part.



**Michael Fiore**  
46  
Firefighter



**Andre Fletcher**  
37  
Firefighter



**Harvey Harrell**  
49  
Lieutenant



**Douglas Miller**  
34  
Firefighter



**Louis Modafferi**  
45  
Captain



**Jeffrey Palazzo**  
33  
Firefighter



**Nicholas Rossomando**  
35  
Firefighter



**Allan Tarasiewicz**  
45  
Firefighter