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New York City Police Officers' Experiences of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks: An Existential Psychological Study

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of Psychology of
Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Cecile S. Irvine, M.A.

Paul Richer, Ph.D. - Director
Michael Sipiora, Ph.D. - Reader
Dan Burston, Ph.D. - Reader

for jimmy

february 19, 1961 – january 6, 2005

i almost missed.

a moment
resplendent

a tree
with fruit

one decaying;
truth.

a cat on a familiar branch.

james locke

Abstract

The police officers of the NYPD who responded to the scene of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 faced a sudden and large-scale catastrophe that caused the deaths of many innocent civilians and threatened their own lives. The present study examines the lived meanings of this experience for three police officers who survived the collapse of the Twin Towers while acting in the performance of their duty. Although a great deal of research has been conducted in the field of psychological trauma, the existential meaning of cataclysmic events for those that live through them is not well understood. In addition, there is little empirical research that examines the particular nature of traumatic experiences as lived by police officers in the line of duty. Further, because no disaster such as this, caused intentionally and resulting in such mass-scale devastation and loss of life had ever occurred in the United States, the experience of police officers in living through such an event was entirely unique.

In order to collect the data for this research I conducted interviews with three police officers who had been at the World Trade Center site when the buildings collapsed. I asked them to describe their experiences on that day in detail. Phenomenological analysis of these interviews revealed several significant lived meanings of the experience for these police officers. The findings were organized into a general structural narrative delineating ten themes of existential importance for the officers.

The results reveal that the officers identified strongly with their roles as police officers with the NYPD. They took seriously their dedication to protect and serve the public, and held saving lives as their highest value. Because of this, the officers were especially distressed when they witnessed the deaths of innocent people, those who jumped to their

deaths from the burning towers or who were killed on the ground. In this instance, they found themselves radically stripped of their typical position of confidence and power, and were helpless to perform their most sacred duty. As the world around them changed so dramatically and so horribly, the officers' natural attitude was completely disrupted. And yet, they were able to maintain a continuity of experience by holding fast to their desire to help save lives. The findings reveal the importance for the officers of being in the world with others, and participating in a shared humanity. Each one encountered the very real possibility of dying that day, but surprisingly, they were even more concerned about the welfare of others during what could have been their final moments of life. The officers came to terms with having survived the catastrophe by maintaining the value of being in service to others, and in the belief that those they might save would one day go on to save other lives. The meaning the officers found in their very existence laid in their participation in and fostering of an ever-expanding circle of care for their fellow human beings.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all of the people who have been so supportive of me throughout this undertaking and over the years. I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to my director, Dr. Paul Richer, whose collaboration indeed made this project possible. Our many conversations about the research were intellectually lively and stimulating. He gave unselfishly of his time, acknowledging the demands imposed by my work schedule, and made himself available to me on weekends and holidays, and even when he was out of town. His clarity of mind brought manageability to the material and helped to focus my own thinking. It was truly a great pleasure to have had the opportunity to work so closely with Paul, and I thank him for making the experience so gratifying all along the way. I would also like to thank my readers, Dr. Michael Sipiora and Dr. Daniel Burston, for their careful reading of the material and thoughtful suggestions. Their input helped tighten the work, and added intellectual rigor.

I would like to thank the Police Department of the City of New York, in particular Dr. Arthur Knour, Director of the Psychological Evaluation Section. His support for my research was instrumental in obtaining the necessary approval of the use of NYPD officers as subjects of research from Police Commissioner Ray Kelly. I also thank Dr. Knour for his encouragement and understanding as I completed the research, and for the many fruitful discussions we had about the topic and about existential phenomenology in general. Of course, this project would not have been possible without the willingness of my subjects to make time to meet with me and to share their stories with me. I felt a personal connection with each one, and will be forever in their debt.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This research project concerns the psychological experiences of New York City police officers who responded to the scene of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. My intention is to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the experience of psychological trauma as it is lived by those whose job it is to put themselves in situations of danger in order to help others. It is my hope that this study will help us to more fully appreciate the meaning, the complexity, and the ramifications of living through a terrifying experience in the course of performing one's duty. With this understanding, we will be better prepared to offer appropriate psychological care to those who are faced with similar situations in the future. Unfortunately, we now live in a world in which the sort of psychological terror induced by sudden, massive, and intentional destruction is a fact of existence we can anticipate and for which we must prepare.

Development of Interest

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were the most devastating ever launched against our nation. As is commonly known, close to 3,000 people lost their lives in the World Trade Center alone, with another 184 perishing in the attack on the Pentagon and 40 on the hijacked plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. The massive loss of life, as well as the material destruction, is difficult to grasp, no matter how well we know the facts and numbers. Since that day, the people of New York have endured a persistent and

inescapable grief knowing that so many of their fellow citizens suffered such immeasurable losses. The memorial services were innumerable, there were lengthy and honorable obituaries in the paper every day for months on end, the sound of bagpipes was heard too often. In addition to this horrible grief, the people of the city grew accustomed to a certain level of fear in anticipation of another attack. The sound of an airplane overhead still sometimes makes one look up and take notice of the flight pattern and altitude. We listen to the sound of sirens, once considered just a nuisance, to make sure there aren't too many sounding for too long. We have plans in case of emergency. We do things a little differently, or think that we should, considering we are aware now that life really is fragile and short, and that there are people out there actively planning additional attacks.

As a staff psychologist for the New York City Police Department, I found myself deeply involved in working with the police officers affected by the attacks that brought down the Twin Towers. Only a few hours after the World Trade Center Towers fell, my unit was mobilized to go into Manhattan and provide whatever trauma counseling might be required for any member of the service. For the next several weeks, we worked 12-hour shifts without regular days off, doing what we could to identify and talk to police officers who were suffering traumatic stress reactions. During that time, I had the opportunity to speak with many police officers about their experiences on September 11 and the ensuing days. I, along with other staff psychologists from my unit, went to precincts in all the five boroughs to address the roll call, giving a brief talk about post-traumatic stress and offering suggestions on how to cope. We also stopped in to the commands in order to informally talk to any police officer who might have a particular

concern, or need a listening ear. We spent time at various relief stations set up around the perimeter of Ground Zero, sharing meals with rescue workers, offering them information and conversation. And we had a psychologist stationed 24 hours a day at a bereavement center for the families of the "missing" police officers. In the months to follow, we facilitated group trauma debriefings for first-responders to the scene, and discussed the officers' experiences on that day in detail.

It was because of my experience of working so closely with so many New York City police officers that I developed an interest in formally studying their experiences of the terrorist attacks. Each officer had a powerful tale to tell. And as members of the police force they were in a position of particular importance in responding to such an event. It is the police upon whom the public relies to "protect and serve" its citizens. This duty includes everything from apprehending criminals, to investigating crime scenes, to breaking up domestic disputes, to directing visitors to the right subway platform. And it involves responding to dangerous and traumatic events to rescue people and offer help in whatever way is possible. Though it is not their job to fight fires, it is their duty to save lives. And it was in response to this duty that the police officers arrived at the scene of the attacks and entered the burning buildings.

At 8:46 a.m. on the morning of September 11, when the first plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center, a group of police officers from each command was ordered to mobilize and respond to the scene. These "first responders" were not pre-organized groups trained and ready to respond to a large-scale emergency. Rather, the groups were comprised of one ranking supervisor and eight police officers who just happened to be around the station house at the time. Each group got into a police van and headed

downtown. Since they were coming from each precinct in all of the five boroughs which comprise the greater New York metropolitan area, the groups took varying routes and arrived at widely diverging times. As they set out, some groups had more information than others, but no one in the city had any idea what was really going on. And we certainly did not know how horribly the day's events would unfold.

In addition to the first responders who were mobilized, and the officers who were near the World Trade Center on regular patrol, there were many police officers who were on-duty but were in lower Manhattan tending to other business at the time. They were appearing in court, taking part in workshops on interrogation techniques, attending peer-support groups, and all sorts of other things. Many of these officers also immediately responded to the scene, though they had not been ordered to go. And there were many police officers who were off-duty when they heard what was going on, and immediately stopped what they were doing to either report in to their command, or to head straight for the World Trade Center.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal and understand the participating police officers' psychological experiences in surviving this catastrophe during the line-of-duty and to investigate how the officers' experience of themselves as individuals and the world they inhabit has changed as a result of it. Unfortunately, the events of September 11, 2001 have forced us to recognize that we live in a world in which sudden and unthinkable horrors can be perpetrated against us on our own soil causing mass-scale damage and loss of life. And it is the police who are on the front lines. It is they who are first called to respond to whatever crisis may befall us. Though police officers routinely encounter

many distressing events in the course of performing their duties, the attacks on the World Trade Center represent a different order of trauma. This was a large-scale catastrophic event, perpetrated intentionally, which resulted in massive loss of life and also threatened the lives of those who responded to the scene. Thus, it was an unexpected and unprecedented experience of catastrophe and trauma for the police officers involved.

It is my intention to shed light on the psychological and existential experience of police officers who are called to respond to an emergency catastrophic situation in which many lives are at risk, including the officers' own. I believe this study will play a role in helping us to clarify what it is like for a police officer to be part of a life-threatening catastrophe during the line-of-duty, as well as to shed light on the process of coming to terms with it. It is important for the mental health field to understand how police officers experience a mass scale disaster, as officers and as human beings, so that we will be able to respond appropriately to them in helping them cope with such experiences and integrate them into their understanding of themselves and their world. We need to know more about the meaning the experience of September 11 held for the police officers who survived it. We need to understand what it meant for them that this disaster was unexpected, massive, intentional, and life threatening. We need to know what it was like to be the one whose job it was to respond and what psychological role was played by the context of being a member of the police force. It stands to reason that the more we appreciate the complexity of such a position, the more effective our psychological support will be in the event that we are the victims of another such attack in the future.

Presuppositions

As the literature review will show, the history of the study of psychological trauma reveals that the nature of traumatic experiences themselves is not well defined or understood. In addition, the experience of living through a terrifying experience and then coming to terms with it has not been investigated using the qualitative methods that can help us to more fully understand the significance of such an experience for the person who lives it. Because I had the opportunity to work closely with police officers after the tragedy on 9/11, I experienced first-hand the difficulties resulting from this lack of understanding when trying to respond appropriately to the emotional needs of this population. As well, I entered this research project with some ideas and expectations as to what I would discover through my interviews with research participants.

My first set of assumptions concerned the experience of responding to this disaster *as a police officer*. Few systematic studies have focused on the particular experience of police officers in responding to a large-scale catastrophe. This lack of knowledge compromises the ability of mental health professionals in adequately meeting the psychological needs of those who suffer distressing symptoms as a result of having lived through such disturbing experiences, or indeed in fully grasping what those needs might be. I anticipated finding the officers to have had a conscientious and serious appreciation for fulfilling their duty to protect and serve the public. Because of this duty, the officers went toward the scene of the crisis rather than immediately moving away from it to save themselves. However, I also anticipated that the frustration of the officers' ability to successfully fulfill their responsibility to protect the public would have contributed to their experience of distress.

Secondly, I anticipated that the officers did indeed confront the possibility of losing their lives as well as having witnessed the gruesome and untimely deaths of fellow citizens. My expectation was that this confrontation with and witness to death had played a central role in the officers' experience of the trauma and what sense they had made of it. While some existential and phenomenological thinkers have addressed issues corresponding to those of surviving terrifying experiences, they do not typically address the phenomenon directly. They have much to say, however, about the subject of death itself. As well, these writers address the basic nature and significance of human existence and I believed their ideas were likely to prove useful in their application to the findings of this research.

Finally, I imagined that the officers' lives had been changed to a significant degree, and that the meaning they had made of this experience would contain a mixture both of disturbing and of growth enhancing elements. I expected the police officers to have had an immediate and inescapable confrontation with their understanding of themselves and their world and to have then been unable to escape the project of making some new sense out of it. Likewise, I anticipated the officers would have then found a greater appreciation for the meaning they made of their lives and their world as a result of what they lived through.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

There is a vast body of literature and research concerning the psychological effects of trauma and disasters. Most of the recent work done in the field of trauma studies has specifically focused on the cluster of psychological symptoms said to be a direct result of living through a traumatic event, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. There is also a great deal of literature addressing the application of the findings concerning post-traumatic stress to the field of police work. However, there are few inquiries into the meaning of traumatic experiences for those who live through them or into the nature of the traumatic events themselves. In the following section, I will review some of the research most pertinent to the topic at hand and show that the work already done can be greatly enhanced by an in-depth phenomenological investigation of the psychological experience of police officers living through this disaster.

Trauma and Hysteria

The study of psychological responses to traumatic events is historically rooted in the late nineteenth century when the disorder known as hysteria became the focus of serious medical inquiry. The French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot was the first to systematically observe, describe, and classify this illness that primarily afflicted women. Charcot demonstrated that the physical symptoms of hysteria, paralysis, sensory losses, convulsions and amnesias, were psychological in origin since they could be induced through conversation and relieved through the use of hypnosis (Herman, 1992). Though

Charcot did much to legitimize hysteria as a genuine psychological disorder and to classify and categorize its manifestations, he did not focus his investigations upon its cause. It was left to his followers, Janet in France and Freud and Breuer in Vienna, to turn their attention to the development of a theory that would account for the psychological origin of such dramatic and disturbing symptoms.

Though working independently, Freud and Janet both came to the conclusion that the symptoms of hysteria were caused by psychological trauma. Each felt that the emotional reactions to certain traumas occurring in childhood were so overwhelming to the developing psyche as to cause a profound alteration of consciousness. They postulated that the memory of the traumatic events became dissociated from conscious awareness but then persisted as “subconscious fixed ideas” (Janet, 1891 in Herman, 1992). Because representations of the disturbing events were not integrated into the psyche, they manifested as the emotional and somatic symptoms of hysteria.

The belief that “hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (Breuer & Freud, 1895/ 1956), that their mental lives were governed by disguised manifestations of repressed traumatic experiences, came as a result of the many hours spent in conversation with the symptomatic women. Freud developed his “seduction theory” based on these conversations that consistently revealed his patients had lived through distressing premature sexual experiences. He also found that speaking about their experiences acted to relieve the patients’ symptoms. He called the effect of speaking of the trauma “abreaction” or “catharsis” and it is upon this principle that the majority of modern psychotherapeutic treatment is based.

Freud's emphasis on traumatic sexual experience as the cause of neurosis was not well received and he soon revised his theory to suggest that these memories were actually based in fantasy and were the result of a libidinal wish. This shift from an emphasis on the reality of childhood sexual trauma to a focus on intrapsychic phenomena as causative of neurotic symptoms, while contributing to the development of Freud's theory of psychic processes as a whole, also resulted in a shift of emphasis away from the study of the effects of actual traumatic experiences in the field in general (Masson, 1984). In addition, his turn away from the examination of event-based trauma led to an emphasis on premorbid psychic functioning when treating neuroses. This shift in emphasis supported the position that emotional disturbances resulting from traumatic experiences were acute and transient in nature. If, then, there was a debilitating reaction to a traumatic event, it was not wholly accounted for by the direct impact of the event itself but more by the premorbid psychodynamics of the patient (Everly & Lating, 1995). This psychodynamic emphasis on premorbid functioning as determinant of one's emotional response to trauma has been largely denied in much of the current work done in the study of psychological trauma. The model now in favor recognizes a direct correlation between intensity of the event and likely symptom formations, regardless of a person's psychological predispositions. This issue will be revisited in discussion of the literature concerning Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Though Freud primarily delimited his study of trauma to that of early childhood development and sexuality, he did give some attention to the "war neuroses" said to afflict soldiers in combat during the First World War. He compared the symptoms of his patients to those of soldiers as well as to people involved in accidents. In *The*

Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1917/1966), he discusses this similarity and also provides an insightful description of the phenomena. Freud writes:

> The closest analogy to this behavior of our neurotics is afforded by illnesses that are being produced with special frequency precisely at the present time by the war, what are described as traumatic neuroses. Similar cases, of course, appeared before the war as well, after railway collisions and other alarming accidents involving fatal risks. Traumatic neuroses are not in essence the same thing as the spontaneous neuroses which we are in the habit of investigating and treating by analysis...But in one respect we may insist that there is complete agreement between them. The traumatic neuroses give a clear indication that a fixation to the traumatic accident lives at their root. These patients regularly repeat the traumatic situation in their dreams; where hysteriform attacks occur that admit of an analysis, we find that the attack corresponds to a complete transplanting of the patient into the traumatic situation. It is as though these patients had not yet finished with the traumatic situation, as though they were still faced by it as an immediate task which has not been dealt with; and we take this view quite seriously (pp. 274-275).

Freud went on to suggest that the basic similarity between the "pure traumatic neuroses" and "spontaneous neuroses" was that in each case the ego was defending itself from a threatening danger. In response to this threat, the ego repressed the memory and emotional intensity of the event, thereby fixing it in the unconscious to be relived over and over in symptoms, dreams, and intrusive imagery.

Trauma and War

The recognition of the psychological nature of soldiers' illnesses often had the unfortunate effect that the men were seen as exhibiting a weakness of character, if not outright malingering. Treatment was aimed at stimulating the soldiers' "desire for health" and included the administration of electric shocks, shaming, and threats. Returning to the battlefield was often seen as a preferable alternative to such methods of treatment (van der Kolk, 1996).

More humane approaches to understanding and treating "battle neurosis" were being investigated, however. The American psychiatrist Abram Kardiner, who had been psychoanalyzed by Freud, applied psychoanalytic principles in his work with WWI veterans. Though he was frustrated by his lack of success with this treatment, he held fast to the belief that discussing the distressing experiences promoted healing. Kardiner wrote a classic text called The Traumatic Neuroses of War (1941) in which he outlined the clinical picture of neurotic disturbances resulting from war and theorized the syndrome represented a form of hysterical neurosis. He also emphasized that developing a war neurosis was not a sign of moral deficiency and his work did much to remove the stigma of weakness from those who suffered traumatic reactions. During World War II Kardiner revised his text in collaboration with Herbert Spiegel. In this edition the men argued that an individual soldier's experience of trauma in war could be mitigated by a strong social bond between the soldier and his fighting unit, as well as by trust in the group's leaders. Treatment strategies then came to include attempts at minimizing the separation between the soldier and his fellow fighters, and brief interventions were conducted close to battle lines (Herman, 1992).

Historical Development of PTSD as a Diagnostic Category

After WWII there was a growing acceptance of the belief that anyone could develop a psychological condition after living through extremely disturbing experiences such as those endured in war. In 1952 the American Psychiatric Association published the first edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. In it was listed "Gross Stress Reaction" which was included in a larger category of "Transient Situational Personality Disorders." The description affirmed that in situations of "great or unusual stress" a person would

“utilize established patterns of reaction to deal with overwhelming fear” (APA, 1952). As can be inferred from the name of the category within which the reaction was listed, the effects of trauma were expected to be acute and to resolve quickly. This “gross reaction” was thought to differ from the “neurotic reaction” with respect to “clinical history, reversibility of reaction, and its transient character” (APA, 1952). The diagnosis was intended to be used only in cases of combat or civilian catastrophe. Any persistence of the symptoms of a traumatic reaction led the clinician to consider underlying psychopathology and pre-morbid conditions.

In 1968 the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual was revised and symptomatic reactions to trauma were then classified in a category called “Adjustment Reaction of Adult Life.” A description of the syndrome was eliminated and the criteria for determination of the disorder were only designated by the inclusion of three examples. These examples associated the reaction with unwanted pregnancy, military combat, and being sentenced to death. However, there was an asterisk next to the category directing the user of the manual to an appendix for additional examples of stressful life events and there the manual gave an exhaustive list of car, railway, boat, plane, and other accidents said to eventuate in symptomatic reactions. It is notable that the manual provided no explication of the nature of trauma, the effects of such experiences on psychological functioning, or the clinical features of the syndrome (Everly & Lating, 1995).

After the Vietnam War, interest was renewed in systematically investigating the long-term effects of exposure to the horrors of warfare. Many veterans of the war suffered tremendously from their experiences in Vietnam as well as their treatment once they returned home. The veterans organized to form groups to work for the provision of

mandated mental health treatment for combat veterans, as well as funding for research on the psychological consequences of battle. It was at this time that a direct correlation was demonstrated between combat experience and the development of symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In addition, the consequences of childhood sexual abuse and rape were coming to the forefront of psychological interest. It was recognized that the psychological symptoms associated with sexual assault were similar to those of combat neurosis (Herman, 1992). Both of these developments contributed to the inclusion of the new category, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, in the DSM-III, published in 1980.

The third edition of the DSM emphasized diagnoses of disorders based on clinical presentation of symptoms. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder was included with the anxiety disorders since anxiety was one of the most primary affective reactions associated with traumatization (Everly & Lating, 1995). To be diagnosed with PTSD a patient had to manifest four symptoms from each of three clusters; re-experiencing the trauma, emotional effects of numbing and detachment, and changes in personality. But the primary criterion was the "existence of a recognizable stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone" (APA, 1980). It was assumed that a certain magnitude of stress would generate symptoms in anyone regardless of personal history or psychodynamics. Yet the nature of the "recognizable stressor" was not conceptualized. One of the members of the DSM committee at the time, George Everly, acknowledged that a "recognizable stressor" to one person might not be to another (Everly & Lating, p. 19). It was taken for granted that certain events would be experienced as particularly distressing, though no understanding of the etiology and nature of the distress, and no systematic investigation of it, was put forward.

When the third edition of the DSM was revised, the traumatizing event responsible for PTSD symptoms was now noted to be “outside the range of usual human experience” and, again, “markedly distressing to almost anyone” (APA, 1987). As in the previous editions, the nature of an experience of trauma was suggested by examples. This time the examples were “serious threat to one’s life or physical integrity; serious threat or harm to one’s children, spouse, or other close relatives and friends; sudden destruction of one’s home or community; or seeing another person who has recently been, or is being, seriously injured or killed as the result of an accident or physical violence” (APA, 1987). It wasn’t until the publication of the DSM-IV, in 1994, that reference was made to the nature of the experience of trauma itself. In this edition, the primary criterion for a diagnosis of PTSD, besides exhibiting symptoms, was that the patient had been exposed to an event “that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others” and “the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror” (APA, 1994).

It is clear from a review of the development of PTSD as a category of psychological disorder that traumatic experiences have long been recognized as being able to cause profound reactions in those who live through them. Because the emphasis in clinical work with patients is, of course, in providing treatment leading to alleviation of suffering, it is important to be able to categorize symptoms into identifiable syndromes which can then be treated with consistent methods. However, it would appear that the nature of traumatic experiences themselves as well as the varying quality of the human response to such events is not well understood.

Trauma in Police Work

Critical Incident Stress Management

It is commonly believed that law enforcement is a highly stressful and dangerous occupation. Police officers are routinely exposed to disturbing events in the course of performing their duties. These events can include, but are not limited to, investigating the sexual and physical abuse of children, witnessing suicides by perpetrators, shooting someone or being shot at, securing gruesome murder scenes, and dealing with the line-of-duty death of colleagues. It is assumed that exposure to such dangerous, violent and emotionally unsettling situations is a critical stressor for police and typically has a negative impact on an officer's ability to cope emotionally and to function adequately on the job (Lennings, 1997). In order to address the psychological impact of trauma on police officers many police departments have a program in place that provides intervention in the form of "Trauma Debriefing," also referred to as "Critical Incident Stress Management."

The stressful and disturbing situations that police officers are faced with are typically considered to be analogous to the experience of military combat; therefore the type of psychological intervention implemented follows the guidelines initially developed for combat soldiers (Volanti & Paton, 2000). Studies of soldiers' wartime experiences and subsequent readjustment to civilian life found that prompt intervention was imperative for recovery. These studies also recognized the effectiveness of allowing traumatized personnel to discuss details of the event as well as their emotional reactions in a safe environment that possibly included others who had lived through the same experience (Bell, 1995). A significant contribution to the implementation of trauma debriefing

programs was made by John Mitchell (1983), a firefighter paramedic, who developed a seven-phase method of intervention for emergency service providers experiencing a traumatic event in the course of performing their duty.

The model developed by Mitchell is referred to as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and consists of a group discussion, optimally provided one to fourteen days post-crisis, designed to mitigate acute stress reactions and provide a sense of post-crisis closure (Everly, 1999). The primary goals of these debriefings include normalization of one's often-distressing emotional reactions to the event, allowing for a cathartic experience by encouraging discussion of details about the experience, and providing information and education about symptoms of post-traumatic stress as well as suggestions for coping (Mitchell & Bray, 1989). The debriefings are not considered psychotherapy nor are they intended to be a substitute for longer-term care. Rather, they are thought of more as psychological "first-aid" and also function as a sort of catchment for those who would not seek intervention on their own.

This method of intervention, also known as the "Mitchell Model," while originally developed to meet the needs of emergency response personnel, is now applied generally to individuals involved in any sort of crisis or disaster. It has been adopted by school systems, airlines, hospitals, and many branches of the U.S. military and government, including law enforcement (Everly, 1999). In addition, many police departments, including the NYPD, offer individual trauma debriefings for any police officer involved in a shooting or other incident that might be considered unusually distressing.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings were designed as a prophylactic to the development of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in police officers

exposed to a traumatic event. While the efficacy of debriefings is the subject of much debate (Orner, 1997), their wide-spread use points to a serious concern about the effects of traumatic stress on those who encounter it as a regular component of their work. A study of New Zealand Police who decided to take early retirement found that psychological factors were the predominant reason given for leaving the job and forty-three percent of the sample cited trauma as a factor in their decision to retire (Stephens & Miller, 1998). However, it has been noted that it is difficult to determine which traumatic incidents are more likely to contribute to the development of symptoms or even to the subjective experience of feeling traumatized. While occupational incidents such as the use of deadly force or exposure to multiple deaths and homicides might be assumed to be distressing for anyone and would meet the DSM-IV definition of a trauma, there is no evidence that such incidents pose the main threat to the psychological health of police officers (p. 179).

Stephens and Miller (1998) attempted to examine the relationship between traumatic events and PTSD in police officers. Their study highlights the difficulty of finding real significance in such a relationship without a well-developed understanding of the nature of trauma itself and the significance individual officers find in these experiences. In their study, one thousand police officers were surveyed by questionnaire and asked to note their involvement in certain line-of-duty incidents. Each participant was also given a version of the Mississippi PTSD scale (M-PTSD; Keane et al., 1998) to measure corresponding PTSD symptoms. The numbers of traumatic experiences were tallied in order to derive a “simple trauma score” with repeated involvement in certain events being multiplied by two. Higher scores on the traumatic event schedule were assumed to

indicate greater experiences of psychological trauma. This quantitative study was able to correlate self-reports of involvement in multiple traumatic incidents with a higher number of PTSD symptoms in those who did go on to develop symptoms. In addition, it was also able to determine that certain types of events were more likely to be related to a higher incidence of PTSD symptoms. These included a known police officer's death, a robbery, mugging or hold-up, chronic distress at work and "other" experiences (Stephens & Miller, 1998).

While Stephens and Miller's study is important in its contribution to the recognition of a connection between line-of-duty trauma and the development of certain symptoms, and even more significantly in its determination of some of the events most likely to cause stress reactions, it falls short of providing an understanding of why certain events are more disturbing to a police officer than are other events. Indeed, the authors grapple to provide explanations and offer such hypotheses as "...being the victim of a crime may be very unexpected and therefore particularly distressing for police," and "...it is likely that in a small region employing 1,000 police, any single officer's death is likely to impact on many others" (p.6). They do not, however, offer any empirical evidence for these assumptions. The quantitative methods of this study, as well as of the majority of other studies done on the subject, are limited in their ability to shed light on the nature and structure of a traumatic experience as it is lived and understood by the individual. I believe this limitation is due to the fact that these quantitative studies do not attend to or investigate the *meaning* traumatic experiences hold for the individuals who live through them. There is an assumption that certain events are inherently traumatic but no real attention is paid to the relationship between the event itself and the individual's

interpretation and experience of it. Stephens and Miller (1998) themselves concluded, “A closer examination of the nature of traumatic experiences in police work is warranted, as part of the approach to the prevention of adverse psychological outcomes in working police officers” (p .6).

Police Culture

Understanding the particular experience of the police officer also requires recognition of “typical” characteristics of police officers, understood within the context of their culture, and some determination of the role these qualities might play in their experience. Police are commonly thought to downplay emotion and feelings of vulnerability (Lennings, 1997). In addition, police are said to believe that the public expects them to be calm, cool, and objective in dealing with any situation. Police officers expect themselves to be unaffected personally and emotionally by whatever they encounter in the course of performing their duties. They consider themselves to be the one who can “handle it” and to whom others turn for help. The repression of emotionally threatening feelings is an adaptive coping mechanism, then, and supportive of a police officer’s ability to perform his or her job effectively. It stands to reason, however, that this typically adaptive coping style could contribute to a heightened experience of distress when emotions do overwhelm the officer and he or she does encounter feelings of vulnerability and helplessness.

There is not much research in the field of trauma studies that sets out to systematically analyze how critical incidents are experienced or understood by police officers in particular. It is notable, in fact, that most of the literature makes assumptions about what is and is not traumatic for a police officer without making reference to any systematic

investigations of the phenomenon. A British study concerning helping disaster workers manage their reactions to disturbing experiences, however, found that one of the most basic factors in the mediation of the impact of extreme events is the meaning that the event has for the person (Duckworth, 1991). The author of this study found that stronger emotional responses were evoked "when the threat, suffering, mutilation or death are interpreted in a way which gives them high personal relevance..." (p. 3). He noted this would be the case if a disaster-worker believed there was a threat to his or her own life, or the lives of those she loved, her colleagues, people for whom she had developed a strong commitment, or even people who were reminiscent of her loved ones.

Another factor considered to contribute to distress for police officers is a feeling of powerlessness or helplessness. This stands to reason, given that it is a police officer's job to protect people. It seems likely that being unable to adequately prevent or resolve a critical situation could have a profound effect on an officer's sense of efficacy as a professional. As it is also commonly believed that many police officers consider their work to be not only a career but also a way of life, it makes sense that experiences of professional failure could be unusually distressing. However, again, these arguments are assumptive, as no systematic study has been conducted about the correspondences between personality traits of police officers, the culture of police work, and responses to line-of-duty trauma.

Growth Experiences and Resilience

The extensive body of literature that addresses the relationship between traumatic events and the emergence of distressing psychological symptoms also often overlooks or ignores evidence that exposure to traumatic events does not always result in purely

negative reactions (Moran & Colless, 1995). Research into the consequences of exposure to disasters and other crises typically assumes an automatic relationship between such exposure and the development of traumatic stress reactions. However, it has also been shown that exposure to distressing events can constitute a growth experience for those who respond professionally (Paton, Smith, & Volanti, 2000).

Moran and Colless (1995) noted that positive reactions *per se* were seldom mentioned in the emergency and traumatic stress literature. They hypothesized that this might be due to the severity of the incidents studied as well as possibly being reflective of the focus of the measuring instruments used. They went on to note that it is often assumed emergency workers are "hardier" than the general public and good at suppressing their feelings. Still, they believe, "even with the most adaptive coping styles, it is unlikely that workers would continue to participate in an environment that offers no positive, reinforcing experiences" (p.1).

The term "resilience" refers to a process of resourcefulness and growth, an ability to function psychologically at a level greater than expected given an individual's previous experiences and competencies (Paton et al., 2000). While feelings of loss and distress are expected after an experience of catastrophe, these negative reactions do not necessarily preclude experiences of growth and resilience. In addition, growth and distress outcomes need not be mutually exclusive (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2000). In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the experience of living through a disaster, it is important to attend to possible experiences of growth and resilience as well as to those of distress. Perhaps by understanding what positive reactions are possible, and the conditions under which they occur, we might be able to foster their development.

Existential and Phenomenological Understandings Of Traumatic Experiences

Inquiries into the human experience of traumatic events that provide more of an understanding of the significance of such experiences for the people who endure them can be found in the existential and phenomenological literature. Though few writers address the question of the experience of trauma or terror *per se*, we can apply some of the understandings gleaned from investigations into similar experiences to the matter at hand. Because the existential and phenomenological approaches are concerned with revealing the nature and lived-meaning of the human experience, insights discovered there have greater relevance to this project than do the quantitative studies which represent the majority of the work done in the field.

Martin Heidegger

Martin Heidegger, in his seminal work Being and Time (1927), describes the human experience of not feeling “at home” in the world. The word he uses is “unheimlich,” literally translated as “unhomelike” or “not at home.” This word is typically translated in Heidegger’s work as “uncanny,” and denotes the sense of alienation one feels when the familiar world loses its normal significance and suddenly seems strange and unfamiliar. In his A Commentary on Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Michael Gelven (1989) explains it thusly:

> Sometimes, in becoming aware of such experiences, we often find ourselves reflecting on our own existence. Plucked out of the stream of our daily concerns, we seem forced to reflect upon our existence as if it were a totally new revelation. We observe ourselves, suspended from the concerns that occupy our consciousness, almost as if we were strangers to ourselves. Perhaps we even become aware of ourselves as something independent of our daily concerns (p. 115).

The importance of this sort of experience is that it removes us from our typical involvement and absorption in the things around us, "and in so doing allows us to reflect upon our own stark and terrifying existence" (p.115).

For Heidegger, though, it is in the state of anxiety that one experiences the world as uncanny. As Hubert Dreyfus (1991) explains it, anxiety serves as a breakdown that reveals the nature of Dasein as being absorbed in the things of the world. He quotes Heidegger as saying, "Anxiety brings [Dasein] back from its absorption in the "world." Everyday familiarity collapses" (p.179). Heidegger contrasts the experience of anxiety with that of fear in that fear has a definite object. There is a "fearing as such" which is the mood that lets something matter to us as fearsome, and "that which is feared," something specific coming at us in some specific way (Dreyfus, 1991). But in an experience of anxiety, it is the precise absence of a specific object, a "nothingness" of being that is the source of discomfort. Nothingness is not equated to death or dying since these are things that can be experienced and therefore feared. Anxiety is more a state of mind wherein we are aware of nothingness as an existential ground of being that, as such, reveals to us how we are in the world, that we are absorbed in a world.

Though Heidegger was not writing about experiences of terror here, it seems reasonable that an unexpected catastrophic experience would involve both fear and anxiety. In a mass-scale disaster, one's familiar world, including beliefs about the world, is suddenly and radically altered. While this is a real event and not a mood state occurring with no seeming precipitant, as anxiety is likely to be, the effect of stripping one of the comfort of the familiar is the same. It seems appropriate to assume that an experience of surviving a catastrophe, while facing one's own death and witnessing the

deaths of others, would involve a profound encounter with oneself and with the ground of one's being insofar as it can be understood.

Viktor Frankl

Another existential thinker whose work bears relevance to the experience of surviving catastrophe is the Austrian psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl. In his book, Man's Search for Meaning, Frankl (1959/ 1984) describes his experience of life in the concentration camps during WWII. Frankl was struck by the fact that he and other prisoners, despite suffering great torment and dehumanizing experiences in the camps, could still go on in life without falling prey to despair and, indeed, without committing suicide.

It was through his reflection on this phenomenon that Frankl developed an understanding of the human will to survive which he found to be rooted in our ability to find meaning in life and to take responsibility for it. In the preface to the third printing of the book, Gordon Allport explains Frankl's finding that the will to live arises from an ability to make sense out of suffering. Allport nicely summarizes Frankl when he states, "It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying. But no man can tell another what this purpose is. Each must find out for himself, and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities" (p. 9).

Though Frankl's reflections are concerned with the more protracted sufferings of prisoners in the most brutal and hopeless of circumstances, his recognition of the central role of the importance of finding meaning in life is relevant for survivors of catastrophes. Those who survive terrifying experiences, though the immediate crisis may pass quickly,

are still faced with serious losses, including the loss of closely held assumptions about the safety of one's world, one's ability to face challenges with strength and confidence, and the good motivations of other people. Such a radical stripping away of one's previous foundational understanding of oneself in the world, in addition to the loss of loved ones, could be psychologically devastating. But, Frankl shows that the foundational task of life is to find meaning in it and he offers the hope of the choice to find new meaning in changed circumstances.

Jean-Paul Sartre

The French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre sets out to establish a foundational structure of emotion in his book, The Emotions: Outline of a Theory (1948/1976). In it, he describes many types of emotion and offers that true emotion is accompanied by belief (p. 73). Because of this, emotion cannot be abandoned at will. Sartre goes on to describe the experience of the horrible, as differentiated from that of fear, and it is this analysis that is relevant for the present study.

Sartre discusses the role of physiological phenomena in the expression of emotion and notes these physical manifestations represent the "seriousness" of the emotion, and regards them as phenomena of belief. The physical response to terror and the felt emotion are considered as a synthetic whole and, thus, not able to be studied in isolation. Thus, one cannot, through sheer force of will, stop one's hands from trembling or one's heart from racing. Sartre goes on to discuss what he calls the "two-fold character of the body" (p. 75), which is both an object in the world and something directly *lived* by consciousness. His point that emotion is a phenomenon of belief is grounded in this understanding. Consciousness, thus, *lives* its world directly and spontaneously. Sartre

says, “What it cannot endure in one way it tries to grasp in another by going to sleep, by approaching the consciousness of sleep, dream, and hysteria” (p. 77).

In his description of the horrible, Sartre differentiates abrupt reactions of terror from more superficial and slightly unpleasant emotions. Emotion makes a world appear, a world that is cruel, gloomy, joyful, etc., but always a world in which the relationship of things to consciousness is “magical.” Emotion confers qualities upon objects and experiences. However, in an experience of the horrible, consciousness does not confer belief but rather now *perceives* the world as magical. “The abrupt passage from a rational apprehension of the world to a perception of the same world as magical, if it is motivated by the object itself and if it is accompanied by a disagreeable element, is horror; if it is accompanied by an agreeable element it will be wonder...” (p. 85). Sartre goes on to explain that when we perceive the horrible we are in immediate connection with it, “we live and undergo (this) signification, and it is with our own flesh that we establish it” (p. 86). Our body believes it.

Another aspect of the horrible is that, insofar as it is considered a real and substantial quality of the thing that evokes the emotion of horror, it exceeds its apprehension in the present. The horrible then extends to and threatens the future, “it spreads itself over the whole future and darkens it; it is a revelation of the meaning of the world” (p. 81). The horrible becomes possible as a real quality existing in the world, not placed there by consciousness. The sudden realization of the horrible strips away our comfort in the familiar. It threatens our sense of security both at present and in the future. However, as Sartre says of emotion, it is a mode of existence of consciousness, one of the ways it

understands its being-in-the-world. Thus, the importance it has for us lies in our effort to make sense of it, to find meaning in it, and to understand ourselves through it.

Martin Buber

Martin Buber's work concerning the philosophical articulation of what he called the "dialogic principle" bears relevance for this study in its focus on the way human beings understand their world, and the ways in which human relatedness is possible. The officers in this study experienced a catastrophic event of such magnitude that it effected a radical change in their world. Such a dramatic disruption is difficult to describe or even to comprehend. And it can be assumed that it changed the ways in which they all would then understand themselves, their world, and their relationships.

In his best known work, the short philosophical essay Ich und Du (1923), translated I and Thou, Buber described two primary ways of apprehending the world and others. One he called the "I-It" relationship, in which we view both objects and people according to their functions or usefulness. In this way, we can learn a great deal of objective knowledge about the world through observing, measuring, and examining it. When we view other people this way, however, the relationship lacks mutuality and openness. On the other hand, according to Buber it is also possible to be present to another person in such a way as to allow for more genuine relatedness. He felt we have the capacity to make ourselves completely available to others in a way that creates a bond that enriches each person. In this way, true dialogue and true sharing occur. Such a way of being in relationship is called "I-Thou."

Buber believed, however, that the dialogic principle was not a philosophical conception but rather expressed a reality of relatedness that was beyond the reach of

discursive language. To be fully present to the other in the mode of "I-Thou" was an act that did away with pretense, and did not even require speech. It represented a mode of relationship that allowed for growth, vulnerability, and acceptance. It stands to reason that the officers who participated in this study experienced a change in the way they typically understood their world and their relationships with others. And it also seems clear that there would be a need for them, and for all who seek to understand their experiences, to approach the matter in the manner of the "I-Thou" relationship.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The review of the literature concerning traumatic experiences has shown that most psychological investigations into the matter have focused primarily on psychiatric conditions that are sometimes the result of such events. Even studies that have sought to better understand the nature of trauma itself have relied on quantitative analyses that shed little light on the meaning these events have held for the people who have lived through them. And they certainly failed to provide an existential understanding of what the subjects lived through as they endured the experience. In order to achieve a more depthful understanding of the police officers' experience of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, I used a descriptive and phenomenological method. The strength and purpose of this method is to reveal both the explicit and implicit dimensions of the particpants' experience as it was lived, without concern for proving or disproving any hypotheses. This method also takes into account the researcher's own perspective and presuppositions, allowing them to enrich rather than detract from the findings. The phenomenological method employed here was originally developed by Giorgi (1970) and later elaborated and refined by Fischer (1974) and Wertz (1985).

Data Collection

This study used participants' verbal descriptions of their experience of the September 11 attacks as the data of research. The descriptions were obtained through interviews with each of three police officers who were involved in the immediate police response to

the attacks and were present when the World Trade Center towers collapsed. The guiding concern throughout the interviews, as well as during the process of data analysis, was to access the officers' psychological experiences throughout the day on September 11, 2001 as well as to note any changes that may have occurred in their experience of themselves and their world since that time. Follow-up interviews were conducted with two of the participants. The interviews were then transcribed into text for analysis, the details of which will be elucidated later in this section.

Recruitment of Subjects

I recruited participants by posting a call for subjects at various police commands, through word-of-mouth, and through the Patrolman's Benevolent Association, an organization that protects the legal rights of police officers. I began my recruitment efforts by posting an announcement about the research on the message board at several police commands, including the 1st Precinct within which the World Trade Center towers were located, and several Emergency Services Units. The officers at these commands were likely to have been involved in and personally affected by the disaster. Because I had contact with many police officers while working at the police department, I thought I might also be able to recruit subjects through spreading the word about my research to officers that I was in casual contact with on the job, and, in turn, asking them to tell others. Finally, I asked PBA representatives to contact "first responders" who would be interested in being part of a project designed to help police officers in the future. I contacted PBA representatives in person and explained the project to them so they would be able to adequately explain it to the officers. I asked the PBA representatives to approach both male and female officers, and to seek a group of officers of different

backgrounds, ages, ranks, commands, and time spent on the job in order to create a group of participants whose descriptions may have shed light on a diversity as well as a similarity of experience. Further, I explained to the representatives that all officers they approached should be informed that their decision to participate or not would result in no ramifications pertaining to their jobs, as this project was being conducted independently of the police department.

Because I had already spoken to, literally, hundreds of police officers about their experiences on 9/11 while conducting trauma debriefings for the police department, I was confident about finding research participants. I initially chose to post a call for subjects and to ask PBA delegates to approach potential subjects rather than directly contacting officers I knew because I was concerned that the officers I contacted might feel pressured to participate. However, my posted announcements drew no subjects whatsoever. This did not completely surprise me. I was employed by the NYPD as Psychologist Level I, and in this position I routinely evaluated police officers' psychological fitness for duty. Because of the disruption of an officer’s career that could result from being placed on “restricted duty” for psychological reasons, many officers were wary of being forthcoming about their emotional experience with someone who worked in the capacity of psychologist for the NYPD. I knew the PBA delegates personally, and they had the trust of the officers. Therefore I felt they would be more successful in helping me find participants.

As it turned out, the PBA delegates found only one person willing to participate. This was a female officer whose lungs and throat had been scarred when she inhaled some noxious gasses at the WTC site. She contacted me and we spoke informally. She agreed

to be interviewed after she had throat surgery and said she would contact me in a few weeks. She did not contact me, and never responded to my telephone calls. I have no information about why she changed her mind. Frustrated, I decided to personally contact an officer whom I had met casually while conducting trauma-debriefings during the 9/11 aftermath. He had been emotionally forthcoming and willing to share details of his experience at that time. I explained the purpose of my project to him and he readily agreed to participate. This was my participant "Andy," who had only been on the police force for six months at the time of the 9/11 attacks. I explained that all identifying information would be kept confidential and that there would be no consequences of participation in terms of his position with the NYPD. He indicated he understood, but also seemed unconcerned about potential ramifications.

I then contacted an officer I knew who worked at the Early Intervention Unit, a division of the NYPD that provides counseling services to officers by other officers with advanced degrees in mental health fields. I asked if he knew of anyone who might be willing to participate and whether he would contact them for me. This officer found two willing participants. When after six weeks of trying to schedule an appointment I finally met with one of them, a high-ranking veteran officer, he refused to sign the consent form. Though I explained it was for his protection, he stated he did not want to enter into any sort of contract. He said he had told his story to a reporter in the past, and this person had included it in a book and made a profit on it. Therefore, he was wary of my intentions. Though he stated he would actually, though somewhat illogically, agree to be interviewed without signing the consent, it appeared to me that his mistrust of my intentions would

not be conducive to his providing a valid account of his experience and so I eliminated him as a potential participant.

The other officer did agree to participate and, though she was only able to meet one time, spoke to me for several hours about her experience. Having been on the police force for nineteen years, “Mary” was a Lieutenant on 9/11 and had since been promoted to Captain. After our interview, I asked if she knew of anyone else who might be willing to participate. She thought of someone, and contacted him for me. This final participant, “Chuck,” had also been an NYPD officer for some twenty years and held the rank of Lieutenant on 9/11. He had since retired from the force. Mary and Chuck knew each other fairly well. In fact, Chuck had taken actions on 9/11 that saved many lives. One of the people Chuck saved had then gone on to provide aid for Mary, effectively saving her life.

Finally, there was a fourth officer who agreed to participate. Once I decided to contact officers myself, I called a sergeant at the Emergency Services Unit whom I had met when he referred another officer to the Psychological Evaluation Unit. When I explained my project to him, and asked if he knew of anyone who might be willing to meet with me, he said he would be happy to participate. While he was recounting his experience during our interview, I realized this officer had not been present when the WTC towers collapsed, but had arrived later to conduct and supervise rescue and recovery efforts. His story was compelling and informative in its own right, and his perspective was of particular value given that he was a ranking officer of the elite Emergency Services Unit. However, because I chose to limit my study to officers who had literally survived the attacks, I did not include his account in my final analysis. I

have included a transcript of his interview in the appendix. I appreciated the officer's willingness to take of his time to tell me his story, and it was my distinct impression that he wanted to help with any project that might contribute to further improvement of the mental health services provided to police officers. I also feel his account has value as an historical record, and could be used as data in future research studies.

The Interviews

My initial plan was to conduct two interviews with each participant. During the first interview I would ask them to tell their 9/11 stories in as much detail as possible. I assumed the officers would be rather fact-oriented as they gave their accounts, and I expected to have to prompt them quite a bit to elaborate upon their psychological experiences. I would transcribe the taped interviews and meet a second time to further discuss issues that stood out as particularly significant. I thought that meeting a second time would also give the officers an opportunity to discuss anything they had felt might be important to add after the initial interview. But the circumstances of the officers' lives as they were being lived at the time made me adjust my practical expectations. The interviewing process was different for all three.

Andy and I met for our first interview in my office. I explained the project and asked him to describe to me what he experienced on September 11, 2001 such that someone who knew nothing about the event would know what it was like to have been him that day. Andy was quite gregarious, and described his psychological experience of September 11 in rich detail. I found it unnecessary to ask for much elaboration. He seemed engaged and excited as he spoke. Though he had told his story before, to journalists and friends, Andy still conveyed an air of newness and awe as he talked about

it. This interview took place in November 2002, two months after the first anniversary of the attacks.

I transcribed the interview into text and analyzed it in a preliminary way for areas I thought were of particular psychological and existential importance. I developed a list of approximately six areas I wanted to explore in more detail. Andy and I met for a second time in March 2003. This time, I traveled to his command and spoke to him just after his tour of duty had ended. Andy was still in uniform and I was able to see him interact with his fellow officers at the command. He had an air of confidence and I could see he was well regarded by those he worked with. During this interview, I asked Andy to elaborate upon several areas of his psychological experience. For example, I had been struck by how vivid his memory was for the day's events and asked him to comment about whether he remembered 9/11 especially vividly or if this was usual for him. At the time, I felt I might be able to compare the officers' experiences of September 11 with other experiences they had of line-of-duty trauma. As he began to speak about traumatic events in general, he naturally delved into other areas of interest, such as the authority a police officer commands in situations of emergency and his assumption of that position on 9/11. Andy was again quite talkative and did not hesitate to answer all of my questions fully.

I met with Mary at her command before her tour of duty began in the evening. She was a commanding officer and, because we met in her office, the phone rang frequently and we had to stop so that she could attend to business, even though she was not officially on duty. We met for approximately five hours and Mary was also quite gregarious and forthcoming about her experiences. Again, I explained the project to her

and asked her to simply tell her story. And, as with Andy, she was so elaborative that I rarely had to prompt her to provide more details. The only times I felt I needed to ask for elaboration was when Mary had conveyed her ideas or emotions primarily through gestures rather than words. It turned out that it was very difficult for Mary to put these certain experiences into words. This phenomenon itself became a research finding, and is discussed at length in the Discussion Section. Mary felt it would be difficult to schedule another interview, but it seemed to me that she had discussed her experiences in such depth and detail that a follow-up interview was unnecessary.

Chuck called me the morning our interview was scheduled to say he felt he could not participate after all. He said he had begun to lose sleep in the week leading up to the interview and he felt it was because he was anxious about having to retell his story, and relive his experience. He did not think it was in his best interest to put himself through it again. He did mention, however, that he had told his story in detail to an interviewer for a German television station that wanted to give him an award. This interview was conducted at the World Trade Center site on the morning of September 11, 2002, the first anniversary of the attacks. He was willing to let me use that taped interview as research data. When I went to his house to pick up the tape he also told me he had a videotape of September 11, 2001 taken by a cameraman who had been trapped with Chuck and was ultimately saved by him. It showed people jumping from the buildings, and the response of the rescue personnel on the ground. It also showed the cloud of debris that resulted from the collapse, and what the scene looked like just afterward. The cameraman then ran into Chuck again, and he is featured on the tape. Chuck and I watched it together, and he began to describe his experiences to me. He became emotional and tearful a few

times while watching the video. I took a few notes as he spoke, and he said he now wished I had brought my tape recorder. We agreed that I would transcribe the interview he gave to the German television crew into text and then we would meet again to discuss questions I might have and anything else he wanted to add.

Chuck and I met a second time at his home. I had found the interview he gave for the television program to be as detailed and psychologically rich as the ones I had conducted with the other participants, and I felt I did not need much elaboration. There were a few thoughts he wanted to add, however, particularly concerning his belief that the rescue operation on 9/11 had actually been quite successful, saving many lives. He wanted to point out whatever positive perspectives could be taken on the events of September 11, 2001.

It was notable that all of the participants told their stories in vivid detail and with such psychological depth. They all were very willing to discuss their experiences and, in fact, seemed eager to do so. Even Chuck, once he felt comfortable with me, was quite forthcoming. The participants provided so much data, in fact, that I had to limit the focus of my study. I had originally intended to examine their experiences on 9/11 as well as in the aftermath. But, because of the overwhelming wealth of data, I decided to restrict my focus to the officers' experiences only on September 11, 2001 itself.

Steps in Analysis of Data

All the interviews, including the videotaped one, were transcribed into the form of a written text and analyzed for themes of psychological significance. I began my analysis by closely reading the interview material several times in order to immerse myself in the described experiences. This step was necessary in order to gain as full an empathic

immersion as possible into the particularities of each described situation. As Wertz (1985) said, "...the researcher attempts to put himself in the subject's shoes and to live through the experience from the inside so that he is not a mere spectator but achieves a grasp of the meanings the subject has expressed precisely as intended by the subject" (p.164). As I read I noted themes that were expressive of the psychological experiences involved for the police officers in living through this catastrophe.

In order to delineate themes of psychological significance, I followed the method of qualitative analysis as described by Giorgi (1975). This process involved taking note of the shifts of meaning that occurred throughout the descriptions of the experiences. Each shift was understood as revealing a psychologically significant aspect of the phenomenon under investigation. Given the wealth of material provided by the officers in their accounts, I chose to limit my final analysis to the themes I felt were of the most significant existential importance for all three. There was such a depth and richness of experience revealed in each account, in fact, that I felt I could have undertaken my project as a case study, analyzing only one officer's experience in detail. And yet, had I focused solely on one officer, I would not have had the benefit of comparing the significance of each officer's experience to the others.

After having reviewed the transcriptions of the interviews and analyzed the material in a preliminary way, I wrote the officers' stories into the form of a narrative text called a Situated Narrative. My hope was that this would allow the reader to become acquainted with the officers' experiences without having to read the entire transcripts. It also served as a method of data analysis, as I had to determine what I felt were the most salient issues that needed to be included in my rewriting of the officers' stories. These narratives

describe the day's events in great detail, and give voice to themes of psychological significance that were explicitly conveyed by the officers as well as those that were more subtly implied. The narratives function as a retelling of the subject's descriptions in a psychological way, as stories that highlight the existential meanings involved in each officer's experience of living through the September 11 attacks.

The primary psychological themes that emerged through this process of data analysis were then clarified and elaborated upon as General Results. In this section I delineated the most salient psychological and existential themes while also engaging in an interpretive analysis of the experiences of the officers. I attended to the temporal unfolding of the officers' experiences as well as to their relationships to self, world, and other. It was upon these General Results that I based my discussion of the findings in dialogue with relevant literature.

Confidentiality and Consent

In order to use police officers as subjects of research it was necessary to get approval of the project, through all necessary channels, from the Police Commissioner of the NYPD. The document indicating official approval is included in the appendix. That the police department approved the project was made clear to participants. However, I explained that the study was being undertaken independently of the NYPD; therefore, the department has no rights to the material nor access to names of or information about participants. Because I am employed by the NYPD as Psychologist Level I, there is a possibility that I could come into contact with participating police officers if, in the future, they are referred to the Psychological Evaluation Section either for fitness-for-duty evaluation or trauma debriefing. If this were to happen, I would excuse myself from

any involvement in the matter, and I made this clear in the consent form. Further, I would not share any information I have about the officer that I am privy to as a result of this research project with the psychologist assigned to conduct the evaluation or debriefing. This guarantee of anonymity was also noted in the consent form.

I eliminated all names and other identifying information from the written documentation to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, I protected the anonymity of people the participants mentioned during the interviews by eliminating identifying information about them as well. However, certain details of the officers' experiences on September 11, 2001 have already been documented elsewhere and are a matter of public record. It proved impossible to eliminate all identifying data as to do so would have changed the officers' accounts in such a way as to occlude certain significant aspects of their experiences. I discussed this dilemma with each of the participating officers. None of them expressed any concern about their confidentiality being protected so stringently. They did not feel they had anything to hide nor did they believe that, were their identities revealed to the police department or to the public, any negative ramifications would occur. Nevertheless, I made a conscientious effort to change as much identifying information as was possible.

Interpretation of Results

The analyses and results of any qualitative research project are influenced by the presuppositions and expectations brought to bear on the study by the researcher (Giorgi, 1970). It is one of the strengths of phenomenological research, in fact, that the perspective of the researcher is made as explicit as possible. In this vein, it should be noted that I had been a "civilian member of the service" working in the capacity of

Psychologist Level I for the NYPD for one year when the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred. Because of this work, I had become quite familiar with the culture of the police department. After the attacks, my "unit" was responsible for conducting trauma debriefings for all of the police officers who initially responded to the scene and for those who had worked at the site for the many months of recovery efforts. This was often emotionally demanding and distressing work. I heard many stories, and was privy to gruesome details. Some officers had developed serious psychological symptoms as a result of what they had lived through. But I was also struck by the fortitude of many of the officers. The plenitude of reactions called me to wonder about the nature of trauma itself, and to suspect that the existential significance of an event for any individual was a primary constituent in their experience of it.

Because of my immersement in the world of the NYPD, I came to the research with a number of preconceptions. I knew that the police department was a culture unto itself, and that police officers' sense of identification with the job was varied and significant. Thus, I wanted to address the role that such an identification with the position of NYPD officer would play in the participants' experience of the 9/11 attacks. However, I was concerned that the reticence often encountered in police officers would hinder the research. I was acquainted with many officers whose style of reporting was very fact-oriented. As a group, they stereotypically did not offer much in the way of psychological insight unless directly questioned about it. This was part of their training, to pay specific attention to facts and leave one's personal reactions aside. I assumed I would have to prompt them throughout the interviews to provide more depthful psychological observations. This turned out not to be the case. The officers gave such rich and detailed

accounts of their experiences that I barely had to speak at all. In fact, it was apparent that the officers I interviewed were eager to describe their experiences of 9/11, though it was often difficult for them to put it into words. Even Chuck, who hesitated to participate for fear of opening up old wounds, was very forthcoming once he felt comfortable with me.

When I first undertook the project I believed the officers would likely emphasize their experiences of distress in living through the attacks. For this reason, I emphasized issues of posttraumatic stress in my literature review. Again, I was surprised. Though they did discuss their emotional reactions to the many disturbing events they experienced, the focus was not primarily on feelings of distress. They described a wide and complex variety of psychological reactions and experiences. Thus, the reader will see that literature on posttraumatic stress proved pertinent, but was not of utmost importance. It was the work of the existential thinkers that I found the most appropriate to refer to in my efforts to lay bare the profundity of the officers' experiences.

I had, of course, planned to discuss my findings in dialogue with existential literature at the outset. However, the assumptions I made before undertaking the research itself about which thinkers and ideas would be most relevant were also subject to revision. The most significant existential finding pertained to the importance the officers placed on their relationships with others. They were embedded in a culture that held the safety and protection of others as a guiding value, and these officers embodied that value. They felt the pain of those who suffered and died on 9/11, and they found meaning for their own lives in continuing to help others in the future. It was also apparent that their personal relationships were of great significance. In fact, I believe the officers who volunteered to participate in this study did so in order to help *me*, as well as anyone in the future who

might benefit from the contribution to the body of psychological knowledge this study might provide. Because of this emphasis on relatedness to others, the work of Martin Buber, for example, proved to be of greater significance than I had originally anticipated.

Finally, my own emotional involvement in the topic should not be ignored. As has been discussed, I was immediately and intimately involved in the efforts of the NYPD to provide psychological counseling for its officers. This was a very demanding and sad time in my life. But it was also a time when I felt my work had particular relevance and meaning. I developed respect for many officers who had given so much to the people of New York City. I also encountered those who had not acted as honorably on 9/11 and those who expressed resentment toward the NYPD for failing to adequately address their needs in the immediate aftermath. However, the officers who chose to participate in this study were positively inclined toward the NYPD. And they acted with bravery and heroism during the tragedy on September 11, 2001. Thus, my response to them and to their stories was quite positive.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter presents the research data as well as the findings as yielded through the method described in the previous section. The participating officers' accounts of their experiences on September 11, 2001 have been written in the form of detailed and extensive narratives. I felt it was important to include the officers' stories as fully as possible so that the reader could become immersed in the richness of their lived experience. I also hoped in this way to present the data from which the results were gleaned in an accessible manner that would prevent the reader from having to turn unnecessarily to the transcribed interviews. I feel I should warn the reader here that some of the details included in these narrative accounts are quite graphic. The second section presents the results, also in narrative form, as a general structural description of the most salient existential themes presented by the officers in their accounts.

Narrative Accounts

“ANDY”

On the day of the WTC attacks, “Andy” was still a probationary police officer, also known as a “probie,” or a “rookie.” At the age of 28, he had just graduated from the police academy six months before, so he was still on probationary status. He was assigned as a patrol officer in an area which encompassed the World Trade Center. I met Andy while attending an official NYPD ceremony once the recovery effort at the WTC

site closed in June of 2002. I spoke to him casually about his experiences that day, and found him to be easy to talk to and forthcoming about everything he had lived through. I was struck by the fact that he appeared to have come through his experience unscathed psychologically, despite having witnessed unimaginable horrors and having narrowly escaped with his own life. When I began to look for research subjects I called him, and he readily agreed to participate. Andy had told his story many times, had been written about in newspaper articles, and was recognized for his heroism on 9/11 at an NYPD award ceremony. We met at my office in the Medical Division for the initial interview in February 2003, after he had been seen by an NYPD physician to check his blood for possible heavy metal contamination resulting from his presence during and after the WTC collapse. Though he had told his story so often before, he was willing and eager to discuss it again in detail with me. We met for a follow-up interview several weeks later. That time, I went to his precinct, and talked to him in an empty meeting room, just after he'd come off patrol and was still in uniform.

That September morning in 2001, Andy was involved in his regular duties and had just begun investigating a routine traffic accident one block away when the first plane hit WTC Tower 2. He heard a loud bang, and looked to his partner, wondering what had just happened. Andy said he had heard loud bangs before, but he recognized this as something out of the ordinary. He was facing away from the towers, but his partner saw the plane hit. Andy remained calm, though he already suspected this "bang" foretold a serious situation. He said, "Being in uniform, you try not to jump up. You know, like, not to use a harsh word or anything, but you don't want to look like a sissy." He was immediately cognizant of his position as a police officer, a position of authority and

control, and did not want to appear frightened. Andy turned around and saw people rushing toward him, covering their heads and looking back toward the towers. He looked where they were looking, at the top of World Trade Center Tower 2, and saw a massive explosion, "just a fireball coming out." He and his partner started telling the people to get out of there, and then he "just instinctively" started running toward the towers. Though the natural instinct of most was to run away, Andy's instinct was to run toward the scene of the "accident."

He had run just a few steps when it occurred to him that he was not supposed to leave his partner. Having just graduated from the police academy six months before, he said, "Stuff like that was still fresh in my mind; 'Never leave your partner'." So he stopped, turned to his partner, and said, "Meet me up there…Meet me in front of the Trade Center." At this point in his retelling of the story, Andy paused to say that his partner had been unable to drive the patrol car the one block to the site because of all of the people flooding the area and the debris falling from the tower. Andy made a point of telling me his partner was not involved in his experience after that time. He also made sure to tell me his partner ended up being safe, though he thought at some point, his partner was "gone." The concern that his partner may have been killed did not actually come up again during our interviews. And it seemed to me that this important concern was ultimately overshadowed by the day's extreme events, as well as falling into Andy's rapid adaptation to and acceptance of the fact that many did not live through this horrible event.

As Andy ran toward the Trade Center he saw that the West Side Highway was littered with debris, and "things on fire." He also noticed that there were no cars on the road,

which was very unusual for that section of Manhattan on a Tuesday morning during rush hour. He slowed down, thinking it didn't seem like anything was going on. He noted that it was quiet, "just quiet as can be…just very quiet." This seemed to give him a sense of peace, that the situation was not so grave. He stopped running and began to walk. Then, as he neared the Highway, he saw that the "things on fire" were actually people. He began running again. He described it thus, "I came upon the first person, on fire, was dead. Came upon another person, on fire, was dead. Came upon another lady, who was sitting…just sitting Indian-style in the middle of the street …all…totally naked because all her clothes were burnt off her. She was a Spanish lady; her skin was like almost pink. Her hair was singed off, crying hysterically, her face was burnt." He tried to pick her up from under her arms, but she wouldn't get up. He looked around and saw other people on fire, and others who appeared injured but mobile. A man who knew the burned woman came out of the building. He was able to get her up and walk away. Andy then continued toward the lobby of the tower. He said there was shattered glass everywhere, and fire. Smoke was pouring out of the lobby. He felt confused about the situation. "If the plane hit so many stories high…why is the lobby on fire?" He was hesitant to enter, and stood just outside, peering in through what had just recently been a glass wall, trying to figure out what was going on inside, a task made more difficult by the heavy smoke pouring into the lobby area. He couldn't see much, and just yelled, "Anybody in here? Anybody need help?" Debris from the initial strike was falling near him and he jumped into the lobby. About his decision to enter the lobby Andy said, "That's when I became a sissy. That's when I just ran in. I just jumped. I was like, 'Holy Shit'." He ran in, really to protect himself from the falling debris. It was safer inside.

He entered the lobby of the burning tower and saw “bits of fire again.” He saw two more people on fire. One person caught his attention because she was still alive. He saw that her legs were on fire. Andy said, “So, as she’s, she’s lying on her back with her hand, her hands out in front of her face, like this (gestures, hands in front of face, palms out). And she, she sees me, ‘cause I look face to face with her to see if she was alive, and saw her eyes were open and she was breathing.” Her clothes were burnt off, as the other woman’s had been. She was taking short breaths. Andy ran up to her and asked if she was all right. She said, “I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe.” He couldn’t believe she was so concerned about being able to breathe, considering that her legs were on fire. She appeared to be unaware or unconcerned that her body was in flames. Andy looked for something to put the fire out, but found nothing. He took off his shirt, and struck her legs with it to put out the fire. He told her she would be all right, that help was on the way, and he used his department issued radio to call for help. Andy realized his call was going unheard because of the number of trauma calls. He then saw some firemen and waved them over.

Reflecting on this experience, Andy said this was one of the most vivid of his memories that day. He had two differing emotional reactions. When he was trying to help her, he had a sense of powerlessness because there was nothing he could do to save her life. On the other hand, he felt he brought her some comfort and reassurance in her final moments. He said he often wondered about who she was. He spent time searching the posters of the missing in the weeks after 9/11, looking for her picture. He hoped he could contact her family, and tell them what happened to her, possibly bringing them some closure. Andy empathized with her, and felt sad for her and for her family. He

talked about how she was likely just standing in the lobby waiting for the elevator, going to work like any other day, when suddenly she was hit with a burst of fire.

At this point in his narrative, Andy's thoughts turned to another person he had seen who was on fire. This man was dead, and his body was engulfed in flames. Andy described what he saw in vivid detail. He said, "I can still see his face. He had a business suit on. He had on navy blue dress pants. He had on a light blue collared shirt, with a tie. He was a black gentleman wearing glasses. Seemed like a pretty big guy too, like, fit, 6'4" or so, built, muscular though. And he was in the same position as her. He was on his back with his hands held out in front of his face. Almost as if he was trying to defend his face from the flames, or whatever was coming at him. But I just, I very much remember his face. And he had, same as her, heavy blood pouring out of his mouth. Since he was on his back the blood was all coming down his cheek and then down his neck and his shirt was drenched with his own blood. He, I knew he was dead. I mean, you don't have to be a doctor to figure that one out. There was no, I'm not putting that fire out with my shirt."

Andy's recollection of seeing this man was extremely vivid and detailed, even though he was describing it to me a year and a half later. And it was striking to me that he even noted the color of the man's clothing, considering he was engulfed in flames. Andy said he also felt sympathy for this man, "because he looked like such a regular guy…Looked like a Dad, you know? And, same thing, this guy walked through the doors and just got hit with this fire. And now he's dead." But Andy wasn't caught up by any emotional experience at the time. At that point in his experience he said to himself, "If these two people are like this in the lobby, inside it has to be even worse." He was aware of the fact

that he was the first police officer on the scene. And so, he continued in to look for others in need of help.

Andy remarked that at this point he was unaware that this was a terrorist attack and so he was not scared at all. He thought a small plane had accidentally flown into the WTC and, though he was witnessing tragic consequences, he did not think the situation was going to get any worse. Therefore, it wasn't such a big deal to him to stay in the building. He was doing his job, and did not perceive himself to be in great danger. As he walked through the WTC lobby, the director of WTC Security approached him. He told Andy he had a report of a decapitated head on the 33rd floor that needed to be recovered for identification purposes. Though he was new to the force, Andy recognized that, as the only apparent NYPD officer on the scene, he was in a position of authority. He took charge of the situation and informed the security officer that the decapitated head was not a priority, considering there were injured people who still needed help. But he made note of the exchange in his memo book for future reference, as police officers are trained to do, writing, "Decapitated head, 33rd floor." He told me he still had in his possession the memo book with the notation in it. In a later interview, Andy commented further about what it was like to be the one in uniform during an emergency. He said everyone looked to him for the answers. In that instance, it was his responsibility to take charge of the situation, despite his inexperience.

Now more personnel were entering the building, primarily Fire Department and Port Authority police. But Andy still did not see other city cops. He said he was looking for other city cops the whole time he was there. "I was like, I gotta find some cops. There's gotta be cops in here who need me to help them help everybody else." It was obviously

very important for Andy to find other NYPD officers. I suspect he was hoping to find someone in authority to direct him, as well as seeking the reassuring presence of the group to which he belonged. In addition, being new to the force, Andy was well aware that there were certain procedures he was supposed to be following, and he was concerned that he did things in accordance with these procedures. He didn't want to be in trouble later. In our second interview he told me that finding other cops was his priority, even more so than helping people evacuate. He saw that the Port Authority officers were evacuating civilians from the building and Andy joined in with them for a while. He helped direct people out of the building for a few minutes, but then began to feel that his presence was not really needed there. His focus was on finding other NYPD officers and joining their evacuation and rescue efforts. "I was thinking procedure." And he was concerned he would get in trouble if he did something wrong, or took action on his own without supervision, or was discovered to have left his partner. As he looked for other city cops, he continued to walk through the lobby and entered the Marriott Hotel, which was between the two towers. There he found hotel guests in the lobby with their suitcases, "just sitting there." He remarked that he did not think at the time there was any real sense of urgency either. And then the second plane hit.

He heard an explosion, and the building shook. Some people lost their balance and fell to the floor. Andy did not know another plane had hit Tower 1, and, in fact, throughout his ordeal he never knew about the second plane. He simply thought the situation in Tower 2 was getting worse. On his department radio he heard, "Another explosion, massive casualties, MOS down, 10-13, officer needs assistance, 10-85." Ten-thirteen, code for 'officer down,' was coming over the radio most. That was Andy's

priority, to rush to the aid of other officers. So now he tried to figure out where these officers were. He ran around the Marriott lobby asking if anyone there was hurt, if there were any NYPD cops in there. Everyone there was fine. He looked out the window, and saw debris and cars on fire. He knew it wasn't safe to go outside. And he didn't see anyone out there in need of assistance. He now felt a much greater sense of urgency. He said he had originally planned to begin escorting hotel guests out the front door. But when he saw the destruction outside, he knew no one could go out that way. So he looked for an alternate route. His heightened sense of urgency led him to take a more serious and authoritative attitude with the hotel guests and he said to them, "Are you waiting for something? You gotta get the hell out of here, come on, follow me." He said about 10 guests grabbed their things and followed him to a side door. He saw there was a pedestrian overpass across the street where the hotel guests would be safe. There was debris falling, but it was intermittent. He told each of them to leave their bags and run to the overpass, one by one or two by two. It was clear in Andy's description that he then began to experience a much greater sense of danger, and he assumed a position of authority. He said, "I became very honest with everybody. I said, 'Soon as you leave this little walkway here you're running for your life. You realize that. You get hit with something you're dead. But this is your only way out. I would leave the bag.'"

Though Andy clearly felt the situation was more urgent, he still did not know just how grave it was, or that a second plane had hit. He recalled, "Collapse was never an issue." His concern was that the damage caused by the first plane hitting the building was growing worse, and there was increased danger of fire. As he ushered people out, he saw that some of them were struggling with their bags and tripping. He became even more

intent when he saw that, and also saw that debris was falling from the top of the towers. He said, "That's when I started yelling at people, 'Leave the bags, it's not worth it, you know, just run as fast as you can, don't look up until you get across the street underneath that shelter.'" But still the guests wanted to bring their bags, and some were just sitting around in the lobby. He said, "You know, I think I was calling them, I said, 'You're stupid,' I think, 'you're stupid. Get out of here. Just go, run.'" He went back to the lobby and saw more people just sitting around. "Now I started to get a bit more authoritative…" He saw people "literally standing there with their hands in their pockets, just looking, like, you know, they're probably traumatized. It was terrible outside. You saw a lot of terrible…like I said there were cars on fire, there were cars overturned, crushed….They didn't know what to do. I'm not blaming anybody. It was a confusing time." At that point he told everyone they had to leave the building. He escorted groups of ten or so out and returned to the lobby probably four or five times. Each time he returned to the lobby there were more people. It turned out everyone was taking their time in the hotel, packing their bags, "putting their watch on or whatever, just making sure they didn't forget anything." Then he began to get upset with them. His anxiety increased and he began to say, "What, are you crazy? Don't you know what's going on? A plane just flew into the World Trade Center." They said, "Yeah we know, we were watching it on the news." Andy chuckled while recounting this part of the story, still amazed that people could be so complacent in the face of such danger. "OK, so you know what's going on. You gotta get outta here." And he escorted them out.

Only hotel employees and security personnel were in the hotel lobby now. Andy told them to leave but many of the workers stayed. He decided his work there was complete

so he resumed his quest to find his partner and other city cops. He started to walk back in the direction he had come from, through a corridor connecting Tower 2, the first tower to be hit, with the Marriott. At this point Andy saw a fireman who told him the second tower had been hit and who said, “We’re under attack.” Andy said, “Now things jump to a whole new level with me.” Now that he was aware of the reality of the situation, that it was an intentional attack, and involved both towers, he felt afraid. He made a connection in his mind between what was happening then and Pearl Harbor, and he thought, “This is the beginning of a world war.” He also noted that once he realized what was happening, he grew concerned about what might happen next. “What else is coming? Is there another plane coming? Is there a bomb in here someplace?” His interpretation of events shifted from it being a tragic but isolated and relatively contained accident, unlikely to put him in grave danger, to a much more serious, threatening, and frightening situation.

Andy knew he needed to get out of the building. He felt he was no longer needed there anyway since the Fire Department and Port Authority Police were there. He said he was also somewhat concerned about getting in trouble with his supervisors. He felt certain they were wondering where he was, possibly imagining he might be dead, and he felt an urgent need to check in with his command. He wasn’t able to use his radio to contact the precinct because there was so much other chatter coming across. He also did not feel that reassuring his command he was alive was a priority, considering other officers were in need of assistance. The radio frequency should be used for emergency only, he felt. So he decided to exit the WTC the way he had come in, find his partner and his sergeant, and return to his command. Andy felt this decision was a “blessing in disguise” because he ended up walking away from Tower 1, which fell first. He was

walking toward Tower 2, and was about ten feet away from entering the lobby when he saw Port Authority officers running toward him waving him to go back saying, "It's coming down!" Without hesitation he turned around and sprinted as fast as he could back toward the Marriott.

During our follow up interview, Andy talked about two hotel guests who were still in the lobby of the Marriott when he finally left. He yelled at them to leave, and was agitated with them. The man was overweight and moved slowly because of a bad leg. Andy yelled at him to, "Suck it up!" His description of the sequence of events changed slightly now, in the retelling. He now thought he had just left the lobby when the building began to fall, and said these two civilians were right behind him. He had not mentioned these two in the initial interview, but now talked about the experience as one he remembered very clearly and had strong feelings about. Andy had yelled at the man, and then the building began to collapse and he ran. He felt certain they had not survived, and he felt guilty for having yelled at them. "So, I felt guilty. Very guilty about it. I yelled at this poor guy."

As he ran, and the building began to fall, Andy heard a "huge echo noise." He described it as, "like being on the subway tracks, metal hitting metal, just louder than you can think. The loudest noise I've ever heard." And then it got pitch dark. The floor started shaking, and Andy felt a "tremendous breeze" coming up behind him. "You knew, it was almost like something was chasing you." It got louder and louder and felt like a "whipping wind." Andy started to lose his balance. The pressure from this wind slammed Andy to the ground. Andy stopped at this point in his story to explain that he had actually been running toward the tower that was collapsing, though he didn't know it

at the time. The people who had run toward him from Tower 1 also believed it was that tower that was falling. I asked for clarification about this since Andy had described the air pressure and noise as coming from behind him. When he paused to think about it, he doubted his memory and wondered if it might have been in front of him after all. He mused that it was possible that his belief that the building was collapsing behind him led him to feel the wind came up from behind. He said, “Maybe it was my mind…maybe it was just that something, I had a fear of something chasing me.” However, he knew that when he fell, he fell forward, “as if I was pushed.” In his experience, there was something coming behind him. “Because, like I said, you heard it, it was getting louder and louder, and then I was pushed forward.” He repeated he felt like he was being chased, as if this wind had an intentional presence, and he was trying to get away from it. It then “slammed” him to the ground and everything was pitch black dark. He didn’t hear anyone screaming, or “anybody getting torn apart or anything.” He said, “It was just me, this metal, and this gust of air.”

Andy said he thought he was going to be killed. However, he seemed to have had a mixed experience concerning whether or not he thought he would survive. Part of him thought he was getting ready to be crushed to death, and yet, his mind was still searching for a way to survive and was believing he could. When he fell to the ground, he curled up in a fetal position and brought his forearms up to cover his face. He said, “And I knew, actually I didn’t know, I knew I was dead, is what I did know. So I figured if there’s any chance of me living here, I’m gonna be crushed to death is what is gonna happen.” As he began to describe his thought processes during what could have been his final moments, he stopped to point out that, though it sounded like he had a ten minute

conversation with himself, it had merely been a matter of seconds. He said his mind moved rapidly from one thought to another and he snapped his fingers several times to illustrate his point. He said his first thought was, “I can’t believe that I’m gonna die like this. I can’t believe I’m gonna be crushed to death.” He immediately thought of his wife. He thought, “She is gonna die of a broken heart.” Andy was especially concerned about his wife losing him because she had a miscarried their first child on September 9th. Andy had taken a few days off work to be with his wife. September 11 was his first day back at work. So he was “already as upset as could be this whole morning.” They had only been married two years, had just bought their first home a month before, and this was their first pregnancy. When he thought of the despair his wife would feel upon his death, Andy’s thoughts began to change. He said, “It’s like my wife was an inspiration for me, where I said, ‘You know what, I’m gonna find a way out of here.’” In our second interview, Andy also described feeling angry at the thought of dying. He chastised himself for having stayed in the building when he could have left and saved himself. He thought he had made the wrong decision, and regretted not taking the opportunity to leave when he had the chance. He was angry with himself for getting ready to die and leave his wife alone.

Then he began to talk to God. Andy said, “God, as long as I’m not buried alive, as long as I can find a way to walk, I’m gonna walk out of here.” He asked, “Just let me walk, and I’ll find a way to get out of this place.” He knew he had to try to avoid being crushed to death, so he rolled over. He knew where the wall was, so he rolled toward it, “just like a tadpole, just rolled up.” He figured the place where the wall met the floor had a better chance of not being flattened. He thought he might be ok if he could position

himself there. At the same time, he thought that might not be the best spot. Something could fall on him and crush him at any spot. So he began to roll back and forth across the corridor, hoping that by pure luck, he would happen to roll away from whatever might fall. "I figured if I'm on the left and I roll to the right, maybe I'll just miss the thing on the left." And vice versa. He described himself as resorting to "desperate measures" and said he just had to hope that rolling back and forth would help him avoid being crushed. Andy repeated that this "whole conversation" had lasted maybe 20 seconds. "It went from, 'I can't believe I'm gonna die, to my wife being upset that I'm gonna die like this, to 'No, I'm gonna find a way out of here.'" He used the metaphor of an alcoholic moving from denial to acceptance, only this was the opposite. His first belief was that he would die, but he rejected the thought and began to fight to live.

When Andy talked about his belief that he would soon die, he also gave an impression, though not explicitly stated, that to be crushed to death in this incident was an ignoble way to die. He said to himself, "I can't just sit here like this," "I can't believe…that I'm gonna die like this," "I'm not gonna lie here and die like this." He did not say what *like this* meant, but it conveyed a sense of being robbed of something, or that there was a better, more honorable way to die that was not happening in this case. It also seemed to be specifically related to the manner of death, rather than to the officer's life circumstances. His expression did not convey that he felt his death was untimely or unfair, but that it was somehow improper. He seemed to be rejecting, and actively fighting against, feeling powerless to escape death. He refused to "sit here like this" or "lie here and die like this," that is, passively.

Suddenly, all the noise stopped. Andy had been hit by debris, sheetrock, and bits of metal. His elbows and forearms, which had been protecting his face, were lacerated and bleeding. He mentioned he had put his short-sleeved shirt back on after having used it to put out the fire on the burning woman. Though the shirt was burnt, his shield, or badge, was pinned to it. He did not want to take the time to take his badge off the shirt and pin it elsewhere, so he just put the shirt back on. He mentioned that this decision was a result of his being new to the job. This time, he interjected a bit of comic relief stating that he always had trouble getting his badge on. He said, “They give you that stupid big pin on the back and I could just never get it on.” He said other officers frequently asked him what happened to his shield and expressed surprise, possibly finding humor in it, that he had put his shirt back on. The fact that he was often asked about his shield showed the importance of procedure to police officers, as well as the strong identification with the badge, with being a police officer. We also see the camaraderie shared by police officers. It was implied in Andy’s remarks that he took a bit of ribbing about having worried over his shield and deciding to put his shirt back on.

Once the noise and tumult stopped, Andy stood up in the pitch dark. He was stumbling, and described himself as being disoriented and in shock. “I didn’t know if I was alive. I didn’t know if I was dead. I didn’t know who was with me. I didn’t know really where I was.” He tried to walk, but the debris was slippery and was awkward to walk on. He had to feel his way around since it was dark and he had no flashlight. Andy took a minute to explain that he ordinarily would have had a flashlight with him, but he left it in the patrol car while he took the accident report. It seemed he felt he needed to explain why he did not have the standard equipment on him. At this point I asked him

about the air quality. He had mentioned it was dark, and he could not see, but he had not said anything about whether or not he could breathe. He replied that it was very difficult to breathe, the air was thick with smoke and some sort of heavier material he did not know how to identify, possibly sheetrock, pulverized cement and, he heard later, asbestos. He was spitting and coughing and trying to wipe the thick dust out of his eyes. He walked very slowly, feeling his way. "And I was very, very scared. Because I knew I was by myself. I knew what I had just survived." And he began to wonder what else might happen, what further danger lay in store.

Andy heard some voices and saw a light shining through the smoke. He called out and two firemen approached him, asking if he was ok and if he knew where they were or how to get out. He remembered seeing an exit sign and so the group, approximately seven people including firemen and hotel security, began to walk in that direction. They had only taken a few steps when they ran into a wall. The firemen thought Andy had been mistaken, until they discovered it was a wall of debris. They began to use their equipment, axes and picks, to dig through the wall and see what was on the other side. As they did, small pieces of debris started to fall on their heads. They stopped working and shined the lights up. There they saw that two large steel beams had buckled in the middle and fallen into each other, creating a teepee shaped space beneath them. It was because of these beams falling into each other and stopping there, rather than collapsing straight down, that Andy and the others with him had been saved. Andy said he realized that if he had run any faster or any slower, he would have been killed. And he said it had not been his choice to stop where he did. He was pushed down by the force of the

pressure. He described this as a "religious thing," noting that if he had been ten feet ahead or ten feet behind where he got knocked down, he would not have survived.

The group recognized the beams might not hold and they needed to get out of there fast. One of the security guards realized they were standing in front of the gift shop and he knew there was a door to the parking garage just past it. So they began to look for the door. Andy said a sprinkler system went off for a while and drenched the group. And there were exposed wires and sparks. Andy thought he might be electrocuted. Everyone was digging through debris looking for the door. Then one of the security guards saw a light through a wall of debris. But a fireman looked through and saw it was not daylight, but the light from a fire. Andy started frantically trying to dig his way through the pile of debris to find the doorway to the garage, moving hot and heavy fragments of metal. He found a door, "a whole, clean, grey door." He asked God to let the door be unlocked, and not be be caved in on the other side. He opened the door and found a clean stairway. He called the rest of the group over and they started to descend the stairs to the parking garage, but they were stopped by another wall of debris. There was no way out and so the firemen began to go back up the stairs. But Andy didn't want to go back up. He said he had a bad feeling about going back up. "I just thought we had too many miracles already. I didn't think there were any miracles left up there." So he stayed behind, waiting for the others to go up first. He began to look around "very nervously, very intensely." He felt there must be some way out of there. As he was looking around, the smoke cleared a little and he saw a red "Exit" sign in the distance. He called the group back. Now that they could see a little better, they realized they could pass over the wall of debris and get to the exit. They had to climb over the debris and pass through a space

about three feet high. Andy said you couldn't just roll over it because it was full of sharp, twisted metal. But they all made it through and found themselves in a parking garage full of cars on fire.

Andy described the area as "disgusting" and said it was full of debris and fire. They made their way to the exit sign and saw daylight. They were one floor below street level and light was shining straight down into the parking garage from where a doorway used to be. There was a ramp leading up and out. One of the firemen walked up the ramp out of the garage and said, "Holy shit…You will not believe what you are about to see." Andy went up the ramp to street level and found himself in front of 7 World Trade Center, a 57 story building that collapsed later in the day. He said it was in shambles, and was "an inferno" but was still standing. He was on Vesey Street and it was covered in debris. "It wasn't a street anymore." As far as Andy could see in all directions, all the buildings were collapsed, except for the one engulfed in flames, and everything was covered in ash and debris. He saw fire trucks crushed and on fire. Police cars, taxi cabs, all on fire. And there was no sign of human life anywhere. He compared it to being in a small town at 3:00 in the morning, though it was around 9:30 a.m. in downtown Manhattan on a Tuesday. His first thought was that all the people had been crushed to death and were under the debris. And his first priority, again, was to find other city cops.

The firemen went on their way, and Andy saw to it that one of the security guards who was bleeding from the head made it over to an ambulance. Andy seemed impatient with the guard, who was asking that Andy not leave him. The guard had started to lag behind. Andy reassured him he would not be left behind, but also told him to "suck it up." He wasn't able to carry the guard because the ground was slippery and unstable.

Once he directed the guards to go to an ambulance, he turned his attention back to finding other cops, and his partner. He walked down the street, on top of the soot, debris and ash, and ran into other people, all rescue personnel. He saw Emergency Services Unit officers, but knew they were a specialized unit that was involved in rescue operations for which they had been trained. Andy was not a part of this group, and so continued on to look for his own kind.

A police car drove slowly by and he saw that it was from his precinct. He was profoundly relieved, and ran over and banged on the window. The driver was a female police officer from his precinct with whom Andy had trained before and knew pretty well. She saw him and said, "Oh my God, get in. We thought you were dead." She asked about his partner and other officers from the precinct, but of course Andy had not seen any of them. He was the first police officer from the "day tour" that the command had located. Many were missing at this point. The officer helped clean out Andy's eyes and drove him a short distance to Stuyvesant Highschool, where she knew he could get some water and wash off. The highschool had been designated a muster area where police could meet and get organized. It was close to the WTC site, but far enough away to be safe.

Once there they saw the Commanding Officer of the precinct. Andy described seeing him as an experience of great reassurance and comfort. The CO asked if Andy was all right and inquired about his partner. Much to Andy's relief, he did not get in trouble for having lost his partner. The CO seemed primarily concerned about Andy's welfare, and told him to go inside, get cleaned up, and relax.

Andy started to enter the highschool when someone yelled out, “The second one’s coming down!” As he began to enter the building, he thought better of it. Andy did not want to be trapped inside another collapsing building. So he ran around the outside of the school, falling in line behind his CO. He saw people diving into the Hudson River, jumping over fences into the water in a desperate attempt to flee. He explained that, though he was several blocks from the WTC, he believed it could topple over rather than collapse straight down. He thought he might be crushed by the building falling over. Andy ran to the back of the school and saw students calmly filing out, almost leisurely. He said his first thought was “Get out of the way!”

Andy said he felt like running through the students, pushing them out of his way. The scene reminded him of an episode from the TV show, “Seinfeld.” In the episode, George Costanza is at a child’s party when a fire breaks out in the kitchen. George runs for his life, pushing children aside to save himself from the fire. He even kicks the clown. Andy recognized his immediate impulse was to save himself, and to disregard the safety of others. As he ran toward the evacuating students, “reality set in” and he knew he couldn’t act like that. Also, there were city cops there, the first he’d seen all day, evacuating the children out of the school. Andy slowed down. He said, “There’s cops here. You know, I mean, I’m sure I wouldn’t have done it, but it was just the emotions. I was scared once again.” His impulse was to run for his life, and he was particularly aware of the realness of the danger. His recognition of danger was different than those he found himself among. Andy was truly afraid the building was toppling over and could kill them all. His joke, remembering the “Seinfeld” episode, underscored his separation from those who were unaware of the reality of the situation, and his own experience of having

witnessed true horrors and narrowly escaping with his own life. He wanted to get away, fast.

Instead of continuing to run, Andy fell in line with his fellow officers and began to help evacuate the students. He found himself becoming more authoritative, even aggressive with them. He grabbed one student by the elbow and said, “Let’s go. Let’s get out of here.” He told me he thought the building was getting ready to fall on top of them. “I’m waiting any second now its gonna fall on top of me. So I stood there for a couple of minutes, getting them out…” The second tower collapsed, and again the air was filled with smoke and ash. Andy continued to help evacuate the students and then saw some other cops from his precinct. And he again saw his commanding officer.

The cops talked to each other, telling their stories, trying to find out what was going on. And then their CO told them there was another plane unaccounted for, and if they saw a plane coming in, they should take shelter wherever they could. Andy said, “So now we’re scared as can be again.” He was directed to secure the perimeter of the WTC site. He was told it was a terrorist attack by Middle-Easterners. And he saw “a lot of Middle-Eastern folks standing on the corner just watching it.” Another cop approached a group of Middle-Eastern men and frisked them. Andy said, “It was kind of like martial-law for a little while. I had my gun out. People were telling us that the Empire State Building had been nuked. That there were ground-troops attacking us. Midtown Manhattan is gone. These were civilians telling us. It was just chaos.” He said he wouldn’t have believed any of this was possible before the towers fell, but, “I gotta believe anything now.

Andy found himself alone again. He saw a news-anchor going through some notes and approached him to ask what information he had about what had happened. This was the first time Andy was informed that two hijacked airline jets had flown into the towers and another one hit the pentagon. Then he saw all sorts of rescue personnel, Fire Department, Bomb Squad, Emergency Services police, all coming away from the site. One of them told him there was a gas leak and they thought the whole area was going to blow up. He said, "That's it. I'm out of here now." And he went back to his precinct.

Once there, Andy called his wife to tell her he was alive. Then he went to the lounge and saw television footage of the planes hitting the towers and the buildings collapsing. "That's when it really hit me," he said. "So when I saw over and over again the plane hitting into the tower, and then they had the footage of the second plane hitting it, and then showing the footage of the building coming down and knowing I was at the bottom of it that whole time, it's like, I kind of got numb." It took his breath away. Though he felt extremely lucky, realizing now the enormity of what he had lived through, he also felt more frightened than he had all day. He was stunned by the recognition that he had been at the center of it all, and had walked away from it, "pretty much unscratched." His body went numb when he realized just how lucky he was to be alive. Though he had come face to face with his own death when the first tower fell, it was only now that he saw it on television that he understood the big picture. He was overcome with fear. Andy described it as being a very humbling experience.

Andy also talked about feeling certain that many of his fellow police officers, his partner, and friends were dead. He wasn't distraught at the thought, but had more of a sense of resignation. Because he had been there when the towers collapsed, he knew the

chances of living through it were slim. He said, "I had just seen so much. I had just seen so many people dead. For that brief moment of time, death was just nothing to me…These were all my friends, my best friends here who I still work with." He felt he also took this attitude because he did not want to give himself false hope that his friends might be alive. But he simply did not believe that anyone could have been as lucky as he.

Andy got home about 10:00 that night, took off all his clothes outside the house, hosed himself down, and put everything he had worn into a garbage bag and threw it away. He didn't sleep that night. He was immediately assigned to the 4:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. tour, so he knew he had to be back at work in a matter of hours. This tour of duty, twelve hours long, without regular days off, would continue for the next eight months. He returned to work early the next morning, traveling nearly deserted highways because the roads were closed to all except emergency and police vehicles. As he crossed the Brooklyn Bridge going back into lower Manhattan, "that's when reality set in." Stationed at the base of the bridge was an Army tank with an officer on top manning a machine gun, moving it back and forth. There were army personnel everywhere and Andy had to maneuver through different routes to reach the precinct because of all the devastation. Andy's world had completely changed. "Seeing it from the second, the minutes before everything happened, to being in the middle, seeing it as it happens, and now a day later, seeing what it looks like the next day. It was just…took your breath away. It was very scary." Andy couldn't believe this was his city. And at the time the estimate of the number of dead was 10,000.

Andy's regular work assignment now became the temporary morgue near the WTC site. The area that made up his precinct no longer existed. It was now a scene of disaster,

and so there was no area to patrol as usual. Therefore, the officers were assigned to the temporary morgue set up on the perimeter of what had been the WTC. Thus, after having survived the collapse, his duty now was to assist the medical examiners as they tried to identify victims' remains. Andy had lost several friends. The day after the attack, he had been informed that five of his friends were dead. As he dealt with the small bits of human remains, he knew these could be his friends. He said, "At first it was very, uh, uncomfortable…obviously, it was disgusting. The smell…" It was hard for him. But he threw himself into his work, and did what was expected of him.

He began to talk about the process of adapting to the situation. After handling human remains and body parts day after day, he became adjusted to it. At first it was an emotional experience to deal with each body part that was recovered. He thought about the person and wondered about who they were and how they died. And he thought about the family. Eventually, he quit thinking about the person, and began to just identify the body part. The smell didn't even bother him anymore. Andy said he became used to it, and he no longer saw the remains as being attached to a human being, with a mother, or a sister, or a son. "They weren't human anymore." Andy said the situation was terrible, so bleak, but it became an everyday part of life. It became the job. It was difficult for him, and sad, to realize that handling and helping identify small pieces of human remains became just another routine thing he was expected to do. And yet, he did become accustomed to it, and did his job as expected. He put the emotional attachments out of his mind, and continued on, for months on end. Andy said the numbing of his feelings angered him. He felt it was disrespectful toward the surviving loved ones.

When asked how his life had changed since September 11, 2001, Andy said he had a new vigilance to events going on around him. This was born from anticipation of another attack. But he also said he was not afraid of much anymore. And he did not feel nervous at the thought of another attack happening. He had been able to handle himself well during the crisis, despite his inexperience as a police officer. Thus, he was confident he would react well in the face of another such event. He felt proud of the way he conducted himself on September 11th. He knew he had saved many lives because he was able to keep his head and not panic. And since that time, he had been treated with respect by fellow officers as well as his superiors as a result of his actions that day. People looked up to him now.

Andy went on to say he believed he was spared on 9/11 because God had a plan for him and for his family. His wife had since given birth to a daughter in October 2002. He felt he survived because he was destined to have this family. He associated this feeling of having a purpose in life with a feeling of invincibility. “You know, I’m using that word loosely of course, but I just think that I was meant to do other things. Maybe I lived that day not just to have a kid, a family, with my wife. Maybe I lived that day because, on another day, I have to help other people. Maybe I’ve saved people in other ways I don’t even know about. So I just think, I believe in the whole ‘big picture’ thing, that everyone has a purpose in life…And I think that there’s more for me to do in this life.” His experience brought him to believe that he had made the right decision when he chose to join the NYPD. Indeed he felt he had been destined to become a police officer, and to live through September 11th. I asked Andy to comment on what lasting effects his 9/11 experience had for him. He said he had gone through so much that day, and in the weeks

and months to follow, he couldn't imagine being faced with anything worse. "So, it doesn't really weigh on my mind anymore. I think I've seen the worst and I've dealt with it. And that's that."

"MARY"

Mary is a 42-year-old female who has served the police department for 21 years and now holds the rank of Captain. At the time of the September 11 attacks, she was a Lieutenant in a division of the NYPD that provides information to media outlets and her office was located in Police Headquarters in downtown Manhattan. Like the other participating officers, she comes from a family with strong ties to the police department. Her father was a police officer, as are her three brothers. Mary told me her sister was not a cop, but she jokingly remarked that her father forgave her sister for that decision since she ultimately married one. She was in a meeting with a Deputy Commissioner when they were informed that a plane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers. A Chief of Department contacted the office and ordered a lieutenant to respond to the scene and so Mary was sent there. At the time she first heard of the incident, she had no access to video footage and assumed a small aircraft had accidentally struck the tower. She was not particularly alarmed.

Mary drove her group to the WTC site. She decided to take a longer route across to the West Side Highway because of all of the emergency vehicles clogging the streets. As she drove, she saw a "volume of paper" floating through the downtown air. She thought there must be a big hole somewhere high up in the tower, and began to think the plane was bigger than a two-seater. Still, she thought the plane had only taken out one small section of the building, a portion of one floor at most. She arrived on the site at 8:50

a.m., a fact she can verify because her Department beeper went off just after her group arrived and she kept the text message that was relayed. The message read, and still does, "First Precinct WTC, WTC possible explosion. WTC building level 3 mobilization to Church and Vesey St. 8:54 a.m." Mary said the next plane hit around 9:06. She heard the roar of the engine and described it as "surreal." At this point, she had no idea the first plane had been a commercial airliner. Now she heard a sound she recognized as being a commercial jet. She found it "unreal" to hear that sound in this location. She looked up and saw the plane crash into the South Tower. Now she knew this was not an accident.

Mary entered the atrium of the World Financial Center, just south of the towers, with the intent of using the public telephones to contact her Command. Her cell phone wasn't working. While she was in the building, she saw people jumping from the tower. She said she felt detached from the experience at first. But she then described the experience as "one of the most awful feelings as a cop." Over her Department radio she could hear that the Aviation Unit helicopters were unable to land on the top of the towers because of the amount of smoke. Mary had responded to the WTC during the terrorist bombing in 1993, and recalled that the helicopters had been able to land and to evacuate people from the roof. That would be impossible this time. And she was struck with the recognition that there was no hope for the people trapped in and above the area where the planes hit. She said, "It was extremely difficult to be in a situation and be completely helpless." She immediately empathized with the people who jumped. She said, "And I couldn't imagine the hell that it was for those people to be up there and that the better option was to jump. There was no judgment attached to it, but how awful it must be to be in those shoes that this is considered a better option." There was one man using the payphone who was

crying hysterically and Mary thought his reaction was a little excessive. She discovered later, while watching a television show about the attacks, that he had just found out that his sister and niece had been on one of the planes that crashed into the towers.

Mary ran into the First Deputy Commissioner of the police department, a man she knew. He ordered her to put on a helmet before entering the WTC buildings. So she went out to an Emergency Services Unit truck and asked for helmets for herself and the sergeant who was under her command. The guy in charge of equipment did not want to give her one. She finally "pulled rank" on him and made him give her two helmets, as she had been ordered to do by someone who outranked her, the "First Dep." Her job then was to direct the media to a particular location. She picked a spot that she would find out later was directly in the line of danger. Mary then went into the north tower, the first one to be hit, and saw "a line of blue," police officers directing people out of the buildings. Seeing this sight brought her comfort, and a sense of pride. She remembered everyone being very calm. Upon reflection later, she felt no one realized the immediacy of the danger. The police were calmly directing people out of the building, the people were calmly evacuating. When questioned further about the "line of blue," Mary equated it to a feeling of security. She said no one had to wonder what to do. "All that's being taken care of." The people were being taken care of by those whose duty it was to take care of them, by people who considered it their job to protect them.

Mary said she was "very unnerved" at this point, but she focused on what needed to be done. While recounting this part of her story, Mary began talking about her thought processes at that time. She found it remarkable, and somewhat humorous, that she continued to focus on mundane aspects of her typical work routine, despite the crisis

unfolding around her. She had a meeting scheduled for 11:00 a.m. that day, and, while she directed the media to leave the South tower she thought, “I’m not going to make that meeting. I better get in touch with them.” This focus on the regular routine of her day remained one of her most significant concerns throughout the ordeal. Despite the severity of the situation, and her own encounter with death, she continued to focus on the typical and mundane concerns of her daily existence. Her attention was occupied with both the immediate task at hand, evacuation, and the usual concerns of her daily business.

She next found herself close to where she had parked her car. She thought, “It’s going to be a very long day,” and so decided to return to her car to change into sneakers. She walked back toward the car and had just opened the trunk when she heard a rumbling, the sound of metal hitting metal, similar to loud subway trains. She thought a train must have gone off the tracks, or something had happened underneath the building. She turned around to head back to the site, not realizing the first tower was collapsing.

Suddenly she saw Emergency Services personnel running toward her yelling, “It’s coming down! Get out!” She stopped and began to turn around to run when a rush of air picked her up and threw her across the six lanes of the West Side Highway. She landed on a soft spot of mud and grass, unusual to find in downtown Manhattan. Then it was dark. She didn’t know where she was or what was happening. Her mouth was full of ash and debris, and she found it hard to breathe. Then she felt a “Pow” in her head, “Like someone had taken a baseball bat and just whacked my head.” She heard a “crack” and felt liquid coming down. The helmet that had been tight on her head was split in two by a piece of concrete that now lodged itself in the back of her skull. She described the experience as “surreal.”

At this point Mary didn't know where she was, she couldn't hear or see anything, her throat was clogged with ash, she had been hit in the head, and there was liquid streaming down her neck. She found herself buried in debris, and tangled in pieces of concrete and wire. She thought, "This is it," believing she would soon die. When asked about this experience later she said she remembered having once had her palm read. The palm reader said her death would be quick. She was happy to hear this, having recently lost a loved one to a long battle with cancer. At this point, she thought, "This really isn't quick." And she thought, "What a horrible way to go." I asked what was "horrible" about it. Mary said that not being able to breathe was horrible. She compared the experience to having the wind knocked out of you and being aware that you can't get any oxygen. She said, "I didn't know. I had no spatial consideration of where I even was. Where am I? That this is my last breath. Where am I?" She remembered thinking, "I must be unconscious." Then she thought, "I can't be unconscious because I wouldn't be thinking about how black it is." While recounting this part of her story she said, "Like, reality doesn't make any sense right now." She was not even aware that the Trade Center tower had fallen. She just knew that something "massive" had happened.

Mary elaborated about the blackness. She described it as the experience of being in a cave that has no light source. You put your hand in front of your own face and see nothing. She was "very conscious of how black it was. I can't, like, all senses were gone. It was weird to *hear*, that the first reaction was one of hearing, to the helmet coming off my head….It just, there was no frame of reference to what I was experiencing, if that makes any sense." I believe that her sense of disorientation, the sudden and complete unmooring from her regular experience, coupled with fear and

realization that her life might now end, in confusion, apart from all that she knew and understood, was a large part of what made her feel that this was a "horrible" way to die.

Questioned further about her lack of a frame of reference, Mary described it as "awful." She compared it to her experience of skydiving. That was also a disorienting and new experience, but ultimately positive and exhilarating. Here, the disorientation was completely negative. She said, "It was extremely eerie. It was a very eerie sensation…totally."

Then the air slowly began to clear, and turned to gray. She was "under stuff. I'm intertwined with all these cables around my body." She felt at that point that she went into shock. She did not feel any pain, though she knew at some level she ought to. "But…, like, my brain wasn't working fast enough to catch up to the physicality of what happened." She actually didn't know what had happened, and it had all happened so fast. "I mean, it hurt when it happened, but I don't know what happened, so I don't know. The thing is, it's back here and I'm thinking, is this a piece of helmet that's embedded? Like, I can't get rid of this." In the distance she saw the silhouette of a firefighter's hat and he shined his flashlight toward her. He was buried in debris as she was. He told her to pull her shirt up around her mouth, in order to block the ash and breathe more freely. Then she heard someone moan to the other side of her. She grabbed the person's hand and passed on the message. She said, "I'm with the PD. Debris is still falling. Don't move. You'll be ok." She said her eyes were "streaming" because "all this crap is in them" and her nose was "running black." She was coughing and spitting up. She heard people around but also described the scene as being very quiet. "Eerily, eerily quiet."

She turned toward the person whose hand she was holding and said, “Let’s get up.” Mary was trapped under a lot of debris and wires, but she tried to pull herself out of them, along with the person whose hand she was holding. She managed to pull her upper body out of the debris, still holding on to the person’s hand. Once she got out, the hand and arm she was holding came with her too easily. She realized she was holding onto an arm, detached from a body. She tried to find the rest of the person’s body, but, considering the amount of debris, it was impossible. Later in the interview, Mary said she remembered sending a prayer to that person’s spirit. She didn’t know who they were or where they had come from, the building, the street, or the plane. But she felt a strong sense that no matter what had befallen her it was obviously not as bad as what had happened to that person. And so she sent out a blessing before she got up and went on her way.

She got up, and there were four survivors standing there. Mary said it was “totally silent.” She walked with her group to an ambulance and they wrapped her head in gauze. She said there were cars on fire and dust. “And you think the world has come down.” She had no concept of what had just happened. She thought it was a bomb, that someone had flown in and dropped a bomb. The scene was covered with ash and was eerily quiet. The few remaining people were trying to wash out their eyes and throats with saline solution. Some were throwing up. Then they heard people screaming for help from the pile of debris. They all went to the location where they thought they heard the people and started to dig through the debris with their bare hands. They rescued three emergency services workers from the pile.

Mary thought maybe half an hour had passed, but she noted that she had no real concept of time passing. She described herself as being rather disoriented at that point.

Then, all of a sudden, people were again running toward her shouting, “The second one is coming down!” She said she had no shoes on, having been blown out of them when the first tower fell. She also remarked at this point that she saw shoes all over the place, from other people, likely dead now, having been blown out of their own shoes. She tried to run, but was having trouble. She felt she was moving in slow motion, and described it with a sense of humor as being like the introductory scene to the movie, “Chariots of Fire.” Then she was hit in the back and fell to the ground. She turned around and saw a huge cloud of dust coming toward her. She said she felt more vulnerable now, having no helmet on and already being injured. She decided she was going to make it to the river and jump over the railing, intending to hide under the water until the dust cloud passed, thereby avoiding being hit with more debris. As she ran, she realized she wouldn’t make it to the river and entered a building.

When she got to the doorway she took out her gun, intending to shoot the door open to get in if she had to. She said, “If this building is locked, I’m just going to blow it up.” But the door was open and she went in. There was no one around and she, again, found the scene to be “eerie.” Smoke began to come in through the elevator shafts, so she went to the nearest staircase exit. When she opened the door she found people lined up on the stairs in various modes of dress. Some had obviously just come out of the shower, and there was a mother nursing her baby. She got into an argument with a man who wanted to leave the building with his wife and child. Mary said the man was frantic to get out, and she ordered him to stay, knowing what it was like outside, and the danger that awaited there. Mary was accustomed to having a great deal of authority as a lieutenant with the NYPD, but in this case, she felt she did not exude her usual authority. She was

in plain clothes, and was bleeding from the head. "I mean, how credible do I look?" The guy said, "You know, no disrespect Ma'am, but fuck you. You act like it's the end of the world." Mary said again the scene felt surreal. All these people were in the stairway, and she was just catching her breath, and feeling the duty to take charge of them and protect them, though they had no idea who she was or that she was in a position of authority. But they did listen to her, and after a few minutes she looked outside to survey the scene. She thought every building in lower Manhattan was about to fall down and she wanted to evacuate these people from the building. She instructed them to go into the lobby, but to stay away from the windows, fearing debris could crash through.

They all got into the lobby and began making their way out when Mary saw other NYPD officers. She called to them and one man recognized her. He came over and she asked him to help evacuate the people. Mary said she saw several radios lying in the dust, NYPD, FD, EMS, and she picked each one up and tried to communicate, but they were all dead. The officer she knew said they were evacuating everyone to New Jersey and then she turned around with her back to him. He saw her back and said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but I, I think I should probably just carry you down to the boat." She said, "Well, my ankle hurts. I can feel the pressure, but I'm ok." He then informed her that she had a large piece of glass stuck in her back. No one in the apartment building had said anything to her about it. She knew her back stung, but she had no idea a piece of glass was lodged there. Still, her first priority was to evacuate the others to the boats heading away from the island. The cop had to tell her again that the evacuation would be taken care of, but she needed immediate care as well.

She went with her fellow officers to the harbor and they waited there to put her on the first boat out. But, then she saw an NYPD Harbor Patrol boat pulling up. Mary was insistent on waiting to be put on that boat. She said, "There was something like a real safety net for me to be among cops." This sentiment of feeling a reassuring sense of safety and protection from being among other members of the NYPD came up several times throughout Mary's description of her experiences that day. It seemed to reflect a strong and positive identification with the police department, and the feeling of belonging to a group that one could trust to provide care to its fellow members. In addition, Mary held a high rank within the police department, and she trusted that the other officers would understand and respect her authority. She said, "I have total trust in the NYPD people. I knew I'd be taken care of. I knew word would get back to my office. I had total, total faith." She went on to say that she knew she would be taken care of with special consideration. Mary said, "I think that if I got on this boat with hundreds of civilians…that I'd get lost in the shuffle…it wouldn't be as important to an FD person as it would be to an NYPD person."

It turned out that Mary knew the Captain of the Harbor Patrol boat. When she saw him she remembered she had sent him a videotape of a rescue operation he had participated in the month before and she asked about it. Here, again, her mind turned to the more routine and everyday aspects of her job, temporarily forgetting the enormity and trauma of the present circumstances. She accounted for this by saying she was in shock, and described herself as being "just oblivious." The Captain asked a member of the Emergency Services Unit to assist with her medical care saying, "I've got an injured officer." Mary looked around to see who it was, then realized he was talking about her.

The EMS officer asked Mary to hold onto a railing so they could pull out the glass. He said they would have to cut off her blouse and then would wrap her in gauze to stop the bleeding. Instead of being concerned about her injuries, she thought "So, I'm going to be naked from the waist up in lower Manhattan." It is likely that all of the attention Mary paid to the everydayness of her job and to the regular concerns one would have in the ordinary course of life were a defensive reaction to the trauma she was experiencing. She was unable to fully comprehend what was happening around her and to her, but she was able to continue to function in her role as a police officer because she persisted in attending to the mundane and ordinary concerns of daily life. Even after the glass was removed from her back, and she stood at the railing wrapped in gauze, with a piece of concrete stuck in her head and a fractured ankle, her intention was to return to her office. But cooler heads prevailed, and Mary was sent on the NYPD boat to a hospital in New Jersey.

While she was on the boat crossing the river to New Jersey, another officer, young and injured, went into cardiac arrest. He was brought back to life with the use of a defibrillator. Then, once the group was safely on the grounds of the hospital, they saw that the air was clear and it was a beautiful, sunny day once again. Mary was put in a wheelchair and the heat was searing. She began to feel her injuries and asked to be positioned in the shade. A Park Ranger came by and asked if there was anyone she would like to be notified of her whereabouts. Mary asked him to call her sister. She said, "At that point I was at least aware of the magnitude of the situation and I said, 'Tell her I'm alive.'" She found out later that her sister had thought she was at a training session in Brooklyn and had no idea she might have been at the scene of the tragedy. No one

knew where she was, or how she was doing, including her command. However, her sister contacted her brother, an NYPD officer, and told him that Mary had relayed a message from New Jersey that she was alive. Her brother realized instantly that, if she was in New Jersey, she had been at the scene and was likely injured. He was working a second job as a driver for a wealthy businessman and asked him if they could drive to New Jersey to check on her. And so they did.

Mary described the scene at the hospital as a "tizzy." The hospital personnel had been expecting masses of injured people and had many staff members on hand, but there were not as many wounded as had been anticipated. They saw her gun and she explained that she was a cop. The staff wanted to take her gun, but she would not give it to "just anybody." Mary made sure another officer safeguarded her firearm. Safeguarding one's firearms is important NYPD policy, and Mary had certainly not forgotten about proper procedure. Several physicians then treated her injuries, but they were unable to give her any anesthesia because of the trauma to her head. She was still unaware of the extent of her injuries, but realized how severe they were when she saw the faces of those caring for her.

Once her medical care was complete, she asked what had happened. She was told it was a terrorist attack and that the Pentagon had also been hit. When she heard this, she became more concerned than she had been all day. She said, "If you can hit the Pentagon, we are so vulnerable…They hit the pulse of our national security system?" Some of the information she got was incomplete and erroneous. She was told that Pakistanis had attacked the US. Mary was confused and felt increasingly uneasy. She was just beginning to comprehend the scope of the disaster, and that it was undertaken

intentionally. Then a nurse asked if she had eaten that day. She had not. The nurse offered to get her a slice of pizza and Mary readily agreed. Just when she was given the pizza, her brother arrived. Mary said her brother was conscientious about health and would disapprove of her eating pizza. So, she insisted that the nurse take the pizza away so he wouldn't see. Again her thoughts had snapped back into everyday concerns. Once her immediate medical care was complete, Mary asked if she could be taken home by her brother and the hospital staff agreed to let her go. Everyone wished her well as she left, and priests gave her blessings. She described this experience as "very weird." She was in another world, completely at variance with her routine experience. And she had trouble comprehending it. Then they drove back to the city, one of the sole cars on the road, allowed to pass through the Holland Tunnel only because they were with the NYPD.

Despite her injuries, Mary immediately returned to work. She and her brother first went to the WTC site, but Mary soon realized she could not walk. It upset her that she could not begin to dig in the pile to help rescue those who might have been trapped there. At that point, sadly, there was no one left to rescue anyway. Her brother drove her to police headquarters. When he let her out of the car he said, "Don't ever do that to me again!" She entered headquarters and began tending to her usual task of providing official information to the media. "And I started answering phones, and it was right before Tower 7 came down, right before we lost all communication. But I remember answering the phone. It was just so weird." People started telling her that one of her pupils was dilated and the other was constricted. Other people began coming into the office who were injured or were just covered in debris. They realized they all needed further medical attention and so drove as a group to a hospital on Long Island. Mary got

a CAT scan and then was taken to her sister's house to finally rest, and to begin the process of recovering from her injuries and her experience.

After she had finished telling her story, I asked Mary to elaborate on some of the experiences she mentioned that seemed particularly important to me. She had said that when she was thrown by the force of the pressure and was then injured and covered in debris, she thought, "This is it." I asked if she could say more about what that was like and she repeated that she felt this was a "horrible way to go." In addition to her distress at not knowing where she was, and being unable to see or breathe, she found it strange that her predominant sense was hearing. And then she said, "The sounds of all those people screaming was so horrible." While Mary was facing her own death, she was concerned about others. She wondered how many people the NYPD had managed to evacuate from the buildings. "How many people did we get out? How many people came down when that building came down? How many people were still inside?" She thought massive numbers of people had to have been killed. She said, "My initial reaction was that, no one, no one at all, no one, everyone is dead."

After the initial collapse, Mary found herself in the company of only three other people and she thought she was one of the sole survivors of the catastrophe. I asked what that was like and she began to discuss her spiritual beliefs. She said she believed that "we come to this life with lessons we are supposed to learn. And so I think everything sort of, it works together in the sense that its part of your plan, that you come with a plan, sort of." Then she said she had had a hard time reconciling the fact that it had been 3,000 individuals' "plan" to die at once. And she wondered about the 10,000 children that lost a parent. She said she had difficulty justifying understanding the purpose of that. She

did not have an answer, but she did believe that it was all part of a mysterious yet ultimately benevolent design.

Mary said she did not feel guilty for having survived when so many others died. She had been concerned about what life lessons she had yet to learn, considering her belief that she would have died had she already learned such a lesson. But she did not spend too much energy wondering why she had lived when others did not. She said, "I can't go down that road. There is no logic to that, and I'll never know it. So I don't want to go down a road where there are no answers." But, there remained some quality of mystery to her survival that she could not express in words. She said, "But there was something of, you know, 'You lived.'"

Mary and I spoke for quite a while about her experiences after September 11th. She said she felt that she had seen the best in people and the worst in people since that time. She had been the object of resentment on occasion because of the opportunities that opened up for her after her heroic story was revealed in the media. Mary had traveled to Australia for a speaking engagement, and had appeared on a television talk show. There were those who resented her for being so acknowledged. But she had also been shown much kindness, with people who did not even know her reaching out to say "Thank you," for her efforts on 9/11.

Mary shared her philosophical and spiritual perspective on life with me. I could see that she had a respect for the mysteries of life, and did not rush to assume she knew the answers. But it was also clear that she continued to value caring for others. She thought her survival might have been "an opportunity to live through the experience and come out on a different end to talk about it in a compassionate way." In reflecting upon how close

she came to death, she said, “I think if you think, ‘This is it,’ and you think its all about us as individuals, that’s where you have a really hard time.”

“CHUCK”

“Chuck” is 45 years old and retired from the police department with the rank of Lieutenant in January 2002 after serving 20 years as a police officer. He is the third generation of men in his family who served as police officers with the NYPD and is very much identified with his role as a member of the police department. At the time of the 9/11 attacks, he was the commanding officer of a section of the department that is responsible for ensuring crowd control during events such as parades and demonstrations, as well as during building collapses, fires, and other situations of danger. While driving to work the morning of 9/11, he heard on his car radio that a plane had struck one of the World Trade Center towers and he decided to respond directly to the scene. Chuck narrowly escaped with his life when the first tower fell, and his quick thinking helped save the lives of up to 30 people who were in the same location. Despite what he had just lived through, he stayed on the scene and was also present when the second tower and surrounding buildings collapsed. He helped others reach safety, civilians as well as fellow rescue personnel, and continued to work until about 8:00 the next morning.

Chuck’s name was given to me by another participant, a personal friend of his, because she knew he had a dramatic story to tell and thought he would be willing to share it with me. She checked with him first, and then I contacted him directly and he agreed to participate in the study. We spoke several times on the phone and arranged to meet at his home in order to conduct the interview. The day of our scheduled appointment, Chuck called to say he felt he could not participate. He was very apologetic, but revealed

that in the week leading up to the interview he found he was unable to sleep, and his insomnia was getting worse and worse as the day of the interview arrived. He said he did not think it was in his best interest to re-tell his story as the thought of doing so was already reviving painful memories and feelings. However, he said he had given an account of his experiences on 9/11 during an interview conducted by a German television station and he had a copy of the videotape. He was willing to loan me the taped interview to use in the research. I went to his home to pick up the tape and, while I was there, he showed me another video he had that was taken by a journalist/cameraman who was present with him during the collapse of the first building. This cameraman had been one of the people whose life was saved by Chuck's actions. By coincidence, the two met up again shortly after the collapse and the cameraman filmed Chuck as he began to offer assistance to an injured firefighter. We watched this video together, and Chuck began to talk about his experiences. He began to feel more comfortable talking and said he wished, now, that I had brought my tape recorder after all. We decided that I would take the video of his interview and transcribe it to text, and then we would meet again to review some of the most significant aspects of his experience. This would allow him to avoid having to take me, and himself, back through his experience moment by moment. But, now that he had met me, he felt more comfortable with the idea of discussing his memories and reflections in a taped interview.

I would like to note here that after reviewing the tape of the interview, I felt confident that the information provided was thorough and detailed, as it would have been had I conducted the interview myself. It took place the morning of the first anniversary of the attacks, September 11, 2002, at the site. Chuck walked the interviewers through his

experiences, at the very places they occurred. And he not only detailed where he was and what he did, but he also described the thoughts and feelings he had as the events unfolded. The following narrative is comprised of information obtained through both my review of the videotape and my personal discussions with Chuck.

Chuck began his account of his experience of 9/11 by making sure to note various circumstances that were unusual as pertained to his regular routine. It was these departures from the norm that later served to put him in position to act to save his own life as well as others. As he said, "The reason I'm telling you this is that there were so many little things that just fell into place…" For one, he usually did not leave for work until 9:30 a.m. Had he followed his usual routine, he would not even have been present at the site during the collapses. But this day, he woke up early and decided to go ahead and head to work at 8:30, allowing him to hear about the first plane crashing into Tower 2 and respond directly to the site. He also noted, almost in passing, what a beautiful day it was. "There wasn't a cloud in the sky." This would later contrast with the graying of the sky that occurred due to the shower of debris from the collapse of the towers.

Initially, Chuck assumed a small aircraft, possibly a Cessna, had struck the tower. It was an emergency situation, but not thought to be of disastrous proportions. The thought of a terrorist attack did not at all occur to him at this point. Chuck changed cars from his private vehicle to the department car awaiting him at the base of a bridge. He made note of this as another event that allowed him to be present at the scene; this car had a red flashing light he could put on the roof identifying it as an official vehicle. Because of this, he was able to get in line with other official emergency vehicles and cross the bridge into Manhattan, otherwise now closed to civilian traffic. As he arrived at the scene, the

first thing he saw that indicated the seriousness of the situation was a car in the middle of the road crushed by a piece of a jet engine. He realized that the person driving the car had to have been killed, and he now knew that "this was no Cessna. This was something very serious." He thought about the person driving the car, remarking that here this person was just driving along and "a piece of a jet engine comes out of the sky and crushes the car and kills him."

When he arrived at the scene and got out of his car, Chuck immediately noted a sense of "eeriness." Though there were hundreds of police, fire, and other emergency vehicles, there was an "eerie quiet." He said no one was talking, and there was "a silence in the air." The plane had struck, he thought, at least as high as the 78th floor, but he could clearly hear the fires burning. He then learned that the second plane had hit Tower 1, probably while he was in a tunnel driving toward Manhattan. He said it was at that point that he first thought of terrorism, and realized the aircraft were commercial jet liners. He saw a Chief in the department, also a personal friend, and approached to ask what he could do to help. He was told to stand-by, and tried to contact officials at the section he commanded, but was unable to reach them. So he decided to stay with the Chief, ready to do as he was ordered, certain that personnel at his command were responding as necessary. At this point, he said, he thought the primary concern was the fire. He imagined this incident to be similar to the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 and thought that if the fire department could not put out the blaze they would have to just let it burn itself out. Chuck and the Chief were standing under an overpass. He said they were using the overpass for "cover" because debris was falling from the buildings. It was at this point that he also saw that people were jumping from the burning buildings. He

said someone in the crowd said they were falling, but, he said, “you knew they were jumping.”

Seeing people jump from the burning buildings was one of the two most emotionally distressing aspects of Chuck’s experience. The other was coming close to losing his own life and thinking in that moment about how much he would miss his family. He believed most police officers had been particularly affected by seeing the people jump. “There were officers in uniform crying…All of us were stunned and taken aback, because, the reports didn’t really go into detail, but there were many…” It was here that Chuck began to talk about his experience of identity as a police officer. He felt that most people who decided to become police officers or firemen did it because, truly, they wanted to save lives and help people. “That’s what we are and that’s what we’re about.” But, on this day, he said, “We were helpless to do anything. I had to stand here and watch these people take their lives and it was a horrible, horrible feeling.” Chuck said he would never forget the sight of watching people jump. He saw one couple come down hand-in-hand.

Chuck then began to discuss the fact that he was a “history buff” and had read about a disaster in a factory fire in New York City in 1911 where 146 women and children were killed, the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. He said over 100 of them had jumped to their deaths from the roof of the factory. He thought about this as he watched the people jump from the World Trade Center towers. He recalled that the people who witnessed the women and children jump to their deaths in 1911 said they would be “haunted to their grave.” Chuck said this sight was something he and everyone who had seen the people jump from the World Trade Center were “going to take to our graves,” and he remarked at that point that he was “more hurt and affected about that than I was about what happened to me

personally." When Chuck and I talked about this in person, his eyes became red and tearful.

At this point in his description, Chuck began to talk about his belief that the people that jumped from the WTC had, in fact, ultimately saved the lives of many rescue workers. He talked about how the fact that people were jumping necessitated his, and others', staying under the cover of an overpass and not taking a closer position to the buildings. Many rescue workers would have been closer to the perimeter of the buildings had they not had to protect themselves from being hit by people jumping from the buildings. Because they were already at a distance from the towers, many people were able to run for their lives and escape death. It was very important for Chuck to emphasize his belief that those who had chosen to take their lives by jumping from the buildings had actually saved many lives in doing so. Indeed, he felt his own life was saved because of the people jumping, since that resulted in his being in exactly the place he was when the first tower fell. Chuck wanted to get this message out, seemingly needing to mitigate for everyone the sense of horror in contemplating the choice to jump. He found a way to believe there was something positive in that choice; a consequence that proved heroic.

As he was standing there watching people jump, Chuck was told that a plane had hit the Pentagon. As he described it, "I felt like I was punched in the stomach." This was the first time in Chuck's twenty years on the job that he had ever felt a crisis situation outreached the capabilities the of the NYPD. At this point we see Chuck's intense identification with the police department. He said, "In my twenty years, everything that has been thrown at the NYPD, the FDNY, we have handled. We'd handled it quickly,

efficiently, and I'm still impressed at the things we're able to accomplish at the scenes of emergencies. But now, when [the Chief] told me they just struck the Pentagon, I felt like *I* was struck because for the first time in my life I thought, 'My God, this is bigger than we can handle, possibly. We might be in over our heads.'"

It was here that Chuck felt fear for the first time. Then, he immediately noted, "You have to get that out of your head and you have to get back to what you're doing." He coped with his rising fear through action, by attending to the task at hand, and by putting his emotions aside. He began to help unload equipment from an emergency vehicle, and about fifteen minutes later he heard a loud rumble, "the loudest, most frightening sound I ever heard in my life." Someone screamed, "Run!" and he did.

At this point in his story, Chuck stopped again to point out a lucky coincidence; he was not familiar with the area, but happened to run straight to a spot he later felt was the safest one he could have run to. He also told the interviewer that he had returned to the site on September 13 in order to walk back through where he had been, and "to try and think about what I went through." It seems he was already trying to make sense of his experience and felt a need to revisit the scene, perhaps in an effort to come to grips with the realness of it. Chuck apparently stood in awe at what he had survived, and continues to make efforts to sort through how and why he did.

He resumed describing the circumstances of his survival, stating he had run into the corner of an alcove. He was crouched in the alcove when approximately thirty other people rushed into the same area. Chuck found himself pressed against a concrete wall approximately three feet high, above which was a thick-plated window. He felt himself begin to suffocate. He thought of people being crushed and suffocated during European

soccer riots. He said to himself, “I can’t believe this is happening to me. I’m going to suffocate like this.” With these thoughts in mind, he found himself able to stand up and, just as he did, everything went pitch black because of the smoke and ash. He could not see at all and was pressed up against the glass. Now he again felt like he was suffocating and he could not see anything. He also said the sound of the building collapsing had been so loud that his hearing was impaired. “You’re being robbed of all your senses.” And he was also being hit by falling debris. Everyone began to scream and they were trying to break the window so they could continue to run away from the falling tower. But, the window was too thick. Chuck said he realized banging on the window with radios and cell phones was futile. He was suffocating, and began to lose consciousness. In the midst of this experience, he was thinking, “I can’t believe this. I’m going to…after 20 years I’m going to die like this, like a dog.”

Then he thought, “This isn’t right. I don’t deserve this.” He thought about his family, that he would miss them. And he remembered thinking that at least his death didn’t hurt. He was suffocating, but said he felt no physical pain. He described himself as having given up. Then, he said, “a voice went off in my head” and it was loud. The voice, his voice, screamed, “What the fuck is wrong with you? Shoot out the window!” Chuck’s description of this voice was very interesting. He said he was certain it was his own voice, but it was so loud and clear that it seemed to have the quality of something he heard coming from outside himself. He said a voice went off inside his head, but then expressed some form of doubt by saying, “and I know it wasn’t someone behind me screaming.” When we discussed this again during our follow-up interview, he mused that he could have perhaps even actually screamed this to himself out loud, rather than

just having the thought. The idea had not occurred to him before, but now that we discussed it, he brought this up spontaneously as a possibility. This experience, having a thought that sounded like a loud voice, but knowing it was his own voice, was very unusual for Chuck, and he had never experienced anything like it before or since.

Chuck realized his firearm was in a pack around his waist. Ordinarily, he carried it on his ankle, and, had it been there this day, he would not have been able to reach it. He drew his gun and put it to the glass, but then hesitated. What if someone was on the other side and he shot them? He quickly realized he had to take that chance in order to save himself all the people trapped in the alcove with him. He also considered that the bullet might ricochet, coming back and shooting him in the stomach. This was another chance worth taking. He said to himself, "You're going to die anyway, so pull the trigger." He pulled the trigger and much of the bottom part of the window collapsed. But there was still a large piece attached at the top. He feared it would fall, decapitating those trying to climb through. Chuck fired two more shots at the top of the window, and the whole thing fell. The group spilled into the lobby of a building, and ash and debris came with them. Chuck said that though telling this part of the story, and describing his thoughts, was taking some time, it all happened "in milliseconds." It was striking to me that so many logical thought processes, decisions, memories, associations, and emotions happened within such a short period of time.

Chuck and his group were now inside a lobby and still could not see. He said people were screaming, "We're going to die!" and "all sorts of screams, everything you could imagine." He heard explosions and thought the city was being bombed. He tried to find a way out of the lobby and found a door with a handle. He opened it and was blasted

with smoke and ash again. He couldn't breathe, started choking, and again began to lose consciousness. He said the ash "got stuffed down your throat" and felt like razorblades, and his eyes burned. He decided he needed to find a spot where he could breathe. He was able to find an area with less dust and ash and leaned over, putting his hands on his knees. At this point he consciously told himself to calm down, and to think about what he needed to do next. As before, he focused on immediate action, and pointedly instructed himself to remain calm. As he was doing this, he heard another loud rumble and believed the building he was in was collapsing. He said he was now afraid again, and hurriedly looked for a way out of the building. He came upon another window like the one he was pressed against before, and shot it out. The group filed out onto the other side of the building from where they had originally entered, and ran south to safety. Chuck said he recognized where he was now, and that being able to get his bearings brought him some emotional relief. His senses were returning. He still couldn't breathe or see well, but now the cloud was dissipating. "It was clearing up so you could make things out." He was immediately struck by the amount of destruction and devastation, but said he still did not actually comprehend at this point that the tower had completely collapsed. Chuck described everyone he saw as being "on different levels of shock."

At this point in his story, Chuck began to talk about a Jewish volunteer ambulance corps that was also present that day. He emphasized that they were volunteers and felt they deserved credit for sticking around when they could have easily left. It is unclear what led him to talk about the volunteers at this point in his story. But, he made sure to mention them, noting that they stayed on the scene though it would have been reasonable for them to leave. I suspected that he remembered them so vividly because they are on

the videotape taken that day by Chuck's cameraman friend. Chuck had watched the video many times. When I watched it with Chuck, we saw these volunteers after the first tower fell, covered in white ash and vomiting from having ingested it. I think he was making an implicit connection between those whose job it was to stay and try to help, and those who stayed though it wasn't their "duty" to do so. He admired them because they stayed and continued to help, like he did. Perhaps he felt that everyone in that position, his position, felt the urge to flee, but these volunteers stayed anyway. Chuck's inclusion of this story, in my view, highlighted the phenomenon of the human urge to help others who are in pain, and the courage to act selflessly brought on by nearness and empathy.

He then started talking about the fact that there were very few injured people. In this catastrophe, people either got out basically whole, or they just disappeared, with only small pieces of their bodies left to recover and identify. The city was prepared to provide medical attention for large numbers of injured, but they didn't come. (I remember being at the police academy that evening. The gym was laid out with palettes to accommodate the injured. There were thin matts with medical supplies next to them, laid out in rows. But there wasn't a single palette occupied. The hospitals were ready, but mostly empty.) Chuck had trouble putting this experience into words. He said, "You were dead or alive. That struck me as…" And there his description ended. He then started to speak, but only briefly, about his view that the rescue operations on 9/11 had actually been quite successful, with tens of thousands of lives saved because of evacuation efforts. He said, "I mean, we were fortunate with everyone anyway."

Immediately from that thought he jumped back to discussing his personal experience. He started looking for water. He could see now, and found what he thought was a

delicatessen. He said he was not thinking so clearly at this point, but he had some recognition of where he was and where he might find water. He said, “A woman’s voice calls me. Come in here, we have water.” Water was now the most important commodity. Chuck entered and immediately realized he had been in the space before. It was a yacht chartering company that he had done business with. The woman that had called to him took him to the back of the office and showed him a storeroom, filled with napkins, bottles of soda, and bottles of water for the yachting trips. First he washed the ash off his face, and flushed out his eyes. Then, he found a milk-crate and filled it with water bottles to take to others.

He walked outside and found himself to be at the NYPD Memorial Wall, a monument dedicated to police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Chuck was immediately struck by the significance of finding himself at this memorial. Being a third generation policeman, he had visited the site many times before, taking time to reflect and honor the lives of fellow police officers who had lost their lives in the line of duty. He visited the site twice a year. It was obvious that Chuck felt a strong need to respect those who had made the ultimate sacrifice in devoting themselves to their calling. Chuck described standing at the memorial wall as another “eerie” thing. In discussing his having wound up there he said, “I didn’t intend to. I just ended up here and… *I* just was nearly killed in the line of duty.” Then he turned around and looked at where he had just been and thought, “Where the fuck is the tower?” Despite what he had just lived through, he was unable to comprehend that the tower had collapsed. He said, “I couldn’t comprehend, at this point, what was going on. Even going through all I’d been through, it was just too much. It was an impossibility.” He returned immediately to action.

Without hesitation he said to himself, “Snap out of it. Let’s get going.” And he again turned his attention to helping others.

He stood at the wall, holding a crate of water to give to others, trying to make sense of what was happening. There was a fireman sitting below him, psychologically stunned and physically injured. Chuck talked to him, asked if he was all right and gave him water. Then a cameraman walked up, camera rolling. He recognized Chuck as the man who had saved his life by shooting out the window, and asked him to identify himself. Chuck was filmed, standing there with the milk crate full of water bottles, looking rather dazed, his hair standing up wild, full of white ash. Chuck was concerned about the fireman, and on the film we see him ask if he felt ok. The man said he just needed to sit there for a minute. Chuck found out later that this fireman had serious internal injures, but survived. On the video, we next see the cameraman washing himself off at a water fountain that was part of the memorial wall, having put his camera down, but in a position to film himself. This is a man with whom Chuck has since developed a profound and particular friendship. Chuck said, “That was the first time I met him, but we’ve become close ever since then.” He said, “ We stay in touch and it means a lot to have someone like (him) to talk to, because, Lord knows, all of us, from time to time, we have tough times after this.” Chuck’s said his relationship with the cameraman was now one of the most important relationships in his life. He told me in person later that no one could know or understand his experience, except someone who lived though it with him. This cameraman was the one person Chuck felt was able to truly understand his experience.

Chuck resumed describing the sequence of events, and said three fellow ranking officers now appeared. He gave them water and they were talking about what they had been through and were going to do next when they heard another rumble and someone screamed, "Run!" Chuck said he thought that the first tower then fell completely down. He said it wasn't talked about, but he thought it had not fallen completely down initially, and the last 20 or 30 floors then fell. Chuck ran back into the yacht business office. He said that the air again began to be filled with the same dust and debris as before. He again couldn't see, and was choking. He remembered the fireman outside, and felt bad knowing he was sitting out there with ash and debris raining on top of him. Once the dust settled, he told the women in the office they needed to evacuate. They went outside and picked up the injured fireman, and began to evacuate heading south toward the harbor. He saw the North WTC tower still burning, and feared it might now collapse and his group would be killed. They evacuated the civilians in their group and some rescue personnel onto boats. The remaining rescue workers continued to walk further south when they heard yet another loud rumble. Chuck described it as even louder than the first time, though, he said he "wouldn't have thought it was possible." He turned around and saw the North Tower falling. Everyone started running, but Chuck didn't think they could outrun it. He thought about jumping into the harbor and almost did. Then he saw someone run into a building. He called to the others to follow him, and they all ran into that building. Once inside, they saw there were about fifty other people in there, mostly women and children. Ash and debris followed them in through the open doors, choking and blinding them again. Chuck said the people inside were hysterical and he, along with other emergency workers, tried to calm them down. "But at this point," he said, "I

honestly felt like it was the end of the world." He quickly reviewed the frightening experiences he had been through in such a short period of time; "It's the collapse of the South Tower to being pinned in the alcove. It's that other collapse where I dropped the milk crate and ran back into the VIP offices. Now it's the collapse of the North Tower. It's just like it never ends." Then a fireman said they would have to leave the building, that there would probably be a gas leak. Chuck and the emergency workers instructed everyone to exit the building and walk south. Once outside of the building, they saw two police department vans and a golf cart. Chuck described finding these vehicles as "like a miracle." They were able to load all the people in the vans and cart, including a blind woman with a service dog, another woman with a cat in a carrier, and several infants and children.

The emergency workers then continued to walk south, in order to evacuate themselves off the island. Several officers recognized Chuck, having worked with him in the past, and approached him. He used one of their radios to try to get through to police headquarters but was unsuccessful. At this point, he thought it was possible headquarters had been bombed. He also now "desperately" wanted to get in touch with his wife to let her know he was OK. He finally reached her using a cell phone. The conversation was brief and Chuck simply told her he was all right and asked her to call his parents. At that time, his wife was unaware that Chuck had even been able to reach the WTC site. He said he was "in no emotional state to tell her what I had been through." She began to find out details of his experience throughout the remainder of the evening, and she arrived at his command to see him around midnight.

Chuck and his group began to get organized. They went into a restaurant to wash off, drink some water, and rest before returning to the work of rescue and evacuation. Chuck was outside the restaurant calling other officers to come in and join in their mobilization when a fireman rushed out saying there was a gas leak and the building was going to blow up. Chuck said, "At this point, after all I had been through, my nerves had been shot and I was like, 'How much more of this can I take?'" He decided to go ahead and leave the area. Chuck's dedication to his duty to help the public was evident when he explained that he felt it was all right for him to go ahead and leave the scene since all the civilians had already been evacuated. He arrived across the river at Jersey City and consulted with the Mayor of Jersey City, as well as their police and fire Chiefs. He reassured them that there was no nerve gas at the site, and told them they would need to send fire rescue personnel, emergency services police, cadaver dogs, and utility company workers to deal with gas leaks. He asked the officials for fifteen rescue personnel to go back to the scene and they then got on a tugboat to return to Manhattan. The boat took the group to a pier north of the WTC site on the Hudson River. This happened to be the location of the NYPD division that Chuck commanded. He took the group to a highschool near the site that was being used as a base of operations. Chuck thought it was about 3:40 in the afternoon. He decided to then return to his command and check in with and organize his officers. He stayed there the rest of the night, finally going home at about 8:00 the next morning.

After finishing telling his story, Chuck was asked some questions by the German television interviewer. When he was asked about the significance of the NYPD Memorial Wall, Chuck spoke of his family's involvement with the NYPD. A great-uncle

joined the NYPD in 1927. Another great-uncle joined in 1931, and his father enlisted in 1950 and went on to serve 30 years. Chuck knew the name of the first police officer that died after Chuck himself joined the force. He said "Not counting 9/11, I buried seventy-one cops in my twenty-year career." With this statement we again see the strength of Chuck's identification as a member of the police department, and his devotion to his fellow officers. The NYPD *is* Chuck's family, and he takes every line-of-duty death as a personal loss. "And then we lost twenty-three that day, so in twenty years I lost ninety-four brothers and sisters."

Next he was asked what it had been like to tell his story several times and how he had been coping during the past year. He talked about having immediately begun to work fourteen-hour days, six days a week, after 9/11. He said that from that day until he retired in January 2002, "I kind of didn't have to cope because I was so busy working." He said he was preoccupied with "getting the job done," and so did not take time to reflect on his emotional experience. Then he noted that he had found that instead of finding his experience to be easier to deal with as time went on, it actually got more difficult. He suspected this was because he had retired and so had a lot of free time now. While discussing his emotional experience, the first association he had was not his own survival, but seeing people jump from the buildings. He then said that he only had two nightmares about 9/11 and he felt fortunate about that. He knew others who were plagued by nightmares. He started talking about the group who had lived through the experience with him, and how they had grown to be supportive friends. He felt a sense of relief from being in contact with this group, whether or not they discussed 9/11. Chuck felt many people thought they knew what he had experienced, but that everyone had their

unique experience that day and only those who were in his exact spot could really know and understand how he felt. "Nobody can understand what we went through that day because it's incomprehensible. Even now, a year later, I come by and I still think, 'They're gone!' It's just unbelievable. It's hard to take." Not only was Chuck's experience unknowable to others, but a year later, it continued to hold a sense of uncanniness. He had not been able to make sense of it for himself.

Chuck was asked to talk more about his friendship with the cameraman he helped survive and then crossed paths with again. He said he felt this relationship had played a big part is his ability to cope emotionally, and the two spoke frequently, at least once every two weeks. Chuck felt particularly close to this man, and described him as one of the only people he felt he could be completely unguarded with, someone he could call at any time of the day or night if he felt he needed to talk. Again he spoke of those who jumped. He said, "I don't care how tough you think you are. We had that day men and women who have seen who-knows-what in their careers crying, hysterical, (pause), seeing those people jump." Then he began to talk about emergency workers who immediately evacuated the area, when he and others chose to stay. He felt those who left should not be faulted for their decision, or thought to be weak or lacking courage. He felt people should not be judged, because, again, unless you went through it, you could not know how you would cope.

Chuck went on to say people often remarked that his training as a policeman must have come into play when he shot out the window in the alcove. He said the only thing he was actually trained to do, that he was able to rely on that day, was to remain calm, to keep his head. He felt this training did help him cope at the time. People told him he was

brave to have shot out the window and help others survive. But Chuck said the bravest thing he did that day was to stay on the scene when he came out of the yacht company with the water bottles. At that point, he had a strong urge to flee the scene. Indeed, he said, “Every fiber, every nerve ending, every muscle in my body was *screaming* at me, ‘Run! Drop the milk crate and run! If you don’t leave here now you’re going to die. Run!’” His ability to overcome that fear and to have the strength and presence of mind to stay was the only thing Chuck felt pride in remembering. He didn’t want to feel proud of something that happened during such catastrophic circumstances, but he said he could admit he did feel a sense of pride that he resisted such a strong urge to flee.

He was asked if he felt like a hero. Chuck said he felt good that he was able to do what he could to save others. But, he would not call himself a hero. He said he would give it all back in a second if it meant 9/11 would never have happened. He began to discuss his belief that his actions had what he called a “ripple effect.” That is, because he had saved the lives of other rescue personnel, those people would then go on to save other lives in the future. He felt he had, thus, effectively saved lives “for years to go on.” He was moved by this thought. In fact, Chuck’s theory was confirmed two months later when he responded to the scene of a plane crash in the neighborhood near Kennedy Airport. He ran into a friend of his, the female participant in this research project who recommended him to me. This was the first time they had seen each other since 9/11, and it was her first day back on the job. They shared their 9/11 stories, and she mentioned that another police officer had played a big role in saving her life because he had seen the piece of glass sticking out of her back and made her quit helping others and took her to tend to her own potentially life-threatening wound. The officer who helped

her was one of the people trapped in the alcove with Chuck. He survived, and went on to save this woman, because of Chuck. He then thought of something else that made him feel good. A friend had once asked him if he had ever, in his twenty years on the job, had to use his firearm. Chuck said no and his friend pointed out that his gun, intended to take lives, was only ever used to save lives. He found this thought very moving as well. And here the television interview ended.

After I had reviewed the videotape and transcribed the audio to text, Chuck and I met at his home for a follow-up interview. I began by asking him to discuss the concerns he had about telling his story to me that led him to decide he should not. Chuck said that in the months after 9/11 he had been so focused on working that he felt he handled the catastrophe well psychologically. Once he retired in January 2002, he was still busy traveling, going to the gym, and visiting friends. He felt he was doing well and was moving on with his life. Then the first year anniversary arrived and the media attention and publicity was tremendous and constant. He was asked to schedule the interview for the German television station on the morning of the anniversary. The interview he gave, from which the previous narrative was constructed, took place at the WTC site on the morning of September 11, 2002. It was the first time he had been back to the site since his retirement. He said walking the interviewers through his experience and reliving it himself became "too much." After the interview, someone he was with noticed he looked upset and asked if he was all right. Chuck said he was, but that wanted to go home. He had planned to stay for the ceremony, but he couldn't do it. Once he got home, he broke down and cried for the rest of the day and into the night. He watched the ceremony on television, even though it was difficult to do so, because he felt he should. He realized

then that his experience had more of an effect on him than he thought. He felt fine except when he thought about it too much or talked about it too much. Then he would find himself becoming “anxious.” With time, he again began to feel he had moved on. But then, as the date of our interview approached, he had trouble sleeping properly. He had no other stress in his life, and so he felt his insomnia was related to the impending interview. His sleeplessness grew steadily worse, and the night before the scheduled interview, he did not fall asleep until 5:00 a.m. He said he had a problem his whole life with saying “No” and felt this was probably related to his decision to join the police department in the first place. Police officers want to help others. But, he said he realized there were times when he had to put himself first, even if it meant letting someone else down. I asked Chuck if he had conscious thoughts of 9/11 during those sleepless nights and he said he did not. One of his main concerns was that he would mess up his story, failing to accurately remember details or the proper sequence of events. He felt he would be very embarrassed if he wound up getting the facts wrong while recounting his story to me.

I asked if there were particular facts he feared getting wrong, if there was something he felt he didn’t remember clearly anymore. Chuck said that, actually, one thing he found remarkable about his experience was that the day’s events for him seemed “crystal clear.” He felt he clearly remembered every move he made. Now that two and a half years had passed, he had not dwelled on the subject very much of late, and he thought that he would have to really concentrate and make an effort to provide me with an accurate and detailed portrayal, complete with proper time sequence. That would mean reliving the event again, and he was concerned that it would be too emotionally

distressing. He then started talking about one thing he remembered in particular about the sequence of events. He remembered the Chief being on the telephone and telling Chuck, 'They just hit the Pentagon." It was soon after this that the tower fell. Though he just told me he clearly remembered this, he said this was also one thing he felt he needed to verify. Was that the way it happened? He reviewed newspaper articles and checked the time sequence from the Pentagon being struck to the first tower falling. He was relieved to find that he did remember it correctly. Chuck wanted to do a good job in his interview, for my sake. But, to do so, he would have to concentrate and focus on his experience to make sure he was accurate. And that would bring back strong memories and emotions. I got the impression that when Chuck did remember 9/11, despite how much time had passed, he had difficulty finding a comfortable emotional distance. When he remembered his experience it was not in a vague and hazy way, as with most past memories. In this instance, remembering meant reliving.

I asked Chuck if he felt he remembered 9/11 more vividly than other experiences in his life. He said he did, and began to talk about surviving several serious car accidents. He said that those experiences had happened as if in slow motion, and he remembered seeing the other car coming toward him in great detail and as if it was taking a long time. He said 9/11 was not something he experienced as if in slow motion. However, he associated from that idea to how "surreal" 9/11 seemed. He said that during his career, several times a year a car or taxicab would catch on fire. This was always a big event and would make the nightly news. One of the first things that struck him as surreal on 9/11 happened just as he arrived at the site and exited his car. He saw about five cars and trucks burning and exploding and no one was paying any attention. These fires paled in

comparison to the tower being on fire. Another thing that struck Chuck as surreal was how quiet it was at the site. Even though there were hundreds of rescue personnel on the scene, fire engines and department radios blaring, and people screaming and yelling, it was "eerily quiet." Chuck could hear the flames burning some one hundred stories above. He said, "It was so strange, surreal."

I asked Chuck to talk more about what he meant about the scene seeming surreal. He said, simply, it felt like it was not real, like it couldn't be happening. He brought up the story of the factory fire in 1911 where so many women and girls jumped to their deaths from the roof. In books he had read on the topic, people had said it was the most horrifying thing they'd ever seen and they would take the memory to their graves. Chuck remembered reading about this as he watched people jump from the buildings. He realized he was feeling what those witnesses must have felt. It was so horrible it seemed it could not be real. He then brought up his experience of coming out of the yacht company with the crate of water bottles. He said this might seem embarrassing, but that he had not realized at that time that the tower had collapsed, despite everything he had been through to escape it. What he was experiencing was simply incomprehensible to him. He felt he must have known at some level, but consciously, he did not realize the enormity of what had happened. Chuck then talked about his experience of being at the highschool used as a mustering area later that afternoon. Outside, everything was covered with ash, paper, and debris six inches thick. The ground, trees, cars, everything was covered in gray ash. He said there was no color, and he felt he was in a black and white movie. He saw an emergency services truck drive by and it made no noise because

of the thick ash in the street. All of this was so far outside Chuck's normal experience it simply did not seem real.

I asked him how he made sense of the tragedy for himself now that some time had passed. Chuck said he didn't want to sound melodramatic, but he felt like he had "walked through the gates of hell." He thought of the death and destruction and compared it to his readings about the bombings in Europe during World War II. People at that time were subjected to bombings day in and day out for years. He also compared his 9/11 experience to other traumatic experiences he had lived through as a police officer. He said he had seen terrible things and encountered terrible people during his years on the force, but the scale of this disaster made this experience qualitatively different. He said he did not believe the terrorists anticipated the buildings would actually collapse. No one thought the buildings would fall. Chuck repeated that the whole event was beyond comprehension. He felt it was something that could make a person question God. Though Chuck was not a practicing Catholic anymore, he indicated he did not doubt his faith. He said he'd seen so much as a cop that if his faith was going to be shaken, it would have been already. In fact, during his first year on the job, Chuck had three people die in his arms. Again he returned to the sheer scale of the disaster, the death and destruction, and his description trailed off.

I asked Chuck if he had felt emotionally troubled by any of his previous experiences as a police officer and he said he did not. He said he might be a bit callous, and he lacked empathy for drug dealers or people involved in organized crime who killed each other. He did, however, become emotional about issues involving innocent children. By emotional, Chuck meant angry. He related two stories involving his dealings with abused

and neglected children. Because the children were returned to their mothers, and no changes were made in their living conditions, Chuck felt he personally had let the children down. But, as with the 9/11 disaster, “you just move on.” Chuck said he had to move on or else he couldn’t do the job. Being able to put feelings aside and tend to the immediate task allowed him to continue to function in his duties as a police officer.

I asked Chuck if he could compare his emotions about 9/11 to other experiences he’d had on the job and he primarily talked about the loss of innocent life. Chuck said he always took the death of fellow police officers “close to heart.” But, these were innocent men, women, and children. People who were just going to their jobs in the private sector, not military or police personnel. The loss of innocent life was particularly upsetting to him. And he again mentioned the scale of the disaster, and the people who jumped. He had thought quite a bit about the experience those who jumped must have had, how horrible it was. And he felt the terrorist attack was “evil personified.” He said he knew there was evil in the world, but, again, he had never seen it on this scale.

Chuck and I had watched the video his cameraman friend shot that day. I personally found it powerful and distressing. I asked Chuck what he felt when he watched it. He said he had seen it so many times that it no longer had much emotional impact. However, he did “get choked up” while watching certain parts. One he mentioned was some footage of a group of cops staring up at the burning towers and watching people jump. One police officer is visibly upset and becomes tearful. Chuck said this officer was expressing how every cop felt; empathetic, and powerless. He said that, for a cop, being unable to help others was one of the most distressing experiences they could

encounter. It is their duty to protect the public, and when they find themselves inadequate to the task, it is deeply troubling.

At the end of my interview with Chuck, he wanted to make some points he felt we had not covered elsewhere. The first thing he wanted to emphasize was the competence of the NYPD. He talked about some assignments he had in the past, in particular the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square in 2000, the millennium. Chuck talked about the terrible weather conditions that night, sixteen inches of snow. His unit worked very hard to set up for crowd control and when it was all said and done, he felt very proud. He thought to himself, "This city is incredible. There's nothing we can't do." He felt there was no situation the police department could not handle. But when the Pentagon got hit, he felt for the first time in his life that this was one situation the NYPD was not equipped to take care of. This thought filled him with fear.

Chuck ended the interview by taking a decidedly positive and hopeful perspective on the tragedy. He noted that most people, particularly the media, emphasized how many people were lost that day. But each tower employed 25,000 people. Given that it was only 8:46 a.m., and it was primary election day, many workers would not yet have arrived. However, there would still have been an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 people inside the two towers, by Chuck's estimation. He had done the math, tallying the number of civilians likely to have been in the buildings and adding the number of rescue workers. Chuck's point was that, in truth, this had been "the greatest rescue operation in the history of the world." The newspapers the next day estimated 10,000 people were likely dead. Though at 3,000 killed the loss of life was still staggering, many more people survived than were expected to. Chuck wanted to balance the emphasis on the

tremendous sadness and loss by giving proper credit to the success of the rescue operation. Chuck called it "a great triumph." It was on this note that he chose to end the interview.

General Structure

In this section the most salient existential themes that emerged from the officers' experiences, as I understood them, are delineated. Each theme is described in a detailed narrative style. They are ordered more or less temporally, reflecting as closely as possible the unfolding of the officers' experiences throughout the day on September 11, 2001. Priority was given to themes that were common among the officers' experiences, though some were lived by only one or two of the officers. It is noted in the narrative where the experiences were unique to certain individuals. The themes are listed below, and then followed by the full narrative descriptions.

Theme 1: A Strong and Positive Sense of Identity as a Police Officer

Theme 2: The "Taken-for-Granted" Attitude: An Initial Interpretation of Events as Proceeding According to Typical Understandings of the Day-to-Day

Theme 3: As the Crisis Worsens, the 'Taken-for-Granted" Attitude Can No Longer be Sustained and Feelings of Fear and Vulnerability Arise

Theme 4: Bearing Witness to the Horrible Deaths of Others

Theme 5: Facing Death

Theme 6: Persistence of the Significance of the Pre-Catastrophe World

Theme 7: Bravery: Conscious, Decisive Action in Spite of Fear

Theme 8: A Traumatic Rupture in the Fabric of Taken-for-Granted Existence Leading to a Sense of Unreality

Theme 9: A Particularity of Experience that Could Not be Shared or Understood by Others

Theme 10: Making Meaning out of the Deaths of Innocent Others and Coming to Terms with Having Survived

A Strong and Positive Sense of Identity as a Police Officer

All of the officers who volunteered to participate in this research happened to be members of families with a long history of involvement with the police department. All of their fathers were police officers, one had an uncle and grandfather who were police officers, two had siblings who were also on the job, and one was married to a fellow officer. One officer described himself as being a "third generation" police officer and said that, all totaled, his family had given seventy-five years of service to the NYPD. It was the impression of this researcher that their role as police officers with the NYPD was a central and integral part of their sense of identity

Being a "member of the service" with the NYPD brought a particular sense of being a member of a special group. For these officers, it was an honor to belong to this group comprised of people who routinely put themselves in danger in dedication to their duty to protect the citizens of their city. The officers discussed their wish to help others as both a professional duty and a personal value. As Andy said, "That's the way I was raised. You just help in whatever way." Chuck mentioned that once or twice a year he visited the NYPD Memorial Wall, a monument dedicated to NYPD officers who had given their lives in the line of duty, in order to pay his respects to them. It was significant to him that he found himself at that very wall just moments after the first tower collapsed. When Chuck spoke of the men and women whose names were engraved on the wall he referred to them as though they were members of his own family. He said, "I buried seventy-one cops in my twenty-year career. And then we lost twenty-three that day. So in twenty years I lost ninety-four brothers and sisters."

In addition, being a police officer also provided them a position within a strict hierarchy, defined their roles and duties, and offered guidelines for behavior. This was especially important for Andy, the probationary police officer. He was very concerned throughout the tragedy that he acted in an appropriate manner and followed proper procedure. He brought this up many times throughout the interview. Andy was particularly concerned about the fact that he had left his partner behind in order to run toward the Trade Center tower. He said, "I took maybe four or five steps and I realize I'm not supposed to leave my partner. 'Cause, I was only out of the Academy maybe six months when this happened, so stuff like this was still fresh in my mind, 'Never leave your partner.'" But his instinct was to run toward the scene and help in whatever way he could. Once he was on his own, his primary objective was to find other city cops. He looked for them throughout the crisis, but only found them after the buildings had fallen and he was safe. Andy explained that he thought he should fall in with more experienced officers, "…my priority was to find other police officers to help them help everybody else." He was not experienced and was not supposed to be acting on his own and giving orders. He also said he was concerned about getting in trouble. "Whether or not I saved a thousand people, if I were to say, 'I ran away from my partner because I wanted to go help people on my own.' That's a no-no." He said, "I was thinking procedure. I'm not out of the Academy even a year." After the first tower had fallen, and Andy had survived and made his way out of the rubble, he happened to encounter his Commanding Officer. Andy described the experience as "a big relief." He was not reprimanded for his actions, and, quite the opposite, he found his C.O. to provide a source of great comfort.

The clear delineation of position and responsibility also provided a sense of security for the officers throughout the day. In fact, one officer, seriously injured, refused to leave the island on anything other than an NYPD boat. She said she knew she would be well taken care of by the officers aboard, and they would recognize her rank and, thus, her position of authority. Mary said, "I get down and they are loading this boat with people, this big Fire Department boat. But in the background I see an NYPD Harbor boat and I wanted to wait for that boat...There was something like a real safety net for me to be among cops." This officer wanted nothing more than to be with her own group during this time of personal vulnerability. She felt safe only with others with whom she could identify, other New York City cops. Her people would take care of her, and she could trust that they would treat her with the authority and respect she deserved as a Lieutenant with the NYPD.

This strong personal identification with the police department provided guidelines for action and a great sense of personal security for the officers. It also seemed to contribute to their determination and sincere desire to help those in need. This desire contributed both to their resilience and their vulnerability. It provided them with the guiding principle of helping in any way possible throughout the day, and bolstered their ability to act despite their fear. But it also rendered them vulnerable to intense feelings of powerlessness when they were faced with situations in which they were unable to do anything to help. This was especially true when the officers were faced with watching people jump from the burning towers. This troubling experience will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

The “Taken-for-Granted” Attitude: An Initial Interpretation of Events as Proceeding According to Typical Understandings of the Day-to-Day

In the few moments after the first terrorist attack, the research participants believed that the situation was not nearly as grave as it would later prove to be. They knew a plane had flown into one of the towers, but they all thought it was an accidental event. Each officer assumed a small aircraft had flown off-course and had crashed into one or two floors of the tower, possibly because the pilot had a heart attack or due to a navigational error. It was seen as a tragic accident, costing the lives of a few, and causing a fire that threatened many others. But, still, they thought it was contained to just a few floors; requiring an evacuation by the police department and the response of the fire department. The belief that the tragedy was accidental, limited and controllable seemed to contribute to the participants’ initial feelings of relative calm assurance that they could cope with it and perform their duties as expected. In fact, it was the impression of this researcher that they felt a sense of excitement, and were eager to respond to the scene in order to be of assistance. After all, the guiding concern of the participants as police officers was to be able to help those in need. They wanted to be involved in a situation wherein they would be able to help others and save lives.

While entering a scene of tragedy and danger always brought uncertainty and concerns about their own safety, this event, as understood so far, fell within the usual paradigms of the officers’ understanding of normal life. Chuck was a commanding officer whose job was to keep public citizens a safe distance away from any scene of danger. He was listening to the radio as usual while he drove to work that morning. He told me he typically listened to a newsradio station during his morning commute in order to hear about any citywide crisis that might affect his job. He heard on the radio that a

plane had crashed into the WTC and so he responded directly to the scene. He said, "Now at that time, the thought that was running through my head was that it was a Cessna, it was a small plane, possibly the pilot had a heart attack. I'm not thinking a 767 or terrorism at this point."

Andy, the probationary police officer who was working regular patrol duties approximately one block away from the World Trade Center towers, said that when he heard the initial explosion he did not have a noticeable reaction. He said, "…being an officer…working in lower Manhattan, you hear unusual noises all the time." Later in our interview, while he was talking about his initial interpretation of the unfolding catastrophe, Andy said he assumed the pilot of a small aircraft had made a tragic error in navigation or lost control of the plane. As he talked about entering the lobby of the first World Trade Center building to be struck, he remarked that he did not know at the time that this was a terrorist attack. Nor did he know that a second plane was about to crash into the other tower. And he never imagined the towers would fall. Therefore, he said, "It wasn't scary at all. It was just my job at the time. It was a terrible tragedy…I just figured …the pilot was given some kind of coordinates or something wrong, but it was just a terrible mistake." He said, "…in light of everything that happened afterwards with the towers falling, you know, at this point, right now, you have to put all that out of your mind. At this point right now, to me, it was just a terrible accident. And this is the extent of it right here, the lobby and upstairs…I just, it didn't seem like it was going to be any worse than it already was."

Even when the situation did worsen, and Andy felt the building shake from what he later learned was the crash of the second plane and saw more debris falling, he assumed

the fire from the initial crash was causing increasing damage. As he said, "Collapse was never an issue." This was true for all of the participants.

As the Crisis Worsens, the "Taken-for-Granted" Attitude Can No Longer be Sustained, and Feelings of Fear and Vulnerability Arise

The officers' assumption that the crisis was tragic but manageable began to change as they lived through an increasingly worsening situation. Their initial feelings of confidence and safety turned to fear with the strike of the second plane, the people jumping from the buildings, the realization that this was not an accident but a terrorist attack, and the knowledge that other attacks were in progress. The officers were unaccustomed to feeling overwhelmed by a situation of crisis, and had always had confidence that the police department was equipped to handle any emergency that might befall the city and its citizens. As police officers working in New York City, they were used to coping with sudden tragic events such as assaults, murders, car and subway accidents, and the like. Two of the participants had even responded to the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. Though being called to handle such events would be disturbing to most civilians, these officers dealt with them in the normal course of performing their job duties and, typically, were not struck with feelings of intense fear or distress. Describing his initial experience Chuck said, "…as tragic as this was, our mindset is, it's like '93. We're going to evacuate the buildings, we're going to secure the area, and if the fire department can't put the fire out, we're going to have to let it burn out." It was, no doubt, a tragic event as it was. But it still fell within the realm of normalcy for these NYC police officers and, thus, they were not unduly alarmed. It should be noted, however, that none of the participating officers had been involved in a

life-threatening situation in the line-of-duty before. It is possible that they would have been more attuned to the danger and initially felt more fearful and vulnerable if they had.

Even still, for this group of participants, the shifts in their awareness of their own vulnerability as well as the likely inadequacy of the police and fire departments to effectively manage the crisis represented a dramatic and distressing change in their usual attitude. For the first time in one officer's twenty-year career, he thought the situation might indeed be so massive in scale that the resources of the police department would be inadequate to cope effectively. This was a frightening realization for him. When Chuck was told that a plane had struck the Pentagon he felt "like I had been punched in the stomach." He said, "…(I)n my twenty years, everything that has been thrown at the NYPD, the FDNY, we've handled. We've handled it quickly, efficiently, and I'm still impressed at the things we're able to accomplish at the scenes of emergencies. But now, when (the Chief) told me they just struck the Pentagon, I felt like *I* was struck. Because, for the first time in my life I thought, 'My God, this is bigger than we can handle possibly. We might be in over our heads.' So I had that fear…"

Andy was unaware he was dealing with a terrorist attack until he ran into a fireman only minutes before the first building collapsed. The fireman told him the second tower was hit by a hijacked plane and said, "We're under attack." He realized then that the explosion he had heard before was actually the second plane crashing into Tower 1. He said, "Now things jump to a whole new level with me…(T)his is my worst fear, that this was done on purpose…So this was a little scary." His focus immediately shifted from a concentration on the task at hand to fear about what the future might hold. "Also, when I

was told that a second plane had hit, we're under attack, 'What else is coming?…Is another plane coming? Is there a bomb in here someplace?'"

For these officers, the realization that they were dealing with an intentional act of terrorism and their attendant feelings of vulnerability and fear happened suddenly, not gradually. Their heretofore taken-for-granted interpretation of the unfolding crisis as tragic but manageable could no longer be sustained and they were suddenly thrust into a new sort of experience altogether, one for which they had no pre-given ways of coping or understanding.

Bearing Witness to the Horrible Deaths of Others

The participants in the study all arrived at the World Trade Center shortly after the first hijacked plane hit Tower 2. One participant was already in the area and ran one block over to the towers when he heard the first plane crash into the building. As he drew nearer and then entered the lobby he saw people engulfed in fire, some already dead, some who survived, and one woman who was still alive but died shortly after he arrived to help her. As another participant arrived on the scene he saw a car in the middle of the street whose occupants had been crushed to death by a part of a jet engine. And two of the officers arrived in time to witness the horrifying sight of people jumping to their deaths from the burning towers.

The participating officers all identified the experience of witnessing these deaths as the most vivid, significant and troubling memories they held among all of the dramatic experiences they lived through that day. Chuck, a twenty-year NYPD veteran said, "And now, I don't know if I'd use the term 'haunted,' but this is something that I, and everyone

else, is going to take to our graves. Like I said, I am more hurt and affected about that than I was about what happened to me personally."

They all talked about feeling great empathy for those who died. The young officer who tried to help the people on fire talked about how unfair it was that these people had simply been going to work on a typical day when they were suddenly struck and killed so horribly. He remembered one man, dead and engulfed in flames, vividly. "Because, even though he was engulfed in flames, I can still see his face. He had a business suit on. He had on navy blue dress pants. He had on a light blue collared shirt, with a tie. He was a black gentleman, wearing glasses." Andy said the man "just looked like a regular guy, …going to work in his business suit…Looked like a Dad, you know?"

As police officers, the participants understood they could face life-threatening situations in the course of performing their duties. But, here, it was ordinary citizens going about their daily business who were attacked. Andy said, "And I know every day that I could be going to a situation like that. Them, they're just going to work in their office and it's the last thing they expect...When these people kissed their loved ones goodbye that morning…I'm sure that their family members weren't worried about them getting burned to death in the World Trade Center." He also felt great empathy for the family of the woman who was on fire but still alive when he found her. In the weeks after the attacks, Andy searched the flyers of the "Missing" that were posted all around the city, looking for a picture of her. He hoped to find out who she was and to be able to contact her family, to tell them he was with her in her final moments, to help bring them some sense of peace, some closure.

The officers who found themselves in the unfortunate position of watching people jump from the burning buildings to their deaths were immediately and intensely aware of the impossible choice these victims faced. Those who jumped had to know they would certainly die if they jumped out of a building some 80 or more floors up. It was clear to them that, for too many people, to jump was the preferable choice to being burned alive. The recognition of this terrible choice, while witnessing first-hand the people in the act of making it, was difficult for the officers to bear. Mary, the only female participant in the study, also a near twenty-year veteran of the NYPD, said, "It was extremely difficult to be in a situation and be totally helpless. And I couldn't imagine the hell that it was for those people to be up there and that the better option was to jump. There was no judgment attached to it, but how awful it must be to be in those shoes that this is considered a better option."

In addition to the painful sense of empathy the officers felt with the victims, they were doubly traumatized by the fact that they were unable to help these people. Their guiding value and intention as police officers was to save lives. Though their typical duty as police officers was to protect the public from criminals, they talked about having decided to join the police department in order to help people. That was their ultimate goal and value. As Chuck said, "The truth is, I've worked with thousands of officers over the years…and ninety-percent of those, we join the police department and the fire department and the emergency medical services to save lives and to help people. That's what we are and that's what we're about. You train your entire time and now here we are. Everything we've trained for, everything we've come on the departments to do, and we're helpless to do anything. I had to stand here and watch these people take their lives

and it was a horrible, horrible feeling." In this case, they found themselves unable to do anything but bear witness to horror and tragedy.

This feeling of helplessness, and witnessing first-hand the consequences of their powerlessness, was particularly troubling for the officers and contributed significantly to any lingering feelings of trauma or disturbance they felt after the initial crisis ended. It was the memory of watching people jump from the buildings for two participants, and the people on fire for the other that continued to trouble them the most in their private moments after the attack.

Facing Death

All three participants nearly lost their lives on September 11th. At a certain point, they all believed, with good reason, that they were living through their last moments of life. By what seemed to them all to be divine intervention or fate, however, they survived. Each officer thought that this would be a horrible way to die, and felt robbed of a more fitting death. Two participants spoke in detail about the many thoughts they had while they were facing their deaths. Both officers found themselves giving in to their belief that the end was imminent, and were initially accepting of it. But then both were overcome with a powerful will to live.

One participant, Chuck, was trapped against a large glass window in an alcove with about thirty other people as the first tower began to fall. He was overcome by the smoke and ash and was beginning to lose consciousness. He thought that this was a terrible way for him to die, given that he had already survived twenty years of police duty. It didn't seem right that this was the way his life should end. He said he had given up, but then he thought about his wife and child, his parents, his brother and sister; he was going to die

and he would miss them. He suddenly found a renewed will to live. He remembered that he had his service weapon in a pack around his waist and he was able to shoot out the window so that he and the others could escape the area where they were trapped.

Andy was walking back toward the first tower to be hit when he saw some people running toward him, yelling that the tower was collapsing and telling him to run the other way. He was thrown to the ground by a powerful gust of wind as the tower fell, and he heard a loud rumbling sound of metal hitting metal as he was hit and covered with debris. He said, "…it was almost like something was chasing me and I was just trying to get away from it. Because…you heard it, it was getting louder and then I was pushed forward…So, it slammed me to the ground, it was pitch black…It was just me, this metal, and this gust of air." He thought, "I can't believe that I'm gonna die like this." And then his thoughts turned to his wife. She had just miscarried their first child days two days earlier. Andy had taken some time off to be with her and this was his first day back at work. He thought his wife would die of heartbreak if she lost him now. He thought, "This is gonna kill my wife. She is gonna die of a broken heart. She just lost a baby and now she's gonna lose me." With this thought, Andy began to feel a strong sense of resolve, and he fought to live. He began to talk to God, and asked simply not to be crushed to death or buried alive. He began to roll back and forth in the tiny space he was trapped in, hoping that with each roll he would avoid being crushed to death. When the rumbling ended and it was still, Andy wasn't sure if he was alive or dead. The air was black and his lungs were filled with smoke and ash. "It was pitch black…I didn't know if I was alive. I didn't know if I was dead. I didn't know who was with me. I didn't know

really where I was." He gradually realized he was alright and he got up and continued his struggle to get out of the collapsed building.

Mary was thrown across six lanes of the West Side Highway, landed in a rare patch of soft mud, and was covered with flying chunks of concrete, wire, and other debris. For her as well, everything went dark and she couldn't breathe. Nor did she know where she was. While she was lying there, she heard, more than felt, a blow to her head. "Like someone took a baseball bat and just whacked my head." A piece of concrete had lodged in her skull.

Like the others, Mary thought these were her final moments. She was seriously injured, she couldn't see anything, she couldn't breathe, and she did not know where she was. Mary said she wasn't even sure if she was conscious. But then, she realized the fact that wondering whether or not she was conscious indicated that indeed she was, for the time being. She thought about having had her palm read and being told that her death would be quick. This death, she thought, was not quick. And, she was thinking, "What a horrible way to go." Part of what made it horrible for Mary was that during her ordeal, she heard people screaming. She wondered how many people came down with the building. And she was also disoriented and alone. She thought, "Where am I, that this is my last breath? Where am I?" She wasn't sure what exactly had happened. Her senses were limited to hearing. She said, "…there was no frame of reference to what I was experiencing, if that makes any sense."

For these participants, facing death at this time and in this way was not what they had expected. The two men felt it was an ignoble death, somehow lacking in dignity and honor. Chuck, having such a strong sense of identity as a police officer, had imagined

that a line-of-duty death would entail having been shot while trying to protect someone or stop a criminal. In this instance, he felt trapped and powerless. Though Andy was new to the police force, he seemed to have a similar experience. To die being crushed to death held a sense of defeat**.** And Mary only knew that something massive and horrible was happening all around and to her, and she was robbed of the senses she needed to comprehend it.

Persistence of the Significance of the Pre-Catastrophe World

Despite the increasing intensity of the disaster, and the growing realization by the officers that the situation was extremely grave, they each continued to focus on their job, as they understood it, especially to help evacuate and rescue the public. None of the officers who participated in this study left the site in order to save themselves. The scene was becoming more chaotic and dangerous, but they focused their attention on doing whatever they could to provide assistance to others. This remained true throughout the entire ordeal, even after they all survived the first collapse; covered in ash, eyes and lungs burning, dazed and, in one instance, seriously injured.

One officer did feel an urge to flee the scene after he realized the first tower had indeed fallen. But he resisted this urge and turned his attention to securing basic necessities for other rescue workers, assisting those who were injured, and continuing to help people evacuate the island. After Chuck had escaped the first collapse, he stood and looked back toward the scene, unsure what to think or to do. Then, he said to himself, “snap out of it. Let’s get going.” And he turned to the task of giving out water, and solace, to an injured fireman.

It appeared to this researcher that a focus on particular tasks helped the officers to continue to act in spite of the extreme circumstances. In a certain sense, they began to function on "autopilot." Unable to psychologically process the enormity of the crisis, they turned to what they knew, putting danger and personal vulnerability out of awareness, they began to perform their police duties automatically, functioning according to protocol and personal responsibility. As Mary put it, "I'm unnerved, but I'm very focused on what needs to be done now…I was just focused on what's at hand." This was especially remarkable in her case, considering that she took charge of evacuating a group of residents trapped in an apartment building after both collapses despite the fact that she had a piece of concrete lodged in her skull and a pane of glass sticking out of her back.

This focus on the present moment and the task-at-hand appeared to be significant in two separate ways. For one, it did seem to be an adaptive response to an overwhelming psychological situation. The officers were suddenly faced with a crisis for which they were both personally and professionally unprepared. Attending to understood-protocols for professional functioning acted to guide them in making judgments about how to behave in this new situation, and allowed them to put their personal concerns aside in favor of tending to the needs of others. In another sense, this was less a conscious choice and more of an automatic reaction to a situation of extreme distress. The officers did not fully comprehend what was happening to them or to their world. They did not have time to reflect and then make reasonable decisions about how to proceed. Thus, they fell back on what they did know, pre-reflectively; that they were police offices for the NYPD and they still had a job to perform.

One participant's experience of continuing to be concerned with the affairs of her more typical day-to-day experience was remarkable in that it seemed to her that these things should no longer bear significance given the catastrophic nature of the situation she found herself in. She mentioned several instances of seemingly forgetting the unusual and traumatic nature of the immediate situation surrounding her and thinking of more typical concerns. For example, as she first entered the scene of the impending disaster she remembered she was supposed to be attending a meeting and thought she should contact her office to say she would not be there, momentarily forgetting that everyone else expected there were NYPD personnel and, thus, had likely also responded to the WTC site. Not to mention the fact that the current crisis obviously superseded the importance of any other professional concerns. This meeting was now factually irrelevant, but it still bore significance for her. She continued to be engaged in the project of maintaining the significance of her usual priorities.

Mary gave several other examples of her attunement to the priorities of her pre-9/11 world. While she was potentially gravely injured and had a pane of glass lodged in her back, Mary saw an officer for whom she had put together a video of a previous rescue operation. Her primary concern then was not to get assistance from him, but to ask him if he had received the videotape she sent. She said, "So I had put this montage together for him and I had just mailed it to him. So he comes in on this (NYPD) Harbor boat and, like, the world has just gone awry and I say to him, 'K__, did you get the tape I sent?' And he's like, 'Uh, ok…EMS, I've got an injured officer.' And I turn around and I say, 'Where?' And he says, 'I've gotta get you to a hospital. You're not in good shape.' But part of it was just total shock. I'm just thinking, 'K__, did you get the tape I sent?'"

And, finally, while she was at the hospital having just received emergency care she was offered a slice of pizza. She accepted, having not eaten anything all day. But when she saw her brother arrive to take her home she refused the pizza thinking, his being very health conscious, that he would disapprove.

Mary found her attention to these more mundane affairs unusual, even humorous, and explained it away by thinking she must have been "in shock." It seemed to this researcher that the officer was attuned to her typical concerns because she was unable as yet to incorporate the realization of the enormity and distress of the events surrounding her into her usual mode of understanding. She could not suddenly and drastically change her world-view and leave the importance of her previous concerns behind. This allowed for a continuity of experience, perhaps protecting her from becoming overwhelmed by the destruction and danger surrounding her.

Bravery: Conscious, Decisive Action in Spite of Fear

Only one participant spontaneously discussed having felt he acted with bravery during the chaos and tragedy of that day. Chuck quickly thought to shoot out a window while the first tower was collapsing, thereby saving his own life and many others. He then had to shoot out another window to escape, and allow others to escape yet another scene of entrapment. He fled from the collapse and found himself in a business office that he was familiar with, a yachting rental company near the harbor in Battery Park. There he found a storehouse of bottled water and he collected as much as he could carry to take to other survivors whom he now knew needed water desperately. As he came out of the office with a milk-crate full of water bottles, he again saw the devastation surrounding him. One WTC tower was gone and the air was filled with ash and floating papers and debris.

He saw a seriously injured firefighter and offered assistance. At this point Chuck began to realize what had happened and he was overcome with fear. He felt a powerful urge to flee.

Chuck said his instincts told him he should leave the site as fast as he could in order to save his own life. But he was also palpably aware of his responsibilities as a police officer and a human being. He overcame his visceral urge and stayed on the scene, living through the collapse of the second tower and then helping many others to evacuate. His ability to stay and help, despite his fear, was the main thing Chuck said he felt proud of about his conduct that day. Though Chuck had narrowly survived the collapse of the first tower and saved the lives of perhaps thirty other people, his act of remaining on the scene afterward required enormous self-control.

It was my impression that Chuck's sense of pride came as a result of his having made a *conscious decision* to stay in spite of his fear, whereas his act of shooting out the window to save himself and the others in the alcove felt to him like more of an automatic response. In the first instance he acted spontaneously and immediately, having no real choice in the matter if he was to have any chance of escape. He could take even greater responsibility for the decision he made to then remain on the scene, however, because he made it with full awareness of the potential consequences, and therein it was a truly selfless and brave act.

A Traumatic Rupture in the Fabric of Taken-for-Granted Existence Leading to a Sense of Unreality

The officers referred to the scene as a whole as having an "eerie," "unreal," or "surreal" quality. They all used these terms to describe a sensory and psychological experience they did not have words to describe. In particular, they all pointed out how

quiet it was, despite the chaos all around. One officer noticed that though there were sirens going off everywhere, and hundreds of rescue personnel outside the towers, it was remarkably quiet before the towers fell. He said he could hear the fires burning near the top of the towers some 80 floors high, but otherwise there seemed to be an absence of sound. His use of the word "eerie" seemed to describe a sense of ominous foreboding. The scene was already beginning to unfold as something terribly out of the ordinary. Andy also mentioned how unusual it was when he first arrived at the World Trade Center towers that the typical noise of the city seemed to be absent. He said it was, "…just quiet as can be…just very quiet."

After the towers fell, ash, paper, and debris covered the entire area, robbing it of sound and color. Chuck said it was like being in a black-and-white movie. This description seemed to match not only his physical surroundings, but to capture his psychological experience as well. The experience he was living through did not seem real; it had the quality of a dream or a movie, larger than life in its chaos, confusion and horror. It was a situation for which his twenty years as a ranking officer provided no framework. The shift from living out the day-to-day concerns of an NYPD officer to witnessing and surviving a massive catastrophe was so sudden and dramatic that it was nearly impossible to comprehend while it was happening or even for some time thereafter. Though he had just survived the collapse of the first tower, saving the lives of about thirty other people trapped in an alcove with him, Chuck still did not realize the tower had actually collapsed. When he stood and looked back at the scene after escaping, he saw the smoke and debris and wondered where the tower was. This experience was more profound than

simple disbelief. He literally could not yet comprehend that a World Trade Center tower had completely collapsed and that he had been in the middle of it.

As the towers collapsed, and during the aftermath, the officers were so suddenly cast into a realm outside of their typical experience and understanding that they had great difficulty recognizing what had happened. Again, it seemed more a matter of a problem comprehending what was happening rather than of believing it had happened. They were thrust into a completely new and different world, one for which they had no psychological map, no previous life-experience to compare it to and, thereby, understand. It seemed to this researcher that their focused attention on continuing to act in their capacity as police officers was both remarkable and adaptive. A psychological breakdown in the midst of such confusion would have been understandable, but continuing to perform their police duties served to ground them and to guide them in this new terrain. And yet, in describing their experiences of that day a year or more after the attacks, the participants were still profoundly struck by how unreal it all still seemed. At the time of our interviews, their experience of 9/11 continued to stand out as something that breached previous understanding, something for which typical ways of describing events fell short.

A Particularity of Experience that Could not be Shared or Understood by Others

Two of the participants, Chuck and Andy, talked about their feeling that no one other than someone who shared their exact experience could know what it was like to have been them that day or to truly understand what they felt as a result of what they had lived through. Though they were willing, even eager, to describe their experiences in detail to me, and share their feelings, it was clear that they did not believe I was capable of

knowing exactly what they knew. Chuck in particular was still inclined to re-live his emotional experience of 9/11 at the time of our interview, though two years had already passed. He grew tearful at certain times during our discussion and tried to explain what he was feeling. He said that in the ensuing months and years since September 11 he had had difficult emotional times and, when he did, he reached out for support from people he knew who had been trapped with him in the alcove. One man in particular became a source of enduring emotional support for him. This was the cameraman whose life had been saved by Chuck when they were both trapped in the alcove and who, coincidentally, later encountered and filmed him soon after the first tower fell. When Chuck felt emotional distress pertaining to 9/11 his only real comfort came from talking to someone else who had *been there* with him. He said, "One thing I've found is it's a relief, even if you don't talk about 9/11…to talk to people who were not just here that day, but literally standing next to you, who know exactly what you went through. Because too many times there are people who maybe mean well but they're like, 'Oh yeah, I know what you went through.' You don't know. Nobody knows what we went through. And everyone here, depending on who you are, went through a different thing. But nobody can understand what we went through that day because it's incomprehensible.'"

As a staff psychologist for the NYPD I have seen this sentiment expressed many times by police officers involved in traumatic incidents. No matter how empathic one felt, or how much sympathy and support one could convey, there still existed an impression that the officer felt alone with his or her experience. This was especially remarkable in this case, given that hundreds of police officers were present at the scene of the terrorist attacks, stood by in helpless horror at the tragic deaths of innocent people, faced their

own deaths, and witnessed all sorts of horrors on September 11. The officers I spoke to found little comfort in sharing their experiences with others who had lived through such a similar experience. What each had endured seemed to them to be unique to the individual in the place they were and at the time they were there. The true meaning and intensity of their experience appeared to be felt as being particular to the individual and mostly incomprehensible by others. As Andy said, simply, "You weren't there, you don't know."

To draw conclusions about this would be presumptuous on the part of this researcher since it was not specifically addressed in the interviews. Nevertheless, it did stand out to me as a significant aspect of the officers' struggle to cope with what they had lived through. For every officer, the experience was singular and particular, despite whatever similarities may seem to have existed. The impression I had was that a point of vulnerability and significance was reached that was deep and individual. It had the sense of something sacred, something perhaps transcendent to reason or explanation.

Making Meaning out of the Deaths of Innocent Others and Coming to Terms with Having Survived

Witnessing the tragic deaths of those who jumped from the buildings or were burned alive, and knowing that countless other innocent people had been killed during the collapses, was emotionally distressing for these officers. They struggled to make sense of it, and sought to understand such appalling and senseless deaths in ways that held a more positive, hopeful, or comforting interpretation. And, though none of the officers stated it explicitly, they all searched for justification for their own lives having been spared when so many were not as fortunate.

While discussing his experience of watching the people who jumped from the buildings, Chuck made a point of saying that he felt they had not died in vain, and that, indeed, their choice had ultimately resulted in saving other lives. This particular viewpoint was surprising to me since it was commonly understood that the falling bodies created a risk for those on the ground. Rescue personnel had to be watchful of the debris, and bodies, that were falling all around them in order not to be hit and killed as they entered the buildings to help with evacuation efforts. In fact, several firefighters were known to have died after being hit by people who jumped. But, Chuck offered a perspective about those who jumped that was actually quite positive. He said that, if not for those who jumped, many rescue personnel would have been closer to or even inside of the buildings when they collapsed and might not, therefore, have managed to escape. Because the jumpers made it dangerous to go closer to the buildings, the emergency workers had to take cover further away and, in so doing, were able to escape with their lives when the buildings collapsed.

The officers also offered perspectives on their own survival that were positive and meaningful. None of the officers believed their survival was purely random or dictated by mere chance alone. When Andy talked about having survived he said he felt that God had a purpose for his life, one that involved bringing children into the world. His wife had miscarried their first child only days before the attacks. By the time of our interview, Andy was the proud father of a baby girl. He said he felt his purpose in life was to have a family and so it was not in God’s plan for him to die that day. He also felt this purpose was not limited to his own satisfaction in family life. He felt it was likely that his

daughter, and other children he may have, might very well go on to help others in the future. And so his life was spared for the future greater good.

Chuck had a similar perspective. He knew that his survival had effectively saved the lives of many others as well. However, he also believed that the value in saving lives was not limited only to those lives he saved. He talked about his belief that saving other rescue workers would have an exponential life-saving effect in that those people would then go on to save other lives in the future. He called this the "ripple effect." Chuck said his theory was proven to him two months after September 11th when an airplane leaving from JFK Airport crashed in Queens, NY. While Chuck was helping with that recovery effort, he ran into a female police officer he knew from NYPD whom he had not seen for some time. As they chatted, he discovered that her life had likely been saved by the efforts of one of the people who had been trapped in the alcove with him. This man's life was saved because of Chuck, and he then went on to save yet another life. This female police officer was Mary, the female participant in this study, and the officer who helped her was the man from the TARU unit who made her stop helping others and took her to get medical attention for the pane of glass in her back.

Mary had also thought quite a bit about why it was that her life had been spared. She held a particular spiritual perspective that understood death as coming when one had already learned whatever it was he or she needed to learn in this life. In this way she could even come to terms with young people having been killed, believing that their life-lesson had been completed. She struggled with this idea, however, wondering what it was she still needed to learn and feeling somewhat critical of herself for not having learned it already.

The suffering and death of others, especially innocent victims, was obviously distressing for these officers. In their efforts to come to terms with it, it seemed, they found ways to understand that were both meaningful and hopeful. Chuck was even able to view the deaths of those who jumped as a positive act that was ultimately life-saving for others. In their struggle to find meaning in the deaths of so many innocent people, these officers were also left to wonder why they had survived. All the participants felt there was a purpose for their lives having been spared. For them, there appeared to be a grand design for the greater good that extended into the future. There was a significant and fundamental purpose for their lives.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In this chapter I elaborate upon and discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter. In the first section I return to each of the ten existential themes identified in the general structural description of the experience of the participating police officers on September 11, 2001 and discuss them in dialogue with relevant psychological and phenomenological literature. The second section presents a brief summation of the discussion and offers suggestions for application of the findings and for future research.

A Strong and Positive Sense of Identity as a Police Officer

In speaking to the officers who agreed to participate in this research, it was evident that they all identified strongly with their position as members of the NYPD. Being a police officer was much more than an occupation; it acted as a primary constituent of the officers' understanding of themselves and the world in which they lived, and their purpose and position within that world. In this sense, being a police officer was more akin to being a member of an extended family or tribe, with its attendant loyalties, guidelines for behavior within a hierarchy, definition of values and responsibilities, and even sources of security, social support and comfort.

The strength and intensity of the officers' identification with the police department cannot be overemphasized. It is a commonly understood, yet still striking, fact that police officers function within a distinct society, an insular "cop culture" to which they

refer as “the job.” For many officers, “the job” becomes the primary organizing principal of their lives, sometimes restricting their potential to engage in other activities and relationships (Blau, 1994). Many studies including “cop culture” as a factor emphasize police officers’ “macho” attitudes toward disturbing experiences; their apparent lack of emotion in the face of distress. But, “the job” more fully denotes the officers’ understanding of themselves as fulfilling a particular role within the community they serve, a set of principles to which they are bound by allegiance, and parameters of duty and conduct that are rigidly monitored and enforced by the department itself. For example, police officers are expected to be able to “take appropriate police action” whether or not they are on-duty. And they are expected to conduct themselves as representatives of the police department at all times. Otherwise, they could be faced with a charge of “conduct unbecoming of a police officer.” They are, thus, assumed to function within their role as police officers *at all times*, even in the conduct of their personal lives. Many officers struggle with these demands, but so too are those that assume the responsibility as a matter of personal pride and a basis for self-esteem.

In this study, the participating police officers’ sense of personal identification with the police department was decidedly positive. They saw themselves in the role of being continuously and routinely in service to the public. Their most basic value and guiding principal was that of helping others. As Chuck said, “The truth is…we join the police department and the fire department and the emergency medical services to save lives and to help people. That’s what we are and that’s what we’re about.” This last statement, in its force and simplicity, shows the depth of identification these officers held with being members of a group whose primary dedication was to ensure the safety and well-being of

others. Notice also that Chuck used the pronoun "we" in describing his own experience. His personal dedication was indistinct from the values he felt were inherent to the larger group.

In their book, In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror, (2002) Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg put forth that identification with a specific culture allows the members of that culture to control their fear of death by providing them with a worldview that brings order, stability, and meaning to their lives. When people believe that they are significant contributors to a meaningful world, they assume a position within that world that provides them with a sense of security and value. The attendant feelings of self-worth and safety allow them to function effectively despite their factical vulnerability and mortality. The police officers in this study were members of a distinct culture with clear values; the highest ideal of which involved a transcendence of the self in the service of others. Indeed, membership in this culture allowed the officers to identify with a societal role of the most noble kind, that of being willing to lay down one's own life for the benefit of another. Taking up this mantle provided the officers with the framework through which they conducted and understood their lives. And it served to ground their thoughts and actions on September 11th when the structure of the world as they knew it began to crumble.

Being a member of the culture that is the NYPD on 9/11 also provided the officers with a strong sense of belonging that brought comfort and security. While seriously injured, Mary would only leave Manhattan on an NYPD Harbor Unit boat. She stated explicitly, "There was something like a real safety-net for me to be among cops." And Andy, after having looked for other "city cops" all day, described finally meeting up with

the commanding officer of his precinct as "a big relief." These officers felt most at home, and therefore safe, with others of their own kind. They belonged to an organization that knew who they were, recognized them as one of their own, and cared for their safety. It did not matter if the other members knew them personally. Once a member of the NYPD recognized a fellow officer as being in need of assistance, she would move heaven and earth to ensure the well being of her "brother" or "sister." Police officers took care of their own.

In analyzing the strength and importance of the officers' identification with the police department, we can see that being a member of the culture of the NYPD served a function extending well beyond that of most occupations. For the officers in this study, their dedication to "the job" provided an organizing framework for their lives that was inherently meaningful. "The job" took on the significance of a cause. In his book, Existential Psychotherapy (1980), Irvin Yalom discusses the importance of finding meaning in life through dedication to a cause. He cites Will Durant (1932) who said, "The meaning of life lies in the chance it gives us to produce, or to contribute to something greater than ourselves. It need not be a family…; it can be any group that can call out all the latent nobility of the individual, and give him a cause to work for that shall not be shattered by death." Durant went on to say that such a cause "must, if it is to give life meaning, lift the individual out of himself, and make him a cooperating part of a vaster scheme" (in Yalom, p. 434). The officers' identification with and dedication to their roles as members of the NYPD can best be understood in this light. Their job was their cause, and it gave their lives structure and meaning.

<u>The "Taken-for-Granted" Attitude: An Initial Interpretation of Events as Proceeding According to Typical Understandings of the Day-to-Day</u>

While the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 turned out to be massive and disastrous, it was not immediately recognized as such in its first moments. Aside from the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, no event such as this had ever taken place in the United States. Thus, the attack was sudden and unexpected, and it took everyone a little while to realize what was actually happening. The police officers in this study did not immediately assume that the first plane that flew into the World Trade Center was a hijacked commercial aircraft or that the strike was intentional. They all believed that a terrible accident had occurred; a small plane had unintentionally hit the tower. This in itself was tragic. But it was not particularly overwhelming or even that traumatic for the officers. In their capacity as police officers for the NYPD, they had routinely dealt with sudden, tragic, and dramatic incidents. Indeed, this was their specialty. They knew what to do in a crisis and were eager to respond to the call of duty. Their false assumption that the "accident" was contained and controllable provided the officers with a sense of confidence in their ability to manage it. In fact, none of the officers in this study ever imagined that the World Trade Center towers could or would collapse.

These participating police officers existed and functioned in a context within which they were routinely called to respond to tragic and emotionally demanding incidents. Terrible things happened in New York City and its surrounding boroughs all the time. And the officers could potentially face a threat to their own safety at any time. But, despite this, they went about their business basically feeling safe. Of course, they were attuned to potential threats and were trained to handle them in a way that would help

protect their own safety. Indeed, they may have felt an even greater degree of safety and protection because of their position as officers. They were, after all, trained and armed.

But their initial interpretation of the unfolding events of September 11th as being terrible yet contained and controllable seemed to fall in line with the attitude of the majority of the citizens of New York. I remember seeing the first tower burning as I drove to work that day. The World Trade Center towers were so tall and the plane hit so high up; it was impossible to have an accurate perspective of the magnitude of the disaster. I, too, believed something had exploded or that a small plane had flown off course and destroyed, at most, two floors of one side of the tower. Surely several people had been killed, and that was terrible. But, I continued on to work. I felt bad for those involved, but I assumed the fire department and the police would take care of it. It turned out that what I had seen burning was approximately ten floors of the tower, not two. And, of course, I never imagined the horror that was to come.

For most of us, the world is generally experienced as being manageable and safe. Bad things happen, to be sure. But we get through it. Evil exists, but the worst of the worst usually happens to somebody else. We expect life to proceed with continuity and consistency. We take our world, and our security within it, for granted. Otherwise, we would be crippled with constant fear and intense anxiety. For a view of what life would be like without such a foundation, see R.D. Laing's, The Divided Self (1960), wherein he describes the experience of those who cannot take the security of their existence for granted; the world of the schizophrenic.

For the rest of us, life proceeds according to taken for granted expectations. Husserl discussed the foundation of consciousness as taking place within a "horizon" of

anticipations. These anticipations are maintained within a continuity of past experiences. Husserl studied the structures that made consciousness itself possible, and the nature and action of these structures. He thought phenomenology should reflect on our basic, natural attitude. The "natural attitude," for Husserl, was our way of belonging to the surrounding world in the everyday sense that we feel a general commitment to the existence of that world. Husserl said, "The natural attitude is the form in which the total life of humanity is realized in running its natural practical course" (1931). Our normal, taken for granted way of approaching the world functions within a "horizon" that we take as "pre-given."

As such, the police officers in this study initially took their world on September 11, 2001, for granted, despite the increasing danger. Their horizon typically encompassed a world of tragic experiences that were to be expected. And they took for granted their ability to manage and cope with such a world. The current taken for granted anticipation was consistent with the natural attitude assumed by the officers in the past.

As the Crisis Worsens, the "Taken-for-Granted" Attitude Can No Longer be Sustained, and Feelings of Fear and Vulnerability Arise

The officers' initial belief that the crisis, though severe and tragic, was an accident with consequences that could be effectively managed by the police and fire departments soon gave way to greater concern about the scale and scope of the incident. Their feelings of confidence and relative safety, in fact, changed dramatically once they realized this was an intentional act of terrorism and that further attacks were underway.

Chuck had responded to the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 and he thought this incident would unfold in a similar fashion. He said, "…as tragic as this was, our mindset is, it's like '93. We're going to evacuate the buildings, we're going to

secure the area, and if the fire department can't put the fire out, we're going to have to let it burn out." However, as he stood outside the burning buildings witnessing people jump to their deaths, he was informed that a plane had also crashed into the Pentagon. With this, he suddenly felt afraid, and for the first time in his career he doubted the police department's ability to successfully cope with such a large-scale catastrophe. Andy was unaware that he was dealing with a terrorist attack until the first tower began to fall and a fireman informed him that New York City was "under attack." He too felt afraid now for the first time. And his focus suddenly shifted from tending to his duties in the present moment to fear about the future. He thought, "What else is coming? Is another plane coming? Is there a bomb in here someplace?"

The shift in the officers' experience of the event from an attitude of confidence and security to one of fear speaks to the very nature of terror itself. The officers were suddenly cast into a world of uncertainty and potentially grave danger; the ultimate intention of the attackers, and the extent of their power, was unknown. The circumstances were already terrible, yet they had heretofore fallen within the realm of the officers' previous experience. The knowledge that the attack was intentional, widespread and disastrous pulled the officers' focus away from the present moment, one that could be controlled and managed, and into the future. This future, now posing an immediate danger to the officers' lives and to those of the public they were expected to protect, was left to the fearsome speculations of imagination.

In his book, Man, Time, and World: Two contributions to Anthropological Psychology (1930/1982), Erwin Strauss stated that, "it is not the particular threat itself but rather the experience of being threatened that generally suffices for a shock" (p.27).

He explained that a psychological trauma, or shock, was constituted by the meaning the person endowed it with, a meaning involving personal vulnerability and a sudden realization of the finitude of existence. This meaning was not thought to be general in the sense that it could happen to any human being, but was rather an *existentiell* meaning, that is, one that posed an immediate threat to the person's existence, in its particularity and individuality.

Strauss went on to discuss Karl Jaspers' (1950) idea of "limit" or "boundary situations." Jaspers believed that situations such as death, suffering, and war brought an individual existence into an encounter with its own limits. Thus, the individual experienced himself in these situations as unconditioned and reacted not with planning or rationality but with "an intensified encounter with himself" (Translator's note, in Strauss, 1982). In the limit situation, the taken-for-granted world was undermined. In this case, the world was no longer firm, no longer beyond doubt, and the general meanings one ascribed to it were called into question. This set the stage for a person's radical encounter with himself. Here, the general meanings of death and vulnerability, typically avoided, were transformed into reality. Strauss stated, "A shock takes place only when, in the one-time experience, general *existentiell* meanings for the first time are presented to one's gaze and break into one's personal world. The shock thus depends on the historical modality, on the first-time-ness of what is experienced" (p.32). These police officers indeed encountered their own vulnerability and finitude, as well as that of the group with which they so strongly identified, for the first time. Suddenly, they could no longer take their world, or their efficacy and safety within it, for granted. The foundation

upon which their confidence and sense of security was based suddenly began to crumble, and they became afraid.

This understanding of trauma, however, though it does reveal the extent to which the officers were cast into a sudden encounter with their own vulnerability and finitude, lacks the element of terror implied in the officers' accounts of their experience. They suddenly recognized the enormity of the threat, that their own lives as well as those of countless others were at risk, and the future was immediately terrifying. When Andy was discussing having learned the city was under attack he said he could not help but wonder, "What else is coming?" Once the officers learned that they were being intentionally attacked, and that the Pentagon had also been hit, they could only imagine what might befall them next. In their article "The psychology of terror and its aftermath," found in the book, Individual and Community Responses to Trauma and Disaster: The Structure of Human Chaos (1994), Holloway and Fullerton analyze the experience of terror using references to literature and popular culture. They note that Stephen King (1981) makes a distinction between terror and other emotions evoked by horror films and literature. "In tales that use terror to frighten, we actually see nothing that is nasty or grotesque. Each person is invited to remember their worst nightmare, to conjure up their most frightening fantasy" (p. 34.) These officers had already seen much that was grotesque and horrible, but now they feared even further destruction, perhaps even annihilation of their city, their country, and life as they knew it, if they could possibly survive. For them, terror arose in their encounter with the monstrous face of the unknown future. Heidegger (1927/1962) described it thus, "And where that which threatens is laden with dread, and is at the same time encountered with the suddenness of the alarming, then fear becomes terror."

Bearing Witness to the Horrible Deaths of Others

Of all the traumatic experiences the officers lived through that day, the most difficult and distressing was their witnessing the deaths of innocent victims. During our interview two years later, Andy recounted minute details about each of the people he encountered who were burned to death. He felt empathy for them and for their surviving loved ones and told me he had spent time in the weeks after the attacks searching the pictures of the "missing" posted around the city in hopes of finding a picture of the woman who had died in his presence. He thought if he could locate her family, he might tell them the details of her death, and that she had not been alone, in hopes of bringing them some closure. Implicit in his concern for the surviving families was a recognition of and empathy for the torment of losing a loved one and never finding any remains or knowing what exactly had happened to them.

Chuck and Mary stood by helplessly as they watched people jump to their deaths from the burning towers. These officers, too, felt great empathy for the victims. They were immediately and intensely aware of the terrible predicament of those who chose to jump. Death was certain; the only choice was the manner of it, to stay and burn or to jump. Mary said, "And I couldn't imagine the hell that it was for those people to be up there and that the better option was to jump…how awful it must be to be in those shoes that this is considered a better option." The distress felt by the officers in witnessing this horrible choice was even more painful than their own near-brushes with death. Chuck said, "…this is something that I, and everyone else, is going to take to our graves…I am more hurt and affected about that than I was about what happened to me personally." In addition to the empathy the officers felt for innocent victims, their horror in watching

these people die was exacerbated by the fact that it was their duty and value as police officers to try to help save lives. The fact that they were unable to do anything to help prevent these deaths challenged their natural attitude, an attitude that encompassed a mandate to do whatever was necessary to help another. In this situation, they were helpless, a most unnatural feeling for these police officers, and one that began to challenge their most basic assumptions about themselves and the world.

Psychological studies of the effects of exposure to violent and grotesque death during disaster and war have shown strong correlations between such experiences and the development of symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (McCarrol et al. 1993, 1995, Green et al. 1989, Laufer et al. 1985, Lifton 1973). McCarroll et al. (1995) identified three components of exposure to violent death that were of particular significance for rescue workers; the gruesomeness of the remains, the "emotional involvement" of the viewer with the deceased, and possible threats to the rescue workers themselves. On September 11, 2001, the police officers in this study were simultaneously confronted with all three of these factors. But it was the "emotional involvement" of the officers as they witnessed these deaths that seemed to bear the most significance for them.

In the verbal descriptions of their experience of witnessing the deaths of so many innocent people on September 11, the empathy the officers felt for the victims was palpable, in addition to being stated explicitly. They spoke of an immediate, almost pre-reflective, awareness of the sudden horror and impossible choices the victims faced. Andy did not witness people jumping from the buildings, but he encountered several of those who had simply been standing in the lobby waiting for the elevator when they were

suddenly engulfed in flames. He thought how ordinary they looked, "Like a Dad, you know?" And it seemed unfair to him that these people were so suddenly and horribly struck down when all they were doing was trying to go to work. Though he was acting fast to try and help them, he was concurrently *feeling-with* them. Chuck and Mary described a similar experience of immediately feeling-with when they saw the people falling to their deaths. Even though radio-dispatchers were describing the jumpers as falling accidentally, Chuck and Mary both somehow knew this was no accident; these people had chosen to jump. Rather than being surprised at or uncomprehending of the choice that was made, the officers put themselves in the place of the victims and were, thus, viscerally and painfully aware of the rationale that must have been involved in facing such an impossible choice.

Edith Stein, a student of Husserl, developed a phenomenology of empathy that showed it not to be a sense that is constituted by consciousness but is, rather, a prior condition of the possibility of any such constitution (Sawicki, 1997). She believed that the human capacity to feel what she called "someone else's," the *knowin*g of the experience of an other, was not founded on the ability to make an analogical inference based on comparative perceptions but was, indeed, a "manner of appearing" in and of itself. In her view, the "reality of other people" is given to us immanently; it is foundational to the way we apprehend any experience. Individuals, in her thought, are not literally individual but are radically and constitutively connected. Individuality, therefore, presupposes community.

With this view, that the apprehension of the experience of another is one of the basic constituents of our apprehension of the world itself, we can readily understand the

experience of empathy the officers felt with the victims of 9/11. In fact, they would have had no choice but to empathize. Not to have done so would have required a distortion or subversion of that which was immanently present. We could therefore assume that any one of us, having been there, would have felt the same way, we would have immediately put ourselves in the shoes of those who suddenly had to choose the manner of their death. And we would have understood the necessity of making that choice.

But, for these police officers, it was also their *job* to understand the other's experience of vulnerability and suffering and to then take action to help. This value and this duty, in large measure, defined their identity. The officers' desire to help those in need could be seen fundamentally as an immediate response to the apprehension of the intensity of the difficulty of another. But it was a response that was compounded by the everyday anticipations inherent in the officers' sense of themselves *as* police officers. If, with Stein, we see empathy as being one of the ways in which we understand the world, rather than one of the things we experience within it, the desire to help appears as an immediate response to the apprehension of the experience of the other. In that moment, there is nothing to do *but* help. This was especially true for the officers. And yet, here they found themselves utterly helpless.

The police officers in this study can be understood to have empathized with the experience of the victims simply as a mode of their own being. However, their desire to help was further informed by their identification with their roles as officers of the NYPD. As I already discussed, the officers' thoughts and actions were significantly influenced by their identification with their roles as police officers and the attendant value of helping others throughout the ordeal. Such an identification provided structure and guidelines for

behavior amidst such chaos throughout the day. It seemed that this was a crucial factor in their ability to continue to function effectively. However, this very mandate, and indeed urge, to help others, held so strongly as a focus of personal and professional identity, was also the source of the officers' most profound vulnerability. Witnessing so many tragic deaths, and being powerless to help the victims, was particularly distressing for the officers because it was their job to help these people. It was horrible for all of the people who saw others jump to their deaths, or to see someone suddenly crushed or burned on the ground. However, most citizens who witnessed this did not typically consider themselves to be responsible for saving these very lives. It was horrible to see, but it did not reflect on the personal adequacy of the witness. For the police officers in this study, it was felt as a failure to live out their most basic and significant function, with the most tragic of consequences.

Facing Death

Each of the officers who participated in this study could very well have died on September 11, 2001. They were in or near the World Trade Center when the first tower collapsed, and all narrowly escaped with their lives. Two officers, Chuck and Andy, suddenly found the tower collapsing on top of them and thought they were surely living through their last moments of life. Mary was picked up by the force of the collapse and thrown across six lanes of highway before she had a chance to realize what was happening. However, after she landed, found herself unable to see or breathe and was hit with a piece of concrete in the back of her head, she thought she was experiencing her death.

Chuck and Andy's experiences of what they thought were their last few seconds of life were similar to one another. At first they began to surrender. They did not believe they could escape this fate, and were initially accepting of it. However, they viewed this manner of death as some sort of dishonor, and described it as dying "like a dog." Their thoughts then turned immediately to their loved ones. Andy's story was particularly touching in its expression of his love for his wife. She had miscarried their first child only days before. Andy thought of how she would now suffer his loss, and he knew that it would break her heart. Chuck also thought of his wife and child, of how much he would miss them. With these thoughts of loved ones, both men were filled with a powerful will to live and began to fight for their lives. They fought in various ways. Andy asked God for help, and began to roll back and forth in the tiny space where he was trapped, hoping to avoid being crushed with each roll. And Chuck suddenly remembered he had his firearm in his waist and screamed at himself to shoot out the window.

The subject of death is, of course, one of the great mysteries of human existence. All that can be empirically known about it, however, is that it does indeed happen to everyone. This we know because we see it happen to others, and logic prevails in telling us that the flesh cannot last forever. But, what is it like to actually face death? I am unfamiliar with any phenomenological studies about the experience of suddenly facing one's own death and surviving. There are studies about the experience of gradually coming to terms with one's own death, as in, for example, the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. And there are many philosophical and theological treatises on the subject of death itself and the supreme significance that it has for us as human beings. But what is the nature of the experience for those suddenly facing the end of existence in those very last

moments? It is not possible here, given the scope of the present research project, to identify and adequately discuss all of the constitutive factors involved in the experience of facing death for these police officers. However, I would like to note a few of the experiences they mentioned that seemed most salient.

First, they all indicated they felt that this was not a good way to die. This feeling did not seem to pertain to any physical suffering, but rather to a feeling that they deserved a more dignified death. Chuck specifically equated this feeling to his position as a police officer. He had given "twenty years of service" to the police department and to be crushed to death in the alcove seemed to somehow lack honor. My sense was that the officers felt helpless to save themselves, just as they had been helpless to defend the citizens whose deaths they had just witnessed. To die feeling helpless and vulnerable was not something the officers had ever imagined for themselves.

Mary spoke of feeling disoriented and having all of her senses robbed. Her experience was different than Chuck and Andy's. As soon as she saw the building begin to fall, she was thrown a good distance by the pressure of the collapse. Mary had less time than the others to realize what was happening to her. This contributed to her sense of confusion. Her description emphasized the fact that she did not know where she was, she could not see, and she could hardly breathe. She said the only sense she could rely on was hearing. Mary even questioned whether or not she was conscious, so profound was her lack of orientation. But it was not only her thought processes that were called into question. Mary suddenly found herself without her usual sense perceptions. To be dying, as she thought she was, without the basic perceptions that provided her typical mooring in life was profoundly unsettling. Irvin Yalom (1980) briefly touched on such an experience

when he discussed the distinctions that philosophers make between "my death" and death itself, or the death of others. He said, "What is truly terrifying about 'my death' is that it implies the dissolution of my world. With 'my death,' the meaning giver and spectator of the world dies, too, and is truly confronted with nothingness" (p. 221). Mary was indeed experiencing the dissolution of her world, in very concrete terms. It was not "nothingness" she remarked upon, however, but the discomfiture associated with losing the very appurtenances through which one can perceive, or make meaning out of, anything at all.

What stood out as particularly profound in listening to these stories was the fact that when Chuck and Andy thought of their loved ones, they felt a strong will to continue living and, thus, rejected death and fought to live. Andy wished to live not as much for himself as for his wife's benefit. In what may have been his last moments, he felt the heartache his wife would feel if she were to lose him. Interestingly, Chuck did not say he thought of the loss his wife and son would suffer, but how *he* would miss them. He did not want to be separated from them, and in the moment of his death, felt the sadness of their loss. That these two officers thought so powerfully of their loved ones calls to mind the statement by Martin Buber (1970), "In the beginning is the relation." Buber believed that human beings are not fundamentally constituted as separate entities, but that "Man is a creature of the between." The sharing of life, and the bonds of love, were of the most profound importance for these officers as they faced their deaths. Indeed, the thought of their loved ones brought about a change in attitude such that they railed against this premature death.

Finally, it is interesting to note what was absent in these accounts. None of the officers spoke of imagining what was going to happen next, that is, after they died. Their focus was still on the things of their lives. They did not want to suffer, they tried to orient themselves in their surroundings, they thought of loved ones, but they did not imagine anything beyond. None spoke of fearing death itself, or of whether there might be an afterlife. Though we can imagine what it might be like as we face death, perhaps it is not within the realm of possibility for us to be able to truly imagine what it is to die.

Persistence of the Significance of the Pre-Catastrophe World

Throughout the crisis, from the initial evacuation efforts to after the buildings fell, the officers continually concentrated on what they felt to be their primary duty as police officers, that is, to assist others. None of the officers decided to leave the site after they had survived the collapse of the first building, though to do so would have been reasonable. This certainly speaks to their dedication to the responsibilities expected of an officer of the NYPD. And yet, it is remarkable that they were able to continue to function within these expectations given the extreme circumstances and the personal vulnerability they were facing. Despite their fear, and the devastation all around them, they remained focused on the task set before them. Mary expressed this plainly when she spoke of entering the lobby of the World Trade Center after the crash of the first plane, "I'm unnerved, but I'm very focused on what needs to be done now…I was just focused on what's at hand."

It seemed that, in one respect, the officers focused on the present moment and the tasks that were immediately presented to them because they were suddenly faced with having to cope with such disastrous and unexpected circumstances that they did not know

what else to do. In this sense, it was a reaction to a set of conditions that were so extreme that they surpassed the officers' typical understandings of a regular succession of events. The officers therefore persisted in comprehending the circumstances as existing within the realm of previous experience, and their natural attitude remained constant. In the immediacy of the demand to cope with impending personal danger as well as the recognition of the larger potential consequences while concurrently living out the professional mandate to help those in need, the officers did not have the luxury of reflecting upon their experience and altering their interpretation of the world and themselves. Thus, they fell back on what they already knew, that they were police officers and their duty was to protect the public. Their identification with this role provided a framework for comprehending the situation and, thus, for taking appropriate "police" action.

One officer mentioned that she was surprised by her own behavior at times, especially her persistence in being concerned with the more mundane affairs of her pre-9/11 world. At several points throughout the day Mary found herself seemingly forgetting the enormity of the disaster around her, and indeed her own precarious position, and thinking of typical work-related or personal concerns. This was especially striking in the example she gave of being seriously injured after the collapses; with blood streaming down her face from the concrete lodged in her skull and a pane of glass jutting out of her back, and in need of serious care. Despite the gravity of her condition, Mary was intent on asking a fellow officer if he had received a work-related tape she had sent him. Though her concern was not particularly relevant at that point, it clearly maintained significance for her.

It appeared that Mary was not yet able to incorporate a realization of the disastrous nature of events happening around her into the framework through which she typically understood and made meaning of her life. That is to say, living through 9/11 was so calamitous that it was difficult to comprehend while it was taking place. The officers' entire world was being destroyed all around them. Their lives were in grave and immediate danger, and thousands of the people they were sworn to protect were dying horrible deaths. The world was suddenly changed, and in an uncertain, threatening, and extremely distressing way. If Mary had readily given up her hold on the significance of things that mattered up until that moment, it seems, there would have been an emptiness where meaning had previously been. For her, to abandon the significance of former priorities would have left her without a foothold or grounding in this new terrain. Thus, she held fast to the world she had known, and with this she was able to maintain a continuity of experience.

Bravery: Conscious, Decisive Action in Spite of Fear

All of the officers in this study could certainly be said to have acted with honor and bravery on September 11th, 2001. They each conducted themselves professionally and selflessly as they carried out their duties throughout the day. After their initial response to the scene, and their help with evacuation efforts, any one of them could have fled in order to save their own lives and would not be faulted for it. But, they stayed. Chuck discussed his decision to stay, and his sense of personal pride in this decision, most explicitly. He talked about the harrowing experience of having narrowly escaped death during the collapse of the first tower, and of the urge he felt afterward to flee the scene of horror and threat to his life. Despite his heroic actions that eventuated in saving the lives

of perhaps thirty other people during the collapse, his greatest sense of pride in his personal conduct came from his decision to then remain at the site in order to continue helping others. It was this act that took the greatest courage and self-control. He made a conscious decision to continue in the conduct of his duty as a police officer in spite of his fear and emotional distress.

Andy told a story of controlling his urge to put his own safety before that of others that also occurred after the collapse of the first building. He was just about to enter a highschool near the site when the second tower began to fall. The students were being evacuated, and it did not seem to Andy that they were cognizant of the potential danger they were in. It was interesting that in the story Andy told he compared his urge to flee to a humorous episode of a situation-comedy called “Seinfeld.” In this episode, one of the characters, George Costanza, is attending a child’s birthday party when a fire breaks out. He runs out of the house, knocking down a clown and running over the children in order to save his own skin.

In choosing to compare his visceral urge to save himself rather than help the students to this fictional comedic story, Andy highlighted important aspects of his experience. He used the story to emphasize the intensity of his own fear. He was so frightened, particularly in light of the fact that he had just narrowly escaped death in the collapse of the first tower, that his instinct was to disregard his responsibility toward others and run away. It may be that some of Andy’s sense of humor about this arose from the disjunction in his experience of the way he was “supposed” to feel and act as a cop, and the way he really felt and had the urge to act. As a cop, he did not think he was supposed to feel panicked and alarmed, but should be calm and confident in all circumstances. In

this instance, his ability to live up to his idealized persona as a police officer was called into question, and he laughed at his very human urge. His self-perception in that instant was that he was more like George Costanza than John Wayne. The humor also seemed to lay in Andy's recognition that to push the students aside in order to save himself was out of the question, even absurd. Though the urge was there to put his own safety before that of the students, to act on that urge was so unthinkable for Andy that it was laughable.

The experience of the officers in overcoming their fear and choosing to stay and continue to help others is notable in one respect for the absence of rumination involved. It was as if the urge to flee and the choice to overcome that urge appeared simultaneously. The officers *knew* what the right course of action was, and they chose it immediately. That is not to say it was an easy choice, but it was not a choice made only after much deliberation. Max Sheler postulated that courage was a matter of taking actions that reflected the moral values held by the actor. This was to be differentiated from the traditional "moral ought-to-do" which was expressed in the notion of perfunctory duty and obligation. Rather, as Asarian (1981) asserted in his phenomenological work concerning courage, Scheler understood that "a genuine moral action must hold a core quality of spontaneity to constitute a true ethical action. Duty without choice and spontaneity repeats the pregiven prescription and lacks the uniqueness and responsibility necessary for authentic ethical conduct" (Asarian, 1981). In light of this view, we see that the choice the officers made to stay on the scene and continue helping was a spontaneous choice, made with free will, and therefore was a true act of courage. Of course, their obligation to help others as NYPD officers was a contributing

feature of their decision, but considering they had already performed this duty admirably, they could certainly have chosen to put their own safety first now.

<u>A Traumatic Rupture in the Fabric of Taken-for-Granted Existence Leading to a Sense of Unreality</u>

When describing the scene of devastation after the towers fell, the officers found themselves somewhat at a loss for words. They seemed to feel their descriptions were not adequate, or could not effectively convey what they saw and experienced, that is, the dramatic difference in their world. They all repeatedly used terms such as, "unreal," "surreal," and "eerie." And they frequently appealed to my own knowledge base or possible experience in hopes that they would not have to describe something so far beyond ordinary experience. Chuck spoke of the scene as being like a black-and-white movie, one he was featured within. And Andy said, “You just couldn’t believe this was Manhattan.” The officers’ struggle to adequately convey their experience of the surroundings indicated that they perceived a sudden and dramatic "otherness" to the immediate environment that spoke to their very comprehension of themselves and their world.

Both Freud and Heidegger spoke of the experience of the “uncanny,” translated from the German “unheimlich,” or “unhomelike.” Such an expression conveys the sense of suddenly finding oneself in unfamiliar psychological territory, without the typical congruencies and givens that provide familiarity and comprehension. It is what happens when the unbroken and coherent appearance of the everyday world is disrupted. The officers became confused, frightened, disoriented. All that was certain was threatened and the structure of normal life gave way to something new. Of course, in a situation as extreme as 9/11, the sudden loss of the feeling of being at-home was so profound that the

officers could not even find words to describe it. The world was now something they hardly recognized, and, thus, it did not seem real. All the familiar trappings of normalcy were gone; the enormous towers, the streets, the sunlight, the idea of death as abstract, the feeling of assurance that the world was generally good and that life would proceed according to familiar patterns and expectations.

The officers' struggle to describe the scene of devastation, to convey the impact of such a radically changed landscape and world, highlights the question of whether language gives voice to experience or if it is more fundamentally creative of our very experience of ourselves in the world. These officers found themselves at a loss for words. They seemed to want to be able to share, in all it's devastating newness and intensity, just what their environment was like now, how their world appeared to them. But they did not know how. And, in their efforts, we see that they did not trust language to convey the enormity and particularity of their experience. In Ricoeur's work on language and interpretation, he stated that an event in one person's experience cannot be transferred whole to another person. However, we can communicate the *meaning* of our experience. Experience remains private, but its meaning can become public. What we see in the officers' difficulty to describe their experience is, at the very least, the profundity of the experience itself, and the sudden strangeness and unfamiliarity of their home.

A Particularity of Experience that Could Not be Shared or Understood by Others

It seems to be common among those who have lived through traumatic and disastrous events that they feel the depth and singularity of their experience cannot truly be understood by any person except one who actually lived through it with them. That is,

those who were standing right next to them when the event happened. No matter how many others witnessed people jump to their deaths on 9/11, or narrowly escaped death themselves, the officers in this study did not find comfort in sharing their stories with those who had experienced such a similar fate, nor did they feel a bond with them. It was only in sharing their emotional experience with those who knew exactly what they knew, those who had lived through precisely the same ordeal, that the officers found comfort. Chuck said, “And everyone here, depending on who you are, went through a different thing. But, nobody can understand what we went through that day because it’s incomprehensible.”

Chuck and the other officers said they frequently encountered people who wanted to talk about their experiences on 9/11. They all described social interactions wherein the person might have “meant well” but made statements to the effect of, “I know what you went through,” which struck the officers as impossible and even alienating. This phenomenon, an isolating feeling of radical otherness in communicating with those who wished to find shared commonality, can be understood in part through Heidegger’s analysis of discourse as the primordial way in which Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is disclosed (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Heidegger said that it is through discourse that we “articulate the intelligibility” of our Being-in-the-world. Such an articulation goes beyond a mere communication of ideas and content. What is fundamentally addressed in discourse is the “disclosedness of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world,” a revelation of it’s ownmost-potentiality-for-Being. The most fundamental and important aspects of our Being-in-the-world are implicit in any discourse, and allow for authentic disclosedness and understanding.

However, our everyday way of talking and hearing is referred to by Heidegger as "idle talk." Being generally absorbed in the everyday world, and having been born into a language that can be said to be a repository of the way things always and already have been expressed and interpreted, we are inclined toward an "average understanding and intelligibility" of ourselves and others. "Idle talk" can be said to draw the hearer "only to that which is 'said-in-the-talk as such'" (White, 1994). As human beings, we share "common understandings" and, as Heidegger (1927/1962, p.212) says, "hearing and understanding have attached themselves beforehand" to that which is said. We hear too quickly and understand too easily, becoming fascinated with the story and wishing to forge a bond with the speaker. Because of this, the more fundamental nature of what the person's discourse is about, the disclosedness of and encounter with their Being-in-the-world, remains unheard. Because our everyday way of expressing ourselves is infused with "idle talk," our language fails us when we try to convey a depth of experience that falls outside of our heretofore taken for granted world. The effort to express something existentially profound can be akin to showing someone a snapshot of a sunset. It just doesn't capture the experience.

The police officers in this study have quite a story to tell. But the facts of it, even the revelations of emotional vulnerability, leave something unspoken. What is not heard by the casual listener to these stories is the radical encounter the officers had with the ground of their Being-in-the-world. Such an encounter is an experience that, in most cases, our discursive ability fails to be able to communicate. The officers were, thus, left to struggle to express the profundity of their experience by relying on a language and discourse that was inadequate to the task. And all the listener can really do, in attempting to understand

and convey support in such an instance, is to respect and validate the singular and inexplicable nature of the experience.

In his book, I and Thou (1970), however, Martin Buber discussed the possibilities for “a full sharing in being.” He felt human beings longed for and, indeed, could achieve deep and authentic forms of connection. He spoke of an “I-Thou” mode of being in relationship and said, “The *I* is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes.” According to this view, it is indeed possible to fully engage with another human being, to truly understand and “be there” with them, without pretense and even without words.

According to Burston (1998), Buber believed that an essential precondition for an I-Thou relation was a recognition of and respect for individual differences. As Burston explained it, “Sameness, equivalence, identity, and so on, nullify relatedness. They do not create harmony, but a kind of shared monologue, a flight from authenticity on the part of both participants that invariably becomes tedious and unfulfilling.” It stands to reason that what the officers recoil from in their conversations with those who wish too readily to understand them is the very lack of recognition of their new condition of difference. The story they tell is too quickly taken as understandable, even common. But their experience, as Chuck said, is “incomprehensible.” Perhaps so, for those who wish to disavow its depth, singularity, and mystery. But, as Buber said in his book, Pointing the way (1957), “What the most learned and ingenious combination of concepts denies, the humble and faithful beholding, grasping, knowing of any situation bestows. The world is not comprehensible, but it is embraceable: through the embracing of one of its beings.” The experience of these police officers is, then, not comprehensible but it is embraceable.

Those who can hear the story while standing apart from it, and give recognition to the complexity and individuality of it, can in so doing "embrace" the Being, the whole person that is before them. Many people who want to hear these stories do not take such an attitude, but those who were actually *there* do. Consequently, the officers did not trust the discourse of others, and, in contrast, those people who shared the lived horror of the tragedy formed a kind of discursive bond.

Making Meaning out of the Deaths of Innocent Others and Coming to Terms with Having Survived

None of the officers who participated in this study mentioned feeling guilty for having survived when so many others perished. The only officer who expressed remorse over any choice or action was Andy, who recalled being rude to someone he was trying to evacuate who ultimately was unlikely to have survived. However, each officer did discuss, without prompting, the ways in which they came to terms with the fact that they had been spared. For Andy and Chuck, their belief system included the view that there was a purpose for their lives to continue on. They believed their lives were saved in order to ensure assistance for unknown others in the future. At the time of our interview, Andy had just become the father of a new baby girl. He spoke of his belief that he was spared on 9/11 because it was possible he would go on to save other lives, and because it was his destiny to have a family. But it did not stop there. He thought that his daughter, or another child he might have, was likely to save someone else's life in the future. And Chuck spoke of his hope that those he saved would go on to save others. He explained his feeling that it was of particular value to save the lives of other rescue personnel because they were likely to, in turn, go on to save other lives. Indeed, this idea was confirmed for him when he was reacquainted with Mary, whose life had been saved by a

police officer who had only survived because of Chuck's quick thinking to shoot out the window in the alcove.

Though he did not say anything about incidents of regret during his initial recounting of his story, during our second interview Andy mentioned "feeling bad" about having yelled at one of the hotel guests as he was trying to evacuate them. This man was very heavy-set, and was not moving fast. Andy's sense of urgency to evacuate the guests was increasing and he was frustrated by this man's slowness. He said he yelled at him, with an unpleasant tone, to hurry out, and then turned to leave himself. A few minutes later Andy encountered the firefighters who told him to run because the building was falling. Andy felt sure the man he yelled at was dead, and he felt bad that he had yelled at him in what were his last moments of life.

Andy's feeling of remorse seemed to me to stem from his recognition that the man with whom he was frustrated was a human being whose circumstances, being heavy-set and therefore slow, dictated he be treated with more patience. Martin Buber believed that when a person remains troubled about some action or inaction on their part, what is needed is the restoration of a sense of relatedness to others, and, by implication, to themselves (Burston, 1998). He felt that to find peace with such an occurrence requires that one find the courage to rededicate his life in the direction of relatedness. It was clear that Andy's remorse had to do with what he perceived was a failure on his part to recognize his responsibility toward this man, the responsibility to offer him patience and compassion. Of course, given everything Andy did for others that day, we could easily forgive him this one lapse. But, for him, remorse lingered. This does seem to support

Buber's view that guilt pertains to our condition of relatedness to others, and our felt responsibility to acknowledge their humanity and to care for them.

Responsibility for the care and well-being of others also revealed itself to be perhaps the greatest value held by the officers and, indeed, the source of the very meaning they found in life. The officers clearly held saving the lives of others as their highest ideal. Such an ideal was made manifest when they chose to stay on the scene and help evacuate civilians. Mary even continued in her efforts to help others when she was seriously injured. And this same value provided the officers with an explanation for their having survived when so many others perished. They felt they had a purpose to serve in life, one that involved continued service to humanity. Chuck called it the "ripple effect" and saw his survival as having a beneficial consequence for the greater good; that is, those he saved would go on to save others.

Again we see that relatedness, being in the world with others, concern and care for others, was of the utmost importance for these officers. It informed their sense of themselves as police officers to begin with, which then colored the whole of their experience of themselves as individuals and as members of the NYPD. Their duty as police officers, and their empathy as human beings, spurred them to continue to help save lives on September 11, 2001 despite their personal vulnerability and danger. It was also the source of their greatest pain as they witnessed the death of so many innocents. And, as we saw, in what could have been the final moments for two of the officers, thoughts of loved ones acted to fill them with a will to live. Finally, in their efforts to come to terms with having survived, it shows itself again. The officers' continued survival served a purpose, to show compassion for and foster the care of others in the future. What

mattered most to these officers was their involvement in a community with others. In this shared humanity they found the meaning and purpose that sustained them in life, and brought them comfort in distress.

Conclusion

The police officers' identification with their roles as "members of the service" of the NYPD proved to be of fundamental importance to the way they interpreted the unfolding events, their conduct throughout the day, and the existential meanings they ultimately gave to their experience on September 11, 2001. The officers initially believed their handling of the crisis would fall within the usual parameters of the performance of their duty as they understood it. This view was informed by the "natural attitude" they brought to any call to duty. As NYPD officers they were accustomed to dealing with sudden distressing events, and expected themselves, and the police department as a whole, to be able to cope with this incident as they would any other.

The participants' confidence as officers proved to be helpful to them throughout the crisis, allowing them to respond appropriately in helping civilian victims rather than to fall prey to panic and despair. But their tireless efforts to help others despite the very real danger to their own safety appeared to be buttressed most significantly by their deep identification with the value inherent in the role of police officer; to protect and serve the public. All three officers took this value so seriously, and so much to heart, that they remained on the scene in order to tend to the needs of others even after they had nearly lost their own lives. The officers were shown to have truly dedicated their very lives to the service of others. With this, they found a purpose that directed their intentions and

actions on September 11, and secured a meaning for their lives that extended into the future.

The natural attitude of the officers, the typical anticipations that made up the horizon of their world, played a vital role in their experience. But this attitude was suddenly and dramatically disrupted. The officers' initial interpretation of events and their understanding of their subsequent duty was informed by their taken-for-granted anticipation of success in managing and coping with such a crisis. The officers' witnessing of innocent civilians jump to their deaths or burn to death on the ground, however, coupled with their discovery that the "accident" was indeed an intentional terrorist attack that extended beyond the city of New York, effected a sudden and disquieting shift in the natural attitude. The world that the officers had previously taken for granted began to change, and with this they became afraid. It was in this experience of a dramatic irruption in the usual givens and expectations of the officers' world that terror arose. All that they had previously accepted as given, including their sense of personal security, was suddenly threatened. And the dawning of a frightening and uncertain future filled the officers with a sense of dread.

But the officers did not immediately abandon the meanings they had previously taken for granted in their world. They persisted most notably in holding onto the value system that held ensuring the safety of others, and saving lives, as its highest ideal. And one officer continued to give the concerns of her pre-catastrophe world a priority, though they seemed unimportant given the extreme nature of the current circumstances. It seemed to me that holding onto the foundation that had previously made up her world allowed this

officer to see the world as maintaining a structure of meaning. If she had let this go too soon, there may have been nothing to replace it but fear and chaos.

The officers' pre-catastrophe understanding of their world, their previous natural attitude, changed so dramatically after the collapse of the first tower that they found it nearly impossible to describe. This new world was so unfamiliar, so horrible in its newness, so uncanny, that the officers' usual discursive practices failed to adequately convey its character. Not only did they have trouble describing it to others, but the officers also found the experience hard to grasp themselves. The world was so unhomelike that it did not even seem real. Even still, the officers exhibited a strong desire to give voice to what they had lived through, despite the difficulty in doing so.

Perhaps it was the existential profundity of their encounter with themselves as finite beings, and with their world as radically changed, that led the officers to make such an effort to describe their experiences. They were much more descriptive and forthcoming than I had expected at the outset of this research project. I had anticipated they would provide an account of their actions throughout the day rather than reveal the complex and rich details of their psychological and existential experiences. They seemed eager to talk about the wholeness of their experience of September 11, and it was my impression they longed to talk about it in a different manner than was typically expected of them. By that I mean the officers found themselves discussing 9/11 frequently, but the conversations left them with a feeling of alienation. The typical way they were called to speak of it had the character of being "idle talk" in the Heideggerian sense of the term, and so the contact they had made with the deep significance of their experience and their lives was covered over. The only people the officers then felt truly comfortable sharing their experience

with were others who had actually been there with them. Because those who had been there were understood to have shared in the same existential experience, it was only with these people that the officers did not have to struggle to explain themselves.

Finally, the most surprising and striking finding pertained to the central position that being in relationship with others played in the officers' experience of the events of September 11, 2001 as well as in the meaning they made of it once they began to move forward with their lives. The police officers in this study were guided in their actions on 9/11 by the great value they placed in being of service to others and in doing whatever they could to help save lives. When they found themselves in the position of being unable to help, and bore witness to the tragic deaths of so many innocent civilians, they felt great empathy for the suffering of their fellow human beings. The officers' empathic emotional pain was intensified by their felt responsibility to save these very lives. One officer even described this experience as being more difficult to bear than his own narrow escape from death. Then, during what could very well have been the officers' final moments of life, they thought of their loved ones. For two of the officers, the intensity of their feelings for those they loved filled them with a will to reject death and fight for life.

The depth of the officers' commitment to others, and their understanding of themselves as existing in a world with a foundation of a shared humanity, was brought to light most clearly in their discussion of the meaning they made of the whole of their experience on September 11, 2001. These officers shared a belief system that held helping others as its highest value. And they believed their lives had been spared in order to foster continued care for others in the future. What was surprising to hear in this attitude was that the officers hoped for and believed in the possibility of contributing to

the aid of many others, not just the few they may have had the good fortune to help. Chuck called this the "ripple effect" and said he believed those he saved would go on to save others in an ever-widening circle of care. It was remarkable that the officers' desire to be of service to others was so expansive.

It appeared to me that the officers' existential experiences of September 11, 2001 were initially informed by the meaning they made for their lives which was to come to the aid of others, were guided by this value throughout the day, and continued to be so guided at the time this research was conducted some two years later. This grounding of experience, so suddenly stricken and ruptured, was in fact maintained as a horizon of the officers' being in the world with others. In this they participated in a most significant sharing in humanity. The officers were willing to give their own lives to save the lives of people they did not even know. When two of the participants came face to face with their own deaths, it was the thought of those they loved that instilled a powerful will to live. And for another, as she lay injured, disoriented, and alone, believing she would soon die, her thoughts turned to the suffering of all those she believed were being killed at that same moment. Such care for others extended into an uncertain future, in the officers' beliefs that their lives held purpose in the continued fostering of aid for their fellow citizens.

When I decided to undertake this research project, it was my hope to be able to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning psychological trauma, particularly as it is lived by those whose job it is to be directly involved in situations of crisis and disaster. Having worked so closely with police officers in the aftermath of the tragedy on September 11, 2001, I saw a need for a greater understanding of the nature of such experiences for this particular population. There is a large body of research concerning

the etiology and treatment of symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. However, in reviewing this literature, I found little appreciation for the true existential complexity involved in the phenomenon of living through a catastrophically traumatic event in the course of performing one's duty. In addition, because a disaster of this magnitude had never before occurred on U.S. soil, the psychological response of police officers in coping with it, and the meaning they would make of it, was unknown.

This research has made clear that being a member of the culture of the police department was particularly significant for the participating police officers' experiences of September 11, 2001 as a whole. It was their duty as officers to respond to the scene in order to help save lives that day. But the officers had chosen to assume such a responsibility when they made the decision to join the NYPD. In fact, the desire to help others and save lives was noted by Chuck as the primary reason most officers chose to become police officers in the first place. It would appear, then, that the officers' dedication to the service of others was overdetermined. Their willingness to put themselves in positions of danger in order to help others was a personal calling, as well as a performance of professional duty. Because of this, the source of these officers' greatest distress was their inability to save the lives of those they witnessed perish. They were the ones who typically had the power to help others, but in this instance they found themselves helpless. Thus, I believe it is important for those who tend to the psychological needs of police officers to recognize the profound responsibility the officers feel to save the life of every suffering victim they encounter. For an officer, to find herself unable to help another can give rise to feelings of personal failure that may cut to the very core of her sense of identity and her understanding of her purpose in life.

I also feel that it is important for members of the mental health community to appreciate the complexity of police officers' identification with and relationship to the specific culture of the police department in other areas. The police department functions as a paramilitary organization, with a strict hierarchy and chain of command, and rigid rules for conduct and proper procedure. The officers who volunteered to participate in this study had a positive relationship to this structure. They were able to function effectively and successfully within it, and were provided with a source of stability and nurturance. Not all officers might find their affiliation with the police department to be as rewarding. They may feel unduly pressured to live up to the demands placed upon them, or feel that they are not always treated with respect and dignity. However it is taken up, we can see the importance of the individual officer's relationship to the structure of the organization. In addition, police officers often expect themselves to be psychologically strong, and impervious to emotional distress. This expectation can take the form of a cultural mandate, a "departmental" norm. Police officers expect themselves to experience the world a little differently than the average person, with greater psychological fortitude. Indeed, the police department functions as a particular culture, with its own norms and standards. It stands to reason that counselors would do well to approach their work with officers with the same cultural appreciation and sensitivity they would bring to bear with any population that was of a different race, religion, ethnicity or nationality.

Another finding I feel bears relevance for the psychological care of police officers concerns their natural attitude and the changes that were so suddenly and dramatically faced therein. The world that these three police officers took for granted was violently

disrupted on September 11, 2001. Everything they had previously taken as given, their safety, their efficacy as officers, the general stability of life began to crumble just as surely as the towers did. And the officers faced the ultimate vulnerability, their own death. The officers were suddenly cast into a world they did not recognize, one that was uncertain and threatening. But the officers maintained a continuity of experience and avoided falling into a state of despair by holding on to the ideals that had previously provided meaning for their lives. Victor Frankl said that in order to survive and grow as human beings we must find a purpose for our lives. But he also said that no person could determine that purpose for any other. These officers found their purpose in dedicating their lives to the service of others and in believing that their actions would have the "ripple effect" of helping those whom they might never even encounter. I believe that anyone who makes it their business to provide for the psychological care of police officers who have suffered such devastating line-of-duty traumas should not shy away from addressing the importance of finding meaning and purpose in life. It would seem that a counselor could even provide help for officers soon after they had survived a catastrophe by exploring the things of their lives that previously held significance for them and determining their continued relevance.

The findings of this research also point the way to other fruitful research that can, and I hope will, be done in this area. Each of the findings calls attention to a particular aspect of the officers' experiences that could be further analyzed. It was not within the scope of this project to explore each existential theme as fully as I would have liked, as it was my intention simply to determine a general structure of the experience of a few police officers in living through such a cataclysmic event. Indeed, as I discussed the findings in

dialogue with relevant literature, I felt that an entire dissertation could be written about each theme.

As well, while conducting this research, I found myself faced with an overwhelming amount of interview data. So much so that it was impossible to adequately explore and describe every significant psychological theme I discovered. For that reason, I limited the scope of my project to the officers' experiences on September 11, 2001 itself and did not explore their reactions in the aftermath. Even then I found it necessary to limit my analysis of the results to those that I felt were of the greatest existential importance. Naturally, someone else might find other themes to be of equal significance. And it would, of course, be worthwhile to examine the officers' psychological experiences in the days, weeks, months, and years that followed. The transcripts of the interviews I conducted are provided in the appendix in their entirety. There was also an additional participant whose story I did not use in my research and the transcripts of my interviews with him are also included. It is my hope that the data I collected will be used in future research projects. There is fertile ground there to explore a wide variety of important psychological experiences that were lived by these police officers.

I believe it would be of particular value to more fully explore the cultural context of the police department and the role this context plays in the experience of individual officers. The officers who participated in this study all happened to come from families with a history of involvement with the NYPD and strong ties to it. This fact likely contributed to their esteem for the NYPD. Also, during the officers' own work in the NYPD, their experiences were generally positive. I believe they felt comfortable volunteering to participate in part because of these positive feelings. Further, on the day

of the catastrophe they behaved in ways that they did not need to hide: in fact they had much to be proud of. That ultimate pride, even if not lived arrogantly, might have predisposed these subjects to participate in my research. But there are also those whose experiences on the day of the disaster as well as of the NYPD culture in general might not be as positive as the experiences of the subjects whom I interviewed. In addition, there are those who might fear repercussions if their feelings of emotional vulnerability were revealed. Thus, I believe a comparison of the various relationships that police officers have with catastrophic events and with their roles as officers could shed further light on the meanings officers make of a traumatic event in the line-of-duty.

When I began this project I anticipated finding some positive outcomes for the officers, a renewed appreciation for loved ones perhaps, or a reevaluation of the choices they made in life. But I also expected to hear more about instances of emotional distress, self-doubt, and possible guilt. As well, I suspected I might uncover hidden motives for their participation in the study, for glory or appreciation, even absolution. But what I found was four human beings who volunteered to participate because they felt that sharing their experiences might help me to learn something of value that could then be used to help others. It was my impression that they did not withhold any of their emotional vulnerabilities, nor that they unduly flattered themselves. In my capacity as a psychologist for the NYPD, I have met with and evaluated hundreds of police officers. My experience of them as individuals has been quite varied. Many officers are sent to see an NYPD psychologist because they are genuinely suffering and in need of help, but many are also referred because they have acted inappropriately in various ways either in their personal lives or on the job. I have come to feel that police officers are as varied a

group as any, and they cannot be easily stereotyped. Thus, when I began this research project, I did not know what sort of stories I might hear from my participants or what impressions I might have of their character.

My experience of the participating officers turned out to be quite positive. Again, they impressed me as having a genuine interest in sharing their stories in order to be of help to others in the future. I found a personal connection with each of the officers that I cannot deny. They each shared very tragic and personal experiences with me, and made themselves vulnerable in my presence. I found myself to be captured by their stories, and I empathized with them. Despite my affinity for the officers, I searched for implicit meanings in their accounts that might reveal more self-serving attitudes or behaviors on their part. Perhaps this was why I was so struck by their clear desire to help others. In a certain sense, it seemed these officers viewed the civilian population, during this crisis, as children who needed their assistance and protection. I discovered that these police officers experienced the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001 from a unique perspective that both intensified their distress and sustained the meaning they made of their lives. As police officers, they felt it was their responsibility to protect all the people of their city. To fail in that effort, and to experience the dissolution of the world as they knew it, constituted a personal tragedy. But the officers carried on in their efforts even as the world crumbled around them, and they were successful. They did save many lives that day, and to do so they put their own lives at risk. Indeed, this dissertation was a study in bravery.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:

New York City Police Officers' Experiences of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks: An Existential Psychological Study

INVESTIGATOR:

Cecile S. Irvine, M.A.
One Lefrak City Plaza, 15th Floor
59-17 Junction Blvd.
Corona, New York 11368
516-707-8314

ADVISOR:

Paul Richer, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Duquesne University
412-396-5074

PURPOSE:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate what NYCPD police officers experienced as a result of their having responded to the scene of the terrorist attacks on September 11. The purpose of this study is to better understand the particular experience of the police officer in the face of being called to deal with a large-scale catastrophe.

Because the events of September 11 are unique in this country's history, police officers' experiences of being involved in a tragedy of such a massive proportion have never before been researched. Unfortunately, our nation is now under threat of other such attacks happening in the future. Because

police officers are some of the first who are called to respond to catastrophic emergencies, it is important to understand what they undergo in order to help them cope with such events.

You will be one of three police officers involved in this project.

Description of Procedure:

I intend to use a qualitative method for this research study. The data will be descriptions of the participants' experiences. In order to access your experience we will have one or two interviews. Each interview will take 60-90 minutes. In the first interview you will be asked to describe in as much detail as possible your experiences on September 11 as well as your experiences since that time. This interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. We will use the written document in the second interview. The purpose of the second interview will be to allow for clarification and elaboration of what was said in the first interview, if such is necessary. Both interviews will be put together to form one document. All identifying information will be eliminated from the written documents.

These interviews will be conducted either at my office or at another place chosen by us both.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There is a risk that the interviews may bring up painful feelings about the events of and surrounding September 11. However, people often benefit from discussing their experiences in detail with a non-judgmental and informed listener. The experiences you share will be valuable in helping understand what police officers dealt with, how they felt and acted, and how they have made sense of their experiences since that day. This information will help the mental health field provide more appropriate care for those in similar situations in the future. In the event that you have unresolved feelings as a result of these interviews, a list of counselors will be provided.

COMPENSATION: You will not be compensated for your participation. Likewise, there will be no fee for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your confidentiality and anonymity, as well as that of the people you talk about in your interviews, is guaranteed. The data that you provide may appear in the dissertation, and therefore published. However, your name and other identifying information will be changed and will therefore not appear in the published material. In addition, the names of other people you discuss, and further identifying information about them, will also be changed. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. All materials will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

Approval of NYCPD: Because the researcher is a staff psychologist for the NYCPD it has been necessary to get approval of the department in order to use police officers as subjects for this research. However, department approval does not give the NYCPD any access or rights to the material. This project is being conducted independently of the NYCPD and no data will be shared with the department. The names of participants and those they mention during the interviews will under no circumstances be released to the NYCPD. Further, if a research participant, or someone mentioned by the participant, should in the future have any reason to be involved with the Psychological Evaluation Unit, such as for a trauma-debriefing, fitness-for-duty evaluation or promotion evaluation, this writer will ensure anonymity and will remove herself from any involvement. The anonymity of participating officers and those they discuss is taken seriously and is guaranteed.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Mr. Eugene Mariani, Human Protections Administrator (412-396-5081).

____ __________________

Participant's Signature Date

____ __________________

Researcher's Signature Date

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL OF THE USE OF NYPD POLICE OFFICERS AS RESEARCH SUBJECTS

FROM THE POLICE COMMISSIONER OF THE NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

DATE February 20, 2002 | P.B.# 0839C(01)

CHIEF OF PERSONNEL TO: | OTHER#

C.O. Staff Services Section

XXXXX NECESSARY ATTENTION/ APPROPRIATE ACTION

____ INFORMATION & FILE

____ COMMENT & RECOMMENDATION

____ ADVISE WRITER

____ REPORT

____ RETURN BY ENDORSEMENT INDICATE ACTION TAKEN

____ PREPARE REPORT / REPLY FOR SIGNATURE OF:

INDEX- APPROVAL FOR PSYCHOLOGIST CELIA IRVINE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AS A PART OF

RESPONSE DUE:

OTHER ACTION: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

NOTE: ATT: CO, OMAP

For L. Fuller
James H. Lawrence
Chief of Personnel

cc: CO, MEDICAL DIV

/lr

DATE: | #

C.O., Staff Services Section | OTHER#

TO:

____ NECESSARY ATTENTION/ APPROPRIATE ACTION

____ INFORMATION & FILE

____ COMMENT & RECOMMENDATION

____ ADVISE WRITER

____ REPORT

____ RETURN BY ENDORSEMENT INDICATE ACTION TAKEN

____ PREPARE REPORT / REPLY FOR SIGNATURE OF:

RESPONSE DUE:

OTHER ACTION:

cc:

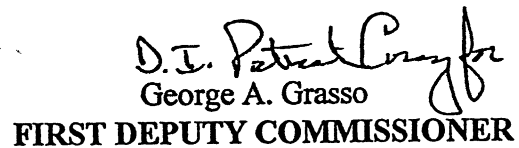
GEORGE W. ANDERSON
Inspector

Misc. 1903-K (Rev. 5-99)-Pent

1DC 029-2002-0002

SEVENTH ENDORSEMENT

First Deputy Commissioner to Chief of Personnel(ATTN: Commanding Officer, OMAP), February 19, 2002. Contents noted. Please note the Police Commissioner's **APPROVAL** of the request by the department Psychologist Level I, Celia Irvine, to conduct research as part of a doctoral dissertation in Clinical Psychology utilizing Department volunteers. In addition to normal safeguards to assure confidentiality and privacy, it is understood that all research will be conducted during off-duty time and that the stipulations contained in the Fourth Endorsement shall also be adhered to. Forwarded for your necessary attention.



George A. Grasso
FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

GAG/WA/lk
cc: Deputy commissioner, Strategic Initiatives

1DC 29-02-0002

FIFTH ENDORSEMENT

First Deputy Commissioner to Police Commissioner, February 7, 2002. Contents noted. Recommend **APPROVAL** of the request by department psychologist to conduct research with eight (8) volunteer members of the service for PHD dissertation regarding trauma experiences. Research will not be conducted on department time and stipulations contained in the 4th Endorsement will be complied with. Forwarded for your consideration.

APPROVED

FEB 1 3 2002

RAYMOND W. KELLY
POLICE COMMISSIONER

George A. Grasso
FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

GAG/PC/jwj

SIXTH ENDORSEMENT

Commanding Officer Police Commissioner's Office to First Deputy Commissioner, February 12, 2002. Please note the Police Commissioner's **APPROVAL** of the Fifth Endorsement and the request of Department Psychologist Level I, Celia Irvine, to conduct research as part of a doctoral dissertation in Clinical Psychology utilizing Department volunteers. In addition to normal safeguards to assure confidentiality and privacy, it is understood that all research will be conducted during off-duty time and that the stipulations contained in the Fourth Endorsement shall also be adhered to. Forwarded for necessary attention.

Lowell Stahl
Assistant Chief

LS:
cc: File (1)

IDC 29-02-0002

OMAP # 18
CAPPS # 13
MSU # 19
PB # 0839C
MD # 87

FOURTH ENDORSEMENT

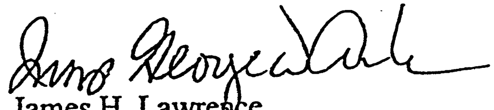
Commanding Officer, Office of Management Analysis and Planning to First Deputy Commissioner, February 1, 2002. Contents noted. This project may yield some worthwhile information for the Department. Having increased knowledge about the way in which the mind processes and copes with trauma may help the Department more effectively deal with and treat psychological trauma which can so adversely affect our members. It is, therefore, recommended that the request be approved with the following stipulations: (1) before conducting this research, all related approvals from the Investigative Review Board for Research on Human Subjects at Duquesne University must be sent through channels to the Office of Management, Analysis and Planning; and (2) once approved by the University, a copy of the approved prospectus as well as the completed dissertation must be sent to the Office of Management, Analysis and Planning with an Executive Summary of important points for the Police Department. Submitted for your consideration and approval.

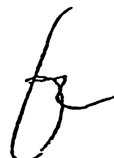
Joanne Jaffe
Assistant Chief

RECEIVED
2002 FEB -4 A 9:48
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

<u>3rd Endorsement</u>

Chief of Personnel to Deputy Commissioner, Policy and Planning, December 4, 2001. Contents noted. Psychologist Irvine of the Psychological Evaluation Unit wishes to use a small number of volunteers from this agency as part of a trauma study which will fulfill a requirement towards her Ph.D. Identities and information gathered will be kept confidential. Forwarded for your comments and recommendations prior to decision on approval. For your consideration.





James H. Lawrence
CHIEF OF PERSONNEL

JHL:kff

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
02 JAN -8 14 06

2nd ENDORSEMENT

Commanding Officer, Medical Division to Chief of Personnel, November 16, 2001. CONTENTS NOTED. In order for Psychologist Irvine to fulfill the requirement necessary to receive a Ph.D, in clinical psychology, she is requesting to use a small number of volunteers from the NYPD to participate in a trauma study. The participates in the research study will be anonymous and all information gathered will be kept confidential. Recommend Approval. For your CONSIDERATION.

for SJ Piccune

Michael A. Faranda
Captain

IP

1ST ENDORSEMENT

From Director, Psychological Evaluation Unit to Commanding Officer, Medical Division, November 15, 2001. Psychologist Level I Celia Irvine is a member of the staff of the Psychological Evaluation Unit. She has been working at this Unit since September, 2000. She is also beginning to work on her doctoral dissertation and is interested in doing research on trauma as experienced by police officers. Ms. Irvine is requesting permission to employ a small number of volunteers from NYPD. Recommend this request be forwarded through channels for consideration.

Arthur Knour, Ph.D.

AK:gf

Arthur Knour, Ph.D.
Director
Psychological Evaluation Unit

POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF NEW YORK

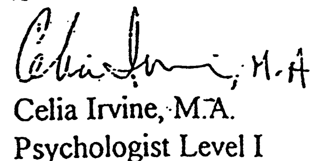
November 15, 2001

From: Celia Irvine, M.A., Psychologist Level I

To: Director, Psychological Evaluation Unit

Subject: **REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH USING NYCPD OFFICERS AS SUBJECTS**

1. In order to fulfill the requirements necessary to receive a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology I must conduct an original research project and write a dissertation based upon it. The topic of my research is an investigation into the way the mind processes and copes with trauma. For this project I had planned to specifically focus on police officers' experiences of line-of-duty critical incidents. The experience of trauma is particularly relevant for police officers as they are faced with it continually in the course of doing their job, yet they are called upon to continue to protect and serve while coping with oftentimes intense emotional distress. The ultimate goal of this research is to gain greater understanding of the experience of such trauma in hopes of facilitating effective interventions for those affected by it. This project is particularly relevant in the wake of the catastrophic events of September 11th and I now plan to focus my research on that event in particular. I would like to request permission to conduct this study using a small number, no more than eight, of NYCPD officers who volunteer as subjects. This research will be a qualitative analysis which seeks to understand, in great depth and detail, a certain phenomenon as a few individuals experience it. The method of the study, namely, analysis of interview material recorded during one or more meetings with participants, is subject to approval by the Investigative Review Board for Research on Human Subjects at Duquesne University before any contact with participants will be made. This board will ensure that subjects' participation in the research will be anonymous and confidential and that appropriate steps will be taken to provide subjects with counseling if necessary. I am looking forward to conducting this study and am confident that it will prove to be of benefit to the NYCPD. Thank you for your consideration of my request.



Celia Irvine, M.A.
Psychologist Level I

CI:gf

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS WITH STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This appendix contains the transcripts of the interviews with each participant in their entirety. They are ordered to correspond with the order in which I presented the narrative account of each officer's experience in the Results section. The transcript of the interviews with the participant whose data was not used is included last.

"ANDY"

On September 11, 2001, Andy was 28 years old and had been a police officer for six months. He was assigned to patrol the area that encompassed the World Trade Center towers, and was one of the first officers to arrive on the scene. The first interview was conducted in November 2002 and the second in March 2003.

R: First I'd like to explain to you what the goal of this research is. Um, basically, what I'm trying to do is study line of duty trauma for police officers. Um, but, that's more in general and I want to know more about what that experience is like, just what it's like to be a cop dealing with uh, a trauma, or in this case, a catastrophe, in the line of duty. Now, this kind of research just looks at a very few people's experience in depth and it's called descriptive research. So what we do is have you describe what your experience was and then I take that and look at it and see what I can find out. Um, so that's really all there is to it. So what I'm asking you to do today is to talk to me about what you went through on September the 11th, um, and I'm gonna ask you to describe it in as much detail as you can muster up. So if you can think of it as if, um, um, as if I'm doing a documentary, say, about your experience that day, sort of, without the benefit of any visuals.

S: Yeah, right, fine.

R: Say there's no TV. That, so that we could, so that somebody hearing, and when I transcribe it so that somebody reading this in the future who has no idea what this was about can really understand what you went through that day, what it was like to be you. That's what I'm looking for. What I really want to know is what you experienced on September the 11th and how your life has been impacted since then. OK? So if you just want to start anywhere you feel is appropriate and just tell your story...

S: You want me to start from that morning, then, I assume...or from at least the moment of the first plane striking.

R: OK

S: I was approximately one block away from the World Trade Center, on that morning. I was in uniform outside my car filling out a traffic accident report. Um, as I was approaching one of the first motorists, who was a taxi driver, um, walking up to him just about to say to him, "What happened here?" as I usually do. I take one driver and my partner takes the other driver. As he was walking away with the other driver I grabbed the taxi driver just about to say to him "Excuse me sir, are you ok? Now what happened

here?" And just as the first word was about to come out of my mouth you heard the explosion. And, being an officer, I knew that it was, first of all working in lower Manhattan you hear unusual noises all the time. And being in uniform you try not to jump up. You know like, not to use a harsh word or anything, but you don't want to look like a sissy, basically. You know, you're in uniform you don't want to jump, like, "What was that?" So when I heard the noise, I knew it wasn't a dump truck or something like that, it just sounded a little bit more…serious. So I just stopped and looked at my partner and he actually had witnessed the plane strike. So when I looked at him I just said, "What the hell was that?" and he looked back up at it and he goes "I think a plane just hit the World Trade Center." So I said, you know, I'm sure we can be frank here, I said "Get the fuck out of here." And I peeked around the corner, and I saw all these people, I don't know "all" but 40 or 50 people rushing towards us, civilians rushing towards us. Putting their hands over their head to cover themselves and looking up at the same time. So I just followed what they were looking up at, which was the top of the Trade Center, and I just saw this massive explosion, just this fireball coming out. And I said, "Holy shit!" I looked back at my partner, and all these civilians are running at us, saying "Officers, officers a plane just hit the World Trade Center, a plane just hit" and we were like, "Yeah, we know we know. Just get outta here, get outta here." So just instinctively, since I saw those people running away from it, I knew that there must be people hurt over there so I started running down the block, which was Vesey Street. And I said, at this point it was a half a block away from me. So I realized...

R: So you're running towards...

S: I'm running towards the Trade Center. I took maybe 4 or 5 steps and I realize I'm not supposed to leave my partner. 'Cause, I was only out of the Academy maybe 6 months when this happened, so stuff like that was still fresh in my mind, never leave your partner. So I stopped, I turned around and yelled to him. I said, "Get in the car, turn around and meet me up there. Meet me in front of the Trade Center." He said, "Ok, sure." Just to sum up his role in this, by the time he got in the car and tried to make a u-turn, he said there were hundreds of people just flooding the street. He couldn't get the car down the street. And then once he.. *could... inch..* his way down, there was just debris all over the place. So that's how I got separated from him...whereas he is not involved in any of my further experiences now...So he's outside of the belt, he's out of the picture now. Also safe though, because nothing happened to him.

R: But you didn't know that at the time.

S: No, I'll explain that later..I, I thought…that, he was gone. So, once I said that to him, I turn around I started running towards West , the West Side Highway, Vesey and the West Side Highway is the corner of Tower 1. So..

R: Tower 1 is the first tower that was hit...

S: Actually, Tower 2, I'm sorry, yeah, Tower 2, the first tower that was hit, yes..

R: OK,

S: …which is the North Tower... so.. .As I ran towards the block, towards the Trade Center, as I got closer and closer I saw that the West Side Highway was covered with debris, with fire, things on fire. I also notice there's no cars coming. At that time of the morning, West Side Highway is packed with motorists. It's rush hour. It's 9 o'clock, I think it was 9:00, 8:50 in the morning this happened, 8:45 a.m. And I notice there's no cars coming anywhere. So I started to slow down, 'cause I noticed that there was, it didn't really seem like there was anything going on.. just quiet as can be.. just very quiet. And I slowed down and I just started walking.. and as I'm getting closer and closer to the West Side Highway I'm noticing that the things on fire are actually people. So, I started jogging again. I was just, "Holy shit, I, I think those are people."

R: Mm,hmm.

S: And I walk now, I just, there's nothing I can do. I came upon the first person, on fire, was dead. Came upon another person, on fire, was dead. Came upon another lady, who was sitting,.. just sitting Indian style in the middle of the street... all .. totally naked 'cause all her clothes were burnt off. Her, she was a Spanish lady, her skin was like almost pink. Her hair was singed, singed off, crying hysterically, her face was burned. And I grabbed her under the arm and I said, "Come on, you can't stay here." There was a walkway, which went across the West Side Highway for pedestrians to go across the highway since it's so busy with cars it's easier to walk over it. So, you can get sheltered underneath that, it was only a few feet away. So I picked her up, or I tried to pick her up under her arms. She wouldn't get up. I said, "Come on you can't stay here, it's not safe, get underneath the…" I can't remember what they called it, I think it was just called the walkway. And I said, "Get under the walkway." And she wouldn't budge. I'm saying, "Come on, come on you can't stay here". So then I'm looking around, I'm trying to survey everything else that's going on at the same time, and I notice, I see more and more people on fire, but I see people coming out who are alive but yet you can see they're seriously injured. So I let her go. I said, "You have to get over there. I have to go, but, get out of here." A gentleman who came out of the building, he knew her and he grabbed her he said, "Come on." He called her by her name. He said, "Come on we have to get out of here." She walked away with him underneath the walkway. So then I walked up to the lobby of the Trade Center now. And there was shattered glass everywhere. Glass, fire. The,uh, smoke was pouring out of the lobby. And I couldn't understand, if the plane hit so many stories high, I think 50th it was, somewhere around there. If the plane hit 50 stories up, why is the lobby on fire? I couldn't see the connection. So I was a little hesitant to go in, but I was like, well, I don't know what it is, it happened up there, things must be alright down here, so let me go in. I'm peeking around and the door, the actual glass door was a little further away, maybe about 20 yards away from me. But, all the walls were glass and they were all blown out. So to get in I didn't have to find the door I can just literally walk right through the wall. And I'm standing there, I'm trying to just look around before I walk in there, to see how safe it is, 'cause it was so smoky you really couldn't see that well into the lobby. You couldn't see that far across I should say. And as I'm standing there I'm looking and I'm yelling "Anybody in here? Anybody need

help?" Pieces of debris started falling a foot away from me, and I just, that's, I guess I could say I became a sissy. That's when I just ran in. I just jumped. I was like "holy shit."

R: You ran in where?

S: Into the lobby, because I realize I can't stay here, there's, there's debris coming down.

R: You were outside and there was debris falling down around you. So you went in to seek shelter.

S: Yes. I didn't think it was safe to go in, then once the debris started falling next to me I realized I have no choice, I can't stay here. If I take a chance to run across the West Side Highway that's a lot of open space with no shelter, I'm taking a chance. "Cause it was falling behind me, too, in the middle, the middle of the West Side Highway. And I said the roof is right here, let me get inside here, it's safer. So I walked in there, and I saw bits of fire again. And I walked across, uh, it was only a few feet because it was so smoky, and I saw two more people on fire. One person who caught my attention, well, more than the other, was because this lady was still alive. And her legs were on fire. So, as she's, she's lying on her back with her hand, her hands are out in front of her face, like this. (He gestures with hands up by face, palms out.) And she, she sees me, 'cause I look face to face with her to see if she was alive, and saw her eyes were open and she was breathing. And all her, same as the other woman, she was naked, all her clothes were burnt off of her, blood pouring out of her mouth. Um...barely breathing, very short breaths like (imitates sound of her breathing), like wheezing almost. So, um I said, I just ran up to her and said, "Are you alright?" Obviously, just a question you just throw out there. And she's going, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." And I'm looking down at her legs and I see her legs are on fire. And I'm thinking to myself this lady is so messed up right now...that...she doesn't realize her legs are on fire. She can't, her pain is so bad, or she's so numb right now, or in shock, that she just, all she knows is that she can't breathe. She doesn't even realize her legs are on fire. So I jumped back and I looked around the lobby real quick for some, I knew I had to get the fire out on her, if she's going to live I have to put the fire out. So I'm looking around the lobby, its like, there has to be some sort of curtains, 'cause it was early September I was wearing a short-sleeved shirt, I had no jacket. I needed something to put the fire out. I just looked around, did a 360 real fast looking around for some kind of curtains, some kind of, some kind of linen, cloth, something to put the fire out. Didn't see anything. So I knew I had to use my shirt. So I took off my gun belt, I dropped it, ripped off my uniform shirt, put the fire out on her legs. As I'm putting the fire out I'm saying "OK, you're gonna be alright, you're gonna be alright. It's out, it's out." She just kept going, "I can't breathe. Help me, help me. I can't breathe." So I grabbed my radio, I just started yelling, "I need a bus here, I need a bus. In the Trade Center." Which probably went unheard because there was so much going on over there. I stepped back, I put my gun belt back on. The fire was out, on her legs, she was still breathing. I peeked outside and saw a fire truck pull up. So I ran outside, not ran, I kind of like put my hand out of the doorway, or what used to be the

doorway, and waved the firemen in "Over here, over here." They came in, there was no EMS with them, it was just firemen. They came in, they had, since they didn't know how bad the, uh, the damage and the injuries were either…they weren't prepared for this either. They came in literally with their EMS equipment, you know, which was good for this particular woman. So I said, "This lady right here..." The other gentleman who I said, the other body, was a gentleman, he was dead. His whole body was engulfed in flames almost as if it had just happened. I mean, like, that second. Because the flames were still that high. On this woman you could see she had been on fire, but now it was starting to go out except for her legs. The other gentleman, his whole body was still on fire. And I remember him very vividly as well. Because even though he was engulfed in flames, I can still see his face, he had a business suit on. He had on navy blue dress pants. He had on a light blue collared shirt, with a tie. He was a black gentleman wearing glasses. Seemed like a pretty big guy, too, like, fit, 6'4" or so, built, muscular though. And he was in the same position as her, he was on his back with his hands held out in front of his face. Almost as if he was trying to defend his face from the flames, or whatever was coming at him. But I just, I very much remember his face. And he had, same as her, heavy blood pouring out of his mouth. Since he was on his back the blood was all coming down his cheek and then down his neck and his shirt was drenched with his own blood. He, I knew he was dead. I mean you don't have to be a doctor to figure that one out. There was no, I'm not putting that fire out with just my shirt. So the firemen came in with, they had fire extinguishers. They put the fire out on him. They doused the female with the fire extinguisher as well, just to be safe. Before they touch her they want to make sure. So at that point, the firemen are there, this is a fire matter, obviously. So let me find out what else is going on. I said if these two people are like this in the lobby, inside it has to be even worse. So I said, and I know I'm still the only one here. No firemen have passed me yet. I'm still the first one here. Let me see what it's like inside there. So, and of course, this whole time not knowing that we're under a terrorist attack. Not knowing that there's a second plane coming.

R: What was that like? That 'not knowing'?

S: It wasn't scary at all. It was just my job at that time. It was a terrible tragedy. Terrorist attack vaguely, you know, kind of entered my mind. But, the one thing I said was, somebody really, talking about the FCC, somebody really fucked up. You know, I just figured that this pilot was given some kind of coordinates or something wrong, but it was just a terrible, terrible mistake... where he flew into this. That's also what I was hoping. You know, you didn't want to think that somebody just did this on purpose. But, you know, in light of everything that happened afterwards with the towers falling, you know, at this point, right now, you have to put all that out of your mind. At this point right now, to me, it was just a terrible accident. And this is the extent of it right here. The lobby and upstairs.

R: OK.

S: So, to me, it wasn't a big deal, going any further. It wasn't a big deal staying in the building. You know, people were saying, "You should have gotten out of there." It

wasn't a big deal to me. Because I just, it didn't seem like it was going to be any worse than it already was. It was terrible right now. You didn't think it could get any worse. So as I walked through the lobby, some civilians came up to me. Turns out they were the World Trade Center security. One of them was head of security. Since I was the first uniformed officer they saw they all ran up to me. They literally rushed me, with all this, "upstairs officer, this person, that person." I'm like "Whoa wait a second, what's going on?" A gentleman identified himself to me, said he was head of World Trade Center Security. He said, "We have a decapitated head on the 33rd floor. There's a gym on that floor. We need to recover the head." I said, "Alright, well, wait a second. Decapitated head sounds like the gentleman is dead." He said, "Yes, we need to recover the head for identification purposes." I said, "Alright, well, listen. He's dead, he's not going anywhere. I'm sure there's a lot of injured people who are alive that need first attention." He goes... I was writing it down in my memo book, I still have it, "Decapitated head, 33rd floor." Put my memo book back in my back pocket. I said, "Listen, ESU will go up there, FD, somebody, they'll recover the head. But right now that's not a priority. I'm not worried about recovering the head. There's gotta be other seriously hurt people." He said, "Ok, yeah, yeah." And he was on a radio, his radio was going off like crazy. So he kind of walked away from me, I walked away from him. Now at this point, more and more personnel were coming in. Fire department. No city police. Because this is Port Authority jurisdiction. There were several Port Authority uniformed officers in there. Also, as I found out later, a lot of the city cops could not get in the building because, as I stated earlier, the debris that was falling. You couldn't get in the building at this point. It was just so much, you know, a piece of glass the size of a quarter falling 50 stories is, could take your arm off, you know. So the police department barricaded off the West Side Highway so that nobody can actually get that close to the building. Which is why I never ran into any other city cops. And that's what I was looking for the whole time. I was like, I gotta find some cops. There's gotta be cops in here who need me to help them help everybody else. So, uh, I saw some Port Authority cops. They were directing people who were using the, 'cause there were no elevators now, everyone was coming down the stairs. And they were directing people out of the back of the building into the area where, um, where the sphere was. I don't remember what that area was called. But that golden sphere, the ball, right, it was right in the middle of the towers and I can't remember what that area was called, it was like the breezeway or something. They were directing people out that way. So I just joined in with them. You know, people were coming out hysterical, obviously, crying, screaming. Just telling people, "Calm down, you're out now, this is the first floor, just keep going that way, follow everybody outside and walk as far away from the building as you can." Ok, no problem. I was there maybe 5 minutes. I realized, alright there's really, I'm not really doing anything here. There's plenty of Port Authority cops here. I said, I gotta find my partner. I gotta, 'cause I still assumed he was coming in after me, he knew where I was. I just kept saying I have to find some city cops, there has to be somebody in here. So I kept walking through the lobby...ended up in the Marriott hotel, which is in between the two towers, Towers 1 and 2, it's connected. Ended up in there, and I saw several hotel guests sitting in the lobby with their bags, their hotel bags, their laptops, their suitcases. Just sitting there. And, I didn't really think it was a big deal then either. FD started coming in. And then the second plane hit. Heard a huge explosion, the building shook. And I wasn't even in the

Trade Center, I was in the building connected to it, but we shook. Some people lost their balance and fell to the floor. I thought that it was still the first tower just getting worse. I thought it was another explosion up there. I never knew it was a second plane. At that moment, I didn't know there was a second plane. So, you noticed, all of a sudden my radio starting jumping even worse than it was. You heard people screaming, "Another explosion, massive casualties, MOS down, 10-13, officer needs assistance, 10-85." Ten-thirteen was coming over most – "I got a 13, I got an officer down, officer down." And now that's, that was my priority. I said, I knew I had to come in here to help the police help the civilians. Now I'm in here and the police are hurt. So now I'm trying to find out where are these cops at? Where are they at? So I'm running around in the lobby and I'm saying, "Have you seen any city cops? Anybody in here hurt?" And they say, "No, everybody's fine in here. Everybody's fine here." So I was like "Alright." You know I don't know what's going on, so that's why I peeked out the window and I just saw, just, debris and, um, cars on fire. I didn't see any bodies. No people out there. So I knew, first of all, it wasn't safe to go out there. Second of all I didn't see anybody who needed any help. They either just died, got crushed by something, or it's barricaded off where the police aren't letting anybody out that way. So, originally when I saw the people who were sitting there, the hotel guests, I *was* going to escort them out of this front door here. Now that this just happened I knew, obviously we can't let anybody out that door. Have to find an alternate route. So I asked everyone, "Are you waiting for something?" And they said, "No we're just waiting to leave." I said, "You gotta get the hell outta here, come on, follow me." Maybe 10 people came with me, grabbing their bags and stuff. We came to a side door, which was Liberty Street. And you saw debris falling but it wasn't terrible, like, it was intermittent. So I said, "Alright, listen, here's what you're doing. Right across the street there's a little roof there." Actually it was another pedestrian walkway, 'cause now from where I originally came in, from the first tower I'm on the total opposite side, now the second tower. Now from walking through Tower 1, walking through the Marriot, I'm now all the way on the other side of where I originally came in. So I went from Tower 1 to Tower 2. So, uh, I said, "Soon as you leave this little space here," we were in a little walkway, "run across the street, don't look up, if you drop something" because they insisted on bringing their bags. I told everybody "leave your bags" and I became very honest with everybody, I said, "Soon as you leave this little walkway here you're running for your life. You realize that. You get hit with something you're dead. But this is your only way out. I would leave the bag if I was..." Because they had huge suitcases, the kind of suitcases that have the wheels on them that you roll. And they said, "No I need my bag, I need my bag." It was like, "Alright, hey, I can't make you not bring it, but, I'm just giving you my opinion."

R: Can you tell me, when you were having this conversation with them, was it, 'cause it sounds like it was sort of a leisurely conversation saying "You need to go, leave your bag." It's not like you're screaming and rushing.

S: No, it wasn't screaming at anybody. Like I said, I didn't know and neither did the guests know that a second plane just hit. So to me and to them it was still one plane and an accident. That was it. Nothing, nobody knew anything about the second tower, which we were actually closer to now.

R: OK.

S: We still thought that was all behind us.

R: I see.

S: So, I mean, like I said, I knew it was still a terrible thing. There were a lot of dead people. I can see outside how bad it is. But, to all of us, it was still, you have to get out of this building it's not safe. Collapse was never an issue. You just knew that you couldn't stay in the building though, you have to get out of here. So, uh, I saw the debris coming down, coming down a little bit more heavy now. So, um, two or three people got out, no problem, bring their bags. Then I start to kind of get a little more authoritative with people, because they would, some people, not stupid, just they want their personal belongings, you know, and you can see, I saw a couple people trip as they were running, debris fall right next to them. One person actually did drop their suitcase and debris fell on the suitcase as they went back to pick it up. That's when I started yelling at people, "Leave the bags, it's not worth it," you know, "just run as fast as you can, don't look up until you get across the street underneath that shelter." Some people still bring them. You know, I think I was calling them, I said, "You're stupid," I think, "You're stupid. Get out of here. Just go, run." Ten people, twelve people or so, they all got out. I went back to the lobby. More people were sitting in there. Same thing, just sitting there. Now I started to get a little bit more authoritative with people saying, "Come on let's go, what are you doing? Don't sit there. Let's go, you gotta get outta here." They were literally standing there with their hands in their pockets just looking, like, you know they're probably traumatized. It was terrible outside. You saw a lot of terrible...like I said there were cars on fire, there were cars overturned, crushed. But they were just sitting there, or standing there, you know. They didn't know what to do. You know, I'm not blaming anybody. It was a confusing time.

R: Mm,hmm.

S: So, I went back, maybe grabbed seven. I said anybody who's leaving the building, actually no, at this point I was telling everybody you have to leave the building. I made this trip maybe about 4 or 5 times. Each time, like I said, 10 or 12 people would come with me. Run them out one by one. Walk back to the lobby. Every time I come back to the lobby there would be more and more people there. I was, like, where are these people coming from? It just turns out, I was asking people, "Where were you?" People were just taking their time in the hotel. Packing their bags, getting ready, they're putting their watch on or whatever just making sure they didn't forget anything. And so now I started to get a little bit upset with everybody. I said, "What are you crazy? Don't you know what's going on? A plane just flew into the World Trade Center." They said, "Yeah, we know, we were watching it on the news." So I said, "Ok," (chuckles) "so you know what's going on. You gotta get outta here." People were there, I'd escort them out.

R: Now when you were escorting them out were you taking them all the way across to the walkway?

S: No, I would walk out, show them, I'd point them where you have to go. Like, if we were inside the lobby right here, this door is open, I would walk out a couple of feet and point exactly where they had to go. (Demonstrates) Then, once you leave this shelter, this room, you were vulnerable to anything hitting you. So, of course when I'm standing out there, I'm only standing there for a few seconds and I'm looking up the whole time. "Alright, you gotta go that way, don't look up. Don't look back for anything, you dropped it, just run across the street." I'd come back inside. I told them this is the only way out. You can't go back that way because that's where it's all coming from. I said, "You have to run." It was only, it was a block, it was, you know, 25 yards. This is the only way out. So they ran out that way. There was no problems. Like I said, one person lost their luggage. A couple of people tripped. They got up right away and made it across. In terms of escorting them out I was escorting them to the door, because if I would walk across the street every single time, it would take forever.

R: Right.

S: So,at this point it was literally, "Ok, go. Alright, you go. Alright, you go." People needed to be pushed, literally to be pushed, like, I had my hands on their back and say "Go." Some people were hesitant. I said, "This is it, you have no choice, go." Walk back to the lobby, more and more people are there. Eventually, they start to dwindle. This is only over the course of like 20 minutes. Once I would get people to the door, to escort them out, it would take maybe a minute. It was one after the other, "Go, go, go, go." Maybe an extra couple of seconds with someone who was a little hesitant. But, maybe 20 minutes this whole thing took. So I go back to the lobby. Now I see less people hanging around there. I see a lot of hotel security, people who work in the hotel, people who had the Marriott uniforms or pins on. So then I started asking, I was telling people "You gotta get outta here," and they said, "No I work here." So I said, "Alright." So I just started running around, not running, but walking at a fast pace around the lobby saying, "Anybody have to leave the building, come with me." And nobody came with me, nobody said anything. So I assumed, ok, these people are workers, they work for the hotel, they're not going anywhere. Alright, no problem. So now at this point, I wanted to leave the building. I said I'm not needed here anymore. I still gotta find my partner. I haven't seen any city cops since this all began. I have to find a way out of the building now. I wanted to go back...if I would have walked out the way that I was just escorting those people out, to get where I originally came in would have taken forever. Not just walking wise, um, because I'm like 7 blocks away now from where I started, 5 blocks away. But because of all the debris that's falling I would have to walk around the West Side Highway, through Battery Park City and come around. I don't want to do that. So I walked back towards where I originally came in, where the first plane hit. Now, that ended up being a blessing in disguise because as I was walking back that way, out of the Marriott, now back into the first tower, which had been hit first, I was told a second plane had hit, in the other tower, we're under attack. Now things jump to a whole new level with me. And I said, alright, this is really...this is...this is my worst fear, that this was

done on purpose. Being I was 28 years old at the time, Desert Storm really wasn't much of a, wasn't much fear in Americans hearts in '91 because there was no terrorism here, there was nothing here, it was all in Kuwait and Iraq. Um, wasn't really much of a memory of Vietnam, so this, something happening, happening here in the United States, never happened, you know, in my lifetime. So this was a little scary. Especially the way that, he was a fireman, the way he put it, "We're under attack." I was, like, "Wow." And the first thing that came to my mind actually was Pearl Harbor. You hear Pearl Harbor, attack, sneak attack on our soil. And also, in my mind, I said this is the beginning of a world war. Just from the atmosphere, the death that I had already seen. The World Trade Center is being, not bombed, but bombed kept coming to my mind. The World Trade Center is being bombed like this, attacked like this. I said, we're not gonna just clean this up and forget it, this is the start of a world war. And other people were using that phrase too, they said, "We are at war right now." It was just like "Holy shit, we're at war right now." Also, when I was told that a second plane had hit, we're under attack, "What else is coming? What else, is it going to happen again?" I remember in '93, they wanted these towers down. "They're still up right now, is there another plane coming? Is there a bomb in here someplace?"

R: So a lot of thoughts are running through your mind now.

S: A lot of thoughts, a lot. Now leaving the building had totally exited my mind. And now I'm, I'm looking around the lobby and I'm seeing it saying, "You know what, it all makes sense now." I mean it's, it's all just a matter of seconds, not like I was sitting there with these thoughts, just a matter of seconds. So now it made sense to me, I said this was done on purpose, it wasn't an accident, that other explosion I heard was the second plane. I said, yeah, we're at war right now, I can't believe this. So I said I had to get out of here. You know, I'm not needed here. FD is here, the Port Authority is here. I said, not that it was really that much on my mind but I was worried about getting in trouble with my supervisors. You know, they were probably thinking, "Where is this guy?" There's, at that point you know, hundreds of people dead. I'm sure there were officers dead at the time. They're probably saying "Where the hell is [Andy]?" So I said, I gotta check in. The radio was useless, there was just so much chatter on the radio I couldn't get through. And also I didn't have a priority. You know, I'm not going to say "Officer [Andy], I'm ok." That's not a priority. It's really not. So I said I gotta get out, I gotta find my sergeant, and I gotta find my partner. That ended up being the blessing in disguise. I walked away from the second tower, which fell first. The second tower that got hit fell first. So, since I just found out that it was hit, you know, you would have figured that the tower that got hit first was gonna fall first because it was burning for longer. But I actually walked, I was closer, the whole time I was in the Marriott I was right at the base of Tower 2, not knowing that it was hit, not knowing that it was about to fall within maybe 15 minutes. So as, thankfully everybody was out of the hotel who wanted to leave the hotel, at least, when I said, "Ok, I'm not needed here. Let me see what's going back on over there in Tower 1. There's gotta be some city cops over there by now, my partner, somebody." That ended up saving my life, because if I would have stayed in the Marriott I definitely would have been dead. So, um, I walk back into Tower 1, I was still maybe ten feet away from the actual lobby of Tower 1, still in the Marriott,

there was a corridor that went in between. It was almost like when you're boarding an airplane, that little walkway you go through to actually get to the door of the plane, it's very small, just a little walkway.

R: You're by yourself at this point?

S: Yeah, by myself. It was kind of like that, it was very small, no doors on the side, just carpeted floor. So I'm walking through there and I see some Port Authority officers, uniformed Port Authority officers running towards me with their hands going, "Go back, go back, it's coming down." So without even asking a second question I turned around and I just sprinted as fast as I can back into the Marriott. My thoughts were to get into the Marriott and get out the front door. I knew the debris was bad outside, the falling debris, but I knew that was the only exit I knew to get out of. So I got maybe six or seven steps and it was this huge echo noise. It was kind of like being on the subway tracks, metal hitting metal, just louder than you can think. The loudest noise I've ever heard. And it got dark, pitch black. The floor started shaking, and you heard this tremendous breeze coming up behind me. You knew, it was almost like something was chasing you. And you just heard it getting louder and louder, like a whipping wind, almost. And I'm running and running, and I start to lose my balance. This breeze, it wasn't a breeze it was a gust of air, as the tower came down all the pressure goes out the sides, which was to my back since I was running away from it, all the pressure coming straight down and then out any open doorway, came up behind me, slammed me to the ground. I knew what was going on because someone said "It's coming down," so I knew that they meant the tower was coming down. I don't know which one it was, I just knew I was told to run this way. Actually I was actually running back towards it. Because the officers, they were just told, "The tower's coming down." They themselves thought it was the first tower. It was hit so long, you know, maybe 40 minutes it was, I'm not really sure. So I actually was running back towards it. I should have stayed where I was. I should have kept going into the first tower.

R: So you're running now towards the tower that's falling down, though you don't realize that, you think you're running away from it. But the wind you describe is behind you.

S: Yes. I have no idea. It was just, however the hallways were, the vents, the corridor. You know what, maybe, maybe it was in front of me. Maybe it was my mind...maybe it was just that something, I had a fear of something chasing me. You know maybe that's what it was. Maybe it was in front of me. I know that when I fell, I fell face forward, as if I was pushed. That's why, in my mind, there was always something coming behind me. Because like I said, you heard it, it was getting louder and louder, and then I was pushed forward. So the only thing I can assume is that it came from behind me. And, like I said, it was almost like something was chasing me and I was just trying to get away from it. So, it slammed me to the ground, it was pitch black. You heard, like I said, metal hitting metal, like I said almost on subway tracks, that's the only way to describe it. No screaming, nothing like that. I didn't hear anybody getting torn apart or anything. It was just me, this metal, and this gust of air. So as I fell forward, I curl up in the fetal

position. And I knew, actually I didn't know, I was just, I knew I was dead, is what I did know. So I figured if there's any chance of me living here, I'm gonna be crushed to death is what is gonna happen. This seems like I had a ten minute conversation with myself, but it was seconds. It was just I went from one thought to another (snapping his fingers) in seconds. And my first thought was, when I covered up in the fetal position, with my hands over my head like this (raises forearms in front of face), my first thought was, "I can't believe that I'm gonna die like this." Then it was, "I can't believe I'm gonna be crushed to death." Then my thoughts went to my wife. My wife had a miscarriage two days earlier, which would have been our first child, on September 9th. September 11th was my first day back to work. I took 4 days off to be with my wife, two days prior to the procedure and two days after the procedure. So, this was my first day back. I was already upset as could be this whole morning. So now, I'm thinking about my wife. I said, "This is gonna kill my wife. She is gonna die of a broken heart. She just lost a baby and now she's gonna lose me." It's just me and her. You know, we have no other kids. We've only been married, at this point we were married two years. So this is, we just bought a house a month earlier, our first home. So I said, "She is gonna die of a broken heart." So then my thoughts started changing, it's like my wife was an inspiration for me, where I said, "You know what, I'm gonna find a way out of here." So, I said, now I'm talking to God. Of course, you always bring God into it when you think you're gonna die. I am Catholic. I said, "God, as long as I'm not buried alive, as long as I can find a way to walk I'm gonna find a way out of here." I said, "Just let me walk, and I'll find a way to get out of this place." So then I said, now I gotta, like I said this was all in seconds, so now it was, I have to avoid being crushed to death. So I knew I had to avoid being crushed by a pipe, by the roof, so I rolled over. I knew I was near the wall when I was running, so I rolled towards the wall, just like a tadpole, just rolled up. I hit the wall. I figured, if anything is not gonna be completely flattened it'll be the base of the wall and the floor. If I can just get right in this spot right here, I should be, I might be ok. At the same time, I said, "You know what, any second now I'm gonna be dead. I, I might be dead. Any second now something might fall and crush me. I have to avoid it." So I started rolling back and forth, hoping that, just by pure luck I would miss the falling metal, or pipe, or whatever, air conditioner vents, you know, all these things that were above me. I figured if I'm on the left and I roll to the right, maybe I'll just miss the thing on the left. If I roll to the right, maybe I'll just miss the thing on the left. I was just like, it was desperate. It was desperate measures. I just had to hope that if something is about to fall and crush me, I can roll out of the way just in time. Then again I might be rolling into something, who knows, but I was like I can't just sit here like this. So I started rolling back and forth, back and forth. Everytime I hit the wall I knew I was as far as I could go, obviously, that's where I wanted to go. So I was like, maybe something is gonna come down this way, let me get out of the way right now. Alright. Let me get out of the way right now. This whole thing, like I said, maybe 20 seconds, this whole conversation took place. It went from, "I can't believe I'm gonna die, to my wife, to being upset that I'm gonna die like this to no, I'm gonna find a way out of here. You know it was like, what do they say when an alcoholic, there's certain steps, the biggest one is acceptance. You know, first there's denial, then there's acceptance. It was kind of like that. I went from "I'm gonna die," it was the opposite that way, it was from the worst thing possible to "No, I'm gonna find a way out of here." I went through all these

little things in my mind, with my wife in the middle. So, thinking about my wife, that turned my mind, my state of mind to “I’m not gonna lie here and die like this. I’m gonna find a way out of here.” So, next thing I knew, all the noise stops. Things did hit me but obviously nothing crushed me. You know I felt debris, I felt sheetrock hitting me. I felt little bits of metal. You know, I had scratches, my elbows and my forearms were lacerated pretty badly. I was bleeding pretty bad from them because that’s what was protecting my face. That was exposed the most. It’s also because I had the short sleeved shirt on. The short sleeved shirt I had put back on, after I used it to put out the fire on the woman’s legs. I put it on, it was in pieces, it was burnt to a crisp. But the one thing on my mind was my shield was on there, my badge. And I didn’t want to waste the time of taking the badge off. Like I said, since I was fairly new, to this, to the job...I always had trouble getting my badge on. They give you that stupid big pin on the back and I could just never get it on. I originally was just gonna take it off, but I was like, no, I always have trouble with this thing, it’ll be quicker just to put the whole thing back on, and I’ll take the badge off later. So, everyone, I get that question a lot, “What happened to your shield?” It’s like, well no, I put the shirt back on. And they say, “You put the shirt back on?!” I said, “Yeah, because it would take me too long to get the shield off. I could never work that stupid pin.” So I had the shirt back on. So that’s why I think that my elbows and forearms, they were the only part of my body that was exposed. I had my pants on, I had my bulletproof vest on. Um, my gun belt was still on. That was the only part that was exposed so I got pretty badly cut on both my elbows. Same exact wounds on both. Actually it might have been one piece of metal that hit them at the same time. I don’t know. But, um, it all stopped. I knew, I thought at least, I was alive. I stood up right away. It was pitch black. I was kind of stumbling, because I was in shock. I didn’t know if I was alive. I didn’t know if I was dead. I didn’t know who was with me. I didn’t know really where I was. So I started tripping over, over the debris. And it was kind of like walking on sand in sneakers. You know there’s really no balance, you keep slipping, it feels awkward, it’s not a flat surface. So I started walking very slow, and feeling my way around, because I had no flashlight with me, it was in my RMP. Since I ran outta there, since I was actually out of the car to take the accident report, my flashlight was in the car. ‘Cause I have the flashlight that hangs off the back, when you sit down it pops up, so when you want to sit down you take it off. If I knew I was going on a certain type of job, obviously you bring it with you. But I was taking an accident report so I didn’t have it with me. So I started walking very slowly, with my hands in front of my face just feeling around, I kept tripping because I would trip over.

[end of side 1 of tape]

R: So you were walking kind of slipping?

S: Yes, and I couldn’t see. It was pitch black.

R: It was still dark.

S: Still dark, no lighting. Very, very smoky.

R: I wanted to ask you, what about being able to breathe? You said it had gone dark but you've never mentioned anything about, anything in your eyes, or the swirling, the air quality.

S: It was very difficult to breathe, very difficult. The whole time I had my hand over my face. I had to hold my breath a couple of times. I swallowed a lot of, it wasn't really smoke, it was a little material to whatever I swallowed. Um, ash, just debris, sheetrock, people have said asbestos. It was something like that. And it was white. I was spitting constantly, coughing constantly. Um, I couldn't see, my face was covered with everything. I did a little thing with my fingers, just to get the eyelids open. But it really didn't matter since it was pitch black anyway. The smoke was the worst part, or the smoke or the whatever had just been crushed, pulverized, cement, dust particles, matter, everything in the air. That is more of what made it difficult to breathe.

R: OK.

S: So I was walking forward. I was feeling my way around and I knew that this was the way I was running, so this must be the way out. So I just very slowly walked, with my hands out, feeling little by little. And I was very, very scared. Because I knew I was by myself. I knew what I had just survived. Now I said, "I just survived that, what else is awaiting me?" It's been pretty traumatic already. All these things that I've seen in a matter of 40 minutes or so, 45 minutes. I was like, "What else is gonna happen?" So I heard voices and saw a flashlight. And it was a light shining through smoke, you know you really can't make out the figures, all you do was see the smoke. And I heard the voices, I just yelled out, "Hey over here." And they put the light on me, it was a couple of firemen. And then one of the firemen yells, "Hey we got a cop over here. You ok?" I said, "Yeah, I'm alright, I'm alright. You guys alright?" They said, "Yeah, Yeah, we're ok. You know where we are?" I said, "Yeah, we're in the lobby of the Marriott." They said, "You know how to get out of here?" I said, "Well, this is the way I was running. And I know that there's an exit over here. So let's go this way." So they said, "Ok, let's go." They took maybe two or three steps. I walked towards them, where the light was. They were shining the light straight ahead. All of a sudden there was this wall of debris. And they said, "Oh, no, not this way." I said, "No, this is the way." So, they said, "No, there's a wall there." I said, "Wait a second, this is the wall here. That's the wall over there. This is, there's no walls over here, we're in a walkway in a corridor. That's the Marriott and that's the Trade Center." So they're putting the lights up and down. They said, "Holy shit, this is collapsed." It was a wall of debris. They had their equipment with them. Two firemen had axes. They started chopping at it, or picks. Two guys had axes, one guy had a pick. They started chopping at it trying to see if they could peek through and see exactly what's on the other side. I just started doing that. Debris starts falling on our head, above. Of small little things, but you felt it. We looked up. A fireman put the light up there, he said, "Stop." Almost like quietly, he said, "Stop doing that." He put the light up there. He goes, "Look." It turns out that we were in between two pillars, two beams. And when the building came down, the spot that we were in was in between these two beams. Now, thankfully, instead of these beams flattening, like everything else in the building, they buckled in the middle. As if this was the beam (puts

up index finger of each hand, parallel to one another), they went like that (puts tips of fingers together making shape of triangle), and they fell and met each other. And we were underneath them. There was like a teepee over our heads. If we would have been outside of that, or a little faster or a little slower, we would have been dead. So we were in this one spot. And not by my own decision, not by choice. If it was up to me I would have kept running. And I would have been dead. This is another, uh, religious thing if you want to look at it like that. For some reason, myself and the other gentlemen, I got knocked down in that one position where if I would have been maybe ten feet further or ten feet behind, knocked down, I would have been dead. So we knew that this thing is barely holding above us. We have to find a way out of here, fast. So they were telling me, "Do you know where we are exactly?" There were also two security guards from the Marriott with us. Ended up being there were maybe 7 people in there with me, the firemen, myself, I was the only cop, and two security guards from the Marriott. So, the firemen asked me, "Do you know the way out of here?" I said, "I don't know where I am." I went to the security guard and said, "Where are we? How do we get out of here?" One of them said we were right in front of the gift shop. So he said this is the gift shop, on the other side of the gift shop there is a door that goes down into the parking garage. We have to find that. So looking at the wall, it wasn't a wall anymore. There was wire, it was electric, uh, shocks, sparks going over. The sprinkler system went off for a period of time, drenching us. Uh, and then with the shocks, I thought I was gonna be electrocuted now. So, it wasn't just a matter of going up to the door and turning a knob and getting out. You had to find it. So, I went over there, and at this point now I had started to, I wasn't walking with my hands in front of my face. I wasn't walking gingerly anymore. I ran over to the other side of the hallway and I started ripping debris out of the way trying to find this door. I was, well, we all were. Because we knew that we could stay in the hall much longer. We have to get out of here. So I'm looking, I'm looking. All of a sudden one of the security guards, he says, "Oh, I see light." He's peeking through the wall of debris. He says, "I see light on the other side. We have to get through here." The fireman walks over and looks through and he goes, "That's not light, that's a fire. We have to get out of here." So I was like, "Holy shit, there's a fire, these beams, I'm gonna be crushed any second above me, there's a fire on the other side. I gotta find this door. We have to get the fuck out of here." So I'm throwing everything out of the way, whatever I can, you know, bare hands, it's metal, it's hot, it's heavy. Whatever I can move I'm moving. Sure enough, after fairly quickly, maybe two minutes, I saw a doorknob. And I moved a little bit more out of the way, and it was just a whole, clean, grey door. So now before I said anything to anybody I put my hand on it and I said, "Please God, please let this open." Because I was afraid it was gonna be locked, it was gonna be caved in on the other side. So I turned it and it opened up. I looked down the hallway, there was a stairway, straight down as soon as you opened the door. And it was clean. So I said," Thank God." So I yelled back and said, "Guys, I found the door, I found the door." Security guard came over, he said, "Yeah, that's it, that takes us to the parking garage." Two firemen went first, they had the flashlights. They said, "Let's go first. Come behind us." So we get to the bottom of the stairway, the fireman goes, he yells back to the security guards, "Ok, where to now?" Security guard goes, "Just keep going, keep going." He goes, "I can't go anymore. This is it. It's all… this is the end of the room." He goes, "No, no, just keep going." Security guard came down he said, "Oh,

this isn't supposed to be like this." Fireman goes, "Yeah, no shit it's not supposed to be like this." It was all caved in down there. There was nowhere to go. We came into a room actually about the size of this room, seven feet long or so, and on every wall was a door, though. We came in through this door, there were three other doors. So we said to him, "Where do these doors go?" He says, "No, that one, that's the locker room." One of them was like a boiler room, one of them was just an office. So I said, "Is there any way out, any windows, any way out of any of these offices?" He said, "No, there's nothing." I said, "I don't believe this." The one fireman goes, "Alright, let's go back upstairs and let's figure out another way." So I just said, "No." I said, "I'm not going back up there." To myself, I had a bad feeling about going back up there. I just thought that we had too many miracles already. I didn't think there were any miracles left up there. I didn't want to go back up there. They started going up there. I stayed behind for a few feet, I was last, I was waiting for everybody to walk up. And I'm just looking around, very nervously, very intensely. I said, there has to be some way out of here. So I'm looking where this wall of debris is, where we could have kept going, and I'm just looking around it. I said there's got to be some way, one of these doors has to lead to somewhere. And as I'm looking, I see this red exit sign. It was like when you're in a movie theatre, when you first enter a movie theatre from the back, all the way up front you can just make out those red exit signs. That's what it looked like. And I said, "I think that's an exit sign." So I yelled over to the security guard, he was only a few feet, he was already walking back upstairs. I said, "Yo," no names, I said, "Yo, come back here. Is that an exit?" And he goes, "Yeah, that's the parking lot. That's what I'm talking about. That's the exit for the parking garage." Turns out that the smoke was still so bad when we first got down there you couldn't see it. So after a couple of minutes, smoke started to rise, or whatever, it wasn't there anymore, it started to drift away, it was easy to see this. The firemen came back down. We were looking at this debris, like, "Yeah, we think we can get over this." 'Cause you couldn't tell what was over there at first. It was just pitch black. Now you can see a little better. "Yeah, you know, if we can get over this we can get to that exit sign." So, you had to climb almost straight up this debris, whereas there was maybe about three feet between the top of the debris and the ceiling. So you got to the top, and this is twisted metal, sharp, like you couldn't roll over on it, you had to be very careful what you stepped on, no gloves, what you grabbed... All of us got over it, though, got to the bottom of it. We were in the parking garage. In the parking garage, cars on fire, very, very few spaces to walk. It was just, it was disgusting in there. You know, there was nobody dead in there, you didn't see any bodies, you didn't see anybody else in there, but my eyes were still fixated on that right exit sign. So the firemen walk towards it, myself, two security guards after me, walking straight towards it. All of a sudden as you got closer to the exit, you started to see daylight. And it turns out we were one level below street level. And it was, the parking garage where you went from street level down, so it was a driveway going down and the door was blown off, obviously, when all this had happened, the tower falling. So the daylight now was shining straight down. We all walked towards it. Two firemen, they were up there first. I was five feet or so behind them. One of the firemen walked away right away. The other fireman stood there for a couple of minutes. And he goes, "Holy shit." I said, "What? What is it?" I started walking up behind him. He goes, he just turned around to me and he goes, "You will not believe what you are about to see." So, I didn't know

what he was talking about. So I got to the top of the driveway, I was at street level now, and we were in front of 7 World Trade Center, which was still up, it was in shambles, it was an inferno, but it was still up. The street in between it, which was Vesey St., was just covered with brick, debris, cement, it wasn't a street anymore. It was as far as I can see in all directions it was just...debris. It was everything that had collapsed, because there were the other Trade Center buildings as well, you know, 3,4,and 5, were in there, and 6, were in there as well.

R: They had collapsed?

S: They all came down when the first tower came down. The other tower and 7 were still standing. So, it was just as far as I could see it was just brick and smoldering cars, firetrucks on fire and crushed. I saw police cars on fire, taxi cabs, just everything. And it was as if you're in a small town at 3:00 in the morning. Just not a sight, no sign of human life anywhere. And for 9:30, or whatever it was, on a Tuesday morning in Manahattan, not a holiday. An hour ago there were thousands of people on this street. Where are they all? My first thought was they're all underneath all this. Everybody is crushed to death. So, once again it all went back to, I've got to find these cops. We're out of there. There's no one behind me, everybody's safely out, who is still alive, is safely out of there. The firemen went on their way, to look for firemen I assume, the two security guards I walked with them. One of them was bleeding pretty heavily from his face. And he was very nervous about it. It wasn't a terrible cut, but it was bleeding a lot. And he was holding his shirt to his face, his shirt was covered with blood, it was saturated with blood. But it wasn't life threatening. It wasn't like we had to get this guy to an ambulance right away. So as we were walking over the debris, same thing as inside, you couldn't just walk straight, it wasn't a straight line. You know, you were waking over concrete, over twisted metal and steel. You would trip a couple of times, you know, cut yourself. My pants got sliced. Um, it wasn't a straight line, it was difficult to get across the street. So as I'm walking across the street, one security guard who wasn't hurt was right behind me, the other guy was starting to lag behind. He's saying, "Officer don't leave me, don't leave me." I'd stop and I'd say, "I'm not gonna leave you, come on. You have no choice, this is it, you gotta suck it up. You're not going back there, this is the only way out. Come on, man, I'm not gonna leave you, I'm gonna wait." So he'd catch up to me, I grabbed him by the arm, under his armpit, I kind of said, "Come on, I'll help you as much as I can but I can't carry you out of here. This isn't stable ground. You gotta figure a way to do this yourself." So, we made it over. There was an ambulance around the corner. I said, "Guys, go see the EMS guys." You know, I've got other things to do. I've got to find other people, my partner. So, I walked away from those two guys, they were fine, they were with EMS workers. I walked down Greenwich street, and the street was just covered with, it looked like sand, it was like soot, it was just dirt, it was, it was, you know, it was disgusting. It was the same thing, I don't know if you've seen any debris, but as far as you can see there was just fire, smoke, and debris. I'm walking down Greenwich street and I stop and I see more people, I start to see firemen, I start to see other cops, EMS, you see everybody, OEM, whoever, everybody was there. So I'm looking for, now, for uniformed cops. I was seeing ESU, bomb squad. I was like, alright, these guys are here for whatever, I don't know. But I'm,

whatever they're doing I'm not supposed to be doing. They have a certain, well, a different trained job than I have. You know they go in to look, you know, search dogs were there. I gotta find, you know, my cops, the guys I work with. So an RMP passes me, and, going very slowly. And as it passes me I see on the side it has the precinct number. So I think, "Oh my God, thank God. That's my precinct." So I run up to the car and I bang on the window. And it's a female officer I work with who is a veteran, 17 years on, who I had actually worked with a couple of times. She was training me here and there. When I'd get into a car, she would always be the one I would work with, most of the time. So, she had the window up, and I banged on the window, calling her name. My face was covered with the white, whatever it was, soot. So she opens the door, she says, "Oh my God, get in. We thought you were dead." I say, "What the fuck is going on here?" She's like, "I don't know. Where's [Billy]? Where's this guy, where's that guy?" I said, "I don't know. I ran to the lobby after it was hit. I thought [Billy] was behind me." She says, "We can't find anybody. You're the first one we found from the whole day tour." Well, the patrol, the guys in the sector cars. So, um, I said, "I can't see a thing right now." I couldn't use my hands anymore because they were filthy, I wasn't gonna put them in my eyes. I said, "I can't see anything." So she pulls over the car. She had a bottle of water. She pours the bottle of water in my eyes. Her shirt was cleaner than mine, she wiped off my eyes. I said, "Ok, thank you, I can see now." So we were maybe a block away from Stuyvesant Highschool, which they made into a temporary muster area, where everybody was meeting, since it seemed like it was a safe distance away. Students were being evacuated out the back. So, she walked me over to there, actually she was a School Safety Officer, so she knows Stuyvesant Highschool very well. She goes "I'll take you in the bathroom at Stuyvesant, you'll get yourself cleaned up." So I said, "Alright. Thank you." As we were walking towards the school, my C.O. is standing right in front of the school. He's in plain clothes, with a radio, he was a Captain at the time, he's a Deputy Inspector now. He didn't know me that well, he knew who I was but since I'd only been there a few months he didn't know my name or anything. So, she said, Captain this is officer M___, he's in the precinct, he's pretty messed up, I gotta get him cleaned up inside. He said, "You ok? You were in sector A, right?" He goes, "Do you know where your partner is?" I said, "No, I don't." He said, "It's alright. Are you ok? Are you ok?" He was very comforting to me. He's like, "Ok, go inside, get yourself cleaned up and just take a seat, relax, ok? You've done enough." I was like, "Alright, thank you." The second that conversation ended, as I went to turn to go inside the building, Stuyvesant Highschool, someone yelled out, "The second one's coming down." So now it was, I started to take another step in the building and everything came back to me, I said, "You know what, I'm not going back in any buildings. I'm not going through that again." So I ran around the back of the highschool. My C.O. was right in front of me. Turns out [female officer] went in the building. You know, a lot of people went in the building. You wanted shelter. I just, from what I had just went through, I had a phobia now of going inside the building. So I turned around I ran back out. My C.O. was in front of me all these other people, tons of people running down the block. You got to the, when we got to the end of the street, this is Chambers Street, you're at the water. You're in Battery Park City now. So people were literally jumping in the water, just diving. It's like a 20 foot drop, over the, what do they call that area back there, I don't know. People were just literally jumping over the fences into the water. So I

wasn't gonna do that, so I ran around the back of the building. And as I get to the back of the building I see all these students just walking out the back. Like very leisurely almost. And my first thought was, "Get out of the way." You know, it's not a joke obviously, but I laugh about it with my wife, we enjoy the show Seinfeld, and there's one episode where the character, George Castanza, is at a kid's party, and there's a fire in the kitchen, and he throws all the kids out of the way. There's a clown at the party. He kicks the clown, to get out the front door. And, you know, it's a comedy. That's the first thing, this shows what kind of personality I have, the first thing that came to my mind was George Castanza on Seinfeld. Where I'm gonna tell all these kids to get the hell out of the way.

R: You were thinking this at the time?

S: At the time, as I'm running, I see them in front of me.

R: You're remembering that Seinfeld episode?

S: As I'm running, I'm seeing these kids in front of me, I'm saying, this is just like Seinfeld. I'm telling these kids to get the hell out of the way. I'm not stopping. I said, after what I went through? I said, I'm not dying now. And I'm thinking, George Castanza telling the clown, or kicking the clown, and throwing the kid, picking the kids up and throwing them out of the way so he can get out the front door because there was a fire in the kitchen. And as I'm getting closer and closer, of course, reality started to set in. I said, I can't do that. And, also, finally, I saw some city cops. They were escorting the kids, or evacuating the kids out the back of the building. So now I slow, now I can't run through these kids. There's cops here. You know, I mean, I'm sure I wouldn't have done it, but it was just the emotions, I was scared once again. But, like I said, for some reason this show came to my mind, where I was gonna tell all these kids to get the hell out of the way, and just gonna go, like parting the red sea I was gonna do, just boom, knocking them over. So I was like, alright I can't do that. So I stood there and there were cops, nobody from my precinct, but there were cops who were "Alright come on kids, let's go, let's go." I remember one thing that jumps out at me was a lot of the kids were, I don't know if they didn't know what was going on or how serious it was, but they were laughing and giggling and I started to get a little upset. So I started to say, "Come on guys, let's go, hurry up, move, move, faster, faster." And I remember one kid was laughing, like they were joking on line as they were coming out. And then they saw me, because compared to the other cops, I was a mess. My shirt was halfway off, burned, my whole body was white, my face, my hair, my arm, my skin was just all white. My pants, you know I have a navy blue uniform, all this debris and smoke, white ash and soot, it shows up. I'm sure you've seen the pictures of what it looked like. That's what I looked like. I remember one kid, he was laughing with his buddy and he got a look at me and he goes, "Oh, damn." I said, "Oh, you think that's funny?" I said, "You better get your fucking ass out of here before you look the same, or your dead. This isn't a joke." And I just lost it for that brief second. Because I started to see people aren't taking me serious, or, I was like, you have to know what's going on. You've been here the whole time. I'm sure you have t.v.'s. You can see the whole thing right from your windows. Then they all started getting, I started getting a little more aggressive with everybody. Like, "let's

go," grabbing kids by the arm saying, "Let's go. Let's get out of here." Fortunately, when the second building came down, once again, when the building came down, one of the reasons we were running like that was because, my first thought was, it's toppling over. No one thought it was gonna fall straight down. It turns out I found out later on it was designed that way. The original architect designed it so if it were to ever collapse it would come down straight, not topple over. But, in that time, you're thinking, "Its falling, and it's falling right on, it's falling sideways, and it's gonna land right on top of me."

R: So, let me get this straight. When you are getting those kids out of there, has the second tower collapsed?

S: Yes. And, being that it came straight down, the smoke, I'm sure you've seen those clouds of smoke, they reached us, but the debris didn't. Since it came straight down no pieces of metal came flying, because we're about seven or eight blocks away from it now, with a lot of other buildings in between us. But, like I said, you're thinking it's toppling over. If that can topple over, it'll reach Houston Street, you know. So, it had already fallen, that's why I stopped running, you know, once I saw the kids and the officers escorting the kids out the back, it had already been done. That's why they were kind of going at a leisurely pace. I was still running because I didn't know it was done or fell straight down. I'm waiting, any second now it's gonna fall on top of me. So I stood there for a couple of minutes, getting them out. Every kid came out. Walk back around in front of the school. I was on Chambers and West Street now. Saw a couple of cops from my precinct. I didn't know them well since I'd only been there a couple of months, but I knew their names I knew their faces, they knew me. They were a mess, too, their uniforms ripped apart. So our C.O., the same guy I was running with before, he saw us. We were asking each other, "You ok? What the fuck's going on here? I don't know? I was inside. I was over here." Telling our stories. "Are we at war? What's going on?" Our C.O. came up to us, he was like, "Listen, guys. Everybody ok? Alright, good. Listen, I need you to set up barricades on West Street over here. Don't let anybody go south of Chambers Street. Nobody goes towards that site right now." He goes, "And also, I don't want to alarm you guys, but I'm just telling you what's going on. There is still another plane unaccounted for and they think it's coming back here. So if you see a low flying plane again, just run. Seek shelter, do what you have to do. But there's still something else around and they don't know where it's gonna go." Turns out that was the one that landed in Pennsylvania. So now we're scared as can be again. So we're standing there, we're setting up the barricades. Saw a lot of suspicious activity in terms of Middle Easterners. Saw a lot of Middle Eastern folks standing on the corner just watching it. And my C.O. said "You see anybody hanging around here, question them, if you've gotta cuff them, if something's wrong, get them out of here, whatever." And another cop went up right to this first group, it was three Middle Eastern men standing on the corner. He went up to them and he was frisking them and, literally, "What are you doing here? Who are you? Do you have I.D.?" He knew more about what was going on than I did. He knew there were hijacked airliners. I didn't know they were hijacked, I knew they crashed into them. I didn't know they were passenger jets. So, he knew a lot more about what was going on. That's why the Middle Eastern thing hit him. So, he

went up them and was putting his hand to their waistband, pretty much all stop-frisk rules are out the window right now. It was kind of like martial law for a little while. I had my gun out. People were telling us that the Empire State Building had been nuked. That there were ground troops attacking us, Midtown Manhattan is gone. These were civilians telling us. It was just chaos.

R: You heard all of this...

S: And I believed it. I believed Midtown was gone. I believed there were ground troops attacking us. This was, you know, there was such chaos, and everyone was so scared obviously that rumors were flying. And, you know what, two planes just hit the World Trade Centers and collapsed them. I wouldn't have believed that a couple of minutes ago, but I gotta believe anything now. So now, he's telling us if you see anything suspicious like that, you grab people, there's a lot of crazy shit going on here right now. I saw a couple of, a couple more Middle Eastern men. As I walk towards them they start running away. I don't know what's going on here now. So I'm, no one's around now. A couple people tried to get by, press, photographers, civilians saying I gotta go to the ferry, I gotta go to Battery Park. You know, "Walk around, you're not coming through here." You can't even walk straight, there was no West Side Highway anymore. It was gone. No Battery Park City anymore. So, I saw a newsman, a news anchor, black guy in a suit with a microphone and he was going through some notes. And I could see he wasn't on the air. So I said I gotta ask this guy what's going on. So I said, "Excuse me, can you tell me what the hell is going on here today?" And he goes, "Yeah, at 8:46 a hijacked passenger TWA or American Airlines was hijacked and flew into Tower 1 and another one was hijacked and flew into Tower 2 and one hit the Pentagon. There's three more unaccounted for. I said, "Holy shit. Who's doing this?" He's like, "I don't know. Terrorists. We're at war right now." I said, "Oh my God." Those were my worst fears, I said, "That's what I thought. Thank you." So I stood there for a couple more minutes with the other officers at the barricades making sure nobody goes down. Next thing I know I see FD, Bomb Squad, ESU, Con-Ed, all these people coming away from the site. And they're just walking right past me, away from everything. So I grabbed an ESU guy and said, "What's going on?" He goes, "There's an open gas leak. They think the whole thing's gonna go." So I was like, "Oh, alright. Well I'm glad somebody told me. I'm out of here now." I said, "That's it. If you guys are leaving from inside there, I'm not staying here. I'm going back to the precinct." So I walked back to the precinct. When I turned the corner for the precinct there was a whole bunch of people, cops, civilians, officers who work inside the building who aren't on patrol standing outside waiting for us. Because all of the sector cars, officers, which was 12 of us, we were still unaccounted for. And they assumed we were dead. So, a couple of officers were rushed to the hospital already, who got hit with, it turned out when the second plane hit, they were hit with debris from that plane. They were seriously hurt, rushed to Bellevue, one was in emergency surgery. Almost lost, had to have his arm pretty much reattached. They were standing outside there. They saw me turn the corner. They saw what I looked like. They were like, "Oh my God, we thought you were dead. You ok?" I said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm alright, I'm alright." Same thing, they said "Where's this guy, where's that guy?" I said I have no idea. I have no idea. "Alright," they said, "go check in at the desk. You got

any family?" I said, "Yeah, why?" They said, "Go call your wife. Call your mom, your dad, whoever you gotta call, call them." I was like, "That's a good point. I didn't even think about that." All the phones were dead. Somebody had a cell, it wasn't working. I had a cell in my locker, it wasn't working, couldn't get through at all. So, uh, finally maybe an hour later I got through to my wife. And I just told her very quickly, "Listen, I'm alright. Just wanted to let you know I'm in the precinct now." She was like, "Oh, alright, thank God. Good, good. I was so scared. I thought you were dead." She goes, "I've been watching this on TV. Just stay inside, don't go out." I was like, "Alright, I don't know what we're gonna do." I said, "I don't know when I'm gonna be home. I'll talk to you when I can but just, I'm alright, I'm alive, I'm in the precinct right now." She's like, "Alright, good, thank God, thank God." So then I went down into our lounge and they, obviously, had on the TV. and for the first time I saw it. That's when it really hit me. Where what I went through, seeing the towers actually collapse and then looking out the window and seeing they're not there anymore. You know I grew up with those things. I live on Staten Island, where I grew up you could see them from my house. So when I saw over and over again the plane hitting into the tower, and then they had the footage of the second plane hitting it, and then showing the footage of the building coming down and knowing I was at the bottom of it that whole time, it's like, I kind of got numb. I was, "I can't believe I just went through that." You know, then guys started asking me, "Where were you?" you know. I said, "I was, I was at the bottom of that." And it just, uh, it, it took my breath away. You know I realized how lucky I was, but it made me even more scared now. I was, "I can't believe I was just in the middle of all that." You know, as time goes on, it turns out to be the greatest catastrophe ever to happen in this country and I was right at the center of it. You know, literally at the center of it. At the bottom of it. And I walked away from it, though. Pretty much unscratched.

R: You said at that moment, it sounds like, is when you really started to feel fear.

S: Yeah. Oh, yes. Fear of, I mean, I knew I was safe now because I'm sitting in the precinct, I'm watching it, but I realized how lucky I was. And, like I said, it's like my whole body just got numb where I can't, I realized even more than ever how close I was to dying. Like I know that I was close when it was coming down and I'm doing this (holds arms up to cover face), I'm moving out of the way. But now seeing it, and, I'm like, "I was just at the bottom of that? How did I live? How did I get out of there?" You know, it really made me scared. Even though I'm, I'm alive and, but I have flashbacks right away of, like, "I can't believe I just walked out of there." So, it's, it was a very humbling experience. And I got home about ten o'clock that night, threw my uniform away, threw my shoes away. Right away threw it away. I didn't even go in the house with it. Right in front of the house, I took off all my clothes. I got down to my underwear, had my wife throw me a pair of shorts, put on the shorts. Took the uniform, put it right in the garbage bag, put it right in the garbage can. My gun belt, my shoes I threw away, my gun belt I hosed off, I hosed off my whole body, right in front of the house. Because we were told, that's, we were told chemicals, um, all these chemical agents were in the air and all these disgusting things that aren't good for ya. So, I said, "I'm not going in the house like that," you know. You couldn't shower in the precinct because there was no water. Everything was turned off. We had generators, that's what

gave us electricity. But there were no phone lines, uh, um, no water, I couldn't wash myself off, I was still disgusting with all this stuff. Um, I wasn't gonna put on a clean shirt because I'm just gonna ruin that one. So I was just "I'm gonna keep on what I have on." Threw away my bullet proof vest, you know, it was all, it's not worth it, you know, so…And then the next morning is when reality set in. Had to be in, five hours later we had to be in. Didn't sleep at all that night. To come in, to come in the next morning, and, and, uh, I come in to the Brooklyn Bridge and everything was, you remember the whole city was shut down, September 12th, for the whole first week. And as I got over the Brooklyn Bridge, there was a tank at the bottom of the bridge, with, uhh, an army officer on top of the tank, inside the tank but with his upper torso sticking out, with his hands holding a machine gun, not a machine gun but, like, a huge stationed machine gun, that's too heavy to hold manually. And he's got both hands on it like this, and he's just moving it back and forth as he's in the tank. And I'm like, "This is just some serious, scary stuff going on here." This is, this is lower Manhattan. There's tanks, there's army personnel all over the place, and, you know, the city, Broadway, ugh, it took me about 20 minutes to get around everything. I had to go all these different routes, 'cause everything was crushed. There was no streets anymore. You know it was just really scary. It was really scary seeing the aftermath. You know, seeing it from the second, the minutes before everything happened, to being in the middle, seeing it as it happens, and now a day later, seeing what it looks like the next day. It just, took your breath away. You know… it was, it was very scary, um, just couldn't believe this was New York City. We're at war. You know, all these people just died. Thousands. At the time actually I think the first estimate was 10,000 people. You know, 10,000 people I think they originally said they thought died. A lot of friends of mine worked there. It turns out that they did die, once it was all tallied up anyway.

R: When did you find that out?

S: I found out two of them that, September 12th. And I found out a couple more like a week later. Five of them altogether. Um, from highschool. Three guys I went to highschool with, two guys I just knew from Staten Island. Staten Island's not that big. So, uh, yeah it was very scary, you know. All these memorials going on all over the place. The officers, three officers that I worked with that were still in the hospital. One of them, he was there for a while, he was in intensive care. But the first week afterwards, was just, it was a different world.

R: Yeah.

S: Very little sleep. Being there every, being in the middle of this every day. Doing the bucket brigade. You know, searching for, for survivors at first and then for human remains.

R: So you were on the bucket brigade every day?

S: No, the first week I did it twice. Altogether I did it maybe ten times, in the first month. But the first week I did it twice, when it was really, really bad. Obviously as

time went on, more and more debris was cleared away, it wasn't as bad. You knew you were looking for, now, remains. But then, after that, since there was no patrol, since there was really no precinct anymore, our steady shift, our steady post was the morgue, the temporary morgue. So every time they found human remains they'd bring it to this tent, obviously a makeshift tent. They'd look through it, they'd try to get some kind of ID. Police would be there for identification, um, any property, they would find credit cards, wallets, whatnot. For that, usual identification purposes. But, they would have 20 of us assigned there at the same time because so many human remains were coming in. So for as long as ground zero went on, we were stationed at the morgue. And at first, it was very, uh, very uncomfortable seeing arms and legs, torsos, heads, um…you know, obviously, uh, …it was disgusting. The smell. And then, you know, putting the mask on. And then to see, to show how, how much you adapted to it, after maybe a month I never wore a mask anymore. The smell of it didn't bother me. The remains were more and more...d-disgusting, you know, really, it wasn't, there was no flesh, now it became bone, now it was, um, it would be an upper torso, with a shirt and tie still on it, but just mush, inside the shirt. And it didn't even affect me anymore. It just was, like, its just a body now, its not a person anymore. Now, so, kind of like, its like, almost like, not that you didn't care, but you became so used to it that these remains, to me, they weren't humans anymore. You know, it wasn't somebody's mother or father anymore. It wasn't my friend being pulled out of there. You know, it, it just, you be-, things were just so terrible down there and so bleak, that it became an everyday part of life, where they were like, "Ok, we found 4 more…" It became pieces, after a while. EMS would tell us, "we have a couple of pieces." You know, and, that's just the way it was. It wasn't any disrespect, obviously, it's just a job that had to be done, by the EMS, by the police, by the FD and the ESU who were searching for bodies, and for the morgue. They had to identify these bodies, you know. They'd say, "Oh, yeah, we got a leg here, it's human, ok we're gonna send it in for DNA testing." They'd put it in a bag and it would be carted, put in the back, depending on what kind of piece it was, some would be refrigerated, some wouldn't. You know, but it was, like, it was almost sad in a way, you know, because these are human beings, and, they just became pieces now. You know.

R: Yeah.

S: So, it was, it was, it was difficult. Working the morgue was very difficult because you had to put that out of your mind.

R: Right.

S: That this is a person. Like, you, in the log book you would write "At 0700 hours, on this date," and ground zero was broken up into coordinates, sectors, to pinpoint where the most number of bodies were being found, to try to figure out, I assume, when it fell where people were, like in these coordinates G-3 they found 100 bodies, in these coordinates they didn't find any bodies, so they were trying to figure out where exactly a lot of the people were when the building collapsed. So you would put in there the coordinates and then you'd put "leg" or "bone" or just "human remains." You know, a couple of times you had to put,uh, "head."

R: Mm,hmm.

S: So, uh…

R: Tell me what it was, you're describing that as "difficult," but can you elaborate about what was difficult about that?

S: Working in the morgue?

R: Yeah.

S: Because, like I said, they didn't become, they weren't humans anymore. It was almost like you were mad at yourself, where…

R: Because you didn't feel anything?

S: Because you didn't feel anything anymore. Where, at first, it was very emotional. You couldn't look. I would be there with the logbook, and, um, and I'd stand 20 feet back, and I'd just wait, I wouldn't even look at it. I would just wait to hear the doctor say, "Yeah, it's a torso, human. Ok, we're gonna bring it up for DNA test." "Ok." And then I'd just walk out of the tent.

R: Mm,hmm.

S: You know, and, sometimes, when they would bring in remains I would say to the other guy, "Do me a favor, would you get this one? I don't want to go in there." And then after a month, it was just, it was like nothing. I'd walk in, no mask, "Whaddya got?" looking at it. I started touching things. 'Cause you got to know the M.E.s, um, that were working in there, because we were there, 12-hour shifts. So you got to, and no days off, so you got to know these people very well. They needed help, so they would ask you, "Can you take that out of the bag and spread that out for me please?" You know, obviously you had gloves on. So now you began handling this, touching it, as well as looking at it and smelling it. And it became the job. You know. And it did bother me, because, I'm an emotional person, and I'm very caring and, I had friends who were in there and I felt so bad for, I know how close I came to becoming a "piece." And, it's almost like I felt disrespect for the family members. Like, this is someone's family member right here, and it's just a piece, in a plastic bag, and their watch or their ring is being placed in another plastic bag. You know, and this is all that's left of these people. So, it angered me because I wasn't able to feel anymore. It wasn't disrespect, it wasn't lack of emotion. It was just, it became an everyday occurrence. Where something a month ago, if you would have told me I would have been handling dead, not bodies, dead human remains in pieces, torsos and limbs, and, uh, you know, and handling them and touching them and smelling them, I would have said, "Oh, I could never do that. Ugh. No way, that's not me. I'm not a cop for that. That's M.E." You know, if I have to see dead bodies, person's been shot, stabbed, I've seen that, alright, but, uh, you know, if

you're gonna tell me I'm gonna be doing this I'd tell you never in a million years. But after four weeks it became, I can't remember what it was like before. You know, it was just like every day going to work, instead of answering 911 calls and dealing with regular crime or quality of life things, it became dealing with human remains every day. So I wake up, take a shower, go to work, and, you're going to a morgue. And that was it. For like the first 3 months, it was really bad like that. And then after the 3rd month, right around Christmastime, a little after Christmas was when they stopped kind of finding remains. When they would find, it would go from 100 pieces a day, I mean a piece would be 4 or 5 pieces from the same person, so a piece wouldn't mean a body, to some days it would be 5 pieces all day long. And instead of finding things with skin and identifying marks where you could see that that's obviously a hand, it would just become a bone. It actually became a couple of times where they found bone and it turns out it was steak bone, pigeons, chicken, because there were also restaurants in there. So, you know, the rescue guys would find these bones. They'd say, "Oh, I found a bone." They'd bring it up. M.E. would look at it and say, "No, it's not human," and throw it away. So it became that, that adaptive to it.

R: Right.

S: Where it was just like, "Ok, it's a bone, human remains." And it wasn't a person anymore. You know, so. But, like I said, as they started to find less and less remains, and as they weren't looking human anymore, at all, it was just a bone or, sometimes, one thing they would bring in, what they would call human remains, I guess it was flesh. It would be in the red, um, the red bag, that they used for like, you've seen in hospitals, for hazardous waste they use those red bags. Put it in that, doctor would open it up, sometimes he'd pour it out, it looked like sand. And it was actually, he told me, this was actually skin, it was condensed bone and skin. It was just in a pile. It looked like wet sand, and it had a very distinct smell to it. It was different than a regular DOA.

R: Than just the smell of a dead body.

S: You know, because it had…(end of tape).

Tape #2

R: Ok, so.

S: That's really it. That was my day. That was it.

R: Yeah.

S: It was interesting.

R: Well, can you…I kept realizing as you were talking, there are probably quite a few things that I'm going to want to revisit when we meet again, if that's ok. But what I'd rather, rather than kind of going back into that right now I'd like to wait until I've

transcribed it and read over, and when we meet again we can talk about some more the things you mentioned more specifically. But, I was wondering if you could speak a little bit now about what impact this has had on your life? Like, where are you with things now? You know, what has it been like, how have things changed?

S: Ok, uh, it's changed in terms of, um, first as a police officer, it's become, with what's going on since then, just kind of waiting for another attack to happen, especially today, for instance, more than ever, I think Friday we'll have the end of the Muslim holiday they're expecting something. Being in front of the Stock Exchange and the World Financial Center and City Hall, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Holland and Battery Tunnel, the Statue of Liberty, are all in my precinct, Battery Park, Staten Island Ferry Terminal, these are all locations which were marked as high profile locations that are potential targets. Knowing that every day I'm around them, uh, it's kind of made me, you're very aware, your eyes are open to everything now. We get a million suspicious vehicles and suspicious persons calls every day. It had died out for maybe the past six months but now we're starting to get them again. The suspicious package, someone leaves a backpack on a bench, call ESU. Someone leaves a shopping bag on the subway platform, they forget it, or someone forgets their jacket, um, in an office building unattended, we're being called. The anthrax letters…

R: That's happening again…

S: That's happening again. One that happens a lot, people are getting, get the fed-ex, and airborne express cardboard letters, open up the top, and white dust comes off and they'd think, "Oh my God, it's anthrax." And they call us. They open up the package, and the white, it's the same thing that's happened, one lady called us and we looked at it and we realize that's just cardboard, and I said, "I guarantee you, that you've opened that a million times and, on September the 10th if you would have done that you wouldn't have called us. There's nothing wrong with that, that's the sign of the times. Obviously people are very nervous, so we're starting to get those calls again. But I'm really not scared of anything. I wasn't scared of anything that day. Afterwards I was scared. When I was going through everything on September 11th, I couldn't be scared because otherwise I probably would have been dead. I knew I had to keep going. Like I was telling those people, "You have no choice, you have to go out this door. There's no choice, this is it. You stay here you're dead." I knew that I had to keep moving, that I had to find a way out. There was no time to be, "Oh my God, if I go down there I might die." Same thing now, it's like, if something's gonna happen, it's gonna happen. I'm gonna be the first one there. It might happen right in front of me again. In a way I, I would never tell my wife this, I kind of feel invincible now. Not that I would go running into a burning building again, or go walking down into a subway station where a chemical attack has just occurred. I kind of feel like, you know, I've experienced the *worst*. Now, with that experience, I'll be able to handle myself even better than I did last time. I am very proud of the job I did that day. I know I saved numerous lives that day. And it's because I didn't panic. And now I know how I am going to react in that kind of situation again. And it's just, like, it's the job of a police officer. I've experienced something terrible and I think now if something were to happen again, or when it does

happen again, I actually think people are gonna be looking up to me. Even though I only have three years on the job, the way that I've been treated since then in my precinct by other police officers, they treat me like I have 18 years on. Such respect. I've been given several awards. I got the Medal of Valor a couple of weeks ago. It's like they don't treat me like a guy with three years on, or two years on when this happened. They even joke around now and say, "I know if something else happens I'm running right behind you." So it, in a way, this reputation you're supposed to live up to, like, God forbid if something happens, if I run away…it'd be like, "He really is a scaredy-cat. Maybe he was making all that up." But it's just like, I'm not nervous at all about something happening. My wife is crying every day about it and I tell her its alright, I'm not going to do anything stupid. But I know how I am and I know that I am gonna get involved with something, if there is another attack. But I'm not nervous about it. I don't think anything's gonna happen to me. I'm not stupid. I'm not going to just run into a chemical attack. I know when to retreat. The experience…it's, it's, it's, I know how I'm going to react now in these situations. Like, if you're in a gunfight, if you ever have to fire your weapon, you might have missed, terribly missed the suspect. And then next time you're gonna be a little bit more relaxed, and aim, and do everything you were taught. So I know that, the first time this happened, I'm convinced that I did it right. And if something were to happen again I know I'll do it right again. Maybe even do a little bit more this time. I'll know, we are better prepared now, we've had trainings, in terms of evacuations, when to retreat and when to help, when to say "This is over my head, I better get out of here." So I'm confident. I personally think something is going to happen, and I think it is going to happen in my precinct. I think it's going to be something at the financial center, the Stock Exchange. Um, but it doesn't bother me. I mean, I hope that nobody dies, obviously. I hope I don't die, of course, but I'm just prepared for the worst. But at the same time, it doesn't scare me at all. And that's because of September 11th. I just feel that I am prepared. I feel I've gone through the worst. I always thought the reason I lived September 11th was God has His plan for me and my family, where, I have a daughter now. My wife and I have since, after the miscarriage, she became pregnant again and we had a daughter last October. She's 4 months old now, she's beautiful, I'm happy as can be. So I always said that the reason why I lived that day was because my wife and I were meant to have a family. So, we have the family now. So maybe, my seed is planted so to speak, I have an offspring, I have a child, maybe now I'm not needed in the big picture of things. Maybe I did my part in life here. I gave my wife a beautiful child, and a family. Maybe if I were to pass away now, if something were to happen, my wife won't be alone now. But, that still doesn't bother me. I think that my wife and I are meant to have several children, you know, and, and have a long happy life. Retire and move to Florida and all that stuff. But, it just doesn't make me nervous anymore, everything that's happening. I expect to one day hear a huge explosion, or have someone run up to me and say a guy just lit off a gas canister, and I'm just gonna go to it like another job. And do what I have to do.

R: What about your relationship with your wife, or family, friends. Have you noticed any change in your relationships with other people?

S: Um, yeah, (hesitant) I mean, I have a lot of friends and I've always been close with my family. Everyone is very proud of me, and speaks about me. My wife brags about me to co-workers, my family. But, um, they're very scared for me. They're always asking me everyday, "How are you doing down there? Be careful. Don't get into anything messy. Be careful what you do." My wife is very upset these days, because we all know something is gonna happen. Especially once, I pretty much assume the attack on Iraq is gonna happen. Once that happens you know any day we can expect something, something here. So, they're very nervous, very scared. But, um, the relationships are for the better, that's for sure.

R: Oh, in what way?

S: It shows a lot more affection. You wouldn't say every day to, like, my father wouldn't say to me every day "I'm very proud of you." Of course he loves me I know he loves me I know he's proud of me. But it's not something that he would go out of his way to say every time. Like my mother, my brother, my brother is also a police officer, he has 11 years on, he's told me, "The things that you've done, in 11 years I've never seen, you did things in your year and a half that guys never do in 30 years on the job." He's like, "I brag about it to guys I work with all the time." You know, he goes, "I'm very proud of you." So, it's definitely for the better.

R: And what about, with, like, what is your experience now of the world you live in? Has there been any change there?

S: Um, yeah, I'd say so. With civilians, for one, after the original day of September 11th, the first coming weeks, um, very supportive, we love NYPD, you guys are the greatest, good job, we love you. You knew it wasn't gonna last. That doesn't bother me. I was cursed out plenty of times before for doing nothing except telling a guy to move a car, and I knew it was gonna happen again. It lasted maybe 4 or 5 months, which was longer than I expected. Then it went back to normal, getting cursed out again all the time. But then, hearing all the things now about anti-war and protesting…they want to have this big rally on Saturday, for instance, and it's just not a good idea to have a rally outside of the United Nations when we have all these terrorist threats. We need, we can't afford to put police at an anti-war rally in front of the United Nations when, what, are we gonna take them away from the Stock Exchange? We're gonna take them away from the Brooklyn Bridge? Are we gonna take them away from the Empire State Building? You know, there's so many people working now and everyone, it's like, the thing with the French and the Germans, don't go to war, what has Iraq done, and Hollywood, saying they haven't done anything, Al Qa'ada, they're just martyrs. You know what, I want to say, "You weren't here that day, first of all. You, obviously you didn't lose anybody you cared about that day. I'll tell you what, when something happens, when this attack does happen, first of all you're gonna feel like an idiot 'cause you're saying nothing's gonna happen. Second of all, come down here, put on a uniform, and respond to it like we did. And you'll have a different state of mind." It's made me very bitter towards anybody…of course I don't want a war, but it's made me bitter toward these people who are saying just let Saddam Hussein be, just let Iraq be, let the terrorists be, if we don't

bother them they won't bother us. Well, no, we didn't bother them and they did bother us. Already people have forgotten. One of the slogans that we've had is "9/11 Never Forget" and in the precincts guys have written under it, "Already Forgotten." Because it's already forgotten, it's been a tourist site for over a year now. Everyone cares more about what they're gonna build there than about what happened that day. And everyone's upset about traffic congestion, and being searched going into a concert. I worked the Christmas tree lighting last year, and people didn't want to be searched. The front page of the Daily News yesterday, "Expect massive delays and congestion due to police checkpoints." You know what, if this would have been done on September 10th maybe this wouldn't have happened. We wouldn't have to go through this now. But, people are worried more about convenience than they are about safety. Like I said, I've seen it all the time downtown where the whole stock exchange is blocked off, "You can't walk through this block, sir, it's closed off." "Why?" "For security, it's blocked off, walk around." "Oh, this is fucking ridiculous. You guys and your security." They don't care. Nobody cares anymore. And in a way, I want to say to people, "You know I hope another attack happens and I hope you're in the middle of it. You'll change your mind then. I hope someone you know dies, and then maybe you'll change your mind about the way you talk to us."

R: So that attitude really makes you angry.

S: Yeah, it makes me very, very angry. I've had a lot of arguments with civilians, justified, where they're giving me lip because, "Officer why is that cop standing with a machine gun in front of the World, the, uh, the Stock Exchange?" "For security, what do you think?" "Isn't that a little much?" "I don't know. I thought that hijacking two planes and flying them into the World Trade Center was a bit much, too, don't you think?" "Gee, they're not gonna do that again." "Oh, they can't drive a truck into here, a guy can't just open up his jacket and pull out a machine gun and start shooting everybody? You think that doesn't happen? Don't you read the news? Don't you know Israel, Palestine? Sound familiar?" "Oh, I think that's ridiculous, you guys are just buffing out." "Alright, get away from me. And when an attack happens, you'll probably run behind me, though, right?" So, it's made me very bitter toward people. And it's only a handful, of course, but in terms of the world, everybody's gotta throw in their two cents. Why do I care that Madonna is making an anti-war video? Why is that news? Why does Sean Penn have to go to Iraq to buddy-buddy with Saddam Hussein to show that we can get along with these people? Everyone has to get a bit of what happened that day. But none of them were there. And I just find it very two-faced. People, when it first happened, we want to help, we'll give money, we'll donate our time and now it's like, just leave then alone, we don't want to get involved over there. They got involved over here. We didn't start this.

R: One thing I'm also wondering about is, you mentioned religion a few times and I was wondering about your experience of the meaning of life, if that's change for you. Is there anything that stands out or has been significant for you in that sense that was a change from before September 11th?

S: Nothing on the negative. I never have said, "Why did this have to happen? Why would God let this happen?" Nothing like that. I've always looked at it as a great day for me, because if I would have died, if God would have said "September 11, 2001, is the day [Andy] dies," then there would have been a hole in my family's life. And, my wife. I didn't that day. For some reason there were 4 or 5 miracles that day that got me out of there. Not just one. I lived through a lot of miracles that day. And I just think that, that's also another reason why I kind of feel invincible. You know, I'm using that word very loosely, of course. But I just think that I was meant to do other things. Maybe I lived that day not just to have a kid, a family, with my wife. Maybe I lived that day because, on another day, I have to help other people. Maybe I've already saved people in other ways I don't even know about. So I just think, I believe in the whole "big picture" thing. Not so much that your life is already lined up before you were even born, but just more that everyone has a purpose in life. And I feel that my purpose wasn't to die that day. It was to have a family with my wife. I still think there's, I'm meant to have a bigger family with my wife, and grandchildren, great-granchildren. And, that's not just trying to sound like a fairytale or anything. It's a feeling I've always had. And, especially after that day, it's like, there's just so many things, so many people who were standing where you're sitting who died that day. And I didn't. And people who were just standing outside of the building when the second plane hit and got hit or crushed with debris. The fireman who was helping outside and got crushed by a jumper. None of that happened to me. But yet I was in all of their positions. It *could* have been me. Every single time it could have been me, but it never was. And I think that, there's more for me to do in this life. It wasn't supposed to end on that day, and it's not supposed to end next weekend. It's just, the way that I handled it that day, and dealing with people I've seen, DOA, a gentlemen I saw stabbed in front of me, dealing with that, I think that all that, it's just better experience. You know I wish I'd never seen anyone shot or stabbed or die in front of me, or obviously September 11th, but you just take the bad and try to make a good, where I can use it to help another time when it happens. Help people out of that situation, or, even if it's just psychological for people.

R: What do you mean?

S: Just telling them. Like the lady who, who I put the fire out on. I'm 99% sure she died. And I'm looking at her and I'm like, "How is she still alive?" But yet I'm telling her, "You're gonna be alright. You're gonna be Ok. Everything's fine. The fire's out. The ambulance is right here. Don't worry about it. You're Ok. You're Ok." I very much doubt she lived. Very much doubt. Like I said, I'm thinking, "This lady is dead. How is she still breathing?" So even if it's just telling people it's gonna be alright, come on let's go, you know, follow me.

R: Providing comfort?

S: Yeah. And then maybe if you follow me, it might not work out, but, you made them feel good up until that point. That's all you can do. So, I just feel there's a lot more for me to do, that's all.

R: It sounds like you already felt like there was a purpose for your life but then September 11th made you feel, like that was confirmed.

S: It justified everything I thought. Yeah, it confirmed it. It just, just the fact that was probably the biggest incident ever to happen in the United States, to be at the center of it, one of the biggest incidents to ever happen in the history of the world, and the fact that I was at the center or the bottom of it, and I came away the way I did, saving as many lives as I did and still coming back, you know, I haven't called out sick ever since. You know, some guys went line-of-duty the next day who didn't even come close to what I went through. I'm fine though. Why am I gonna go sick if I'm not sick? I don't need to, I'm fine. What am I gonna do, abandon everybody else I work with? And have one less body here, to, you know, we have all these 12-hour posts that we're standing on. If you guys are gonna do it, I'm gonna do it. Just because I went through something, I'm alright. I went through a lot but I'm fine. You know, so, it's just, uh, I don't know…It's been going good, though, since then. I've dealt with it. It doesn't…I think it was, it was a good day for me personally. Like I said, it confirmed a lot of the feelings I had…that I was meant to be a police officer. I turned it down once before, when I was 21. My father and my brother and my uncle are all police officers. Not that I didn't want to I just, I knew a lot about it, I grew up in a cop family. I knew everything about it, and it just wasn't interesting for me. I didn't feel I needed it. And then I took it the second time, because I was getting married and I still had a so-so job. But it didn't have benefits, no retirement, no pension. It was a dead-end job. It was good for a single guy, but not for a family. So I knew I had to get something that would provide for a family. So, I made the right decision, I feel, coming on the job. I have no regrets about it. Even if I would have died that day, I have no regrets.

R: Ok, well listen, I think that is a good place to stop for now. Your experience is so incredible and I think its really going to be valuable for my research. So I want to thank you again for meeting with me…(tape is shut off)

Interview #2

R: So, um, there are about eight different areas that I wanted to ask you about, so, let's just dive in. Do you have any questions or anything you wanted to talk about first?

S: No. After I hear what your questions are maybe I'll have something to add.

R: Right, ok. So, the first thing is, it was really remarkable to me just how vivid, how detailed your memory was of that day. And, especially considering it's now been a year and a half, um, that was, it really stood out just how much detail you remembered. I was wondering if you have that same sort of detailed memory for other things in your life, or if you feel you do remember that day in special detail?

S: I do have a very good memory. I've never gone through anything as traumatic as this. I remember this more than, say, my highschool graduation, or graduating from the police academy, for instance. Ever since I've gotten on this job, it's been a little over three

years now, any kind of a job where it's been something physical or a gun run or a stabbing or something, I always remember that. So, maybe it's something with something that was really, I don't want to say traumatic, but something that really gets your energy going. You hear that gun run, or that 10-13 come over, you just get into it. I always remember everything about specific jobs that was a heavy job.

R: Heavy, meaning…?

S: Where I had to wrestle somebody or, uh, there was a gun involved. Not a shooting, I've never been involved in a shooting. Um, somebody took a swing at me or I had to make a physical arrest or, uh, actually, just today there was a traffic accident where the person was pinned in the car, the car was overturned. I remember stuff like that.

R: You responded to that today?

S: It was actually in the []th precinct, but it was such a serious job, it was right on the border, so we went over there. She was okay.

R: Good. Glad to hear that.

S: Yeah, I was surprised.

R: So things, then, that seem to have a high intensity level you recall more clearly. Do you have any sense of what it is about it that makes it that way for you? And, you might not even know but I'm wondering if you have any sense of, is it the danger or is it exciting, or that you have to be ready for anything?

S: Yeah, what you said. Actually, all three, because for one it's what you have to do. I understood that when I became a police officer. The adrenaline really gets up there when something like that happens. And it's also because I've learned, since I've come on the job, that when you come to a situation like today when a car is overturned, or on 9/11, everyone's coming to you, asking me for answers. I have to have the answers. So, it's like a take-charge situation, you have to take charge when you're in uniform. It's a combination, definitely adrenaline, definitely it's part of your job and it's also that, I won't say you like it, nobody likes it to take charge 'cause when there's multiple police officers there, too many people taking charge there's a problem. But, you have to be ready to be in charge and sort things out.

R: You have to be ready to be in charge.

S: Yes. You have to understand that as soon as you pull up, even though you don't know exactly what is going on, people are jumping in your face, yelling about it. You have to sort things out.

R: Another thing I want to ask you, I understand you have to really be on your toes, but it also sounds like it is something you just do, that you're not saying to yourself, "Ok, I really have to pay attention," you just…

S: You just do it. That's a perfect example with September 11th. I never thought about running into the first tower, I just did. As I, actually, the real thing that made me run into the tower, as I was running towards it when I first came upon the people outside, who were already dead, was debris was falling right next to me, so I had to run in. But, the thing with when the first plane hit and my partner and I realized what was going on I just ran to the tower without my partner. Which is a no-no. But, just instinctively I knew something was happening right down the block. I had to go there. So, without even thinking I just ran there.

R: While we're on that, let me ask you, I wanted to ask you some questions about the decisions that you made throughout the day. You're saying that when it first happened you just instinctively went, you said you had to go there. But why did you have to go there? Do you think if, say, you weren't a cop, I'm imagining you wouldn't have thought you have to go there.

S: Yeah.

R: But, you instinctively did that, even to the point of leaving your partner behind, which you're not supposed to do. I'm wondering if you can talk about all those decisions that you made. I guess I'm, it's hard to answer a question like this. But, I'm wondering if you could talk about,uh, what it was like to be faced with those choices.

S: Like what made me decide to run this way rather than that way? Stuff like that?

R: Right, right.

S: Well first, when I first ran there, away from my partner, I stopped and realized I shouldn't be doing this. I told him, well, he was driving, he was the driver, and he was standing in front of the driver's side of the car. So, I said "Bring the car around and meet me in front." And then once he tried to come around it was all chaos and he never was able to see me again. But, then again, I should have waited outside until he came. But in terms of decisions once I was inside, the one thing on my mind, which I told you about last time, the one thing I kept thinking about was, not necessarily, not priority of helping people, I saw everyone was ok, with the exception of the people who I saw in the lobby who were either dead or on fire, once I saw people being evacuated my own priority was to find other police officers to help them help everybody else. Because I know, the amount of people being evacuated from the building, just me, wasn't going to do much. So I knew that I had to find other police officers and join in with them evacuating everybody.

R: Tell me more about that. Why was it so important to find other police officers? Would they be more in charge than you? Or you could join something that was already going on?

S: I was thinking procedure. I'm out of the academy not even a year and I was thinking that, well I knew now that I'm inside the building without my partner, and I knew I couldn't go back outside because of the falling debris. It wasn't safe. So I just assumed if I find other police officers…It's kind of like CYA, you know, cover your ass. If I'm with other police officers, not thinking anything bad is gonna happen, if someone says, "Where were you?" Well, "I was with the guys from the Task Force," or "I was with ESU helping evacuate the building."

R: So that is police department procedure, is that what you're saying, that you have these rules you are supposed to follow. If they asked you where you were, you're not supposed to say, "Oh, I decided to go off on my own?"

S: Yeah. Like, you…whether or not I saved a thousand people, if I were to say, "Well, I ran away from my partner because I wanted to go help people on my own." That's a no-no. So I knew that, evacuating people by myself, one I didn't think it would really make a difference, people already knew where they were going. Port Authority was already telling people where to go. And I ran across Port Authority Cops, I just wanted to find NYPD cops. And I just said, there must be some kind of evacuation going on with the PD, and probably my precinct is in charge of that, let me find that, and then, get back into procedure.

R: Ok, so following police procedure was really present in your mind. It sounded to me, from what we talked about before, that that came up for you quite a bit throughout your whole experience, what you were supposed to be doing. Uh, was that sort of, the impression I have now is that you were concerned about getting in trouble.

S: Yes.

R: And was there another reason, too, or anything more to it? Was there any sense that you didn't want to be on your own? Did you think it would be reassuring to find other cops?

S: Actually, I liked being on my own more because, since I was new, I didn't have to worry about doing something right or wrong. I could just trust my instinct. And whatever my decisions are, there's not going to be somebody telling me to do things another way. I was looking for the other cops, to get back into whatever their procedure was, though, to be honest there wasn't much of a procedure going on at this time, but I didn't mind that it was just me going around to people evacuating them on my own. Once I got into the hotel and I saw all those people just sitting there, without any police, without any Port Authority, just sitting there, who had no idea how serious things were, just me myself saying, "Come on, you gotta get out of here." I think if I was around other

police officers I wouldn't have been vocal like that. If there were other officers there, I would have waited until they said something first.

R: Ok. Now I wanted to see if you could comment on if there were choices you made all along the way because you were a cop compared to choices that you made just because you're a person. You know? Can you comment on things you did because you thought of yourself at that time as a police officer. I know its asking you to speculate, but…

S: No, I can comment on that. I've thought about stuff like that. The one thing that, I come from a police family, my father, my brother, my uncle, and my grandfather. Plus I was 28 when all of this was going on, so I was a little older (than the average probationary police officer.) I've always been taught, before the Academy, when you're a police officer, treat everyone the way you would want your mother to be treated by a police officer. So I was thinking, when I saw people who asked me for help, the woman on fire, all the people who were scared in the Marriott and wanted to get out, asking me "What do I do?" I knew things were getting bad and it was time to get out of there. I knew not to just walk away from them. This is, it's not really the wrong or right way to look at it, I was thinking "This might be someone's sister" you know, "This is someone's wife." And I know that if my wife was in this situation I would want a cop to help her, to get her out of there. So I think about it in terms of family members. I put myself, and my family, in that position. If this was my wife right now asking me how to get out of here, even though I know I gotta get out of here myself, I would want a cop to treat my wife like that. So I take that into consideration, with all of the jobs that I handle. Whenever someone asks me for help, or even directions, it could be a cop's mother asking me for directions. So I just always try…I just like to do it the right way.

R: Mm, hmm. So it sounds like you don't make a big distinction between acting as a police officer and acting as a person, that's it's wrapped up into the same thing, you identify strongly with being a police officer and that means to treat people the way you want to be treated.

S: That's the way I was raised. You just help in whatever way.

R: Do you think if you had been in the same spot, on that day, but just as a civilian, and that happened, do you think you would have run in or run away?

S: If I was there before any police were there, I definitely would have run in. Because, if you see someone hurt like that or begging for help, I wouldn't have run away. If police officers were already there, I would have let them do what they had to do, but being the first one there, I would have stopped.

R: Ok. I also wanted to ask what stands out for you as the most crucial points of making choices throughout.

S: Ah, one was, which could have killed me, was never leaving the building. I always use this term whenever I say this, that's why my memory is so vivid from it, I've gone

over this so many times in my own head, when the building first started to collapse and I was going across the corridor and I was covering up in the fetal position, knowing, "This is it," saying my prayers, thinking about my wife, actually before I even said my prayers or thought about my wife, actually the first thing I said was, "Why didn't I leave this building when I had the chance?" I was so mad at myself. I even said, reflecting on what we just spoke about, I said, "I stayed to help all these other people, and now I'm going to die." I knew I made the wrong decision. I kept saying, like I said last time, it seemed to go on for a half hour even though this whole thing took place in about 60 seconds I had about a half hour's worth of thoughts. And the very first thing was, "I could have left this building so many times, but I stayed because I wanted to help other people." I was mad at myself. "Why did I do that? I could have been out of here. Now *my* wife is not going to have a husband. And is never going to have a baby with me." Like I said, we just had the miscarriage. That's when I started thinking about my wife, and family. Then, "Just let this be painless."

R: So you were really thinking…

S: I was regretting. I was regretting staying. Because, like I said, I helped all these other people, and it's going to be for nothing. They might be ok, but how's it going to leave my wife and my family? So I was mad. That I'm going to die like this. Any other decisions in there, was when I found a way down into the parking garage downstairs, the firemen, the two security guards and the three or four firemen, they wanted, when we first got downstairs and we couldn't find the exit, they wanted to go back upstairs and I just had such a bad feeling about going back up there. I just did not want to go back up there. And two security guards swore that there was an exit down here, we just have to look for it. And the firemen said, "Let's go back upstairs. Someone will come and get us." And if we had gone back upstairs, the second one fell, we'd all be dead. I just had a bad feeling about going up there, there was a fire on the other side of the debris. For all we know it could have already been destroyed. I was almost in a panic now, looking with the flashlight, "There's got to be an exit. It has to be here." And just by waiting an extra 30 seconds it was. Because they had already decided to go back upstairs. Just by staying an extra 30 seconds, the smoke started to clear away, and I saw the EXIT sign, and they were all able to get out. So, if I just would have said, "Yeah, alright, let me do what the firemen say and go upstairs and wait for someone to find us," we all would have been dead.

R: Let me ask you about that. I can imagine there was some pressure to go along with what the firemen said to do, since it was a fire situation, and you're new on the job, I don't know what your experience of who was in charge was, but they were already going back up, so what do you think it was that made you stay? It seems like there would have been a lot of pressure to follow them.

S: No, they weren't giving me any pressure. They were asking me a lot of questions because they weren't familiar, I wasn't familiar with the building either, but, I had been in and out of the Marriott for about an hour straight at this time so I was familiar with what it looked like before everything came down. But, I was just putting my trust in the

security guards who said there was a way out of here. And the firemen said the way out of here is now destroyed, we can't get out this way. And had such a, I just thought that, I was so lucky upstairs, that there was no more luck up there. Once the security guard said, "I can see light in front of me" and the fireman said, "No, that's a fire," I said I'm not going back up there. There's a fire up there, it's all caved in, there's only one way out of there, and we're in the one way out. If the security guards say this is the way out, I don't care what I have to do, if I gotta move debris, if I have to cut my hands up moving stuff, burn them, I'm gonna find it. But I just *know* that upstairs is not the answer. It's just a gut feeling. Like I said, that's the key phrase, I felt I had no more luck upstairs. It's a dead end up there.

R: You just really felt that deep down.

S: I just felt that, if I go back up there, that's it. Never thinking that the second one is gonna fall. Forget about it. If we would have been up there when the second one fell, the little bit that covered us was gone. When both buildings fell, the entire Marriott was gone. So we were fortunate that we were on the one side that stood up. So, obviously if we would have known the second one was gonna come down they all would have been working a little harder to find the way out. But, you know, they thought, "You know what, we're alive, someone will come and find us." But I just didn't think about that. No radios were working. They're all saying "Mayday, mayday." No one's answering. So I just, we gotta do this on our own. I made it this far, we gotta get out one way or the other, but it's not going back up that way.

R: Ok. Any other points at which you felt like the decision you made was really crucial?

S: Well, never going upstairs in the tower…When I first got there, they said I was the only cop there. There was a security guard for the Trade Center who grabbed me and said, "We have a decapitated body on the 33rd floor. We have to recover the head." At first I said "OK" and then I said, wait a second, I'm not going up there, that's not my job. I mean, he's dead, we'll get the body later, right now we have to get these people who are alive out of here. But I saw ESU cops going upstairs and Port Authority, and, I just never went upstairs. I just knew that wasn't (shrugs).

R: Did you have a bad feeling about that, too?

S: It wasn't that. It was just that I saw all the people coming down without any problem. I didn't see anybody upstairs yelling for help. The plane hit on the 80-something floor, I knew I wasn't walking up there, that's for the Fire Department, they're here. But in terms of any police officers going up there, they are doing whatever job they have. Seeing ESU go up there, I knew they had a job, whatever reason, to go up there. I said I'm supposed to, as far as I believe, to evacuate people. I see everybody coming down the stairs with no problem so I just decided to stand down here and direct them out the front door. I just knew I shouldn't be going up there. Again, that's in terms of being a new police officer, being afraid of doing something wrong here. I didn't think it was my job to go up there.

R: So that's where some of your training influenced your decision-making in a way that helped you. You thought about the training you had and followed those procedures.

S: Yes.

R: I'd like to get back to asking you about your detailed memories of the day…Are there any experiences you had that day that stand out to you as ones you remember *especially vividly*? Anything, among everything you went through and remember in so much detail, is there anything that stands out as especially vivid?

S: The woman on fire. I remember everything about that, everything she said to me. Another one was right before the building collapsed, the last two people I was evacuating, there was an older gentleman, not really older but probably in his late 50's, a heavy set guy, and he had a bad limp and he was with a woman younger than him, not younger like a daughter, maybe a younger wife or maybe a business associate, but he was definitely (garbled) because he was in business attire. And I remember they were the last two I saw sitting on the couch in the lobby. And I started yelling at them saying "What are you doing here, you gotta get out of here. Let's go!" And the guy said, very calm, he said, "Officer I have a bad leg," a bad leg or a bad ankle, "I move slow." And I said, "Sir, you gotta suck it up. We gotta get out of here." And I was kind of yelling at him, you know. Because I knew things were really bad at this time. You could just tell. I was starting to have that feeling, about what I saw outside, I was pretty much alone in the lobby now. Everybody else either left or had gone up in the building. So I just knew we had to get out of here. I was kind of yelling, but just kind of just raising my voice, like, "Come on, sir. Get out of here. Right now. Let's go, follow me." I said, "Forget your bags. Leave your bags. Let's go. Follow me." And he got up, and he was a couple of steps behind me and it was right at that moment when someone screamed, "It's coming down." That's when I just started running straight. And, I don't know whatever happened to the two of them. They could have been on the other side of the debris and everything's ok. Or, I kind of assume, they were in the part of the debris that just got, uh destroyed. So I've always wondered about those two people. I remember speaking to the guy. I remember his face. He wasn't scared at all. He was just, "I have a bad leg, sir. It takes me time to move." And I kind of felt guilty for yelling at the guy. You know. And I don't know if he made it or not. He might have, he might not have.

R: And what do you think about that now?

S: I feel guilty about yelling at the guy. I really do. Even though I was trying to help him. Knowing that he's probably dead now, and that I yelled at him. And I also felt bad because physically he couldn't help himself. And I couldn't pick the guy up he was huge. He could walk, he was just slow that's all. It was almost like he had a limp because he was so heavy. He wasn't enormous, like 300 pounds, but you could see he was a heavy guy and the way he walked was because of his weight. And, uh, I just feel guilty that, assuming 99% that the guy probably died, from the way it looks, and from when everything collapsed I was in an area about this size, knowing that everybody on

that side and that side is probably dead, that wasn't in that area with me, so I just assume the two of them died. So I felt a little guilty. Very guilty about it. I yelled at this poor guy. And it wasn't his fault he couldn't move, you know. He did get up, he did try. So, I always thought about that. Wondering if he made it. But I don't think so.

R: You didn't tell me about that before.

S: I thought I told you…Maybe I didn't tell you about the part about me yelling at the guy. I know that every time I've spoken to you I've said, the last two people that I was evacuating is when someone said…, I was leaving the building with two people. Those are the two people. But, yeah, I guess I just never said, because if you ask about it in terms of decisions, or regrets. That always, it's always been on my mind about the guy. It's not his fault he couldn't get up. He was just waiting there for help.

R: Of course if the building hadn't come down you might have saved his life by yelling at him.

S: He might be alive. But, like I said, we never assumed it was going to come down. What my bad feeling was about how we gotta get out of here, collapse was not the bad feeling, that was never a thought in my mind at all. The bad feeling was more like a fire, like a fire's gonna break out in the lobby at any time. Not a collapse.

R: Yeah.

S: So that's why I was in such a hurry with everybody.

R: Mm,hmm. You had no idea what was getting ready to happen.

S: Right.

R: And what about the woman that was on fire who you were there with her in her last moments? I know you remember that very vividly and you've told me about it several times. Can you tell me what it is about that experience that really sticks with you?

S: Yeah, um, seeing someone die right in front of your eyes. The way that she was begging me for help. And, uh, just, there's nothing I can do for her, except what I thought was to put the fire out. I'm thinking, the fire, that's the problem. Once I get the fire out she'll be ok. But that was the last thing. Because nothing could save her at that point. But the fact that she's, her legs are on fire, when I first came upon her and her legs were on fire and she's telling me she can't breathe.

R: Yeah.

S: And I'm like, how much pain can she be in that her legs are on fire and she's not even moving, she's not saying, "I'm on fire." She's just like, "I can't breathe." This is serious, a serious condition. So, I mean, I don't know, maybe because that's the very

first part of it all, the first thing I saw. Well the first thing I saw were the people on fire in the lobby, on the street. But she was the first person I came upon who was alive that actually needed help. The other people I came upon, 'ok, dead, dead, dead,' and just keep going, so eventually I came upon someone that was alive and was just like…

R: You couldn't help her.

S: No. I thought, "Just put the fire out and everything will be ok," but, she was…

R: You thought she might be ok?

S: Well I knew she was on fire and she's alive so I assume if I get the fire out, that's a start, you know.

R: Right.

S: Until EMS or FD gets here. And, just that, once put it out and I started talking to her saying, "It's ok, the ambulance is coming," you know, you got a sense of, uh, she doesn't even know who she's speaking to right now. Like, she never said, "Officer, help me." She was just like, "Help me. I can't breathe." And her screaming, you know, it was…

R: She was screaming?

S: Yeah, she was screaming. So it was…I'll always, definitely, that was very vivid in my mind.

R: She died right in front of you.

S: If this was a regular situation, I wouldn't say she was "pronounced" right there. But in terms of her screaming and, and saying "I can't breathe," and begging for help, she stopped all that and wasn't breathing. So, I mean, I walked away once EMS was there. I mean if, if, if it was a regular situation they would have got her on a stretcher and put her on oxygen and got her out of there. Even if she would have stopped breathing right there because they'd work on her on the way to the hospital.

R: Right.

S: But, I'm, I'm pretty sure that, um, I've seen people die, aided cases or a person had a heart attack and they're working on 'em and they're dead. But the ambulance takes them anyway and keep working on them because you never know, you never know. Let's justt get them in the ambulance and see what happens. I don't think that happened because of what was going on. But I walked away when they got there. And at that point she had already stopped breathing and talking and screaming. So I assume, you know. They started working on her and I just walked away.

R: So what kind of thoughts and feelings have you had about that since that time? How do you think about that now? What's that like for you?

S: I wonder who she was. You know, the first days afterwards one of the posts I had was that downtown hospital, which is the closest hospital to all this. And if you remember all over the city they had all of those "Missing" pictures everywhere. I scoured the hospital for her picture, trying to see who she was. Maybe, just maybe, I could see the picture and call the number and talk to the family. Maybe it would be some kind of closure for them? Because I remember the face. The face wasn't burnt. You know, it was the rest of her body. But, I just, that's the one thing, I would like to know who she was. This poor lady, she literally just opened the doors to the lobby and got hit with a burst of fire. She never knew what hit her. The next thing she knows, she's dying, on fire, burning to death. So I'll always wonder who she was, you know. If she did die, I'm pretty sure she did. The name is the big thing. Just wondering who she was. Her family's still looking for her. Once again it goes back to someone's mother, or someone's sister, you know. She was probably in her late forties. I wonder who she was.

R: Mm, hmm. Ok. Anything else stand out?

S: That was hard. That was…everything that happened, you know, it was…get the fire out, talk to her, she died. You know. Like I said, I remember exactly what she looked like, the position she was in, her clothes being burnt off, what she said to me. That's everything that had happened. There was nothing else. I remember that.

R: I remember that you also described a man who was already dead. It was interesting to me that you described everything he was wearing, everything about him you remember in such detail. Do you think it's a similar thing? Why do you think you remember such vivid details about that?

S: Because he just looked like such a regular guy. You know, going to work, in his business suit. I remember him wearing glasses, black guy, wearing glasses. Looked like a Dad. You know? And same thing, this guy just walked through the doors and just got hit with this fire. And now he's dead. And his position. And the way that he was engulfed in flames. The woman, just her legs were on fire, and it was enough that I could put it out with my shirt. But the guy, his whole body was engulfed in flames. So, I knew there's no helping this guy. He was dead. He was almost solid, almost like frozen solid, even though he's on fire. His whole body was in one position, stuck. It wasn't just like flat, with no movement. It was, his hands were up in the air, his legs up in the air, just like this. Everything just tightened up on him. And you figure if he's dead his arms would be at his side, his legs would be flat on the ground. But his legs and hands were up in the air.

R: Like he died in that position.

S: Like that was the position, yeah. When I first talked about that with people, other police officers, they said maybe it was somebody from the plane. It sounded like they were in a seated position. But, I doubt it.

R: Yeah.

S: You know, maybe he, when he saw the fire, he fell back like this, it came at him like this. And someone mentioned something to me about, I don't know if it's when you're dying, but something happens to your spine where everything just tightens up on you. I don't know.

R: It sounds to me like one thing that really struck you about both of these people is that they were just going about their business and didn't even know what hit them.

S: Yeah. Just, you know, for me I was going in there, I knew what I was getting into. And I know every day that I could be going to a situation like that. Them, they're just going to work in their office and it's the last thing they expect. You know, when these people kissed their loved ones goodbye that morning or said goodbye to whoever, you know, I'm sure that their family members aren't worried about them getting burned to death in the World Trade Center. You know. For a police officer or a fireman, you know, I kiss my wife goodbye in the morning, anything could happen to me during the day. I could get shot, stabbed, car accident, simply because of what I'm wearing. The uniform. But these people, they, you know, they're going to what they assume is a safe place, you know, an office building, and for this to happen, it's just…

R: Can you tell me what emotion or what meaning you make of that for yourself? Do you know what I'm saying? What is it about that that strikes you?

S: It's just, um. It's not really guilt, but uh, because it's not my…I wouldn't place the guilt on me for this, it's not my fault, obviously, but, it's, you feel bad. You have pity for the families and for them. The poor guys, all the people, were just going to work, and then this has to happen to them? Because of 17 or 18 lunatics in the planes. You know, you feel bad. Just regular people, just going to work and, you know, being a good citizen, earning their pay for their family or whatnot, and, you know, open up the door and you're dead. Just like that. For a police officer, you can understand. I can go to a domestic dispute, open up the door to the apartment and get shot. It's similar. But, it's, you can see, oh yeah it's a police officer, it's gonna happen. It's easier to accept, or understand. But these guys, people, men and women, they're just in an office building, you know, who would expect that a terrorist attack is gonna hit them.

R: So there's something about it that seems…it's just not right.

S: Well, it's more like, the cowardness, and my hatred for the hijackers, you know, how low to hit civilians like that. You know all those people in Israel, the Hammas, the suicide bombers who go into the buses and hit civilians, you know, go after the soldier.

You don't go after civilians. So I was more pissed off. These people had to suffer because of a person's religion, or hatred toward our whole country.

F: Ok. I was wondering if you could tell me what its like for you in general… you've mentioned to me that you have discussed what happened to you with other people, and I was wondering if you discuss it in the same way that you and I do?

S: No, no. When it first happened, everyone wanted to hear, everybody heard that I was in the building when it fell. And everyone heard that I took off my shirt to put the fire out on this woman. You know. And I got out through the basement, just the basic details. But I've never discussed emotions, or why I did something. When I talk to other officers, and even my family members, it's just, this happened, this happened, this happened, and then I got out.

R: Right. Ok. And what's it like for you to discuss it…

S: In more detail?

R: Yeah.

S: It feels good.

R: It does? What feels good about it?

S: Just to look at it a different way. You know, because I have pictures of myself that day, and I have awards, and I have a million reminders about what happened that day. But, and I know one thing everyone talks about is, you earned, you became a veteran that day, if you were there. If you were there, you know. It's one of those things. But I know what I did that day and I'm proud of being there and I lived through it. But in terms of emotions, you know, it kind of brings you back, thinking about, hey, you know what, I did feel bad for that guy now that I think about it. And I was kind of scared to go back upstairs now that I think about it. So, it makes me, it kind of takes me back to that day and why, I never thought about why I made these decisions. I just remember, I had to get out of there, I got outta there. But when you ask questions such as you're asking, it makes me think a little deeper about, you know, why'd I stay down there? Because I had a bad feeling about going back upstairs. I ran out of luck. I never thought about it. I never told anyone else that.

R: I wonder if you can think a little about what it's like for you to talk about these more difficult things, like the woman dying, and the man on fire. I mean, I know when we talk I just get a sense from you, obviously that's very important, and it's a difficult thing. I wonder what it's like for you to talk about these things that are so horrific.

S: Well, it's not easy. I don't even talk about it anymore. Like we have a new set of rookies who just came out of the police academy, and downstairs they have the article about me from the New York Post, and people read it. And, uh, one of the training

officers spoke to the FTU (Field Training Unit), I don't like to use the word rookie because I'm only 3 years on myself, but one of the training officers said, "Hey, this guy read your story and he wants to talk to you." And he was saying "I read your story, it's great what you did, I'm so glad to meet you." And the other cop said, "Tell him what you did, tell him what happened." And I just felt like, "You read the story, I don't want to talk about it." Not because it bothers me, it's, just, enough. It's over.

R: You're tired of it? You said, "it's over." What do you mean, "it's over"?

S: It's time for closure. You know, I think people are gonna get sick of hearing about me. There's so many awards and people wanting to talk to me. I don't want to get to the point where people say they've had enough of hearing about me, you know, enough already. And I know I can't live my whole career based on that one day. I know eventually I gotta do something else. You can't be a one hit wonder. And people bring it up a lot. We're hanging out after work, we're sitting in a bar, it's a relaxed atmosphere, and people bring it up. It's like, "Why bring it up? We're trying to have a good time. I don't want to talk about this."

R: It sounds like you want to move on to the future, and not have to go back over that, for other people, but also for yourself.

S: I don't like talking about it, or, I should say I do like, or I will talk about it when I hear somebody bad-mouth the country. Or, question why we are fighting in Iraq. Or just have no heart about what happened that day. I'm like, "Oh yeah, well, you know what? Let me tell you what happened that day." I've spewed some venom on some people down here who've said, oh just get over it. Not to me, just in general talking about it. Or the vendors selling pictures of the building on fire. Right on the grounds, they're selling Ground Zero baseball hats, you know. And someone telling me about answering a call, a dispute, and some guy saying, you don't care about this area. You know, "Oh yeah? Let me tell you about this area, let me tell you what I did for this area, on September 11th. You weren't there, you don't know." So when I hear people saying stuff like that, bad mouthing the country or the police or Americans, I say, "Let me tell you about what Americans that day, you're coming here taking pictures…you don't know what it was like that day." That's when I'll get into it a little bit. That's more personal.

R: Right. Well, that's an emotion. I'm trying to figure out what emotion that is for you. I know you feel angry, but there's also, it obviously hits something in you. What is it that gets you riled up?

S: First, it's anger. Definitely anger. It really pisses me off…

R: But, why?

S: Because people are kind of downplaying it now. I said, it's over with, that's it. That's because, for *me*, in terms of telling my one story. But there are a million stories out there. I just figured that enough is enough from my point of view. It's just anger.

R: Yes, I understand that you feel angry at those times. But, I'm trying to understand what the anger is from. What is personal about it for you?

S: Maybe because I almost died down there. And I knew that, it really upsets me when I see people taking the pictures. People from Wyoming and California coming over here and they're coming here to take a picture of what? Why don't you go to a graveyard and take a picture of headstones. It's the same thing. So then I think about how I almost died there and what if my wife is here and my parents are here crying their eyes out because this is the only place we have, the only resting place we have, and there's somebody rubbing elbows with my wife asking her to move because they're taking a picture? Like, I feel bad, I have pity for the family members. Because I've seen family members down there asking us to get these people out of here selling this stuff. It's a disgrace.

R: You can easily put yourself in the place of family members who lost someone.

S: Putting myself in the place of family members. Or, looking at it in terms of me dying. I think about that. Also, you hear other people tell stories about what they did. But, so many people have created tales about what they did that day. It's just that the police department and the fire department became so popular after this, that everybody suddenly was there that day. And that really bothers me. "You know what. You weren't there." And you know, I'm not proud of being there. But, you just don't know what people went through unless you were there. Don't say you were there just because you are a fireman or a policeman, or, say, you came seven hours later. People want to place themselves in the situation. If I had my choice, I wouldn't want to be there. It's, like, don't be proud of, oh I was there that day and did this and that. Personally I think if you lived, you didn't do enough.

R: Is that how you feel about yourself? That you didn't do enough?

S: I think that I did probably more than some other officers. But, the officers that died, the fact that they died, they gave obviously a lot more. They didn't have to help people. They gave their own life. I know what I did. And as far as the stories I've heard, officers and firemen were just going up the stairs and they died, with the *intent* of helping people. Lets see, it was 23 police officers, 343 firemen. It's not inter-agency dispute. Like, I don't hate firemen. Some of my best friends are firemen but it really upsets me about stories that I heard from my firemen friends in the paper about firemen arguing amongst themselves about who's going to get the free trip to Disneyworld and who's going to go to the free concert or get the Yankee tickets. But you know what? Three hundred forty three of your friends died or in my case, twenty-three of my friends, or coworkers died. Obviously they can't get the free tickets to Disneyworld. Their families should get it. You're getting it simply because you're a fireman. You weren't even there. There became so much bickering about a free trip here or meeting Robert Deniro. Who's going to the dinner with, I don't know, Mayor Guiliani at the time.

R: Right. So again, it sounds to me like what really *gets* you, the thing that just sticks you in a moment like that, what comes up for you is the people that died. And this is what that's about. Would you say that's a fair statement?

S: Yeah. I see no, I got a lot of stuff out of this. I really did. One thing they did here in the precinct was they said, "You know what, you deserve this." I mentioned Deniro because I got my picture taken with Robert Deniro. It was at a police function and I went nowhere near him the whole night and people came up to me and said, "Aren't you going to get your picture taken with Deniro?" And I was like, "No" I actually had an award at this ceremony. I was one of the people it was in honor of and he was there. Billy Crystal, Robert Deniro, and Harvey Keitel, and other famous people were there. I was like, "Nah… I feel funny." And they were like, "Get up there! This is for you! You've got your award. Go take your picture with him!" I'm like, "No. I don't want to take my picture. I don't like that. It's not a happy thing." They're like, "You know what? It is a happy thing. You should be proud of what you did." So that's the way I started looking at it. Yeah, I am proud. I know how proud my family is. The precinct is, they put me in for all these awards and always mention my name in terms of guys who did heroic things that day.

R: So it sounds to me like it's hard for you to feel comfortable being proud of yourself?

S: Yes, very uncomfortable. Very laid back, but also, what's the word, I just don't want to be in the spotlight like that. Not in this situation. If it were something where I chased down a rapist and I solved the big murder case and I got shot in the arm and shot back and got the guy or whatever and saved all these kids, that's different. But in a case like September 11th with what happened, I don't think it should be something that you talk about with pride. The only thing I would talk about with pride is, I'll say I was there. I saw what happened. I took action and you don't want to be where I was that day.

R: So when it's just you yourself thinking about that day, do you feel a sense of pride in how you handled yourself?

S: Yeah, very much.

R: Ok.

S: It comes back to other people talking nonchalantly about it. You know like, "Yeah I was there. Oh, it was a crazy thing." No, it was a little more serious than that. If you're talking like that, you weren't there. I developed pride over it when I hear other people come up to me and say, "Wow, I heard you were there. What was it like? It must have been crazy. It must have been terrible." "Yeah, it was terrible." Like, that's different. When someone says it like that. "Can you tell me about it? Was it really that bad?" Other people are like, "Yeah, you know, I saw a body here and a body there and I was on Houston Street." "Oh, you're on Houston Street? That's 20 blocks away. What are you talking about? You're lying." This isn't the type of situation to lie about. So

many people died. It'd be different if it was just a shooting and I caught the bad guy. That's different. Then that's me.

R: Ok, and that has more of a sense of you made this conscious choice to take action. You made a lot of conscious choices on September 11 to stick around and take action. But there is a sense in which you were saved by…chance.

S: Oh yeah. Ninety-nine percent was chance. And like I said, it all goes back to, fate, being religious, where it just wasn't my time because I have to start a family with my wife. I truly believe that I lived that day because God had intentions of me having a family. The daughter I just had, maybe she's going to grow up to save a lot of people in her own way and if I wasn't here to help conceive my daughter, then somebody in the future's going to die because my daughter's not there to help them. I just think it's a whole chain of events where I was just meant to have this family.

R: So there was a reason you were saved.

S: Yes.

R: Now, let me ask you this. What you went through was *so* extreme. Every step of the way it was extreme. I was thinking, actually, when I was listening to the interview we did before and typing it up, how even, you mentioned coming across that Hispanic woman who was on fire and then, well, she was burned and all her clothes were burned off. The one outside. Even at that point, you could have helped her to safety and then run away yourself and actually still felt good about how you responded that day. You helped somebody, you know, and you lived. And that happened at so many steps along the way. It seems to me, you could have helped all those people get out when they were running over across to the overpass and then you could have run across with them, the last one out, and then gone back to the precinct. There were so many times, it seems to me, where you could have stopped, headed back to the precinct, and still sat here today and felt very good, and rightfully so, about how you acted that day. I'm just wondering if you had any sense, and this again might not be something you can really speak about, but how was it that you managed not to just run for your life or collapse?

S: The first thing you spoke about today. Once I thought I was about to die, I was so upset that I had all these chances to leave and I never did. My whole mind frame was, if this person is this messed up, then the person even further inside is even more messed up who needs help, and I know this is the World Trade Center, there's got to be hundreds of cops in there who need more help. So I just knew that no matter how far I keep going, every step of the way there's going to be someone who needs more help, primarily police officers. I just knew there were cops in there who need more police officers to help them so that's why I just kept going and going and going.

R: Ok, but as you were doing that, were you ever thinking, "Mmm, maybe I should get out of here." Were you deciding?

S: No, right away I thought that. After the thing with the woman in the lobby, once I got inside and then the security guard talking about the decapitated person, then I saw NYC firemen and Port Authority Police inside, I was thinking, you know, I don't think I'm needed here now. I don't see any city police officers in here. This is Port Authority. This is their headquarters. So it was filled with Port Authority police officers and the firemen and I was like, I guess I should get out of here. Let me go find my partner. And then as I looked outside, I was like, I don't think I can even get out of here because debris was falling. That was a game of chance too. You can run outside straight ahead and be fine or you can walk straight and make a left and then something falls on your head and you're dead. So I was like, wow, it looks pretty bad there. Let me see what's going on over here. Eventually I made it into the Marriot where I was like, what are you people doing?

R: So while you were doing that, were you trying to think to yourself, how *am* I going to get out of here?

S: Not at the very beginning. At the very beginning it was evacuate and find police officers.

R: Right, because as you said before, you weren't thinking the building was going to collapse.

S: No. I thought I was actually safer. I thought I was in the safest spot. Inside. As far as I saw, the danger was outside where the debris was falling. And then it turns out, when the second one hit, all the debris from the second plane hitting, killed who knows how many people, including officers, NYPD officers, two officers from my precinct were severely hurt because they were outside helping evacuate. They got hit with debris from the second building, the second plane. So I just thought I was in a safe place, not knowing the second plane was coming, of course. I just thought, wow, there's a lot of debris coming down. I think I actually made the right choice by coming in here. It looks like I'm in a safe spot.

R: A shelter.

S: Yeah, a shelter. So I thought I was doing the right thing by staying inside.

R: Let me ask you a couple questions about your role as a police officer. You talked about your partner. Um, so I was wondering about his importance to you. I know you mentioned it a little bit earlier but, the importance of being with your partner that day. And also, when we did the first interview, you said at one point you talked about him and then you said, "It turns out he was ok but I didn't know that. We'll get back to that later." We didn't get back to that later. So I was wondering if you could talk about your partner a little bit.

S: Yeah, when I first got back to the precinct, knowing what I just went through, how lucky I was to be alive, I knew that I was the only one in the building and I was like,

"I should be dead right now." Whereas, not just my partner, but all the other guys I was working with that day. We had five cars out that day, two guys in a car. So it was ten of us. Minus me, that's nine. So there are nine other guys that I work shoulder-to-shoulder with, who I had no idea. I expected them to be at the precinct when I got back. I went through all that, for hours this was going on, and by the time I got back to the precinct, I thought I would be the last one back because of what I went through. It turns out, I was the *first* one back and my first thought was, they're all dead. They're all dead. Because I knew what it looked like. I knew what we were involved in and I knew they were on the outside so I said, unless they can outrun this building collapsing --I know they were all at the bottom, right underneath it-- they're all dead, every single one of them.

R: So you got back to the precinct and suddenly thought all these people are dead.

S: The people who didn't respond then because obviously they need people in the station, or the people who did respond and before the collapse they were sent back here, were all sitting or standing on the front stoop of the precinct on the corner waiting for all of us, because we're the patrol guys, the first ones to get there, so they're all waiting for us to come back, like "Where are they? Where are they?" And when I got there, they met me with opened arms. I'm a mess, I'm cut, I'm white. No shirt. Just a vest and a short-sleeved shirt underneath it. My uniform hanging off, burnt.. everything. They take me in and I get cleaned up. They're like, "You ok? Where is this guy? Where's that guy?" I was like, "I don't know." So they had me report to the desk. "Go let the sergeant know who you are and that you're ok and what you were doing today. Go to the sergeant now." They're trying to rush me through this because they want to get me cleaned up, get me to sit down, relaxed, get a drink. So I reported to the sergeant. He kind of knew me because like I said, I wasn't there that long at the time. So I said, "I was in sector 80 today," and he goes, "Ok, alright. You're ok. Alright. Where's your partner?" I said, "I don't know. Isn't he here yet?" "No, he's not here." "Sir, what about T____? Or R_____?" "They're not here either." "What about M____ and C____?" "You're the only one." "I'm the only one?" "You're the first one to come back. We're still looking for them. We can't find them." They're dead. That's the first thing in my mind was, they're dead. I said before, getting upset about being nonchalant and lackadaisical, they were just very lackadaisical and in my head I was like, they're dead. Just because I knew. Not that they didn't care. But like, these were the guys who were teaching me. These were all guys who had been here for years who were teaching me how to be a police officer. And it was like, I *know* what it was like and I just can't see anybody else being as lucky as I was, so I just assumed they were all dead. It turns out they were all at the hospital.

R: You said sort of lackadaisical. What was that about, for you, at that moment? Was it so overwhelming that you just kind of had to be like, "Yeah, they're dead."

S: Yeah, because I had just seen so much. I had just seen so many people dead. For that brief moment of time, death was just nothing to me. Like, "Oh, more dead people." Even though these were all my friends, my best friends here who I still work with…

R: Your partner…

S: Yeah. It was just, "They're dead." I know what it was like. There's no way they made it. It was also because I didn't want to give myself hope either. I'm not going to get myself like, "Oh maybe they were in an area like I was." I felt nobody got as lucky as I did. I was lucky. I shouldn't be here. I should be dead. I said there's no way they got that lucky too. So I didn't want to get my hopes up.

R: Ok. Some more things I wanted to ask you about in terms of being a police officer. You also talked about when you saw your CO.

S: Yes.

R: And that he, the conversation you had with him you described as comforting and I was wondering if you could explain that.

S: Once again it goes back to being new. I'm at the bottom of the totem pole here. He's on the top of the totem pole here. And for him, he didn't know me either, being new, but the officer who I saw… when I finally got out I was walking on Greenwich Street. I saw a police car and banged on the window. "Hey it's me." She washed out my eyes. She goes, "Captain, this is Andy . He's in our precinct. He's all messed up. He needs some help." So the captain said, "Andy, are you ok? Why don't you go inside." "You need to take him inside and get him cleaned up." "You're ok, Andy. We'll get you back to the precinct. You relax." So it was like, hearing the big cheese, talking to me like, like, like he cared, you know. And it turns out, after I got to know him, he *is* a great guy. He *does* care. So it made me feel good like, "Alright, the CO. I'm not in trouble." First of all. Because I'm not with my partner. I'm not in trouble. He's not yelling at me, he's concerned. He didn't tell me, "Go back to the precinct and check in," or, "Go stay on this foot post and don't let anybody go over there." He was like, "Go sit down. Get cleaned up. Show him where the bathroom is. Get him a drink of water." So it felt better. But then it was two seconds later, someone says, "The second one's coming," and it was all over again and I was running right behind him.

R: So it was two things about that. One, the relief of not being in trouble, for being alone, leaving your partner and all that. And then it sounds like there was, like you said, the big cheese, the authority figure, your boss, the big guy, just being nice to you.

S: Yeah. I mean he had no reputation of being a *bad* guy. I didn't expect to get yelled at. He has a reputation of being a very nice guy. I had never spoken with him before. Coming from the Academy where you are yelled at by janitors, basically, and then to the CO, the captain speaking to you, calling you by your first name, I was like, "Wow. I feel good." He was very comforting. As time got on, I got to know him with my time here. He's like a best friend, to everybody.

R: So what about what you learned in the Academy? Was there anything about your training that you felt helped you not be afraid that day? Were you relying on your training

a lot while you were in there and doing everything you were doing or were you relying more on your instinct as a human being?

S: To give you an answer, not a cop-out answer, but it's half and half and I'll tell you why. The only training that I thought about was… something one of my instructors at the Academy said, "When the shit hits the fan, everyone's running that way, you've got to run *that* way. You've got to run towards it. You can't run away. They're looking to you for answers and for help." So that was always in my mind, being prepared, that I've got to go in there. It's my job. They're looking to me for help and people were saying, "Help me, help me" and running up to me with all these questions. Like I said, the security guard saying, "We've got a decapitated head." I'm like, "Why are you telling me this?" You know why? Because I'm in uniform. That's why he's telling me this. He thinks that the police are here. It's ok now. And don't freak out. Don't be like, "Oh, my God. A decapitated head!" Keep your composure. So knowing that I have to go in there because it's my job and also knowing that I can't just run away and people are looking to me for answers. That's one thing I thought about in terms of how to handle myself. And then, from instinct, once I was on my own it was like, I'm a big boy. I have a nice loud voice. If I'm going to get out of here, if I'm going to do my job, I'm going to do it my way. And that's how I decided, "Alright, I've got to get these people out." Like when I came to the Marriott, you know from instinct, these people shouldn't be in here. I proceeded and told them to evacuate. I was like, "You shouldn't be here. Lets go, lets go. Get out." And then when people started bringing their briefcases and their luggage like, "Oh, give me a minute, officer." I'm like, "No! A minute? Lets go, now! Leave it! I'll kick it out of your hands if I have to." That was more instinct.

R: It's interesting because I wonder… You say it's instinct but obviously those people didn't have any instinct to leave their stuff and just get out of there but you seemed to have a sense of the greater picture of what was going on, that you need to leave your stuff and get out.

S: I think because of what I had already seen.

R: Oh, ok. Right. They didn't know.

S: I saw how bad it was. I don't think they really knew how bad it was and I let them know. "You know what's going on here?" And they were like, "Yeah, I heard a plane hit the tower upstairs." "Yeah, it's *upstairs*! Don't you get it? Get out of here! Don't you see what's going on out there?" They're like, "Yeah, there's a lot of stuff going on out there." (laughing) "Come on! Lets go!" So I just think from the death I had already seen, that I was taking it more serious. They had no…. I don't recall there being a TV in the lobby so I don't know what they really knew about what was going on.

R: Ok. Ok. Um, let's see. And in terms of what you felt was expected of you that day, is there anything else that we haven't talked about already? Do you feel like anything more was expected of you in terms of being a cop, by the command or by the public or yourself?

S: No. Like I said, I'm very proud of the way I handled myself that day. The precinct…I got my medal from Commissioner Kelly and from Mayor Bloomberg. The New York Post gave me an award, which that article in the paper was about and when I received it at Gracie Mansion, just me and my wife went. And then my Captain who became promoted since then, but the "big cheese" and some of the guys I work with in the department came to support me. But when I was there, I'm dressed in uniform and a Lieutenant from the Intelligence Division comes up to me and says, "Hey Andy, how are you doing?" I don't know who this guy is. "I'm Lieutenant _____ from Intelligence. Commissioner Kelly would like to meet you." I'm like, "Oh… really? Alright." At this time, I'm two years on the job, I'm still... I'm having the Commissioner tell me how proud he is of me and the Department, and his words to me were, "You made us look good."

R: Oh, that's nice.

S: That guy makes you feel good. At this time, this was a night where I *could forget* about the bad stuff that day and kind of reap the benefits, which I feel guilty about, you know, but this was just a night where they were honoring people from September 11th and I was one of those people and I was like, "This is a night that I can feel good."

R: So that helped you just to accept, to feel good about what you did and not have to feel mixed about it.

S: Yeah, because the people here, there is no, with me, there's no, uh, jealousy, for one thing. They know anything I get I deserve. They all say, "You deserve…" If their husband or other officers have gotten awards or whatever. People aren't like, "You don't deserve that. That guy should get that." So, everyone here has been great with me. I'm the one who feels guilty about it. Actually, the day of the Department ceremony, when I got the Medal of Valor, which I received from Kelly and Bloomberg—both of those awards I received from Kelly and Bloomberg—but the one with the Post, this one was the Department. And I didn't want anybody to know what I was doing, what I was getting. Everybody already knew. I didn't have my family come. Some of the other guys who were getting awards, and actually, two female officers got similar awards, um, they all had their family members come here and other officers drove their family members over there. I didn't have my family accompany me because I just didn't want any more attention. So I had my wife, my brother, father, mother, and my daughter just meet me for dinner after the ceremony. Because, for me, it's like you're throwing it in other people's face. I'm getting this award and those other guys are out here answering 911 calls, dealing with patrol and getting cursed and spit at while I'm over here getting this big award. Even though, but everyone tells me, and I know they are truthful and sincere, "No, you deserve it. You should be here. You should be getting this award. You should be getting a higher award than what they're giving you." But still, deep down I'm like, "Oh, you know, that's nice. I appreciate it but…"

R: What held you back, you think, from really feeling "Yeah, you're right?" What is it, that thing in you that says, "Mm…"

S: Not wanting people to change their opinion of me. I'm very well liked. Not just on this job but my friends, family, outside of the job. I've always been raised, with 12 years of Catholic school, "Always treat others how you want others to treat you," so I think I would get sick and tired if I heard some guy telling me the same story all the time about this one thing he did. So I look at it like that, you know, I don't want to hear the same story over and over again. Ok, we know what he did that day. So I don't want to do it to them. Even though we all know I did it and I'm proud of it, but it's like, I think that, we all know what I did and that's it. There's no reason to flaunt it, so I don't.

R: Ok. Um, let's see. In terms of, this is the last question I have about your training and expectations as a police officer, I was wondering, if you feel that, what was going on in your mind in terms of being a cop? Like, I remember you talked about your shield. It was very important for you to keep your shield. You were looking for the other cops. You weren't supposed to leave your partner. Do you think that those regulations you learned in the police academy helped you cope emotionally?

S: Yeah, I think so.

R: In what sense?

S: Just, like I said, knowing that I have to keep my composure. They're looking to me for help. I can't run in here…Kind of like, I alluded to the Seinfeld episode. Actually that episode was on last night. Um, you can't, like that seen with George Costanza, running through the party of kids, pushing them out of the way, "Fire, fire!" To be the first one out the door. I know, you can't run into a situation like that screaming, "You've gotta get out of here! It's over! We're going to die!" It's kind of like common sense, but then again, if people who, like the civilians for instance who were screaming, "Oh my God. I just heard that the Empire State Building just got nuked." Screaming, grabbing onto my arm, "Oh my God. I just heard there's ground troops attacking us." That's how you can't act, as a police officer. You can't create more panic.

R: So you were conscious of the fact that you needed to remain calm and do your duty.

S: Yeah. Simply because, I mean, I know I'm like that anyway, but two-thirds of the people, the civilians, were…you know, they lost their mind. They didn't know what to do. They were zombies. I told you the story about, at the pier, people dropping into the water, because they just wanted to get off Manhattan, trying to swim to the boat.

R: Do you think that ability to remain, to keep your head together is a personality trait you've always had?

S: Yeah, definitely.

R: Ok. Alright. Just a few more things. Now, you, it seemed like the emotional impact of everything pretty much hit you afterwards. It was my impression in reviewing our first interview that you were very much in the moment and just doing what you were doing, dealing with it. And then you said that, actually, at the beginning, you said, "Despite everything that was going on, it wasn't scary at all," and partly because you didn't know what was coming or how bad it was. It seemed like you got scared, when you said you first got scared was, um, when you were told that we were under attack.

S: Yes.

R: So that seems accurate to me…

S: Yeah. At first, when the first plane hit and I was running over there, my first thought was, "Somebody at the FAA really fucked up."

R: Right

S: You know, somebody's in a lot of trouble for this.

R: You were thinking it was an accident.

S: I knew it was a commercial airline but I was like, someone flew this commercial airline into this…because, this pilot was getting his coordinates accidentally. That was a reach. I was reaching that that was the truth. Knowing it was the Trade Center, you kind of have an idea that it's a terrorist attack but I was kind of hoping, mmm..nah. Someone at the FAA just fucked up. That's what it was. And then, once I was inside and the second plane hit, I think it was a fireman that yelled out, "You've gotta get these people out of here! We're under attack!" I was like, so it's true. That's when I got scared. That's when I got scared. That's when I picked it up a notch in terms of, "Ok, lets get out of here. Go. Now, now now now now!" I mean, I was getting people out of there to begin with. That's when I kind of changed it from, "Let me find NYPD" mode to, "That's it. I'm on my own now. Things are serious now. I don't think its procedure now. I think I'm on my own now." So that kind of changed everything for me.

R: Ok. That's interesting because it became, that's when you got scared, but that's when you also really took charge even more of yourself and the whole situation.

S: Yeah, for some reason that one word "attack" just makes a world of difference where it goes from accident and securing the scene, making sure everybody's ok, to "Attack!" where, "What's going to happen next?" See, an accident, it's over. The accident just happened. There's no more. Lets see what the damage is. Attack is, what's going to happen next? There's more. We don't know.

R: You don't know what's coming.

S: Yeah. So, “Is it going to happen again? Can I get out of here? Are there people shooting at us?” I don’t know. What’s “attack”?

R: So now it opens up all these new possibilities and you don’t know what. And then there are all these rumors.

S: Yeah. That made me scared, but it kind of kicked things into gear for me and then also, I stated the last time, after I checked in at the precinct I went into the lounge and saw it on TV and I saw for the first time what it looked like, the plane coming, the building collapsing. And, knowing, as I’m watching it collapse, knowing I was at the bottom of that. That’s when I realized how lucky I was. I mean, I knew I was in the middle of it but I was in awe. Like, I can’t believe I was at the bottom of that.

R: When we talked about that before, you said you felt numb when you saw that. Do you remember feeling numb? I was trying to figure out if that was a figure of speech of if you literally felt physically numb, um...?

S: No, it was more of a figure of speech. I just remember staring at the TV because in the back, where the TV is, all the lights were off. The air conditioner wasn’t on because we lost all power, we were just on generator. So, it was just enough for lights, like, running the AC on a generator is just not smart. You’ve got to conserve. So we had the lights off, all the shades down anyway to keep it cool, this was just the way it is, and the door was closed. So there’s no light in there except for the TV. And I just remember sitting on a table almost right in front of the TV watching this, trying to see what’s going on, “What’s going on?” There’s like, maybe one or two other cops inside trying to figure out what’s going on and then just the first time I had seen it come down, my mouth just dropped. I can’t believe I was just there, two minutes ago, or whatever. This morning, I was there and I’m still here? I don’t understand. How did I get out of there? So seeing it, having a picture from the outside view to go along with what I experienced inside gave me a full picture.

R: Right. And you felt, and then what you mentioned feeling was a sense of awe and that you felt lucky but were there any other emotions? Were you really scared then? Did you feel like you wanted to be sick? You know, what, what were you…Were there any other emotions happening?

S: No, it was, it was just luck. Like, I can’t, or… shock. I just can’t believe that I’m, I’m here. I’m still alive. I can’t believe it.

R: Now, I know that everything you went through was a horrible experience, but I was wondering if there was a sense of, uh, exhilaration or excitement throughout what you were experiencing, too.

S: Uh, nothing on the positive side.

R: Not in a positive way but just a sense of, you were charged up.

S: In the very beginning I would say more adrenalin. When the plane hit and I ran down, I was a block away on the north end, I ran to Vessey, the West Side Highway which is just one block, as I was sprinting it was a lot of adrenalin, like "I've gotta get there, I've gotta get there." That was the one.

R: Ok.

S: You know, knowing that there's people on the west side of the highway, in the lobby that were dead, who needed help. I know that it just happened up there, but for some reason I was just like, "I've gotta get there. I've gotta get there." That was really the only excitement, like, they need me. If nothing happened downstairs, I don't know, would I have climbed 80 flights? I don't know what would have happened in that situation, but I saw what happened all the way up there and I'm just thinking, I've got to get there.

R: Ok, ok. Um, and then, you also said about, the next day when you were going over the bridge and you saw a tank and it was really scary seeing that, and I was wondering if you could tell me more about what made that scary.

S: The tank and the jets flying overhead, how loud they were.

R: What was scary about that?

S; Its New York City. You know. I felt now, it was a different period in our history where, kind of like you see these old WWII tapes of soldiers marching through France and houses and villages destroyed and civilians wearing these ragged clothes and it seemed like this was now a village destroyed and there's soldiers here, waiting for us to be attacked again. It was just very scary, like any moment now, something's going to happen again overhead or there were still all those rumors. F-16's were constantly flying overhead and the noise that they make and you just don't know what's coming next. So it was just the fact that, I can't believe this is New York City 2001. This isn't France, 1940 or Japan or Normandy. It seemed like this was a war zone now and there was a period that I remember when I was younger, watching these war documentaries with my father and grandfather and my grandfather was in WWII and so I saw a lot of these movies like, WWII buffs. You know, you watch them with your father and your grandfather. And seeing what it was like, and I remember being scared as a kid saying, "I'm so glad I don't live in that time." And now, it came back to me like, now I'm living in that time. It's happening here. This isn't Europe. I am those French kids or whatever. German kids. This is happening here now. There's no escape. And I'm an adult and I'm a police officer. There's no way for me to say, "I don't want to go to work today." There's no running away from this. I'm right in the middle of it and like it or not, I've got to deal with it and knowing that if something happens again, I'm going to be in the middle of it again. This is my job. Everything was closed for the rest of the week, in terms of stock market or businesses. Nobody went to work anyway, but I knew that September 12th, September 11th, I got off at 9:30 at night. Four o'clock in the morning September 12th,

I've got to be back here. So it was kind of scary just knowing that the world had just changed and I was in the middle of it, now, again, every day I'm going to be in the middle of it for who knows how long.

R:	And you don't know what that even means in that sense, too**.**

S:	The war, for me. The attack. The changing of the world, you know. The world just changed. There would be no Afghanistan attack. There would be no Iraq. Everything is a result of September 11th, in my opinion. It really is. The world changed that day and I knew I was in the middle of it and the eyes of the world were on lower Manhattan every day, every day. Twenty-four hours a day. There was no, Friends wasn't on, Seinfeld wasn't on. It was all *that.* You're very nervous going into one of these buildings that you're told aren't stable, looking for people who are still trapped inside of them, no power, walking around with flashlights, filthy…you were wearing a crappy paper mask with a rubber band on the back, you know, knowing that this could happen again. Not only could this building fall that I'm in right now, but another plane might be coming. They might be launching a missile. Because, you know, there are so many rumors. They're in this country, they're going to hit us again, smuggle nuclear bombs in…

R:	You mentioned this too, a little while ago, well a couple of times, but the way you describe everything, it seemed like so much happened in such a short amount of time. You talk about your thought processes and we could talk about it for twenty minutes but meanwhile, that was actually taking place in just a few seconds so I'm wondering if you can say anything more about your experience of time passing during that day.

S:	My experience from that day?

R:	Yeah, while everything was going on. And I know this might be a difficult question to answer. Did you sense that things were happening really fast or happening really slowly? Did you have any sense of a passage of time while you were in those buildings doing what you were doing?

S:	I'd say everything went fast. All the events were fast because it was one step to the next step. One building to the next building. Helping one person to helping the next person. Until the moment when it fell was when everything became slow motion. Because that was the phrase, my life passing before my eyes. It's a phrase, a slogan, but it really did.

R:	In what sense?

S:	Just having all these millions of thoughts, about why did I leave my wife? Why didn't I leave the building. Thinking about my wife, thinking about my family. Thinking about the day when my father-in-law gave me the ad in the Daily News to take the police officers test. Little things like that. If I had never gotten the paper from him that day, I wouldn't be a police officer.

R: That came to your mind too while you were down there like this?

S: Yeah. If I wasn't a police officer, I wouldn't be in this position. Or, I also thought about…I turned this job down in '93. I turned down the PD because I just didn't want, I was 20 years old and I had a job, I lived at home, and there was a lot of cash for a guy who lives at home. I was like, I don't want to be a police officer yet. My father was already retired. My older brother was already on but they were like, ehh. You don't want to, you don't want to. No big deal. And I was like, yeah I'm not going to take it so I thought, at that time, if I would have taken it in '93, I wouldn't have been here. I wouldn't be in this precinct. Or I would have known better than to run in there. There were so many decisions from the past that I thought about, that got me to this position. The day I got the ad from my father-in-law in the Daily News, 'Become one of New York's Finest,' he was like, "Why don't you call this number? They're taking applications." Knowing I'm marrying his daughter, he wanted to make sure I got a good job. And I was interested in it and I took it and I obviously became a police officer, seven years after I turned it down the first time. So I thought about those two things. The miscarriage my wife just had and now knowing my wife's never going to have a family with me. That's when it was slow motion. Everything was… just a million thoughts. The past, the present, what's going to happen to my wife after. Thinking about how she's going to have to try to go on without me. Just… the one phrase I used, my wife's going to die of a broken heart. She's never going to get over this. The baby, two days ago, losing the baby. Losing a husband today. She's never going to get over this. She's an emotional person, as it is. I know I'm her world, just like she's mine, and she's never going to get over it. Her mother passed away three years ago and this is going to kill her. Things like that.

R: That's so much to think about in such a short amount of time. It's remarkable.

S: It was. It was just…boomboomboomboomboom. But each thought was like, 30 seconds long.

R; It seemed like.

S: It seemed like. And then the next thing I know, I'm like, I think I'm alive. Standing up and patting myself. And I'm also thinking, I have to have a steel spike sticking out of my arm or something. I'm like, there's no way. And then I'm like, there's no way I'm going to be able to walk. My legs have to be broken. Then sure enough, I started walking. I just couldn't believe it. And then I was just feeling my way out.

R: And then it was action again. Getting back out there.

S: Yeah. Everything was trying to get out of that one area.

R: It's really interesting to me, that part about time.

S: It is. It still is. That's why…I think that's true now, your life flashes before your eyes. You just have a million thoughts and I talked about, accepting, like, I have the five steps from denial to acceptance.

R: In that moment?

S: Yeah.

(tape stops, new tape)

R: Ok, go ahead, you were talking about your thought processes changing from you can't believe you're going to die to…

S: I can't believe I'm going to die. From being pissed off I didn't leave when I had the chance, to "Oh, this is going to kill my wife," to "You know what," talking to God, "just don't let me suffer. Don't let me be buried to death. Any second now, I know any second now I'm going to be flat. Just wait." Just knowing that any minute now it's going to be over. Just asking God, "Just, please. I know I'm going to die, but just don't let me be squished. I don't want to be buried to death."

R: What was it about being buried to death?

S: Like trapped, where I can't get out.

R: And then you die…

S: And then I die suffering. Where it would be a steel girder and dirt and concrete. Something where I'm trapped and I can't move and I can't get out and I'm just stuck there. It's not claustrophobic. I'm not claustrophobic. But it was just a matter of, if I'm going to die, I don't want to die slowly. Just get it over with. And I accepted it. I know, any second now, and I remember saying, any second now, like, I refer to when you're a kid and you're about to get a needle and you stiffen up. It's like, "Ok, is it over yet? Did you do it yet?" I was just waiting, like this, "Any minute now." And then I was like, "Well, you know what, God? As long as I can walk, I'm going to find my way out of here. Just let me walk and find my way out of here." And then it was, "No, I'm going to get out of here. I'm not dying. I'm not leaving my wife. No way. I'm out of here. I'm getting out of here."

R: And this was still while it was happening, before you started going, "Oh, wait a second…"

S: Yeah. This is before I stood up. Yep. That's why, when I stood up, I was like "I can't walk. There's no way I can walk. I can walk. I'm getting out of here. I'm finding a way out of here." So it was a lot of different thought processes.

R: A *lot* of different thoughts. It's really amazing. Is there anything else you can think of, that you haven't mentioned, that came to mind at that time?

S: Well… like I said, my wife, my family, the baby we just lost, our future, being pissed off.

R: Pissed off about…

S: Dying this way. It kind of made me feel like they won, whoever they were--at this time I knew it was a terrorist attack--like, I can't believe I'm going to die like this. And when you're younger you always think about how you're going to die. Old age, cancer, car accident, who knows. And I was like, "Pshh, I never thought I was going to die like *this.* I'm going to be *buried* to death? *Squished* to death?" So it was like that.

R: And then, the last thing I wanted to ask you about is, if you could talk, I mean, going back to the people who died and being there present with, they had just died or were seriously injured or were getting ready to die. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about what it was like for you to be right there in the face of death.

S: What did it feel like? There was no feeling. It was just, not cold or callous, it was just like, "Ok, I've gotta get to the next one." I had seen people dead before, on this job. People who had just died. Not like this, obviously. Burned to death or anything. You know, heart attack, old age, DOA, a stabbing.

R: That seems like a lot of people to see dead in just six months on the job.

S: Yeah.

R: So you had already had some experience.

S: Yeah but I averaged like, ten in a year. That's like going to an apartment building of an elderly person who lives by himself and you find out they passed away watching TV. Only one homicide, I've seen. But like I said, it was so fast. It was one step to the next. "This person's dead. What about that person? That person's dead. What about that one? Oh, she's still alive." So, until I got to the lady inside, seeing anybody dead at that point, it just, I didn't have time to stop. And like I said, it goes back to having that state of mind, you can't freak out, like "Oh my God, this person's dead. What do I do?" And then also when, the following weeks, the whole precinct's steady post was the temporary morgue, where they pulled out the body parts. At first, it *was* a body. You can see it was an arm or a torso. Or the one they pulled out of the torsos of a man and woman embracing, just the torsos stuck together. So their final moments were just holding each other. And, even that was, it wasn't emotional but it was…uh…I don't know how to describe that. Maybe it was emotional. But, at first, and then a month into it, it was, ok, remember I told you, you went from body parts to just calling them "pieces." How many pieces did they have? Oh, it's human… it's soft tissue, is what it became known as. It's not a bone anymore, it's not an arm, it's not a leg, it's soft tissue. It just became, it's not a

person anymore. I'd be picking it up myself, putting on ready disposable hazardous gloves picking it up myself for the ME. At first, the smell, I had my mask on and I just stand back and I try it real quick like, oh that's terrible. And then a month later, no mask, right in there, "What have you got there? This looks like a hand." I mean, doing it myself, it just became…

R: You get used to it, somehow.

S: You get used to it. It was nothing like, nobody became cold. It was just the job and you all know what happened that day and we've got a job to continue doing. We have to identify the bodies. We've got to help out the ME, do what we can. We've got to chart this information. So from seeing them that day, just die, I didn't think about it much then because I knew I had to keep going. The first few days in the morgue, that was more emotional than seeing them on the street dead, because now, I wasn't in a hurry now. I didn't have to leave to go help someone. I had to stay in here, I had to see this and you kind of, there's a term that one of the doctors in the morgue said, about how you turn to individualize the victims, where one of the rescue workers found a body and was saying, "I have to find out who this woman was. I have to know who she is." And the guy had to go to Bellevue. He lost his mind from seeing all this. So I never individualized it. I never wanted to put a face or history with this person but I started to because a lot of them, their body would be mushed but their business shirt would still have their I.D. tag on it, with their face.

R: So it was hard not to.

S: Yeah, so you could see the guy's face, what he looked like that morning and now this, and then also knowing that could be me. That could very easily be my body. Because I remember when they'd find a FD or police officer's body and it was, you know, stop everything. We've got to identify, try to find who this guy was or who this woman was.

R: Can you tell me what emotion you had when you thought, "this could be me"?

S: My family, thinking about my family. Like right now, when I'm in here, I'm looking at someone's brother. What if my brother had to come in here and identify me? Looking like that. It's not like, on TV or really even in every day life, where you have to go identify a body in the morgue. These weren't bodies. These were mush. I couldn't imagine someone in my family having to come and look at this.

R: I know it was a lot of different things but it sounds like one thing that was really important for you was that sense of affinity with the families, thinking about your own family and what they would have had to go through and because of that, you were right there, you could have been the one. It was very present to you. And what about feeling sad? Did you ever break down and cry at the morgue? Was there any…

S:	Not at the morgue. Not crying…actually, we had a post outside of the morgue, like a security post around the World Financial Center and I remember one day, maybe a week later, it was a Saturday and we were doing 4:00 in the morning until 4:00 at night. So it was 10:00 in the morning and you're already there for six hours so you're exhausted. You just stand there the whole time. And I remember the boat coming behind the World Financial Center and it was bringing the family members and I remember it was the most somber walk and as they're coming, you know, you're on your post and you just watch them get off the boat and as they get closer and closer, it's a couple hundred of them. And I remember seeing one of them--a woman with a dog, little kids carrying stuffed animals and construction paper cards they made and I remember looking at it and at first you're just like, standing on your post and then all of a sudden it's like, whoa. You know… you get all choked up. And I had to turn around. I was like, I can't look at these people. Boxes of Kleenex, bawling all over the place, being held up, leaning on someone's shoulder as they're barely walking. I remember one kid had a t-shirt of his father's face, I assume, and I remember looking at it and I was like, I can't look at that. I just had to turn around. I remember I started tearing, choked up. It was terrible. And knowing that could be my family on that boat right now, coming to see. They're not coming to a morgue. They're not coming to a funeral home. They're coming to this hell hole, this shit hole, to see, not even to see, just to… I can't imagine what their thoughts were. It's not like your love one died in a car accident and you're going to the corner where they died in the car accident, putting flowers on the telephone pole. You're coming to this, which was still on fire at the time. And they had to come see this. What could this do for them? I just really felt so bad for them, for the families. And like I said, my family, if it was me.

R:	It really strikes me that because you work in this precinct, not only were you there when the buildings collapsed and in it, but then you were there in a really important way *after*, you know, working at the morgue and seeing all of that.

S:	Yeah. This precinct. This was it. This was the ground zero because obviously, everybody throughout the city --the five boroughs--were turned out of this precinct. Everybody came through this precinct at one point or another, to get their post, to use the bathroom, trying to find a space to sleep, get something to eat, sit down. Everything was run out of here because it's the closest precinct, so this was the center of it all. I remember a female cop I know from Staten Island, I never worked with her, I just know her from high school, actually. She was telling me how she came down here like six months later, before the closing of the site so maybe four months later, and she came down with other girlfriends of hers to see the area. She was in plainclothes, she was off duty and I took them in a police car, marked police car, one of the SUV's so it was like five of us and I was like, we can drive right in and the girl, the cop, said, "I don't know how you guys did it. I remember coming down here day after day and just crying my eyes out and I wanted to go home, go back to my precinct so badly, but knowing that you guys, this is it for you. This is your home. This is your work. You have to come here." You know, you can't call out sick every day. There was no vacation. Actually, I don't think there was sick at the time.

(Female officer enters room.)

S: This is the officer who found me on Greenwich Street and took me to Stuyvesant and washed out my eyes. (To her) I mentioned your name several times, so we're just going over that day.

R: Well, I guess the only other thing I want to ask you is what sort of lasting effect do you think all this has had on you personally.

S: I don't know. I think I've gone through it all. It's, like, I can't go through anything worse so if something else bad happens, I'll know I dealt with worse. So, that's really it. It doesn't really weigh on my mind anymore. I think I've seen the worst and I've dealt with it and that's it.

R: Ok. So is there anything else that we haven't discussed that you think would be important to mention?

S: No, I think that's it.

R: Ok. Well thank you so much.

S: No problem.

"MARY"

Mary had been a police officer with the NYPD for nineteen years at the time of the September 11 attacks and held the rank of Lieutenant. She was 39 years old. We met at her office in October 2003.

(Subject wants to discuss some things before tape is turned on.)

S: Ok, well just to begin with, I wasn't assigned to where I am now. I was assigned to the (…) office, which is basically a press office, and at that point I was doing an early tour, which means I came in at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning and a call came in from one of the media outlets to the floor at DCPI stating that a plane had hit the WTC. I was in a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner at the time and a sergeant came in and said that he was going to respond, he had just gotten the call, and he was going straight over. Five minutes later the Chief of the office called and said he wanted a lieutenant there as well so I was sent and I grabbed the sergeant to go with me. Now, our thought, there was no footage, we weren't watching anything, so in my mind, my thought process was this is a small Cessna plane...for some reason the pilot was from NJ. Because there were so many, it was automatic…because there are so many small airports right across the river. I thought he had a heart attack and it was an accident. So we go down to the garage, pulling out in the car up the ramp, I see two department photographers going up so we stop, we pick them up and we say, "Hop in." So, you know where headquarters is and where the WTC is so it's easier to go East to West but just hearing all the sirens responding, I made the choice to go loop around on the FDR and come up from the opposite end, so I wasn't gonna be in the way of responding vehicles. So getting on the FDR drive heading South, where it turns, the volume of paper… that was floating…and, having worked so many ticker tape parades, I was thinking, "There's a big hole somewhere. This Cessna caused a big hole. It must have been a bigger plane than a two-seater plane."

R: So I'm getting the impression that you started to feel like it was more a serious thing than you had thought at first or you were just thinking, oh, it just tore a big hole.

S: Well, you know, maybe perhaps I was thinking of those movies where you see the Empire State Building where you see a plane half in, half out, I'm thinking maybe this plane went fully in, it's not hanging, like, it's actually taking out a floor, at most. So then, traffic got backlogged. People were doing their normal routine, it's between 8:30 and 9:00 am, people are coming and, in any event, just getting to the site and parking far enough away, but then realizing how far we had to walk. I remember getting back in the car and moving it closer but out of the way. It was a department vehicle, which was assigned to me, so I drove it, I took it home. I had luggage in the car, my briefcase in the car. We got there at 8:50 and I only know because I keep it on my beeper, the message that came over that day, it stores text messages and so I knew that I had grabbed it My beeper went off and I looked at it, and it came from Operations. Anything that happens in the city goes out to these beepers to let everyone knows what's happening. So this said "First Precinct WTC, WTC possible explosion. WTC building, level 3 mobilization to

Church and Vesey, 8:54." So I remember consciously going to my waistband and looking at the message. So 8:54. The 2nd plane hit at like, 9:06. I remember hearing the roar of engine coming in, and, like, it was surreal. Because even at this point, I don't know the first plane is a commercial airline. All I know is there's shattering glass flying off the building, pieces of the building are coming down. There are barriers up…people have put tape. So,…no one got directed West. Everyone was evacuated North and East. So now I'm at the Western part of the building.

R: Is that where the plane went in?

S: The 2nd plane. The first plane had hit the North tower, so I'm parked by the South tower. So at 8:54 I know that I'm there. At 9:06, the plane just comes. You hear this roar of an engine which you don't hear in Manhattan because the planes can't fly that low. Now, I grew up in Queens, a mile from JFK airport from where the runways are, so I know what the sound is; it's not a foreign sound to me. So, it was very unreal to have that sound at that location and then to look up and watch the plane. It was like, "Oh my God." You know? Then, obviously, it's an easy jump to, "This is not an accident."

R: Yeah

S: And it was not a small plane, it was obviously a commercial plane. It was, "Oh God, this is… this is bad." I was with this other sergeant. I go across the street into the atrium at the World Financial Center. Like, that whole plaza is directly across the Marriott Hotel, where there's a walkway that leads you into another building. They were evacuating them and there were two phones. So of course, cell phone isn't working, I can't get through. The lines were jammed. At this point, the towers are still standing but, there was no signal. They were useless. So I figure if I go to a hard line and call, and I remember calling across the street, and people were jumping, which was just…horrendous.

R: Tell me about that.

S: Um…in the beginning, it was… like… to see people coming down, like, it was almost a detachment to watch people jump but it was one of the most awful feelings as a cop because over the radio you could hear that (the Aviation Unit helicopters), because the amount of smoke, couldn't get there. So I was thinking… so I had also responded in '93. And in '93 the helicopter did land and take people off the roof. And I was thinking, "Well, for the people who are on the floors above where the plane went through, we'll be able to land the helicopters and get people off the roof. So there's hope for those people." But I could hear on the radio that because of the volume of smoke, the helicopters couldn't get close enough to the building. And it would put them at a huge risk. And there's all sorts of issues with the air space now over and around the whole area, 'cause they're landing planes now, left and right, once they realize. If you were in the air, if you were going from Chicago to Denver, if you were by St. Louis, you were landed at St. Louis. People were just automatically grounded. So it was extremely difficult to be in a situation and be totally helpless. And I couldn't imagine the hell that it was for those

people to be up there and that the better option was to jump. There was no judgment attached to it but how awful it must be to be in those shoes that this is considered a better option. Then there were obviously lots of concerns. There was an ESU officer with binoculars who was, um, you'd hear on the radio, "It's clear to go." We had to be careful not to get hit by the people who were jumping. But when the 2nd plane goes in, I first went into the Word Financial Center to call and say, "This is huge. We need more people. We need support." And there are two guys and they're both on the phone and one guy is hysterical. And I'm thinking, "You're ok, guy. It's ok." Like, "You're out, we'll get you to safety." He's on the phone and he's sobbing. I say to them, "I need to use one of these phones." So the guy says, "Listen, the cops are here. I've gotta go. I'll talk to you." And he hangs up, and he was really kind. I didn't have change. He was very kind. He gave me his quarter and I get on the phone and it's just ringing and I'm like, "What? How could… Pick up the phone." Then I figure I'm going to call another office where I know someone, this is their private line. And it's ringing and ringing and I'm like, "Where are these people?" And at the same time I'm patting this guy on the back saying, "Guy, you're ok. You're shaken up but you're ok." So finally I give up because no one's answering the phone. Now *I* don't know that they've emptied police headquarters when the 2nd plane goes in. They've decided that headquarters might be a likely target for a next plane coming in. Get all the people out of headquarters. So they've evacuated the building. So that's why the phone was just ringing off the hook.

R: So when nobody was answering the phone, what were you…

S: Well I'm thinking it's really bizarre. One, that the phones ringing off the hook, that the phone is just ringing and no one's paying attention. When I called someone else I knew that wasn't in the press office and I'm thinking, they probably all went into the next office where there's a television, to kind of look at what's happening. So I'm not thinking they've evacuated the building.

R: Right, not *scaring* you, but no one's picking up the phone.

S: I was more annoyed. It's like, you know, "C'mon." But I also realize it's more important to move and get on with things. So I grab the guy who got off the phone and I said to the guy who's still sobbing on the phone and I'm like, "Guy, you've gotta get out of here. We're evacuating." And I said to the guy that was really kind to me, "Could you just take him." I mean, he's really, it seemed like a disproportionate response. I remember thinking like, "Why is this," you know, "you're out the building, you're here. It must be awful," you know. I'm assuming he came from or was about to enter the WTC when it was hit. I don't know what he'd seen but he is *really*, like, frantic. I was like, "you're ok."

R: You're thinking it was excessive.

S: I was! Right… but now of course, this is in hindsight. I'm recuperating and I'm watching one of those shows like 20/20, Dateline, whatever. And I see this guy's face and, you know when you see someone you recognize, I was like, he must be a city

official. I didn't hear the promo for the show and I just see the guy. And I said, "I know that face." And he starts to tell his story. And he was the guy on the phone next to me. And why he was hysterical was he called his wife to say "I made it out of the building. I'm ok," and his wife told him on the phone that his sister and niece were on the plane that just went in. But, I had no clue and I'm thinking, even seeing people, it was still an excessive, even seeing people jumping, it was still an excessive...He was really not composed at all. But obviously a couple weeks later when I see him it's like, "*That's* why the guy was so upset," you know? And I didn't want to get into it, like, why you, the guy, was so upset. Because, you know, yeah, people are jumping. But we're so focused on, "We've got to get you out of here." Like, "Just turn around and keep walking for your own safety." So the sergeant and I walk around to the front of the building and (Name) who was the First Deputy Commissioner at the time, he grabbed me and he said "(Mary), there's a report of a 3rd plane in the area. Get a helmet on." So there's an Emergency Service truck that's there and I hop on. I said, "How you doin'? I need two helmets, one for the sergeant and one for myself." And he said, "You think this in a fuckin' army surplus store?" And I said, "I have no desire for your helmet." I said, "Are all your people suited up?" In other words, I'm not taking the helmet away from someone who's going to be climbing up. I mean, I know I'm going into the towers but my job is to direct people once they come down and to get the media out of there. So he says, "No, no… but, you know, I'm held accountable for it." So finally I said "Listen, bottom line, I'm a lieutenant, you're a sergeant. I've been sent in here by the First Deputy. I promise you, I will sign for these stupid helmets. I have no desire to keep one of these camouflage helmets," because they're one of those heavy-duty weapon ones. I had no use for it. You know, "I promise you, I will get it back to you." But I'm not walking out of this truck after I had just been told by the First Deputy Commissioner of the NYC police department. He didn't want to give me one. But he gives them to me. So I come back out and I hand one to the sergeant and I said, "Listen, lets just pick a location for all the media to go to." Because they're all around. And I'm working for the office that's supposed to corral them all up, get them to a location, brief them, get information out like, we're sending people North, we're sending people East… You know, if people had been injured, we're going to this hospital and that hospital. I said, "Alright, I'm going to go back and I'm going to go to the north tower. You go this way. Lets comb the whole area. You go this way, I'll go that way." And then I see (a fellow officer and friend). She's another sergeant that I worked with in DCPI. She's dressed to the nines, and I remember she grabbed me and she hugged me and she was very upset. She said, "(Mary), this is bad." And I said, "I know. Listen. Just stay safe. I just told (the sergeant) to go this way. I'm going to go this way." And, I think I picked Murray and West, which was not the best location, never thinking that the towers are going to come down. But I was just like, if we're sending all the victims this way, lets at least get the media away from the people we're trying to get out of the area. Because really, the only people that were running toward the buildings, with everybody moving away from them, were emergency workers and the media. Everyone else was going the opposite way. So I meet the First Dep, the Deputy Commissioner of ____ and I said "Hi, how are you doing," and he says "Alright," and he says, "I have to go back to headquarters," because you can't have all the top brass at the scene so he's now like, the acting person, so I assumed. So there's a postal car and I commandeer the postal car and say, "Are you

going south?" because it is a big distance. Like some of these avenues are 2/10 of a mile, like, between 6th and 7th at certain locations. So, to go from one side of the WTC down, it's 16 acres. It's a long way. I said, "I have to go down there," so we all hop in the car and the guy…

R: In the mail car?

S: It's like US Postal Police car. And we go to get out and like, these cars that we have for patrol, you can only open the car doors from the outside, so he's in the front seat, he gets out and then there were four of us squeezing in the back. And honestly, we went like, a block. That was it. And the guy's like, "this is as far as I'm going." But it got him that much closer to leaving so they get out of the car and now they have to let us out. And I go into the North tower and there was just a steady stream of people leaving. They were in blue. You would hear, like, hitting on the concourse. The bodies, that were jumping. And, before I went in, looking up, people were jumping in groups. That was, oh, because, I tell you the truth, you didn't know they were bodies until they were at least halfway down, because there was so much debris being blown out and then as they fell, "That's a human *being*. This is not a piece of the metal coming off. Or just, their windows being blown out." And you'd hear this "KSHHHH!" the shattering of glass, the sound of the bodies hitting the overhang, you know, the people would hit a portion of the building. And I'd be like "Ohh, there's another body." And I tell you, it was like people disintegrated. It was like, "PFFF." Splat. And there's nothing left. It wasn't like, here's an arm or leg. It was just like, the force at which people came from, at that speed, depending on people's weight, but to see people holding hands and jumping… it was horrendous. I was just like, we've gotta get these people out. But people were extremely calm. That's what amazed me.

R: Even though all that was going on.

S: Well, I think they were totally unaware of what they were walking out of. A lot of the people, like my boyfriend's sister-in-law, she had been there in '93. They had done these drills over and over again. The people in the South tower, after the North tower had gotten hit, were told "Relax, stay where you are. Don't move." So there was this huge calmness about it. It was almost like people were so on top of the situation that they didn't know what had actually happened. Like, one guy, the guy that wrote the letter about Moira Smith (an NYPD officer killed in the attack) said, "The building shook and the temperature jumped." He was in the South tower. It started going down. He was on the 84th floor. He goes down to one of the Morgan Stanley floors, decides to take a break and just walks out and figures he's going to look across to the North tower to see what's going on. He stops on the 84th and the guy from Morgan Stanley goes, "Don't look, it's a horrific scene." So they're kind of hangin' because it's tiring, walking down those stairs. There's a backlog, it's a bottleneck. And the plane goes in. So they're there, but they don't know. When you read his account, he doesn't know that there's a plane. All of a sudden, the building shook and they were like, "You know what, we're going to continue down." And so he talks about when he gets to the bottom, on the concourse, there's obviously no lights, the escalators aren't working. And people are walking down the

escalators and he sees Moira Smith with her flashlight, really calm, keeping really good control of the situation saying, "Don't look, keep moving." So he writes this letter and he posts it on the family victims wall, like, to the family, "If you're looking for her, I saw her five minutes before." Because he gets out, and he goes to the phone and he stops and calls his wife and he hangs up the phone and he turns around and the tower falls. So he said he knew it was only a mater of minutes between the time he got out and the time the tower fell and he knew exactly where Moira was because, he just remembers her. Her voice. He said "I looked her right into her eyes, she was really…" and he writes this nice letter about it. But my impression from him and from other people I spoke to who were in the building and got evacuated was that they weren't, they didn't know what had happened. So they *are* extremely calm. So I go into the north tower and it's just like, a line of blue. You know, just follow the blue. The blue's gonna lead you right out. So that was really great.

R: When you say "blue," what do you mean? Like, uniforms?

S: The cops, yeah. It's like a line of blue. Every time there's a cop, just follow the line. So you know, there's no thought process. There was a sense of security that people had so you got down to the end and all along they're seeing, you see firefighters going up, cops going up, and you get down and there's total direction from people directing. There's no thought process of like, "Oh my God, where do I go, what do I do?" All that's being taken care of.

R: And you're feeling calm, you personally.

S: I am. I'm unnerved but I'm very focused on what needs to be done now. And I'm only saying that because after the first building came down I was thinking, I don't think I'm going to be making that 11:00. That was my first thought. I wasn't going to make an 11:00 meeting. I was like, I'd better get in touch with them. It was stupid because I was just focused on what's at hand, you know. So I cross over to the South tower and there's a photographer that's standing on the bottom of the escalator and he's taking photos of people walking down and some people were injured or, just, you know, it was a long way down from some of those floors. And he's just snapping away. Whether it's conscious or subconscious, people slow down when they see a camera. So I said, "I know you have a job to do and you need to get that shot and you want the shot that's going to make the front cover." And I said to him, "Listen, you can keep snappin' but I've gotta get you out of here. You're in a frozen area. We're working our tails to get these people out of here. You know you're not supposed to be in here, so I'm going to escort you out." So I walk him out of the South tower onto Liberty Street. I came out and there's an officer in uniform and I said, "Take him and walk him as far as you can. I don't want to see him. These people don't belong here." Because you're thinking this is really counterproductive. You're working your tail off to get people out as quickly as possible and here's a guy just snappin' pictures, you know. So I'm underneath the overhang of the South tower and my car is parked by West and Liberty and now I'm back to the location where I started. It's just down the block. I said, "You know, it's going to be a very long day." And it was election day so I had voted before I came in and I knew I had

a pair of sneakers in the car, so I said, "I'm going to change my shoes into sneakers because I have a feeling I'm going to be running around a lot today. It would just be more efficient." So I walked back to the car and I get close enough to pop the trunk, 'cause it has one of those remotes. And then I hear this rumbling. And I'm thinking of an elevated train. You know, that noise. Steel. You know when the train comes into the station and it's not clicking, you know, there is no elevated train. It's like, "I know those are jet engines I'm hearing,"' not, "I shouldn't be hearing them," when the plane goes in. But I am aware that there are lots of trains underground that pull into the WTC. It's that kind of rumbling noise. So I said, "Let me…," so I turn around and I leave the trunk open and I start walking back towards the building, figuring a train is off course, something happened underneath the building.

R: Oh, so you're turning around to go back to…

S: Not realizing it's coming down. And then, now, I'm in an area where it's only emergency personnel because we didn't send any civilians to the West side. And all of a sudden, there are people running at me like, "It's coming down! Get out!" And it was like that freeze frame like, "What is coming…?" Like you're in the center of something and you don't see the, like it's, like, where are you going to run away from 110…? I literally, I stopped going in that direction and then I'm going to walk away from it but the force… it's really bizarre to explain, but the force of that building coming down created such an air-rush up, so you have this "Pffffff" and it's mushrooming out but, being in the center, I literally get picked up and flown by the debris. So I'm on the East side of West Street. You know West Street is four lanes in each direction, North and Southbound, so you know how long it is. I'm on the East side. I land on the West side, in front of the World Financial Center. I land and I land on a patch of grass, which, in itself, is amazing for Manhattan. The sprinkler system just went off so I land in mud, so it wasn't like "Boom!" I get thrown in the middle of… So, it's relatively a soft landing. But I'm shaken. It was like, "boom!" Now, it's dark. I don't know where I am. I don't know. Like, I just realized, like, for me, it was like being in a tornado. Um, and I've got crap in my mouth. It's very difficult to breathe. And I hear, more than feel, this "POW!" in my head. Like someone took a baseball bat and just whacked my head. I heard this crack and all of a sudden there's stuff coming down, I feel, like, liquid coming down. And I can't see it but I realize that the helmet I have on has split in half. I have no more helmet on my head. That was tightly on my head. It has split in half and fallen. It just fell off my head. So I'm feeling this liquid and it's blood and a piece of cement is embedded in the back of my skull, in the back of my head. Again, it was like this surreal thing. It's like, there's this thing in my head, you know? And I'm feeling it and it feels like concrete, and I can't pull it out.

R: It's stuck in your head.

S: It's stuck in my head. So I start spitting up and it's totally black and it's difficult to breathe and my ears are jammed, and I can't see anything. One of the questions after that was "Did you lose consciousness?" And I was like, "It became totally black." And I remember thinking, "I must be unconscious." Then, my thought process was, "I can't be

unconscious because I wouldn't be thinking about how black it is." Like, reality doesn't make any sense at all right now. I'm somewhere where I can't see anything. I heard the expression of, "They were screaming bloody murder." I would hear that and it's one of those expressions, like people say "I'll beat you until an inch of your life." I never, those expressions never... But that was what it was like when that building was coming down. I now have the sounds of what "bloody murder" sounds like. If I ever use that expression, that would be the sound that comes to mind. It would be people that were screaming bloody murder. People were screaming at the top of their lungs. And I'm not really sure that I was aware of the whole building coming down. I just know that something massive, like the ground, it was like an earthquake. Something massive is happening. So I'm lying there, I realize I got hit, I'm kind of like, unconscious. I can't breathe. I'm thinking, "This is it." I just couldn't get any oxygen. Um, and, um, I'm kind of hearing things, but, it becomes, and I was just lying there getting hit with stuff, which was just...And I don't know where I am. I don't know. I've landed somewhere where it's damp and wet and muddy. "I was somewhere on West Street. Am I in a garage someplace?" Just, no concept at all. So, gradually, it goes from this pitch black. The best way to describe it is, if you've ever gone on a tour of a cave. When they take you down, they say, "No one really knows what true darkness is," and they shut off the lights. Literally, you know, you put your hand up in front of your face but you have absolutely no sense that you put your hand in front of your face because you see nothing. So, that's how black it was. I had no concept, and so now it's going from totally black to like, this gray. And I'm under stuff. I'm intertwined with all these cables around my body. I think at that point, probably physically, my body went into shock.

R: Why do you say that?

S: Just because I wasn't feeling the pain. I was like, "Ow, it hurts." I think if I walked out and the same thing happened right now, I would be screaming. But, it was, like, my brain wasn't working fast enough to catch up to the physicalness of what happened.

R: So it wasn't really hurting.

S: Well, I mean, it hurt when it happened but I don't know what happened so I don't know. The thing is, it's back here and I'm thinking, "Is this a piece of helmet that's embedded?" Like, "I can't get rid of this." In the distance I see the silhouette of a firefighter's hat and he puts his flashlight toward me, because he's underneath the pile too and he says to me, "Stay… just… it's still coming down. Stuff is still landing. But if you can, grab your shirt and pull it up and put it around your mouth. It'll help you breathe." And I hear someone moaning to my left. I don't have mobility but I reach out and I feel fingers and so I grab them and I basically pass on the same instructions. I say "I'm with the PD. Sit tight. Debris is still falling. Don't move. You'll be ok." So now it gets, it's slowly coming around. My eyes were just streaming because all this crap is in them and my nose is running but it's running black. I'm coughing and spitting up. All that's coming out of your nose is black stuff. I'm coughing and spitting up but you just hear people around but it's eerily, eerily quiet. You could have heard a pin drop. Like, that's the other piece of it. It was like, just so quiet. So, I said to the person whose hand I

had and I said "Lets try and get up." I said, "I can't, my legs are pinned under something," but I think I can get from my waist up out. I have mobility in my upper body. So I get from my waist up and I'm saying, "I'm going to try moving my leg. Just move with me as I pull." You felt like if you let go, you were never going to be able to retrieve. And I'm moving and I'm, really, trying to get out of these wires. And all of a sudden the arm comes up too easily and I look down and I had someone's hand and arm. So, I'm shocked, but I was like, "There's gotta be the rest of the body." And I was digging, but if you saw the site, it was like finding a needle in a haystack. But somewhere the rest of this body has to be here. And I'm coming up empty…So I have this hand…That was just really bizarre.

R: And you had been talking to that person, right?

S: But, no response. I heard someone moaning and at one point while I'm lying there, a gas tank explodes on a, when I got up it was an ambulance, I realize. But I was very physically close to it. So my sense of hearing is totally distorted. I mean, right now they're testing it because I have significant hearing loss. They think it's nerve damage. So a cochlear implant won't really do anything if it's nerve-related. It could still regenerate itself. So, anyway, I wind up getting up and I see this firefighter and there are two EMT's and I guess I look pretty much a mess. But here were dozens of people running towards us and now there are four of us and we're kind of standing there… and there's no one else around. It's totally silent. And the firefighter says, "You'd better wrap her head." And people were like, "Yeah." And we walk over to an ambulance that survived. But there were cars burning all over the place and it's, it's like, dust. And you think the world has come down. I couldn't see beyond the Battery Tunnel, beyond North of West, North of Vesey. I don't even see the second tower still standing. I don't see the South tower not standing. I mean, literally, we were just right there so there's no concept of what has happened.

R: And the air's all gray…

S: Well, I thought it was a bomb. I thought we were bombed. Like, someone came in and dropped a bomb. It looks like those horrible scenes you seen from the Middle East of cars just burning. So, the guys hand me a rag and they're like, "It's not going to do you much good."

R: The way you describe it, too, it sounds like everybody was moving slowly or in a daze or something like that, or…

S: Yeah, like, "Ok, what happened? Where are we?" There's four of us standing on the back of this ambulance and people are just spitting and there are bottles of saline solution but you don't drink it but just wash out your mouth and of course, inevitably, because you're so dry, someone swallows and gets violently sick from doing that.

R: It makes you vomit.

S: Yeah, because it's like salt water. Plus, it burns. So we're all standing there and then someone says, "We hear people screaming from the pile." "Hello! Help! I need help!" So we just stand there. You're just looking at the sight of destruction. Where is this voice coming from? Sort of like, ok, I think it's over here. So we walked over. So, literally you just take your bare hands, just moving stuff. Then we pull one guy out. Mostly it was emergency workers because that's who was in the area. So we get three people out and I haven't strayed much from where I was to being with. I think it was a half an hour. I have no, absolutely no concept of time, at all. But the second building comes down and we're still there, pulling people out. All of a sudden, people are running South towards us, saying, "The second one is coming! Get out!" Meaning, the North tower. So they're running South, towards us. And, I have no shoes on. That was another thing. We were just seeing people's shoes all over the place. Now for me, it wasn't a huge thing because I had loafers on so being thrown out of loafers wasn't a big thing, but tied shoes? You know? But on my stocking feet, it was hot. And they're like, "Run!" And I'm banged up so, you know, everyone's running, so I think, "Ok, I'm running like Carl Lewis." I mean, but probably like Chariots of Fire, that slow motion-like movement.

R: And you have a piece of concrete in your head still, right?

S: Right. But I get hit in the back and I immediately get dropped. I mean, I'm running and the next thing I know I'm "bang" on my knees, from taking the shot in the back. I turn around and I see that cloud coming at me. I don't know if you've seen any of the video tapes, but all of a sudden it's just like, this blob is coming at me and without a helmet I was feeling really vulnerable. My intention was, "I'm going to make it to the river and I'm going right over that railing." And I'm a swimmer, but at least I can go under the water and not take the brunt of getting hit with debris. I'm feeling banged up, you know. But, you know what, my whole perspective is, "I have two arms and two legs and someone is walking around without their arm." So I realize, after getting hit and going down, I turn around and I see this cloud coming at me, I know I'm not going to make it to the river. So I go into this building. I get into the doorway and take out my gun, and if this building is locked I'm just going to blow it out, you know? And, I open it and there's a doorman station there so I walk in. There are no lights and, again, my thought process was, "This building must be under construction."

R: Because there are no lights?

S: The only thing that are lit are these light bulbs in orange cages, so I continue walking in; there's no one around, and it was sort of eerie. I get to the elevators and the elevators were all stopped at (floor) one. So I'm like, "Ok, so this building's been… there's no one here." And then the smoke starts coming in from the elevator shafts. So I go to the nearest staircase, figuring there's no way smoke can come through, so I open up the door and close it and I'm in a stairwell and the stairwell is just lined up, with people, and people are in various modes of dress. Some people had just come out of the shower. It's an apartment building and I'm thinking, "What are you doing here?" There's a baby crying, the mother's nursing her. People are hyper. Oh, on my way, I did meet a guy and we get into an argument. It's a husband and wife and they have a kid, and he's totally

frantic. "No, I'm taking her, we're going out!" And I'm saying, "Guy, you can't go out there." Like, "Been there, done that. You go out you get killed." Because, in this debris are pieces of building. You go in that and you're dead. And I was feeling no authority. I'm a lieutenant in the NYPD. I mean, how credible do I look? I've got cement…you know. I'm saying, "Don't go out there. I just came in from there. It's black, you can't breathe… and the haze." And he's like, "You know, no disrespect, Ma'am, but fuck you. You act like it's the end of the world." I'm like, "Listen guy.. you wanna go?" What am I gonna…? So, it was surreal because all these people were in the stairway. And I'm just catching my breath. After about five, ten minutes, I open up the door and I see the smoke starting to clear. I'm at this elevator bank, and I go out and say "I'll be right back." And the smoke *is* clearing but we need to get these people out as quick as possible. My thought is, "Every building in lower Manhattan is going to come down now." So I don't want people in the building. So I come back and say, "Ok, I'm going to open the door. Why don't you all go to the lobby, the interior lobby. Don't go to the front where the doorman station is." Because, my thought was of something coming and smashing through the glass. I remember at one point, someone gave me a bottle of water and there was a baby crying and I remember saying to the woman, I mean, it was an infant and I said "Here's his or her water," and she said "She can't suck, doesn't have that capacity yet." And I said, "Well, maybe take some on your finger." And I remember standing there watching the people come by and they're passing me and people are just dazed. And the last person comes out, I close the door, I climb over them and a guy says, "You can't," and I say, "I'm with the PD," so he says "Oh, go ahead." I walk to the front of the door and it's that gray haze again but I see the back of someone's shirt and it has in huge letters, NYPD. Oh, and it said TARU which I knew was NYPD. I guess if you're not in the department, you wouldn't necessarily say "TARU" so I open up the door and I'm like, "TARU!" The guy turns around and he recognized me. I didn't immediately recognize him. I said, "I'm on the job," and he said, "Yeah, yeah! How you doin'?" I said, "Listen, there are all these people here. We've got to get them out." He says, "No problem." As all this is happening, you would pass these radios from FD, PD, EMS, lying in this rubble and I'm picking them up identifying myself ,and they're all dead. There's no communication. He says, "It just came over the radio. We're evacuating everyone to New Jersey." I'm like, "Alright." So I turn around and I said, "Lets just get them down to the riverbank and put people on boats." And that's a little bit of a walk. So he's like, "Alright." And he was so calm. He grabs me and he says, "Lieutenant, I don't know how to tell you this but, I, I think I should probably just carry you down to the boat." I said, "Well, my ankle hurts. I can feel the pressure but I'm ok. I'm doin' ok." And he says, "No. There's a piece of glass that's just sticking out of your back through your blouse." For me, the lucky part was that none of my injuries were visible to me. I mean, I have this cement, and there' a piece of a window pane…And, all of these people, there are all these people in the apartment and not one of them says, "Do you know you have a piece of glass hanging out of your back?"

R: Right, and a piece of concrete in your head.

S: Well that one I had, I had this white thing I'm holding up so they knew I was aware of that but I would have thought they would have told me about the glass.

R: So you had no idea.

S: Well, I knew I got hit. But the thing actually went into my back and it didn't come out. It stung, but I didn't realize the thing was still there. I mean, how would I know? It wasn't like I was leaning up against a wall, pushing it further in. So, I said to him, "Well, lets just get the people out. Start moving." He said, "We'll take care of the evacuation." I said, "I'll just walk down, slowly, to the boat, but lets just move." And he said, "Yeah, no problem." I mean, one of the nicest guys. I know him now, well. And when I see him, he always laughs. It's just one of those things, you know. So I get down and I'm making my way through, and I keep getting beeps from the office where I work saying, "Call the office. Where are you? We're worried." But, and I'm seeing people from the PD. I get down and they are loading this boat with people, this big fire department boat. But in the background I see an NYPD Harbor boat and I wanted to wait for that boat. And he's like, "You've gotta get on this boat. It'll be pulling out in two minutes. Let me just throw you on this boat." And I'm like, "I want to wait until the Harbor boat pulls in." There was something like a real safety net for me to be among cops. So he's like, "Alright." So the boat pulls in and the CO, Captain K___, the CO of Harbor, I had just met him in August because there had been huge water safety rescues that were on film that made the news and I had put a montage together of Channel 7's piece on it. People that work for him did phenomenal rescues. One was off the pier at Rockaway, another was of an overturned boat, and a traffic helicopter was up and they filmed the whole rescue. So I had put this montage together for him and I had just mailed it to him. So he comes in on this Harbor boat and, like, the world has gone awry and I say to him, "K___, did you get the tape I sent?" And he's like "Uh, ok.." And he says "EMS, I've got an injured officer," and I turn around and I say, "Where?" And he says, "I've gotta get you to a hospital. You're not in good shape." But part of it was just total shock, I think. I'm just thinking, "K___, do you have the tape?" Just oblivious. And he says, "I've gotta get you on this boat. I've gotta get you out." I'm like, "Alright." He said, "I can't put you on the boat with the glass because if the boat rocks, God forbid, I don't know how far that's in you. If it punctures your lung or goes through your heart…" I'm like, "Alright." So he calls EMS, and EMS says, "Ok, I'm going to ask you to hold onto the wooden railing and lean over. We're going to cut your blouse off because we need to remove this glass before you get on the boat. But we're going to wrap you in gauze because it's going to bleed." And even then, my thought was, "So, I'm going to be naked from the waist up in lower Manhattan." You know, like these bizarre thoughts.

R: It's, like, it's thoughts you would have ordinarily but considering the circumstances, they seem, somehow, not appropriate to the situation. Like you're in crisis situation. Who cares? But you're still having these mundane concerns.

S: Right, so I'm saying to K___, "K___, I've gotta get back to my office." Like, "If I get on the boat, can you by boat take me to St. Vinny's? I don't really want to go to New Jersey." He was saying, "I don't know what the load is at St. Vinny's. Don't worry about going back to your office." And I'm like, "Well, I'm getting these beeps. I need to get word to them." Because I get a message saying, "If we don't hear back from you we're

putting you among the missing." And I'm *not* missing. I'm *alive*. You're trying to account for me and I'm here, I'm alive. I mean, God, if that ever went out that I'm missing, then people are going to think that I'm dead and I'm alive. So I lean over, and then some guy comes along with an ax and decides that if we get rid of this railing, we'll be able to push people on boats. So, I'm like, "Yo, guy, until they finish working on me, do you think you can not bang with an ax?" And so I'm leaning over and there's an EMS guy here and an EMS person here and all the sudden, their feet come up on the railing and they go "One, two, three," and just rip. I thought, at that moment, I was like, "Oh, my God." Because they just ripped the glass right out of my back, which was much more painful than it was going in. And they wrap and wrap and wrap and wrap and then K___ puts me on a boat and we're going over to Ellis Island and I know that I'm on the boat with a really young officer. He's in uniform and he has no stripes so he has less than five years on. He's got this baby face, and he's laying there, and all of a sudden he starts losing it. So they're going to get the paddles out. They take off his gun belt, they hand it to me. They rip off his shirt and they're ready to do CPR because it looks like he's going out of the picture. So I'm like, "Holy shit." We get over to Ellis Island and we need to get this guy off, and they literally lift him right up onto the dock onto a stretcher and start working. I have his shirt with his shield and his gunbelt. They lift me off and they put me, I guess in a wheelchair. And, the sun, and now it's back to being this clear and beautiful day again. I said, "Could you get me out of the sun?" It was just hurting. So they put me under a tree, and I give over, I say, "This shield goes with this gun." They put tape on me with my name, that I was with the NYPD and my social security number. I'm sitting, literally hunched over because my back hurts. I can't sit forward and this thing in my head is getting heavy. So I look over and there's a guy on a stretcher and I don't see his face but right below his knee, it just made a right-hand turn. It wasn't gross. It wasn't like, blood and gory. It wasn't like the bone was through the leg. It was this right angle that you knew your body shouldn't be able to do. So they come over and they were extremely courteous to NYPD, and this guy comes over and he's a National Park Service and he was very, "Ma'am, I'm Ranger Joe Blow, and, is there anyone I can notify?" I said, "Great, could you notify my office?" Because that's the first thing I notify, but he couldn't reach the number. So I said, "Listen, I have a sister who lives on Long Island and she's a stay at home mom and could you call her? Her name is ____." And he says, "Ok, what's the message?" And at that point I was at least aware of the magnitude of the situation and I said, "Tell her I'm alive." I mean, she has to know, that's all she needs to know. If people were watching it, it's, like, a miracle that I'm alive. So he's like "Alright." So he comes back to me before I get moved and he says "Ma'am, I got in touch with your sister and she just asked whatever time, whenever, if you get a chance, just please call her. But she knows you're ok." I said, "Alright." So they're taking me out and it's a gravel road on Ellis Island and they take me to an ambulance. They're so anxious to help so they're like, "We're going to get you right in this ambulance and we're going to take you." I said, "Listen, guys. I'm not going to be able to get on a stretcher. I mean, I have to stay sitting up. I can't go back, my back. And my head. So if you can put another person on the stretcher, because I'm going to be sitting on a bench." I said, "There's this guy that wasn't far from me and his leg is just really screwed up. I mean, he's got to be moved soon. He needs to get to surgery." So they go back and they find the guy and they wheel him over. I'm off to the side and they're going

to put him in, so they put him in. They pick up me and they put me on the bench and I am sitting as close to the door as I can because this is really skeevy. Like, you know when something's skeevy? Like, I don't want to look at this leg, man. Like, I couldn't *see* it. But it was so… and it's taped, like with duct tape, it looked like. So they start to move and it's a gravel road. So now, of course, this guy starts screaming like, "Aaah!" and so that's unnerving so I'm like, "It's just a gravel road for a little bit and then it gets to be a real road so this isn't going to be the way it's going to be the whole way to the hospital." I'm saying that to him. So when he starts screaming, they stop the ambulance. So he's like this with his arms. All of a sudden he picks up his head and he says, "Hey, I know you." So I look at him, right, and I'm thinking, ok… and it's one of those faces that… I just say, "My name is (Mary). I work in the NYPD. I'm in the press office." So he says, "Mary, it's (Name). I'm a photographer for the Daily News!" So when I'd get assigned to parades, he'd be one of the guys that would be in the pen taking his pictures. So I said, "Oh…" Now, do I *know him* know him, no. But I've come across him professionally. There are fifty photographers and this one lieutenant so they tend to know you more than you tend to know them. So then I kind of scoot down the bench and I said, "Listen, here's my hand and squeeze it until we'll off the gravel and then when we're on the road, it will be better." So he squeezes me and he says, "Oh, do I have to tell my wife?" He was calm but he was in a lot of pain. And he's obsessing about his wife and his two kids and he had spoken to his wife saying, "Listen, a plane went in. I'm going down there." And he said, "My wife probably thinks I'm dead." I said, "D__, they're probably going to take you right into surgery." And he lived in NJ and the EMS guy gave me his pen and on the other side of the white tape I had on, he gave me his wife's name and his home number and I said, "My family knows I'm ok. But if they take you right to surgery, I'll make sure that when they come to me, then I'll give them this number and ask that they call your wife and let her know that you're here." He was like, "Yeah, that'd be great." So, of course when, we pull into the hospital and we get separated. They take him and he goes one way and I get off and go another way. But, we were either the first or second ambulance to get to Bayonne. Everyone else went to Jersey City, but I think they got jammed and they were like, "No more. Send people to Bayonne." So now you have all these doctors and nurses and everyone's on standby and so you have all these hands coming at you and it's like, "Whoa." And when I gave the guy the shield and the gun belt, I think he thought they were mine so now, they're saying, "We're going to bring you in." And the first thing they did was a chest X-ray because they don't know what we've breathed in. But I had my gun on me and so I said, "I've got a gun," and they're like, "Aah, she's got a gun!" I'm like, "Come one. I'm a cop. Don't make it sound like I'm a lunatic in the emergency room with a gun." But I'm not just giving my gun to anybody. So they get a Bayonne cop and I give it to him, and I give him all my information, my wallet and all my personal effects that's of any value to me. And even all the personal questions like, "Is there any chance you might be pregnant?" You know, "When was the last time you had your last period?" I'm like, "What? Are you kidding? No, I'm not pregnant." But, like, you're in a vacuum, with all these people, so trying to process… And my leg is blown out so someone's working on my leg and someone taking my blood pressure, someone is unwrapping the gauze to put the EKG on me because they've got to do that. Someone else is trying to do something with my head. It was like, I remember it being like, a tizzy. So then this woman comes up to me after

about, literally, it was like five minutes because I think they brought a portable X-ray machine right over to me and did a chest X-ray without moving me. That's my recollection. I don't really know. The woman says to me, "I have some good news and I have some bad news." I said, "Well, it's been a little bit of a rough day so maybe you could give the good news first." So she says, "The good news is I'm Dr. So and So, and I'm a surgeon and you need to be brought to surgery and I'm the surgeon and we'll be operating on you." I said "Ok, well what's the bad news?" She said, "Well the bad news is because you've had blunt trauma to your head and we need to do this thing, we can't give you any anesthesia." So I said, "That is bad news." But I was like, "Alright." She said, "We're going to go operate now." So they bring me up and it's like this really weird thing. People are prepared for thousands and thousands of people to rise up, out of this rubble, that never came. So actually being in the hospital was like, being in a triage area. So we go in and it's like this fugazie operating room, because they're not putting me under, and they have me, and they switch me and they're like, "We're going to do your head first and then we're going to do your back." So I'm laying on this gurney and there's a woman and they say, "She's going to give you her hand and just squeeze." And that was the worst part. Like, I don't see myself at all. I don't see my injuries. So to look at someone's face…

R: And they see…

S: Well, to see the reaction, you know, the person going (grimaces), like, I don't want to see that. She said, "I'm going to try some locals first." But the needles going into the back of my head, it was like, "You know what? You're causing me more pain." It's like how I kind of feel about Novacaine. Lets start drilling and if it gets really unbearable then give me the Novacaine, but you're going to spend more time and effort on doing it. So she's like, "Alright," so she does my head. And just, you know, she's cutting and she's making great comments like, "You know, I'm no Vidal Sassoon but I'll try so you don't wind up totally bald." And I remember when she got it out, she said to me, "Do you want to keep this?" And it was, you know, a chunk of cement. But it had my scalp and my hair on it and I'm thinking, "I have no clothes. I have absolutely no clothes." You know, I'm much more practical. I was like, "I would really appreciate clothes more than I would this rock." Now, in hindsight, I wish I had kept it. And she says, "Ok, now we're going to do your back. I'm like, "Ok." They do my back and the sheets are soaking wet, either from blood or from pouring, like, whatever they do to clean the wound. So I'm just sopped. So now they're changing me again and they move me over to a different section. So now I'm basically sitting up. My head's wrapped like a turban and they have my back wrapped. They took an X-ray of my ankle. Oh, that was the other thing. The reason why I wasn't running was I had fractured my ankle. I had had fractured the bone so it *felt* stiff, but, obviously, at least I felt better about why I wasn't running that fast. But she said, "It's so blown up and because you have all these open cuts and lacerations," because they were bad, "I can't put it in a cast." So I'm like, "Alright." Like, everything was like, "Ok." So I'm laying in this, literally just this hospital and it's just *up* because they've put enough of a buffer so I could at least lean back. So I'm just laying like this, my head's in a turban and I'm saying to the nurse, "What happened?" And they're like, "Oh, it was the Pakistanians." And I don't know where they got that idea. I think they probably

meant to tell me it was the Palestinians, drunken in the streets and cheering, like, "They did this." And then they tell me that the Pentagon got hit. And that really bothered me more.

R: Why is that?

S: I think because, for me, it was the center of our national security. Like, if you can hit the Pentagon, we are so vulnerable. Like, the Pentagon? In my mind, I have this image of, that's our national security. They hit the pulse of our national security system? The plane went down in Pennsylvania, oh ok. You know, like, it went into an open field. I obviously know the two planes hit the WTC but the other plane hit… the Pentagon? How did that happen? Just explain. But they're not telling me Palestinians, they're saying Pakistanians, and I'm like, "What did we do to Pakistan?" None of it was… and this is intentional? And the whole, "We're at war," "Did a bomb go off?" Because I'm still thinking, because of the destruction down in lower Manhattan, that this is more than two buildings collapsing. And obviously, people are just speculating. I mean, no one really knows, that *day*. This is a couple of hours into it. And then this nurse comes up to me and says, "What have you had to eat today?" I said, "Well, I got up at 5:00. I had a cup of coffee." I hadn't eaten because there's a group that does 10:00 to 6:00, so when they get in, we order breakfast, but this happened before those people got in. She says, "Well, it's now X amount of hours later. Aren't you hungry?" I was like, "Oh yeah. I guess so." I'm thinking, "I've never been to Bayonne, NJ in my life. What the hell am I doing here?" Like that kind of… So, she was so nice. She said, "Listen I could go down and they're going to give you hospital food, but we ordered pizza. You seem like a really nice person. We have two extra slices. If I nuke it, would you rather have pizza?" I was like, "Ok." And she said, "What kind of soda do you want? We'll get you real soda. Not one of those no-name hospital kinds. Do you like Coke or Pepsi?" So they're being extremely kind to me. I said, "I'll have a diet Coke." And then, through the corner of my eye, I see my brother. He's an NYPD detective who drives Judge (Name). He (the brother) was working his second job on September the 11th. And he was supposed to be in a meeting at the WTC that morning because they were thinking about handing over to private security, and he was working for the company so the guy said, "So, could you come to the meeting?" And what happened was, he drives this guy steadily, so the owner of the company called him and said, "Can you spare (brother's name)? We're doing a presentation about what we would do for security at the WTC. Could you spare him tomorrow morning? We want him to come to the meeting." Fortunately, the guy said "I have a lot of things to do tomorrow and I'd really like him to be with me so unless you really need him, I would prefer that you not take him tomorrow. I could free him up another day." So he's with this guy who's this billionaire, and my sister, I'm one of five, four out of five of us are cops. My sister's the one that didn't become a cop but my father forgave her, I joke that my father forgave her because she married a cop. But when she gets the phone call, she makes up this whole story about this park ranger. I was at training the day before September 11th and I'll stay in touch with her. I'll say, "The UN project is coming down." I have the Waldorf Astoria, is my site. I'm responsible for that site on my tour. So we have to go this training at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. That's what I did on Monday. And then on Tuesday, my 11:00 meeting was to meet the guy at

the Waldorf, to go through, you know, "This was where the president of South Korea is going to stay. When Bush comes in, he's going to stay here." Just doing the mechanics of it. *She* thought that the training was for the entire week, not just the day. So she gets this call from this National Park Ranger and she says, "How is she?" This park ranger doesn't want to commit no-how. He's saying, "Ma'am, the only message that she gave me was she wants to let you know that she's alive." So she was like, "Oh, ok." So she says, "How is she?" So the guy says to her, "She's pretty shaken up." And then he says, "Can I relay a message back to her?" So that's the message, "Just, tell her to call." So in her head, she devises this whole story about, "Well, she was at training in Brooklyn and I guess once the planes hit, they all went up to the roof of the building in Brooklyn and she watched the buildings come down and she's really shaken up about it, and the phones aren't working but somehow, through some secret scientific radio that the police have, I'm able to contact someone on Ellis Island to tell him to call." So she calls and tells my sister-in-law, who goes along with the story. "Yeah, I guess that makes sense. How else would she be telling you a story from Ellis Island?" My sister-in-law beeps my brother. My brother is at least astute to know to say, "If she's on Ellis Island, then she's pretty seriously hurt," because that's where they're taking people that were hurt. And he says, "I'm going to track her down. She's not ok. She's alive, but she's hurt." He's able to track me down. The guy that he works for, this billionaire, who I've never met, is saying "I can't believe you talked..?" And I have a pretty close family. So he's like, "Lets go." He gets to the Lincoln Tunnel, and everything's shut down. They sealed off New York. So he gets to Lincoln Tunnel and he has his shield and his I.D. and he said, "I have an injured member of the NYPD." They opened up the tunnel for him, with this guy. This guy has a huge Tahoe. He comes through the tunnel. He makes it to Bayonne. So now, I see him out of the corner of my eye. Now, my brother Kevin is the father of five. His second child is handicapped and he's extremely health-conscious. He runs marathons, he's a vegetarian, he really stays on top of his health. But I think part of the reason is to outlive his daughter who he knows, no one is ever going to give the care for, the way he and his wife do. So I see him and my first thought, like, you know, that mundane stuff, I said to the nurse, "Forget the pizza." Because he'd be like, "You're eatin' this crap?" So she's like, "He's not going to be upset." And I'm like, "Don't bring the pizza! Let me tell you something, he's a health nut." So she's like, "Alright." But as he's coming barreling through to get to me, they stopped him. They're like, "No, you've got to put on a mask, you've got to put on this gown." So while they're doing this I'm saying, "Forget the pizza." "It's already in the microwave!" "No, forget it, forget it! I can't have it. My brother's here!" So they're like, "Oh, ok." He comes, and he's like "(Mary), how are you doing?" I'm like, "I'm alright. But, this is bad." He's like, "I know, it's bad." He said, "I just talked to the surgeon." So I called her over and I said "Are you going to do anything for me? Like, I really appreciate you stitching me up and…" She's like, "You're going to be in a lot of pain, but you really can't take too much pain killer because, you know, you really got knocked in the head. But you should probably get a CAT scan, MRI." And I said, "Listen, I have a ride back to Manhattan. Do you mind if I just leave?" But they're expecting thousands, so they're like, "Go. Listen, thanks for stopping by." I'm like, "Listen, you were great, thanks." "If you have a problem, fill these prescriptions because you really need to go on antibiotics. You have a lot of open lacerations." I'm like, "Yeah, no problem." So now I meet this guy that he's been

driving for an X-amount. It's his second job. Oh, so I said, "I need clothes. I have nothing." I said, "K__, the only thing you really need to get is my gun." "Ok." So they give me a paper blue top, like one of those things if you go into X-ray, and a pair of real surgeon's pants, and the booties like you get on airplanes. And I'm like, "Listen, you were great. Thanks a lot. I'm out of here." They're wheeling me through and I meet this guy, and it was so surreal. I'm like, "Nice to meet you. K__'s told me wonderful things about you. Thanks for coming to get me." Like, what do you say? So they're wheeling me out and people are like, "Hey," hitting you. "You made it, good for you." Priests are blessing me as I'm walking out. It was very weird. So we get out and K__ goes to pull the car over and this billionaire is saying, "You know, I think you should maybe put her in the front." And this guy comes up to me and he's in uniform. Maybe that's how people knew I was with the department, because they're like, "Thanks for your help." And I'm like, "What did I do?" The world is coming apart. This guy grabs me and he's like, "Ooh, ooh, Lieutenant. You don't know me, I know you! It's (Name)." I'm like, "Hey, how you doin?" He says, "What's goin' on? Where you going?" I said, "Listen, my brother's here. I'm getting in the car. I'm going back. I've got to get back. I've got to get back to Manhattan." He says, "So do I." He says, "They threw me on a boat with a lieutenant who needed medical treatment and I had to come here but he's stabilized now and…" he was from ESU, Emergency Service. He said, "All my guys are down there. I've gotta get back. Can you take me back? Can you take me back? Please, Lou?" I was like, "Yeah, J__. Just, yeah. Mr. F__, is it ok? This guy…we've got to get him back." "Yeah, yeah. Fine. Jump in!" So he hops in and, there are no cars on the road except us and we're on the NJ turnpike and we'd just pull up and we'd put the window down and the guy'd look at me and I'd show him my NYPD I.D. He's like, "Go right ahead." They open up the Holland Tunnel for us. We've been the only car on the NJ turnpike. They moved their sanitation trucks out of the way at the Holland Tunnel. We go back to the WTC site because we need to get this guy back to his… And I get out, because, it's just massive now. And now I realize, I'm like, "K__, I can't walk. I can't." So he lifts me back into the car. I couldn't even help dig at that point. I was like, "I'll come back down here but I need to go back to my office first and let them know." And even his logic is like, "(Mary), I'm going to bring you back to your office, bu,t I'm going to leave you there for a couple of hours. You can't be alone. I've got to bring this guy that I drive back up to his residence in Connecticut and then I'm going to come back to headquarters and you're going to come home with me." His wife's a nurse. "You're just going to stay with us." I'm like, "Ok." And he pulls me right up to headquarters, he delivers me to the office and I'll never forget, the Chief of the Department, he's like, "Don't ever do that to me again!" And I started answering phones and it was right before Tower 7 came down, right before we lost all communication. But I remember answering the phone. It was just so weird.

R: In what sense was it weird? Weird how?

S: Well, I just had this wild experience and I'm like, back in my office. My car is gone. When I got up out of the pile, there it is, totally engulfed in flames, you know. I'm out of surgery an hour and a half and now I'm like, "Public Information, Lieutenant ____, can I help you?" Like, what are we telling people? K__ calls me, the woman that had hugged

me and she said, “Ah, M, I’m glad you’re back.” People are like, “One of your pupils is your whole eye. And the other one’s really dilated.” You hear every horror story. “Yeah, I once worked in Brooklyn and this guy got clocked in the head from a bar fight and he showed up dead three days later. You should really get a CAT.” And then there were other people in the office that had the running eyes, the running nose. Everyone was not in good health, and so the three of us drove out to Northshore Hospital on Long Island and I got my CAT scan and, eyes flushed out with these guys. I was able to get in touch with my brother. He made it to Northshore Hospital before we did so we were all pre-registered. Got taken care of. And then I said to my brother, “Maybe you could drop me off at my sister’s house,” because she’s a stay-at-home mom. I mean I felt all of a sudden, I’d be moving in with my brother. You know, he’s got five kids. He’s got a full plate, so I ended up doing that.

R: Staying at your sister’s.

S: Yeah. Plus, my boyfriend lives there too. Because I had to go back and forth, obviously, to a lot of doctors appointments and whatnot and it was just easier.

R: So let me ask you a couple things, um, about that day. You were aware that your command was looking for but you couldn’t reach them and then you were finally able to get that guy to contact your sister but were you concerned about your brothers? You said you have…

S: No, because two are out of state. I knew my brother was not working with the PD that day, so, no. My immediate family, no.

R: Ok, and, there were a few things I wanted to get back to a little bit. You said that you wanted to wait for Harbor, that you had a sense of safety or security with NYPD. Can you say anything more about that?

S: Well, I guess because the first portion of the day, for me, right after the initial tower went down, I was the only NYPD person. I was with EMS and I was with FD. And just the sense of…my sense of relief in seeing Detective M___ from TARU, um…

R: But why? Can you say?

S: Because I have total trust in the NYPD people. I knew I’d be taken care of. I knew word would get back to my office. I had total, total faith in them.

R: So, you felt safe.

S: Yeah, a sense of security. Cops will always do the right thing.

R: Ok. In order, you mean, to take care of you. You felt like you’d be taken care of?

S: Yeah, but I also knew that anything I asked of them, like getting in touch with my office, I knew they'd take that seriously. I think that if I got on this boat with these hundreds of civilians that were on the FD boat, that I'd get lost in the shuffle, that word wouldn't get back, it wouldn't be as important to a FD person as it would be to a NYPD person. They had enough on their plate.

R: At one point when you were thrown by the force and landed there, at one point you said, you thought, "This is it." Can you say more about what that was like?

S: One time, I don't know whether I had my palm read, one time a person said, "When you die, it's going to be very quick. " Like, a heart attack, an embolism. And I remember thinking, "This really isn't quick." Probably it was, minute-wise, but I was thinking, "What a horrible way to go."

R: What would be horrible about it?

S: Oh, it just, not being able to breathe. The only thing comparable that I've ever experienced was when you have the wind knocked out of you and you're so aware you can't get any oxygen into your brain. Um, I didn't know. I had no spatial consideration of where I even was. "Where am I? That this is my last breath. Where am I?"

R: So that contributed to it being a horrible way to go.

S: I had no clue of where I was. I didn't know if I was on the East side or the West side. I was somewhere in lower Manhattan. I didn't know where I landed. I knew it was downtown. I mean, had I landed in the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel? I mean, where am I?

R: Can you take me through, and I don't know even if you can, but if you can, can you take me through your thoughts in that moment or those moments where you thought, "This is it?" What was going through your mind, do you remember?

S: I remember thinking that this really isn't so quick. I mean, that certainly was one thought.

R: Did you think about how you had your palm read? Like, that whole thing?

S: Well, I just remember, you know, I don't even know, was it my palm or an astrological chart? I just remember having it done, and having had someone die very close to me, of cancer. And, what a long drawn out battle. And it always stayed with me, because I remember that the guy thought I was nuts when he said it was going to be quick because I was like, "Thank God." Like, it won't be one of these diseases that goes on forever and ever. Um, uh, I think, the sounds of all those people screaming was so horrible, um. The thought of, "How many people did we get out?" Like, "How many people came down when that building came down? How many people were still inside?"

R: You were thinking about that?

S: Well, I wasn't really sure. I'm like, "Did a piece of that building, did the whole thing come down?" Being very conscious of how black it was. I can't, like, all senses were gone. It was weird to *hear*. And, that the first reaction was one of hearing. So there's the, the, the helmet coming off my head. Total black. It just… there was no frame of reference to what I was experiencing, if that makes any sense.

R: So, emotionally, what's that like, to not have a frame of reference?

S: Awful, because I'm a very pragmatic person. And it wasn't a good, you know how you can have experienced that you've never had before but they're enjoyable? In '93 I skydived for the first time. That was such a great feeling. But it wasn't that type of feeling. It was a real negative. It was, um, it was extremely eerie. It was a very eerie sensation… totally.

R: Mm,hmm.

S: (silence)

R: And what about, what was it like, or, if you even registered anything emotionally to be in the presence of other people dying, the people jumping, did you think about the fact that, this person has just died? And, did you think about the person whose hand you were holding, whose arm came off, was that affecting you in some way?

S: Well just, is this a person from a plane? Is this person's body somewhere? Yeah, I think it gave me a big sense of how fortunate *I* was. No matter, no matter what could have physically ailed me, I knew it wasn't as bad. Or my perception was, no matter what's wrong with me, in terms of injury, it's never going to be as bad as pulling up that limb. But I remember sending a prayer to that person's spirit. Like, if there's a body that goes along with it, may you be in someone's care right now. May there be a tourniquet. May this be, may this arm be from the plane. You know, one of the victims who was killed instantly, and it came out when the building came down. Yeah, and it, and also just the amount of emergency workers in that area, you know. I lost my cousin, who was a firefighter. So, and the thought that it was, and I don't mean this lighthearted, at all, it amazes me that so few people died. I thought it was going to be thousands upon thousands, not…(tape ends)

S: We evacuated, a conservative number in terms of who we evacuated would be 20,000 people. Because the capacity of the WTC I think was 50,000 people. So they're saying we got out between 20,000 and 30,000 people, given the time of day, because not everyone is there that early. So, it's a rather conservative figure. So if you say 30,000 people, and then 3,000 people died. That means that for every person that died, nine got out safely.

R: And so that…

S: That makes me feel a little bit better. But, my initial reaction was that, no one…no one at all…no one…everyone…is dead.

R: While it was happening…

S: There were four of us, that's it. All of these people had been running from the building, emergency workers, and there were only four of us, four of us pulling people out. Where did all the people go?

R: And all these other people, they were dead.

S: In my mind.

R: So you were at that point, what you thought, a sole survivor.

S: Yes.

R: And, how did you feel…? What was that like?

S: I don't, I don't know, being where I was, how I survived. I don't. As a matter of fact, it was two weeks, it was the beginning of October, before I was actually able, at the site, to reach the location where I was that day. That's how long it took them to clear that debris. How, how did I survive? Now, do I think that there were angels? Both of my parents are deceased. Do I think that they…I am a spiritual person. So, do I think that they got me out of there? No. Do I think…, I know that there is no rationale of why, being exactly where I was, why I was saved. That I was blown from one side of the street to the other side, and what took a lot of the brunt for me, in terms of getting the lower part of my body buried under debris and getting shots with stuff. Why the glass that hit me, went into my back didn't hit me in my jugular, or it didn't hit an artery, or why it missed my lung by three centimeters. All of those things. One of the things that took a lot of the debris, I know the South walkway bridge remains standing and all the windows got blown out. But, that took a lot of the brunt of huge pieces of the stuff coming down. And I was not that far…So stuff tended to go over me, you know. I find that stuff really remarkable. Now, I'm also a believer that we come to this life with life-lessons that we are supposed to learn. And, so, I think everything is sort of, it works together in the sense that it's part of your plan, that you come with a plan, sort of. What I had a hard time reconciling was, "Was it 3,000 people's plan to go at the same moment in time?" And it wasn't even so much the people that died, but, there's 10,000 children that were left behind. Was it part of their plan to grow up without a mother or a father? Is that written into people's plan? I had a hard time justifying, or understanding that. And also, I think, you can understand even young people can accomplish what they need to in a very short time. I don't know it, but this is just my guess, but I think the median age of the people that died is very young. I would say most people were in their 30's probably. And that's only because, when I had the stitches removed from my back, they rushed me to the hospital in Manhattan because I had donated my right kidney to my brother in the 80's and there was a lot of scarring all around my back. So I had to get some specialized

tests to see how much damage there was, and between the time I had the blood test done and when I went to have the dye injected and all that stuff I went outside and all along the walls were these horrific pictures, of people missing. And I went and I just read them. It was unusual to come across someone in their fifties. The ages were 27, 25, 32. And they were horrible stories, you know, "Last seen South Tower," and the perception of hope of people that these people had somehow made it to a hospital and no one knew. So, the thing is, those people learned their lessons at a very young age, accomplished all that they were meant to accomplish. But then the burden, the other thing is that people kept telling me how lucky I was. And I wanted to say, "Am I?" So now I have all these horrible images, and all these horrible thoughts, and I'm still living. And, like, the pain, the physical pain, that can be dealt with. But, in some ways I feel the people that were killed got off easier.

R: Can you say more about that? It sounds like you feel you are left with a burden.

S: Yeah, and thus stuff of, what haven't I learned in my life yet that I'm supposed to? Am I on the wrong path? Am I doing the wrong thing? Why did I survive? I'm not guilty that I survived. I don't have survivor's guilt. You know, "Why did I have this arm? And I?" You know, and maybe that guy was right there, and his arm got severed, or he was in the same wind I was and a window came and took his arm out and I lived and he died…" I can't go down that road. There is no logic to that, and I'll never know it. So I don't want to go down a road where there are no answers. Um, but there was something of, you know, "You lived." October 17, I still had this turban on my head, I'm bald on the back of my head, I'm in an air-cast for my ankle, I'm stitched up in the back, and I'm on crutches and I'm sitting there and we have no body but we're going to do this memorial service for my cousin. And I just remember his brother coming up and grabbing me and hugging me and saying, "I'm so glad we're not going to your funeral, too." My cousin was seven years my junior. All his life he wanted to be a firefighter. (phone rings, stop tape)

R: …the spiritual part. You're saying if I understand correctly that you feel you still have a lesson to learn in life?

S: I think we are here for a reason. I think every person that we come in contact with, we cross paths with for a reason. And sometimes it's in a negative light, but we have the greatest lessons to learn from those. So, yeah, I think that I'm here for a reason. And I'm not really sure what that is. And I'm not sure that we ever know. Or, what am I supposed… am I supposed to be staying with the police department? Am I supposed to be leaving the police department? Am I supposed to retire? Why am I staying? I have my time in. Was I where I should have been? Did it make a difference? What lessons have I learned? I could be hokey and tell you "Oh, I'm so aware of what a gift life is." I don't even think I was feeling that way by the time the afternoon came that day. And I also think that we are on top of it in terms of, there's not enough distance yet, in some way. I was much more affected by this year's anniversary than I was last year's.

R: How were you affected?

S: I'll give you an example, I have visions in my head, I have sounds in my head, I can recall like *that*, (snaps fingers) the moment, day, certain thoughts. But, people would say, right after it, "You musnt' be able to sleep. That's gotta be horrible. You gotta be having nightmares. Are you able to eat?" I was like, "Look at me. Do I look like I have a problem eating?" And that first year I wanted to say, "Listen, September 11 happened. I spent eight weeks just trying to heal." And I have say I think because of the environment, because of, truly, just being surrounded by people who loved me, that were just so kind and generous and wonderful to me. I'll say my sister, I just took over her life. And people were in and out of the house at all hours. And she fed them all. I just really even when I think about it now, she was so present. I remember being in bed with her at 3:00 a.m. and they were showing one of these videos. I didn't sleep for about 48 hours after it. It got to the point where I knew how tired I was, and I was aware I needed to sleep. But I was hyper, and glued to the television. I was showing her, "look, that's how black it got" and going on and on. And she had kids to care for. But she was never like, "give me a break" or anything. I remember I took two Tylenol and some Nyquil. The adrenaline that was in my system just stayed there. And I still didn't sleep. Finally I called the doctor and asked if he could give me something. The awful part too was that they cut the piece out of my head, to stitch it, but I had all this fiberglass in my hair, and all that dust and asbestos or whatever, and they didn't clean it out. So when I got up all these dust particles fell off me. And I couldn't bathe myself. So my sister washed my hair over the kitchen sink. I remember getting into the tub on September 12. It was a white bathtub, and she ran the water, and it was gentle, I couldn't put my lower back in, and I had to be careful of my ankle. I remember getting into the tub, and I was there maybe 3 minutes, and they lifted me out and it was entirely black. They had to just let the water out and do it again. I felt like it was in my pores and everything. But I remember people would say they'd be having these nightmares and stuff. But, you're so focused on, "Are they gonna find my cousin?" And then that jerk with the cell phone. That woman who called the cops and said she just heard from her husband. So you think there are people that are living! You hear stories about Pearl Harbor and they were able to tell by calendars that were kept that people had lived at the bottom of the ships and they never got to them. You hear all those stories. And then some of the people that died from the police department were friends of mine. One of them was John Coughlin. So, now I go to the department Health Services and the guy is great and he says "I'll see you in January," and it's October and I leave. And I get home and the Chief calls me, that I work for and says, "How are you doing? I heard the guy doesn't want to see you again until January. But, I really need you to come back." So, I said "OK." And I called up and said, "Put me back full duty." So the guys said that was fine if I wanted to go back. But I couldn't be full duty with stitches and stuff so he put me on limited capacity. I work in an office anyway, so whether I'm Limited or Full doesn't make a difference. So I go back to work and I'm back one week. And it's now Monday, November 11th and a guy comes knocking on my door and says, remember that party you had down at the beach at your house? I know that you were on (Name) Avenue, but what street was it? And I said, (the street name) and he said, "I don't know how to tell you this but a commercial airliner just went down one street over and there are numerous homes on fire." I made it from Headquarters down to my house in 11 minutes. It's 20 miles, but

there was no traffic. It was a civilian holiday, it was early in the morning. In one sense that was almost worse because it was body on top of body, burnt, in a pile. It was the opposite of the World Trade Center. It was a commercial airliner that went down and they were still identifiable. It was a mother with her little baby in her arms, burnt, they were just fried. And just the horror. And I remember that my Parish down in Rockaway said they were going to open up the school as a temporary morgue and I said, "You don't want the bodies going there. Listen, Monsignor, it's great of you to offer, but let them go to the hangar. Don't bring these bodies to the Church." Those deaths were almost more personal.

R: In what sense?

S: You know, when someone is jumping, as horrific as that is, you didn't have a face to go with it, you didn't get that close. Whereas here, people were still in their seats from the plane. But, my point is, that week the UN was in session. They had decided to show the world that New York was alive and vibrant. So all of a sudden, every single press group that is covering the UN is down here. And my neighborhood, we're mostly civil servants there. So we had taken a huge hit. Like 75 people on this small island had died in the World Trade Center, some cops some firefighters, brokers for Cantor Fitzgerald. And the bells were constantly going off for funeral masses. I mean, it was horrific. But, the early newscasts come on at 5:00 a.m. and the last one finishes and 11:30 p.m. So I would work, you know, I'm in an air-cast, I still have my head bandaged, and I'm getting up at 4:00 in the morning and I'm out there with the news trucks at 5:00, the house across the street from me got (hit by) the engine, and people were camped out in my driveway. I get down to my house and there were airplane parts in my back yard and on my roof. It was just like my worlds were colliding. The Fox News van is in my driveway. I open my garage and I have to say, "Excuse me, this is private property." And I know some of these guys, and I have to say "Get off my driveway." They were waiting for the engine to be pulled out but they had to wait for the NTSB to say it was ok to move it. So, even today, they are finally rebuilding the house. And then I'd get home around midnight, and I'd get into bed and crash, and sleep for four hours, and get up and take a shower and go back to work. It was the closest commute I ever had. I open up my door, I'm at work. But, I didn't have time to think about what was happening. I'm physically exhausted. So then things calm down and we're into January and February 2002, the site is open until June of 2002. So we put all this energy into the digging, and now that's closed. But you still have the Landfill going on, so we're still…And you have these groups coming up and the press putting pressure on because "people want body parts," "how many body parts are you dealing with?" And the first anniversary there was a big hullabaloo about what we were gonna do. So the focus, for so long, has been on external things. This year there was a concentrated effort not to do that (have a formal 9/11 anniversary memorial service), but thousands came. And it was really… I love the place, I've been a member for over 20 years, but in their infinite wisdom, so I'm a Lieutenant when this happens, I get promoted to Captain in September of '02. Now, it's September of '03, and I'm a Captain at (names Precinct) and you forget you are just a number. They call me, I'm in the (names precinct) where (names members of service) died. They've lost members of the command. And I'm put there with the background of they needed to put a Captain

there that could gently say to them, "It's time to move on." I get sent there with that task, which is very hard.

R: And what do they mean "move on?"

S: Can we shut off the tape for a minute? (I stop recording.)

S: So I'm in the new precinct. And I was going to take September 11 off. But I thought it was kind of unfair to take the day off when you're in the command where they lost people. If anything I should work because I should be available to them. I'm part of this precinct now and it's really tough. Right before September 11 we went to the unveiling of (name's deceased police officer) headstone, we went to (name of another deceased police officer) house. I was very present for all of those. So I felt kind of connected to them. So I got an assignment for a detail at the WTC, and I think "that's surprising that you're going to send me downtown for a detail when I work in the command that lost people. I open the detail log to the page (where the assignment was listed) and, I kid you not, I kept it, I was assigned to the exact corner I was standing on when that first tower fell. I tell you the truth, I get pissed. So I'm sitting in my office and the person bringing the assignment down comes in and I say "do you have a minute?" because I actually thought it was a cruel joke, in one sense. I asked, "Who assigned people to these posts?" And he said he was given the names of people working and he assigned them. I said, "There's an irony that you put me (there) which is exactly where I was when the tower fell, and I got buried, and wouldn't want to…I said "Why did you…" He said, "Because it's going to be a really busy spot, where they're going to open up the site, and we wanted someone who knew what they were doing." I explained to him. And he said, "If you think it's going to bring up bad memories…" I thought, "it's beside the point, but could the police department ever have the foresight to think a little?"

R: To take someone's feelings into consideration.

S: But there is no thought. You're just a number, just a name, you get plugged into a sector. And there's no thought process. I said, "In light of the fact that this was just so arbitrary, and I believe you…" I just thought it was so strange… "Out of the whole entire 16 acres, this is the one place you assign me, the exact spot." So I think being down there this year… The first year, I wasn't a Captain, it was a lot of running around, typical press stuff that you deal with. This year, it was much more low-key in terms of media, and there were …thousands. To have that many people, collectively, in a small space, grieving. There was just this…pall. You looked at people and you just cried. There was a couple, an older couple, who had a picture of their son on one, the guy was wearing it, and his wife, the son's wife also died, so the older woman had a picture of their son's wife on her t-shirt, they both worked at the World Trade Center, they both died. And people just held … and you'd be standing there and realizing they'd just called out the name of the person who was standing next to you lost. The sobs that came out. I found it much more poignant this year. There was less fanfare. And there were people that…like, I understand Guiliani's…and I think he handled it superbly, he rose to the occasion, but when I heard him say, it seems so short the period of time, "Come back, go to shows,

Broadway is relit," and I'm thinking, "People aren't there yet, to move on." It was days, I don't even think it was a week, and you're telling people to come on in, come back to Broadway? I'm thinking, "The last frigging thing I want to think about is a Broadway show." And I'm removed from it in the sense that I didn't lose, like, a husband. What about the woman who has three kids and her husband just died? Her life is never going to be the same. Things are so different for her right now. The whole point I'm making, from a spiritual aspect, is there was no time to think that entire first year. You know, you came home, you went to sleep, you got up, you went to work. It was just…time was passing, time was marching on. But, I'm a peer counselor in POPPA (a PD peer counseling organization), which you know all about, so I'm on the hotline in January '02. The calls …were… unbelievable. So much so that I said, "I can't do this anymore. I can't…" The stress! People's marriages were breaking up, the stress of the job put people under. And even the debriefings with the Columbia project. Now, I'm a First Responder, meaning if you got there within the first four hours. Let me tell you something, there was a huge difference between if you got there before the towers fell, or if you responded after the towers fell. So, what's the four-hour gig? And I get, now, and I know enough, I have an MSW, so I'm aware of these counseling skills. I got debriefed in July of '02. That's going to help me with post-traumatic stress? I don't think so. It needs to be done…I understand that your intentions are good. And I think you're trying to do the right thing. But, my perception is that you're covering your butt, so that you don't get sued. I want to say, "What did we learn from Oklahoma?" Did we not learn that between three and five years the divorce rate is going to skyrocket? It was a much smaller scale, but you're talking about a national tragedy. I don't think that the brunt of it has even sunk in yet. I think you're going to have not only psychological effects but physical. I hear people wheeze here. So I don't think the full impact is felt yet. But I do think, spiritually, it puts me in a better place. It was horrific. People don't understand. I wouldn't want to be quoted about what I'm getting ready to say. (tape is turned off)

Things that would never have come up in my job as cop. How often do some of these issues come up? It took some courage to stand up, because people are so angry. And I'm not saying that people shouldn't be bitter. I can't put my energy there.

R: Let me ask you, talking about these spiritual issues, do you think this is a continuation of the way you've always felt and believed? Or has something changed?

S: I always thought we came with lessons. I spent the first six months to a year being really hyper about, "What didn't I learn?" "What am I doing here?" Because I figured if I had learned what I was supposed to learn, I'd be dead. So, what haven't I learned here? But, maybe it's an opportunity to live through the experience and come out on a different end to talk about it in a compassionate way. I am very opposed to the war in Iraq. My initial reaction was, and I didn't sleep for 48 hours, "We are going to annihilate them!" I thought we would go into Afghanistan within those first 48 hours, drop the bomb, and I was ready to watch the footage of it. You know, "How could you do this to us?" And then I think what happened, in the preparation for the war on Iraq, I gained a sense of perspective. "We're going to go in and bomb, and then we're going to drop care packages after we bomb?" That didn't make sense to me. It did from the political

standpoint, but not from the spiritual. I think we're a little on top of it because we're from New York. But, we need to at least say, "What is it about us that people hate so much?"
(Officer again asks to speak without being recorded.)

S: I also think that it helps me just cope so much better with it.

R: It helps you to cope to…

S: To have that spiritual side. That this isn't just this incident that happened. And it's not about me. And, in some ways, it's not about the people that died. It's bigger than that. It's not about the NYPD. September 11 isn't about me, I'm just a piece. One of the people (police officers) that died, and going through POPPA, that training, it was him, this other girl, and me, and we were only trained in January 2001. Then every week we spoke. And on September 11 he dies. And in the aftermath I got to know his wife, because I felt like I knew her, because you talk, and what were the chances that we were ever going to meet her? It was really interesting, one night we had this fund raiser and I see her. It was like we were life-long friends, though, not. And I said, "I just have to ask, do you think September 11 was a defining moment in your life?" Because I'm thinking here you are married, have 3 great kids, you're thrilled, now all of a sudden you're a single mom. And she said something so simple, but I thought it was so profound. She said, "I know that September 11 was a horrible event, for the city, for emergency service workers, for the state of New York, for us as a nation. It was a horrific world event. September 11 will always be for me the day my husband died." There was no fanfare about it. It's just, this was the effect that September 11 had. It doesn't make a difference how he died. You know, she said, "It was horrible. But I don't look at September 11 as this …. She said, "I couldn't tell you what the defining moment in my life was. And I don't think I would choose that as the defining moment, I would say it's the day that my husband died. And it won't be anything more or anything less than that ever to me."

I think September 11 brought out the best in people and the worst in people. I saw things that really repulsed me. And yet, the goodness and kindness of people…My sister came into the room one day, and she was really good about screening people, because it gets overwhelming. You know, I didn't need to tell my story. I didn't *need* to tell my story. I can define the people that are important in my life. And they don't want to know what happened for the sake of wanting to know what happened. They want to know what happened because, "How are you doing with it?" And my sister brought this woman in and she said, "You don't know my name, etc. and all that minutae that I don't really care about…" Her husband just called. He said he didn't want to talk to you, but he just wanted to say, "Thank you." He was in, whatever tower, he doesn't know if he saw you, but he said there was just a line of cops that got him out. And he just wanted to call and say, "Thank you." I was so touched. He wasn't calling to thank me personally. He was just calling to thank the cops. He wanted to make sure I could pass it on. There were people like him that made it out. And they made it out because of the great job that the cops did. And he wanted to say thank-you. You know, I think it's a real tough thing of where you move on and where you don't and what it all means and how you sort it all

through. I mean, it wasn't a near-death experience for me, I know that. I mean I didn't leave my body, in that sense…

R: But you at one point thought that you were getting ready to die.

S: I thought, "How mundane." My life did not flash before my eyes. I'm thinking, "This is it?" You know, I want something more, to be honest with you. And it wasn't. It was, "This is it?" "Where's the white light?" You know? "Please let it be a white light!" (laughs) Or, "Is this it?" And you die, and it goes totally blank? Am I dead? That was a moment. I had no bodily feeling. Not in the sense that I had left my body. But it was almost like, because I think because of my spatial orientation being out, and having such severe nerve damage, and blockage in my ear, because there's debris, I mean, glass got in and stuff, so your spatial orientation…I'm thinking "Oh, my God. If this is it, man have I been going down the wrong path in life." Is the joke going to be on you when you meet God and he says, "Who developed Celibacy? Who the hell ever developed that rule?"

R: "That was not my idea!"

S: Yeah! So, but, I think if you think, "This is it," and you think it's all about us as individuals, that's where you have a really hard time.

R: Yeah.

S: But then, things that I never thought would happen…I have done things since September 11 that I never thought I would do.

R: And why is that?

S: I mean, I'm a gusty lady, I don't mean …but, if you said, "Would you like to go to Australia?" I don't know that I'd put the effort into it. But, there was an organization, the International Organization of Police were having a conference and they flew me down to Australia to speak at one of their sessions. I'm thinking, "What do I have to say?" But that was my opportunity to say to people…I mean, the biggest public speaking I ever did was at a roll call, now all of a sudden the Rosie O'Donnel show wants you on and we think it's gonna be good for female cops, do it. The one thing I do have to say changed after September 11, was that none of that phased me. Not to be disrespectful, they have good shows, but it was…those things became so inconsequential. I wanted to simplify my life, I found.

R: And have you been successful?

S: In some ways. I'm working on my dissertation now. And after all, it's like, "Who gives a shit?" Regardless of the topic. "If I have to interview one more frigging person…" "If I have to analyze, and do a regression analysis on one more…" I don't care. You know, it's like, "Just get it done." But you know you accumulate boxes of

crap and data and tapes and transcripts and it's tough to simplify because you really have to throw it all out and say, "You know what, I really don't care about this anymore." But it's so important to just finish. I need to finish. I have four and a half chapters written of seven, I'm so close. But, I don't give a …you know what I'm saying…If you have to hear one more 9/11 story, you know…I don't mean to knock it, and I'm sure you've had this happen, but if I hear one more person come in, and cry about it…I want to bitch-slap them and say, "Get over it! It was awful. Accept it. I don't mean to take away your emotional sense, but you've got to move on." Either let it go, or seek counseling, or, "You don't know what I went through…" Yeah, I don't, and you get to the point where I couldn't hear someone else's story. I had someone come and fix my (appliance), and the guy comes in and, I had my cousin's Mass card on the table, and he tells his story. Everyone knew someone that died. So you hear all these horrific stories. So, I don't say anything, I don't need to tell my story. So he describes minute by minute how he was out on Long Island, he went out to the truck, he says, "I'll never forget that moment. I walked back into this woman's house and I saw it happen right there on the t.v." Thirty fucking miles away. He's saying, "I was devastated." But, people needed to tell their stories. But, somewhere along the line, I ran out of patience. I wish I could tell you I became more patient with people. I became much more impatient with people. People have their agendas. My agenda wasn't in synch with a whole lot of other people's. If that makes sense. I didn't lose a husband, I didn't lose a child. Like, I met this woman, I see her on the news all the time, she's doing something about skyscraper safety, and she was doing something because there was no code. And I'm tired of hearing about the pissing match between the fire department and the police department. People are obsessed with that. All right, they're angry. Were they (FD) stealing, were they not stealing? I don't know. But, I do speak from a personal perspective because I lost my cousin. And I think they do need to think about how they responded. Why did 300 firefighters go in? They weren't fighting a fire. They weren't going to win that battle. So why did you let them go in? My cousin is on the first two minutes of that film by those French filmmakers and they sent an advance copy to any family member who they could identify. I watched that, and I thought it was really important. It showed me an organization that was disorganized. I felt like I was watching firefighters hang out in the lobby of a building for two hours. I'm not saying the police department was any better. Here I am as a knucklehead sending the press people to (location) to hold a press conference. I mean, get your head out of your ass, that's not going to happen right now. But there are all these peripheral issues that I don't have patience for. But now this woman is taking her energy and she's getting buildings to have a fire plan. If that's what she needs to do, ok. Like, MADD, that organization started because people lost their children, ok. But there was so much anger. I was just so shocked at my reaction to it. I felt, "I can't take on your anger about it." "I can't take on your issue of being really pissed off at the fire department." But, there is this need to be angry.

R: For other people.

S: I don't know. I'm not angry about it. I'm not saying this won't have any long-term effect on me. I just got to a point where I can't carry, I can't handle the story about it. I got to a point where I didn't need to tell my story. Now, considering the division that I

worked in at the time, it couldn't have been easier for me. I didn't have to tell my story at all because it was a conflict of interest. Then comes these people from California, and they're writing a book about women at ground zero. They interviewed a woman who went behind a tombstone at Trinity Church and that saved her life. None of those tombstones were affected, though there was debris all around them, it was pretty strange. But, she survived it. They asked to interview women police officers since most information was about men. That was their agenda, they were feminists. But they talked to her and she told them to talk to me, that I had a funny story. Now, I don't think my story is funny, but it is amazing that all these New Yorkers could pass me and not say, "You know you have a piece of glass in your back." You have to see some humor in it. Or that my mundane thought, when they removed it, was "Am I going to be naked in front of all these people?" Or, not wanting the pizza because I'm thinking my brother is going to chastise me for eating pizza. It's like bizarro-world. But, you have to be able to poke fun at yourself, that in this major crisis I'm thinking about these mundane things. So anyway, they include me in the book. (pauses) The cattiness that came out once the book came out! You know, "Why did she get to be in the book?" There were people who wanted to be superstars, and they resented the people who were getting acknowledged. Kelly put a stop to it, but there were people flying all over the world. I mean, God bless them, people deserve their press and some sort of a break. But people were going all over and getting free trips…taking advantage of the situation. Now, I saw my role as thanking people for supporting us. I went to Australia to speak, and of course I get there and Bali (the terrorist bombing) happens. The people in Australia were devastated. They were also upset that it wasn't a huge focus in the international media. But, here I am speaking at this conference and there are people from all over the world. My thing is to say, "Thank you." I speak on behalf of the NYPD, the citizens of New York, and tell them how much their support meant to us. It was phenomenal. So I see it as an opportunity to thank people for all they did for us. But to see the sides of people that came out…That was the worst part of September 11th for me.

R: Seeing that side of human nature. And what do you do with that?

S: I would say that for the better part of 2002 my anger consumed me. Anger at the injustice of it all, the resentment from others, being treated as if I was taking advantage of my experience. Now I'm just at a better place. Part of it was just letting go. It's a real ugly side of human nature. And the thought that people could go into the site and steal stuff after the towers came down. That is pretty pathetic in my book. I still get angry. Then I get promoted and they're saying "Thanks for all your hard work." I was thinking something doesn't add up here. But, looking at it from a spiritual perspective, maybe I needed to be humbled? Maybe I was coming across like I thought I had done something great. I don't know. I thought I was pretty low-key. No one knew my story. In December of 2002 I volunteered to do the midnight duty on Christmas Eve because I don't have kids and I always think it would be nice to let someone with kids be able to be home for Christmas morning. So, they're like, "Fine." So some guy ended up committing suicide that night within the precinct, and you never want to leave something like that for the next person to deal with. So I did all the paperwork with it, and signed off. So the guy who was relieving me calls and says, "I am so pissed off at you. You

kept me up all last night. I got no sleep because of you." I said, "What are you talking about." He said someone gave him the book about women at ground zero as a Christmas gift. He was enthralled with my story and stayed up late reading. So, you know, my story was out there, but it was not out there. I could get ticked off at the guy giving me the WTC post at the exact spot where I was, but they didn't know. It had nothing to do with me. So, I couldn't understand where that anger that was directed at me was coming from. My story was not out there. Just seeing the character of people. Now, there was this High Holy Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral at Christmas. This is where all the important muckety-mucks go, the Police Commissioner, etc. But there was a priest saying a mass down at ground zero, for anyone that wanted to go, that worked at the site or whatever. So, I went down there. There was something very sacred about being there. And I went down there and it was outdoors, and just as he began mass, the sky opened, it was a blizzard, the wind whipped, and all this snow. And it was the most beautiful. This was where I wanted to be. I have to believe that at this site, where all these souls lost their lives, it's got to be…That was more religious to me. And the Chief of the Department showed up there. And I know this guy has tickets to this fancy mass, he is the highest ranking uniformed member of the department and he's here with the workers. Those things tell you a lot about people, too. But people can't seem to talk about September 11th without being angry about *something*, even if it wasn't the towers coming down.

R: I saw that when we were doing all the debriefing afterwards. People were angry at the Department. There was more anger expressed than sadness.

S: Because we don't know how to be sad. We know how to be angry. And this job breeds negativity. If you ever say to someone, "I'm happy"…

R: You get sent to Psych Services.

S: Exactly. People say, "You're happy going on patrol? What's wrong with you?" I hear that. But, I am having the time of my life. Tonight, I'll be on duty for the next twelve hours. But, I'm in Manhattan driving around in a marked unit…, it doesn't get better than this. If you say that to people…They complain about everything. Listen, I can pay my bills. That is another thing I've come to terms with September 11th, my lifestyle. I don't have to have the best of everything. I have a good life. I appreciate everything I've gotten to do because of this job. It is not all negative. At this point the police department could say to me, "You're going to be in charge of this phone booth for the next eight hours and that is all you get to do." And you know what, I'm going to have fun. I'm going to make it work for me. I do have a problem with the way the police department treats its employees. From the top down, they treat people like crap. But, you can still make it work for you. Cops sometimes don't have the wherewithal to do that. I think what I need to focus on now is that I need to get it to work for other people. But, a friend of mine lost her brother. They were really close. All these tragic stories, he had a young child at home, stuff that would eat your heart out if you took everything to heart. She calls and says, "I need to know, could you please find out from the morgue how he died?" The detectives were very gruff in giving out details. What a crappy job

that was, too. So I called and asked could you check on this entry number (in the log book cataloguing the deceased). And, his body was pretty much intact, to be honest with you. It was identified in September, they don't get notified until later. So, we got his body right away. The person said, it was blunt force trauma to the head that killed him. I called back, and I wanted to say, "They found his body in September, but it took them until December…" Because remember what you're getting here, you get a body, it doesn't mean he has I.D. on him.

R: Yeah, because people were ripped out of their clothes..

S: Yeah, so, but it's the full torso, the head's attached. I mean, do you think that they deal (details about cause of death)..the guy just died of smoke inhalation , they just didn't deal with the cause of death, they had the body. So I said, "They found the body." Let's just say it was September 30th. To be on the other end of that anger. I wound up pulling back and saying "You're right, it was entry (number) they didn't find him until (date)." I couldn't take on that anger. You need to know he didn't suffer, and so I need to tell you he didn't suffer.

(tape runs out and subject ends interview to begin work)

"CHUCK"

Chuck was a 42-year-old Lieutenant with the NYPD on September 11, 2001 and had been on the job for twenty years. He was a commanding officer of his division. He retired in January 2002. The first interview found here was conducted by an interviewer with a German television station on the first anniversary of the attacks. It was transcribed from the videotape. Many of the questions asked were inaudible. The second interview took place at his home in January 2004.

S: Normally I work Monday to Friday. I leave my house at about 9:30 in the morning and I work until about 7:00 at night. What had happened Sunday, which was the 9th, I had to work seventeen hours so I was exhausted so I had taken Monday off, September 10th. So, I guess from having the day off and having had a good night's sleep, I felt very rested and I got up earlier than normal. The reason I'm telling you this is that there were so many little things that just fell into place, and this is one of those things. I had gotten up earlier. At about 8:30 I decided I was going to go into work early because I had already been, it was a beautiful day out, and Tuesdays are normally, unless something is scheduled, are normally quiet in the [ ] Section. So I'm pulling out my driveway at 8:30 in the morning. Normally I'd be leaving at 9:30. As I'm driving to my private car, to make the switch to pick up my department car, I listen to 1010 newsradio. The reason I do that is two-fold: number one, I do that to listen for a traffic report but also the [ ] Section, which I was a commanding officer of, we're responsible for putting out the blue or those metal barriers for many, many different types of things; fire scene, building collapses, residential visits, demonstrations, anywhere where there's a need for crowd control and to ensure the public's safety, we were assigned. So, the reason why I listen is if something happens over the night like a water main break or a building collapses, they would have to come and take barriers there and I need to know where it is so if I hear it on the radio, I have an idea, let me call and check to see if any barriers went there the night before. I pull out of my driveway at 8:30. Like I said, as everyone I'm sure has told you, it was a beautiful day. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, it was crisp…probably the nicest day of the year up until that point, weather-wise. So I'm driving on my way in Staten Island, on my way to pick up my car, I hear on the radio that the North tower was struck. It was struck at 8:46. I got on the phone right away. According to my phone records, I got put in my office at 8:51. I instructed my sergeant to say that all available men and trucks down at the crash site, that I would meet them there. I was going to respond direct. The section where we turn out of is Houston Street, which is about a mile straight up the road here. It was Pier 40. Its one mile right back up North on West Street. So there was no sense for me to go up there and come back here. I said, "I'll meet them at the site." Now, at that time, the thought that was running through my head was that it was a Cessna, it was a small plane, possibly the pilot had a heart attack. I'm not thinking a 767 or terrorism at this point. The TBTA, the Tri-Borough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, they're responsible for all the tunnels and bridges in NYC. It's a governmental agency, a state agency. Those offices had immediately shut down the

Brooklyn Battery Tunnel and Verrazano Bridge, which I have to cross to come here, to all except emergency vehicles. At their parking lot, at the base of the Verrazano Bridge is where my department car is. Being that I had to pass it, I took the time to make the switch. It took me about two minutes to switch cars. I jumped out of my car, jumped in that car and I started to come over the Verrazano Bridge. At that time in NYC, for traffic purposes, we have HOV lanes, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, which means if you have two or more people in your car, its an express lane. Fortunately, now it's about 9:00, the second tower hadn't been struck yet. The HOV lane on the Gowanus Expressway in Brooklyn was still open. The reason I mention that is because I only have a light to slap on the roof of my car, a red flashing light. I don't have lights and sirens on my department car. It's an unmarked car. I was able to get in with the caravan of emergency vehicles responding too; Staten Island ambulances, armored service trucks, and radio cars and police vans. If that HOV lane wasn't open, I don't think any of us would have gotten here in time, before the collapses of the two towers. So now I'm in this caravan, everyone's using their lights and sirens. I can't even hear my AM radio any longer. We're driving so fast, I'm not going to try and make a call on my cell phone. I've got to pay attention to where we're going. So we exit the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel which is four blocks south of the WTC complex, maybe five blocks, and as I'm coming northbound on West street, I want to get as close as I can to the scene of the crash. One of the first things I notice, if you look now at that overpass down there, that overpass wasn't there on 9/11 of '01. That was just built after, to help alleviate the traffic with all the construction that was taking place here in the recovery effort. Right about where that tower was, as I'm responding, one of the first things I see is, there was a car, … it's about 4 lanes wide, West Street heading northbound. In the middle of the street was a car crushed totally flat by what appears to be a jet engine. I would say the piece of the engine was about the size of a large desk. And this car was in the middle of the road. It wasn't parked and it wasn't double-parked. Whoever was driving this car was killed immediately and when I saw the piece of the engine, I said, "Oh my God, this is no Cessna. This is heavy duty. This is something very serious." Of course, a Cessna would have been serious but this was much more serious. And as I'm driving, it's funny the things that go through your mind. As I'm trying to get closer to the site here, I say to myself, "What are the odds of this? Here is some person at 9:00 on a Tuesday morning driving in Manhattan and a piece of a jet engine comes out of the sky and crushes the car and kills him." So that runs through my head. I'm able to get as close… I parked my car directly under this walkway. We call it the south pedestrian walkway. I exited my vehicle and… there are a lot of things, I have no other way to describe them, any other adjectives but to say they were eerie. When I exited my car, there were hundreds of emergency workers, police, fire, ambulance, fire trucks, ambulances, police cars, everyone… but it was an eerie quiet. Except for the sirens of the responding vehicles, nobody was talking and there was a silence in the air. You could actually hear… the North tower was struck, at the lowest point, I believe was the 78th floor. You could actually hear the fires burning. That's how quiet it was. Now, when I get out of my car here underneath the south pedestrian overpass, I looked around to where to go and I saw a deputy chief, (NAME), police officer (NAME) and several others standing over here what I was calling the grassy knoll, and they were watching the two towers. So I came over to them and all of a sudden I looked up and I saw that the second tower was struck

and on fire and I was like, "What happened?" And they're like, "Didn't you hear? Another jet came in and struck." I probably entered the tunnel at about 9:15. The second tower, the South tower, was struck…

(Question)

S: I didn't hear about it. It wasn't until I physically saw it. When I looked up, I turned around to the other officer and said, "What the hell happened?" And they said, "Another jet came and struck the second tower." The first thought in my mind was, "Oh *shit*. We're in for it. This is heavy. This is unbelievable!" Now the thoughts of terrorism were running through my mind. One thing is the pilot had a heart attack, the first one. Now you know the two towers are struck by two separate jets and now I realize we're talking 767, 747, major aircraft. So I'm standing here and I go up to the chief, [name] and we know each other, we're friendly. He worked for the Chief of the Department, within the police department. He and another three men are, in the police department, who coordinate all resources, especially at a scene of this size. So I went over to [name], I said, "How can I help you? I have barrier trucks and guys coming. How can I help you?" He said, "Well, stand by because we're going to be setting up a temporary command post right here." So I said, "Okay." So, while I'm standing by I'm on my cell phone trying to get through to my office. I can't get through, because I want to locate my fellows and tell them where to come, my barrier trucks. But you couldn't get through and on the radio, there were so many messages going back and forth. I didn't have a radio but even if I was to borrow one, there was just too much going on to get my trucks here. I knew that if my trucks were responding, supervisors would grab them and use them as the need occurred. So I knew they were going to be put to a good use. So now I was thinking, well if I can't get in touch with my men, it's best to stay with the Chief and assist him in any way. So we're standing here, now [name], one of the fellows who I said I recognized, he works for the TARU Unit, that stands for Technical Assistance Response Unit. The TARU is, if we have a kidnapping, they do the eavesdropping, they do the wire-tapping, they do surveillance photos. So here what they were going to do is they were going to set up the communication system, the phone line, and also record the response of the emergency team, police, firemen, EMT, how we responded and what we did and then we could critique it later on. As I was standing here, I think I can speak for everyone in my group that, what we thought was, as tragic as this was, our mindset is, it's like '93. We're going to evacuate the buildings, we're going to secure the area and if the fire department can't put the fire out, we're going to have to let it burn out. So it was the '93 bombing but on a much greater scale. The reason we were using this overpass for cover is because of all the debris that was coming down from the buildings but also, I wasn't here five minutes when somebody said, I don't know who, I think at the time I was on my cell phone trying to get through, somebody said, "Oh my God, look!" and I looked at who it was and I followed their line of sight and I looked up and all of a sudden, the people, we started seeing the people jump. I think somebody in the crowd said, "Oh, they're falling!" but you knew they were jumping.

(Question)

S: The comments were like, "Oh my God! Oh my God!" There were officers in uniform crying. All of us were stunned and taken aback because, the reports didn't really go into detail but there were many… it wasn't like, 5, 10, 15… I would say, I mean I was just looking at this complex from one side, this was the West side, and for some reason, I don't know why, I thought, I counted. I felt bad about it, but recently I found out that I wasn't the only one. I got up to 18 and I couldn't count anymore. When you'd talk to police officers, firemen, you ask them "Why did you become a cop or a fireman?" You may get this macho response, "Oh..." whatever macho response you may hear. The truth is, I've worked with thousands of officers over the years, over my twenty year career, and ninety percent of those, we join the police department and the fire department and the emergency medical services to save lives and to help people. That's what we are and that's what we're about. You train your entire time and now here we are. Everything we've trained for, everything we've come on the departments to do, and we were helpless to do anything. I had to stand here and watch these people take their lives and it was a horrible, horrible feeling. As bad as the experience was of nearly dying in the alcove later on, what I'll never forget is the sight of watching these people jump. There was one couple I saw come down hand in hand. I am a big history buff, especially about New York City history and the history of the U.S. and as I'm watching these people jump, what occurred to me was in 1911, we had what was called the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. There were no sprinkler systems, there were no labor laws. This is a factory not far from here, a little more toward the Village and I would say, approximately 15 stories tall. I'm not sure but probably at least fifteen stories. A fire had started in the factory and the owners of the factory had locked all the fire exit doors because they were afraid the women, it was all women and young girls, would steal the material and make their own dresses or shirts at home so all the fire doors were locked. Everyone above, just like here, everyone above the scene of the location of the fire which I believe, in the shirtwaist factory was about the 7th or 8th floor, everyone was trapped, there was no way out. We lost 146, almost all women and children that day, over 100 having jumped out the windows and off the roof. That's what I'm thinking. I'm thinking, "My God, this is what it must have been like for those people." Because the accounts I read of it, the people who witnessed it, the triangle shirtwaist fire, were saying they would be haunted to their grave, watching these women and young girls jump. And, now I don't know if I'd use the term "haunted," but this is something that I and everyone else is going to take to our graves. Like I said, I am more hurt and affected about that than I was about what happened to me personally. And, the reason, as I said, Chief [name] and [name] were here first, the reason they had picked this location was that, when they responded, one of the first people to jump had struck a fireman and, it turned out, they had killed him. But, the point I try and make, which I feel is very important, especially for the families of the people who were killed that day is this person who jumped… they didn't die in vain. There was a reason. They saved lives by them taking their lives and by that I mean, this person had jumped from the tower and struck the fireman. His three or four buddies who were with him had felt they could still save his life. They picked him up, they put him in an ambulance or a fire truck and they responded to the hospital to try and save him. Now, this person who jumped died, the fireman they struck died, but those three or four other firemen's lives were saved because they tried to save his life. If these people weren't jumping, I know for a fact…the mindset of the PD and the FD, up until 9/11 and I hope it

ended there, is to be as close to the scene of the emergency as possible. But we couldn't get any closer because of the jumping people and debris coming down, but mostly the people coming down. I know for a fact that alcove where that blue lift is, is about 20 feet from this grassy knoll where we were standing, maybe 30, 40 feet. That's how far we'd made it. If we were any closer, there is no doubt in my mind, I can speak for myself, I know for a fact I would not be here today. If those people weren't jumping I would have been closer and I never would have made it. I was lucky to escape from where I was. So I'm assisting the Chief and he had a radio and a cell phone. TARU was starting to pull phone lines out of one World Financial Center, set up tables, this is where one of our command centers was going to be. I remember it distinctly. The Chief was on his phone, on his cell phone, and he turns around to me and he says, "[Chuck], they just struck the Pentagon." And at these types of scenes, I found that rumors start and they fly and it's like the telephone game. They get worse and worse as they go on. So I said to him, "Are you sure?" He said, "[Chuck], I'm on the phone with headquarters. They just struck the Pentagon." I felt like I was punched in the stomach because, in my twenty years, everything has been thrown at the NYPD, the FDNY, we have handled. We've handled it quickly, efficiently, and I'm still impressed at the things we're able to accomplish at the scenes of emergencies. But now, when the Chief told me they just struck the Pentagon, I felt like *I* was struck because for the first time in my life I thought, "My God, this is bigger than we can handle, possibly. We might be in over our heads." So I had that fear. But you have to get that out of your head and you have to get back to what you're doing. But I remember talking to [name], I remember him giving me that message and I think, on the time chart, from the time the Pentagon was struck to the collapse of the south tower, it was only 15, 19 minutes, something like that. So it was right after [name] told me this that we heard… I remember we had moved back under the overpass at this point. I think I was helping unload the van, their equipment, and all of a sudden, the noise started. I would describe this noise as if you're in a subway station and you're waiting for your train but the express comes by but a thousand times louder. It's the loudest, most frightening sound I ever heard in my life. And someone screamed, "Run! The building is coming down!" I didn't even stop to look up. I just…

Now, one thing I wanted to point out is this area, this is the way I commute to work every day. I had driven this area a thousand times. But I was not familiar… I had never stood over here and I wasn't familiar with this area. I'm plenty familiar with the rest of NYC, but here I wasn't familiar with. I'll tell you why I bring that point up. So now when this person's screaming, you hear the noise and this person screams, "Run for your life! The building's coming down!" I turned around and I ran as fast as I could into that alcove in there. The reason I point out the point that I wasn't familiar with the area, because I came back here Thursday morning. I continued to work on 9/11 for 23 hours. I didn't leave work until approximately 8:00 Wednesday morning. I went home and tried to get some sleep. When I came back here Thursday I needed to come back to try and think about what I went through. I guess I started with some closure, possibly. When I came back here on Thursday, I realized that… I mean, there were people who ran North and ran South and were killed. I believe everyone who ran West made it. But there were people North and South who were killed, some probably from our group. I just have to turn and run into that corner. Now Thursday, when I was looking at, I thought the safest

place you could have possibly run to was some shelter, in fact, that alcove. And I said, "What made me…" Because...I turned around and…somebody said, "Run for you lives," and I just turned and ran. Now what that alcove did…You can see these pillars right here, those pillars are patched up because they had holes in them from debris, 3 ft x 3 ft. There were all those holes where those patches are. By running into that alcove, what it did is it gave some officers some protection from the walkway and it also offered us protection from all these pillars. We were behind those two pillars in the corner. Now, as soon as I got into the corner, this may sound a little silly, but the people who went through this would know. I went to Catholic grammar school in Woodside Queens. In the mid-60's from '63-'66, roughly, we were practicing arial drills. What you would do is they would sound the siren and we would evacuate the classroom and go into the hallway, get on our hands and knees, and we had to wear sports coats because we would have to pull sports coats over our heads because this was going to save us if we were attacked by nuclear weapons from Russia, of course. But, the thing is, here it is 30 some-odd years later, I run into that corner and what do I do? I get on my hands and knees and put my hands over my head. It's 37 years later, I'm doing what I was taught. Now I'm on my hands and knees and you can still hear the noise. All of a sudden, everyone, I don't know how many, I've been told 30, 40 people came in behind me and I'm pressed up against the window, which doesn't start until about this high, so I'm pressed up against that area of, I don't know what it's made of, concrete, whatever. So I'm on my hands and knees, covering my head but now everyone files in behind me and I'm starting to suffocate. I'm literally unable to get my breath and I'm thinking.. I mean, this is what you read about in Europe in a soccer riot. I'm thinking, I can't believe this is happening to me. I'm going to suffocate like this. So I was able to stand up, find my way up, and I was standing up and now, just as I got up, everything, and I mean, *everything* went pitch black. Not night, not dark, not gray, but pitch black. I could not see. I'm pressed up against the glass and I can't see out the window 6 inches in front of me. Now we're starting to suffocate. We can't breathe, we can't see. The actual collapse just ruins your hearing. You're being robbed of all your senses. You can't see, you can't hear, you can't breathe, and now we're starting to be struck by the debris. Fortunately, because of where we were, it wasn't the major pieces but I distinctly remember getting struck on the head and shoulders and the neck and, buried. And now everyone started screaming, "break the windows, break the windows, we're going to die!" So we all started banging on the windows, who had a cell phone, who had a radio. But these windows were not breaking. I mean, they're made obviously, not to break. And as we were banging on the windows, I realized it was futile. It wasn't going to work. I put my hands down and… now I'm suffocating. I'm losing consciousness and I said to myself, "I can't believe this. I'm going to…after 20 years I'm going to die like this, like a dog." And I said, "This isn't right. I don't deserve this. After the way I've lived my life and all the good I've done, to die like this." And, the whole Hollywood thing about your life flashes before your eyes, that's nonsense. It didn't happen. Not for me anyway, and I don't think for anyone. What I did think of… I have a wife and a child. (pause) I think to God, I was going to miss them. My family. My parents are still alive. I have a brother and sister. And I was going to die and I was going to miss them. I remember saying, "Well at least it didn't hurt." There was no physical pain. It was just suffocating. And I guess it would be the anger at dying, going to miss my family, that all of a sudden I think I had given up at that

point, because I just said, at least there was no pain. It didn't physically hurt. But then all of a sudden, I think the anger took over, the survival instinct. And a voice went off in my head, "pow"! And I know it wasn't someone behind me screaming. It was myself talking to myself but I said to myself, I *screamed* to myself, "What the fuck is wrong with you? Shoot out the window!" And now here's another thing, like I said about leaving the house an hour earlier than normal, I normally carry my gun. I wear my gun on my ankle when I'm dressed like this. I was pretty much dressed like this on that day. I normally wear my gun on my ankle. That day, for whatever reason, I had it in a pack around my waist. Thank God, because it would not have been possible for me, because of this crush of people, I could not have reached down and drawn my weapon from my ankle. So another one of those things that just worked in my, or our, favor that day. So now I draw my weapon, the voice goes off, "Shoot out the window!" I draw out my weapon from my pack and, like I said, I'm pressed up against the glass. The first thought that runs through my thought is, now…this story that I'm telling, these things, (snapping), I think if you talk to people who are in life and death situations, they'll tell you whether it be… Ok, so as I was saying, this story is taking several minutes but this was happening in milliseconds. So I draw my weapon and the first thought that enters my mind is, "My God, what if there's somebody on the other side of this window?" But then I said, "You've got to shoot out the window, otherwise everyone's going to die." And then I actually went so far as…what went through my mind was, "Where do I press the gun? Against the glass? Or do I shoot from here?" But I was afraid the ricochet would come back and strike me. And I said to myself, "You're going to die anyway so pull the trigger." So I pulled the trigger and the window… like I said, it starts approximately this far off the ground and it's probably ten feet tall, ten feet wide. Well, we'd get a better look on the other side but it's probably 10 ft x 10 ft. So when I shot the window from here, I drew the weapon, had those thoughts, pulled the trigger, the window from here down, collapsed. But now I was afraid of, if we go under, we've got 8 feet of glass. I was afraid that if we went under this, it would come down and decapitate us. So then I shot another round here and the window collapsed from here and then I went as high as I could with a third round and almost the whole thing dropped and we all piled into the lobby. But the problem is, when we got in to the lobby, now we were protected from all the debris coming down but all the smoke and ash came right in behind us. You still couldn't see. I would not have been able to see you, three feet away. The only thing you could see, and people were still screaming, "We're going to die!" and all sorts of screams, everything you could imagine. I mean, hearing explosions and it wasn't too much later that I'm thinking… I mean, at first when you're there you're thinking it's secondary bombs, secondary explosions, you know, to kill the emergency response, which is a big terrorist thing. So I'm hearing, you can't see, I'm hearing explosions going off, I'm in the lobby and I'm thinking, secondary bombs. I think later on, the gas tanks of all the emergency vehicles that were parked there, like they all caught fire and exploded. So I'm going in the lobby. Now what I'm afraid of is falling down because I feel that if I fall down I'm going to be trampled and I'm never going to be able to get up. I'm walking around, trying to find an exit out of the lobby. I find a door, which I can only assume from after being back here several times and looking it over, it was actually this door right here, the door where you use the handle, because you can't see where you're going at all. You've got to find this door handle. I pull open the door handle and I

was just blasted with all the smoke and ash again. I look over at the door. I started choking, I couldn't breathe. I started going unconscious again. It just got stuffed down your throat. Your eyes were burning. I don't know how to explain it. There was sand in your eyes, besides not being able to see, there was sand in your eyes and it was like razorblades in your throat. So that's all closed. I took a step back and I, now I told myself, I said, "You've got to find a spot where you can breathe; where the smoke and the ash isn't so bad." So again, I started walking around the lobby. I found an area where it wasn't so bad. So I put my hands on my knees and I said to myself, "Calm down. Don't hyperventilate. Think about what you're going to do." And I was like this (leans over, puts hands on knees), and people were still screaming and hearing explosions. All of a sudden, I hear a rumble, a loud rumble. Nowhere near like the first rumble but still a loud rumble, like it sounded like a building coming down. Somebody started screaming, "*This* building's coming down!" Now, I was afraid. I'm thinking, "The rumble.. is *this* building coming down? I've got to get out of here, *now*." I turn around and I was walking to the other side of this lobby and I came up against another window. I drew my weapon again but this time, I went as high as I could with the first shot and the entire window collapsed. We filed out. I came out onto Southend Avenue, and my first thought was, I had some relief because on that part of NYC, I knew where I was. I had some of my bearings. Some other people came up behind me and the first thing that strikes you was the amount of destruction and devastation. I mean, as crazy as this sounds, I still hadn't realized the south tower had collapsed. I wasn't aware of that. So on Southend Avenue, the amount of destruction, and a fireman comes through. He's bleeding from the arm. That's not the window I shot out, the window I shot out was behind that pillar.

(QUESTION)

S: This window here, where you see the text. That's the window on [name]'s tape that is shattered. You'll see the fireman who was bleeding from the arm exit there. And plenty of other people are exiting. But that's not the window I shot out, somebody else shot that one. The window I shot out, you can see on the tape. It's broken, the window behind this pillar. So I came out, and like I said, the first thing you saw here was all the devastation and destruction. All these windows were blown out, of the apartment buildings. The car windows were blown out, some cars looked like they were pushed up on the sidewalk. You can see on the tape, the ash and dust and debris was unbelievable. At this state, we're all on different levels of shock. Myself, everyone, we're all on different levels. In NYC here, we have an ambulance corps and it's made up mostly of Jewish volunteers. I don't know how many of those ambulances were here that day. A lot of them were people who….*(I can't hear this part. Too much noise.)* Those people, they deserve a lot of credit. They're volunteers, they could have turned around and ran but they stayed here on site because they knew we needed help. So, I had a little relief because I knew where I was. I was familiar with these surroundings. But, I couldn't breathe, you still had trouble seeing. But now the cloud was dissipating. It was clearing up so you could make things out. So I remember coming over here. We were giving first aid to some of the injuries. One thing about that day that struck me, and I've seen plenty of scenes of serious car crashes, building collapses, construction accidents, etc. Here you

were either dead or alive. There was no in-between. I mean, we had some broken legs and broken arms and some head wounds, but everyone was at least able to get up and walk around. You were dead or alive. That struck me as…I mean, we were fortunate with everyone anyway. I remember walking down and I knew that the Northcove was over here and I'm thinking possibly there's a water fountain here. I mean, now you can look and see, yeah, there's a delicatessen here. I'm not thinking that straight after what I'd just been through. I knew there had just been water over here at the Northcove harbor, so that's where I'm going to go. So I start to tell them.

(Break in filming. Now video shows subject back at the window.)
This is the window I shot out to escape from the lobby. This is the west side of the building. So pretty much this whole window collapsed in one shot. This time I aimed as high as I could and the window collapsed and I came out and once I realized it was Southend Ave, I knew this was the way to go, away from the towers still burning. So I turn around and tell people, "C'mon, c'mon!" and I don't know how many people came out but we came out on Southend Avenue.

(Break in filming.)
I hear a woman's voice call me, "Come in here, we have water." So I go in there, I wash out. I grab all the water. I come running out with a milk crate and start giving out…

(Break in filming.)
So we're exiting the building through the window and I turned and looked and I could still see the north tower. It was still burning. So it was right here in the line of sight so I knew by the time that tower came down, I had to get out of here. Plus, I was in desperate need of water for my eyes, my throat… So I started walking in this direction. I knew about the Northcove harbor and I figured somewhere here I would be able to get a drink of water. There was all this debris. We're gasping, choking, eyes burning. I started walking down in this direction and just as I got to that metal fence, I heard a woman's voice from my left calling, "Come in here, we have water." So I followed her in. There were several firemen. One was seriously hurt. He had a head wound. He was bleeding badly and his buddies, about 3 or 4 of them, they picked him up and carried him and we went into these offices. They are vacant now but back then they were the offices for the VIP yacht tours, like several large yachts for 100+ people in this harbor that they chartered out, for private parties and functions. I had actually chartered once or twice from this company and it wasn't until I got inside these offices where I realized where I was. But I had only stopped at the front desk or the receptionist area. The woman walks me through the office, we go to the back and it turns out they didn't just have water but they had a storeroom. Inside this storeroom they had a big sink used for washing mops and things like that. Plus they had napkins, tablecloths, bottles of water, bottles of soda, all for these parties. So the first thing I did, I turned the sink on and I washed my eyes out, washed my head off, cleared my throat and then I looked around and realized the supplies that we had here. So I grabbed a plastic milk crate, dumping out whatever was in it, threw a case of water in and I grabbed a bunch of napkins, stuck them in the sink and then put them in the crate and I came running back out. I don't remember now why, but I found myself, and we'll take a walk down to where those two people are, and

what's down there, you'll see, is the NYPD memorial wall, where we have the names of all the members of the service who'd been killed in the line of duty since the late 1800's. I would come down there once or twice a year to pay my respects and to reflect. Now here I am, I find myself standing there with a milk crate, thinking how ironic it is that here I am standing at the police memorial for the members of the service killed in the line of duty and *I* just was nearly killed in the line of duty and it's just another eerie thing. Here, my standing here by this wall. I didn't intend to, I just ended up here and when I first got here and turning around, right over by that dome shape was the north tower and I remember looking and the south tower was gone. I'm standing here with a milk crate, looking saying, "Where the fuck is the tower?" I couldn't comprehend, at this point, what was going on. Even going through all I'd been through, it was just too much. It was an impossibility. And then I told myself, "Snap out of it. Lets get going." So as I'm standing here with the crate, there was a fireman that was hurt and I gave him water and there were three gentlemen who were trapped with me, the Chief and Captain [name] and Captain [name] and I gave them water and we started talking about what happened and I told them I had shot out the window and then coming up behind me here, you'll see on his tape, was [name of cameraman] and another thing that's ironic about that is I remember before the collapse of the north tower, before we were trapped in the alcove right to my left, there was a cameraman with what I call professional gear. They stand out. So I didn't know who he was at the time but he says, "Are you the one who shot out the window?" I said "Yeah." This cameraman is [name]. He's the fellow who was trapped with us in the alcove. All the sudden, he's standing next to me filming so they ask me if I'd mind identifying myself. I told them who I was.

(QUESTION) (Subject is asked to repeat this part of the story.)

So I was standing here at the milk crate and there was a fireman. I don't know if he was on this ledge or on that step but he was hurt. I'm handing him water and then, amazingly, [name] and Captain [name] from the NYPD and Captain [name] from the New York City Correction Department. The three of them had come over here and I gave them water and we were standing here talking about what we were going to do and we were forming plans when all of a sudden, there was an extremely, extremely loud rumble. One of us just screamed, "Run!" I dropped the milk crate here, I turned around, and ran back into the VIP yacht offices, because what had happened was, everything, the entire air, had become filled with the dust and debris and everything. You couldn't breathe and see again. It wasn't talked about but I can only assume that when the south tower collapsed, I don't think it collapsed all the way. I think there were still 20 or 30 stories. This is just an assumption, I'm not sure. Then, I believe, the final 20 or 30 stories collapsed. Because whatever collapsed this time was big enough to cause the dust and debris to get airborne again. Oh, before that happened, coming up behind me was cameraman [name]. When I was on the grassy knoll, there was a cameraman with professional gear on my left. I remember that very clearly. Now, talking to [the Chief] and the others, I think [the Chief] says, "How the hell did you get out of here?" and I told him I shot the window out. All of a sudden this cameraman comes out behind me and says, "Are you the one who shot the window out?" And I said, "Yeah." He said something like, "Oh my God, you're the one who saved our lives." So it turns out, [name] was the cameraman who was on the

grassy knoll with me and now here he is later, who just happens to be walking by where we're talking. That was the first time I met him but we've become close ever since then. We stay in touch and it means a lot to have someone like him to talk to. And the same thing, he helps me out during tough times because, Lord knows, all of us, from time to time, we have tough times after this. So I'm standing here, that happens, that other collapse, I run back into the offices but even inside the office, all the smoke and ash had come in and you were choking. You couldn't see again. I felt so bad because that fireman was still laying there, with that head wound, and here everything is coming in on top of him. When it settled down, I told all the women, the office was mostly women, "We have to evacuate. When we come out the door of the office, go straight down to the esplanade and make a left and go to the Southcove Harbor." That had to been 15 to 20 of us between the officer workers and the other people who might come in. We pick up the fireman, we went down to the esplanade and I sent them to the left to head southbound to the Southcove Harbor because you could see, the North tower was still burning here and I was afraid if that collapsed, we'd get killed in the collapse of that tower. Now right over here where that cameraman is, they were evacuating the people from that spot. A lot of cops, a lot of firemen doing the evacuations. I went over to them and identified myself and said to them, "We can't stay here because if the North tower comes down, we're going to get killed. I'm familiar with the area. There's a Southcove Harbor. We have to go to the Southcove Harbor." We finished loading that last boat and we sent it on its way and all of us, I would say a group of about 30, started walking southbound on the [?]. We had just gotten past those trees then, the sideline of the North tower, when another rumble started. It was even louder, I wouldn't have thought it was possible, even louder than the first time. It turns out it was the collapse of the North tower and we just started running. By the sound of this, I knew there was no way I was going to outrun this. The first thought that went through my mind was to jump into the river…because you know you're not going to outrun it and just as I was about to jump in it, I caught somebody out of the corner of my eye, run into a building. It turns out to be a bar/restaurant called [?]. As familiar as I was with the area, I wasn't familiar with that restaurant. So I yelled, "Follow me!" and I just made a left and I ran into this building. I followed this person into that restaurant that turned out to be Seaman's Landing. When I got inside, there were probably 50, 60, mostly women and children already inside there. I can only assume they took shelter in there from the collapse of the South tower.

(QUESTION)

S: So a group of about 30 of us were coming southbound on the esplanade on the way to the Southcove harbor and we had just snuck down with the trees and we had just cleared the sideline of the north tower which was still burning, when the rumble started, the noise, but even louder than the collapse of the south tower, which I didn't think was possible. So someone screamed, "Run!" and we all started running and I knew there was no way we were going to outrun it so my first thought is to run and jump in the river. So as we're running, I got down to where that woman is at the entrance of that restaurant and I see her going in that entrance. I figured it was safer to run into this building so I ran into this restaurant and inside were the 60 women and children. What had happened is that a person must have left the door open because all the dust and ash from the collapse

of the North tower came in and started choking us and blinding us inside the restaurant. There were two women in there, I assume they were employees. When I got there they were already giving out soda and water. I told them to turn the water taps on and start giving out soaked napkins because that would make it easier to breathe. I also wanted the water out. I wanted to get as much water as we could. I was afraid of watermain breaks happening all around. So we're in there, people were very hysterical in there and myself, along with several other emergency workers, cops and firemen who were in uniform, we were trying to calm everybody down. But at this point, I honestly felt like it was the end of the world. It's nonstop. It's one thing after another after another. It's the collapse of the south tower to being pinned in the alcove. It's that other collapse where I dropped the milk crate and ran back into the VIP offices. Now it's the collapse of the north tower. It's just like it never ends. So we're trying to calm everyone down. I remember one woman with a 4-year-old, a son. She was holding him and he was hysterical and she wasn't too well either, emotionally. I had my shield around my neck, a gold shield. I took it and I let him play with it, it was an extra shield, just to see if it could take his mind off it, distract him. He didn't even play with it. The poor kid was a wreck. So I'm thinking, "We have water, we have shelter. This might be a good place to stay for a while." Plus, now we're probably up to 60, 70 people. So I started telling everybody "Calm down, calm down. We're going to stay here. We'll wait." But then a fireman who was in uniform came up to me and he said, "Lieutenant," he said, "No, we're probably going to have a gas leak. We've got to get out of this building." So it was something I hadn't though of so I said, "You're right." So I told everybody, we made an announcement. We said, "When you come out of the door here, make a left on the esplanade and head down to the Southcove harbor," which is what we did. We all came out of the building, but now, where we exited, it was like a miracle, and how they got there I don't know because I don't remember them being there when I ran into the restaurant, there were two police department vans and a golf cart for the Battery Park City Authority that the workers use to get back and forth. So we had a blind woman with a dog. We had plenty of women with young children, with infants. We had one girl, a woman with a cage with a cat in it. But because of these vans and the golf cart, it was like a movie. With no prompting, as soon as we came out, everyone was saying, "Ok, women and children first." And we were fortunate enough, with the two vans and the golf cart, we were able to get all the women and all the young children including the blind woman, even the woman's cats. We were able to get them in the cart and the vans and we sent them southbound and then we all started walking. So it was down to a group of 25 or 30. It was mostly now, at this point, pretty much just emergency workers, all cops, firemen, and EMTs. We continued down to the Southcove harbor. By the time we got there, it's between a quarter mile and a half mile walk down, there was a full-scale evacuation going on. Before we get there, on this esplanade here, as we were walking, boats were coming off the river saying, "Come on, we'll evacuate you!" But what happened was, one person nearly fell in-between the boat and the seawall here so I told the captain, "No, go down to the Southcove harbor and we'll evacuate from there," which is what we did. Whatever boats that were here, they continued on down and we continued walking. When we got the harbor, we saw the evacuation going on. Police department launches, fire department launches, private yachts, tug-boats, everything you could imagine. We were evacuating people and you could see Jersey City, which is that over there. You see the tall building on the left under

construction and then the two shorter buildings to the right of that. Right to the left of the short building on the left is a pier and that's where we were sending the people we were evacuating. When I had gotten down to the harbor, I wasn't leaving. My cell phone wasn't working, my beeper wasn't working. Several cops in uniform, NYPD officers came up to me, they were from the [name] precinct in Brooklyn. They had known me from working for me at the [name] section. They said, "Lieu," (short for Leiutenant), "what do we do?" So one of them had his department radio so I borrowed his radio and I got on and tried to get through to central but the radios weren't working either. So now I'm thinking, "Oh my God, so they may have even bombed headquarters." So we had no means of communication and we continued with the evacuation of the civilians on the boats and the cops say to me, "What do we do?" I'm looking around and like I said, we were all on different levels of shock. So my cell phone wasn't working and I was desperately wanting to get in touch with my wife who was still working with [name] in Brooklyn, to get in touch with her and let her know I was ok and to tell her to call my parents. So this woman came by and her cell phone was working. I guess the transmitters weren't in the WTC, they were somewhere else. So I borrowed her phone and I got in touch with my wife and I told her, "I'm fine, I'm ok." She had known I responded that morning but because of the traffic, she never thought I got through. So I told her I was ok and to tell my parents. At that point I had to find a spot. All the cops and the firemen were walking around and some were asking me, "Where do we go? What do we do?" So it was because of the lack of communication, we desperately needed some organization. So I started walking around the harbor pulling on the doors to the commercial establishments. Most were locked because they hadn't even opened for the day but this Chinese restaurant was open. So I went inside. The water was running, the bathroom was working and some of the workers were there so I told them, "We're coming in here as a mobilization point. Throw your soda and your water out on the table." I went back outside and I grab the 6 cops from the [name of precinct] and I said, "Come in here. Wash off, use the bathroom, have some water and rest. We're going to gather up and respond to the team once we get instructions." So they went inside the restaurant. Then there were a couple of firemen in uniform. I said the same thing to them and they went inside. It was probably 15-20 emergency workers inside. I'm standing outside, trying to gather more to direct them in, when all of a sudden the firemen come running out screaming, "There's a gas leak! The building's going to go!" So at this point, after all I had been through, my nerves had been shot and I was like, "How much more of this can I take?" All the civilians were gone. We had evacuated them. So I felt it was in the best interest of my people and myself for us to get out of here because of the possible gas leaks. We went over to Jersey City. I guess they saw my lieutenant shield around my neck so the cops help me off the boat and they bring me up to these three gentlemen and it turns out it was Mayor Glen Cunningham, Police Chief King, and the Fire Commissioner. I don't remember his name. Mayor Cunningham asked, "We heard there was nerve gas used." Now I got scared because I'm thinking, if they're thinking there's nerve gas used, they're never going to help us and we need all the help we can get. So I told him, "No, there's no nerve gas used. Me and Detective [name], we just came from the other side. There's no nerve gas. Put that thought to rest." So they said, "Ok, what do you need?" So I said, "We need cadaver dogs, we need fire rescue, we need police emergency service and the Jersey equivalent of [?] and electric company. Gas leaks and

all." They started mustering them up and me and [name] washed off and had some water and the Jersey City cops were ready for us. They came over to me. They asked me how many and I said hold it to 15 because I didn't know what we would finally need. So they had 15 uniformed cops and 7 emergency service cops, plus the [precinct] cops who had gone over with me when we evacuated. So we all jumped on a tug and the tug brought us, ironically, back to Pier 40, which is where I was based out of and then I come in here to some NYPD vans and I bring the 22 emergency cops to Lafayette High School which was being used as our emergency services temporary command post. By this time, I think it was about 3:40 in the afternoon, I'm not even sure, there was nothing more for me to do here so I went back to Pier 40 because I had to start organizing my officers. So that's what I did. I was here until [?] hours so I went back to work at Pier 40 and I worked there until 8:00 the following morning. It was about 23 hours.

(QUESTION)

I don't know if I had mentioned it, my wife is a deputy chief in the police department. She's the commanding officer of [section] for [borough]. So I was desperate to get in touch with her so I found this woman whose phone was working. I got through to [wife] and I said, "I'm ok, tell my parents I'm ok." She said, "What do you *mean* you're ok?" I said, "I'm down here." She said, "How'd you get down there?" Because we were both responding from Staten Island when we were notified of the crash. We actually passed each other on the bridge and I remember waving to her. I didn't remember until about a week later and she continued into [borough] and I came into Manhattan. She never thought with the traffic and with the highway shut down, that I'd be able to get through. So obviously I was and that was the first she knew that I was here. She said, "Ok, be careful." So it probably wasn't until midnight that… and I was in no emotional state to tell her what I had been through. But at about midnight she had heard, I guess through the grapevine, about some of what I had been through and she responded down to Pier 40. She came down and was helping out down there and I was able to tell her pretty much the rest of the story.

(QUESTION) (Filming resumes at site of NYPD Memorial Wall.)

This is the memorial, the NYPD memorial wall where we have all the names of the police officers killed in the line of duty. I had come down here maybe once or twice a year to pay my respects and to reflect. My family started in the police department in 1927. I'm 3rd generation. I had a great uncle [name]. He enlisted in 1927. Another uncle, [name], he joined in 1931. My father enlisted in 1950 and served 30 years to 1980 and then I enlisted in 1982 and served until 2002 so between the four of us, we have 75 years of service in the police department. The department is a big part of me and my family. I enlisted in January in '82. George Vardanne, he was the first to lose his life in the line of duty when I started, and not counting 9/11, I buried seventy-one cops in my twenty-year career. And then we lost twenty-three that day so in twenty years I lost ninety-four brothers and sisters.

Interviewer (film): Tell me a bit about how you had to relive this a couple times now. What's it been like and how are you coping a year later?

S: Well, I think what helped a lot of the emergency workers cope was that…my unit worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, obviously, like everyone else but me and my staff, we were doing 6 days a week and by the time you finish up and leave they were like 6 straight 14-hour days. And you had to take one day off. So from September to January, I kind of didn't have to cope because I was so busy working. I was so preoccupied with doing what we had to do, getting the job done for the police department. Then when I retired in January, I haven't worked since. I've just taken time off and relaxed and to just catch my breath, I guess you can say. But the disturbing thing I found is that instead of getting easier to cope with, it's getting harder. I don't know if it's because I have more free time to dwell on it, personally, it doesn't get easier. It gets harder. You know, watching those people jump, you never forget that. I guess one of the things I'm fortunate of, to my recollection, I've only had nightmares twice. Tons of other people I've talked to…I stay in touch with about 8 or 10 of the group of 30 that were trapped in the alcove, on the grassy knoll that day. One thing I've found is it's a relief, even if you don't talk about 9/11, which a lot of times we won't, we'll talk about sports or politics or whatever, to talk to people who were not just here that day, but literally standing next to you, who know exactly what you went through. Because too many times there are people who maybe mean well but they're like, "Oh yeah, I know what you went through." You don't know. Nobody knows what we went through. And everyone here, depending on who you are, went through a different thing. But nobody can understand what we went through that day because it's incomprehensible. Even now, a year later, I come by and I still think, "They're gone!" It's just unbelievable. It's hard to take.

I: Tell me a bit more about your relationship with [cameraman].

S: Well, that was the first time we had met each other and he was a big part of my coping and I like to think I was a big part of his coping. We speak, if not once a week, definitely once every two weeks. We just talk, shoot the breeze. He's looking at property in Montana, I'm looking at property elsewhere. The big help is… with him, I feel that he's someone, and I hope he knows that I'm the same, you know, I could call him any time of the day or night. Whereas with some of the others I might feel a little funny if I'm having a bad night or a bad day. But with [name], I know I can call him anytime and even that, even if you don't call someone, just to know you have someone who you can call, who's been through it with you. He's part of my getting through it and I hope I'm a help to him. You can't do this on your own. I don't care how tough you think you are. We had, that day, men and women who have seen who knows what in their careers, crying, hysterical…seeing those people jump. I remember, at one point, when we were evacuating that last boat here at the harbor, there were a lot of cops and firemen in uniform and some were in bad shape psychologically, from shock. I told them, there was a fireman with me, and we told the people, the uniformed workers, "Listen, if you can't stay here, go. Don't worry about it. No one's going to force you. Get on the boat and go." And some did. And don't let me hear from someone who wasn't here that day, "Oh… they left and there was nothing wrong with them." Bullshit. Unless you were here that

day, the things we went through, you have no idea what it was like or how you would cope. I don't want to hear any of those second guesses or what anybody did or didn't do that day. After I tell my story, when people hear my story about shooting out the window, they're like "Oh my God, that was so brave." First I laughed because some people would say "Oh, I guess that's how your police department trained you." They don't train you, that can't be training for what happened that day. What did help was, having been through the experiences I'd been through in my career, the one thing they do train you to do is stay calm, keep your head, so yes, that did help but as far as the other things, no. But when people here are like, "That was heroic, that was brave" but to me, the bravest thing I did that day, and the most difficult thing I did that day, when I came out and was standing on top of this wall with that milk crate. I was still covered from head to toe except for when I washed off my hair of the ash and soot, I'm standing there watching the north tower burn, it has just dawned on me, I've just come to the realization about the south tower and, at this time it's when I'm saying to myself, "Where the fuck is the tower?" Every fiber, every nerve ending, every muscle in my body was *screaming* at me, "Run! Drop the milk crate and run! If you don't leave here now, you're going to die. *Run*. Nobody can fault you for leaving." When I had gone and told these other people later, this is what I'm saying to myself, "Just run, run for your life or you're going to die," and I was able to overcome that. I stayed and continued to help with the evacuation and giving out the water and everything. To me… it was great to shoot out that window, you know, thank God but, for, to me, to be able to overcome that fear and to have the strength and presence of mind to stay on site and to continue to help and evacuate, that's what I feel best about.

I: Did your own fortitude surprise you under the pressure?

S: Well, I can only speak for… I mean, I can't… my whole life you grow up playing cowboys and Indians, you're playing army, at least the generation I grew up during, so you always hope… cops, firemen, we all hope, and God forbid you're called upon, you can come through with the honor and the bravery. So, not so much that you question yourself, but it's always in the back of your mind, "I hope I can come through" . And that day… I hate to be proud of something that happened in some catastrophic circumstances, I will admit I have pride I was able to do what I could do.

I: Do you feel like a hero? How do you feel at the end of it all?

S: I feel good that I was able to do what I could. When you come to the department, you hope you can save one life. And, from my actions, I didn't save one life, I saved anywhere from 20-40. And that's another thing. What I do feel very good about is, and I hope this isn't misunderstood, but most of those people, almost all of those people I saved were police, firemen, emergency workers. My thinking is, surely after that, I didn't just save 30 stock brokers or 30 clerks. I saved people that will hopefully save other people's lives. So I call that the ripple effect. So, when I thought about that, that made me feel very good. To think that I didn't just save 30 lives, I saved lives for years to go on. So it's a moving thing. It's something I'm very proud of. I'm not going to call

myself a hero. I'd give it all back, whatever I did, all in a second if this never would have happened.

I: Finally, you've been nominated for this award. Does that have any impact on you? How do you feel about that?

S: Number one, I feel touched that [cameraman] felt that strongly to nominate me. And number two, I'm honored that, with all of the heroic things that have happened, not just down here, I mean, I was just one of many that day, I was one of thousands, all the people who maybe haven't gotten the credit I have but there were thousands of heroic acts performed that day. There are thousands of heroic acts performed around the world. I understand this award is worldwide during the course of the year so I'm under the impression I'm in the running with only one other person and I'm extremely honored. I'm touched by it.

One more thing I had go on about the ripple effect. Two months after 9/11, I was home and sleeping, it was 9am and my wife woke me up. At that time, I was working 12:00 noon until midnight so I hadn't gotten up yet for work. I was sleeping, my wife woke me up and said, "You're never going to believe what happened." I said, "What?" And she said, "A plane just went down in Rockaway." So the first is, it's terrorism again. This was, I believe, November 10th. So my first thought is, "Oh my God, here we go again." So I get my clothes on, I jump in the car, and this time I had taken my department car home. I responded directly, immediately, I'm sure my wife responded. We got things under control and it was now 10:00 at night and we finally had contained everything and I had my first chance to sit down with a cup of coffee. I'm sitting there with a cup of coffee and I see a friend of mine I haven't seen in a while, [name]. So she sits down with a cup of coffee and I said, "Hey [name], how are you doing? I haven't seen you." She said, "Well, it's my first day back from work since 9/11." I said, "Oh, well what happened?" She goes on to relate the story how her helmet, she had a camouflage helmet on, was shattered, a piece of concrete was embedded in her skull, a pane of glass embedded itself in her back from shoulder blade to shoulder blade. It was several hundred stitches. She received a broken ankle and she's going on and on and I'm like, "Oh, my God!" because I hadn't heard any of this. "[Name], I can't believe it!" And she says, "Yeah, if it weren't for [name] I would be dead." He is a fellow from TARU that I saved that day. Ten minutes after I saved [name]'s life, he saved [name]'s life, so there's that ripple effect. That night, when I heard that, I really… you know, here it is. It wasn't just an idea or a dream I had. It took 15 minutes for that ripple effect to start.

I: That's amazing. Probably one of many stories you haven't even heard yet.

S: I was telling my story to a friend of mine and he had asked me, "In those 20 years, had you ever used your gun?" I said, "No, I've drawn it plenty of times but I've never fired." He said, "Oh my God, a gun that's used to take lives was used to save all these lives." And it was so poignant. I kind of wished I'd thought of it myself. So I was kind of touched like that. I thought it was an interesting point. Here it is, a weapon. Unfortunately, most of the time it is used that way. You don't want to take a life but you

have to take a life to protect your own or protect the public but here it was, it wasn't used to take a life, it was used to save lives, so I thought that was very moving.

(End of film)

Subject #4 (Interview with Researcher)

R: The first thing I wanted to talk about was just the fact that you called me that day to say you had decided you did not want to tell me your story after all and I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that, like, what came up for you and what that was about that you decided you didn't want to.

S: Well, going back to 9/11 I always felt that we were fortunate, the rescue workers, in that we immediately had to, like my unit, we were going 24 hours a day, 7 days a week so the rescue workers, being the fire department, the police department, no matter who it was, you had to go to work and you didn't really have time to dwell on and think about what happened because you needed to do the job. The job needed to get done. So I felt like I handled it very well psychologically, like it wasn't affecting me, my life, or my occupation. Then I retired from the police department in January of '02, four months later, and right away I joined the Y. I was going to the gym four days a week, I was traveling, I was enjoying myself, and everything was fine. I've stayed in touch with several of the people. I would say approximately 6 people, every couple of months we'll talk, individually, not as a group. And compared to how some of the people were handling it or not able to handle it I thought I was doing very well so then everything was fine and I was moving on with my life, but then came the anniversary, the first year anniversary, September of '02 and the build-up, and I don't have to tell you, was absolutely tremendous. It was nonstop. It was like, you're right back to 9/11 of '01.

R: You mean with all the images on TV and the newspaper…

S: Yeah, right. All the media, the publicity and all. And then ARD German television had asked me to come down and do a live-feed to Europe, the morning of the anniversary. So they picked me up and I was down at ground zero from about 6am to 8am and we were finished. But then it started… there being at ground zero. That was probably the first time since I retired in 9 months that I had been back, but it just became too much. Even one of the fellows who was with me that day saw it in my face, the apprehension, where he was like, "You ok?" And I was like, "Yeah, but I've got to go. I've got to go home." Because I was thinking of staying there and watching the ceremony. So he said, "Yeah, ok, I'll take you home." Then I came home and that was it. I broke down, I cried all day and night. I couldn't talk on the phone. I watched the ceremony on TV, which didn't help, but I felt like I had to watch it. So then I realized, it did have much more of an effect than I thought. But I was fine except for when, you know, if I dwelled on it too much or thought about it too much or talked about it too

much, I would find myself getting, I'll use the word anxious. And then of course, as time moved on there would be less and less times or needs to talk about it and rehash it with people but when your interview was coming up I had told you on the phone, the week before, I mean, there's no other stress in my life right now. So the week before, all of a sudden, it started having me up until 3:00 in the morning, 4:00. As we got closer, like Monday, as we got closer to that Saturday afternoon, Monday night I couldn't fall asleep until 2:00. Tuesday night was 3:00, Wednesday night was 4:00. It was just progressively getting worse. In fact, that night before, I think I was up until 5:00. So that's the reason why I called. Because I have a problem, my whole life, of saying 'no'. I guess that has something to do with why I joined the police department to begin with. You know, you want to help and you know, "Yeah, yeah, I'll help, I'll help, I'll help," and then you have to realize where it's not beneficial for you. You have to say, wait a minute. This isn't good for me. So, that's pretty much why. And then I thought, "well, you know what, maybe I shouldn't do it." And I also thought that, with the way we went, with the tape, would be fine but then you threw me for a little bit because then you said you wanted it recorded and then I was thinking, "Oh she may not be able to record it off the TV and then there might be a problem and then I'll have to do it."

R: Now, when you were losing sleep that week, what kind of things, what was rolling through your mind?

S: Well, I didn't really have conscious thoughts of 9/11. Well no, I shouldn't say that. In the beginning, lets see, Monday, Tuesday… no. And then, this may sound silly but I started getting embarrassed because I started thinking, "Well what if I don't remember everything? And what if I twist something around and say the wrong thing?" I got embarrassed about if I got my facts wrong. For some reason I thought I was embarrassed that might happen. In fact, I was even thinking of… you know, I recorded everything, just scribble. I never had made a good copy. I had gone away October of '02, I guess after the anniversary, and my wife was still working, and I just went out for a couple of days by myself by Montauk Island, very quiet, not like the Hamptons or anything else. And I just sat there for 3 or 4 days and it was a ghost town, because it was October. It was cold. And I just sat there and I put the story on paper, my story of 9/11 of what happened. My plan is to…for the next couple of weeks, I also took a trip across country last year and I kept a journal and a diary and I want to rewrite that and then my intention is, two weeks after that, to sit down and rewrite the 9/11 story. My version. So up until the night before, the Thursday or the Friday, I wasn't consciously thinking of 9/11, like nightmares or flashbacks or anything like that. But then those thoughts did occur to me like, "Oh, it would be embarrassing if I got the facts wrong," or this or that.

R: What kind of facts do you, was that a vague thought? Or do you have some sort of clear idea of something that maybe you don't remember as clearly anymore?

S: Well, I think that for me…one thing I found that was absolutely amazing was that day, I mean everything to me, I won't go as far as to say it went in slow motion but I would say most of it, especially after the first tower came down, everything was crystal clear. I remember exactly what I did, I remember putting my hands on my knee… And

then I talk to the other people who were there and some of them don't remember anything. I mean, maybe they're forcing themselves not to remember. But now, by trying to move on, like I say, I don't think about it or dwell on it and so much has happened since then, to give you an accurate portrayal, I would have to sit down now and rehash it and give it a lot of concentration and thought to make sure I covered everything and remembered the time sequence, how it happened. One of things I remember about the time sequence is, I'll never forget, how [name], the Chief, he's on the phone, and he tells me, "They just hit the Pentagon" and then I remember, right after that, the tower came down and I wanted to check myself. Is that the way it happened? And then, sure enough, I went through all the newspaper articles and I saw that the time frame of when the Pentagon was struck and the first tower collapsed, I think it was only 12 or 15 minutes so I did remember it correctly. But like I said, I'd really have to sit down and really concentrate and focus to do a good job and to make sure I was accurate. So I think that's what I was afraid of is sitting down and focusing that strongly like, here we go again.

R: So you were concerned that you might get some of the facts wrong, I guess, but also emotionally, did you have some concern about putting yourself back there? Was that it or was that not really what was going on with you.

S: Oh yeah, that has to be a part of it because, you know, it's a very painful thing to rehash it all. That would definitely have an effect on me and yeah, that was definitely a part of it.

R: Going back to the remembering facts thing, it's interesting, it has struck me, with everyone I have interviewed, how they remembered that day in such particular detail. I mean the memories are very vivid and step-by-step, which is interesting because most events you live in your life, they get pretty vague pretty quickly, but that one seems to be something people remember in great detail. So you find that, for yourself, I mean I know you have some questions like, did I really remember that correctly? But does this event stand out for you as something you do remember in more detail than other events in your life?

S: Oh yeah. Well obviously, I've never experienced something as traumatic as this so you know, it's the most *traumatic* event but, in fact, I'm a big reader. My whole life, even as a 5 year old, I read at least one book a week, 3 newspapers a week, several magazines a week. And I wanted to do some research because I've been in several incidents like serious car accidents. Well that's the one that really sticks out in my mind is, I've been in several serious car accidents where the cars have been totaled and I swear to God, especially in one where I was watching the car that was going to hit me and totaled the car I was in. I stood there and I watched this car and it was in slow motion. I mean, I watched it frame by frame until it hit the car. And then, boom! As soon as it hit the car and knocked itself onto the sidewalk, everything went back to normal. But I swear to God, for that last 15 or 30 or 50 feet, before it hit us, I was watching it in slow motion. I did find something that said there actually is a physical thing happens, that you do see things in slow motion. Because I used to ask people, you know, if I hear they were in a bad car accident, I say, "Let me ask you something. Did it go in slow motion?" Some

people have told me yes, that they experience the same exact thing. Then I did read something that, there is a medical reason for it. That how your optic nerve, how it relates to the brain under a stressful situation.

R: Did you have that experience on September 11th?

S: You mean about the slow motion? No, nothing like that. Not the slow motion effect but I do remember, I mean, it's incredible how surreal the whole thing is. There was a part of it afterwards that was very surreal too. In my whole 20 years, even though I covered the entire city, my whole 20 years have been in Manhattan. In Manhattan if you were on a foot post, in midtown Manhattan, a lot of times, maybe once or twice a year, a taxi cab, it seems like it's always taxi cabs, maybe because they weren't always being maintained or because they took so much abuse, but every now and then, the engine of a yellow cab would catch fire on 5th or 6th Avenue, wherever. And it was a big thing. The fire trucks came, everyone stood around and the media would show up to take pictures, the vans…And I remember, one of the first surreal things that struck me about being at ground zero on 9/11 is I had exited my car, I was standing there with the group and we're trying to figure out exactly what we're going to do, where we're going to set up, etc. I look over and there was a parking lot over on the southwest corner of Liberty and West and there were like, close to 5 cars and trucks burning and just exploding and there was nobody doing anything. Even though were there hundreds or thousands of firemen there, nobody was paying attention, and understandably so, with the two towers still burning. But I was looking at it and saying, "Wow, that's new…" To me, it struck me as surreal. And another thing, you heard it on the tape, how you could, if you listen to the tape again, you'll hear the fire engines and the radios going and this and that. But another thing that struck me was how quiet it was. Now, you may say, well how can it be quiet? There were sirens and horns and people yelling and screaming. But there were times where I was standing there, looking before either of the towers dropped, and it was so eerily quiet. You could hear the flames 110 stories, over a thousand feet up above. You could hear that as clear as anything. It was almost like I could even hear the breeze sometimes. It was so strange, surreal.

R: When you say surreal, what do you mean by that?

S: Well it feels like it's not real, like you're in a movie. Just that, like it's not real. Like, this can't be happening! And me, one of the thoughts that ran through my mind, like I told you, I'm a big reader. One of my favorite topics, if not my favorite, is NYC history. One of the biggest events in our history, depending on what type you're looking at was the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire which took place in 1911 in Greenwich Village. One hundred and forty six women and young girls, the seamstresses. It was a sweatshop. And they locked the fire doors because, God forbid they were going to steal any of the pieces, and it was a deathtrap. One hundred and forty six women and girls, pretty much almost all of them, jumped to their death. Books I read about it, people on the scene said, watching these women and children jump and hitting the ground was the most horrifying, terrifying thing and they'll take it to their graves. For some reason, I started counting, and I feel better other people were counting, and I think it was 17 when

I stopped counting but that's what was going through my mind. "Look at this. This is what those people, the articles I read, this is what they must have felt. Here it is 1911 to 2001. I'm seeing now and experiencing what those people were talking about and how terrible it was and all." But it just seemed, again, and I don't believe it was on the tape, but when I came out with the milk crate and this may sound embarrassing but there's one thing I can say and I guess it was after the first tower had dropped and we escaped and I came out with the milk crate and I'm standing there saying, "Where the fuck is the tower?" It's still, up until that point, I hadn't realized what had happened. Because of that overhang, at the time the tower dropped, someone says, "Run for your life, the tower's coming down" and I don't look up, I turn around, and run into the alcove and then the building comes down, we escape, I come out with the milk crate and it still doesn't dawn on me…

R: That the building has come down.

S: Yeah. I guess because it's so… how could a 110-story building collapse?

R: So when the person said, "The building's coming down," and you ran, you were just running for your life. You weren't comprehending that the tower was coming down. That's what it sounds like. Or did you know but at the same time not know?

S: I don't know. It's hard to say. I guess I could say, consciously no, I didn't realize. Like all the sudden everybody turned around and ran so I just turned around to run but subconsciously I guess I had to realize. But consciously, no. It didn't dawn on me until much later that this is what was occurring because, you have to understand, our reason for being where we were…not only were the people jumping and we were worried about being struck by them, but there was plenty of debris coming down which could have struck you and killed you. But to go back to the surreal thing, another thing that was surreal, at the very end, I had gone to Jersey, me and [name], and we brought the Emergency Service Jersey cops back and we put them in vans and we took them down toward Stuyvesant High School. We turned them over to our Emergency Service who were mustering up there and I came out of the side door of the high school which would have been Vesey street toward the Hudson river, the side door, in Battery Park complex and I come out and the ash and the paper and all has to be 6 inches…at least as deep… every car, everything. Every tree, every car, is covered in this ash. I come out and it's like you're in a black and white movie. There's no color. Everything is gray. Gray, or shades of gray. There's no color. Everything is covered in ash and paper and debris and then I watch an Emergency Service truck driving down the block and it's making no noise because it's like it's driving in snow because of the ash. I said to myself, "I feel like I'm in a black and white movie." And that's another thing that just struck me as so surreal. I guess it's beyond normal comprehension. That's why I say surreal. Something you wouldn't think could happen.

R: And now, two and a half years later, does it still seem surreal to you?

S: Oh yeah.

R: Has that changed?

S: No. If I try and put myself back there, it's still…from the people jumping, even those cars and trucks exploding. It's all, just…and how quiet it was at times and how you could hear the slightest little thing. If I think back on those particular things and coming out thinking it was a black and white movie, those are still… And those are probably the only things that struck me as surreal. But at the time, they had a conscious effect on me. I was like, "Wow…"

R: Oh, at the time you were even aware that it was very surreal.

S: Oh yeah. It struck me immediately.

R: Right. You were very conscious of that.

S: This isn't just from thinking about it later. This was immediately surreal.

R: You're wandering around actually feeling like you're in a movie. Now, earlier you said there was something else that seemed surreal after but was it that? That it was quiet and the debris and the black and white movie thing?

S: Yeah, that was it.

R: And what about, just in terms of thinking about this whole thing now that some time has passed, how do you make sense of it for yourself?

S: Well… I'm trying to think of how I've described it in the past. Not to sound melodramatic, but I feel like I walked through the gates of hell. The death and the destruction of what happened that day is just…The only thing I can compare it to, and not even Vietnam, but would be, again from my readings, would be what the soldiers went through with the bombing in Europe. It doesn't even matter which army, but to be subjected to this bombing day in, day out. When I think about for Vietnam, you had to do 12 months and then you were shipped out back to the United States. In WWII, these soldiers fought until the war was over. You enlisted for 4 years. You were in action for 4 years. So I would think about that. But I mean, in the police department, you deal with the rapists, the murders, the child molesters, the incest and everything else on a daily basis and you think you've seen, and you have seen terrible things and encountered terrible people but I personally believe, there's no way in the world that they could have thought that they were going to bring those buildings down. I know they thought they were going to do a tremendous amount of damage but I can't believe that they thought they were going to bring them down. Because none of us, no one thought those buildings were coming down. Because otherwise they wouldn't have been there. Again, it was just beyond comprehension. What really struck me is…and I don't practice…I was baptized a Catholic and I went to 12 years of Catholic school but I haven't practiced my faith in God for who knows how long, but it really makes you wonder. If you weren't a religious

person, you'd have to question God. How could He let this happen? But I've seen so much in the police department, if that was what I was going to do, I could have done it a long time ago. But just the scale… it's just, you know…

R: So would you say that's the difference? Because you've mentioned you've seen a lot on the job and you were telling me last time I was here that story about you taking classes at John Jay College…

S: Right from the professor, the female professor. Yeah, because here I was, a cop in midtown north, which is from 45th to 59th street from Lexington Avenue to the Hudson River, probably other than the 17th precinct which is from Lex to the East River, it's one of the nicest commands in NYC but here it was, within 12 months on the street I had 3 people die in my arms. And here I am in a quiet place, a nice place, and within a year I have 3 people die in my arms. I can imagine what it must be like in Brooklyn North or the Bronx or something like that. But, and then…and I can't believe I don't even remember her name, with the death and dying class. But if you're an active cop, I guess it goes to show, no matter where you work, if you're an active cop you're going to encounter things.

R: Now throughout your career, did those experiences trouble you later?

S: Well, no….I think I've always been mature for my age. I came on the job late. I think I was 24 when I came on the police department. I had worked 9 different jobs by this time. I had gone down to the Gulf of Mexico and worked down there. I had been around and done a lot of things and I knew, I learned early, that you can't or you try not to let these things affect you. I mean, my father was a detective for 30 years and I never felt that he brought anything home. Granted, his last 10 years he was in an office environment so he wasn't being subjected to things that he would bring home but I learned that you have to phase them out and move on and that's what I would always try and tell my cops especially with, you catch a rapist or you catch a child molester and you can't take them in the back room and beat them up. You just have to give it up. You have to be comfortable and you have to accept, even if this guy's going to be on the street next week, you did your job and move on. And I learned that early and I would try and bring that across to my guys. So that's the way I pretty much did it. I don't feel I really brought anything home. The only time I would get emotional, and by emotional I don't mean cry, I mean angry, would be when I saw children. I remember one time I'm in the paddywagon, the prison wagon and we're taking prisoners down to central booking from midtown north and there's a prostitute in the van with us and she's 8 months pregnant and she's got ace bandages wrapped around her belly to keep the swelling in so the guys would still pick her up. Because now that she's going to the can, the system, she doesn't have the ace bandages but I see that she's pregnant and I say, "What are you doing? How long are you going to work for?" She says, "Until I pop it out and I'll be back on the street." So what upset me was this poor kid, this kid's life is over. He doesn't stand a chance. Working all over eastside I only did my first five in Midtown Manhattan then I went down to lower eastside and I would say there was one incident where this 8-year-old kid is outside on the street at 3:00 in the morning. I tell the guy, "What's going on?"

He says, "My mother's boyfriend's upstairs and they don't like me around when they're up…" So I go up and they're drinking and doing drugs and then I took the kid to child services and 3 days later he's back with the mother. A week after that he's back on the street at 3:00 in the morning. So it would bother me with children. Sometimes, my wife says I don't have much sympathy or empathy because I mean, if you've got organized crime guys or drug dealers killing each other, I could care less. You know, keep on killing each other. As long as you don't shoot innocent people, you're doing us a favor. So in that way, yeah, I might be a little hard, a little callous but it's only when innocent people are involved. And again, like with that 8-year-old, there's nothing you can do. I took him to child services, I did all the reports. I reported her but they gave the child back 2 days later so what am I going to do? You feel like you're kind of letting the kid down but that's the only time where it would affect me but then, even though I remember the story and I remember more detail, you just move on. You have to move on, otherwise you can't do the job. You won't be able to function.

R: And comparing that to September 11th or just moving from that to September 11th, can you say what it is, when you say you have hard times about 9/11, what is it that's affecting you in those times? Remember before you mentioned in those times, I guess you still have a relationship with [cameraman] and when things would get hard, I think you even said on the tape, when things would get hard, you two would talk to each other and I was curious about what that meant for you, exactly. What gets hard about it?

S: Just thinking of the death and destruction. I shouldn't even say destruction because I could care less. I mean, I wish the buildings didn't come down but it doesn't really matter to me. Even monetarily, the economic effect it had on society, you know, we're going to bounce back from this. You know, it's just the loss of life. The loss of the people in the building and the loss of the rescue workers. I was always, I don't know what word to use, but I was always moved, I guess, because when I first became a cop I would go to every funeral. I didn't know them but I just felt it was your responsibility as a fellow officer to go and show your support to the family. But then after probably like 5 or 7 years, it would be like, 20, 30 funerals. I had to stop going to funerals. I see 15,000 other cops and I say, well they're not going to miss me but that got to a point where I had to stop going to funerals because it just got to be too much. I'm very emotionally attached to the PD because my family started in 1927. I'm third generation, my father, my two great-uncles. And maybe because I was raised in the culture of the police department, what it means and maybe the deaths, the being killed in the line of duty, affected me a little more. The guys who were hurt, the girls who were hurt, I took it close to heart. But that's the way I am. If I was a fireman, I would have been the same way. But when it comes to 9/11, it's just the death, the needless, senseless death. What bothers me is I could even almost understand them attacking the Pentagon because it's a military installation and even though you're a civilian employee, you are working for the military, so that's… I mean, I can see that. But this is innocent men, women and children, office workers. Because I understand, I mean #1, death is a part of life but, especially if you're in combat, but death is a part of war. Death is part of the police department too. You're going to lose people, so if you're in the Pentagon and got struck, that's one thing, but the WTC, there's no justification for that at all. But it's just the scale and the way it

happened. It's not even…somebody was walking across the street and got hit by a car when the brakes failed. These people, they jumped. You hate to think that they felt their best option was to jump from 110 stories. Imagine how horrible it was up there inside the fire. But I honestly feel that that day after seeing this, it's like the gates of hell. It's evil personified. I always knew there were evil people, people who should be killed, never should walk the face of the earth. They'll kill you, they'll rape you. Not many, but there are *bad* people out there. They'll kill you, they'll kill your wife, they'll kill your children. But I've never seen it on this scale.

R: Now, I was wondering what it was like for you to watch that video last week, or two weeks ago, when we met. How was that for you?

S: What happened was, [cameraman], probably within a week, he had tracked me down and he had given me a copy of that video and my warehouse, where we were, I told you we started running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it also became a resource center. We were providing the hot meals, transporting the workers back and forth, first aid supplies. People were always coming in and everybody who heard about it wanted to see it. With no exaggeration, I probably have watched that tape, because I wouldn't let it out of my sight and everybody who came in wanted to watch it. I mean, it got to the point where I would turn it on and walk around the room because I had to have seen that video at least 100 times. Not that I wanted to, like I was engrossed by it, I mean I was for the first couple of times, because like anything else, even a movie, I'm a big movie buff. I'll go to the movies and I'll watch the movie and a really good movie is Mystic River. I'll go see again a second time. You'll be amazed by how much you miss. Not a lot. You just don't hear everything, you don't see everything. The second time you go to the movie, it's just like the tape. I was interested the first 5 or 6 times because every time you see more and more. You pick up on things. But now, at this point, I've had to have watched it over 100 times and that's not too troubling. I don't have a problem with that. I'm not going to say it doesn't have an effect. It still has an effect on me. I still get choked up at points. Basically the points I get choked up on are like, watching a cop who's starting to tear up. 'Oh, my God,' he's watching the people jump. All of us went through the same thing. He's expressing how we felt, that we were inadequate. We couldn't do anything to help these people, to prevent it. So I get choked up there and I get choked up when we come out of the building or the camera comes out the building after the first tower fell. When it puts me back to how bad it was, I'll get choked up on that part too.

R: I know that you're from a family with a long history of involvement of the police department but I'm wondering if you can comment, and you might not be able to because you're so immersed in it and have been for your whole life, but if you can comment on what it was like to be a police officer that day. What it meant for you to be down there because you're a cop. If you can imagine a difference, if there was anything that being a cop contributed to the way you conducted yourself, how you felt you handled things.

S: Well, my experience as a police officer over the years from being in situations, and especially as a supervisor, a good supervisor will realize people look up to you and people turn to you, even cops, at times of trouble and emergencies like this and they need

guidance and they need a calming influence. For example, about the Chinese restaurant. The guys were coming up to me and I put everybody in the Chinese restaurant. That's what happened. I'm standing there and a lot of these cops in uniform, they had worked for me, they come down on a daily basis and work at the [name] section and then they go back to their command. That's how we do it. Every day we would call up and I would call operations and the chief of department's office and say, "I need 50 people tomorrow" or "We've got the St. Patrick's Day parade. Give me 100 cops." So they'd get 100 cops throughout the city and they send them to me. We set up the St. Patrick's Day parade and then if people are good, I try and get the same people. So a lot of people come down on a steady basis, maybe 2 or 3 times a month. They get to know me, I get to know them and that's what happened. I was standing there after the two towers had dropped and the cops in uniform who had come from Brooklyn, from the [name] precinct, they came over to me and were like, "What do we do, what do we do?" and I was like, "Snap out of it." You could see the fear in their eyes. You've got to set them straight and relax them. My years as a cop in emergency situations and as a supervisor, you have to learn to keep your head. Like I said, the part that I was most proud of is I was able to overcome my fear. The worst part, I mean, I was fine except for when I came after the first tower collapsed and I came out with the milk crate and it was tough to stand there then but you've just got to do it. You just do it. Based on years of experience. I wouldn't except, if I was a cop for one month, I probably would have turned around and jumped on a boat and ran (laughs). But you know, you've just got to overcome your fears and overcome the situation and take control.

R: It's remarkable to me that you're even able to in a situation like that. It's so overwhelming, it's so huge. Like you said, it's very surreal, it's not anything you've been trained for or anticipate. It's a whole new ballgame and I'm struck, like you said, by that moment that you go in to get water and now you're coming back out to continue to deal with this situation, how you're able to start thinking along those lines and stay there. Because at that point you could have, with every justification, left.

S: Oh yeah. And well, like I said, right before the second tower collapsed, we were putting everyone on the ferries at the Northcove Harbor and there was a fireman there in uniform. Well, there were a lot of uniformed cops and firemen, male and female. I don't want to put a number, but a large amount of cops and firemen in uniform and a large amount of civilians, lets say maybe 20 firemen, 20 cops, and 40-50 civilians. And we're putting them all on the boat, on the ferry at Northcove Harbor but as you're standing there you can see the North tower burning and now I'm looking at the cops and the firemen and some of them, and understandably so, we were all in states of different levels of shock. I'm not trying to make it sound like I was so cool and calm. But we were all in different states of shock. And I would look at these people and you could tell they were shocked. I'm talking about the cops and the firemen. And me and the firemen, we went up to them and said, "Listen, if you can't stay here, go. Nobody's going to question you. Nobody's going to talk about it. Just go." And sure enough, maybe 5 cops and 5 firemen left and got on the boat and it was fine. And I said the same thing to myself when I was telling myself, "Run for your life, you're going to die," when I first came out with the

milk crate. So yeah, I said, "Nobody can second guess you, after what you've been through. You've done your share. Go." But then, you know, I stayed.

R: Ok, I was wondering if and I know you told your story a bunch of times and now you're doing it again, I was wondering if there's any part of your story, factual about that day or after or just some emotional part about how you feel about everything, that you keep to yourself. I'm not asking you what it is, I'm just asking if there's anything that you keep to yourself.

S: No, not consciously. Even everything, like how I felt emotionally, I think I've gotten everything out on the tape at one time or another.

R: Two other things I kind of wanted to review to make sure I have it on the tape that you have talked about before but mainly having to do with the moment when the building was coming down and you shot out the window and really felt like that was it for you. I was wondering if you could tell me about that again, especially in terms of that moment where you heard that voice, or whatever it was, if you could describe that for me again.

S: Well, like I said, somebody yelled while I was standing there talking to [Chief], "Run for your life, the building's coming down." And I didn't look up I just turned around and ran to the alcove and I was one of the first ones in because I was pressed up against the glass, so obviously I had to be the first one but I mean, it could have fit…it probably stretched from that wall to the edge of the break front there so there was probably 10 of us across the front of the glass and then everyone came and piled in behind us and as soon as we got to the glass, you could see nothing. I mean, everything was, I wouldn't say pitch black but gray. But I couldn't see the window. I'm pressed up against the window. I couldn't see the window 6 inches in front of me. I knew it was there but I couldn't see it. Everything was covered in gray. The noise was so loud that, you know if you hear a really loud noise and then you're hearing for a couple of months, it's like muffled. So everything's muffled and you've pretty much lost your sight, you lost your hearing. Your senses are slowly being taken away. Everybody's screaming, "Break the window, break the window," "We're going to die, we're going to die," "Oh my God, my God," this and that. And I remember, the way the sequence for me was, I get there, I'm trying to bang on the window with my hands, I'm not breaking the window. I remember the people were using their department radios to break the window so now we're stuck. Now the window's not breaking and we're not going anywhere. You're pinned, you can't move, you couldn't even fall, and then now with the smoke and the ash, we start to suffocate and you know, suffocating to death, you're losing your breath, you're losing your ability to breathe and I'm trying to think of which thought came first. You forget all that nonsense about Hollywood, you know, "your life flashes before your eyes." You think of your family. I thought of my wife, my son, my parents, my brother and sister and you realize this is it, you're going to die and I guess you give up. You give in to the moment because, I remember, there was nothing we could do. And this is it, you're gonna die. As I started to lose consciousness, you think about your family.

R: (tape cut off) (side B)

S: Right, I don't deserve this. I don't deserve to die like a dog like this. Then that's when I realized there were only seconds left and I said to myself, "Well this is it. At least it doesn't hurt." Because, there was no physical pain. And then I started losing consciousness and just before I totally passed out, at the last second, the voice went off in my head and it was screaming. I know it wasn't anybody behind me but it was extremely loud, you know, "What the fuck is wrong with you? Shoot out the window!" And then, not the surreal part of it but how it was strange, how many things worked out. I had the fanny pack with the gun instead of on my ankle because there were cops I met after that who were trapped with me in the alcove and they said, and I believe them, "I wanted to get my gun out but it was on my ankle and I couldn't get to it." But another thing that people say, and I'll admit I do feel good about it, I mean there were lets say approximately 20 cops, 15, I dunno, supposedly it was anywhere between 25 and 35 in the group, probably 15 cops, because there were firemen, emergency medical workers, ambulance people. And somebody said to me, "You're the only one who kept his head, to draw his weapon." And yeah, I'm not embarrassed to admit, I take pride in that, that I was able to overcome that and do it. But then I said, "Yeah, but thank God I *was* the only one," because how far back it stretched, it had to have been 5 or 6 people deep. You couldn't see anything. If anyone else would have drawn their gun and started shooting, they would have shot me in the back of the head. So that's another thing. Thank God nobody was able to draw their gun and shoot. There's no doubt in my mind. You can't see and you're fighting for your life and you're just going to start shooting, they would have shot me in the back of the head. I firmly believe that. So now here I am, the voice goes off so I draw my weapon and truthfully, the first thing that came to my head, "My God, what if there's somebody on the other side of this window?" And you know, this all took probably 15 seconds and then I realized and said to myself, "Well, you're all going to die if you don't shoot out the window so shoot out the window." And then, because the window's right here, I said, "Now, do I put the gun against the glass or do I shoot from here?" Because now I was afraid the ricochet was going to come back and shoot me and kill me. And then I just said, "Just shoot the window." I shot the first round and then the window dropped and I said, "No, we're going to get decapitated if we go underneath this," so then I started to shoot more to drop more of the window. So that was that part of it.

R: And this voice that went off in your head, was that your voice? Because it sounds like it was a very loud shouting voice. It's just remarkable to me.

S: I mean, it's possible, and I never thought of it, but it's possible maybe I even yelled it out. I mean, I don't know. I never thought of it until now, as we're sitting here. The one thing I can tell you, I know for a fact, it wasn't anybody else's voice. It wasn't somebody standing behind me. This voice was in my head. And maybe I even yelled it myself but it was my own voice.

R: It's amazing. Ok, so I guess the last thing I wanted to make sure I have correct with you is it sounds to me that the two main sources of emotional, I guess, difficulty,

whatever you want to call it, intense emotionality with the loss of innocent life including people having to make the choice to jump out of the building. And then when you felt like you were going to lose your own life, your personal loss, which would be leaving your wife and child and family behind. So, do I have that right?

S: Yeah. Yeah, they weren't the same.

R: What do you mean?

S: Well, it strikes me differently. I could almost say losing my family, my death, versus…it was like two different levels, two different planes. I shouldn't say two different levels because I don't know if one was any worse than the other or is emotionally worse than the other but it is two compartments. It's two separate emotions. I'm not saying one is any worse than the other because they're both very traumatic but it is distinct.

R: Is there anything that you thought of as we've spoken that you'd like to mention or review?

S: Nothing that I can really think of.

R: Ok, I think we've covered a lot. When I watched your video taped interview it seemed like we had basically discussed all of that. I'm glad you brought up the cars on fire and the surreality of it because that was one thing that wasn't so much, I think you mentioned it but didn't really flesh it out in the videotaped interview. That's an interesting piece, psychologically. For my purposes, it's really interesting.

S: I don't know if it's pertinent and I don't remember if it's on the tape or not, but people have a misconception of what the [name] section is. My last nine years was CO of the [name] section and they think, "Oh, it's just parades," but they don't realize that we respond to every emergency, like a building collapses, fire scenes, demonstrations, riots, etc. So I had seen, between that and my experiences as a cop in uniform, I had seen a lot and I'll never forget, I think it was approaching New Year's Eve of 2000, the millennium, and of course, everyone was on edge about what's going to happen, the computers are going to crash, the whole country's going to crash, etc. If I remember correctly, that was the year where on December 30th, we had like, sixteen inches of snow. I'll never forget, it was 3:00 in the morning, and it takes us 20 hours just to put that together, New Year's Eve, Times Square, with no snow. Now here we are with a 16-inch snow storm, it's the millennium, the biggest one ever, probably will be the biggest one ever, and here we are, it's 3:00 in the morning of the 31st. We've been running crazy for who knows how long now and here we are, in the middle of Times Square, in 16 inches of snow. The entire place is lit up like daylight with all the lights. We've got emergency service, sanitation, the parks department, the police department, the fire department, and again, it's like a movie scene. I remember standing there with the guy I was working with and I'm just standing there looking at it all and looking at the job everyone's doing and I said, "You know, this city is incredible. There's nothing we can't do. This is unbelievable!" Just to

pull off a normal New Year's Eve, much less the millennium, but just to pull off the millennium in the middle of this snowstorm, I was proud, my chest was puffed up but for everybody. And that's the way I've always felt. No matter how bad the situation, there's nothing we couldn't handle in the police department. I mean, it is the greatest police department in the world. But I do remember when the Pentagon had just gotten hit and both towers were struck and [Chief] tells me, "The Pentagon just got hit," right before the first tower falls, fear went through me that, "Oh my God, this might be more than we can handle. This might be over our heads." And that's the only time I felt a fear that day. Because most of the time you're just working on adrenalin, you're just going. But I do remember, I was like, "Oh man, this could be it." But then, like I said, we pulled it off. Oh, there is one thing I'd like to say that I always try and bring out, that I haven't discussed with you. Everyone and the media was always talking about like, now it's down to 2,749 is the official figure that was released yesterday. It was always like, 3,000. We've lost 3,000 people. And especially while I was driving across country, the thing I would explain to people, talking to other departments and all, you know, we lost 3,000 people but each of those towers employed 25,000 people. That's 50,000 people. Granted, it was primary day. Granted, it was 8:30 in the morning. They weren't full because of primary day and because not everybody had gotten to work yet. But I would say, and the figures I read back me up, there were approximately 25,000 to 35,000 people in those two towers when they were struck. If you were to take a loss of 2,749 people, if you deduct all the rescue workers which was 403, I believe, you deduct that, they've narrowed it down to almost every person, besides the rescue workers that were lost, were above the floors that were struck. There's nothing that ever could have been done to save these people. The point I'm trying to make is, yeah, it's the worst act of terrorism in the history of the United States but this was…See, I'm an optimist. No matter how terrible, you've got to try and look at the good side, I guess to move on. The way my take on this is, yes, this was the worst act of terrorism and it was a horrible thing. But this was the greatest rescue operation in the history of the world. I mean, we got 25,000 people out of those buildings. That's how I would like it to be remembered, to boost us up, help us move on, whatever. But stop giving all the credit to the terrorists who killed. Not that we haven't gotten our accolades and all, the rescue workers, but you know what I'm trying to say.

R: Well right. I mean, in addition to the sadness of the loss of all the rescue workers because that is so tremendous, that a lot of emphasis is placed on the loss and the terribleness of that. But there's also great triumph.

S: Yeah. Because when I was talking about the black and white movie, when I had walked back to my shop, it was about 4:00, 5:00 in the afternoon. Nobody asked me but I remember saying to myself, "We must have lost 15,000, 20,000 people. We had to have lost 20,000 people." Even the first estimates were 6,000 and I was like, "Wow." Not, "that's all," but you know what I'm saying.

R: The headlines in the paper the next day said "10,000 feared dead." I think that was on the front page of the Daily News.

S: That's the one thing I try and stress, that it was the greatest rescue operation in the world.

R: Right, and it was a successful rescue operation.

S: Yeah, and that's what I try and point out. They found, so now we're talking about 2300 people, it was like, 2100 of the 2300 people were employed on the floors on or above the point of impact so there was nothing we could do. We never could have gotten there. We would have lost those people no matter what. So that's a point I try and make with everyone when we talk about it.

R: Yeah, I think that's important. I'm glad you mentioned it.

ALTERNATE SUBJECT/ DATA NOT USED

This subject was 43-years-old on September 11, 2001 and held the rank of Sergeant with the Emergency Services Unit. He retired from NYPD after 20 years of service in January 2003. These interviews were conducted in February 2003 and May 2003, respectively.

R: Like you and I have discussed before, and you just read in the consent form, the research that I'm doing is about September the 11th, and generally my goal is to research in a depthful way what it is like for police officers to experience line-of-duty trauma, and in this case, the catastrophic form. This kind of research is called qualitative, it's also called descriptive research, so what we do is get descriptions of what a person has experienced. So, today what I'm asking you to do is to discuss your experiences of September 11 in as detailed a way as you can. I want to know what you lived through that day and also in the aftermath, the weeks and months to follow, how your life has changed since then. One way that is helpful to think about this is, if you could describe your story so that someone who is hearing this would know what it was like to be you that day.

S: Ok.

R: So you can just start wherever you think is appropriate.

S: Well, I might as well start at the beginning. That day, like everybody else, I was sitting home. Well, I'll start back from the Monday before, I was working a 4X12 and I had put in for a tour change for the day tour because the next day, September 11 is my son's birthday. So I was going to be home for his cake and everything that night. But being that I was in the process of painting two rooms in the house, Monday night I had called the ESU desk to see what the manpower was for Tuesday, to see if I could get off. They said it was no problem, they had twenty people working, so that kept me out that day. So Tuesday morning when I got up, my son was going on to the bus, and my wife had said, "Look" the news was on, this is now around a quarter to nine and I was standing in my living room watching, the first, after the first plane had hit. You know, I was having my coffee and I, there were reports about maybe it was a small plane, you know, they weren't sure, there were no reports of terrorism yet. And I remember thinking to myself, "The fire department, they got their hands full." You know, it's a huge, huge fire, so they're going to be working this for a long time. So naturally I'm thinking about the guys from my truck, and from the truck across the way. I knew that we have a plan, called the highrise rescue plan. What we would do is put our people into helicopters and go over on top of the large buildings and we would rappel down to help clear it for the fire department. So, I was just thinking these things as I was standing there and then I just watched as the second plane hit. Once it did, immediately I said, as everybody else probably did, "We're under attack." So I went and picked up the phone, two other guys were slated to work 4 X 12 so I called down and I told them, they didn't even know, I

told them a plane had just hit the 2nd Tower. I said a plane had just hit the Trade Center, definitely we're under attack. I told them to meet at the park-and-ride in 10 minutes, just grab some stuff for the next few days. I ran upstairs. I threw clothes into a bag. Ran downstairs, wrote a quick note. And then I took off to the city. I met up with them, and we drove down. We started to drive down, and I remember the drive down it was just, it was crazy because it was, again, it was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, it was just absolutely gorgeous, and we had the radio on and we're hearing things about all sorts of, a second plane, we're hearing things, you know, a plane into the pentagon, and then another one down in Pennsylvania. So, all sorts of things are flipping through our minds, about, and it's kind of weird, all we want to do is get there as quick as possible. Even hearing this, saying that, we're under attack, planes just smashed into these buildings, and I couldn't get to the car fast enough to get there. So, anyway, as we get closer towards the GW it really starts to sink in. Because you look down on, down lower Manhattan, and you just see, you know, the cloud, the big dust cloud. It was truly amazing. It was very eery. We got to the check point, we showed our shields and I.D. and we shoot through, we're the only car on the GW, and I think it was one of the guys that was driving said, "Remember when they said they were going to blow this bridge up?" I'm like, "You gotta tell us now?" (laughs) But anyway, we shoot down, we get down to the ESU truck and, the (names precinct) was great, because they knew, being the level of skill that we have, that, you know, we're the one's in there. And they knew, I didn't know at the time but I guess the precinct did, that we had lost so many guys. And they were like, "You guys gotta get down there quick, there's a lot of people trapped." So they did everything that they could to, they were just, "Leave your car here, we'll park it, we'll do anything…" and we just kind of did, we just ran in, everybody quick changed, grabbed all their life-lines, their harnesses, their rescue equipment. We were kind of light, we didn't load up with a lot of stuff because we knew it was gonna be coming. Gathered up a few people that were there right at the time and we jumped into, the precinct had a van that they were sending people down, so we jumped into that.

R: What do you mean that you knew it was gonna be coming?

S: Oh, the equipment and everything else would be forthcoming. It was going to be somebody else. The way we work is that whenever you get into a big job, the initial team gets in and they start to try to control it or just assess it, and then to try to keep relaying on down the line, "We need this, get us this," but at least you have, you're gaining, try to gain some sort of control on it and get down there as quick as you can. When you really got down there closer, then it started to kick in. It was just, you know, every time you took a step it was like, "Oh my God." We were 20 blocks out and it was 8 inches deep of concrete ash,…and papers, ..stuff was strewn all over the trees…

R: When did the buildings collapse in terms of your arriving there?

S: We were on the GW when they collapsed. And that was another thing, that, we were, when we heard it, it was one of those things, I said, "Alright the tower went over, where the fire was," and the radio kept saying, "No, they're completely down." And I remember asking the guy I was with, I said, "That's ridiculous…How could it be down?"

I said, “It’s a 110 story building. What do you mean it collapsed completely?” Then again, our thoughts, because we had people that were sent to the bombing in Oklahoma, because we’re one of the only teams that’s made of 50% policemen on the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue, we’ve been to these classes before. So when we heard “collapse” we immediately assume hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of people, are caught in void spaces, caught underneath, trapped underneath rubble. And we said, first there’s going to be a lot of bodies, and there’s going to be some chances for save, if you have that kind of collapse, because even if, in earthquakes, big buildings, people are saved because of the way the buildings collapse. So anyway when we get down there it’s, you know, as you can say, just like chaos. But again, fortunately, the training that we have in Emergency, really really came into play big time. Whereas we were able to just take, you could call it control of the whole situation, and say, “Alright, this is what we’re going to do.” The boss down there at the time, the C.O. of Emergency did an outstanding job. He grabbed a few of us and said, “Everybody down to the North corner, we’ve got to do a re-call right away.” So that’s what we did. As much as guys wanted to go in and start looking for people, we had to find out who are we looking for? Which is another, and again, that was a heartbreaking thing because as you, you know, you can see our guys, um, back up a second, you can see our guys coming down West Street, uh, you talk about when it really hits you how bad this is, that it’s real bad, one of the guys coming out, who got caught in the collapse of the, when the North Tower collapsed into the Customs House, and he had 26 or 27 years on the job, over 20 in Emergency, nothing ever fazed this guy, you could get, people could shoot at us and he’d turn to you and say, “What are we gonna eat after this?” you know, very level headed, and he came out covered, and all I could see was a little bit of white in his eye, and he just turned to me and says “Pete, it’s real bad. Really bad.” And I was like, “Wow, Mario, that’s..” He said, “Yea.” And, he was with a few guys that ended up dying. And some pictures of where he was in, where it collapsed, he missed death by, literally, two feet, where the building collapsed on top of him. So anyway, we go..

R: So you knew, excuse me for interrupting, but you knew when you saw him, and he said “That was…”

S: He said it was bad, it was real bad.

R: And that was, for him to say that, then you knew it was…

S: Right, yeah. I mean, you knew Mario was not one to say, most of the jobs we went on they were, even when they were bad, it was, “Alright we can do this. We’re trained to do this.” But to hear it from him, you knew it was going to be bad.

R: So what was that like for you? When you heard “bad” what does that mean?

S: Truly, like…a real, like a jolt to my system, to the adrenaline system. And it really got me, it put me into, I think a real high gear. I grabbed my guys, what I usually try to do in, in Emergency it works completely different from the police department in the way things are. You may get to a scene as a sergeant, but in Emergency you have these, a

group of experienced guys who you always call on for their expertise, as opposed to the patrol aspect of it where the sergeant got there and he told you what to do. Even if you had an idea, unfortunately, the police department the way it ran out there they were like, "No, listen, this is what you're doing, just go over there and do that." But there was, this was the only one time that I grabbed my guys and I laid it, right into it, I said, "No fucking around, no bullshit, no freelancing, you're gonna follow me, you're gonna listen to me, you're gonna follow my directions completely without anything, nobody…" And they were all like, "Absolutely." And I said, "Let's go." And, because this was something that no one had ever experienced before, this was gonna be, and again, because of some of the things that we learned, I grabbed one of the guys that was in Oklahoma, another guy with 20 years worth of experience. He just got there, he was there when the towers came down, he was actually the truck's chauffeur. When the first one came down he was able to radio to the guys in the second tower to tell them to get out. And he had finished up on a midnight, and he's standing there, you know, in a pair of shorts. A pair of shorts and a t-shirt and a gun belt. And he said, "Alright, Pete, this is it." I said, "Dave, you stay right with me." He told me a few things, I said, "What did you do in Oklahoma?" He said, "This is what we do, you work nothing but on a buddy system." I said, "Great." I said, "You have two guys, no one leaves, no one walks off, everybody's accountable." I said, "Alright, we'll put the teams together and start, you know, we'll start doing our searches." And that was kind of, like, it was kind of, real fast in that portion of the day where it was, there were so many reports of more planes coming in, shifting rubble, shifting buildings, other buildings that they thought were gonna come down. Every time we went to get somewhere, they had three bells or three whistle blasts or something and they would pull people off it. There was, as much as we were trying to get a handle on it, and trying to coordinate where we were gonna try to search, it was still a lot of helter skelter during that, I would say, from, I guess we got there about 11:00, until somewhere around 4:00 or 5:00 when we first started to, I think it was 7:30 that night they found the Port Authority cops. And then we actually had a clear direction on where we were going, and what we were gonna do, at that time.

R: And until then…

S: It was kind of, we would go from, they would say, we had a few people, our bosses in Emergency, who didn't have the experience of being an Emergency cop, and they were, I believe, completely overwhelmed. And they would tell us, "Alright, we need you to go over here and find a place where we can set up." And the time, I said, "The time to set up is not now. There are tons of people trapped in there." We still firmly believed that there were still, we were going to find people. So, eventually we found one place we could set up. And then they said that building wasn't safe, so I basically told the Lieutenant, I said, "I…" I just left him. I said, "You can find a place to set up." And I told my guys, "Come on, we're just gonna go…" And we went to where you can get in, we went to where there was one, over by Liberty Street, there was a park that was covered so we went, we did that, because we figured, to see if we could find anybody there. And then as we started working our way down Liberty Street to where that firehouse was, 10 and 10, that's what it was called, Engine 10 Ladder 10, that was a reference point. For the remainder of the night it turned out to be a very good reference point because there was no other way to

really kind of, that particular block, to give anybody a location, where we were. Because you would get in there, as later on we found out, I turned to Dave, I said, "Well Dave, there's a good chance we don't get out of here." Um, because we were, at once point we were standing in the middle of it, when they were digging out the two Port Authority cops, and we looked around it was like 10:00 around 11:00 at night, all the buildings were burning, there were pockets of flame coming up from underneath us, we were standing outside choking on smoke. We were not in an enclosed space, we were gagging on smoke, and the building 7 had already collapsed around 5:30 and I said, "Dave, you know, this…" We almost joked, I said, "This sucks." You know, but yeah, during the course of that time, that was, for that block of time, it was just kind of weird as we were just trying to find a place that we can go in and just concentrate and work. It wasn't until about 7:30 that night that a couple of guys from Emergency Services, they found those two Port Authority cops, the last two that were recovered out of there alive. And we started working on them. And that was really amazing. It was good in one respect in that it was just complete cooperation with everybody working. There was no, you know, what turned out later, this is my area and this is not yours. So, and it was a very dangerous job, it was a very intense labor job. When I got up there, one of the guys that was running it, well actually not running it, he was in the hole, digging, and he was digging for probably about 45 minutes and he ended up digging out the first cop with nothing but a small garden shovel. That's how tight in he was. And the choking smoke, it was literally like he was working in a fireplace chimney, with the smoke rolling out. When he got out, and we were standing on I-beams, and he came up to me, literally he collapsed 3 times in my arms, the Emergency cop. And he was telling me, "Alright, he's in here. The other one is back further...it's gonna take a little time to get him." And to this day I'm amazed at the bravery shown by him, utterly amazing.

R: What happened when he collapsed?

S: He collapsed from sheer exhaustion, you know, just from the heat, and the smoke, and I remember he was asking for water, and a case of water would start at the end of the line, and you can't fault the guys, they're working and they're thirsty and they think "it's only one," but by the time it got up there, there was no water. So you had these things, even up there, you had to say, "I'll try to get you water later." But he did an amazing job with that. And for that day, I mean that was, you know, like a lot of things we had talked about over the last year or so, guys from work, we'd sit around and we'd say, things would hit you in different ways, and we'd sit there and say, like one thing that got me during the middle of the day, when it dawned on you that we were, for the first time in my life, involved basically in a war. We were standing doing the search around the pile, on the first day, we were watching the F-16s or F-14s overhead. I said, "They're up there to shoot people down. This isn't an air show, this is real." I said, "This is wild." And the other thing is, we kept saying, where are the bodies? Where are the bodies? And that was, every time we'd go, "We got a void over here," we would immediately think, "There's gotta be bodies." I mean, I remember being on a job a couple of years back in Harlem. Freddie's Fire they called it. It was Freddie's clothing store. There was some guy who went in there, he was upset that it was a white-owned business. He ended up shooting two people, then he lit the place on fire. After the fire was put out, we did a

search of the basement and we found, there were like 6 or 7 people, they were stacked up at the door, and you know they were all dead. But, you kind of expected that going in and kind of thinking the same thing with this. I said, "Alright, we've had a big fire and you had a collapse, we're gonna hit these voids, we're gonna open it up." And you kind of readied yourself. I said, "Well, you're gonna go in a void and you're gonna see a dozen people. You're gonna see" you know. And then, nothing. We were going through and…even, we were talking, as it goes on during the search, "Where's the smell?" You know, people died and they smell. People burn, they smell. You know, and it was just really surreal. You know, there were estimates of 20,000 people in there. We said, "Where is everybody?" And that was, uh,… so anyway the first day was, like I said, flew by. We were able to get the first Port Authority cop out, and by this time it was 1:30 in the morning, and nobody wanted to leave. I said, "Guys we'll be back here 6, 7 o'clock. We gotta go, we're gonna be back here for a long time." So basically we made our way out and we went back to the truck and sort of crashed real quick and then got up and started the second day.

R: Everyone wanted to stay.

S: Yeah, all of the trucks are set up so every one has 3 or 4 beds in each truck. And what we did then is we were able to get some cots and we turned our weight room into another bedroom and we put 3 or 4 more beds in there. Of course once we started to work the 12 hour tours down there, by the time you got up, showered, whatever, we weren't finishing up, even when we started doing the 7 in the morning until 7 at night, we didn't come back until 9:00, and by the time, you know, we had two showers going because you didn't want to take all that stuff home with you, it was 9:30, 10:00 and you were getting up anyway, you were coming back in. Yeah, so that's how that kind of went. (pauses) And then, once it's, the first day was, the first couple of days, it was really kind of, it was kind of like setting in, a little bit. We had the list of names of people who, all your friends that you lost and everything, you were like, "Well,.." you know you still, you wanted to have hope, but after being down there, I don't think there were too many guys who really had hope after that first day.

R: I wanted to ask you about that, so you said when you were on the way in, and even setting up and everything that first day, that you were going to be looking for people, to rescue people. At what point did you start…

S: After the first day.

R: After. So the first day you were looking for…

S: First day we were looking for people alive. By the second day, I would say maybe by the third or fourth day, I said, you know, "We're not finding people." I said, you know, "This is…" and then it just really came down to can we at least get them out and bring them home? And we found out right away who was missing, when we did the return roll call right around 12:00, or 11:30 that morning on the 11th. We had a tentative list. And that was the other thing, it was, you know, when it was read to me, out of the guys from

Emergency, the 14 guys, you worked with every one. John DeLario was my partner in #2 truck, Santos Valentine, we used to shoot, I used to be a spotter up at Camp Smith up in Peekskill when we would do advanced training, and I would sit there with him, I mean, uh, no but, any one of those names you, it was just like, "Wow." You know it was one of those things when they would tell you the name you were like, "No, not him, really?" And it was like, some of these guys you knew for so long. Joe Vigiano and Mike Curtain I knew then since 1989 when I was in the 75 with them, I was their boss in the 75. So it was, it was difficult. It was very difficult. But you know, it's just, you wanted to do your best, to be there, and to try to find them. You know, we had someone tasked to do a whole big map on where they were and where they could be. I was reassigned to the FEMA team, to run the FEMA team which was good for us because we got away from all the department bullshit. Because what happened was, being that they had to break it up with the fire department and the police department, everybody had different quadrants and there was a lot of bickering. This was in the beginning, I mean the 2nd, 3rd or 4th day they were doing this. But, once they, of course they activated 14 or 15 FEMA teams and the New York Task Force got activated, I was put in charge of it, we fell under the federal thing, and that gave us the run of the entire place. So, when other people said, "You can't go there, this is our quadrant." I said, "No, we're part of the FEMA team, we go where we want." And they were like, "Oh, alright." So, in that way, for the guys that were with me I know that made them feel a lot better, that they, that we were able to do searches that no one else was able to do. And no one had that sense of being held back, or not being used to their fullest, which I know in talking to guys later on, they were saying that certain bosses would just take us out and say, "Listen, we're not doing this. That's too dangerous, we don't do that." And they were really frustrated. Whereas, I was out there and I said, "This is what we do. Part of the work we do is dangerous, we will minimize it," and I said, "there are some times I won't let you do things." But, I think in the course of the 8 days we were activated I pulled them out of two places. I said, "This is just too dangerous." And I said, "Guys, we're all in agreement that our friends are dead." I said, "Let's not kill one of our own to recover a body. As much as I would love to bring them back for their families," I said, "I'm not gonna go to someone else's family and say 'We were looking for so and so, who we know is dead, and now yours is dead.'" I said, "I'm not going to…that's not gonna happen." And you know, they were being so aggressive, and they wanted to do, you know, but they understood that. They were, you know, talking about bonds, that's working together, the same group of guys for 8 days, it was really good. And it was, there was some funny moments, some heated moments. There was some, one example that, when my Lieutenant grabbed me I happened to be walking across to Stuyvesant Highschool which was our temporary headquarters, on the second day, he said, "Pete, your running the FEMA team." I said, "Absolutely not. I don't want to have anything to do with this. I want to just take ESU guys, I want to…" because we would have had to have been working with the fire department, at that time, I said, "Due respect…" He said, "You're doing it." So, you know, any other time I would have said, "Alright whatever you want me to do I'll do it." He says, "Sit down here with this fire captain and you're going to discuss putting a team together." I said, "Alright." So we start to discuss it, and my Lt. Says "Grab 3 Sergeants." So I say, "Great, I'll grab this guy, this guy, this guy." He says, "No you gotta grab one new guy so we can blend him in." I said, "Alright, whatever." So I grab

one new guy, a new sergeant. So we go to the fire captain who says, “Well we can’t do it because my guys don’t want to do it, they want to go off on their own.” Which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. So I said, “Fine, we’ll run it with just half a team, we can do that.” But now I have two rescue sergeants, one is a new guy, one has been around in Emergency probably 15, 16 years, very aggressive, very knowledgeable. So when we would talk every day about what we wanted to do that day, what tasks we wanted to accomplish, it would be like me and him, we’d be back and forth. And the new guy is soaking it up. So now it gets to like the third day, and one of the cops there, great guy, he’s pissed. He’s like, “Fuck this, fuck this. I want to talk to you.” He goes, “What the fuck? We’re not good enough? That other team gets everything. Every time something comes up, it’s them? We’re not good enough?” He said, ”Everything comes up, you always give it to them.” I said, “You know what, there’s a reason.” And it hit me right then, John, great guy he is, but he’s not that aggressive in saying, “Alright we gotta do this search, I’ll take my guys.” You know that’s all it was. I said, “I got all the faith in world in you.” And we had planned for that day for the globe that was in the middle, we had a structural guy had found a void, and we descended into it and we were going to put a team in there and go down two stories and go underneath this whole pile. I said, “That’s yours.” It was a dangerous thing. He goes, “Great, great.” So we get down there and we’re just about to set up there and I turn to Robby and I say, “Robby, your team ready?” and this guy’s head almost…I said, “I’m kidding, only kidding, you are going in.” But it was just certain things like that, and then after that you just became so tight. It was very good. And it got to a point, by the last day, we knew we were getting ready to, it was an 8 day deployment, so I asked them “Guys, where do you think we should go? Where do you think there’s going to be the best possibilities for recoveries, anything?” Because, you know, we had free reign. And I think that helped because they were very happy that they had input, and we were able to go do stuff that nobody else did, and things that were supposed to be done, you know, we’re there to search voids, and do things, where cops shouldn’t be. That was some of the things that, the bucket brigade, I think that gave a lot of people a sense that they did something. But a lot of it, they were able to put themselves in great danger. And we were walking by, at one time, by Tower 4, and two guys pop up out of a hole, on manilla line, which is not a safety rated line. I said, “What are you doing?” They said, “Oh, we saw this hole, we were checking it out.” I said, you know, definitely can understand the mentality of like, “Hey, I want to help. These are our friends, co-workers, and everything else.” But, you have to know your limitations, you can’t do that. Even the Chief of Department came around and said, “Sergeant, don’t you know we’re at war? I got 30 guys from Narcotics I want you to take them in there and get them dirty.” And I looked at him, I said, “Chief, we got the FEMA team here we’re going to do void searches.” You know, they went up to him and said, “Chief what can we do?” And he said, “I’m going to make you feel good. I’m going to get you in there. You’re going to pass buckets of dirt out.” But meanwhile, the team that I have is a technical rescue team and now we’re stuck doing training, basically. And we were stuck there from, probably for only about an hour until he walked down the block and I said, “Guys, you’re on your own, we’re out of here.” And again, people mean well, but sometimes you gotta, you can’t do certain things and you gotta let other people do it. So that was that part of it…

And then you get into the truck scene, where, every day you would finish there, well, after the FEMA deployment, you were put in a rotation. You had several different things that needed to get covered. One was regular patrol, the other is naturally the World Trade Center, and then the others were starting to come out what they called the HAMMAR teams, or the Anthrax jobs. And you may be assigned to that car. So every day it would be 20 guys in a back room and you would start off every day just grabbing names, "Who's going to the Trade Center today? Who's not?" So I tried to let guys with more seniority, who just really wanted to go, I would let them go for a few days but then I'd say, today you're in the truck. Sort of, again, as these things pop up, the guy I talked about with the shorts, I would say it's the fifth day that we're coming back into quarters after the 11th and he stops me and he says, "Pete, CNN has been on for 5 days running," and, talk about great insight, the way the politics is on this job it's sad that they didn't retain a guy like this, he said, "These guys are doing nothing but going to ground zero, coming back, and watching it again. They're doing loops. 24 hours a day, they're reliving this event." He said, "You gotta go in and turn it off." I said, "You're absolutely right." So I caught some flak for that. I said, "Guys, if you're really interested in watching CNN there's a t.v. up in the front office, come back here we're putting on anything but CNN. It's not gonna be on back here." I said, "We have to get back into a little bit of normalcy." You know where you're gonna come in you're gonna be assigned a truck, if you're assigned a truck you're gonna start to straighten up a little bit, doing the little things that we do to get us back on track again. Which was difficult. A couple of guys stormed out of there, "You're not honoring the dead." But again, a lot of this, you didn't take any offense to any of it. You realize that the pressure that people are under. There were a few things that flared up, but just as quickly as they flared up, I think some of them died back down. You have to remember we were working, I would say, on average, probably about 4 days at a time. We'd go home for 1, be back for four days at a time. But, work-wise, September I worked from the 11th straight through, October I had two days off, November I only had one. December I took a week off at Christmas. And we were working 15 hours a day.

R: So what was that like?

S: For me it went by I think very quickly. They were long days and everything, but when we were down at the site your mind was occupied with something, you weren't thinking about anything. You were thinking of the job and what you needed to do. And by the time you got back, you were kind of shot. Get something to eat, shower, and that was kind of it. In retrospect, the toll it took on my wife is that now we're getting divorced. So, it's, had, and she was there for me. She was saying, you know, "You need to take some time off, forget the overtime." And I looked at it, I wasn't thinking about the overtime. I was thinking, these are friends of mine in there. We want to be there. We want to look for them. I would hope that they'd want to look for me. You know, the way I looked at it and the way she looked at it were two different things. She was saying, "It's a job. It's not your job to be there all the time." And I looked at her and said, "Well, yeah, I thought it was." Maybe, I definitely should have had more of a balance. I should have taken a few more days off. But, you know, the information that I had to make the decisions then, that's what I used. Naturally, hindsight is 20-20. You know,

you can't, everybody, when you got there for work, everybody was focused on going down there and doing that job. It's not like somebody would pull you aside and say, "You need to spend more time at home, you gotta go home, you need to let somebody else do it." Everybody was like, "What do you mean you're taking a day off?" Guys who wanted to take two or three days off in the beginning, guys flipped. They were like "You aren't taking time off. You gotta be down there." You know, so I don't, I don't know if that added to it, or whatever. I'm not sure.

R: It sounds like you felt like you should be there.

S: Mm –hmm.

R: There's pressure also because everybody was there and the attitude is everybody should be there. But it also sounds like you felt at that point that your first priority was to be…

S: Well there were two things. One is that we had, basically there were 3 sergeants that were supposed to be working the day tour. One of them flat out let everybody down. He just didn't do his job. Guys came up to me, on the second day they came up to me, they were adamant, saying, "We will not work doing search and rescues with him. He almost got us killed yesterday. We want someone to go to the boss." I actually went to the X.O. of ESU, I pulled him aside and said, "Listen, guys are flipping. They don't want to work with him. Put him in charge of just the medical response team or something." And he did. I think he kind of, the sergeant held a grudge, and he kind of let everybody down to the point where guys were coming up to me saying, "Everyday when we get in here, when he's working, if you're just going to the pit, we don't know what we're doing, we have no roll calls, we have no direction. We're sitting here an hour, two hours into the day and they're calling us from ground zero, 'Where's your guys? Where's your teams?' Just, he would show up an hour and a half late. So it would be me and the other sergeant who he kind of worked opposite. So again I said, "Well, if I'm not there…" These guys are calling me saying, "You gotta help us." So, you're kind of split, where are your loyalties? You know, did I think that this was going to go that long and be an 8 month process? No. But, you know, that's how that happened.

R: I'm wondering if you can talk more about the ending of your marriage in it's connection to September 11th. Do you think that there is a direct connection?

S: Sure. Definitely, I think a combination of the time and maybe looking at things differently. After seeing, going to funerals, and seeing other things, and saying, "Is this where my life is?" Just taking a different look at it. And then what else happened is that well after this, after, right away January or February I felt, I got hit with the beginnings of post-traumatic stress. At home I became very withdrawn, where, being at home would just depress me to no end. Even being with the kids. I was just sitting around saying, "This sucks. I have nothing to do. I don't want to watch tv. I don't want to do anything." I even went to a couple of sessions to a therapist for marriage counseling and I told him there got to be a point during those months where I dreaded the drive home, as opposed

to coming in. You should be finished work you should be happy going home. You know, most people are kind of disappointed when they're driving in to work. With me, when I was going over the GW the other way I was thinking, "This is horrible," and "I don't want to..." you know. And when I was home I would fall into a chair and just put the t.v. on. And no matter what she tried to do, "No, I don't want to. I don't want to." It got to a point where I would say, I think in May I went to another doctor and I did six months of Zoloft. My uncle works for Pfizer and he had called me up and said that after talking with my mother which is his sister, he said, "Pete, there's a chance you have this post-traumatic stress." It's fortunate that he could explain it, you know, you work for the police department and you take EDPs (Emotionally Disturbed Persons) or people you think are on medication to hospitals and you're like, you always said when you got there, "What is he doing? He didn't take his drugs." So you think, "Well, if I start, will I eventually be the guy in that room barricaded?" But he explained to me it's just like taking antibiotics for 8 weeks. He said sometimes you just, the neurons are not firing right and you just need to get back on track. He said you've been depressed for a period of time. And I said, allright. It's not until you're down that road and everything seems like crap, I was like, "Whatever, I'll try anything." It would be a beautiful, bright, sunny day and you're like, "This sucks." So I did the 6 months of Zoloft and actually I talked to one of the guys at the truck, because I believe he's in the same boat as I am. He's very angry, very depressed. And I told him, "Reach out to doctors, it's the best thing I did in the world." Unfortunately, I would have liked to have done it earlier, and maybe saved my marriage. But, I saved myself, and I gained a relationship with my kids. They're young, only 9 and 8. But if it wasn't, I was thinking that today, that if we did not go down that divorce path, I may have just went complete depression route.

R: Why do you say that?

S: Because I don't think I would have looked for help. I would have just sat around and said, "Well this is what life is supposed to be." But she said, "Listen, either go for help or get out." And I was like, "I don't want to get out so I'll try this." But it kind of forced me to go do something. Although it didn't put it back together, but I look at it as a blessing. At least now I've gone through all that, gone through the six month, which was, like I said, absolutely fantastic.

R: What was fantastic?

S: Taking the Zoloft. I mean now it's, I look on it with a whole different outlook. And I could see, every now and again I go back to the truck and I can see still some of the anger and some of these guys have some, they've got issues. It's very difficult to deal with it within the department. It was so much easier when I knew I was leaving. Because I was, "So what, they find out I'm on Zoloft and pull my guns the last month? I don't care. It doesn't matter." And I guess it's like they say in AA, until you hit rock bottom, you say, I don't need help. And it comes from a culture, a police culture, of you're the one that's doing the helping. Now to actually have to reach out to someone…I don't think it's really bad. But I think there are definitely issues that could be resolved earlier. We at least talk about it a lot. You go in to a precinct where the guy who may have been down

there doing whatever and then he goes back to his locker and then that's it he goes home. Emergency, we always go back to the kitchen table, there's always coffee going as you're getting changed, everyone kind of gets changed together. And it goes back and forth. So no matter what you have some kind of a release for that day. But the poor cop, he goes into an empty aisle, changes, and off he goes.

R: Can you talk a little more about what you were experiencing when you said you had post-traumatic stress? You said you went home and weren't happy to go home, and then sat around watching t.v. But what else was going on with you?

S: I would say, looking back on it now, I used to love to, I still, I do love, I love to cook. I would go home and I didn't even have the desire to cook. It was just, I wasn't happy being in that environment. All I wanted to do was either sleep or just watch t.v. Nothing that they tried to do made me happy. It was a feeling of, a constant cloud over you. And it was really horrible. It was, I, and again, that whole culture that you can do it on your own, go get a book from the library, I started running again and I did some other things, but it wasn't there. I know how to deal with, you have your ups and down days. But this was like a constant down day. It was like you get up and it's like, "Another sunny day." You know, "Wait a minute, you should be, there should be more than that." It was just, I knew there was something going on. Was it the problems with my marriage? Or, was it the 9/11 things? Was it loss of friends? You try to piece it together. Was I afraid of retiring? Because that was right around the corner. So, I was thrown all these things together and it just lumped on top of me.

R: It does sound like it was a combination of everything. But I wonder if there was anything directly from September 11th that came back to you during those times? Anything going through your mind about what went on down there, or how you responded, or the loss?

S: I don't know. I don't know if it was one, definitely not, nothing's come through like where I would just sit there and say, "That was really…" It was just a total compilation of it all. Or it could be just a series of things building. Definitely not one where I could say "It's the loss of this guy" or "this event."

R: Were you ever overcome with emotion?

S: No. More overcome with like a complete blasé. Almost like dead, like flatline emotion. Almost completely numb. And that just stayed with you. You just couldn't shake that.

R: Did you feel like that at work too?

S: No, at work it was different. You get down to work and it was, "Alright…" You start the day, answer roll call, get this going, get that going. At work I actually felt alive. And you go home and there it was again. I don't know if that was the marriage ending, or the Trade Center, definitely you push it all together.

R: What about your relationships with other people? Did you notice any change there?

S: Not really. I couldn't say that there was any either distancing or anything like that, no.

R: What about with people at work? It sounded like you guys really bonded in a certain way.

S: Right. Definitely at work there was some tightening of friendships. Again, because some of the things that we needed to do…I had one altercation with the one sergeant. I just told him he should do his job. He was the one who wasn't doing anything. Then he tried to sabotage me through something else. (details, not transcribed)…But yeah, tempers flared a little bit. But nothing real insane, and nothing long-lasting.

R: Did you feel unusually short tempered?

S: No, not at all. Not at all. Actually more so, getting more tolerance, because we all had a common enemy, the guys in the red coats (fire department). But that was, that was the other thing, as bad as it was, maybe it was a good thing, because it gave everybody a focal point. As much as you had a problem with someone here, someone else would come in and say "You know what they did today?" And it was like, "Boom."

R: You channeled all that anger to the fire department.

S: It would go right there.

R: Well, I'm also wondering about any change that might have taken place in how you think of yourself as a person. You mentioned, talking about your wife, that you felt the two of you looked at things very differently. I don't know if you realized for the first time that you had been for a long time, or, if after September 11, things were different. Can you comment on any…

S: I think definitely we kind of realized that we do look at things different. And I know now that I look at a whole bunch of things differently now.

R: You mean since September the 11th?

S: Yeah, since the 11th. It wasn't right after the 11th. It wasn't until, I would say, the 11th of 2002. Actually, I would say, even more, probably around this December, where it really, where I kind of completely got out of that deep funk that I was in and actually took a whole different look at the way the world is. And, it is what it is. You know, each day, all those clichés, but they mean something. You know, live each day…it means a lot. And, if you love somebody you show it to them. That is something that is part of my upbringing, we weren't a very demonstrative family in that regard. Again, back to the marriage, that was something that my wife needed, for her, in a relationship. And I didn't

give it to her. It's not until the relationship's over, now I realize, well, that works. It was basically, I wanted to get paid first, I didn't want to do the work. Instead of going to work for two weeks and then getting the reward, in whatever way she would give to me, I flipped it over, I said, no, I want the reward first and then I'll do the work. I won't say I love you until you do a, b, and c for me. That doesn't work. If you want love you've gotta show it. It took me, I think the 11th was a trigger event of it, and then that pushed everything else up. Like anything else, you take the good out of the tragedy and work with it. That is definitely the reason why I would sit here to do this, to help somebody else, where they can find that silver lining in the clouds. Like with the suicides, if you can stop one, if you can change even one, I think that's wonderful. But, yeah, I definitely have a whole different way of looking at things now. (pause) And it's nice. It's real nice.

R: I wonder if you could say more about that. You say you look at things differently and it's nice. But, can you give any more details about what, I guess what I'm trying to get at too is that you've been through something really terrible which is not only September 11th but also the ending of your marriage, and yet you have an attitude that is focused on the positive. You see that you have had a positive change…

S: Well, a couple of things, one is that I started going back to church. You have to kind of let somebody else, or God, or whatever, into your life to say, "Have faith in something other than yourself." Because if it's just you, I look at it like, if it's only me doing all this, and I have these problems, if I keep going am I going to keep having all these problems? Or if you say, you know what, have faith that tomorrow is going to be good. And just say, sometimes things are going to happen and they're not always going to be great. But if you have faith that it'll work out, and basically you're a decent person, you can get through it. Yeah, relationships end. If it wasn't for having someone on 9/11, I could have been in that first tower. If all you do is look at the negatives all you'll see is the negatives. If all you do is look back at the problems, and all the things you did wrong, that's all you'll see. That is something I learned, I don't want to do that. And having gone through that bout with depression, it's a dark hole that you can spiral in, and you can be in there for a long time. It's not a nice place. I look back on it now, and I am so happy to have gone, and especially to have taken a six month little blue pill. I talked to one guy at work and said, reach out. What you think is just nothing but anger and resentment could be actually something physically wrong that can go away, and you can see how you can solve, or handle your other problems. You come out of it battle scarred, but you come out of it. Sometimes I say to myself, "You went through 9/11, you went through the Anthrax thing, you went through a bout of depression, and you're going through a divorce, but all in all, you're still healthy, you got two great kids and you're 43 years old and you've got the whole world ahead of you." You take your hits but you keep moving on. I think all in all that's….even down in ground zero there was 4 guys from Emergency that were all, I think right at the same time from September 11th to whenever it ended, their marriages broke up. And again, could it be that? Could it be…?

R: Yeah, that is something I'm looking at, how people change after a major event like this.

S: It would be interesting to know, for those that do go through a divorce or whatever, are they the same type of personality that you know, they would think they could do it themselves first, "I can fix this problem." As opposed to someone who immediately said, let's get another opinion. Again, that is something that, if a pipe was leaking, I'd go fix it first. Instead of, now I look at it and say, let somebody else do it. And that is something else, that motto that we guys in Emergency say, "When a citizen needs help he calls a cop, when a cop needs help he calls ESU." So now, what do we do? We don't call anybody. And we had, a couple of years ago, 5 years ago now, there was a mechanic that came in to fix the big truck, the big rescue truck. I was working, 3 other guys, he was fixing the back of it. The truck rolled and crushed him and killed him. We ended up, we jacked the truck up and tried to revive him. But no good. They brought the trauma unit in. And they were talking about, they had just started a new debriefing thing for guys who see tragic things. Not that they were there to do that with us. They said they go to, like if somebody gets run over by a train we go to talk to the first cop that was on the scene and make sure he's alright. And we asked him, what do you do with the guys with the bags picking up the body parts? What do you talk to them about? They said, "Oh, we don't go, you guys are Emergency guys, we don't talk to you." And that's right. Nobody does. But, we do. And that is the good tradition of Emergency. At least we talk about it, we all go back and sit and, it may be just the gallows humor, but it's still out there.

R: Can you talk about the gallows humor? What role did that play for you?

S: Oh, yeah, absolutely. It was something that was constant. It was always there. No matter what we were doing. Even if they were going in, that story I told you before about those guys going in to the globe, going down in there. I grabbed one of the guys and said "I'll see you soon, honey." Just, you know, just wacky things you know. But we would start the day, we wouldn't see each other for 6 hours and when we would come in for the day we would hug each other. And then, gallows humor, absolutely. There was always something. Even if it was just like, we'd pick one guy, only because he could take it, luckily, because I think if he ever got mad he would kill us all, and he would be the brunt of our jokes for the day. And I think it was a very positive thing that we all did. Nobody was immune, and it was nothing nasty. There were two female canine handlers with us, and they got teased along with everybody else. But I believe it was healthy because when we were done everybody was happy with the direction they'd had and what they were able to do. I was looking at the paper today, and it's been a year since Daniel Pearl was killed. And I was like, "Wow, that was right in the midst of 9/11. Look at how long that's been now." We're coming up on…that was another thing, the memorial day [when the site was shut down], that was another odd day. It was just, you talk about weird feelings. It was just sort of like, games over, and you walk off the field. You didn't feel like you completed it. I guess because, like we talked about earlier, we didn't take out the large number of bodies of people. It was almost like, as graphic as it would have been if we had West Street littered with people and bodies, body bags, you would have had a visual thing of saying, "You know what, we got…" and that's, it was like, they all just vanished. But there was a lot of positive things that happened during that time too.

The Gramercy Park community really took care of us. They would cook, and the clothes that people sent, where all we had to do was just show up. If you were there physically, you had fresh clothes, someone was feeding you. And, you had a place to sleep, and all you had to do was go to work. You just had to go down there and do it. And it was nice. It was really nice to see that people actually…and that was such a benefit, we would drive down West Street and people would just cheer. And it was nice. It was definitely uplifting. The first time they did it we were shocked. But, that was pretty cool. That really boosts your ego, which sometimes you really needed.

R: Is there anything else that stands out to you, you know, positive, negative, surprising, weird, anything that you haven't talked about or touched on yet?

S: Oh, we could probably be here all night. I guess its one of those things you sit there and go, oh this thing, oh this thing. There are so many things that just keep popping up. You know, there was tremendous support from other police agencies. And you kind of wonder, do they have the resources and the counseling available to them? Some of these small departments came in and helped out. They were very helpful, they were right in the pit. And then all of a sudden they were told, "Alright, you're done." And some of the way it was done, too, typical city and police department mentality, they would come in one day and say you're not allowed in anymore. Sometimes it leaves a little bit to be desired. But then there were some heroes. (Person's name) was great with the families. That was the other part. We didn't even get into that. Early on, I probably avoided it for the first five or six days. The families would go, they went down in the auditorium of Police Heaqdquarters right off, and they were waiting for information and everything else. And every night guys would swing by there and talk with, you know, (wife of ESU officer killed), who was down there, her husband was killed, from #1 truck. And I purposely avoided it. I didn't want to go down, digging all day, and then go and see all my friends' wives and family and everything else. But it got to, I guess it was the 5th day, maybe earlier, maybe the 3rd day, 4th day, and I went down there and one of the things that struck me was, she said, "I need you here. This is going to sound weird. But I need to smell you. That's how Brian smelled when he came home." That's…that's…that was tough. You know, then we kind of took care of her kids. They would come in to the truck and run around…But, that was weird. "Need to smell you." When you think that you've gone through stuff. Again, you put things in perspective. Some people have gone through stuff. And that's another story, (name)'s father, who lost two sons, one a fireman, one a policeman. His only two sons. And he was a rock. He was down there every day. And he's a retired fire captain. And we had nothing but the best relationship with him. He's a great, great man. And you feel for him. You just see him sitting there, every day. How do you…I look at my kids and I couldn't even think…they grow up and they have families of their own and next thing you know they're gone. In the same day. Again, it puts things in perspective. As bad as you think you have a problem, sometimes you need to stop and think, maybe its not that big.

R: Have you been able to actually do that? Because I know people talk about that, but sometimes it's more like a thought they have, but they don't do it really.

S: Yeah, I definitely do. Sometimes it takes a little work. It's one of those things. Until you come to grips with where you are and what you did, you have to take responsibility for your actions or non-actions. I know over the last couple of years I've probably completely ignored my wife and I took her for granted. So I had to go revisit that. Because it would be so much easier to just say, "You know what, you left me because of 9/11 depression. You're a bitch. You screwed me. Get out of here." But, what does that get me? It gets me a lot of anger, a lot more pain. Then every time I call to talk to the kids it's just horrible. I said, "I have to have contributed something here." So you go look at it. You revisit it. And you know what, "I did." You kind of have to get through that hurt. Then once that kind of heals, you say, "Alright, let's look at, put it in perspective." You see someone, what these people do, like (ESU officer killed)'s wife, really having a tough time. I saw her recently, a couple of months ago. She's got two young kids. You know, it's tough. Real tough.

R: How is it for you, working downtown now?

S: No problem. You know what, when I do think about it, I think about it in a whole different context. I don't think about the horror aspect of it. I think about the bonding thing. Being with a team of people to go down there. The vision I have, and I kid him about it, because me and Dave went to Chicago and did a presentation on 9/11 for about 1,000 SWAT people, and when we were out there I said, "I still have a vision of you, standing there, everything's burning, and you're in shorts." I said, "How weird is this? He's standing there in a gun belt, a hard hat, a t-shirt, and shorts." And I'm looking at him, saying, "Dave, this doesn't look good here." (laughs) You know, things pop up. We could be here for almost days, of good things, and bad The funerals. You know, early on we were able to go to some of the receptions after, and spoke to the families. I think that was very helpful. And staying in touch with them. I know that they were very grateful for that, that we would go there. The Bomb Squad, they lost, early on, they lost one of their members. In the early goings all they would do is call and ask, "What about this? We're hearing this? What about this area?" And I knew, because where Claude Richards, he was from the Bomb Squad, Mike Curtain, John Delaro, they were all together in the Customs House. We had to pinpoint where they were. And I went in there and I took digital pictures. That place was just, it was leveled. If they were in there…because they were getting information that there was a big void, and they're thinking that this guy could be in there. So before we went back down to ground zero one day we drove to Bomb Squad and I had it on the digital camera, and I put it up on their computer and I said, "Guys, we're all cops here. Most of you know me from Emergency. I'm gonna spell it out. I'm gonna let you draw your own conclusions, but this is where..." and it turns out that's where he was, I said, "This is where he was last seen. So any talk you hear about voids or anything else, I'm going to show you right here." A couple of guys just walked out of the room. You know, I'm not here to, I don't want to be the grim reaper, I said, but this is, you know, and they were very appreciative. Because they said they were getting all this information. I said, "I know, that's why I'm here. You're getting told Emergency wouldn't go into certain voids…" They said, "no, no, no…" I said, "I'm hearing that. But I'm here because this is very meaningful. I don't want you guys thinking that, as days go by and you guys are hearing this

information, you know, we're on top of it." (pause) But, I think back to some of the visuals of it, standing on Thames, or one of those side streets, and this was about one in the afternoon and it was like the blizzard day. That's how it was with stuff coming down. And we were just looking around, utter amazement. We were just, completely, standing in eight to ten inches of concrete dust. That's the other, things that just, the smells, that wet concrete. I was going by a construction site the other day and was like, "Wow, that's it." And that is something you just live with. That is something that will be there, and brings back that memory in a heartbeat. The tents, with the people in there. They had the big white tent, the red cross, with the volunteers and people used to go down there and eat. All the trades, the fire department, us, the precincts, and that would give you a place to just sort of kick back for an hour. You know, come in dirty, grimy. You'd go and they'd feed you, and volunteers would come by, and they were very good, they were trained counselors. They would come by if you wanted to talk. But they would only stay, they would sit down pull up a chair, but they would only stay maybe five minutes. And everything, the conversation would be light, and then, boom, off they'd go. They'd clear your table and then walk away.

R: What was that like?

S: I thought it was good because you could actually, some guys, as soon as they'd come up and they'd bury their head in the dinner bowl and they would just say "Alright." There was no, early on, when we were still in Stuyvesant, in the highschool they had a lot of clergy. And guys would come in off the pile and sit in the auditorium, those row seats, and at times two clergymen would sit right next to them. And start going at it. And they were, "Go away. If I want to talk to you I'll talk to you." That's why it was nice with this. They kept it nice, and just very light. It was nice to be able to go there, after you've spent a few hours on the pile. Have something to eat, kind of relax, and then get back out there. Fortunately, during this, there were a lot of good things that happened in the city. People helped out. And I believe that if that didn't happen, it would have been really tough going.

R: If you weren't supported by the people in the city?

S: Exactly.

R: I wonder if you could comment about, since you've been in Emergency Services, and a ranking officer, for so many years, if, I'm sure you've seen all kinds of things, and I wonder if you could comment on any difference between what it was like to deal with September 11th compared to some other really horrible things you've had to deal with in the past?

S: I think, well September 11th, first, you had a lot more public support. Whereas you may have had something in the past but it would just be, you would just deal with it. We talked about Freddy's fire, six or eight people died. But it was just that, in there. And you put the crime scene tape around. And nobody on the outside of the tape was saying, "Do you need water? Do you need anything? Can we help?" Whereas this time they

did. This time they were like, “Can we get you anything? We want to help. What can we do?” Which was, it’s definitely a completely different feeling, after doing this for so many years. Where, its like, you don’t want to say “us and them.” But it kind of works out that way, as much as you try not to. Because you do, you’d like to have the public support behind you. Sometimes it’s just not there. After doing this for so long, you don’t expect it. You just say “I have to go in and do this job anyway. I’m gonna do it. And if you like it, great, if not, that’s great too.” But it’s nice when you walk out, with 9/11, where it was like, “What can we get you?” You know, “come over here and get some water. We’ll do this, we’ll do this.” That was, in that regard, that was a big deal. (pause)

R: What about, I was wondering if you have any thoughts about this being a terrorist attack. You mentioned that when you were on your way, when you saw that second plane hit, you knew it was a terrorist attack and you knew that’s what you were going into. So I wonder if you have any feelings or thoughts or ideas about that, as opposed to other jobs you’ve been on. Did it make a difference to you?

S: You know what, it, not really. I take it as, although it was a terrorist attack against the whole country, we’ve been on jobs before where numerous people were shot, and killed, you know, the level of violence was just bigger. But it was, and again because we’re so cross-trained in not only doing rescue work, but we could do a rescue job in the morning and knock your door down and shoot you in the afternoon. So, it was like, alright, we’re gonna go do rescue, but…And that’s one of the things that saved a few people that day. And, again, Dave did it, they were getting ready to go inside with rescue stuff, and word came down that all this was terrorist related. So they were like, “Alright, stop, put on heavy vest, get heavy weapons, because you’re going in because there may be terrorists there.” And, because they had stopped, they didn’t get into that South Tower, which collapsed. So, it’s, yeah, the thoughts of it, like I said before, when we were there doing the searches, when the F-15s or the F-16s were around there, you had thought, “Well, we could get hit again.” But, you know what, we did searches, in big buildings, for guys with guns, it was always there so, you know, people have shot at us, so, you know, it could happen, but we’re, I guess because of the level of training that you have, it’s like having the ultimate door gunner up there with that plane flying around. You talk about a sense of security, these guys are pretty good up there.

R: So you weren’t worried about another plane coming in.

S: No. No. But it was, the thought of saying, “Here I am in New York City and this Air Force guy is going to light up some plane with rockets.” I’m like, “Unbelievable.” We had more concerns, we thought buildings on Liberty that were burning out of control were going to collapse. And we were more concerned with that. All the stuff we were standing on was going to give way. (pause). That was a unique year. Especially with Rudy running around, he got, we had to do the coverage for Guliani. He ended up getting a team of us following his car all the time. That was the other thing that eventually got put into the mix. Ground zero, to regular patrol, the HAMMAR teams, and Guiliani’s CAT car, Counter-Assault Team. You know, it was, again, you look back at it now and it went by as a blur. Although it was 15-hour days, it was just, some days when you were

following his car around or sitting outside some place like, "Is this ever going to end?" You look back at it now, you're like, "Wow. It flew by."

R: I'm thinking too as I hear you talk about it, there's a mixed feeling that I get, which is partly, especially when I think about the HAMMAR team and having to go in and deal with the Anthrax and all those scares, that must have been a little frightening. Well, when I think about it it scares me.

S: Well, again, when it started, because of the training that we had, it wasn't new to us. And knowing what Anthrax is, and knowing how to handle Anthrax, and knowing that with a mask you're fine. And it's not….On that first weekend, we got called, and we were putting together the plan and we got called to a precinct, up on a rooftop, behind the elevator duct, it was a small baggy of white powder. And I'm like, "Any other day you'd say a junkie's been up here. And he got scared." But now we had the block shut down… I said, "We don't have to get carried away." But, part of that was, again having people who are well trained, and I told the guys I said, "You know what this is? This is a great big public relations job now." And we got called to one woman, she opened up her suitcase and there was white powder in it. I said, "When was the last time you used your suitcase?" "It's been months." What do you put in it to keep the moths out? "Oh, I didn't think of that." It was mothballs. We actually, talk about funny things, we got called into a donut shop, for powder. I said, "It's a donut shop. You're going to have powder." They said, "No, that's not the right kind of powder." I said, "It's powder. It's a donut shop." And that's kind of it, we called in to this one woman, she got powder on her, I said, "I don't want to break your bubble, but what makes you a target for international terrorism?" And you know, I told the guys, just do it. Just go there, and if you have to, scrub bleach on it and tell them everything's fine and they can go back and do their business, and you did your job.

R: It doesn't sound like you were very terrorized by all this.

S: No. Again, it's, similar to the same thing when the buildings were down, this was like I told those guys, "This is what the training's all about. There ain't no bigger job than this. You gotta have your confidence in your equipment and your training and your leadership, and we're gonna all get through this." And we did. To the point where there were no serious injuries, and not one death in that entire thing. And that's something, we give credit to people within Emergency, I won't give it to the department (laughs). Thankfully they allowed us some leeway to do the training that we needed to do. But, really, it was the initiative of the people (in here?) to get this training into Emergency and to be able to do this. When the entire fire department chain of command got wiped out, and they didn't have anybody to run that for two days, and we did it, 250 Emergency cops were handling that. And it was an amazing feat. I could give the bosses a lot of credit, and the cops were, they were great. Yeah, and like I said, hopefully this, whoever needs to get this out, this helps people in a way for the next event.

R: It sounds like you had a lot of confidence in the training you had, and you weren't crippled by some sort of uncertainty…

S: Yeah. There's a great picture, again of Dave, in the foreground there is a civilian, and the first building had just come down and he's looking at it, the picture is of this gentleman and he's, you can just see he's in complete shock. He's just looking out. You look in the background, and you see, again, the shorts, on the radio, and you just see him, you can barely make him out. And that's basically the difference. The first guy is like most of the precinct cops, kind of stunned, they're like "Where do we go?" The Emergency cop was already doing it. Not because he's smarter. He's more experienced and has more training. And he knows the equipment that he's going to be pulling in here to do it. That's the difference.

R: It makes a big difference.

S: You know what you're doing. And you had to. You really did. Some of the things that we did, I look back …But it was, like I said, there were definitely some positives out of it. A lot more than the negative. You know, the negative are the people that died, the loss. But, you know, you came out of there a lot stronger. (end of tape, end of interview)

(Interview #2)

R: The first issue I wanted to get into is that it seemed to me that your description of September 11th, that day, is very focused on what happened, what you did every step of the way. I got the sense that the emotional impact of what was happening was not in the forefront of your mind. There was so much going on. It is interesting to me that people didn't become immediately overwhelmed with the emotional impact of what was happening. I was wondering if you can speak about your experience of what the immediate emotional impact was for you, if any.

S: I think, especially considering the unit that I work with, Emergency Services, we have so many years of experience, that emotions, you push them, or maybe they don't even come up. It's kind of weird. I remember the first time I saw a murder scene. That was an emotional thing. That stuck with me more. There was somebody who was murdered. You look at that and, whereas for all the experienced cops, it was a common thing for them, but for me…On September 11th, the emotional part was knowing that your friends were in there. Whether it was a terrorist act or a more common criminal act, that was the emotional part you had to deal with. In Emergency Services, we handle so many large-scale things, emotionally we were kind of prepared for that. One of the guys I worked with summed it up, he said, "You can't be prepared for the big jobs unless you do all the little jobs first."

R: What does that mean?

S: Especially for Emergency Services, if you start off with being able to take, for example, someone out of a car from an accident, as it builds up, you gain knowledge and experience, and when you get to a bigger job you can do it. There were people who were

new in ESU that day, but they were also thrust in with people who had a lot of experience.

R: Can you talk more about the impact of your first murder case?

S: That was something that was emotional in different ways. Now you're on the other side of the tape. Growing up, you see that stuff on t.v., you see the crime scene tape and you're a civilian looking in. And now, at 22 or 23 years old, I'm on the inside of the tape, there's the body, you're right there. Was I panicked? No. But you have a different view that other people don't have. But for the Trade Center, even driving down there our mind set was that we needed to work, and thoughts were on the specifics of what we needed to do. That is definitely from experience and training.

R: So you learned to put the emotional impact aside and focus on what needed to be done?

S: Absolutely. Hopefully not just suppressing it down and having it explode at some other time. And actually we talked about it afterwards. Especially for the amount of people that were killed doing their jobs, our jobs, that we do, and it could have been us. And the guys said, "It's not your time." Out of all the things that we do, up on top of the bridges, in the water, in wild shootouts, it just wasn't our time. In ESU we also debrief big incidents in a casual atmosphere, just amongst our peers, nobody from the outside. We let it out, over the course of several days, not just once. And you eventually vent it all out. We've had that system in place a long time.

R: Let me ask you, when you first heard the tower had collapsed, you knew, or thought you knew, there would be a lot of bodies and a lot of people trapped. What was that like?

S: That also goes back to working previous occasions. We had an incident in Harlem, called Freddy's Fire, the guy ends up shooting a couple of people and four or five people get asphyxiated down in the bottom. We had to go down there later on and they were all laying on top of each other. You go back to these things, to when you saw numerous people hurt or killed. And we looked at critiques of Oklahoma, and large earthquakes, super mass casualties, a lot of damaged mangled bodies. This is something we've been trained to do. So we took it as, here's the assignment.

R: But, knowing you're getting ready to deal with mass casualties, do you prepare for that in some way?

S: In this case, it was still an ongoing threat. We didn't know what would happen next. So when we did get there, one guy was running around helter-skelter. And I had to grab the guys and strictly control them. Sometimes we let guys do what they feel they need to do, but this time I was like, "You follow my directions. This is no bullshit." We were basically still under attack. We were going in there, and we don't know (what other threat) is still on the ground. Not only are we going in in rescue mode, we're going in with guns. We're still the ones that are going to be called to respond if something else

happens. We thought we could be dealing with 10,000 bodies. We thought there might be body bags all the way up West Street. But we just focused on getting the job done.

R: And what about concern for your own safety?

S: At one point I turned to a friend, it was late that night, and I said, "I don't know if we're getting out of here." We were digging, the last two Port Authority cops had been dug out, it was late, all the buildings around us were burning, we were choking on the smoke, fires were coming up from under your feet, things were shifting. You kind of do your job, and then afterwards you think about it. You go up saying, "I have confidence in myself. I have confidence in the people I work with. I have confidence in the equipment." Knowing that, you can go in and do your job. I can see how, for the poor patrol cop, he doesn't have this training, he's basically on his own, if he's thrust into that his level of emotion is going to be a lot different from us. We're going in as a team knowing our capabilities. We heard rumors about other incoming planes and all that, but we had to be in there. And that goes back to, there was a big shooting once where four emergency service cops were shot. There was an initial shooting, then a prolonged search, and then the guys went in to where the guy was hiding and he pops up again and there was a shoot-out. So as that's going on we're running around the corner to get to it, and a cop yells at us, "Don't go down there, they're shooting." And I'm like, "Well, that's what we do." We're there in a whole different role. And it's the same with the Trade Center, we're there in a different role. Yeah, the magnitude, we'd never dealt with anything like this before.

R: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that because it really was huge and no one knew what would happen next, there were rumors of chemical attack, no one knew what they were breathing in…It seems this would have had a different impact even for emergency services.

S: But, you know, we didn't really sit and think about the impact for another week. It was only then that we sat down and said, "All these friends, they're all dead." A lot of us cried, we stayed in quarters. But then, it went to, now we need to find them and recover their bodies. It was a switch. It went from an intense search, trying to find them, to figure out where someone could survive to…And there were some arguments where some guys thought we were giving up. But, we weren't giving up. We had done intense searches and they weren't there. There was nobody there. And that was something that, even one guy pointed out, there was no smell. If you've got the numbers of bodies we're talking about, it should smell.

R: Two things I wanted to get to. One was when you said to your friend you weren't sure you'd make it home that night, what was that like?

S: The concern was being on that pile. Being in that smoke environment, you couldn't see anything, you couldn't breathe. The flames were still coming up, things were still shifting. It was, "What else is going to happen?" And other buildings were burning, they could come down too. If they did, no one on that pile would have survived. It would

have come right across us. They just burned out of control, they were roaring. You're looking over your shoulder…And the fire department at that point had no command structure. Every one of them was gone. I remember looking at this one firefighter, and his uniform indicated he was probationary, and his eyes looked like a deer in the headlights. It's the same as the patrol cops being thrust in there. That's why it was good working with the emergency services cops.

R: So when you had that moment of awareness, looking around at the continuing danger, you felt your life was at risk?

S: Yeah, but you put it aside. And you were comforted knowing the competence of the people you work with. Everyone's on the same page. And then after the shift, everyone goes back to quarters and just collapses. Then you're up in the morning, and *boom*, get your stuff and go. Everybody was in that mind set.

R: You were in such a position of responsibility. What was it like to be responsible for the safety of the people you supervised?

S: Again it goes back to training. As a sergeant in emergency, you get put in a position where you make the big decisions about how to handle situations. It's your call. Just after the Trade Center there was a situation in Harlem where there was a lover's spat, a guy comes in a store and shoots and kills one guy at the front door, he goes in and grabs his ex-girlfriend and he holds her hostage. He ends up beating her to death. At the time we didn't know, we thought he had everyone in the basement. So, it looked good to go in and clear the store so we'd have access to the basement. I gave it a good look, and I thought we had a great plan. But he was hiding in an office space. So we go in and he pops up and the guy in front of me shoots and kills him. I turned to the Lieutenant, and maybe this is callous cop humor, I said, "It was a good plan when we started." But, yeah, you're putting your guys in harm's way. There is going to be an element of risk.

R: And with September 11th, what was it like to be in that position day after day after day?

S: For me, I thrive on that. I made the final decisions but I relied on my guys to do their job. We were a close team.

R: You told me that you did experience some depression later. Do you have any sense that September 11 was part of what you were going through?

S: I think so. Being in that complete adrenaline mode, it was intoxicating. For months you were in a high level of work. You were way up here on this big high. And then as it started to come down you went down. That initial feeling, at times it was euphoric. You were downtown in such an intense job. Then you'd get on a truck and drive down West Street and people would just cheer you on and wave to you. People were cheering you and then waiting with hot food and clean clothes. And then you go home and you have to deal with day-to-day issues, the real world. I guess there was a perception of, "Why

aren't you here with the banners?" I'm coming home and it wasn't like that anymore. You were kind of reaching for always being on that level. We always try not to believe too much of our own press. And we did that for a long time. But, this, we all started to believe it, maybe a little too much. Did we do intense work? Yes. Was it dangerous? Yes. But, then we need to get back to the real world.

R: So when you got home after working and you have to deal with childcare issues…

S: In the beginning everyone at home was great. That lasted until about Christmas. Then my depression started to hit. It was probably earlier than the Trade Center that I had some form of depression, just from marital issues. Then when that big rush was over… The city was constantly going, 24/7, that level of energy was always there. Then, being home I was chomping at the bit, I wanted to go to work.

R: Before you described feeling "flat-lined."

S: Yeah, I was just sort of there. At home I just felt no energy. As I would drive toward the city I'd liven up. I was on an emotional roller-coaster. When things started to wind down with the Trade Center, I felt like something was missing. Why is it that when I'm home I feel bad? Now, fortunately, things have switched again. I'm back home, we're not getting divorced. So now when I go home I'm happy.

R: Oh, I didn't know things had changed for you.

S: It just happened. We reconciled just a few weeks ago. I think it was a combination of things. I stopped drinking. I had to take a look at that and see if it was contributing to my problems. And I think it had a depressive effect, the alcohol. So I stopped that. And my wife saw a big change and she was happy about that. Then last week I had a retirement party and my wife came, so that was nice. Then she invited me over for dinner and gave me some gifts, one of which was the divorce papers ripped in half.

R: Well I'm glad for you.

S: Yeah, it was a lot of soul-searching. We had been together a long time, and it made sense to take a good look at what was going on. I think some of the problems were from selfish behavior on my part. Looking back, talking about going home and feeling flat. That was selfishness from going to the city and getting catered to, getting treated really great, I guess I thought that was for me. You start living the fantasy. But, then I started to feel more of a sense of gratitude in being able to be home. In my case, my wife was really always there for me. She didn't give me a hard time when I came home. But, I just wanted more, whatever that was.

R: I can understand that feeling though, that, as horrible as the whole thing was, there was also a sense of exhiliration…

S: It was your moment in the sun. This was the major leagues. We used to always say, when we'd live a big job, we'd say, "See you on the big one." Nobody says that anymore. But, for a while, you just did not want it to end. To be quite honest, if it wasn't for the reality of the death and destruction, it felt great. You were doing what you were trained to do, it was exciting. This is what we like to do. And when it was done it was hard to just wash up and go home. People catered to you. For a while it was good. Even the tough parts, going to funerals, you went there to offer comfort and support to people. That is also what we do. And to be able to do that, it's amazing. So it's tough to do it, but you felt good, because you're still helping.

R: You also mentioned before that you started going back to church. I was wondering if could speak about spiritual aspects of your experience a little bit.

S: OK, on September 11th, nothing. Afterwards, nothing. Not until this year. I was looking at other people trying to figure out what they have that I don't. Why do I have this emptiness? So I took a look at myself, took a look at my selfishness and lack of gratitude for what I really did have. And so I went back to church to actually ask for help. I had to ask somebody else, other than myself, for help.

R: OK, that is all I have. Is there anything else that you want to discuss?

S: I know my biggest thing is to try to help. That is why I agreed to talk to you. I think it's important to get a message out to cops that they don't have to handle things on their own. In emergency services we have a history of getting together and talking things out. I think there's only ever been one emergency services cop that killed himself. And that is because we have that tradition of talking about it and getting it out. So it's important to me to be able to reach out to the new people coming through, to show them there is support.