

## “9-11-2001”



**“You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience  
in which you really stop to look fear in the face.”**

**-Eleanor Roosevelt**



I worked for, ironically, a videoconferencing company. A week ago today I was getting ready to go to New York and on to Toronto for a business trip.

Monday, September 10<sup>th</sup> I had a meeting with the New York Stock Exchange, Tuesday, the 11<sup>th</sup> Lehman Brothers (on the 39<sup>th</sup> floor of One World trade Center), then Toronto Wednesday and Thursday and back to Boston Friday. It was exactly like many other weeks... I thought.

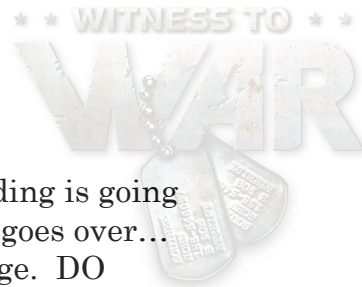
I had spent Monday with one of my sales engineers; Chris Platt and my VP of Sales; David Moss at the NYSE. Dave went back to his home in New Jersey Monday night and would rejoin Chris and me in the morning at the trade center. I had Called Arthur Kass, a consultant to confirm the time and location; 8:30 in the lobby of One World Trade Center. We were on for a very exciting meeting to discuss, ironically, videoconferencing... Chris and I had stayed in mid-town at 49<sup>th</sup> and Lexington at the Marriott. I had contemplated staying at the Mariott in the financial center but decided mid-town was a bit more exciting at night. And Chris and I knew a great sushi place in mid-town we liked.

0730 on 9-11: Chris and I took a cab with our luggage downtown. It was a beautiful sunny day. Dry and cool compared to the oppressive heat and humidity Monday. We arrived at WTC I at 8:00. David and Arthur were to meet us at 8:10 and our meeting was scheduled for 8:30. I remember Chris and I standing, having coffee in the lobby and watching hundreds and hundreds of people stream in to the elevators up to their perspective floors. Just as they had done time and time again. Only today, this was the last time anyone would take an elevator up in the Trade Center. We commented on how many people there were. It was amazing to watch... Like a time-lapsed photo; they'd stack up at the doors then enter time after time...

David and Arthur arrived. We cleared *security* and proceeded to the elevators. Once on the 39<sup>th</sup> floor, we met our hosts from Lehman Brothers and walked to the conference room. Once the pleasantries and introductions had been established we settled down to a business conversation.

Within moments there was a horrible explosion. Then a nanosecond of silence and total stillness. If you have ever seen an explosion (CNN, Fox News, Vietnam, Middle East) you see the fire explosion, but if you look closely, you will see the ring of high-energy escape faster than the fire. I knew the feeling from having been a Combat Engineer in the Marine Corps for four years. This was a huge explosion. Twenty-five years later and I knew exactly what had happened! I could feel the energy percussion literally flow down through the building.

A moment later, the building began to rock violently back and forth. We all raced out of the conference room. I left my belongings behind. People began shouting "earthquake, earthquake..." I was sure the building was going to topple over. Tables, chairs, doors, computers, etc... all started to open and close, fall off tables and shake uncontrollably. I watched many people attempt and try to run to the

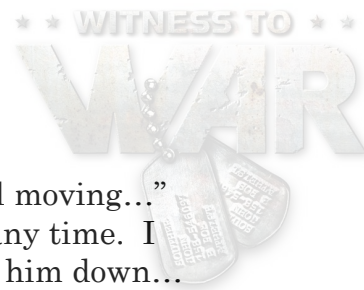


stairs and thought to myself: “Do not panic! Don’t move yet. If the building is going to fall, I can’t possibly run down 39 flights of stairs and get out before it goes over... and if the stairs collapse, we’re all done! Just wait and assess the damage. DO NOT PANIC!” I wanted to be in an open place so I could move. I managed to crawl/walk close to the farthest windows facing the East River and get to my feet again... I knew I was going to die.

I was standing peacefully watching, and fully expected to see the horizon appear as the tower collapsed and fell. I knew that as far as the building was swaying back and forth it had to fall over the next time it rocked back. It had to... I started to make peace with my God... We hear about it, but now I’ve experienced it first hand, total and absolute resolve that I was going to die, and I accepted it without question. There is a moment of total and perfect peace. We all hear about the “white light...” this was nothing more than unconditional acceptance of death and there was nothing I could do. But just then, I heard a woman yell, “there is a mechanical room on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor, it exploded!” Just about then the building stopped swaying and all was very quiet. I was still looking out the window and I started to see massive, copious amounts of reams and reams and reams of paper falling. It looked like a New York ticker-tape parade. It was so beautiful to see the falling white paper drifting so slowly and easily against the bright clear blue NY skyline. It was then I realized I was going to be okay. The joy and euphoria that flowed through me was unexplainable.

At this moment I knew I was safe. It was an explosion 3-4 stories above me and I was okay. I started to the stairs. On my way I thought I’d go back and get my travel bag, briefcase and computer, but didn’t want to carry it down thirty-nine flights of stairs. I’d come back in a little while and get it later...

I opened the door to the stairs and was totally amazed to see hundreds and hundreds of people already there. Calmly and quietly shuffling down. I thought “how did they get there so quickly and why so many of them?” I just joined the procession down... I used to live in Manhattan and grew up around the City; we have all heard the stereotypical New Yorker stories... Loud, obnoxious, hurried, brash, hard, no manners, un-polite, etc... But one thing New York has shown time and time again, and the United States has and will show again and again, when in time of crisis, we ALL pull together as one. There were shouts: “Stay calm! Don’t panic! We’re going to be okay! Walk slowly people. It’s going to be okay.” When we arrived at the landing of the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor (I’m not exactly sure of the number), there was a man sitting in a wheel chair. He was expressionless. There were two comrades standing next to him comforting him. As people walked past, comments were made; “we’ll send the fire department up, help is on its way, we’ll send some one to help you.” In the mean time I’m not sure anybody had any idea of what had happened and the full extent of the damage. But because this man and his comrades were taking a fair amount of space on the landing it was a bottleneck getting around them. From above shouts (sub-panic) were made; “Hurry up, what’s the delay, what’s wrong? Why are we stopping...?” And replies came; “Show some



respect, there is a man in a wheel chair, be patient... its okay, we're still moving..." And that message was sent up to the floors above. No one panicked at any time. I remember thinking: "I'll pick him up and put him on my back and carry him down... Maybe we can get someone in front, one on each side and carry him down..." I'm not twenty-five any longer. He was a big man, and the fire department is trained to evacuate exactly this type of situation, my job was to get out. Keeping in mind, we (I) had no idea what had happened. In my mind, I was thinking "...explosion in a mechanical room on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor... nothing to panic about..." We kept shuffling down and down. One step at a time in what seemed to be forever...

There was the definite smell of burning jet fuel in the stairs. I knew this because I served my last year in the Marine Corps at the Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. I smelled burning jet fuel everyday. I asked to no one in particular on about the 30<sup>th</sup> floor, why we were seeing and smelling so much smoke? "Smoke rises I said, the laws of physics are simple: smoke rises. If this happened above us, why was there so much smoke coming from below and getting worse?" Much worse? Many people had covered their mouth and nose to try and breath easier. My eyes were burning so badly I had a steady stream of tears, as did everyone. But we kept walking slowly down.

About this time I saw two men literally running up the stairs. I thought they were crazy! Both dressed in suits, white shirts and wearing ties. I thought they were men who had forgotten something in their office... As they got a little closer, I literally rubbed elbows and saw the badge of a New York City fire fighter on the left breast pocket on each one of them. It was the Chief of the New York City Fire Department and one of his senior Lieutenants running, to what has been described as the "stairway to Heaven". I thought to myself – "my God! I'm only 9 flights down and these men have gotten to the building, from somewhere else in Manhattan, and climbed 30 flights of stairs!" The look in their eyes was both terror and determination. We brushed elbows and they were gone in a moment. May God bless them, their families and every firefighter, police and emergency worker who intentionally put themselves in harms-way to help others.... The crowd continued to slowly descend. The smoke getting worse. But no panic, no pandemonium... Just shouts from all around... "...to keep calm, do not panic, we'd be okay, keep moving..."

Somewhere, I don't remember where, there was a middle-aged woman. She was obese and walking so slowly it was painful to watch. Slow laboring breaths and constant breaks. She too was a "bottleneck" in the stairs. And instead of rude comments, she was shown courtesy and respect. When the calls came from above (as they had with the man in the wheelchair) they too were met with; "...we have a slow walker... show respect..." and people managed to get past her as well... Just as I'd learned twenty-five years ago in the Corps, TEAMWORK is the only way you'll survive. These people, all complete strangers, we all acted as a team. I'm so proud to have seen this first-hand...



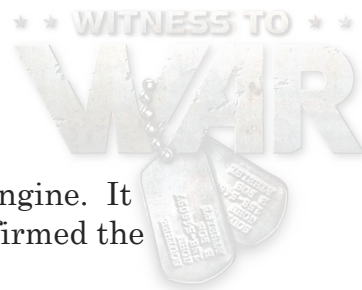
I have no idea what floor it was, and keeping in mind the doors to these stairwells lock from the hallway for security reasons, I was very worried about suffocating to death, but had no options but to continue down. Until by sheer luck a door opened beside me on a landing. Two men in dark pants and white shirts, sleeves rolled up and ties open at the neck, walked into the stairwell. I grabbed the handle and held the door open for a moment. All I could see was a floor without smoke! I stuck my head in and took several deep breaths of cool, clean air. I went in farther. I thought; “why don’t I just stop here. I’ll (no pun intended) wait for the smoke to clear and get out later!” After all, it was just an explosion in a utility room on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor. Why not? My instincts were to either consciously walk back in to a smoke filled stairwell or wait things out on a floor I believed to be perfectly safe. I’d stay with the clean air!. I had to go to catch my flight to Canada later, why not wait, make a few phone calls and get my stuff and leave later? This floor was looking pretty good! But call it what you will; *Divine Intervention?* Luck? Premonition? Chance? Coincidence? I know there was someone looking over my shoulder telling me I had to get out... I could literally feel it pull me out. *My guardian angel I’m sure!*

I held the door in my left hand and stuck my head back into the stairwell and stopped all traffic as I looked down. As I held the open door in my hand, peering over the railing and as far as the eye could see were hands and elbows moving slowly down. I gave it a second and thought; “if I’m not hearing people screaming about a fire I’m going to take my chances and continue down as well.” I knew once the door was shut, there was no way to get back in and if a fire did in fact break out on the stairs below, we were all trapped like rats. *Every instinct in my body told me to stay. I let the door go and continued to descend. That decision saved my life!*

On or about the 9<sup>th</sup> floor I heard a man directly behind me say, to no one in particular, “The World Trade Center has been hit by a commuter plane from Boston to DC!” I looked over my shoulder and told him it was impossible, it’s a perfectly clear day and there are no flight patterns over Manhattan (a lesson we learned when a plane hit the Empire State building in the 50’s). He looked at me with a cell phone glued to his ear and reiterated the statement saying he’d spoken to someone on the outside that knew. I was in disbelief. “Planes CAN’T hit the World Trade Center.”

Floors: 9, 8, 7, 6,... close wasn’t close enough! Close doesn’t count! By now there was more smoke and now water from all the broken pipes above mixed with jet fuel pouring down over us. It was horrible. Smoky and the stairs were extremely slippery. But no one panicked. Not one person. People behaved amazingly well under this kind of pressure. 5, 4, 3, 2.... I can’t breath. Please get us out alive....

As we finally got to the Mezzanine lobby exit door there were security guards ushering people out of the building. “THIS IS GREAT! WE BEAT ONE FLOOR! WE’RE OUT OF THE STAIRS!” I thought as I walked slowly toward the American Express tower. Some ran, most walked calmly but firmly. As I walked I looked to



my right and saw what appeared to be a piece of an airplane wing and engine. It was lying flat and smoking. I'm not sure I believed my eyes. But it confirmed the story of a plane hitting the building.

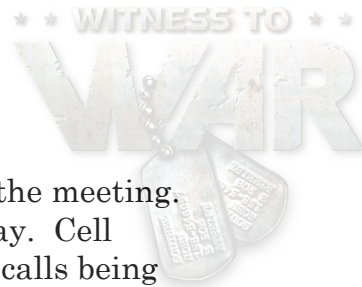
(SIDE NOTE: As I watched the two French photojournalist brother's documentary months later, I distinctly heard "banging" on the roof as they filmed... It struck me to the core of who I am exactly what it was. I had heard these noises 9-11 but had no recall until I heard them again. It was the unmistakable sound of bodies thumping the roof above me... There was no door #3. Only Door #1 and Door #2: burn to death, or jump to death. Friends, fathers, mothers, sons, sisters, aunts... I was there and still can't imagine it!)

Once outside, I rushed away from the building. As I looked over my shoulder I saw a huge horizontal slice in the side of the building. No fire. Smoke but no fire. And I thought maybe it wasn't too bad after all...

I rushed several yards further away looking for my colleagues. It was like looking for a piece of straw in the haystack. A virtual sea of heads. A woman asked me if I had been in WTC-1 and I replied yes. I asked her where she had come from and she said the Merrill Lynch building, and it struck me as odd, why were they evacuating all the surrounding buildings and why were there so many people in the streets. I had absolutely no sense of impending danger other than maybe some falling debris. I continued to scour the sea of heads looking for my colleagues. It was a miracle, but I saw Arthur's head and shouted from 50 yards away.

I knew he heard me because I saw him looking knowing someone had shouted his name. He had no idea where the shout originated though. But he kept looking around. I put a bead on him and started toward him. Shouting his name several more times. Once we met, he asked if I had seen David and Chris. I hadn't. He said David was not going to leave until he found me. And David was close. A moment later I saw David and Chris. David, true to form, had his cell phone and was trying to call me. We were all very glad to see we'd escaped the building in tact.

Now safe and together, we turned to face the carnage in front of us. As we watched, debris started falling off the building and the fire worsened. I remember a woman's voice behind me yell; "look someone has jumped..." And I looked and said it was only debris... A moment later I saw the unmistakable silhouette of a man who had jumped from the top of the building. I keep thinking: "...any second and the parachute goes off. This is a BASE jumper..." A second later, a woman jumped feet first... I could see her skirt blowing up over her and her hands trying to get her to fly. I was sure she had a parachute as well... A moment later, I turned around and looked at no one in particular, and said; "This is not live entertainment folks... I can't stand here and watch people commit suicide. Let's get out of here!" And started to walk away...



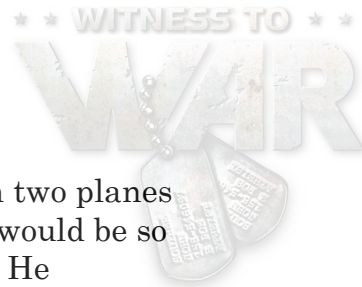
Arthur and David, both of their wives knew they were in the towers for the meeting. Both were desperate to get word to them to let them know they were okay. Cell phones were pretty much useless simply because of the sheer number of calls being made from lower Manhattan. My wife at the time, knew only I was in New York and was flying to Toronto sometime Tuesday. In retrospect, it's better she didn't know exactly where I was. Little did I know until much later, that at 9:16 my wife left me a voice mail message telling me there had been a terrible accident and asking me if I was okay... Little did she know, at that moment I was in a stairway climbing down to life.

David lives in New Jersey and wanted us to head there. Arthur had told me his wife has an office on 34<sup>th</sup> street in mid-town earlier. I know Manhattan and wanted to get to Grand Central Station thinking I could get a train out to Greenwich, CT. where my sister Lynne lives and has a business. From there I'd get a car home to my (x-wife) and son Will. It was a plan in chaos. David and Chris, Arthur and I parted ways thinking we were safe and free.

As Arthur and I walked up town we were amazed at the sheer number of people walking slowly among us. Usually New Yorkers walk at 100 MPH, today it was slow and deliberate. As we walked, we'd pass cars parked on usually busy streets with doors and windows open blaring the news. As we walked we'd listen for a moment and continue. At one point I heard something had "crashed" on a helicopter pad at the Pentagon. All I could think was the world had gone to war... Arthur and I surprisingly did not speak much. We were both in shock. As we walked we continuously tried to call our families to no avail... Cell phones were tied up all day.. Every once-in-awhile I'd get a two-second connection: "...tell them I'm okay and out of the building..." then the phone would go dead. This happened several times trying to call family...

But it backfired. Now they were all calling each other, knowing I was in Manhattan and flying somewhere that evening, but no one knew I was in WTC I. I'd left these cryptic messages I was out and okay... Then they see the news and the towers falling. I was now at the scene of the crime and they were completely in shock at the scenes before them.

Some how as we walked through Greenwich Village we met a man who offered us a ride to 34<sup>th</sup> street. He asked us what we were doing in the WTC and we told him we were meeting with Lehman Bro's to discuss, ironically, videoconferencing. He mentioned a project he'd been involved with between the US and Cuba to do videoconferencing. As bazaar as it sounds, I handed him a business card out of my wallet. We declined the ride simply because we needed to be outside and able to walk the horror off in some way. He asked if he could be of any help, saying his apartment was right around the corner. I told him I'd like to make a phone call and he led us to his apartment. Arthur stayed on the street waiting, but telling me to hurry. As the stranger and I walked up the flight of stairs to his studio, there was some small talk, and then I remember his distinctively saying; "I hope you're not



going to rob me.” I immediately replied; “Yea, I figured out how to crash two planes in the WTC hoping as I walked up town some one in Greenwich Village would be so kind as to let me in to their apartment so I could rob them. That’s me!” He commented how stupid it must have sounded but he was a New Yorker and we walked in to his apartment. I told him I’d lived on 81<sup>st</sup> uptown and grew up around the City...

CNN was on and as he reached the phone over to me I watched for the first time the horror. I tried to call my x-wife, my sister Lynne, my brother DJ, my son Will living with his mother Rhonda, but the strangers’ phone was not working either. He gave me a much-needed glass of water and I left. Arthur and I walked past the Holland tunnel; there were police standing at the now blocked-off entrance making sure no one passed to leave. All we heard was “the island of Manhattan is shut down. No traffic in. No traffic out...” We continued to walk.

Once we were close to mid-town it started to look like New York again. Cars, busses, people walking at 100 MPH... But there was an unmistakable shock in the air for everyone. I remember a “street person” running past us and slamming his hand on the glass at a bus stop. Normally I wouldn’t flinch. Today I jumped at the noise.

Just as it seemed to take forever to get down the stairs, it seemed to take forever to get to 34<sup>th</sup> street. And the closer we got, the longer it took. But we were there finally. As we walked in the building I couldn’t help remember we were now in The Empire State Building territory. And his wife’s store is on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor. I was not crazy about getting in an elevator, but we did.

As the door opened, there was what was one a magnificent view of lower Manhattan. Now all we saw was smoke and one tower. I thought Arthur’s wife Karen was going to faint as she ran out of a back office to greet her husband. The emotions were electrifying. I walked to the large windows to see what we had just come from. There were five or six people in the office. Everyone asked us how we were and had we heard that WTC-2 had fallen. We hadn’t. As I walked closer to the window I said it was still there but hidden by the smoke and some one replied; “It IS the smoke!” I couldn’t believe my eyes.

All I could think of was ALL the people I’d seen standing around on the streets. And I was only there a short time and I was only privy to see one area of one building. I knew I’d seen thousands of people gathering on the streets and wondered in horror how they, if they got out alive...

The phones were working! I called my now x-wife and told her I was okay, alive and in mid-town. I called Lynne and told her. I called my son and only got voice mail, called his mother and got her voice mail, then I tried her mother and she told me Rhonda and Will had just left. She said that they’d be home in five minutes.





When Rhonda answered the phone I thought she was going to pass out. “We’ve been divorced for 12 years and we have had our moments...” She said how happy she was to hear my voice, and that there were times she’d wish... but she was very happy I was alive and well. Rhonda has a sense of humor...

My son Will got on the phone and the second I spoke and he heard my voice we both broke down crying. He said, “I love you dad! You’re guardian angel was watching over you today!” We cried together. I told him how much I love him and I would be home soon (thank God I’d thought to call the corporate travel agency and get a car booked the next day!) But I had to go. Karen was closing her shop. A friend had an apartment at 94<sup>th</sup> and Park they were going to let us use until things settled down. I told Will I’d call him ASAP and we left to get Arthur’s car.

There were five of us; Arthur, his wife Karen and two of her co-workers. We drove up Park Avenue. Basically it was a parking lot. At one cross street Arthur made a left to see if we could get to one of the West Side avenues and possibly get by the traffic. We’d gone no more than 30 feet and we saw a Toyota 4-Runner flying at 60 MPH in reverse at us. And it was certain this guy wasn’t going to stop. There was a Fed-X truck in front and to the right of us. We watched in amazement as this guy drove past us and pulled out on to Park Avenue and disappeared. We saw many people running wildly. We rolled the windows down and asked several people what was going on. No one answered. Finally, one woman said; “I have no idea! I saw others running, I’m running too!” and was gone. If you have never seen panic, real panic, it is an amazing yet killer instinct of nature. When all reason, judgment and common sense are gone, the mind goes primordial and only knows self-survival. We, as a species, will do anything to survive when we are in a state of panic. Anything! We pulled back in to Park Avenue and somehow headed back up town. All the while listening to 1010 WINS news.

At 56<sup>th</sup> street we heard the Metro North commuter line was running from Grand Central Station. The news couldn’t have been better! I said good-bye to all, thanked them for their help and ran 14 blocks to GCS. I had a ruptured disk in my spine and have had surgery, it hurts ALL the time. Adrenaline seems to be a good painkiller as well. I felt nothing... Once inside the terminal it was not panic, but there was a “4-X” intensity to the usual New York rush hour. There was no mistake people had an agenda: get out of Manhattan now!

I saw a 1:10 to New Haven. It was the local, but I knew it stopped in Greenwich. It was 12:55. I’d make it! Once on the platform a conductor told me there were seats up front. I found a near-empty car and sat down to relax for the first time in several hours. I picked a seat as close to a door as I could. If anything more were to happen, I was going to get out of this train and walk to Greenwich! The car started to fill fast. Two women, obviously co-workers sat directly across from me. A man sat down next to me on my left. No one spoke. The man reached in his pocket and pulled out a roll of LifeSavers and asked me if I’d like one. How ironic! I told him he had no idea.... And took one. I kinda started to tell my story (most of the folks in



mid-town had only heard or maybe seen some news, but I was the only one who'd been at Ground Zero...)

As the car was now full there was an announcement we'd be leaving and it was in fact the Metro North to New Haven. A moment later we pulled out. There was total silence until we came out of the tunnel in to the light. We were free! You could feel the relief as we emerged again. People began to speak... everybody wondering what had happened. I said I was on the 39<sup>th</sup> floor and glad to be alive... Just then a man passed out directly behind me. I looked at him and he was out cold! Almost looked dead. Eyes rolled up way, mouth open, breathing heavy... Someone shouted; "anybody have water?" And the woman directly across from me handed her bottle over. Then; "anybody got candy, maybe he's diabetic..." And again, someone handed some candy over. Smelling salts, you name it, women carry the strangest things in their purses... The man regained consciousness. I started to give him my seat and the woman directly across from me grabbed my arm and said; "Honey, you've had enough for one day, you stay seated! I know someone else will gladly give up their seat for this man..." as she pulled me back down to my seat. I obliged. He was given a seat immediately as well.

I got off the train in Greenwich and walked to Lynne's store on Greenwich Avenue. It looked like a ghost town. Like the Apocalypse had taken place. She'd told me somewhere during the train ride she'd closed but would be there when I got there. When I got to the door she bolted across the floor to open the door for me. We hugged for a very long time. My sister and I are very close. We have always been. She'd shut the store and we were heading home to her house. She asked me if I needed anything, I said yes, a Valium... And we left to go to her house.

I made several calls from my cell phone. I called David and Chris to see how they made out. Chris was relieved. Dave was back home in New Jersey; safe and with his wife Mona and two sons, Justin and Kyle. Chris and David had made it to New Jersey, but it was by no means an easy or safe ride.

After departing Arthur and me, they decided to go to the Seaport and catch the water shuttle to Staten Island. Chris explained they saw several hundred people milling around and this wasn't even the line to the boat yet. So they watched the first load take off and Chris said the mob hadn't moved an inch. Realizing it was going to take several hours to get to the boat, they decided to leave. About a half block away they decided to turn around and go back and wait for the boat... No one was going anywhere anyway in a hurry they thought. But after a moment, they decided to try a cab, rent a car, etc... any way to get off the island quickly. A decision that saved their lives. Chris and David walked three to four blocks and saw a guy in an SUV with Jersey tags. David approached him, knocked on the window and asked the guy if he was heading to Jersey. He said yes and they got in and drove to Jersey. But just before they left, Chris looked back toward the seaport and saw WTC-2 collapse and land on the area they had just been standing minutes



before. He simply told me they were very lucky to be alive. It was great to hear both Chris and David's voice!

Later, several friends of mine corroborated this story. One being a broker on his way to work riding the ferry saw the building fall. He saw, by the kinetic energy of the fall, bodies being blown into the harbor. The horror had only begun.

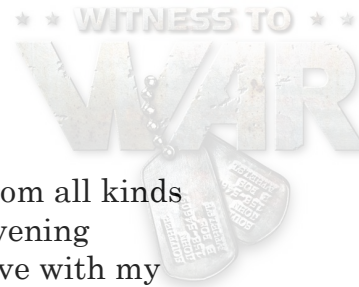
I know people who were either at Ground Zero or sons, daughters, family were there and survived. Imagine panic as discussed above. Now imagine the unimaginable, people running... cars, trucks, cabs, heavy equipment... dust, debris, panic, people running... everyone trying to escape with only the survival instinct in tact. Once at my sister's house we immediately turned the news on and watched as the story continued to unfold. Bill her fiancé' came home with some pizzas and I realized how hungry I was. I hadn't eaten anything all day. Then, some how I slept (a Valium and two VERY large Jack Daniel's helped).

At 4:30 I awoke seriously thinking I'd had a bad dream, but reality hit. I was curled up in a ball and I cried until I couldn't breath. I stopped crying around 5:30. I was exhausted. I had to get to the TV to see what had happened. This hadn't happened! I watched the news from 6:00 – 9:00. Lynne came down and joined me at some point. She has a business to run and had to be there. I had reserved a rental car the day before. Lynne gave me a ride to pick it up.

Driving home I thought of an idea one of my oldest and closet friends had given me earlier in the day; call the Boston Globe and see if they might be interested in a story. I called from the car, but my battery was very low and I had left all my possessions on the 39<sup>th</sup> floor.

The newsroom at the Globe took the story and told me a reporter would return my call. Within moments my phone rang. Some how my battery didn't die on us and I got the entire story to her. She asked if the Globe could send a reporter to take pictures that evening. I agreed.

I pulled off the Mass. Pike on to RT 9 in Natick and drove to Will's house. He usually gets home at 2:40. It was exactly 2:40. I didn't know if to wait at the bus stop or drive to the house thinking maybe he'd already come home and was waiting. I drove to the house. His mother, Rhonda met me there. For the first time in a very long time we dropped all the "divorce" issues behind us and spoke as two people. A moment later my son walked in. Without hesitation we hugged and held each other for a very long time. I told him how much I loved him. He replied the same. We didn't want to let go of each other... After a half-hour I told Will I HAD to get to Beverly, Gabrielle (my x-wife) still hadn't seen me and I had to go. He understood, but asked his mom and me if I could switch weekends and pick him up Saturday. She agreed.



The next day the Globe published the article. I was then getting calls from all kinds of media: Reuters, WGBH, Fox 25 News, Channel 7 news, The Salem Evening News. People called me telling me how happy they were I was home alive with my family.

A woman despondent and desperate called and asked: "...did you see my friend? She was there. You were there. She lives on the North Shore. Did you see my friend, please tell me if you saw my friend, did you see her...? I was hoping you saw her?" I was heart broken because I couldn't respond. Nothing came out of my mouth but "I am so sorry." And without another word she hung up.

Friday came. A bunch of friends had scheduled months ago to go see Joe Crocker and The Guess Who at the Tweeter Center. I wasn't sure at first, but we decided to go. Although I felt guilty, I also felt it necessary to be with people. We drove to Boston to get my brother DJ. On the way the conversation was light. As we got close to the concert location, we were listening to WZLX 100.7. Chuck Nolan was the DJ driving around the parking area interviewing people tailgating. He said he was at a green pick-up truck with a "block" of cheese the size of Rhode Island. We all immediately knew it had to be Bobby Guise. A few minutes later we pulled in to the lot and Bobby pointed to us. We drove over to him and Chuck was still there. A lot of people were partying by Bobby. He had a gas grill, hot dogs, cole slaw, cheese and crackers, etc... Bobby pointed to me and told Chuck I was the guy in the tower. Once out of my car Chuck and I spoke, he asked me if I'd do an interview. I figured the newspapers had "edited" the story, I'd try to tell it in its entirety.

So once on the air, Chuck asked me to recount the events. I did. There were people standing around listening and crying. After I was finished, a woman, who had been in her car listening, approached me. She said her husband was in the car, and that he was a fireman. She told me how he too felt guilty for being at the concert (I'd mentioned how we need to get back to our lives, and continue to grow and be strong or these savages had really won!) This was the reason I was there. I had also mentioned the NYFD Chief running up the stairs and how proud I was for these guys who literally put their lives on the line for all of us every day. She said how much it had meant to her husband and thanked me. The firemen, police and rescue workers are to be hugged and thanked. These people are REAL heroes.

Since I started this, I have had complete strangers call my house. I've had people tell me if anything had happened to me, the local community would have helped my family. I've had people in the street just walk up and hug me, telling me how happy they are I'm home safe with my family.

I'm really sorry to say, I heard just yesterday, the man in the wheel chair has perished. And although I ask myself if in fact maybe I could have carried him, in retrospect, I didn't know how serious the situation was. They kill not only defenseless people, but helpless ones as well.



So much has happened. So much more is going to happen.

I wish everyone the best and God bless you all!

Bob Jenkins

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