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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

CHIEF FRANK CRUTHERS

Interview Date: October 31, 2001

Transcribed by Elisabeth F. Nason

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MR. RIGNOLA: This is Salvatore Rignola. I'm here with my partner Fire Marshal Cliff Krug. Today's date is Wednesday, October 31, 2001. The time is approximately 9:50. I'm at 9 Metrotech, 7th floor, speaking to Chief Cruthers, who is the Citywide Tour Commander. Chief, I'm going to ask you some questions about the events that happened on September 11, the year 2001.

Q. Tell me when you initially received the alarm and how you responded and where you went.

A. That morning I was off duty. I was at home in Rockville Centre, and I was having breakfast with the TV on and the news break came on that the Trade Center had been hit by an airplane. I immediately went upstairs to get dressed, to respond. As I was getting changed, I got a phone call telling me that - the same thing and I said that I knew and then was informed that the call was regarding the second plane. So I was still in my house when the second plane hit. I then get in my car and I drove myself directly to the scene.

Q. So you had no aide, you went on your own?

A. Right. I know that I came on the Southern State Parkway and the traffic got very heavy and I got off and came through the Brooklyn streets, and as I was

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coming, I was still debating which route to take. I believe I came in the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. I came out of the tunnel on to West Street. I turned to the right and I parked pretty close to Rector Street. In the middle there were some angled emergency vehicles parked, angled into the median on West Street. So I parked there.

Q. West and Rector?

A. Pretty close to Rector. I got out of the car, got my gear on and walked north on West Street. As I was walking north, I contacted Chief of Department Ganci to find his location so that I could report to the command post for assignment. I also heard Chief Barbara on the handy talky --

Q. Do you remember the time you arrived about?

A. No, but that will become evident to me in a couple of minutes. I got to the corner of Albany and West Street. There was a pumper on West Street at the northwest corner of the intersection. I got a look at what was happening. I stopped at the pumper, opened the officer's door, I threw my shoes and my bunker pants into the officer's seat and put my boots on and my coat. And then once again started to proceed north on West Street.

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There were some units there, along with a Battalion Chief and I gave them some instructions as to what to try to do. And while I was still in that immediate area, the south tower, 2 World Trade Center, there was what appeared to be at first an explosion. It appeared at the very top, simultaneously from all four sides, materials shot out horizontally. And then there seemed to be a momentary delay before you could see the beginning of the collapse.

At that point, I turned and ran west on Albany Street, okay, in an attempt to get beyond the corner of this building on the diagram marked Dow Jones. I got a ways down. As I was running down the street, the cloud kind of overtook us, then the air seemed to be filled with a lot of very light material. Most of it appeared to be paper. At that point, I dove on the ground on the south side of a car that was parked on the north side of Albany Street and there was some other firefighters there.

Q. Chief, that was between West and South End Street?

A. Yes. I told them to stay there. Some more debris came down, a little heavier but it didn't seem to me at that particular point there was any really

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heavy stuff. Couple of people - after the cloud cleared, which took some minutes, there were a couple of people who were injured. I reestablished contact with Chief Ganci after the first collapse.

Q. The first collapse was at 9:55, so you figure around maybe 15 minutes before that?

A. That I arrived?

Q. Yes.

A. It's hard to tell. Time was -- like I say I know all the things that I did, how long they take I don't know. It all just tends to run together.

Q. After the first collapse --

A. After the first collapse I spoke to Chief Ganci again on the handy talky. I never heard Chief Barbara's voice after the first collapse. I was again making my way north and West Street was strewn with heavy debris. As a means of getting north without traversing the debris field I went into one of these buildings. It's a building where they had an entry on the southeast corner of the building. It's a grade level entrance and when you go in that entrance, there is an escalator that runs from southeast to northwest to the next level.

I had been in the building before and my

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recollection was that if I went up that escalator, that it was a rather circuitous route to get from the south side of the building to the north side of the building, which is where I wanted to go. So I took a look around in that lobby, grade level lobby to see if there was access to continue more directly to get through the building and out the north side to get to the command post.

While I was doing that, I heard more rumbling. I took refuge on the west side of the escalator corner. Once again there was a tremendous cloud. It was pitch black. I waited again until the cloud began to lift. I made my way back around to the same entrance that I had come in, and then -- from that point, I don't remember what route I went by, but I made my way north up to Vesey Street.

Q. This is after --

A. After the second tower came down. I had given direction to some units working there. At that point, I was told that the command post had been drawn further back north up around Chambers Street. I made my way back up there. I met Chief Fellini. We exchanged what we knew about who among the command structure had been - who we could account for. Chief

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Callan was up at that command location. And Chief Fellini asked me if I had seen Chief Ganci or Chief Nigro. I believe I learned from him that Chief Cassano had been moved to a hospital and we set it up that I would be the incident commander at the command post and Chief Fellini would be the operations officer, and would go forward, back down to the - closer to the site, set up an operations post and let me know what he needed and we would try to start getting up and getting organized.

A short time after that I believe, Chief Turi showed up at the command post and some time later, Chief Nigro arrived. I believe he had been over somewhere on the east side of the complex and came down and made his way back to where we were.

Q. So Chief, you'd never seen Chief Ganci, you only had radio contact?

A. I never saw him that day. I spoke with him on the handy talky, both before and after the first collapse. After the first collapse I was unable to get any response.

Q. Did you ever talk to Chief Barbara?

A. Chief Barbara I heard his voice. I don't remember whether we spoke directly or not, but I never

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heard his voice again after the first collapse.

Q. Where was the command post set up that you were heading to?

A. My understanding was Albany - that the command post was somewhere in this area. Between Vesey and Liberty, but closer to Vesey.

Q. Near the Winter Garden.

A. From then, we continued to operate and we got word on the handy talky traffic that there was another group that had formed over on Church Street and Chief Tom Haring from the Eighth Division, now he's down in the Sixth Division, had set up and was operating on that side. We set up a staging area further up. Eventually we moved once things got going, and moved up closer to the staging area down a little closer to the actual operation.

Early on, there was concern that 7 World Trade Center might have been both impacted by the collapsing tower and had several fires in it and there was a concern that it might collapse. So we instructed that a collapse area --

Q. A collapse zone?

A. Yeah -- be set up and maintained so that when the expected collapse of 7 happened, we wouldn't have

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people working in it. There was considerable discussion with Con Ed regarding the substation in that building and the feeders and the oil coolants and so on. And their concern was of the type of fire we might have when it collapsed. They shut down the power, and when it did collapse, the things that they were concerned with would have been. That's about it.

Q. Do you want to add anything?

A. No.

MR. RIGNOLA: Thank you Chief. It's 5 after 10, and that's the end of this tape. Thank you very much.