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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIREFIGHTER THOMAS TURILLI

Interview Date: January 17, 2002

Transcribed by Nancy Francis

T. TURILLI

BATTALION CHIEF KENAHAN: The date is January 17th, 2002, the time is 1635, AND this is Battalion Chief Dennis Kenahan from the Safety Battalion of the Fire Department of the City of New York. I'm conducting an interview with Firefighter Thomas Turilli of Engine 47 in the quarters of Ladder 2.

Q. Thomas, just tell us the events as you recall them from September 11th.

A. All right. On September 11th, we were watching the news and they broke in and said that the first tower had been hit by a plane. We were watching that for some time, and then it appeared another plane had hit the south tower. At that point they automatically made it a fifth alarm and we responded.

We parked on West Street, I think it is, as far as this map is concerned. Yes. We were making our way in with my officer and the guys I was working with. Just a lot of glass breaking, there were like car fires going on on the side of the street. We actually went through an overpass and we were standing underneath that just waiting for the glass or anything, just so we can actually -- we were actually going in the hotel lobby. I'm not sure what hotel it is there.

Q. Marriott? Between the towers?

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A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. That connects the two towers?

Q. Right.

A. We went in there and then we saw Chief Galvin and we saw other companies. I saw Ladder 2 there, 22 Engine, 13 Truck. My officer said try to find a stairwell if we have to walk, so me and another guy went and saw there was a maintenance guy working there. We went up to almost like, I guess like an atrium, and we walked up that way and I saw a maintenance guy there and he said you can pick up the stairs from the third floor on up after walking up like I guess an access stairs from the lobby up.

I came back out, told him we can find a stairway over there, and he said, all right, that they want us to go to the south tower, which is I guess the first actual tower to fall down. He said there was a report of fire actually on -- the lowest report of fire they had was on the 33rd floor at that point.

There was kind of a little chaos. We didn't know really where we were going to go, guys were deciding to take elevators, not to take elevators. There was a security guy there who said, actually, I

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can get you up on an elevator if you want to follow me. So we went with 22 Engine, 13 Truck and us, walked I'd say about maybe 100 feet. We went through like a turnstile. But what he was actually doing is he actually led us through the lobby of the hotel into the north tower. We were actually, you could say, in the wrong tower at that point.

They went up. I actually had the control that day and 22 Engine went up. The elevator came back down, 13 got on and said, listen, if you guys want the elevator, we're not coming back with it. You've got to send somebody up. The officer actually said for me to give my radio to a senior guy there, Louie Cacchioli, and he took the radio off of me and he went up. We were waiting in I guess like a little almost like a cutout area of the lobby, an elevator bank. One elevator was only working out of like four elevators in that bank.

The door closed, they went up, and it just seemed a couple seconds and all of a sudden you just heard like it almost actually that day sounded like bombs going off, like boom, boom, boom, like seven or eight, and then just a huge wind gust just came and my officer just actually took all of us and just threw us

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down on the ground and kind of just jumped on top of us, laid on top of us. There were rocks falling and all that. The lights were still on at that point and all of a sudden the lights went out and you couldn't see anything.

At this point, there's a guy from my firehouse on his way up in the elevator. They got up to the 22nd floor and 13 Truck got off the elevator. He said to the guy -- this is before the actual collapse happened. He said to him stay here with us, stay here with me, because if this elevator closes, I don't have any tools. As soon as he said that, the elevator closed and that's when the actual collapse of the building happened. He made his way out into a stairwell and he made his way down.

When we were down in the lobby, like I said, the lights went out, there was a lot of dust and all of that kind of stuff. After about a minute or so, everything kind of calmed down. My officer just told everyone relax, just hold onto each other. He was radioing the guy upstairs to see if he was all right. He was making his way down. He said he was in the stairwell with 13 Truck, he's coming down right now.

My officer knew how to actually get out and

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we just held onto each other. There were security guards and some civilians, and he just told people, just hold onto us, like a human chain, just grab onto another person and we'll make our way out. We went about 20 feet, 25 feet, and we saw a light. It turned to be a light of almost like I guess a restaurant area. He said no, that's not the way out, and he said just keep on going straight. In about another 25 feet to 30 feet, there was windows, I guess, lobby, ground-level windows that were blown out, and we just walked out of there.

Two guys I was with said they were hurt and everything. So my officer, myself and the few guys who said they were hurt, we walked them across the street and we brought them to an ambulance. At that point we were kind of standing on the street and I looked to my left and actually I noticed the tower was down. I didn't even know what it was when we were in there. It just seemed like a huge explosion.

Then my officer said you all right? I said yeah, I'm fine. That whole time he was actually going over the radio with our control man saying you making your way out? He said I'm out in the street right now. I'm fine. So my officer said all right -- you

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could hear Maydays going over the radio at that point. It was just so many, I really didn't know where they were coming from.

Then we started walking actually back towards Tower 1 and a cop and a Battalion Chief came up to us and said just start running the other way. The other tower is coming down.

Q. Who told you this; a cop?

A. A cop and a Battalion Chief. We were kind of like standing next to them. I stayed with him -- I was with the Battalion Chief at one point and I started running up the street and I kind of lost track of all the guys I was with. The two other guys who I actually brought to the ambulance, the ambulance guy said you've got to get out of the ambulance. They just started running towards the water. We started running, myself, the Battalion Chief, the cop, my Lieutenant was with me at that point, up West Street, and you just heard a rumbling, a huge amount of rumbling, and I just dove under a car, and I was with a guy from I think 138 Truck.

The tower came down, the second tower came down, and then just a lot of chaos, you know, the same thing it was like inside, it was dust and all that

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other stuff flying around. I think it was like five minutes before things cleared up, and I saw a light and it was just the light of a rig, the flashing lights, and then it seemed like more and more guys were coming out of the cars or wherever they were hiding. I met up with my officer and the guys I work with, and they were just saying everyone just go back a couple of streets just to regroup and then we'll go from there, and that's about it.

Q. Okay. That's it?

A. Yes.

BATTALION CHIEF KENAHAN: All right. Well, thank you, Thomas. This concludes the interview. The time now is 4:45.