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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

PARAMEDIC ROBERT RUIZ

Interview Date: December 14, 2001

Transcribed by Laurie A. Collins

MR. CUNDARI: Today's date is December 14th, 2001. The time is 11:35. I'm George Cundari of the New York City Fire Department. I'm conducting an interview with the following individual.

Please state your name, rank, title and assigned command.

PARAMEDIC RUIZ: My name is Robert Ruiz. I'm a paramedic with the Fire Department of New York, and I work at Battalion 26 in the Bronx.

- Q. Paramedic Ruiz, can you please tell us the events of September 11th from your recollection, please?
- A. That morning we had just taken a patient to Bronx Lebanon Hospital, and we had just cleared from the hospital when the dispatcher sent us the assignment to respond down to Manhattan. It was kind of odd because we work all the way up in the Bronx. They don't ever send Bronx units into Manhattan.

So we were wondering what it was. So we switched to citywide frequency. That's when we found out something was going on in Manhattan.

We still didn't know what it was. So we turned on the news, and we listened to 1010. That's when we found out that a plane had struck one of the twin towers.

At that point me and my partner -- we didn't think it was terrorism or anything like that. We just thought maybe it was some sort of a problem with the controls or something like that.

Anyway, we started responding downtown. On the way there, halfway there, we hear the news that a second plane crashed into the World Trade Center. Right then and there we both knew that it had to be terrorists because what are the odds of two planes crashing into two separate buildings.

So we're driving there. There's a lot of traffic, a lot of police, a really long line of fire trucks, unmarked cars and ambulances and everything.

- Q. How were you getting there? What route did you take?
- A. We ended up taking the Grand Concourse all the way up to the FDR Drive and then the FDR

Drive all the way down. We ended up having to get off around 34th Street, because they had blocked off all the -- the traffic wasn't moving, so one of the fire trucks blocked all the traffic and everybody just went.

From there everybody just split.

Everybody just took their own routes. We took a pretty good one, so we got there maybe ten minutes after that.

- Q. So you took West Street from there?
- A. Right there from 34th Street? Yes. We took -- what's the name of that street that's right by South Street Seaport underneath the drive? I don't know what street that is.
 - Q. Allen?
- A. The one that runs underneath the FDR Drive, that street there, like the New York Post.
 - O. Pike?
- A. Right, right where the South Street
 Seaport, you know, where the mall is at. So we
 ended up taking that street all the way down. It
 was pretty clear, I remember. So we ended up
 going through there.

As soon as we got there, we went inside

the tunnel underneath Battery Park, and we came out on the other side. When we came out on the other side, it was like -- we already saw the building on fire from way uptown, maybe 125th Street. As we got closer and closer it was like, wow, it was amazing. The second plane had already hit, so we never saw it when that happened. But we already saw the two buildings in flame. But as we got closer and closer, you see it better and better.

So when we came out of the tunnel on the other side, we were right there. It was incredible. We were just amazed that this had happened.

As we see, there's a line forming of ambulances up on West Street and -- it is West Street, but it wasn't Liberty. There was another street there. What's the next street after Liberty?

- Q. Still south of the World Trade Center?
- A. Yes. It wasn't Liberty, because -- or could it have been Liberty? Was it just that big? Oh, yeah, so it was Liberty. There had to be like another bridge there. I remember the

bridge.

- Q. There's a walkway over here by Vesey.
- A. I remember this. That's where we were. Okay.

There's a couple of commanders, chiefs, captains at Liberty and West Street. We came out of the tunnel, and we ended up on the West Side Highway. We went up to the back of the line.

Before we got to the back of the line, like people describe it, there were body parts all over the floor.

I saw pieces of scalp and entire torsos and legs, hands, just about everything. I never saw a face, but I saw just about every other part you can think of. It was like an obstacle course to get to this line that they had formed at Liberty and West Street.

It can't be Liberty and West Street.

It has to be like right by the hotel. Right over here, right in that corner, that's where it was.

The line didn't start on Liberty and West Street; it was a little bit further up, maybe by the Marriott. Maybe right around there, maybe a little bit before that.

- Q. So you're right by the towers at that point?
- A. No, we never made it to the towers. I'm going to tell you what happened.

It was like an obstacle course to get to the end of the line, to the back of the line. What they were doing is they were getting patients, throwing them in the back of the bus, and then the bus would just take off.

- Q. These are all walking wounded coming to you?
 - A. That's right.

Then the captains and chiefs, they were directing people everywhere. It was total chaos. So that's just what we did.

As soon as we got to the back of the line, these firemen come running from the building right on Liberty and -- right on Liberty and West Street, there's a building there. I'm not quite sure whether it was a church or not. It didn't look like a church. I remember it had a lot of scaffolding on it.

They come running from the building, and he starts yelling at us. He said, "Help,

help, help, we need your help. One of our guys got hit with some debris that fell off a building." My partner was driving that day and he said, "Okay, no problem."

We get off the line, and we park right on Liberty Street now. Right on Liberty Street, there's a parking lot there. He parks there, gets out of the bus, runs to the back and gets a trauma bag. He goes, gets the trauma bag and runs out and goes inside the building.

Now, I get out. I jumped inside the back of the bus, and I'm getting the rest of the equipment. I'm getting the oxygen bag, I've got the monitor, I've got a couple trauma dressings and stuff, and I'm putting it on top of the stretcher. I jumped out with the stretcher and everything.

I go to the building where he went, but there's a few entrances on that corner and I don't know where exactly he went. So I see some firemen almost on the other side of the building on the other corner. I go and I approached them and said, "Which way did my partner go?" He said, "We don't know what you're talking about."

So now my partner's inside the building, and he probably needs the equipment and I don't know where he is.

- Q. What's your partner's name?
- A. Joe Jefferson.

I can't tell you the times that all this is happening because I really --

- O. Time is lost?
- A. Right, time is lost. All I know is that the building hadn't fallen yet.

So I approached these guys. They told me they don't know who I'm talking about and whatever. So what I do is I end up standing right in the middle, because if he comes out of any exit I can just run to him, throw the guy on the stretcher and just leave from there. So that was the plan.

As I'm waiting there -- I must have waited a good five minutes. Then the firemen I had just spoken to, they go and they run into the World Trade Center number two. So they run across the street into the building.

Right after them, you see three FBI agents, two men and a woman, run right after

them, and they also go inside the World Trade

Center. I'm just standing right there in the

center, and I'm looking up. I'm like, oh, man,

you know, just dumbfounded. This is such an

amazing sight.

I don't know what else I was thinking.

It was just incredible. It was just one of those things you look at and you just have your mouth wide open saying, "I can't believe I'm here witnessing something like this." I said, man, you know, this is real history, and wondering where my partner is and what's the matter with this guy.

All of a sudden I see a plain clothes cop come and stand right on the corner. So this is now Washington and Liberty. He's right on that corner, and he's looking up. He looks at me, and we just both nod in disbelief. We just keep staring like -- this happened in a matter of like five minutes, the firemen running in, the FBI right behind and then the plain clothes cop on the corner.

The next thing you know, you hear a loud thundering noise. It sounded like a jet, a

big rumble. I start looking around and I'm like, what is that? The next thing I know, I see the cop just take off. I'm like, where's he going?

Then I see the things on the floor, like Liberty -- you know, just like the movies, bouncing up and jumping and shaking. I mean, not like an earthquake, like a 6 point something or something like that. But you see stuff on the floor shaking from side to side. I'm like, oh, my God. I look up and I was saying, oh, no, the building's going to fall down.

Let me tell you, you talk about being scared, never in my life -- I don't think ever again I'll ever be so scared. So I turn around. Right where I'm standing I turn around. I'm in the center of the building. I turn around, and I try to go inside the building, but that door happens to be locked. So I run towards the corner where the cop was, and I keep trying all the doors.

All the doors and all the windows are locked, and I can't break any of the windows to get in because they have metal gates on them. So even if I was to break a window to get in, I

can't get in. So I keep running, running, keep trying the doors.

I make it to the corner. I make it to the corner, and I turn right. So I was going to keep running all the way straight up Washington. So I ran maybe a few feet when I tripped and I fell on something, some debris. I don't know what it was. But I ended up falling.

By now the sound is just getting louder and louder and louder. I said, oh, man, this building is going to fall on me right now. What do I do? I got up, and I just -- this is like a split second. I said I can't keep running straight up, because you have this building right here on Washington. What is it? Bankers Trust Plaza, 130 Liberty Street? It takes up the entire block. So I can't run like in a diagonal.

What I wanted to do is I didn't want to run straight up; I wanted to go diagonally to get out of the -- because I figured this building was falling, it was tumbling over. I didn't think it was falling down on top of itself.

Q. So you had a feeling the building was coming down right away?

- A. Yeah.
- Q. Is that what you first thought?
- A. Yeah. The sound, it's just loud. At first it's (sound) and then you feel everything around you -- not around you but the floor. You feel the floor trembling and shaking. You look at the floor, the dirt, the sand and everything on the floor shifting from side to side. I'm like, oh, man.

Then the cop takes off. He runs. Then I hit the corner, I turn the corner, a few feet I fall. By this time the sound is so, so, so loud, I think oh, my God. I never looked back, because I figured if I looked back that was going to be it, I'd freeze or be hit with something. I said, look, I don't want to waste any time. Whatever it is I'm going to do, I've got to do it quickly.

So I saw the building. I saw that I couldn't run. I saw that if I kept running straight -- the map here, it doesn't look big at all. But this was like a really long block for me to keep running and running and running and go around the corner on the other side.

So what I ended up doing was there was

a door right on that corner, and the door was locked. It also had a gate, a wrought iron fence gate. I kept trying to open, open, open, open, and I couldn't open. I said, oh, my God, this is going to be it.

The way they made the door is it's like a cutout in the building. It's like about a foot wide of wall before you hit the door. So it was like a little corner. What I ended up doing was I ended up hiding inside that little corner there. I ended up going inside that little door well and hiding up against the wall facing the World Trade Center building and hiding right in that corner.

As soon as I did that, the next thing I know, all the dust; the dust, the dirt. I said, oh, my God, this is it. That's all I kept thinking: Oh, my God, oh, my God, I'm going to die here. This building's going to fall on top of me. It's going to fall on top of this building and squash it and this is it. All you hear is all this rumbling. The rumbling, the rumbling, the rumbling, that's all you heard. The rumbling and the smoke.

In a matter of seconds it was from daytime to complete, complete darkness, something straight out of a movie.

- Q. So that doorway protected you?
- A. Yeah. It saved my life.

But while I was in there, I was getting hit with stuff. You heard it, and you heard glass breaking and stuff -- there was so much noise, you couldn't distinguish one thing happening. But when it happened close to me, I could hear it, like glass breaking.

But the biggest problem there was I couldn't breathe. The smoke was really, really hot, and I couldn't catch my breath. So I ended up taking off my shirt and wrapping it around my face, trying to get some air, but I couldn't.

What I remember is, oh, man, I'm going to die here and -- who will protect my family. I was wondering how does it feel to be dead.

That's what I remember thinking while I was stuck in that corner. I was just like I'm ready for it. I wasn't so calm like I am right now, but I remember thinking this while I was there.

The only words I remember saying is,

oh, my God oh, my God, over and over and over, and trying to pull the fence off so I could get inside, but there was no way. There was no way for me open the door. It was locked. I was just trapped there. So I was just waiting for the big impact that was just going to take me out.

Miraculously the building stopped falling. The noise completely stopped. But the smoke kept coming. I was having a real, real bad time breathing. The shirt wrapped around my face wasn't helping at all, because it was saturated in that dust as well.

I'm saying, oh, my God, what do I do?

Do I stay here? Do I try to run out? But then I thought if I run out of that little corner I'm going to get hit with the rest of the stuff that's flying. I was trapped there.

Like things weren't bad enough already, the car that's parked right on that corner catches on fire. I don't mean a little fire, the entire thing. Don't ask me how. The entire car caught on fire. You would think maybe just a motor part or just the engine part. But this entire car just goes up in fire.

I'm like, oh, my God, what's happening?

I didn't get squashed and I'm going to suffocate
here and now I'm going to burn. The smoke was
real hot. The smoke was real, real hot. I
thought about, oh, man, if I keep breathing the
smoke in, my larynx is going to swell and I'm
going to suffocate like that, and all attached to
crazy things I'm thinking. Forget about it.

Now it was the car. Then I can't stand it anymore because it's getting real, real, real hot. I'm like, oh, man, I've got to get out of here. This thing is cooking me. Now thanks to the car fire -- because it was so big, I could see now. Before then I couldn't see anything. It was literally like people say you stick your hand right in front of your face and you couldn't see it. Now with this car fire, I could see a few feet in front of me.

I got out of the door well there, and I walked a little bit. I notice that there were windows there as well, but the windows had gates on them. All the stuff that fell knocked the gates off the building. So the windows weren't there anymore, the gates weren't there.

All I had to do was break a little bit of glass that was left there, and I ended up jumping inside the building, because you couldn't walk in the street. I was right along like the edge. It's really hard to describe. It was like a mountain of stuff.

I was walking right alongside the building, and I ended up going inside there.

There was no gate. I tried to remember where were the gates, and I didn't see the gates at all. That whole corner was full of windows with gates.

It turns out that it was a restaurant.

The only reason I know is I ended up going inside of it. I must have been there like a good 20 minutes, because I couldn't find my way around.

I kept falling over tables and chairs. That's how I found out it was a restaurant. At one time I tried to yell for help. I was like, "Help!" I said, oh, man, what am I doing? I am the help here. Who's going to help me?

- Q. Nobody answered while you were in there?
 - A. No, no, there was nobody there. The

people, I guess when the first plane hit, locked up and just took off.

So I'm in there a good 15 minutes, good 20 minutes, and I'm trying to find my way around. It's like you've got no sense of coordination because you don't know in which direction you're going. You're just bouncing into stuff and trying to look for a wall. I remember feeling a counter. Then I would fall on a table or trip on a table, on a chair, get back up.

- Q. Was your radio working at this point?
- A. I'm going to get to that right now.

So then when I yell for help, I'm like, oh, man, there's nobody here. So I go and I reach for my radio, but there's no more radio. I don't know where the radio is, where it went.

Don't ask me where I lost it.

I usually keep my radio real secure.

That's something I've always had that -- ever since I started working there, I always kept the radio secure. I don't know, I lost it, maybe when I fell or maybe climbing in through the window or I had already fallen a few times.

The reason I was yelling for help was

because I still hear stuff falling. You could still hear stuff falling. I said, man, I don't know if the whole building fell. I didn't know what the story was.

I thought at that point that only half the building had fallen off, because I was still there. I said, oh, my God, only half the building fell. The rest of the building is going to fall. I thought it maybe broke in half and just fell down. I didn't think it just crumbled onto itself.

Anyway, I start feeling around, and I see a light. I was saying, oh, yeah, that's the way out. I ended up walking towards the light.

It's kind of silly. It ended up being a refrigerator full of Snapple. It was kind of stupid. Oh, man, I got so mad when I saw that.

- Q. Did you need a drink?
- A. No, I didn't want a drink. I tell everybody that part about the Snapple. I said, you know, I thought it was light. I thought it was the way out, and it turns out to be a giant refrigerator full of Snapple. I got so mad at that point.

Anyway, I turn around and I end up looking inside there. I eventually find a little corridor, and I followed the corridor all the way, all the way, all the way. I ended up coming out in the same building, but I ended up coming out on some windows further south on Washington.

So now I'm in between the block. I'm halfway in the building. So I ended up coming out of some broken windows that were there. Now I'm on Washington again. I look back, and I look at everything that was -- and I could still see where it was, because of the fires. It was just like a movie. There were fires scattered all over.

I remember there was a row of police cars, and they were all smashed. I was like, remember that plain clothes cop that was running? There could have been no way that he made it, because the guy was right in front of me. I'm talking about he was right there. I'm right behind him. I fall, I get back up, I hide inside that little corner, and then everything just starts falling.

So I was like, oh, man, that poor guy.

I was even thinking of maybe even trying to look for him. It was like you couldn't see anything there.

So I got out of the window, and I walked down Washington -- I didn't walk. What am I saying I walked? I ran. As soon as I got out, I ran. I ran and ran and ran and ran and ran. I ended up at the entrance to the tunnel. Where is the entrance of the tunnel here?

- Q. It's off the page here.
- A. Let me tell you how I ran. But I ran and ran, and finally I could see the light. When I got to where the tunnel was, I'm looking everywhere. It was just like that movie the day after with the atomic bomb. They drop it and nobody's left and I'm the only one. That's exactly how it was.

I'm looking and like, "Hello?" I'm looking. "Anybody?" No cars moving, no birds, not one other person, nothing at all.

Everything's abandoned, everything's left, and I'm just stuck there. I'm like, oh, my God, what do I do? I said, what do I do now?

Then I remembered Jefferson. I was

like, oh, my God, Jefferson. What happened to Jefferson? What I ended up doing is when I hit that tunnel, I ended up going back on West Street. I was still trying to catch my breath, so I was taking it easy. But I started walking back to that building where I was.

I'm coughing, I'm coughing, I'm walking and everything. As I started getting closer and closer, that's when I start seeing people. I start seeing people scattered everywhere: a fireman here, a guy in a business suit there; just very, very little people.

When I got to the building that I was in but on the other side -- we're now on West Street -- I go in. As soon as I go in, who's behind the door? Jefferson. He's in there. I'm like, oh, man. But I didn't recognize him because the guy was completely black. What he was doing, he was helping out one of our other guys who got hit with stuff and had something stuck in his chest and he had broken his arm.

So there was him and maybe three or four other guys attending to him. So he was hurt, and somebody else was hurt that I remember.

I didn't really pay too much attention because I was still trying to catch my breath.

All this happens real quickly. I was stuck in the building for a while. But as soon as I got out, I ran, went to the tunnel entrance and ended up going back to the other side of the building. I find them. They're taking care of him.

So they ended up taking this guy, throwing him in an ambulance that didn't get smashed. Our bus was completely totaled, because we were parked right here on Liberty. It's demolished. So they take him out and put him inside an ambulance, and they take off. So everybody ends up leaving.

Now, Jefferson comes back to see how I am. When he comes back in there, it's completely empty. Now all of a sudden we see this big group of people come out; I'd say about maybe 15 people, about 17 people. I'm like, oh, man, we thought we were in there all by ourselves.

Somebody had brought a bucket, and it had water in it. I just stayed by the bucket, trying to drink some water. I tried to clear my

passages out, because I couldn't breathe. I was coughing, coughing up that black stuff.

Anyway, so these people come out of a closet or there was a doorway or something.

We're like, oh, my God, what are you people doing here? We started talking to them. They told us to leave, but then the building started coming down and we got scared and they hid.

There was a lady with a baby, a guy with some cats, some other guys that said they were students from I don't know where, and there was this other girl, an EMT, from Metro Care.

What we ended up doing is me and

Jefferson, we end up leaving the building. I'm

feeling a little better now than I did originally

from the smoke and stuff. So I take the T-shirt

off. No, that's a lie. Someone takes a T-shirt

off and rips it, and now we make masks out of

that. We put these white pieces of -- we put it

on our face to try to protect ourselves from the

smoke.

We go and we end up walking back on the West Side Highway. We leave those people there with the EMT from Metro Care. We end up walking

a little bit. What we were going to try to do was to try to find -- oh, no, that's a lie. Oh, my God, I can't believe I forgot it.

Even before we found that, we found the people. As soon as we found the people, we hear it again, the rumbling. Right, I forgot all about that. We hear the rumbling. I was like, oh, my God, Joe, the rest of the building is falling down.

We all run, and we all try to get as much as we can inside this building where we are now. We hide in a closet or something. The walls are all full of glass. So we're thinking that this glass is going to break. All you see is the thing moving. Later on we found out that was the second building that was falling down.

We thought and I thought that the first one is still -- the rest of it is falling down.

So anyway, when this one finished falling, we waited a little while. Then that's when we came out. That's when we came out. We must have walked for maybe a block or two. We found a school bus there, like one of those mini school buses.

So we go in, and we were looking at all the cars to see if we could find some transportation or something. We were picking up equipment as we went along. We found a radio, we found gloves, we found a life pack, a bag. We were picking up equipment as we went along.

So we end up finding a school bus. We go inside the school bus, and we find a lady inside there hiding. Why this lady didn't turn the school bus around and leave that area, I don't know. I guess everybody handles it differently. So we told the lady that we were going to borrow her school bus.

So what we end up doing is we end up taking the school bus. Joe jumps in the driver's seat, and we end up going as close as we can to this building. Now, we go in there, and we end up taking all those people out, throwing them in the school bus and then just taking off.

So we end up taking off, and we end up driving back down the West Side Highway to the tunnel and all the way around to the FDR Drive.

Now, we end up taking the drive all the way up to Bellevue Hospital.

Once we got to Bellevue Hospital, we dropped the people off. Then me and Joe talked it over, what are we going to do now? Are we going to go home? I was like, I don't know. I don't know. What do you want to do? We talked about it for a few minutes. I said, look, let's go back. We just wanted to go back to help, see what we could do.

We ended up getting back in the school bus, and the lady doesn't want to go back down there, and we don't blame her. So what we end up doing, we left her and the school bus by the Brooklyn Bridge, and from the Brooklyn Bridge we had the life pack and we had the monitor we had found. We had the life pack and the trauma bag that we had found. We ended up walking all the way back down to the twin towers site.

When we got back to the twin towers site, it was still a lot of smoke but not like when everything had initially fallen down. So what we end up doing is me and the firemen that were there, whoever was left, we end up just digging. We just started digging.

A chief came by -- I forget who it

was -- and he tried to make a team, tried to make teams of groups of people, but those things just fell apart. As soon as he left, everybody decided to do what they wanted to do.

Me and Jefferson decided to stay together and, when the smoke cleared, just started digging. Then there's like no way to dig. All we can do is walk around and try to listen to see if you heard something.

It looked like somebody had taken like a broomstick and taken all the debris and everything and pushed it all the way up onto the buildings that were across the street from the World Trade Center.

This street was more or less clean, like the highway, right around here was like a giant mountain. I don't know what building it was, this building right here. Everything had piled up over here, up on top of the buildings over here.

So we ended up staying there. We found a couple of helmets from people, firemen. One EMS helmet, we ended up taking that one back to the station. That's what we did all day.

Then around 6, 7:00, my leg was hurting, my shoulder was hurting, this whole side. I couldn't hardly walk. I was like I can't really move my arm anymore. Joe said, "Do you want to go to the emergency room?" I said, "I don't know."

I ended up pulling up my pant leg, and my calf must have been the size of a grapefruit -- no, bigger. It was real swollen.

I decided to go to the emergency room. This is like about 6:00, 6 p.m. or 6:30.

So we ended up walking there too,
because there was no transportation at all. We
went to New York Downtown Hospital. We end up
going to that hospital. They rush me in. They
rush my partner in. They asked us, "What
happened to you? Where do you feel pain?" I
said, "I feel pain in my leg, my knee. I feel
pain in my shoulder, right here in my ribs."

They take my clothes off, start
examining me, and say, "Oh, yeah, your leg is
pretty bad." They started looking at my
shoulder, and they said, "It looks like you might
have broken a bone here or something."

When all this had happened earlier, I didn't feel anything. I don't know why it was. They took x-rays and found out that my collar bone was broken. They said I broke the AC joint as well. They said no broken bones in my legs or my ribs or anything, just the shoulder got messed up.

The only thing I can think of is that little piece of wall that didn't hide me completely, because it wasn't wide enough, so I imagine maybe something -- I remember stuff flying everywhere and falling next to me, but I don't remember feeling pain or getting hit with anything. Maybe it's because I couldn't breathe or what it was.

While we were taking the people out of the building and while we were looking for stuff, trying to find anybody that we can find in the rubble or anything, looking inside cars and all types of -- nothing. I was walking with a little limp, but I thought it was just nothing until later on during the day.

From there, once I got discharged from the hospital -- they put my arm in a sling and

told me to put I believe heat on and then after that put cold and then go see an orthopedic doctor the next day, they gave me somebody to go see.

Now it was how do I get home?

- Q. Did you ever end up calling home all that time?
- A. I tried to call -- I ended up -- oh, this is so funny. I had a cell phone in my pocket. After we came back from Bellevue, I said let me try to call home. The cell phones weren't working. Everything was completely -- I'm telling you, it was completely shut down.

After maybe an hour or two, I got a signal, so I ended up calling. It just so happens that I hadn't charged my phone. So I was on low cells. So I called my girlfriend. She picked up the phone and she said, "How are you?"

It's so funny, because on my way down to the World Trade Center I called her and I was like, "Look, I'm going down to the World Trade Center." She said, "No, don't go." I was like, "Look, they told me to go. They assigned me there." She's like, "Be careful, be careful."

Then from there she never heard from me again.

Now I said, "Oh, you don't know what's happened to me. Oh, my God, I almost died." I'm trying to tell her the story. I said, "Look, it's going to cut off." It cuts off, and then that was it.

That's when everything else started.

We started looking for people and stuff like

that. I took about an hour or two taking -- I

had a lot of glass in my hands. My hands are

fine now, but they were destroyed. I don't know

how I got so much glass in my hand. I figured

maybe I was trying to break the glass with my

hands or something, but I don't remember.

I don't know, but my hands, if you saw them, they looked like -- they were completely messed up. So there I was, trying to irrigate and going through every cut, picking the glass out of my hands. That took about an hour.

Then we would go and look inside cars, look inside the fire engines, the flipped-over SUVs, everything. There was really nothing we could do, just the little bit we did. We took those people out of that building, so I guess we

did a little bit of our part.

As far as finding anybody after that, nothing. Then when I got discharged from the emergency room, we had no way to get home. We were stranded, so we started walking. Jefferson ran into somebody that works there at New York Downtown Hospital. They said they would try to get us as far as Bellevue and then from there maybe we could get a ride from one of our own units there.

As it turns out, they didn't call them right away. I don't think they were logged on or whatever the case was. They ended up taking us all the way to the station. You don't know how happy I was when I heard that he was going to do that favor for us, because by that time I had really had just about enough by the end of the day.

So we get to the station, and there's just a giant crowd of people. Everybody that works at the station was like, "Oh, my God, we thought you guys were dead. We thought you guys were just --" I guess they might have done roll call on the radio, something like that, and they

hadn't heard from us.

So when they saw us, they were happy, clapping. I told the story once, and then that was it. I was like I really don't want to talk about it anymore. I just want to go home.

By that time Jefferson had lent me his phone and I had called my family, and they were on their way there. So I was in five or ten minutes and they got there. My girlfriend Tamara, my brother, my sister, they all came. They hugged me and everything.

It was definitely something I don't ever want to live through again. That's how the day ended. That was my World Trade Center experience.

Q. Thank you for taking the time to conduct this interview.

MR. CUNDARI: It is 12:12, and this concludes this interview.