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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIREFIGHTER RICHARD BANACISKI

Interview Date: December 6, 2001

Transcribed by Elisabeth F. Nason

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BATTALION CHIEF KENAHAN: December 6, 2001.

The time is 3:30 p.m. This is Battalion Chief Kenahan of the Safety Battalion of the Fire Department of the City of New York. I'm conducting an interview with Rich Banaciski of Ladder 22.

Q. Please tell us the events of September 11 as you recall them?

A. We got the alarm for us to respond, just, I would say, a minute after the second plane had hit the tower. Then they actually came over the voice alarm. Actually told the companies to respond outlet. We responded in and it was all the west side companies were actually all running down together, down the West Side Highway, because it was closed going northbound. So we could see what was going on, the two towers, both of them burning pretty good and then we got into, down to the site. We were at the corner of West and Vesey. That's where we parked the rig, in front of the Verizon building.

We were told to bring extra cylinders. We each brought our extra cylinders and we brought our rollups, the whole thing, and we reported in to the command post, which was in front of -- I think it was

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the Merrill Lynch building. There was a parking garage. There were two ramps that went in that parking garage.

Q. On West Street?

A. On West Street. We reported in to there and I remember they had the command post set up. They were telling the engines to the one side, all the trucks to the other side, put your cylinders in the middle. We were there. They were getting the command structure going. I just remember we were -- initially we were out by the street and they started having jumpers, so they all kind of moved back towards the parking garage, towards the building, so nothing would come down on us.

We were there I don't know, maybe 10, 15 minutes and then I just remember there was just an explosion. It seemed like on television they blow up these buildings. It seemed like it was going all the way around like a belt, all these explosions. Everybody just said run and we all turned around and we ran into the parking garage because that's basically where we were. Running forward would be running towards it. Not thinking that this building is coming down. We just thought there was going to be a big

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explosion, stuff was going to come down.

There was just a tremendous cloud that came into the parking garage. Somebody actually laid out a search rope, I think it was the officer of 76 Engine too, Lieutenant Farrington. He laid out a search rope so some of the guys could find their way to a back door, set up a back staircase in the Merrill Lynch building. We followed that up and we ended up coming out behind the building where the Marina is. Back in there. A lot of guys made their way out there.

We kind of -- from there we kind of regrouped together because we lost each other when the building came down. We all ran, so we kind of regrouped there, got ourselves together. Then there was a lot of people not knowing what to do, do you know what I mean.

I said to the officer, I'm going to go look for our chauffeur and I knew he parked the rig right in front of the Verizon building. I went up there. I started looking for him. He had moved the rig, not knowing now -- now I know, but he had moved the rig. I'm not exactly sure where he put it, but I went to go look for him because I couldn't get him on the radio due to the amount of radio traffic. People looking for this guy, this guy, companies looking for their own

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guys.

So I was kind of looking around over there, up and down West Street and looking on Vesey and I just remember there was a police officer standing there and he just started saying, it's starting to lean, it's starting to lean. I remember looking up, looking at the second building and just seeing it starting to move. I just started running back down Vesey towards the water again to where I had come from. That's -- the second building came down there.

So we kind of -- same thing, there was a time period where people were kind of in shock, not knowing what to do. I just remember we finally said we got to go somewhere now. We got to figure out what's going on.

I remember going back up Vesey to West and then they were telling us to go north. Go north up on West Street, because there is a foot bridge north, like an arched foot bridge. Had everybody going north of that. We will regroup up there.

I just remember that's when I started seeing all the guys coming in from home, all the guys from the company and we actually -- everybody from this house, we stuck together and we actually from there, a little

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bit of time, maybe an hour or so, they actually started telling us to go here, go there. They moved us from one spot, they moved us on to Vesey again. Because then they were worried about -- we actually searched the Verizon building, because there was reports of firemen there. Basically our whole house searched that building.

They told us to get out of there because they were worried about 7 World Trade Center, which is right behind it, coming down. We were up on the upper floors of the Verizon building looking at it. You could just see the whole bottom corner of the building was gone. We could look right out over to where the Trade Centers were because we were that high up. Looking over the smaller buildings. I just remember it was tremendous, tremendous fires going on.

Finally they pulled us out. They said all right, get out of that building because that 7, they were really worried about. They pulled us out of there and then they regrouped everybody on Vesey Street, between the water and West Street. They put everybody back in there.

Finally it did come down. From there -- this is much later on in the day, because every day we were

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so worried about that building we didn't really want to get people close. They were trying to limit the amount of people that were in there. Finally it did come down. That's when they let the guys go on. I just remember we started searching around all the rigs.

That was basically the rest of the day, the rest of the night. We were searching around rigs looking for men. That was it.

BATTALION CHIEF KENAHAN: All right.

Q. Do you have anything else to add?

A. No.

BATTALION CHIEF KENAHAN: Okay. Thank you very much for your cooperation. The time now is 3:45 p.m. This concludes the interview.