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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIREFIGHTER FRANK CAMPAGNA

Interview Date: December 4, 2001

Transcribed by Laurie A. Collins

CHIEF MALKIN: Today is December 4th, 2001. The time is 1431 hours. This is Battalion Chief Malkin of the Safety Battalion. I'm conducting an interview with Fireman Frank Campagna of Ladder 11, and we're in the quarters of 28 Engine at this time. This is the fireman's statement.

Q. Where did you respond from?

A. I responded from quarters, came up the FDR, showed up to the scene. The fire was blazing out. The first plane had hit. We pulled up in front, and we headed inside toward the lobby. On the way inside you saw the usual stuff like everyone else saw, things falling and stuff like that.

We got inside the lobby and we waited to hear from a chief or whoever what's going to go on, wait until we found out what's going on. What wound up happening is they teamed us up with 4 Engine, I believe it was. What it was is they combined us as one hose team pretty much. So they dropped half of their rollups and we kept half of ours, we kept one standpipe kit, and we headed up together.

As we were going up, they said on the lower level the second plane hit the other building. Me personally, I felt it on another level up, so I think the timing was off between everybody.

We just kept walking up. As far as we knew, there were no planes or anything coming in. There wasn't even a plane that hit that building. We just knew there was a fire up there. Any other explosions that we felt from inside were maybe extra machinery or something like that. Those were the words that we were getting.

So we just kept going up the stairwell. We got up to about the 17th floor, and we felt another pretty big explosion. At this time about every two floors, every three floors you'd stop into an office, get some water, take a breather. Guys were pretty winded. They had equipment on and carrying everything.

We're taking a breather, and I believe that's when the other Trade Center went down and everybody felt it and they didn't know exactly what it was. Everyone headed towards the stairwell, thinking it was a safer place to be.

After that happened, the building was still standing, everybody kept going up. So we kept going up, still stopping about every two, three floors. People still coming down. We were just telling them to keep calm and walk on the way down.

We got up to about the 28th, 30th floor, and we were taking another break. There was an office or we had a whole floor full of people. A chief came down from a floor above with another company and said everybody evacuate, everybody out now. We had to switch staircases. I believe the staircase we were in, there was no way down it anymore on the lower level. There was word that it had been taken out; we don't know what from.

So we switched to a different staircase. We headed down. We let the civilians go first. We showed them towards that staircase and started heading down, letting the civilians go first, and we walked our way down. We were up there with a couple of companies. I don't know the exact numbers. I know 4 Engine was with us. Everybody went down with us.

We got down to the lobby, and there's a lot of guys down there in the lobby itself along with 4 Engine. Everyone is standing there, waiting to hear what's going to happen next, what's going on. Guys were just saying it's time to go, this isn't safe to stay in here.

So I believe we headed out along the wall of the Trade, and I believe 18 followed us out. That was it. It came down on top of us. That's all I remember of who followed us out or I heard who followed us out. 4 Engine obviously didn't make it out. They were with us the whole time, so I'm assuming they were still in the lobby at that time.

That's pretty much it from that point on.

Q. What did you see when you left tower one? Tower two had already collapsed.

A. I didn't see it. Tower two we didn't even know went down. I had no clue it went down. When we were up on the 30th floor, guys were banging out the windows, saying, "Holy shit, this looks like a war zone."

Guys were saying stay away from the

windows, something might come in, something might fall down and come in through the window. So I never got to see it. What they were talking about was the other Trade Center when it had gone down. The whole scene outside looked terrible.

On our way out when we left first World Trade, all we saw was -- it was like tunnel vision. All you saw was what was right in front of you. Things were still falling as we were heading out. The streets were all dusty. I was not really realizing that the other Trade Center had collapsed, because it was towards our left, I believe, which we were running towards the right. We were standing along the line, and it's just what's in front of me.

I wasn't really looking around to take a look. There's still stuff falling on top of us. So I still didn't know it went down. I actually didn't know until the other one fell down and I heard that the other one was gone while we were in there.

Q. Question: When you exited the World Trade Center, the north tower, you were going where? North on West Street? Which way were you

exiting the area? Running away from the buildings, which street were you on and which way were you going?

A. We were on West Side Highway and we were headed up towards --

Q. North?

A. Yeah, north, toward Vesey. We were right there. Our rig was parked on Vesey, so we headed up that way. We were right under the walkway just about, and that's when it started coming, about there.

Q. Did you see the command post? Did you see Chief Ganci? Do you know Chief Ganci?

A. No.

Q. Did you see the command post with the command board?

A. I saw the command post. Actually I don't know -- I just remember seeing like there was a bunch of people over there past the walkway towards the water. There was just a crowd of people. I didn't know -- in that intersection there, that's all I was looking at was in that intersection there.

There was nobody in the intersection,

nobody in the streets in general, everyone just saying come on, keeping coming, keep coming. That's when it went. I looked back. You see three explosions and then the whole thing coming down. I turned my head and everybody was scattering. From there I don't know who was who. I don't even know where my guys went. None of us knew where each other were at at that point in time.

Q. So you just kept running as it was collapsing?

A. Yeah, pretty much, yeah. Each and every person, pretty much.

Q. Then what happened? How did you regroup? Where did you go after that? Did you form up again or meet your guys again? What did you do after that?

A. After everything happened, we got engulfed by the whole cloud of smoke and everything, and guys were sharing masks inside that whole thing and trying to find our way out. We couldn't see anything inside there. I was right up on a cop van. My face was right against a headlight, and I could barely see that, because



the lights were on on it.

Once we got out of there, I heard Mike Kehoe yelling, "28, 28." I found him, and from there we went looking around and we found Roy. He was up getting IV up somewhere. Then we finally found our lieutenant and Jimmy Ippolito who both of them I guess had ran towards the water towards where all the guys were at the command post area. I guess they ran towards that way. We ran down the West Side Highway.

The other guy we didn't really know where he was was our chauffeur. He was still out by the truck, I guess, when everything was going on. I guess when the second plane hit, from what I understand, he got blown back a couple feet and he got helped out and he got taken to a hospital. So he's all right. That was the only one at that point that we didn't know.

Then we finally all regrouped and whatnot and found each other. Around that time guys were coming in bus loads before we know it, coming in to help search.

Q. Where did you park your rig? Where was 28 parked?

A. He dropped us off right in front, right in front of the tower we went in, which is --

Q. The north tower?

A. The north tower, the second one that went down. He dropped us off right in front of there, and from what I understand he parked it right on Vesey Street. That's where we got off. It was right in front.

Q. What floor did you reach when you were climbing up? You said you were like on the 20th floor and then you decided to come down?

A. 28th or 30th floor, the 30th, around there, because we were going like every two floors. So it was around there. I remember seeing 28 on the wall, and then I think we went up again. I think it was around the 30th floor, we made it up there. From there that's when we went down.

Then a chief came down and pretty much said everybody evacuate, because nothing was coming over the radios, as far as everybody was still waiting. We were waiting with a bunch of guys at that point in time.

I saw one of the guys I knew from the

academy. He was in 4 Engine. Another one I knew from academy, he was from 10-10. They were up there with us also. I don't know if you got details from someone else, but I'm pretty sure he was from there.

Q. What floor did you say you were on when you think the south tower fell down?

A. I would say about the 17th.

Q. You didn't have a radio that day. Did you have a handy talky?

A. Me? No.

Q. You were with the officer when you were climbing?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember what was on the handy talky when the south tower fell down? Was there a lot of screaming? Do you remember radio messages or anything like that?

A. No, nothing like that.

Q. There were a lot of guys in the lobby, you said, when you came down to the lobby and hooked up. You don't remember anybody specific, companies or personal people, individual people?

A. No, like I said, it was real tunnel

vision. I just wasn't being pretty much aware of anything around, who was around me and whatnot. Like I said, 4 and 18 are the only ones that stuck out in my head.

CHIEF MALKIN: Okay. I'm thanking the firefighter for the interview. The interview is concluded. It's now 1443 hours. This concludes the interview and also the chief's aide in the Safety Battalion, Michael Bosco, sat in on this interview.