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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

EMT JASON CHARLES

Interview Date: January 23, 2002

Transcribed by Nancy Francis

MR. ECCLESTON: Today's date is January 23rd, 2002. The time is 2112 hours and my name is Christopher Eccleston of the New York City Fire Department World Trade Center Task Force. I am conducting an interview with the following individual:

Q. Please state your name.

A. Jason Charles.

Q. Your rank.

A. EMT.

Q. Shield.

A. 5114.

Q. And your assigned battalion.

A. 13.

Q. Mr. Charles, were you assigned to the World Trade Center disaster?

A. No, I wasn't.

Q. Did you respond to the World Trade Center disaster on 9/11?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. In your own words, could you please tell me about the events of the day?

A. Yes. [redacted] We got to Madison

and 28th Street when we saw -- me and my son saw black smoke. I had thought it was just a regular structural fire. So I told my son, listen, let's -- my son, mind you, is only three years old. I said let's go check out this fire. So we start walking down the block and we get up to Fifth Ave. and a lady walks up to me and says a plane hit the Trade Center, and I looked at her like she was crazy. I said it might have been a helicopter, not a plane. So I kept walking. I got to Broadway and now I could see the smoke just traveling east over the city, and another guy walked up to us and said a plane hit the towers. So I speeded up my walking to Sixth Ave., put my son on a bike, and we got to Sixth Ave. and I saw the giant hole in Tower 1.

As I'm staring at the hole in Tower 1, I walked across the street, across Sixth Ave. to the west side of Sixth Avenue, to see Tower 2, and at the time Tower 2 was intact. It wasn't touched yet. I looked down at my son and I repeated to him I couldn't believe what was going on, and I told him, oh, my God, and I heard people calling, oh, my God, look, look, and as I looked up, the second plane hit the second tower and there was a humongous fireball rolling up the side of the building. What delayed reaction I heard was the

sound itself, the explosion itself.

So I looked back down at any son and said (inaudible), baby, we have to go home, thinking to myself, Jesus, they're going to need every last EMS personnel in the city to go down. So I hesitantly scrambled along the street. At one point I lost my son for maybe a minute and I looked for him and then I found him. I got him back on the bike. We rode back across the street. I started dialing numbers to call my brother, my wife. At the time me and her were broken up, so we were just getting back together. So I started looking for anybody to call to take my son.

So I remembered the baby-sitter. So I shoot back down 28th Street over to Second and Third, taking my time, making sure I didn't get into an accident with my son. So it took me probably about ten minutes from Sixth Ave. to Second and Third with my son. We get upstairs, I knock on the baby-sitter's door, and she immediately takes my son out of my hands. She doesn't even ask me what's going on. So she takes my son and I give her something else I had on my bike, and she goes you going down there? I go yeah. She goes you want to look out my window? I told her, no, I'm going to get a better view.

As I'm waiting for the elevator, for some reason, the elevators broke down, both of them. So now I'm waiting another five, ten minutes for the elevators and I'm like getting more and more frustrated as I'm waiting for the elevators, and then I said screw it. I threw the bike on my back and I ran down 19 flights of steps. I got downstairs, I jumped on my bike, I got myself together, I checked the gears of my bike, made sure I had air in my tires, and then I took off.

I took off to 27th Street because you can cut through the blocks between the buildings, and I took off 27th Street, made a left, cut down towards Second, and then made a quick right going towards the Trade Center. I'm riding on the curb and I see a fire truck to my left and I speed up peddling and I jump off the curb next to the fire truck, landing probably about a foot away from the truck. A firefighter on the truck looks at me and he's like holy, you know, like he couldn't believe it, and now I'm riding next to the fire truck speeding down Second Ave., which is a slight downhill. I didn't even get the engine number. It was an engine truck, but I didn't get the engine number.

So I'm racing down Second Ave. with all the emergency vehicles, like following behind a fire

truck. I come up onto a station wagon, I cut my brakes, and I just missed the station wagon, almost getting pinned between a bus. So now I'm flying, you know, I squeezed just between a bus and a station wagon to pull off to the left again to almost get hit by an ESU truck. So now at this point I'm passing 23rd Street and the space becomes tight between another bus and a van and I barely squeezed through that and I'm flying down the street, down Second Ave., and now I'm passing the Police Academy, which I think is on 21st Street, 21st Street between Second and Third, and I see a cop standing with the barricades, next to the barricade, and he's looking like he wants to go. He's like, you know, he looked like he was all amped as I'm passing him. He just wanted to -- it was like he wanted to jump in the next vehicle and go.

So I keep racing down there. I get to about Beth Israel Hospital, I don't know if it's 16th Street, 15th Street, and I start to lose all my energy. The first wave of emergency vehicles had left me at about 15th Street. I kept pedaling. I stopped at 14th Street because of the light. I wasn't about to get hit by another bus going crosstown. So I start peddling again as the light turns green and I start picking up

my speed a little bit and then I hear a second wave of emergency vehicles coming and they gave me the second adrenaline rush. So I started racing with them and I'm racing alongside of the ESU truck for a good block and then the streets just opened up and they start going and the ambulances start passing me. I think three FDNY ambulances and a Metro Care ambulance passed me, and then the rest of them were cop cars, fire trucks, and I guess a Battalion Chief, a fire division suburban.

So I get to Houston. Second Avenue now turns into Christie Street and I jump back onto a curb, and at that point all of -- the second wave of emergency vehicles left me and I'm flying down the street and I jump off a curb again, landing next to a minivan, which I just missed, or it missed me, and as I'm coming down the street, I'm not sure if it's East Broadway that crosses Christie Street, but a third wave of emergency vehicles come down and I could hear them at least three or four blocks behind me. They start passing me and I start rushing with them and they gave me a third adrenaline rush.

I'm rushing with them and we all get to Canal Street, where everybody came to a stop because -- I'm

not sure if it's Ladder 9 or Engine 9 was coming off the Brooklyn Bridge. It probably wasn't Ladder 9. But there was another ladder truck coming off the Manhattan Bridge and everybody stopped to let them go, and then I waved on the other emergency vehicles who were behind me to go ahead of me and they all flew down Canal Street for a block and hung a right on -- I don't know what street it was. But I know that, when I went behind them, as I ride behind them, now we're in Chinatown. As I ride behind them, I guess they were like special forces from the courts or the FBI building, in that area, federal cops or whatever, jumped in front of me and I yelled at him EMS, EMS, and he jumped out of my way and I kept riding.

At this point now I'm passing behind the courts. I got behind the courts and I go underneath like the Brooklyn Bridge overheads and I pull up on I think it's Reade Street, right next to City Hall, and then I see both the towers smoking like chimneys. I mean, it was like the worst sight in the world. As I pulled up onto -- I think it was -- I'm not sure what street, but it wasn't Reade Street, I'm not sure what street, but it was right next to City Hall -- I saw one person fall out the building. As I keep riding, I look

over to my left and there's just a crowd of people staring like they couldn't believe it, and I'm staring at them and they're staring at the towers. I see detectives and FBI agents running around the street like they didn't know what to do, what was going on.

So I had my ID out prior to that because I was trying to flag down a vehicle as I was racing down Second Ave. to stop. I mean, I knew they wasn't going to stop, but if they did, good, I would have jumped in with them. But nobody stopped. So I had my ID out prior to that and I was flashing all the detectives and FBI agents and they're just waving me through.

I get to Broadway, Broadway and I think it's Vesey, and I slam on my brakes because a lady cuts in front of me. Now, at that point, I just started like lightly riding to look for a Lieutenant, an EMS Lieutenant, and I ran into an EMS Lieutenant about once I got to Dey and Broadway. So I identified myself as an EMS off-duty, and she was like good, we're setting up triage. They set up triage between Dey and the next street north of Dey -- south of Dey. Sorry. So she starts setting up triage and I told her I was going to be back. I was going to lock my bike up. I locked my bike up on Dey between Broadway and Fulton and I go

back and I started triaging patients. I had no triage tags in my hand. So they had already had the triage tags arriving, so I started asking questions, you know, I had no ACRs neither. So I started asking them questions about their history, if they had asthma history or whatever.

Then I ran into another EMS guy who had a bike. I was sidetracked by him. He asked me where did I lock my bike up, and I told him over here. I took over to where my bike was. Me and him chained our bikes up together. We went back over there and we started triaging more patients. I ran into one patient who said she was having an asthma attack. Now, at that point I had went over to a Metro Care bus to ask if they had any albuterol. They didn't have any for whatever reason. So then I went -- I remembered where my Lieutenant went -- the Lieutenant I ran into. Sorry. I think she was from Battalion 4. I ran over to Fulton and Church Street, where there was another triage center set right in front of the towers, in front of the Millenium Hotel across the street from the towers.

At that point, I run down Fulton Street and a PA cop, Port Authority cop, stops me, and I flash my ID

and he's giving me flack about, you know, you're not going down here. I'm like, listen, I've got an asthma patient over there on Broadway. He's like no, you ain't going down there. She's not getting albuterol today. I was like all right, you know Rudy Charles? Rudy Charles is a Port Authority cop, my father. He goes no, not today. So I can see he was just being difficult.

So I ran back over to Broadway and I ran into a firefighter named Firefighter Anderson. If I'm not mistaken, he's an IC for the fire cadets, the fire cadet program. I used to be a fire cadet. That's how I knew him. He gave me a turnout coat to wear because I needed to be identified as a city worker. So he gave me the turnout coat and I ran back over to -- and he was standing on Dey and Broadway. I ran back over to Fulton and Church and the PA cop was still standing there and he runs over to me and I tell him, you know, stay the fuck over there, and he's like all right, the FBI is going to stop me. So as I'm walking by him, the FBI cops looked -- the FBI agents. Sorry. They're looking at me and they're like, you know, they just looked at me and just let me go through.

So I get over to the Lieutenant. He was

talking to a Chief and a Captain. I didn't get their names. The Chief had an eagle on his collar, so this was a deputy. So now I asked the Lieutenant was there any albuterol. She says go check the ambulance over there. I didn't get the ambulance unit or the bus number. There were two EMTs working on a severe burn patient, it looked like 30 percent of his body was burned, and they were working on him. I jumped on the bus and I asked for albuterol, and the guy turned around and he gave me albuterol and a nebulizer.

So I take the albuterol and the nebulizer and I run back over to Dey and Broadway, where the other triage center was. I get over there. Metro Care found their albuterol. Okay. So after all that running around, Hatzolah comes. They're coming in and now they have nine EMTs and I think two paramedics. I had told them we need at least three of your guys over at Church and Fulton because there's only two EMTs there, the Captain, the Lieutenant and the Chief, and he's like no, we're going to keep them here because everybody is coming here. I was like, guy, there's more people coming out of that building going to that triage center than those two EMTs can handle -- three. Sorry. It was three EMTs there. He's like no. I was like,

listen, right now I need your help. I don't need you to give me your -- what's that called?

Q. Sarcasm?

A. No. Superior complex. And he was like all right, all right. So then I said I'll be right back, and then I ran back over to the Lieutenant on Fulton and Dey -- I mean Fulton and Church, and I get over there and I'm like, Lieutenant, we got a triage center that has too many chiefs and no indians. We need somebody with status to go over there and let them know what's going on. So she's like okay and she sends an EMT over there. I think he was a medic. I'm not even sure. But this guy I remember, a white guy about my height, 5'10", 5'11", he had shades on at the time, spiky hair, I think he's from Battalion 4, too, he walked over to Dey and Church. He started to cut up Dey to go to Church, which is right next to the Century 21 store.

So now, I guess, I saw him cutting up there, so now I made the decision that I was going to go into the buildings and start helping everybody else out because I saw the firefighters standing over there carrying people out and there were a lot of EMTs over there who weren't FDNY. They were like, I guess, from

Bronx -- I mean like Brooklyn and Queens. So they were there and they had like EMT on the tape on their shirt and they were like helping people out. I started to head towards the building and these two EMT females, they had this heavyset lady. They were walking her over to the triage center. So she gets over to the triage center and she sees me and a Lieutenant and decides that she wants to pass out. So, all right, she passes out on the ground. So I started to walk past her because I'm like, well, they got her. Then I saw that the Lieutenant and the two EMS females were having a problem lifting her up. So I told the two EMS ladies to move and me and the Lieutenant picked her up. I grabbed her and the Lieutenant picked her up by the legs and we start walking over slowly to the curb, and then I heard an explosion from up, from up above, and I froze and I was like, oh, shit, I'm dead because I thought debris was going to hit me in the head and that was it.

Then everybody stops and looks at the building and then they take off. The Lieutenant dropped her legs and ran. The triage center, everybody who was sitting there hurt and, oh, you know, help me, they got up and everybody together got up and ran. I

looked at them like why are they running? I look over my shoulder and I says, oh, shit, and then I turned around and looked up and that's when I saw the tower coming down. I saw the -- it looked like the top maybe 70, 60 floors coming off the building, and I had stood there thinking maybe the towers were not going to hit me. Then I looked closer and two pieces of debris fly over my head about 40, 50 stories up, flying over my head, and I was like, shit, I'm out of here.

I grabbed the lady and I tugged on her twice and she wouldn't get up at that point. She got up on one knee, actually, and then she wouldn't get up. Then I let her go and I started to run, and I'm hauling ass down Fulton, up Fulton actually, running east. Actually, as I'm running east, I stopped and I told myself what are you doing? Jason Charles, go back for her. So I turned around and went back to the lady. I get back down to -- I mean, it was only like ten steps. So I took another ten steps back and I get back down there and she's gone, and I'm like all right.

So now I look over to my left real quick and I see two firefighters running at me with this horrified look on their face. One firefighter was trying to drop his Scott pack and it got caught. The

buckle that goes around the Scott pack around the waist got caught. So he was trying to -- he was unbuckling that while he was running. The other guy, he dropped it off his shoulders, but it looked like it got caught onto his arms, and then the dust hit them and then the metal crashed on them, and I turned around and I started running. I saw people -- as I'm turning around running, I picked up people who were coming out this corridor right in front of Millenium Hotel that leads you into like the mall plaza on Liberty. I saw people running out of there, like running against the wall, against Building 5, running north. Yes, running north.

So they were all -- they're running north and I'm running and in my head I'm like let's jump in that bus over there. I said, nah, just run. Then I'm starting to run and I see firefighters, you know, I mean, like when everybody started running, I'm seeing two firefighters drop their Scott packs, FBI agents took off, EMTs took off, and that told me this is a real situation, this wasn't nothing to take lightly. So that's when I had ran and left the lady, came back for her.

Now, as I see the two firefighters

(inaudible), I made the decision not to jump in the back of the ambulance that was parked right on the corner of Fulton and Church. I start running up the block. As I start running up Fulton, I see this lady who I left behind hauling ass up Fulton and her dress is like flapping in the wind, and I'm like look at her go, you know, and I'm just running and she had a nice lead on me, so she was like half a block up already. But I made sure I found her first before I left.

So I started running and now I'm panicking. I'm like, oh, man, I'm dead, I'm dead, and there's all these people in front of me and they're running slow and I'm like, oh, Jesus Christ, and I stopped running and I started walking real fast behind them because I wasn't going to push anybody out of the way. So there was an opening and I took the opening and I started hauling ass, but this older black guy falls in front of me and I jump over him and I stopped and turned around and two people scooped him up and kept running. It was like a football scene, like they scooped up a football and kept running with him, and they're running and then now I'm running. I almost started crying at one point. I'm like, oh, man, I'm dead, I'm dead, and I stopped running and said screw it, I'm going to die

right here, let me take it as it is. Then something said, stupid, run, you know, run and die running. So I started running again.

At one point -- at some point, I'm not sure, but the building -- that horrible twisting metal sound of a freight train or whatever -- it's the worst sound in the world -- stopped. But then it started again. Then I started hauling ass again, and at one point I stopped, like maybe 20 feet before I got to Broadway, still on Fulton, flying up to Broadway, and I let everybody run past me. I said everybody go, go, go. Now I ran the rest the way down to Broadway and then I looked to my right down towards Dey and I see at least a 40, 50-story ball of dust rushing at us. I'm like holy shit. I'm like all right, run, and I kept running and I ran towards Vesey, and then Vesey, the dust came around there, but for some reason the dust didn't come up Fulton yet, not as fast and hard and as dark as it did at Vesey and Dey.

So now I had that trapped feeling and I thought I was really screwed because I knew behind that was nothing but death. If you sucked on the dust, that was pretty much it. So I yelled everybody over here and I pointed to a store. The store's name -- it was a

delicatessen, actually. It's called Au Pain or Au Bon Pain.

Q. Au Bon Pain?

A. Yes, thank you, that famous delicatessen. I ran over there and like three other people followed me. One guy I remember stopping, like he was still on Fulton, running up Fulton. He had stopped dead in his tracks and covered his face. That was actually before the dust started rushing at us, but I thought I'd add that in. There was a guy, he just stopped dead in his tracks, he didn't want to run anymore, and I remember reaching for him and then the dust caught him and I kept running. But the dust coming up Fulton was a little lighter, and I don't know why it was light there, but it was dark as hell coming down Dey and Vesey.

So anyway, we run up to the store and I grabbed the door and I'm "open the fucking door," because it was locked and I had this look on my face like hurry up, like I was about to cry again, and the manager of the store scrambled through his keys and he ran over to the door and he unlocked it. By the time he got to the door, the dust caught us. I held onto the door and then I felt the door open and I opened it

up and I shoved the two people in and then I closed the door right behind me. I get inside the store and I start cursing and I almost started to pick a chair up and throw it, if you know what I'm saying, through the window, but that wouldn't have made no sense because when I looked behind the window, it was completely black. I mean, it was like looking into hell.

As I'm looking, I see one person, it looked like a white guy with glasses, walking up against the glass of the window. I'm like holy shit. So I run back outside and the door was locked again. I turned around to the manager, open the fucking door, and he's like, oh, I'm sorry. I said leave this shit open, and he said all right. He opens the door and I opened the door and I yell outside. I yell outside and it sounded like I was yelling in an empty room, like the acoustics -- if anybody ever heard the acoustics in an empty room, it was like that, and it was scary. I was like holy shit. Then I closed the door and not even five seconds later, three people came, it looked like flies, to the door, tu-tu-tu-tu, like they all bumped into it. I opened the door, rushed them in, and they came in and they couldn't see and I asked the guy for water. I said wash their faces down, and he was like

all right, and the manager and a few other people started washing their faces down.

Then more people started coming to the door and they started letting them in and they started washing their faces off. I washed one guy's face off. Then I told the lady, here, take over because I saw people -- the store now leads to the back. There's a back exit that leads into the building. I think the building we were in was 222 Broadway or 225. I'm not sure which one it was. 222 Broadway. So I go to the back and there's like 60 people in the lobby of this building and I'm like, Jesus Christ. I was by myself and I had no tech bag. The only thing I had on me was albuterol and a nebulizer, and unless I was going to blow into the nebulizer, you know, that was the extent of my medical care.

So at one point I started -- I tried to get the crowd's attention and a guy gave me a bullhorn. He gives me the bullhorn and I start announcing who I was, that I wasn't a firefighter, because I had on a firefighter's jacket, I wasn't a firefighter, I was an EMT and that my name was Jason Charles. They're like okay and they started listening. Somebody had asked me what happened and then two other people were like,

yeah, what happened? What happened? I was like, Jesus Christ, they don't even know. I was like all right. I was like ladies and gentlemen, Tower 2 just collapsed, the entire building came down, and they're like, oh, my God. People started crying and stuff like that. But I gave it to that entire crowd. They held it together. I wasn't like they panicked like in one of those movies and flipped out. They held it together. So I'm like okay.

So then my next question was -- no. Someone had asked me can we go outside? I was like -- and then I know this is like really unprofessional, but then, at that point, I was just really aggravated. I was like you know what? If you want to fucking go outside, you know what I'm saying, and suck on that fucking dust, be my guest, but I suggest that you all stay in here, wait until it clears out in another 15, 20 minutes, and we can all go east towards the river and get out of here. They were like all right, all right. So they started calming down, and I was like ladies and gentlemen, does anybody have asthma? Like 30 people raised their hands. I was like, oh, Jesus Christ. So I started separating the asthma patients from everybody else, and I put the asthma patients back in the delicatessen so I

could keep my eye on them had anybody broke out in a severe asthma attack.

At one point a medic came running in through one of the doors covered in dust coughing and I was like -- and there was a guy standing behind me and I was like, yo, big man, take him inside the delicatessen and watch him. He was like all right. So he walked him inside. Now, I'm still taking in asthma patients. I mean, it was like at least 30, now it looked like 40 because people just started popping up. So then they started -- they went in the delicatessen.

Then somebody brought to my attention a chick who had a laceration on her head, a woman, sorry, had a laceration on her head, approximately 20-year-old African-American female, and the lac was probably maybe half an inch wide, it looked pretty deep, she might have needed stitches for it. There was a guy who was applying pressure to her head with a cloth, and I was like let me see it, and he was like, yeah, she's bleeding pretty badly. When he lifted it up, it wasn't bleeding too bad. So she was pretty much okay. So I told him wait here. I'm going to go back outside and look for a tech bag or something I could use.

So I went back outside. At the time I had

the bandana around my head. I took it from around my head and put it around my mouth. So now I'm walking outside and I'm asking people are they okay because now at this point people are just dazed. It was like one of those nuclear war movies where people are just in a daze. So I walked into a few people and I'm asking them are they okay, are they okay. One heavyset gentleman, I had to ask him, are you okay, sir? Are you okay? He's like, yeah, yeah, I'm all right. I said, listen, sir. Either walk east to the river or walk into that delicatessen over there. He said all right.

At one point I came up to a bunch of officers who were sitting on the cemetery that's right there. They were all sitting on the wall like they couldn't believe what was going on. I had asked if anybody was hurt -- no. I had said who's hurt over here? Who's bleeding? Because I saw blood on the floor. There was an officer who had little minor lacerations on his hand. I was like, listen, guys, you guys got to get out of here because Tower 1 is going to fall because for some reason I had just known that the tower was going to come down at that point because when Tower 2 came down, the ground was actually shaking.

So then I started walking. I got back over to Church and Fulton and I looked to my left and I could see it, but barely, a big piece of metal sticking into the ground. It reminded me of for some reason Planet of the Apes, the new one. So I looked at it and I was like, Jesus Christ, and I saw a Fire Marshal and like two detectives walk out of the dust over there, and they came over, you know, they came walking out. Before that, before I saw them walk out, I found a Battalion Chief's helmet, and I looked at it and picked it up, and I remember seeing a Battalion Chief, he hauled ass up the block, so he was okay. I remember seeing him run on Fulton before the towers came down. I mean, this guy was an older guy and I never seen an old man move so quick. So he was all right. So I took his helmet and I looked at it and I was like -- and I looked at the towers and there was debris still coming off the building.

Mind you, before that, which I found a little weird, before the towers fell, there were a lot of people falling out of the building like, you know, I don't know, like they were just throwing themselves out, like they were just lined up and going, like paratroopers, and at one point right before the towers

came down that stopped. It was like the people that were coming out just stopped coming out the window for whatever reason. I found that a little weird.

As I was walking over to Tower 1 with the helmet in my hand, I had put it on my head. I'm like, you know, well, he's okay. I'm going to put this on and protect myself from anything falling off the building because I had nothing. Then I took it off again and I'm like, ah, I'm not going to put this back on my head, it's not even mine. So I'm like -- and the Fire Marshal, what is that? What is that in your hand? What are you doing with that? I'm like, okay. I'm like, it's a Battalion Chief's helmet. He's okay. He's like, give me the helmet. All right, here. I'm sorry, man. So I took it off because I think he had saw me because when I took it off and I looked behind me, he was already coming up, but he hadn't said anything. So I guess he put two and two together, you know what I mean. Me with a Battalion Chief's helmet doesn't quite look too well. So he's like, oh, and I'm like, listen, I'm EMS. He's like all right.

Then a detective came up and said we're pulling back to Chambers. I'm like word? He's said yeah because Tower 1 is going to come down. He said

the same thing. I was like all right. At that point I looked up at Tower 1 and I could see that she was leaning slightly but not much, and as I looked over to -- I looked at the tower, I looked at everybody else and everybody else is hauling -- everybody is walking up, walking south towards Chambers. So the officer offers me some water, I take it, I'm starting to drink it as I'm walking, and I'm walking because he said we got to pull back. I'm like wait a second. I still got those patients in the building.

So he started -- they walked, and I ran up to an ESU truck. Some ESU guys were putting on Scott packs and I was like, yo, you guys got an extra Scott pack so I can go in the building and help you guys out? They were like -- and they started looking for Scott packs, and they were like, yo, we're out of Scott packs. So I go (inaudible)? He was like yeah. I said you guys going in the building, right? He said yeah. The only reason why I didn't go in the building because I had knew that the mall level was completely dust and for me to go in there with nothing on would have pretty much been suicide. So I said all right. They said go up the block to Broadway, there should be another ESU truck over there.

So I started back over there, and as I'm starting back over there, I looked down -- I think it's Vesey right between Tower 7 and the Trade Center and there were like at least four firefighters over there. It looked like eight, actually, because there were another two walking down. They were long-boarding a guy who must have jumped off the escalator that's like right there on Vesey, and they're long boarding him. I'm like all right.

So I walk over to a fire truck and I take a sip of water that was coming out of the fire truck, and there was this female from England who was on the 90th floor of Tower 1, who told me she had just barely made it out of there. When the towers came down, she lost both her shoes. So she was walking. So I said, listen, I'm walking back to the building over here, you want to come with me? She's like yeah. I'm like all right. So we started walking back. She's walking barefoot because she lost her shoes.

So we get back over to 222 Broadway and we get inside and I'm telling everybody, listen, I couldn't find any equipment, but we're going to have to get out of here because Tower 1 is going to come down. This sergeant, a police officer sergeant goes don't

tell them that, don't tell them that. I'm like what? He was like -- I was like all right, whatever, forget it, then I'm not going to say it again. Then I go all right, ladies and gentlemen, if we're going to do this, we're going to get out here and we're going to walk east to the river, and I had said that twice, and then I made the mistake of saying west again and I was like damn. Then I said all right everybody, you know what? Screw it. Let's get out of here and just walk east now.

As we're all walking to the back of the building through the freight -- not the freight -- the loading docks in the back of the building. We get to the back -- we don't even get to the back of the building. We start walking back there and then I heard a ground level explosion and I'm like holy shit, and then you heard that twisting metal wreckage again. Then I said shit and everybody started running and I started running behind them, and we get to the door. For some reason, like straight out of a movie, two people ran through the door together and got stuck in the doorway, and I'm like, oh, my God, this is not the time. So they squeezed through and they got through and I squeezed through them and ran around them because

I just wanted to see which way the towers were falling.

So I get to the loading dock and I run outside and there's people running out the loading dock east to the river like little rats out of a cage, like chu-chu-chu. Then I get to the loading dock outside and I see this 50, 60-story dust rolling down the block again. I'm like holy shit and I sort of moved too quick and fell down, and as I fall down, I look at a police Sergeant -- or a Captain. Sorry. He got covered in the dust because he didn't make it to the doorway in time.

I fell down, and when I fell down, the dust went over my head, and I said shit and I jumped up gapsing for air. At that point everybody is screaming get the fuck out of here, and they're like close the gate, close the gate, and the gate was moving like a snail, it was closing so slow. So eight of us jumped on the gate and started using our weight to pull it down and it wouldn't budge. I remember looking over to my right and seeing another EMT. Naomi is her last name. She used to be out of Battalion 16. But I saw her. She was helping us pull the gate down. At one point someone yelled get the fuck out of here,

everybody get the fuck out of here, go, go, go, and everybody is yelling. It wasn't that yell like, you know, that roller coaster yell or you're yelling at somebody to discipline them. It was like that horrifying scream that everybody was relaying back and forward.

So everybody started hauling ass out of there, and I jumped back onto the deck and I'm like everybody get the fuck out of here and everybody is running. I must have been like the last person out of the room, and by the time I decided to get out of the room, being the last person out, the room was completely -- I mean the loading dock was completely dusty. It was like a fog. You couldn't see anything but the light that was illuminating the room.

So I got back into the lobby and the lobby was dusty and I'm like shit, I'm going to suffocate in here. I started panicking because I couldn't breathe and it was heavily dust to the side. You could see each other but you couldn't breathe. Now I'm panicking and everybody else is like looking for somewhere to breathe, and I remember sticking my face between an elevator door, like the elevator shaft, to try to get some air, and that wasn't working and I'm like shit,

I'm going to die in here now, suffocating, and then somebody passed me a wet rag. I put the wet rag on my face and I was able to breathe again. So I'm like all right, cool.

Then the same sergeant who told me not to tell anybody the towers were coming down, he asked me, you think we could die from this dust? I'm like right now? No. But eventually? Yes. He's like okay. So then we're all looking for a way out. So now the dust started to come down a little quicker than it did last time. So I walked outside and I'm just like, Jesus Christ. I couldn't even see. Particles were hitting me in my face. I'm like let me go back inside.

I went back inside and at one point I remember I saw a bunch of people run down to the lower levels of the building. So I started running down to the lower levels of the building and I see all these people in there. I went back upstairs to look for a Lieutenant -- a Captain, actually. I said, listen, Captain, I got like 60 people in this building. This is before Tower 1 came down. Sorry. This is before Tower 1 came down. I had told the Captain I had 60 people in the building. He said, listen, I'm going over to -- what's that around where the Liberty boats,

the boats to the Liberty.

Q. To Ellis Island?

A. No. Where the boats leave from Manhattan over to Ellis Island. He said he was going to be --

Q. The ferry terminal.

A. Thank you. He was going over to the ferry terminal and he was like you're on your own and he left me. I was like okay. That's when I started looking for a tech bag and stuff. That was before Tower 1 came down. So anyway, I ran into another -- I ran into a Lieutenant. He says I'm going to South Ferry. You can stay here if you want. I was like all right, that's two for two, you know what I'm saying? (inaudible) I understood that they were scared. So it wasn't like I could say anything behind him. So I was like all right, I guess it's up to me.

So I went back over to Broadway and Fulton at that point and I just knew both the towers were down. You couldn't see anything, but you just knew they were down. There was no shadow or nothing. So it was like I went back into the building and I said screw it, let me start evacuating the building. So I started going down to the lower levels and I ended up in the gym of the building, the nicest gym I've ever seen in an

office building. There were like eight guys in there and they're like what's going on? I mean, they were like what's going on but like is anybody leaving the building yet? I'm like, listen, you've got to go upstairs to Duane Reade -- because as a matter of fact, before I went downstairs, I heard all this commotion and I'm hearing voices and shit and I'm like anybody still in there? I went back to the loading docks because I heard the commotion because it's an area where you can go down to the basement levels before you go to the loading docks, and I heard all this commotion in that area and I couldn't for my life figure out where it was coming from. So I went up to the loading docks, I yelled again, no one responded. As I'm walking back to the lobby area, I see a crack and I see people moving around and I go what's that? Oh, shit, that's Duane Reade, and I'm like -- you know, there's people being handed wet rags with water by the Lieutenant and he's telling everybody to walk east.

Q. Is this a PD Lieutenant or an EMS Lieutenant?

A. EMS Lieutenant.

Q. An EMS Lieutenant.

A. An EMS Lieutenant. He's giving people water and a wet rag and telling them to go east to the river,

go east to the river. So everybody, you know, they're walking east. I'm like, Lieutenant, Charles, 5114, Battalion 13. He's like all right. He said something. He said we're going to get everybody else out of here. I went all right. So that's when I made the decision to go --

Q. Do you remember who that Lieutenant was?

A. No. I couldn't remember for my life who he was. But I remember going back to the basement levels to get everybody else out because I knew there was people still downstairs. So I wound up in the gym. Those guys had a TV set and that's when I found out we were under attack, because prior to that I thought Tower 2 blew up because the engine from the plane hit Tower 2 and exploded inside. It was like stupid, but that's what I thought. Then that's when I knew we were under attack. So I sat there for like 10, 15 minutes, looking at the TV set, and then I was drinking some more water and I was like crazy dehydrated because the bike ride alone wore me out, you know, my legs were just complete rubber.

So now I'm drinking water and at this point I'm with the EMT, Naomi. So we're getting everybody else out of the building. So we got those guys out the

gym, then I started going lower than that and started getting people out of the office. At one point I went to an office and people were still working. I'm like get the hell out of here. What the hell are you guys doing? They're like okay, you know, they're locking up their stuff. I'm like go. Don't worry about that shit. They're like all right.

So then I had started walking through the lower levels looking for more people and ran into a maintenance room, which was like the best luck in the world because I found boots, because at the time I had Sketcher shoes on and those weren't doing me -- they did me good running from the towers, but after that I needed something heavy-duty. So I found -- and like, you know, which was the luckiest thing in the world, size 13, which are like the hardest shoes to find. So I found those, I put those on, and I started -- me and Naomi and another guy, the maintenance guy, we started walking back. So we walked back upstairs. We walked back upstairs and we started telling people get out of here. So then I told Naomi, you know, listen, get out of here, you know what I'm saying? She's like nah, nah, I'd rather stick with you. I'm like okay, cool. So we stuck together for like at least an hour. At

this point I was just like walking around on the streets because there was nothing else to do.

So now we went into a building. At one point I went into a building and I ran into a few PD officers, they were like just sitting in there. I don't know what building it was, but it was next to J&R Music World. So we get into J&R Music -- I mean the building next to J&R Music World and they're talking and I overhear the cop telling everybody, yeah, it came over the radio that one of the planes are heading towards the Trade Center and that one of the planes were already hijacked. I'm like, to myself, I'm like, damn, they heard all this report of they hit the buildings. How come no one tried to evacuate the buildings in time? Whatever. At that point, I didn't know how many people died in the buildings neither, but I knew there were people in there. So we're chatting and stuff and then all right, whatever. So I leave them.

So now, a guy, a detective, for some reason lost his shirt, so he's like shirtless. So I ran back into the building to get him a T-shirt that was in the gym downstairs. I get the T-shirt, I run back upstairs, and he was gone. He moved. So then now me

and the detectives, we're bringing up T-shirts and sweat pants and stuff like that from the gym level because we knew that there was going to be some half-naked people running around, you know, cut, severely cut or whatever and we could use a lot of that stuff as bandages and tourniquets and stuff. So we brought most of that stuff upstairs and we put it in the lobby of the building. We took the Gatorade from the Duane Reade and stuff, we put it in the lobby of the building, 222 Broadway, and we left it there.

So I went back outside and I saw two firefighters like sitting on the ground. It looked like they were just winded, like that was it for them, they weren't going to do anything else. One was Oriental and a white guy sitting together. I went back outside. I ran into another EMS Lieutenant, I don't know who he was, and I was with him for the better part of the day, until I left. I never got his name or anything. But at that point he told me to go to this bus. They had a city bus with all EMS equipment on it, like the defibrillator, oxygen and all that stuff.

So I got on there and a paramedic was like do you need some oxygen? Do you want some oxygen? It looks like you need some oxygen. I'm said I'm all

right, I'm all right. He's like here, take some of this, it's free. I'm like all right. So I started breathing on the -- I took some 02 because I had a bad headache at that point and oxygen was doing nothing for me, so I put it down and I took it off. The Lieutenant was like, all right, we're going to go over to 225 Broadway, the building right next to the Duane Reade.

So we all grabbed some stuff and we lugged it over. We get into the building. We get to the building, actually. We didn't even get in the building yet because for some reason they wanted to get into Duane Reade. As opposed to walking right into 225 Broadway, they cut Duane Reade open and they used Duane Reade as like -- you know, because they had all the medical equipment and they had peroxide and alcohol and stuff like that. So if we get in there -- we could go in there just to cut into the building.

So now we're setting up triage in the building. They're setting up saline bags and sodium chloride and stuff, they're hanging them up. They had a nice little triage center going on. It looked like a little hospital. So at one point I disappeared because I needed to get some Tylenol. I got me an Excedrin from Duane Reade and popped two of those and the

headache went away. All right.

So at that point now, we were just waiting for patients and nobody was coming in. It was like, you know. Then we ran into another Lieutenant, Lieutenant Davis. I think he's from Battalion 4, if I'm not mistaken.

(Tape side two.)

-- towers and I heard six loud explosions, and those six loud explosions changed my mind real quick and I went back over to the triage center and it was like you know what? Let me wait here. I had no helmet. I had nothing that would have protected me from anything that hit me in my head. So I stayed where I was at.

I remember at one point, I'm not pretty sure what point it was, I ran over to a hardware shop that the Fire Department had broken into to use a lot of the masks that they had in there. They had the Scott pack masks, and I found a Scott pack mask that was laying there because a firefighter had took a new one and I grabbed his and I put filters in it and I used that to breathe with and see because the dust was just messing my eyes up.

So I went back over to 225 Broadway and I was

sitting in there, and now at that point we're just all talking, can't believe what's going on. At one point, amongst -- it was three EMTs and two paramedics that I can remember -- four paramedics. Two were HAZTAC and two weren't. It was just quiet and we were just sitting there waiting, and then me and another EMS guy, EMT, we were just like, yo, we can't just sit here and do nothing. So me and him, I never got his name neither, but me and him grabbed a tech bag and we just went outside. So we started heading over to where Building 7 was at and they were like Building 7 is going to collapse, you can't go over there, this and that, and there was another building that they thought was going to collapse that was like right behind the triage center, the building that we were in. So we started walking around.

At one point I was like -- at one point I almost broke down because I had thought my father was dead because he responded to the '93 bombing and he's a Port Authority cop, like I said before. He responded to the '93 bombing. He was on West Street in front of the tower. So I thought he might have been over there. So I said, if anything, I'm going to walk over there, try and work my way over there and look for

him. So I'm going -- like I started walking towards Chambers now to look for him because I'm looking for a Port Authority cop and I knew that that's where everybody pulled back to, which was Chambers.

So I started working my way over there and I run into a group of police officers who were sitting in front of BMCC, BMCC's garden. There's a garden and then there's an apartment complex and that's where they were sitting. So we had a conversation. They had no idea -- they knew what was going on, but they didn't know how bad it was over there. So I started telling them what was going and they were like, Jesus Christ.

As I started walking back over to Chambers, going south again to Chambers, because we were a little north of Chambers where we ran into the police officers, I started walking -- me and the EMT started walking south, I had ran into a firefighter. I think, if I'm not mistaken, he said Engine 9 or Ladder 9. That's where I got that from. He was looking for his boys and he couldn't find any of them and he had nothing on, only his bunker pants, and he looked totally bent out of shape. It was like at the time it didn't even occur to me to help him and look for his guys because I didn't know so many firefighters had

died in the towers like that. Then anyway, I was really concerned about looking for my father.

So I went back off and then I ran into Pete Rosie. I forgot what unit he was on. But I ran into him and he was glad to see me, I was glad to see him, it was a face that I recognized. So we started talking a little bit. We talked. I gave him some Excedrins because he had a bad headache, too.

So we walked, me and the EMT now, we walked over to West Street and Chambers where they had like all the EMS and firefighters and everybody was just there waiting, and I ran into Jerry Toyloy of Battalion 13. I ran into him. We were talking a little bit. I ran into another EMS guy from our station, but I forgot who he was. Then I started looking for my father again.

I ran into a carload of Port Authority cops. I jump in front of the car and almost got hit, and they stopped and they were like, you know, they looked at me like what the -- you know what I'm saying? I'm saying you guys know Rudy Charles? They were like, yeah, you're his son, right? I said yeah. You seen him? They were like, yeah, he's probably still over there in Jersey. I was like all right, all right, that makes

sense. Keep the older guys over there and bring in the new guys. So I found out he was okay and my day was a lot better. So at that point now it was just about helping anybody who came out.

For at least three, four hours after that, there was just nothing to do. The triage center we were in had to be evacuated because they were pretty sure that building was going to come down into it. So we all moved over to Pace University. At that point there was just nothing but cops. I don't know why there were court officers over there. It didn't even make sense that the court officers were there. This is my opinion. But they were there like just milling around. Cops, firefighters, everybody was just helping out bringing all the equipment over to Pace University. Then they had an even better triage center set up over there. They had like little beds and stuff. At that point I ran into a few EMTs I recognized. I went into Salguera from 16. Let's see. Who else did I run into? That was it. Then I ran into a few fire cadet buddies that I graduated with throughout the day and that was pretty much it.

At one point, I think it was Lieutenant David, he had said -- it was around 7:00 o'clock at

night. He had said for us to go home because they weren't going to pull anybody out, and I knew they weren't going to pull anybody out alive, but just in case they had a flood of bodies they were going to pull out, I could help. But at that point I was just very drained, pissed off, upset, sad, scared. It was like you know what?

So then I went back to my bike. I went back to my bike, which was on Dey, and she was completely a mess. Her tires were burnt off. She was completely dusted. So I took the chain off and I lugged her up -- I put the bike on my back and I started walking towards Chambers, and I ran into a firefighter, who questioned me about the fire jacket I had on. He had looked at me and he was like what are you doing with that jacket? I'm like I'm EMS. He's like, oh, okay. I'm like you think I'd be stealing a bike at a time like this? He goes, it's not the bike I'm worried about. [redacted]

Prior to that I did break open a command car just for -- you know, if anybody wondered why (inaudible). I broke into a command car. I had asked

a firefighter at one point to open it up for me. I asked him for an ax or a Halligan tool. He was like, well, who are you? I was like I work for EMS. He was like you got any ID? Just the way he said it pissed me off, so I didn't even show him ID. I walked away. I go over to a police officer and I go, guys, can you do me a favor and open up the command car for me? Without any questions asked, ID or anything like that, he went over to the command car, busted the glass open, and we got all the equipment out of there like that.

There were few little triage centers, as a matter of fact, throughout the day that were like set up that started being shut down and moved to a bigger triage center. I found out there was one in Liberty Plaza. So throughout the day I was just helping collect equipment. I was carrying the tanks, the oxygen tanks. The crate holds, I think, ten, twelve, and I carried like one of those a whole block before I decided I wasn't superman because those things are heavy. I asked for help and carried it the rest of the way. But before I would have to go home, I had to take that bike on my back and walk from -- at that point I was where Pace University was at -- all the way to Canal Street carrying the bike on my back, and that was

pretty much it.

I got home -- I got to 28th Street and I remember people just looking at me like, Jesus Christ, look at him, like they couldn't believe it. I went into a funeral parlor because they had a TV on and they were showing all this stuff that happened, and I had never actually seen the planes go into the towers because when I was in the gym, at the point when I was in the gym, I just heard we were under attack and that the Pentagon was hit and the Trade Center and Pennsylvania. But I didn't see the plane go into the building until I got into the funeral parlor like hours later, and I sat with them and they were like, oh, my God, you were down there? They're like, yo, you want some water? You want something to eat? You know what I mean? That felt good that they acknowledged me like that. I'm like no, don't worry about that. I just want to watch this real quick.

Then I got home, back to my at the time girlfriend, now wife. I got home and she was crying. I got home and my parents had thought I was dead because my mother is in Florida and my father, he was in Jersey. My brother decides to go to sleep at 9:00 o'clock, so he didn't know what was going on until 3:00

o'clock in the afternoon. He woke up to my mother yelling over the answering machine. He jumps up and he knew something was wrong because the way she was yelling. He goes over to the answering machine, 14 back-to-back messages. So he started listening to them. My wife had called. They were looking for me. Everybody was looking for me and my father, and they had knew my father was okay because that call came in at 2:00 o'clock, but they hadn't received a call from me until like 5:00, 6:00 o'clock. So they thought I was dead and my mother is making prayer and they're like, well, if he's gone, he went to hell. I'm like okay.

So after everything was said and done, I had to report back to work here the next day. I called my Lieutenant. I said I was off at 8:00. He said, well, you have to come back at 8:00 o'clock in the morning. I thought to myself the hell I am, you know what I'm saying? At that point everything started hitting me. It was just like it started to bother me and I just got really sad and depressed. I got back into work eventually about like 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon the next day, but I wasn't rushing back in because I was so tired and drained and it was like -- and to be honest

with you, I should have never left that day. I should have just stayed there until I passed out of exhaustion or something. I shouldn't have left because I was tired that day and those guys who stayed there like two weeks straight and I went home. So that's the only thing I felt guilty about. If anything I felt guilty, it was that. I mean, it was just like the worst day in everybody's lives. I mean, I couldn't believe it.

I remember what pissed me off going home was the fact that everybody was like laughing and looking like they were going out to the bars and still eating in diners. I'm like I know people are supposed to go on, but that was to me a little too soon. People were out there laughing in the streets and then there's laughing and they stopped to look at me like, oh, my God, look at him, look at his bike. It was weird.

That's pretty much it. I mean, anything else that will come to mind, I'm trying to write a little scripture about everything I went through that day. So, of course, stuff like that will come back to me later. I guess that's pretty much it.

Q. Okay. Is there anything you'd like to add to this interview?

A. No, not really.

MR. ECCLESTON: The interview is being concluded at 2212. The counter on the recorder is 775.