

## **IN OUR HEARTS AND ON OUR MINDS**

**Senior Court Analyst - New York Civil Court - Rosemary Brasgalla:**

It was a regular day like any other day. Actually it was beautiful like it is here today.

**Principal Court Officer - New York Supreme Criminal Court - Major Reginald Mebane:** It was a beautiful morning. The sky was blue.

**Court Officer - Criminal Court Supreme - Izabella Blajch:** It was a beautiful, clear, sunny, crisp day, warm crisp, clear air. There wasn't a smog around. Everything was visible.

**Administrative Judge - New York Civil Court - Honorable Fern Fisher:** I'm Judge Fern Fisher. It is my distinct honor to introduce this reflective video dedicated to the memories of the three court officers of the court system lost in the World Trade Center disaster on September 11, 2001.

There have been two points of my life which I consider to be extremely low and where I felt extremely powerless: the death of my mother and September 11, 2001. On that day, I was in Albany at a conference with most of the other court administrators. I was having a cup of coffee when I heard about the first plane.

Thereafter, we figured out it was terrorism and the first thing that occurred to me, "What was happening to my family back in Civil Court?" I felt like I could do nothing to help. We learned shortly thereafter that three court officers were lost, that members of our Civil Court family lost fathers and sons and cousins and friends.

**Administrative Judge - New York Civil Court Supreme - Honorable**

**Micki Scherer:** I'm Micki Scherer and I'm very proud to have been asked with Judge Fisher to introduce this video, which memorializes the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and its impact upon our court family. This gives me another opportunity to say again how proud I am of the extraordinary valor, heroism, and humanity displayed by our employees. This video is a tribute to those values.

**Court Officer - Criminal Court Supreme - Ralph Bova:** I got up, it was dark, a rather cool morning. The birds were singing beautifully. I took the bus to Port Authority, the train to Canal Street, and walked to the courthouse. I was in the locker room on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor at 100 Centre Street with my brother officers. We were having our breakfast there and suddenly, we heard a loud explosion. We all went to the window and we had an unobstructed view of the World Trade Center, the Twin Towers. And we saw one tower was on fire. All breakfast is forgotten now and we are wondering what has happened.

About 15 minutes later, we noticed an airplane flying very low. And we're looking and the next thing we knew, that plane flew right into the second tower. And it was at that point that we knew we were under attack. Major Reginald Mebane commandeered a couple of jury buses and a number of officers rushed down to the World Trade Center to lend assistance.

**Major Reginald Mebane:** On September 11<sup>th</sup> as we approached the site, we approached from the north, coming south, as you can see behind the cranes here, on West Broadway. We traveled south on West Broadway and we left our bus about three blocks away. At that time, we assisted the NYPD in crowd control, trying to push everyone back past Canal Street. I received a call over my radio that they were bringing casualties out of building five and that they needed assistance.

I gathered the officers that had come down with me. The total would be 11 at that time.

**Sergeant - New York Criminal Court Supreme - Richard Rosenfeld:**

Officers were assisting carrying those that were injured and as you can see, as people were coming from further up the towers, the injuries seemed to get more and more severe. There were head injuries, broken bones, burns we started to see. I saw Tommy Jurgens, Officer Tommy Jurgens and Officer Mitch Wallace and Captain Harry Thompson repeatedly run into the building and helped carry out the injured from the concourse level under Five World Trade.

**Major Reginald Mebane:** We did have some communication with Officer Jurgens. It was very brief but that was cut short at that time. While standing there at the fire truck, we were told that we had to leave the area very quickly. What happened was the second tower had started coming down.

**Court Officer Izabella Blajch:** As the minutes ticked by, there was a call over the radio that another plane hit from another side. And at that point, there was no doubt in our minds that it was a terrorist attack. There was no mistaking it, 100% certain. And it was a shame that so many people died but we are still grieving for our colleagues and our comrades because they were really close friends.

We socialized together. We spent a lot of time together outside of here and they were really exemplary officers and exemplary human beings. I'm not saying that just because they're gone because it was true. They would help out whenever you needed help without even saying one word. They would just come by and give you a hand. They'd turn around, somebody else needed a hand, whether it was their job or not, they would just go over and give them a hand. It was a privilege to know these guys. It really was.

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** We were in our office on the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor and all of a sudden we heard this huge explosion and the whole building shook. And we jumped up and decided to go see what had happened. So we ran up the stairs here and came to this exact spot where we're standing now.

**First Deputy Chief Clerk - New York City Civil Court - Ernesto**

**Belzaguy:** You could see the building back here in the back. There used to be a tower of the red Building and the Federal building right on the top. You could see them

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** A clear view of the building---

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** ---really, really tall.

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** Right, and the first thing we saw was a huge hole in one of the towers and smoke just pouring out the top of it.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** And papers, lots of papers. Paper flying all over the place---

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** Paper and smoke, and the second plane hit about two minutes later.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** We saw the plane and we're looking at the building and it was just like this big ball of fire out of the side of the building and then we said oh.

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** And then we knew something was terribly wrong.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** Yeah.

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** This was no accident.

**Court Officer - New York City Civil Court - Lisa O'Brien:** I was coming out of the A, C, and E line at Canal Street and coming up the stairs and there were people pointing up at the sky. I thought it was just typical New York tourists. Then I noticed the gaping hole in the building and someone said a plane had hit. So at that point, I'm just kind of staring, looking at it, seeing what was going on and started walking to work. I got to Broadway and it's when the second plane had just hit. It was a pretty big, loud boom.

At that point, I ran into the building and we were kind of just wondering what happened but we knew it was terroristic at that point considering two planes had hit the two separate buildings was our assumption. We all went to our courtrooms and kind of just waiting for word to evacuate or what the next step was. So we had to wait for Albany to get the go ahead. We closed all courtrooms, got everyone out of the building. Most employees had gone home if they could and I think room 107 was kind of a waiting area if anyone wanted to wait in the building.

I decided to come in the next day to try and help, you know, dig or whatever help they could use. I know Tommy was missing. That's when they had told me that morning that Harry and Mitch were missing as well, which was a shock.

**Associate Court Clerk - New York City - Civil Steve Spak:** Here's engine 279 stretching a hose line into the World Financial Center building. Both water mains feeding downtown Manhattan were destroyed by the collapses of the Twin Towers. A worker came out of the financial building and told the firefighters that there was a water tower that was loaded up on the roof if they wanted water.

My name is Steve Spak. I'm an Associate Court Clerk with the Civil Court, City of New York. I work in Kings County and I'm in charge of the calendar department. On 9/11, I happened to be off that day. I was off for two weeks. My wife had a baby girl on September 7<sup>th</sup>. So I was home taking care of the baby, helping my wife.

On 9/11, I responded from Whitestone Queens to the scene of the World Trade Center and I am lucky. I got there after both buildings had previously collapsed. I continued down to Liberty Street. There were firemen milling around. And then right on Liberty and Broadway I could see it looked like part of a skeleton but there was a lot of smoke. And it was just incredible. I'm looking for a collapsed area and there was really-- I didn't see that much debris other than the streets being filled with papers and everything was like an ashen grey, like this fine powder all over the place and pieces of metal strewn about.

And to the right was the north bridge that was collapsed and part of it collapsed on the cab of rescue company one. And there were damaged fire trucks and over turned vehicles all over the place. It looked like something out of a war movie. It was just incredible. And the firefighters were milling around. This is West Street right here. That's the north bridge and to the left of that is the Custom House number six. The north tower would have been right in front of ladder five where the north bridge was. And if you looked up there it was just smoke.

You know you see them with some water they had probably from the fire boat and this was taken probably-- at this point, probably about a half an hour from when the buildings collapsed. And there was total disarray and they were doing the best they could. I knew that a lot of people were lost just by looking at this thing. A lot of firemen were missing. I knew it was bad. I knew it was real bad but I didn't really

know exactly what the final count would be. You know it was just a total destructive, incredible sight.

**Senior Court Clerk - New York City Civil Court - Robert Friedrich:**

After I had heard that two planes had hit the World Trade Center, I headed downtown. Already, thousands of people were on these streets making a mass exodus uptown to get away from what would soon be called Ground Zero.

I continued downtown along Nassau Street and when I ended up around here, all of a sudden I heard a rumbling sound and a lot of people screaming. I looked behind me and I could see this dust cloud billowing at me incredibly fast. They're saying it was 60 miles an hour. So I did the only thing I could think to do - which was to run.

This is the wall that I went to when the cloud enveloped me. I stayed there a few moments trying to catch my breath and I could hear the bells of Trinity Church in the distance. There was a woman next to me sobbing so I made my way over to her to tell her that everything was going to be okay, even though I wasn't sure at that moment if things really were going to be okay.

But then I heard voices coming from down the block and I took her hand and made my way over down to those voices. Everything was in darkness, lit only by the streetlights that had gone on sensing the darkness that had been caused by the dust cloud. We followed our way down here until we made it to this Charles Schwab office over here, going inside for sanctuary where people offered us bottles of water and towards the sink where we were able to wash off and wait for the dust cloud to settle.

**Chief - Court Officer Academy - Joseph Baccellieri:** We were starting our day as we normally do, setting up for the day's training

classes, when we heard a loud explosion and some of us started to wonder what it was, those of us that were in the main training room. And then one of the staff instructors came in and said that a plane had just struck the World Trade Center. And several of the members of the staff, Sergeant Al Mascola, Patricia Maiorino, we ran into the men's locker room where we noticed smoke billowing out of the north tower.

It was at that point, I decided that I would respond with Sergeants Al Mascola and Sergeant Andrew Wender. We saw people all over the place. We saw jet fuel everywhere. There was glass. There were people screaming and yelling and the amount of devastation already was just unbelievable. We started to make our way up on the stairwell to assist other firefighters as streams of people were making their way down the steps. We made our way up to the 19<sup>th</sup> floor where we saw a whole bunch of firefighters mustering up on the corridors on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor. It was at this point that we continued our ascent into the north tower.

**Sergeant - Court Officer Academy - Al Mascola:** We continued on our way up until we reached the 51<sup>st</sup> floor and clearing hundreds of people. And people were very gracious. Many people were telling us that, you know, God Bless you for coming in. People were trying their cell phones. I remember no cell phones worked. Our Nextel's weren't working properly. We were having a hard time communicating with the Academy.

**Sergeant - Court Officer Academy - Andrew Wender:** While we were up there, the second plane had hit and we don't know exactly what happened but we felt our building shake and shortly -- thereafter we -- what was the south tower collapsing – like I said we couldn't see what was happening but we knew that it was time to get down.

**Captain - Court Officer Academy - John Civelia:** The rest of the staff and myself were actually watching from the locker room. We actually saw the second plane come down and hit the towers. At that point, and only at that point, did we all realize that this was not just a tragic accident, that this was actually a terrorist attack.

So what I did is I dismissed the class and I informed the class that if anyone wanted to join us, that the rest of the staff was going down to the World Trade Center and try to assist any way we can. At that point, myself, Captain Harry Thompson, Sergeant Maiorino, Sergeant Negron and other officers from the class proceeded down to the site.

**Sergeant - Court Officer Academy - Pat Maiorino:** We just fell into line and started working with the rest of the officers at the scene, police officers, firefighters, EMS, Port Authority, anybody that had a uniform was down there doing a job, trying to get the people out. And the people were coming down from way up, who knows what floors, no shoes, you know burned, wet, bleeding, some of them in shock. And we were just trying to help them get out and get as far away from there as we could.

While we were there, we heard a report. I was standing next to a police officer. He got a report that there was a third plane headed towards the World Trade Center. So I radioed the guys up in the tower. Between them they have 10 children and I'm thinking they've got to get out of there. They have to come down. There's just no way they can stay up there with a third plane heading their way.

**Sergeant - Court Officer Academy - Francis Barry:** While I was outside the door, we heard a very loud noise. It was like an avalanche sound that you'd hear in a movie. And I looked up, the sky was turning black and I didn't have time to think. Me and the other officers ran

inside building five and there was an extremely loud noise, you know, which shook your whole body, your lungs, everything.

We got inside. The rubble was coming down and where we ran inside was a lobby. It was a glass door. It's a glass encased lobby and while we were there, when the stuff came down, we were totally, totally trapped by debris.

**Chief Joseph Baccellieri:** We didn't realize at the time was that when they were getting trapped in Five World Trade Center, that's when the south tower actually had collapsed and we were up on the 51<sup>st</sup> floor when that happened. And again, not knowing that the south tower had collapsed, as Andrew had said earlier, we decided to descend from the 51<sup>st</sup> floor.

**Sergeant Andrew Wender:** Truly a tragedy that our Captain and coworker Harry Thompson isn't here with us and Tommy Jurgens and Mitch Wallace, but it's a miracle that we were spared. It's like everyone said, as we were running up the steps in the towers to try to help people, the second plane hit. And we made it through that. While we were up on the 51<sup>st</sup> floor the south tower fell down. And we made it through that.

We made it down to the lobby and then the building on top of us started to collapse and it was only seconds after we were right outside that it fell down. Again, we were lucky enough. Like Al said, you can't outrun one of the towers of the World Trade Center. So miraculously, it didn't fall on us. A few minutes later when the dust finally did clear up enough for us to get up and I remember hearing the Chief directing us into what turned out to be a bagel shop, I remember saying to myself, "I can't believe how close this bagel shop was." And I don't even remember seeing it while we were running but it seemed to only be a few steps away when everything did clear. It seemed to be pretty much

intact other than the debris. And if just some more people could have made it there it would have been a lot better for them.

**Supervising Judge - New York City Housing Court - Honorable**

**Ernest Cavallo:** I got to the courthouse and as I drove into the garage, Officer Jurgens was there as he usually was patrolling the outside of White Street. I waved to him and he waved at me. It was not until five after nine that I received a telephone call from Zoe London, a court attorney in Kings County, and she was frantic because of what was happening and wanted to know if we were all all right in the court.

I immediately went up to the 12<sup>th</sup> floor where I learned that I was one of the ranking judges here in the courthouse that day and we were all consulting with the clerks, the captains, etc., so that we could have an orderly evacuation of the building. The evacuation was in fact orderly. I did stay until approximately noon at which point they told me that there was nothing left for me to do and that I should go home. I did. I was numb. I am still numb in my heart when I think about it although it never leaves my mind. I'm sitting here today and I happen to be wearing the exact same suit, the exact same shirt, and the exact same tie that I was wearing on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Senior Court Clerk - New York City Civil Court - Sonja Wickham:**

September 11<sup>th</sup> was a normal school day, a typical day for my son and I, taking the number one train down to school. He's at Chambers and Greenwich Street, PS234. We were running late. He was upset about it and by the time we got there, his class had already gone upstairs. And I kissed him goodbye and have a good day, and I was walking up Chambers. I wasn't one quarter of the way up the block when I heard that plane and then within seconds, it hit and I couldn't see because I was already out of sight of the school.

I ran back around and there it was like right in the World Trade

and I ran upstairs to my son's class. They didn't even know what had happened really. They had heard it. They had felt it shake and my son's classroom looks right out on it. His class is right there and it looks right out on it. So the teachers began pulling down the blinds. The kids, you could start seeing them getting scared. But you know, all of us parents that were in there, we just really thought, okay, you know, it's an accident. It looks like something that you know emergency services would be able to take care of. And we were ready to leave our kids. We were going to leave our kids there in that school.

I went back outside and that's when the second plane had hit. I didn't see it but seeing everybody running, you turn around to see what it was and that's when the second plane had hit. And we all knew then that it was definitely not an accident. You know, I grabbed my son and I just kissed all the other ones that were left and we ran. And my son was like a rock. He was very cool and I was hysterical.

I ran up Greenwich. We ran up Greenwich to about Reade Street and then we cut over. And then when we got to West Broadway, I saw our jury bus, our jury bus coming down the block. And then I knew that you know, some of our-- I knew it was the officers. That some of our people from the courts were going down to help.

**Court Officer - New York City Criminal Court Supreme - Peter Mirra:**

As part of my everyday commute, I would go through the World Trade Center. And it became an integral part of my daily routine. The places, the shops there you would use, the Starbucks, the Kelly Photo Lab, all of these became part of a daily routine. You would pass by the daycare center, see all of the babies, the children playing and then one day it was gone, all of it. In a matter of minutes, gone, everything. So the destruction at the Trade Center left a lasting impression on me. And I decided one night after working a shift when we were doing 24/7

security, to go down to the site and do some work at nighttime.

And the one thing about night is that it brings everything much more into focus. And the sheer horror of the scene at night really took a toll on you. I was there one night for five hours. The only thing anyone found while I was there was an identification card for a worker. It was found by someone next to me, an EMT from upstate. She turned it over to crime scene because that's what it was, a crime scene. And unfortunately, the whole night I was there, no one found anything except that one solitary card, who to me is still an anonymous face but to someone else, a loved one. And I can only hope that whoever found this card, eventually got it to the family of the guy it belonged to. Maybe that's the only memorial this man and his family has is that single, solitary ID card.

**Court Officer - New York City Criminal Supreme - Michael Pacific:**

On that first weekend after 9/11, I was basically consumed with the desire to do something to recognize all those that had fallen, especially our own. And I started to put together a slide show, a PowerPoint presentation and I reached out to as many people as I know to send me pictures of 9/11, of what happened, of departments working at this site and the response was pretty good.

I put all those pictures into a slide show and put it to music. Then the idea came that we should do something here at 111. And what I wanted to do was something that would be able to last and the slide show itself didn't seem appropriate. So we started a discussion. We thought about putting up a bronze bust or a plaque or something along those lines and then we found out about the Rose brothers, these artists that seem to do a lot of work for the city. This idea started back in November, December and there were a lot of obstacles to getting it done. And we were able to surmount all those obstacles and the Rose

brothers were on the side, ready to start work the second we were able to start. And as you know, we were able to start work only a few weeks ago and the canvas went up and the next day, basically, the Rose brothers were in painting and they've been painting since then.

**Captain John Civelia:** That day, Harry Thompson was my co-captain at that time. And myself and Harry plus the officers, we went down there together and I believe Sergeant Maiorino said about some of us going to the right and some of us going to the left. What I remember that day is myself and Harry were standing on the corner of Church Street when we got there.

I went straight across and Harry moved over to the left. And I always remember myself thinking about, you know, it could have been very easily, myself going over to the other side and Harry the one that's left standing. I guess what it did, it made me think about Harry a lot more and who he was and how spiritual Harry was. And a lot of his philosophy was about enjoying this whole ride. Life is a journey.

**Sergeant Pat Maiorino:** We are very rare because we did an interview with Queens's public television about surviving the tower falling and being inside when it happened and assisting with the rescue of so many thousands of people. And I asked the officer that did the interview where the other survivors were. And she said, "There aren't any. You're the only people, rescuers that were in there that got out." And I know there are some other fireman that were in an elevator and there's a few here and there but basically, as a whole, we were very, very lucky to survive.

**Chief Joseph Baccellieri:** I'm very, very thankful that I survived and I just wish more people could have survived. And I pray every day that somehow the country will continue on and that we never suffer a tragedy like this ever again.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** It was a very bad experience.

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** Yeah.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** To this day, when I drive in in the morning, when we drive in in the morning--

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** We drive in in the morning and every day we pass where the Trade Centers were.

**Deputy Chief Clerk Ernesto Belzaguy:** And you miss it, you know?

**Senior Court Analyst Rosemary Brasgalla:** You can't help but think about it every single day and it just hurts my heart.

**Court Officer - New York City Criminal Supreme - George Johnson:**

The reason I came to 111 was because of Captain Harry Thompson, who I will sorely miss. Mitchell Wallace was my relief during lunch hour. And Tommy was always this slender kid standing on the corner doing his security patrol. Those vivid memories will live with me for the rest of my life and I hope they're in a better place. But I'll represent them here on this earth as well as me and many of my colleagues. They will forever be in my heart.

**Court Officer Ralph Bova:** (Singing)

When you walk through a storm,  
hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark  
At the end of a storm is a golden sky and the sweet silver song of a  
lark will come through the wind,  
will come through the rain  
Though your dreams be tossed and blown  
Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone  
You'll never walk alone.