

Book Proposal

Soldier of a War That Never Ends:

A Memoir of a 9/11 Firefighter

by

Louie Cacchioli

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TITLE

Soldier of a War That Never Ends: A Memoir of a 9/11 Firefighter

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OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in the book *Soldier of a War That Never Ends* by Louie Cacchioli. This book is a first-person narrative told by Louie D. Cacchioli, a retired New York City firefighter and 9/11 survivor who had been assigned for twenty-years to Manhattan's Engine Co. 47. The book takes a good look at the life and struggles of a 9/11 firefighter – before, during, and after – in a way that has not been done before.

In the book Mr. Cacchioli shares with the reader stories about his extraordinary life. He discusses what it was like (from his point of view) to have earned the right to wear the uniform, to have fought some of the most serious fires New York City ever faced, and to have been part of a rescue-team that came to grief at the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Cacchioli also discusses his struggles that happened in the aftermath of the tragedy and the rebuilding of his shattered life after having lost his job due to injuries suffered at Ground Zero. He also shares from his unique perspective of having become an activist heavily involved in 9/11 remembrance, special events, and litigation against the financial supporters of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

SPECIFICATIONS

The main body of the book is roughly 150,000 words in length. It has more than 45 photographs (some very rare), artwork (of different styles from four different artists), some unique documents, and one appendix. The manuscript also features an Introduction, Forward, and a Preface.

COMPLETION OF MANUSCRIPT

The manuscript is almost entirely complete and will be finished upon delivery of the introduction, which should be delivered very soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Louie D. Cacchioli was born in Borgo Val di Taro (or Borgotaro for short), a small town in Emilia, north central Italy. After immigrating to the United States with his family at age 10, Mr. Cacchioli struggled as an immigrant. Louie's family settled in Queens, New York. After graduating from Long Island City High School Louie attended New York City Community College, where he studied accounting.

Louie graduated from the fire academy in April 1982. Then for the next two decades Cacchioli rode with Engine Company 47 and fought some of the worst fires in New York City history.

On September 11, 2001, Engine-47 responded to the disaster at the World Trade Center. Mr. Cacchioli was part of a four company rescue-team that responded to the North Tower. Louie was separated from his fire company and single handedly saved the lives of some forty civilians by leading them out of Tower 1.

Moments before the North Tower fell Cacchioli was helping an injured Battalion

Chief to safety; a moment that was captured by a *Daily News* photographer. Louie was caught in the collapse and barely survived. Several members of this rescue-team were killed. Nine of them belonged to the same firehouse in the Yorkville section of Manhattan's Upper East Side and were later dubbed "*The Yorkville Nine.*"

Due to the tragedy and injuries suffered from Ground Zero, Mr. Cacchioli lost many close friends, his health, and his career. In the aftermath of the tragedy, Cacchioli has rebuilt his shattered life. He has been active with physical therapy and involvement in a 9/11 survivors group.

Throughout much of 2002, Cacchioli took part in the project *Faces of Ground Zero: A Photographic Tribute to America's Heroes*, a traveling 9/11 photo exhibit. (Faces was the brainchild of Joe McNally, a freelance photographer who has shot assignments for numerous advertising agencies and publications.)

To promote the 9/11 exhibit, Mr. Cacchioli's photo was chosen to be featured in numerous advertisements which put a face on the tragedy. Twenty-six portraits of this exhibit, including Cacchioli's, later appeared in the Life photo-book: *One Nation: America Remembers September 11, 2001*. (One Nation spent five months on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list.)

The photo-book *Faces of Ground Zero: Portraits of the Heroes of September 11, 2001* followed next. It contains 150 McNally portraits; those from the exhibition as well as several that had previously never been shown before. Mr. Cacchioli's photo is prominently featured on the front cover of both the hardcover and abridged soft-cover versions of that book. *The American Spirit: Meeting the Challenge of September 11* was a 2002 follow-up book that featured new essays regarding the 9/11 tragedy. Mr. Cacchioli

was featured in that book as well.

He has been featured in several documentaries, television programs, and radio shows including the very popular well respected television news program *60 Minutes* and *Imus in the Morning*. *Soldier* is not the first book Cacchioli has collaborated with. He can also be seen in the Life photo books that have been listed on *The New York Times* Best Sellers List; *Faces of Ground Zero: Portraits of the Heroes of September 11, 2001*, *One Nation: America Remembers September 11, 2001* and *The American Spirit: Meeting the Challenge of September 11* which also contains an exclusive interview with Cacchioli. (One Nation alone spent more than five months on NYT Best Sellers List.) Louie was also mentioned prominently in the book *Debunking 9/11 Lies* by The Editors of Popular Mechanics.

Recently Mr. Cacchioli took part in a photo shoot and his picture will be appearing in an upcoming LIFE photobook that is due out in September 2011. (That book does not yet have a title.) Louie was also recently interviewed for a new book, *From Battlemind to Homemind*, about posttraumatic stress disorder, that is due out in 2012 by Henrik Krogh. Over the next four months Cacchioli is going to be interviewed and featured in two television documentaries.

Louie became an activist who has been heavily involved in a variety of causes including 9/11 remembrance, charities, and the *World Police & Fire Games*. He is also participating with *9/11 Families United Against Terrorism*, a class action lawsuit against those who financed the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

When possible, Louie volunteers his time giving guided tours at Ground Zero, which is coordinated through Tribute WTC 9/11 Visitor Center. Louie Cacchioli

currently lives in Marlboro, New Jersey.

COMPETITION

It should be pointed out that there is only a small number of books that were put out by other firefighters who were also survivors of 9/11. However, of all those books, each of the authors was an officer in the FDNY. In addition to *Strong of Heart* by Commissioner Thomas Von Essen (2002) and *Last Man Down* by Battalion Commander Richard Picciotto (2003), there was also *First In, Last Out* by Battalion Chief John J. Salka Jr. (2005), *American by Choice* by Captain Alfredo Fuentes (2004), and *The Second Tower's Down: A firefighter's Story* by Lt. John McCole (2002). Two more that deserve mention in this category are *Closure: The Untold Story of the Ground Zero Recovery Mission* by PAPD Lt. William Keegan Jr. and *The Lost Son: A Life in Pursuit of Justice* by Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik.

Louie Cacchioli's book is the first (and so far only known) book of this kind written by a "grunt" (non-officer). That makes *Soldier* distinct in this unique category and provides a very different perspective that has not been previously explored. Cacchioli has elaborated on how his book was different: "*Instead of someone who was giving orders, I was taking orders. That is just one way how my story is different from the other books in this field.*"

Commissioner Von Essen's *Strong of Heart* is an excellent book. Unfortunately the role of the Fire Commissioner is not to take part in coordinating actual fire/rescue situations. Von Essen was with the mayor on 9/11 and not inside the burning towers. Also the Commissioner's book was published in early 2002 and did not have luxury of

discussing the long term aftermath. So his perspective is very different.

Salka's book *First In, Last Out* is described as a book that is about "lessons in leadership" in which the author takes his experiences and applies them to real life situations. This is a very different approach when compared to Cacchioli's. The books by Captain Fuentes and Lt. McCole did not receive widespread distribution. The author of Fuentes's book is a creative writing teacher and the book was not picked up by a major publisher (self-published). Keegan's *Closure* and Kerik's *The Lost Son* deal with NYPD and PAPD police departments. Police issues are obviously very different from the material discussed in Cacchioli's book.

Of all the books mentioned here *Last Man Down* by Battalion Commander Richard Picciotto is probably the closest to Cacchioli's. Unfortunately that book encountered some difficulties. Among some of the criticisms is that the book only discusses the events of just one particular day. To fill up space, there was a lot of unnecessary description of details. Worst of all, the book unfortunately ran into controversy after it was published. ("9/11 STORY DOUBTED: Some Bravest Say Chief's Book Exaggerates His Role" *New York Daily News* 26 November 2002).

PROMOTION

This book is a natural for both talk radio and television. Because of the unique nature of his story, Mr. Cacchioli had previously received extensive press coverage and continues to receive requests for more interviews. During the Faces of Ground Zero exhibit, Cacchioli's image was used in numerous advertisements during a massive international advertisement campaign to generate interest for the exhibit. His photo was

seen all around the world by millions of people. Mr. Cacchioli has several contacts within mass media who may prove to be very beneficial when the book comes out.

THE MARKET

The potential market for this book is not only vast, but also expanding. It will be of major interest to anyone who is involved in firefighting, interested in firemen, or Sept.11th. There are well over 1 million paid and volunteer firemen in the United States. (It will also serve as a valuable resource for anyone who intends to write about New York City firemen, past or present.) With the announcement of the recent death of terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden, the opening of both the *National Memorial* (2011) and *Memorial Museum* (2012) at Ground Zero, the opening of the *Freedom Tower* (2013), and the upcoming movie (currently titled) “*Kill Bin Laden*” we are anticipating a renewed interest in the story of 9/11. Once the official memorial is open in Sept. 2011, officials estimate 7.1 million people will visit Ground Zero in just the first year alone. [1]

QUOTES FROM WELL-KNOWN PERSONS

“*Louie not only is an amazing person, but he has an amazing story.....*”

– Joe McNally

(Official Photographer of the *Faces of Ground Zero Project*)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(See following page.)

1. Officials estimate 7.1 million people will visit the official memorial once it opens the first year from:

“Ground Zero Hotel Wants To Attract 9/11 Tourists” AP www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35769720

&

“WTC Steel Column Installed At Ground Zero” *The Record* (North Jersey) 07 September 2010

www.northjersey.com/news/090710_WTC_steel_column_installed_at_ground_zero.html

(7)

Contents

Preface by Joe McNally, Official Photographer of the *Faces of Ground Zero* Project

PROLOGUE

Already Deadp.xii.

PART ONE: THE AMERICAN

1. Don't Be Afraid.....p.01.
2. It's Wonderful To Be In Love.....p.09.
3. Dare.....p.15.
4. The Rock.....p.19.

PART TWO: THE WAR THAT NEVER ENDS

5. Year One.....p.25.
6. In Harm's Way.....p.32.
7. Life On The Edge.....p.40.
8. An American Dream.....p.50.

PART THREE: TALES OF SURVIVAL

9. Devil's Doorway.....p.57.
10. In The Name Of God.....p.65.
11. The Lower Depths.....p.72.
12. One Night In The Life.....p.81.

PART FOUR: FIRES IN THE SKY

13. It's Going To Be A Long Day.....p.89.
14. Hell Storm.....p.100.
15. Surrealistic Nightmare.....p.108.
16. Death & Life.....p.117.
17. The Hand Of God.....p.128.

PART FIVE: TEARS FOR SEPTEMBER

18. I Will Find You.....p.141.
19. Special Assignment.....p.151.
20. The Wounded.....p.157.
21. War Within.....p.168.

PART SIX: REDEMPTION

22. Renovatio.....p.177.
 23. Unfinished Business.....p.188.
 24. The Financiers of Murder.....p.196.
 25. For A Better Tomorrow.....p.206.

PART SEVEN: LIFE AFTER DEATH

26. September’s Ashes.....p.217.
 27. A Few Comments.....p.227.
 28. Observations Of A Survivor.....p.239.
 29. Why We Do What We Do.....p.248.

EPILOGUE

A Life More Ordinary.....p.255.

APPENDIX

A. Skyscraper Escape Pod Technical Reference.....p.261.

END NOTES.....p.264.

INDEX.....p.311.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....p.315.

PLACES TO SEE.....p.318.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.....p.320.

SUPPORT SERVICES.....p.321.

A FIREFIGHTER’S PRAYER.....p.322.

PHOTOS.....p.323.

“Rage of the Fire” by Michael J. Elferis.....p.324.

SPECIAL LETTER FROM THE CO-AUTHOR.....p.325.

Chapter 13

It's Going to Be a Long Day

Just because something has never happened does not mean it never will.

There was one particular day in my life that I could never forget. It was a Tuesday. That morning, I awakened early to a gorgeous, bright, sunny, clear, blue sky. The temperature that day was going to be about 80-degrees in Manhattan.

At about 6:30 AM, I left my house in Bayside, Queens and drove into Manhattan. It took me only about twenty-minutes to arrive at my firehouse. My tour was not scheduled to begin until 9 AM that day and I was to relieve Matt Barnes of Ladder-25 (“The Pride Of The West Side”) who worked the night tour with Engine-47, because we were temporarily under-manned. The guys who worked the overnight shift were all still sleeping when I entered.

When coming in for the morning shift it was always polite to bring something for the other firefighters to have with their breakfast. That particular day I brought in with me a bag of fresh bread rolls. After checking in with the housewatch, I went into the kitchen to eat my breakfast. As I read a newspaper, I ate a bagel and drank a cup of coffee.

Unfortunately, it was a slow news day. Nothing exciting was happening. The most controversial story the paper had to report was how the New York City school system was considering a new dress-code standard because young boys were showing up to school dressed very sloppy, while young girls were dressing too slutty. Such clothing

was considered disruptive for a school environment. (It seemed that poor parenting,

singer Britney Spears, and Cosmo Girl magazine were the bad influences that were responsible for this trend.)

At around 07:30 AM, the guys started to wake up and come downstairs to join me for breakfast in the kitchen. When Matt finally came into the kitchen, I teased him: “Matt, what time did you get here last night? Did you get here before 6 O’clock?”

That was an inside joke. Senior firemen like to stress to the junior guys that they should always arrive a little early before their tour begins so that the firefighter being relieved is able to leave on time. Barnes was groggy, but understood the joke. He replied: “Yeah, yeah, Louie. I got here at eight-thirty.”

Then I asked: “What position did you have?” Barnes answered: “Control.” At that point, I decided to relieve Matt early so that he would be able to get back to his firehouse on time because he was scheduled to work a double-shift that day. I said: “Okay, I’m ready to ride for you.” Then I added: “Take up! You’re covered.” As Barnes departed, his last words to me were: “Thanks, Louie.”

On the “riding list” that morning was Keith Murphy on Nozzle, Tom Turilli in the Control position, and Steve Viola at the Door position. Lance Lizzul was the ECC and Lt. William “Billy” Wall was the officer on duty. As for myself, the senior-man, I was assigned to the Back-up position. After spending a few minutes talking with the guys, I went to my locker up on the third-floor to prepare for the “day tour.”

Soon after I changed into my uniform, there were suddenly numerous voice alarms coming in over the firehouse intercom system. The dispatcher announced that a second-alarm had been transmitted and various fire companies were to report to box

number “8084.” It seemed a little odd for so many fire companies to be suddenly ordered

to one location. Something was not right. In the room was a small television set that someone had forgotten to turn off. As I continued to get ready, I noticed that on the TV was a special news report about a big accident that had just occurred somewhere in the city.

After putting on my uniform, I walked down-stairs to the officer's quarters on the second-floor. Concerned, I asked Lt. Billy Wall if he knew anything about what was occurring downtown. Lt. Wall had been monitoring radio transmissions. He looked at me, and calmly answered: "Yes. A plane went into one of the Towers." We then looked at each other with amazement.

After conferring with my lieutenant, I returned to the first-floor and found the rest of the guys huddled in the kitchen in front of the television. They were watching live coverage of the events unfolding in Lower Manhattan on Channel 5. We could see on the TV that a lot of smoke was billowing from the upper-floors of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. There was also lots of commotion on the street-level.

The air-space above New York City was restricted. So we firefighters wondered how it was possible that an airplane could have gotten close enough to have crashed into the Trade Center. There was no fog that day. How the hell did this plane go into the Tower? We figured that a very small plane, probably the size of a single-engine Cessna or a Piper Meridian, had probably gotten lost and flew too low before accidentally colliding with one of the Twin Towers. Maybe the pilot had a heart attack or had gotten disoriented? No one knew what to make of it.

At that moment in time there was nothing that indicated terrorism. Later we

would learn that a passenger jet, American Airlines Flight 11, out of Boston,

Massachusetts, had been hijacked mid-flight and deliberately flown into the WTC in a kamikaze style attack. The plane crashed into the commercial skyscraper and ripped a massive triangular-shaped hole approximately between the ninety-third and ninety-ninth floors. The Boeing 767 was carrying onboard many tons of jet fuel, which turned the upper-floors of the North Tower (1 WTC) into a raging inferno.

Announcements were continuing to come in over the intercom from dispatch for numerous other fire companies to report to the North Tower. To find out more information, Turilli and Viola left the kitchen and ran to the housewatch station to monitor the Department's communication radio.

About ten-minutes passed. At 09:03 AM firefighter Keith Murphy pointed to the television and said: "Hey, look at this! Here comes another plane!" Both he and I watched in total disbelief as another passenger plane flew across the television screen from the left side to the right. The Boeing 767, hijacked United Airlines Flight 175, smashed into the South Tower building between floors seventy-seven and eighty-five. There was a massive fireball as the plane pierced the face of the building and disappeared inside.

My first reaction was to think that we were watching a movie. Murphy quickly left the kitchen and ran over to the housewatch station to inform the others of this latest development. Before "Murf" had an opportunity to say anything, he was interrupted by the voice alarm. The fire dispatcher announced that a second airplane had indeed struck the World Trade Center.

It suddenly became obvious to everyone in the firehouse what was occurring.

Someone said: "Oh, my God, this is no accident! This has to be a terrorist attack!"

Manhattan had been targeted by terrorists in the past. Immediately, thoughts of how militants tried to blow up the WTC in 1993 with a truck-bomb came to mind. But this attack was very different.

A high-rise building fire is the most dangerous type of fire that a firefighter can face. However, incidents involving aircraft were not very common in Manhattan. The last time the Fire Department of New York City had to deal with a major situation, when a very large aircraft collided with a skyscraper, was way back in July 1945. In that incident, a B-25 military aircraft had gotten lost in a dense fog. Due to poor visibility, the plane accidentally crashed into the north side of the Empire State Building. (At that time it was the world's tallest building).

Half of the military plane became lodged inside the building while the other half hung on the outside. High octane aviation fuel from the plane then set several of the Empire State Building's upper-floors on fire. However a four-alarm response resulted in the entire blaze being extinguished within only forty-minutes. The Fire Department of New York had to battle the Empire State building plane crash fire nine-hundred-and-fifteen feet above street level. (That incident later became part of the mandatory training for all NYC firefighters who were in positions of leadership.)

All of us in my fire company knew that we would be mobilizing very soon. But we didn't yet know exactly where. (If Engine-47 was not going to be ordered to the Trade Center, then we would definitely be relocated to another firehouse to cover for another fire company who was.) However, within minutes after the second plane had crashed, the voice-alarm sounded again with new orders.

The fire dispatcher announced that a fifth-alarm had been transmitted and that

various additional fire companies, including Engine-47, were to mobilize immediately and report to the Trade Center. Engine-47 also received specific orders to respond to box number “8087”; the South Tower of the World Trade Center / 2 WTC. We were to report to the fire command post desk that had been set up in the South Tower’s main lobby where we would receive further instructions.

It seemed as if nearly every fire company in the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn were being ordered to the Trade Center. Since the FDNY hadn’t had to deal with anything like this since World War II, Lt. Wall gathered together everyone on duty and gave us a quick pep talk. Lt. Wall said to us: “All right you guys, we don’t know what we’re going into. Remember to take it easy! Stay together! Make sure that we have all of our equipment! Get gloves! Bring extra flashlights! Grab all the gear that you can carry and take it with you! Let’s get going.”

Following our orders, we quickly loaded our Seagrave engine pumper with extra firefighting gear and supplies. Then, Lt. Wall ordered: “EVERYBODY, GET ON THE RIG!” We then boarded our Seagrave pumper. Lance, our chauffer, was in the driver’s seat. As I pressed the button to close the firehouse garage door, I realized that I left my cellphone on the housewatch desk. Normally, I didn’t take my cellphone on “runs.” But this was not a normal situation. As the garage door closed, I quickly ran back inside, grabbed my cellphone from the desk and shoved it into my pocket before rushing back outside and climbing back onto the rig.

With our rig’s emergency lights flashing, horn blaring, and siren screaming; Engine-47 took off on its way to the World Trade Center. (None of us were aware that we

were about to become part of the largest rescue effort in the history of New York City.)

Our fire-engine traveled West down 113th St., turned left onto Broadway, and then right onto West End Avenue. From there we made our way over to the West Side Highway. Along the way, a number of pedestrians, who obviously were aware of what was happening in Lower Manhattan, were waving and cheering us.

As Engine-47's Seagrave pumper flew south towards Lower Manhattan, we passed a fire-truck, Ladder-25. Matt Barnes, who I relieved earlier, was riding on the back. He made it back to his firehouse in time to be part of the response to the WTC. (I didn't know it then, but that would be the last time I would ever see Matt again.) Barnes was one of many firefighters who weren't supposed to work that day. Rather than abandon their brothers to the herculean rescue effort, many off-duty firefighters responded to the disaster at the Trade Center.

As we got closer to Lower Manhattan, the Twin Towers of the WTC came into full view. Sticking my head out of the Seagrave, I could see in the distance that both Towers were venting out massive amounts of thick black smoke. Flames were visible as multiple floors within both buildings were on fire. Without being told, we all knew that this was going to be an extremely difficult job to handle.

Engine-47 kept a spare camera in the rig to document emergency situations. As we flew south towards Lower Manhattan, Lance pulled out the camera and fired off a couple shots. There were a lot of transmissions coming in over the Fire Department radio. Reports suddenly started coming in that many people were trapped and a number of civilians were jumping from the upper-floors of both towers.

The closest that Engine-47 could get to the Trade Center with our rig was about

two-and-a-half blocks away. The end of the West Side Highway was already jammed full

of other rescue vehicles that arrived ahead of us – Police, Fire Department, Port Authority, EMS, and ambulance. There were also police helicopters hovering above and FDNY Marine fire-boats were nearby in the harbor. As we got out of our rig, the members of my fire company grabbed our rollups.

We also took with us extra gear including flashlights, a standpipe kit, an EMS kit, and additional medical supplies. Lt. Wall instructed all of us to double-check our equipment and remain calm. As senior-man and the oldest member of the group at age 51, I offered a few words of advice: “Alright guys, listen. We stay together. If you have to go somewhere, you pair up with somebody.”

Then Engine-47 continued on foot towards the burning South Tower. Lance, our chauffer, stayed behind in order to attend to the rig, monitor radio communications, aid injured civilians, and extinguish some of the many car fires that were burning in the street.

As the firemen of Engine-47 proceeded on foot along the west side of West Street, we passed 6 World Trade on our right. A policeman suddenly appeared from behind a pillar. He told us firefighters to find cover because it had been reported that a third hijacked aircraft was inbound. We ignored the policeman’s warning and asked him where the fire department command post was for Tower Two.

The policeman told us that it might be in the lobby of the hotel, but he wasn’t sure. Engine-47 then crossed over to the east side of West Street and proceeded further South beneath the North Pedestrian Sky Bridge, (which extended over West Street and connected the North Tower with the North section of the World Financial Center). As we

emerged from beneath the Sky Bridge the base of the massive one-hundred-and-ten-floor

North Tower appeared before us to the left. To our far right was the World Financial Center (WFC). My fire company continued walking south, toward Tower 2.

As Engine-47 got closer we could see in the windows of both Towers trapped civilians waving for help. We, in the Fire Department, were their only chance for survival. At least a dozen floors appeared to be burning in each skyscraper. There was the continuous sound of glass breaking as trapped civilians on the upper floors shattered windows for air.

Debris was steadily raining down and we passed several parked cars on the side of the street that were on fire. Engine-47 then proceeded closer toward the one-hundred-and-ten-floor South Tower. But we never made it to 2 World Trade. Suddenly without any warning, human bodies began to rain down, one after another. They were jumpers, from one of the Towers, who had leapt rather than burn to death. As they fell to the ground, many flailed about with their arms and legs waving.

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! There were at least a dozen human bodies that suddenly struck the ground and exploded like melons around the members of my fire company on West Street. (The jumpers had landed so close that two members of my fire company were splattered with blood.) It was a sight of absolute horror. Airplane parts, torn clothing, pools of blood, human remains, pieces of the buildings, twisted metal, shards of broken glass, and millions of papers littered the street all around us. Although it was very horrifying sight to witness, unfortunately there was nothing that we could do for the dead. Their physical suffering was over. We had to ignore the carnage and stay focused on trying to save all those who could still be saved.

At that point Engine-47 temporarily took refuge beneath the South Pedestrian Sky

Bridge which extended over West Street. We then waited under the skybridge and used it as a shield to protect us from more falling bodies and debris. Since it was far too dangerous to continue any further because of the jumpers and falling debris, we had to find an alternate safer way to reach the South Tower's fire command post. It was then decided that 3 World Trade Center, the Marriott Hotel which lay between the Towers, could be used for cover and was our best option for getting to Tower 2.

After waiting until the coast was clear, we ran to the front entrance of the hotel. Passing beneath an awning, we entered through a large revolving door. As Engine-47 entered the Marriott, a jumper hit the awning directly above us. (The body made a horrendous loud crunching noise as it impacted with glass and steel.)

Then, unexpectedly, we encountered a group of about one-hundred other firefighters. More than a dozen fire companies had assembled in the Marriott lobby, where a staging area, commanded by Deputy Chief Thomas Galvin Sr. (of Division 3) and Assistant Chief Barbara, had been set up. Among the many fire companies who were gathered there were Engine-22, Engine-23, Engine-54, Engine-74, Ladder-2, Ladder-11, Ladder-12, and Ladder-13. Engine-47 then took its place alongside the other fire companies. Among them were many familiar faces, of other firefighters I knew, who were from different firehouses all over the city.

Galvin needed to know the exact location of the main staircase within the hotel. So he asked for a volunteer to investigate: "I need someone to check for stairs!" With my Lieutenant's permission, I volunteered. Together with a hotel maintenance worker, I was able to find the main staircase and quickly report back to Galvin within a few minutes.

Before returning to the staging area in the hotel's main lobby, I said to the maintenance

worker: “You wait right here! I’m going to go and get my officer and assignment. Then we’ll come back for you.” The reason why I sought the maintenance worker’s help was because I remembered that there had been lots of confusion when the Trade Center had been bombed in ’93.

After several minutes of gathering information, Chief Galvin separated the fire companies by ordering all of the truck companies to move to the right side of the lobby and all of the engine companies to the left side. Galvin then ordered an officer of each of the assembled fire companies to come forward for assignments. Even though the WTC complex encompassed only sixteen-acres, it was more than thirteen-million-square-feet in size; the equivalent of seventy-five city blocks. All of that territory had to be searched and evacuated.

Galvin formed rescue-teams by pairing up various fire companies. The massive WTC complex was divided into sectors and each rescue-team was assigned one sector to conduct search-and-rescue. Chief Galvin instructed everyone that engine companies were not to travel in elevators unless they were paired with a ladder company. (The reason why Galvin gave that order was because engine companies were not equipped with rescue tools. Therefore, if an Engine got stuck alone in an elevator, they would not be able to free themselves.)

Members of Ladder-13 (“The Pride Of Yorkville”) were each carrying a spare “bottle” under one arm in preparation for extended fire operation. As everyone patiently waited for further instructions, Joe Grazsiano (of Ladder-13) sensed we were in trouble and commented to me: “Louie, it’s going to be a long day.”

Another firefighter from Engine-74 (“The Lost World”) commented to Keith

Murphy that he had been at the Trade Center during the 1993 terrorist attack and couldn't believe that he was back. Ruben Correa (of Engine-74) used his cellphone to call his wife. Ruben informed her he was at the WTC, that he was okay, not to worry, and he loved her. Susan Correa told her husband to be safe. Ruben finished his call and then generously lent his cellphone to other firefighters in the lobby so that they, too, could contact loved ones.

Loud banging noises could be heard. Some of the firefighters in the Marriott lobby at first thought the noises might be small explosions, but the loud sounds were actually that of more jumpers, hitting the awning. A firefighter deals with life-and-death situations every day. This was something that was entirely different. We were dealing with carnage on a level that had never before been experienced in New York City. Anxious to get started with the rescue effort, Ruben Correa complained: "What the fuck are we still doing here?"

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, Lt. Wall returned with our assignment. He announced: "We're going to the forty-fourth-floor, in Tower Two!" Engine-47 had been ordered to link-up with Ladder-13 and its sister company Engine-22 ("Double Deuce") and evacuate from the South Tower as many civilians as possible. We were to begin with the complete search and evacuation of the South Tower's forty-fourth-floor (Sky Lobby) before working our way up to the upper-floors.

The forty-fourth-floor was the lowest point in the South Tower where fire had been reported. (Normally it was where office workers who worked between the forty-seventh and seventy-seventh floors changed elevators.) Chief Galvin also informed us

that no fire command posts had been set up yet in the South Tower's upper-floors so my

rescue team would be on its own.

Captain Walter Hynes (of Ladder-13) was in command of my rescue-team, while a civilian maintenance worker served as a guide and led the way. Our rescue-team then exited the Marriott hotel and followed the maintenance worker outside. Along the way falling chunks of debris were coming down around us from the burning towers. When we reached our destination the maintenance worker turned and left us. We entered the main lobby of One World Trade Center through a revolving door.

A security guard allowed us to enter and we passed through a turnstile. What we didn't know at the time was that the civilian maintenance worker had led us to the North Tower instead of the South Tower – which was the wrong building! Since the Twin Towers were virtually identical and there was lots of falling debris, jumpers, and much confusion, we ended up at Tower One by mistake.

The main lobby of the North Tower was massive in size – seven stories high. It was also a chaotic environment that looked just like a war zone. Tremendous damage had occurred to the lobby with broken glass and dislodged wall tiles laying on the marble floor. The ground was wet from broken water pipes.

There was screaming and yelling. Thousands of civilians, evacuating from the upper-floors, were pouring out of the stairwells (A and C) in single-file and onto the raised mezzanine above the main lobby floor. From the mezzanine, they were being directed by other firefighters to evacuate down two escalators and out of the building.

Many civilians headed directly below ground to the concourse level. From there they made their way underground for about three or four blocks, before traveling back up

to street-level and emerging safely away from falling debris. But other North Tower

evacuees were impatient. They were leaving the building immediately by heading directly outside through the lobby's ground-level exits, even though that action put them at great risk from being struck by falling debris and jumpers.

They were accountants, administrative assistants, analysts, bond traders, chefs, clerks, computer technicians, consultants, dishwashers, electricians, executive assistants, human resource personnel, interns, IT specialists, janitors, office managers, receptionists, secretaries, stock brokers, supervisors, temps, tourists, vice-presidents, waiters, and window washers. Many civilians were dazed. Others were hysterical, sobbing, or crying. Some were badly injured. There were some who were bloodied. One woman I saw had burns on over half of her body. Many, women especially, had no shoes having discarded them in order to be able to move faster.

The first instinct a good firefighter has, when seeing an injured person, is to help that person. As much as I and the other firefighters of my rescue-team may have wanted to comfort those injured, we could not. We had to stay focused on our task and follow our orders. As we had to do with the jumpers we had seen earlier, the members of my rescue-team had to ignore the carnage. If a firefighter abandons his assigned task, even if it is to help someone just for a few moments, then other people could die.

In the North Tower lobby my rescue-team linked up with Engine-21 ("The 21 Club"), a fire company from Midtown's eastside which was being led by Captain William "Billy" Burke Jr. (Engine-21 arrived at the Trade Center as part of the fifth-alarm response to the North Tower and was the only fire company of my rescue-team that was in the right building.) Burke had instructed his men: "We're not going to try to put

the fire out now. We're going to try to save people.”

Captain Hynes led us across the North Tower lobby to an elevator-bank. One elevator that we walked past was completely destroyed. The silver metal doors were badly mangled and smoke was emerging from the shaft. (When the plane hit the building earlier, the cables for that particular elevator were severed, which caused the elevator-car to freefall and crash into the lobby.)

Almost all of the elevators in the North Tower lobby were completely inoperable. At first, we were going to use one of the stairwells. But Captain Burke was able to locate one elevator that was still functioning. Before allowing the rest of us to travel up into the heavily damaged tower, Burke tested the elevator himself to make sure that it was safe to use. Using an elevator override key, Burke rode the elevator up to one of the upper-floors and quickly returned a few minutes later.

When Captain Burke returned with the elevator he was testing, he informed the rest of us that it was safe to use. Captain Hynes said to the rest of our rescue-team: "This is how we're going up – in this elevator!" But that particular elevator only went up as far as the twenty-fourth-floor. To get to the forty-fourth-floor Sky Lobby from the twenty-fourth-floor, we were going to have to either find another working elevator or a stairwell, before walking up the last twenty flights. Because the elevator we were using was not large enough to simultaneously hold all four fire companies, my rescue-team had to travel up in small groups. Firefighter Tommy Hetzel (of Ladder-13) was assigned the task of controlling the elevator with an elevator override key. Engine-21 got into the elevator and traveled up with Hetzel first.

The impact from the plane caused tremendous damage to the building including

the entire lobby. There were puddles of water four- to five-inches deep. Large slabs of

marble had fallen from the lobby walls and broken pieces of marble littered the floor. As the rest of my rescue-team waited in the North Tower lobby for Hetzel to return with elevator, we instructed evacuating civilians to remain calm. Then Keith Murphy suddenly yelled: "LOUIE, LOOK OUT! THAT WALL IS COMING DOWN!" Reacting to the warning, I jumped out of the way as a huge thick marble slab fell from a wall. Barely missing me, it landed exactly where I had been standing only a moment earlier. The large slab shattered into pieces, upon impact with the hard lobby floor.

After Engine-21 had successfully gone up, they radioed to the rest of our rescue-team in the main lobby that there was a light haze of smoke on the twenty-fourth-floor. Those of us still in the lobby looked at one another in amazement. How the hell was the fire spreading to the lower levels so quickly? Turning to Lt. Wall, I said: "Lu, we've got smoke already on twenty-four. That's not good."

Members of Engine-22 traveled up next. When Hetzel again returned with the elevator a short time later, it was Ladder-13's turn. Captain Hynes turned to Lt. Wall and said: "We're not coming back! If you guys want the elevator give me your control man to come up with us. He will come back down to get the rest of you."

That day I was originally assigned to Engine-47's Back-up position, while Tommy Turilli was assigned to the Control position. Because I was "senior-man" and had more experience, Lt. Wall ordered me to take the radio from Turilli and stay with the elevator until every single member of our four-company rescue-team was safely brought up to the twenty-fourth-floor. Following my Lieutenant's order, I got into the elevator with the control radio and rode up with the members of Ladder-13.

When the elevator doors opened at the twenty-fourth-floor I witnessed additional

chaos. Several people were milling about. There were screams and yelling. A light haze of smoke was in the air. Two other firefighters, who were not part of my rescue-team, were there wearing air-masks.

Ladder-13 then disembarked from the elevator. It was Engine-47's turn to come up next. Hetzel relinquished possession of the override key and exited the elevator. He said to me: "Louie, you got it? Do you know what to do?" Tommy was a young firefighter in his early thirties and a good friend of mine. (We had gotten to know each other very well by having played together in the FDNY softball league. He was very athletic and a great ball player.) I responded half-jokingly: "Yeah, I know what to do. But where are you going? I've got no tools."

Because I didn't have any rescue tools, I asked Tommy to remain behind with me in the elevator, just in case something else went wrong. At that point I had no reason to believe that anything was going to go wrong, but we did have an entire commercial passenger plane burning directly above us, and Chief Galvin's instructions were very strict that engine company personnel were not to ride in any of the working elevators unless they were accompanied by a member of a Truck company.

Tommy then said: "No problem. We'll ride back down together." Following my request, Hetzel got back into the elevator with me. The time was 09:58 AM. Just as the elevator doors closed there was the sound of a massive explosion. The entire building shook violently as though there had been a mild earthquake. Lights inside the elevator flickered several times and then suddenly went out.

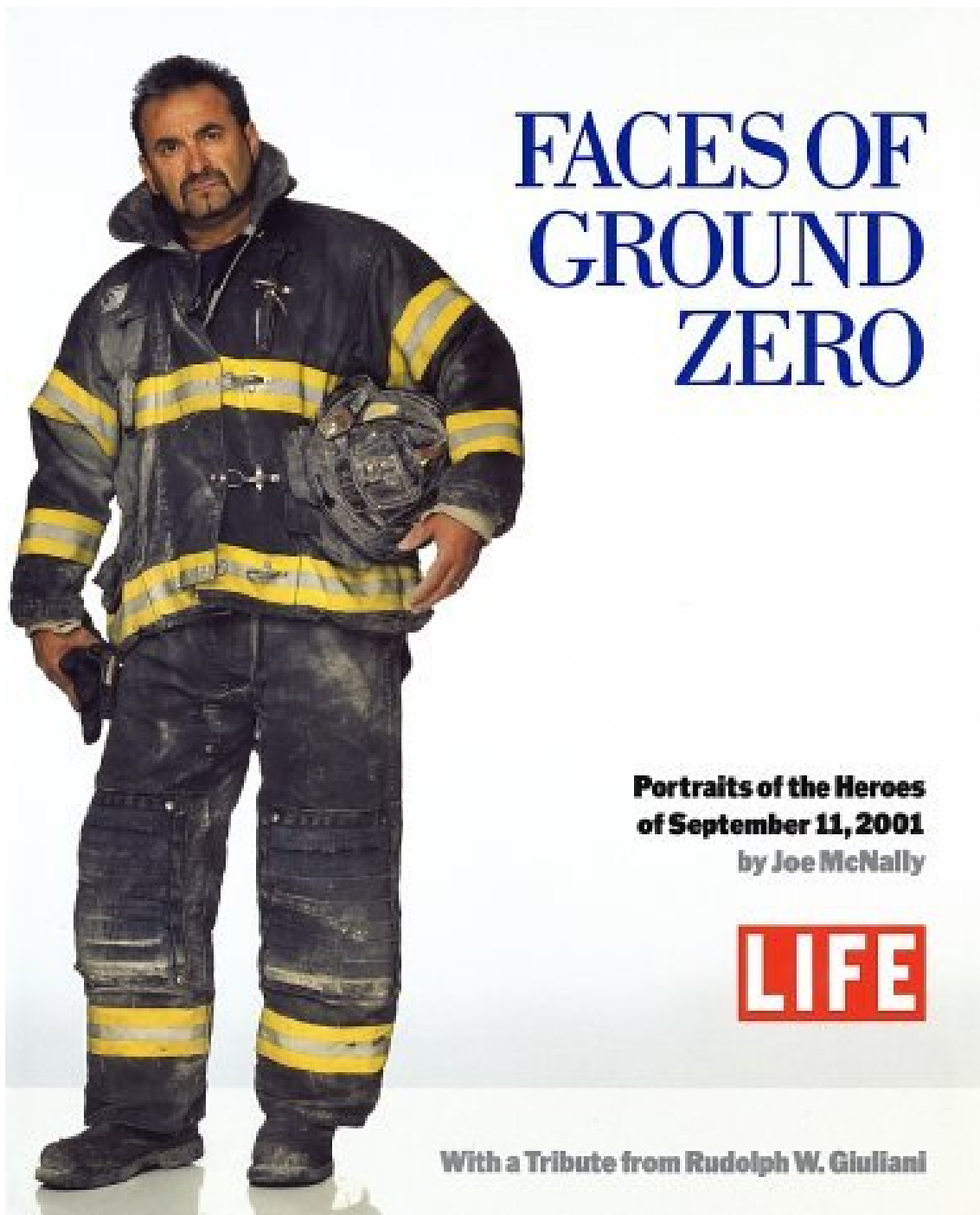
The elevator's interior became pitch black. As Tommy and I fiddled with the

elevator's control-panel, he exclaimed: "Oh, shit! We have no power!" The two of us

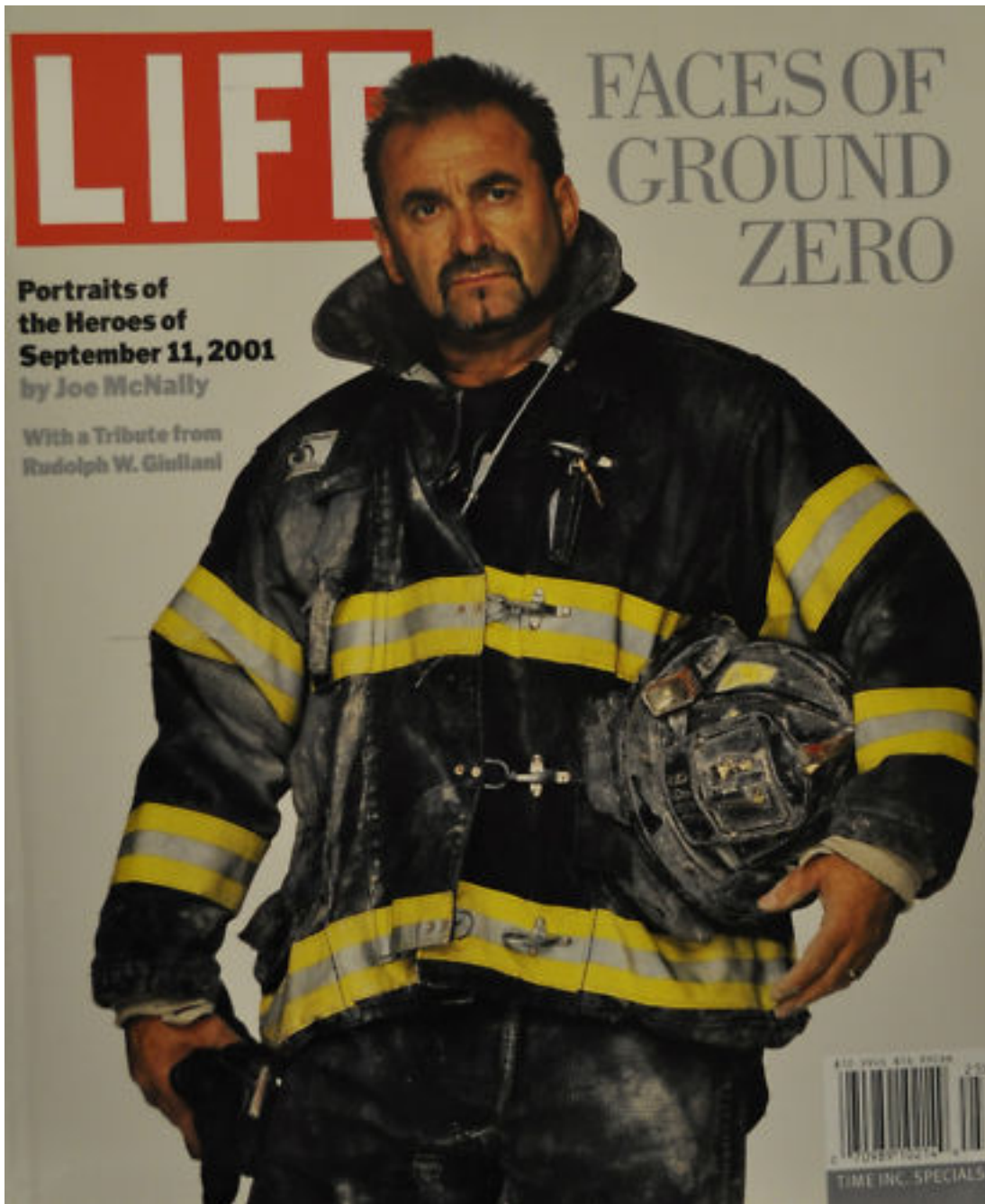
then kicked and pounded on the elevator doors several times and shouted for help while hoping that the other firefighters on the twenty-fourth-floor would hear us. But there was no response. No one could hear us.

So there I was, trapped with fellow firefighter Tommy Hetzel in one of the worst places imaginable – inside a stalled elevator at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

– End –



Faces of Ground Zero (Hardcover Edition)



Faces of Ground Zero (Softcover Edition)

