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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIRE MARSHAL STEVEN MOSIELLO

Interview Date: October 23, 2001

Transcribed by Laurie A. Collins

MR. McALLISTER: This is Kevin

McAllister from the Bureau of

Administration. It's October 23rd, 2001,

1134 hours. We're with Steven Mosiello.

And I'm also joined by --

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DRURY:
Assistant Commissioner James Drury.

- Q. Steven, we'd like to just draw your attention to September the 11th and ask you to provide us with any recollections you may have of the World Trade Center attack.
- A. At approximately 8:45 that morning, maybe 8:50, I heard Chief Ganci, whose offices are three offices away down the hall, call out to Dan Nigro that a plane just hit the World Trade Center. He was looking out of his window at the time. We all jumped up, ran to Chief Ganci's office, myself, Chief Nigro, and we looked out the window. And the World Trade Center was on fire.

At that point the Chief said a plane just hit it, and we responded. It was myself, Chief Ganci and Chief Nigro in the car, and we responded over to the World Trade Center. While

we were on the Brooklyn Bridge, some five minutes later or so, Chief Ganci gave a fifth alarm for the World Trade Center due to the amount of fire and smoke we saw from our position on the Brooklyn Bridge. We were on the center of the bridge at the time, I remember. Chief Nigro said to Chief Ganci that it's probably going to be one of the worst days of our career.

With that we responded in. I believe I went down Chambers Street and wheeled my way in to where we parked. We parked on the corner of West and Vesey on the sidewalk. I gave Chief Ganci his gear. I took my gear. And we were setting up a command post, I believe it was in the street at that point, and somebody said -- I don't know who it was -- go over here by those two garages, where we eventually wound up setting up our command post in front of Two World Financial.

Somebody mentioned -- I don't recall who -- that this is our area of refuge should something happen, meaning the two garages, which during the course of the day did wind up being our first area of refuge when tower number two

collapsed.

- Q. Excuse me, at that time were the garage doors up when you were in the sloping driveway?

  Is that where the command post was?
- A. They, yes were. Looking at the buildings, both garage doors were up. We were set up, looking at the building, to the garage on the left, which would be the south garage. And on the north garage there was a red van from communications. I believe it was where their communications vehicle set up.
- Q. How many planes had hit at this point in time?
- A. At this point there was only one plane. I was told by somebody that we had an eyewitness who happened to be an off-duty firefighter who told me that he saw the first building get hit and it was hit by a prop jet, which I think turned out to be the wrong information, but everybody sees things differently. But he said he was an eyewitness. I gave him to a fire marshal. I never got his name personally.

At that point we were set. This was our command post, and everybody was stopping in

before they went to locations. You saw so many faces of guys that are dead today that were going into these buildings. They'd stopped by, how you doing, where do you want me to go, they went to their location and they went to work.

At that point we're standing there -- I remember a gentleman who worked in number One World Trade, a maintenance worker, who was talking to Chief Ganci, and asking him if he wanted to go into the building to check and see what pumps were working and how high the water was being pumped in the building, and I don't recall what the outcome of that was. I believe Chief Ganci sent a company in with him to go check these pumps. I don't remember what the company number was or anything else.

At that point the Mayor shows up. I was standing away from the command post, and the Mayor showed up. And one of his aides asked where the Fire Commissioner was. I remember the Mayor being with Commissioner Kerik and himself and a lot of their aides and escorts or whatever. Somebody said the Commissioner was in One World Trade Center, north tower, that was hit already.

I said go up and get him. What was I thinking all the jumpers and everything else.

I believe at that point when I went over to get the Commissioner, that's when the fireman of 216 was killed by a jumper when a jumper landed on him.

I went to the building, looked for the Commissioner, and they said he had just left. So now we've crossed each other's paths. I came back to the command post across the street at Two World Financial, and the Commissioner was there talking to the Mayor.

- Q. Can you describe what the plaza and the area outside looked like at that point in time?
- A. Outside number One World Trade, there were jumpers. There was a tremendous amount of bodies on the ground. They were hitting at a rate of probably one every 30 or 40 seconds onto the glass atrium that was there, which is a distinct explosion-type sound when they hit, as was -- I think you can close your eyes and you knew when a jumper hit the ground over there. It was very distinct.

After you saw enough of them, you just

stopped looking. You knew what it was. I think this is a quote from somebody else: If it stayed the jumpers and the fire in number one, then there would have been a real bad day, not worse.

- Q. Stopping and stepping back for a second. You were driving I assume on Vesey to the corner of West. Did you see any debris or anything in the street at that point?
- A. I don't recall -- and I don't know if I came in on Vesey. I believe I came Chambers to -- no, I came over the Brooklyn Bridge. I came past City Hall, wheeled my way through I think that first street there -- I think if you make a left at Broadway going straight across may be Park. I'm not sure. We wheeled in in that way. And I came down maybe a street or two north of Vesey, and then we got in. I don't recall if I came down Vesey Street. I draw a blank on that.
- Q. You left off with the statement about if it was left with just the jumpers and that one tower.
- A. At that point I don't know exactly when the Commissioner and Mayor had left. It was

pretty soon after they had left that Richie
Zarillo, who works with EMS -- I believe he's an
OEM liaison -- came running up to me. I was not
on the ramp at this time. I was like almost at
the sidewalk location.

He said Steve, where's the Chief? I have to tell him, you know -- I said tell him what, Richie? These buildings are in imminent danger of collapse. I said how do you know that, you know? So he ran with me. I ran over and grabbed Chief Ganci and said Chief, these buildings are in imminent danger of collapse. He looked up at me --

- Q. Had the second plane hit at this point?
- A. Yes, yes, the second plane hit. We saw the second plane hit if you want me to go back to when the second plane hit. I was told by Chief Ingram, who was a terrorist and hazmat-type guy, that we've got to be careful of secondary explosions or secondary devices. Who knew that the secondary device would be another plane.

People actually saw the plane. You heard it, the closer it got. It just got louder and louder. I say that he throttled up as fast

as he could. That's what it sounded like, but I think he became more in earshot of us. And he just came in and put the plane into the building.

As I'm looking up at this stuff that's going on up there now, I just like -- I'm saying to myself I've seen this in a movie. My whole recollection is going back to a movie or something I saw. I just saw this before. It's like before my eyes. I don't know if I ever did or didn't, you know, in a dream.

Then at that point within a few minutes, Richie Zarillo came up to me. I'll go back to that. He said that these buildings are in imminent danger of collapse. I went right up to the Chief because I was a few steps away. I said Chief, these buildings are in imminent danger of collapse. And he said to me who would would tell you something like that?

And he looked at me and he had that determined -- I have to say probably scared look on his face, who would tell you something like that. I said Richie, come over here and tell the Chief what you just told me. He got the words out of his mouth. I think it was maybe 25, 30

seconds later, maybe, the building came down.

- Q. Did Zarillo ever say what he based that opinion on?
- A. I believe the Chief said where did he get that from? He said from OEM. We were trying to determine exactly how he got it. In retrospect, how did he get it? He was walking towards us. Was he coming towards us anyway and he got it over his radio? I think he told me he got it from Peruggia. There was like a relay type of thing, which maybe we should have and didn't have our OEM radios on at the location. There was a lot of havoc going on.

I believe you were there, Jim, and you saw it also.

So at that point the building comes down. I believe Chief Ganci said what the hell's this or what the fuck is this, looked up, and then we all just bailed out simultaneously into garages. I don't remember who went into the left garage and who went into the right garage.

I remember going into the north garage, which was on my right. There was a booth, if I remember correctly, between the two garage ramps.

I went behind the booth and into the garage.

There was a lot of people in there. We wound up running into the garage, running to the right, and it dead-ended where there was like storage space behind doors, behind locked doors.

- Q. Do you remember seeing Commissioner Fitzpatrick at that time?
  - A. No, I don't.
  - Q. He also went down there?
- A. There were so many guys I saw. One guy I distinctly remember is Mike Donovan. We were all searching for a staircase or some way out for tools. I think a few people screamed for tools: Who's got tools, who's got tools. They found a staircase that led out.

At this point you're being choked out, totally choked out. I thought we were going to die in there because we couldn't breathe. There were low ceilings. Nothing was lifting. The dust wasn't lifting. It came in and just stayed.

- Q. Stepping back for a minute, Steve. Had you seen Chief Feehan and Chief Downey at that location moments before the collapse?
  - A. Yes, yes. I recall seeing Chief Downey

I believe before the second plane hit. He was talking to Chief Ganci. I believe the firefighter already had gotten struck by a jumper, and Ray Downey was telling the Chief that he'd like to start bringing companies over via the north walking bridge and that that would be a safer avenue to get into the building.

- Q. So this is after the first building came down, they were still planning --
- A. No, no, this was before the first collapse, before any buildings collapsed.
- Q. After the second plane hit, but before the first building collapsed?
  - A. Yes.
  - Q. Got it.

That firefighter, by the way, just for the record, is firefighter Suhr, S-U-H-R, who was hit by a jumper.

## A. Right.

I was on my way out of that building when he was hit by a jumper. There was a company coming. I don't know the company. They were walking next to the building, and I yelled at the lieutenant to get in the street with his men

because look what just happened. There were jumpers coming down. He probably wasn't very aware of it at the time. Probably like everybody else he was scared and he wasn't thinking either.

- Q. So you are in the garage now and there's no air and the dust is in there and you're trying to find a way out?
- A. Yes. I was checking some doors, and I heard somebody yell hey, Steve, we found the staircase. I got to the staircase and there was a lieutenant there named Mike Donovan who worked for us up here that day, and he said we found a staircase. And Mike said I want you guys to start getting out and I'm going to stay here until everybody's out of the garage. I remember that. I have a book at home. I wrote his name down, what he did. I thought that was quite heroic that he wouldn't leave that location.

Most of us from headquarters -- nobody had masks. The only people who had masks then were possibly companies standing by waiting to be assigned, which at that point I don't think we had that many, because the second tower -- the first collapse was the second tower, so we were

putting as many men to work as possible.

At that point I recall going up the staircase, turning a few ways and we wound up back on West Street, I think just north of the north walking bridge we came out. At that point I saw Chief Ganci, Commissioner Feehan. I don't recall if I saw Fitz at that point, Commissioner Fitzpatrick. I saw Tommy McDonald limping.

Tommy was walking with us.

Commissioner Feehan had kind of a limp to him, and I was standing on his right side. So with my left hand I went to grab his right elbow just to help him along. Arrogantly, the way he was, he pulled his arm and said I don't need any help, Steve. Thank you anyway.

We walked up to the corner. Chief Ganci said he wanted to move a command post and staging area as far north as possible.

- Q. You said the corner. Is that the corner of Vesey and West?
  - A. Yes, Vesey and West.

I don't know if we all just realized exactly what happened or were confused. Glad to be alive, probably. I think maybe something

clicked in Chief Ganci's head at that point that he had men in that other building and he knew that, and he started walking in that direction with Commissioner Feehan. I said Chief, where are you going? He said Steve, I'm going to take a walk down here. Go get me two trucks.

I went to -- I believe our staging area was around Barclay. I'm not exactly sure. I remember the Chief I spoke to was a Chief Mike Keenan from 46 Battalion.

- Q. Barclay and West?
- A. Yes.

We were on West Street then. And I asked this Chief Keenan for two trucks. He said okay, Steve, I'll go get them for you.

At that point Chief Ganci called me back on the radio and he must have seen something because he said Steve, I want two of my best trucks, rescue squads, two of my best trucks. He must have gotten to where he was going or in that direction and he saw something, possibly people who needed some kind of help.

Q. Can I ask, when you last saw them were they back near the Two World Financial Center

garages where you had initially set up or were they farther down?

- A. When they left me, we were all on the west side of the north walking bridge. That's where we separated. They went south. I went north to get the trucks.
- Q. By the way, did you notice on West Street, either before the first collapse or after the first collapse when you came back around, the number of rigs that were on West Street?
- A. There were a tremendous amount of rigs, because I believe those rigs saved my life during the second collapse. A tremendous amount of rigs.

On my way after I asked for the two trucks, I saw a fellow I rode up with and who I worked with years ago. His name was Lieutenant Wilkinson with 238. He was obviously in the first collapse because — he was right near a fire truck. I don't know what fire truck it was. But he was obviously in the first collapse because I believe he had dust and stuff all over him. We talked, how are you doing, how's everything. And then I was still waiting for the

trucks at that point.

I believe that was on the west side of West Street his rig was parked, or wherever he was. I'm going to say just south of Vesey but not as far as the walk before.

So I have the trucks -- the Chief calls me and tells me he's gathering up the trucks and going to send them down to me. I told him where I was. This is Chief Keenan. And Chief Ganci called me back and said Steve, I want you to bring those two trucks to me. He said stay on the westerly side of West Street. I'm 50 feet or 50 yards -- I forget exactly -- south of our last command post, which told me he was south of the garage.

Okay, Chief, I have the trucks coming.

I'll be there in a couple minutes. The next
thing, the second tower came down. I'm calling
Chief Ganci: Car 3A to car 3, car 3 -- he never
answered. I kind of knew something happened
there.

At that point, as we know, the walking bridge was collapsed in the street. You couldn't get through that way. So I probably went into

shock, knowing that my best friend was seriously injured or dead. I presumed the worst, obviously. And I went back to Chambers Street -- at this point the collapse happens.

And now we're running opposite of the collapse, obviously. I'm running north on West Street. I'm running in the southbound lane of West Street on the east side of the lane. There was rigs parked all along that curb, and I stayed in the street next to those rigs.

- Q. This is at the time of the collapse?
- A. At the time of the collapse. I heard the noise. I looked up. I saw the debris flying. And believe it or not, I never heard another thing. I did not hear another thing after that.

Same thing with the first collapse.

After the initial rumbling, you look up, my ears shut right down. I heard nothing. Speaking to people, they say you probably thought you were dead, you were just shutting everything out.

So as I was going north on West Street,
I stayed next to the rigs. And I don't know if I
ran for a block or two. I'm not embarrassed to

say we ran away from the scene. We had no choice. And I thought I was going to choke to death again. I was totally choked up. I wound up going to my knees -- I don't know at what location -- just saying this was it. Somehow I picked myself up and started moving again.

At first I thought I could outrun it, but it came so fast and furious. Like I said, I think I just kept walking after that. After the collapse was over, I just kept walking and walking. Of course this dust was rolling down and kept pushing towards you, but you couldn't outrun it. Eventually I think I saw a clearing somewhere around Chambers Street. There was a glass overpass there or something.

- Q. Probably Stuyvesant High School and Manhattan Community College.
- A. Right, right there. That's where it started. You started seeing it clear, clear up.

And that was it. And then I saw some faces and I kept calling Chief Ganci and kept calling him. I tried to get Dan Nigro. I thought he was dead. He wasn't answering.

At that point I went into a panic. I

don't know exactly when, but I saw Chief Turi. I saw Frank Carruthers and I told him I think I know where Pete is and that I want to put together a couple teams and go down and see if we can search for them.

I grabbed Al Turi. I know he was in the military and he's a real trooper. We got a couple companies together. I believe they gave me ladder 144, the second section, if you will, and ladder 136. I believe it also was the second section there, the ones that we recalled, I believe.

Also now a bunch of guys wanted to be involved -- I forget who else -- a few captains, a few chiefs, whatever. Chief Turi took them on the side and told them we were going to search for Chief Ganci and probably First Deputy

Commissioner Feehan and that this was our mission and they were to stay together and follow up.

We went to Vesey Street. We made a right. We went through Two World Financial off of Vesey because you couldn't get through down West Street, wiggled our way around, came out, came to the other side. You didn't know where

you were, didn't know what direction you were anymore. The whole place was a complete disaster zone.

I grabbed a chief who looked like he recognized the scene. I don't remember who it was. I told him we were looking for the spot where the garages were. He said I think it's over here but the only way to get through it is through the garage, you have to go back in the building.

Somehow in all this confusion I lost the guys. I go back to the building and went over and spoke to somebody on the radio. I don't know who it was. Because Chief Turi's radio was dead at that point. They said they started the search.

At that point I went back to the command post, which was now set up at Chambers Street, and I believe it was Chief Carruthers who was there, or Chief Fellini -- I'm not sure -- and I told them I think I should go tell the Mayor and Commissioner I believe that Pete Ganci is dead, that we need lights here, it's going to get dark in a few hours and we need to find him.

- Q. You said the command post was now at Chambers Street. Is that Chambers and West?
- A. Chambers and West, yes, Chambers and West. That was the west command post at that point. I know there were other command posts set up at Broadway or over at Park Row. We never saw anything that was going on on the other side of the buildings, on the east side of the towers, because we were always on West Street. I heard some horror stories over there.

Somehow the Commissioner's car was around. There was a vehicle there or something with a driver. I said take me to the Commissioner. They told me he was over at the Police Academy. So they brought me over there.

I went and talked to him and told him what had happened and that Pete's probably dead. He told me calm down, Steve, you're thinking the worst, maybe he's not. I said I'm pretty damn sure. I'm talking to him one minute and the next minute I couldn't raise him on the radio.

I knew everybody was in good hands searching for the Chief and stuff. Don't ask me why, but Chief Ganci and myself had a very close

relationship with the Police Department also,
Chief Esposito and Commissioner Dunne.

And on the way back we were passing One PP, and I said maybe I should stop and tell Joe Dunne what happened also, and I did. At that point I just went and said Joe, I'm really sorry. I'm pretty sure this is the way it's going to play out, but Pete's gone.

- Q. Hadn't Joe Dunne also had a close call?
- A. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. This is the first time I saw Joe Dunne, I believe. But either way, I've got to go back to the scene.
- Q. Can I just get a clarification, Steve. Were they still looking for Chief Ganci --
  - A. Yes.
- Q. -- and Commissioner Feehan when you left to go to the Police Academy?
- A. Yes. There was a very large pile there. There was a lot of steel. I knew this was going to take more than a 15-minute rescue. This was going to take time. And it did. It took a couple of hours.

I remember when I was talking to the Commissioner, babbling, I was very upset. I

wasn't upset with anybody in particular. It was a bad day. I said Commissioner, it's 1:00, I cannot go home without his body. We have to get lights here. Because I looked at my watch. It was exactly 1:00. I said we have six hours of daylight left. We need lights. I cannot go home without his body.

We live across the street from each other. We've been best friends for many, many years. I often think to myself should I have stayed and dug with the guys and stuff. I didn't think that was necessary at the time. We had to get command and control of this whole scene. It was utter chaos, in everybody's eyes.

I went back to the scene. I don't think I was there 15 minutes. They called me on my radio, asked me to come down to the building, where they found Chief Ganci. They were just going to put him in an ambulance, for me to come down.

I went down there, and they put his body in an ambulance and off they went.

Q. Can you tell me with as much specificity as you can recall, where they found

him?

- A. Yes. They found him -- it was probably more like I would say 75 to 100 feet south of the first command post, which was on that ramp. I know exactly where they found him. I knew exactly where he was. It wasn't a surprise we found him first, him and Commissioner Feehan, because he had just told me on the radio where he was. He couldn't have moved that far in that time frame.
- Q. Were you informed that they had found Commissioner Feehan too at this point?
- A. I don't recall. I don't know. I honestly don't know. I know they told me they were 15 feet apart. It was actually on the sidewalk area. They were maybe 25 feet from the building, from the building walk. That building, if you remember, it juts in and out.
- Q. The building being the Financial Center?
- A. Two World Financial Center. It has different characteristics. This part was set back a little bit, about 25 feet from this part.
  - Q. There's another walking bridge down

there; is that right? North?

- A. They were so far north of that. They were just about, I was going to say, 75 feet -75 feet sounds like a lot. It's not. They were
  75 feet south of exactly where our first command post was.
- Q. Right. The south bridge is actually south of Liberty Street, so they were well north of that.
- A. Oh, well north, absolutely. Well north of that.
- Q. Literally only 25 yards south of where the command post at the Two World Financial was?
  - A. Yes, yes.

 $\label{eq:At that point I went to the ambulance.}$  Henry McDonald was sitting in the ambulance.

- Q. Henry?
- A. Henry, Henry. My memory's pretty good. Henry was sitting in the ambulance.

I viewed the body.

Through this whole course of all these

events, I had a cell phone that was working and not working from time to time. I did get a couple calls out to my wife during a couple courses of events, such as a collapse or afterwards, whatever, to let her know that I was okay. I left a voice mail message on her work phone. She's a computer girl, so she would send me back on my beeper that she received my message and love you and all that.

 $$\operatorname{Now}\ I$$  had to go back and tell Mrs. Ganci. I went to the command post at Chambers and West.

- Q. Stop you there. Had they recovered Commissioner Feehan's body at this point, to your knowledge?
- A. I don't know. I don't recall. I honestly don't recall. But I know they were recovered very close in a timely fashion to each other.
- Q. So you made it back to the command post.
- A. I'm back at the command post. I told

  Chief Carruthers -- I think Chief Butler was

  there also -- that we found Pete and I have to go

tell his wife. He said go do what you have to do.

I grabbed I believe it was Chief Hale of the NYPD, told him I wanted a police car to take me out there. He said do you want to go by helicopter? I said absolutely not. I need to think of what I have to say to this woman.

And I asked Al Turi to go with me.

Chief Ganci and I also have a personal friend, Dennis Conway, who is retired from the Fire Department who was at the scene helping there. He's still a big, big buff. He was a fireman for 30 years. He worked for Pete for many, many years.

So he went in one police car, and we went in another and we drove out to North

Massapequa to tell Mrs. Ganci. There were some fire marshals there that I knew. I asked one of the chiefs if they could go and find Chief

Ganci's son who was a fireman in Ladder 111 and

pick him up and bring him to the house. Actually I told him to wait down the block and we'd all meet at that location.

Subsequently when we got there, I forgot all about this kid. They weren't there. We pulled in. I just kept going and told the wife. I felt bad about that, left the kid down the block.

Then I came back to work that

night.

That was basically it.

We went back that night. They were moving cars and doing all sorts of things. They were digging out, trying to get equipment in there. It was pretty chaotic. Well lit. I remember there was a lot of lights.

I saw a police tow truck and asked him to tow our car out of there. It has been crushed by some debris. The trunk was popped open; I don't know how. Steering column was all ripped out; I don't know why. To this day I don't know why the column was disabled like that. They towed it to the corner.

I found a department tow truck. I asked them to tow the car to one of the shops, and I rode with the tow truck with the car and saw Tommy McDonald. That was probably around midnight. I asked Tommy for another vehicle. He said he didn't have any but I could have his.

Q. You said earlier that after the first

collapse but before the second collapse you had seen Tommy McDonald limping.

- A. Yes.
- Q. The next time you saw him, was that fleet services when he gave you his car?
- A. I don't recall that. I don't recall that. I remember him sitting on a rig, on the front of a rig or on the back of a rig. I don't recall if it was after that first collapse or after the second collapse. I remember seeing him on a rig sitting down resting.

I said Tommy, let me help you. He said I'm all right. I don't recall at what point that was. I guess that's the only cloudiness in a lot of this stuff. You saw faces. So many of these faces I saw.

I saw a friend of mine from when I was in high school, Bruce Gary, who was on the median. He said Steve, when are we going to retire? Every time I go into Manhattan, I always see Bruce Gary. He has been with 40 engine for 20-something years.

And he died. I was really surprised at that. I didn't notice that for probably a week

- or so. I really didn't keep up with the list of names. I was, you know, in denial, probably.
  - Q. Did you ever see Chief Burns?
  - A. Burns? Yes.
  - Q. What about Chief Barbara?
- A. Yes. Both of them were at the command post before the second plane hit the second tower. I saw them both.
- Q. I don't have anything further. I don't have any follow-up questions. Do you have any other recollections or observations?
- A. No, I mean, I think most of that stuff is exactly the way it happened. I wasn't cloudy on any of this stuff. It's just a bad day, a bad day in my life. And hopefully we'll all get through this and go forward.
  - Q. Thank you very much.

MR. McALLISTER: We're going to conclude the interview. It's now 1207 hours on October 23rd, 2001. Thank you.