

Episode 149: Stories from September 11

September 11, 2001 was a tragic day in America.

The terrorist attacks caused the deaths of 2,996 people in New York, the Pentagon, and near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Thousands more were injured. And many people since then have died from illnesses caused by exposure to toxic materials at the World Trade Center crash site.

Here on the podcast, each year in September we dedicate an episode to hearing stories from people who were there and witnessed the tragedy. In this episode, you'll hear from Lori Brody, who worked in the World Trade Center, and from Joe Falco, a New York City firefighter. Their stories were told a few years ago here, and we're taking this opportunity to make sure their voices are heard again, so that we never forget that day.

If you, or someone you know, personally experienced the terrorist attacks at any of the three locations, please contact me through the website at WhatWasThatLike.com.

May we never forget.

Lori Brody

Everyone has a story and this happens to be my story - that's what my friends told me. 15 years ago, my brother and I got up. We went to work on a normal, bright and sunny day. We got off the subway at the Trade Center and he went up to his tower which was Tower 1 - people know it as North Tower - and I went to mine, which is the Deutsche Bank building, which was connected to Tower 2. I can still remember what he was wearing - a nice pair of black Calvin Klein pants, a Kenneth Cole beige sweater with a little collar and a nice pair of Kenneth Cole shoes. That was how we dress. I was in my suit and sneakers because my heels were in my drawer at work.

When I got to my desk, all of a sudden, I heard these loud bangs, noises, and alarms, and everything went nuts. We were told to just get away from the building. No one knew what was happening. Then, we heard that a small commuter plane probably hit the tower, but nobody was hurt - that's all we knew at that point. We were back at our desk. I was trying to reach my brother - my brother was Scott Schertzer - but I couldn't reach him. Then, Tower 2 got hit. We were told to run out as fast as we could. We had to run to the other side of the building because our windows were breaking. I couldn't reach anybody in my family.

A nice man named Mark Lubin saved my life because he made sure I got out. I just went to a state of shock because I couldn't reach Scott. He made it to work. I was at 101st floor - Cantor Fitzgerald - and that's the last that I got to really see him was that morning. Then, it was just about running and more running and more running. As the buildings were collapsing around you, you just ran into hidden alleyways and doorways, and people covered you up. I always said there was no such thing as chivalry, but the men were covering up all the women so that whatever was flying in the air would not hit us. They would just like cuddle us and everything. We finally got to an office building all the way down by the water because we ran that way. We didn't run towards Midtown. We ran further away because that's the only way we could run.

It took me until 12.30 that day to even reach my parents. At that point, my parents didn't know if my brother or I made it. I was able to reach my dad after the first tower, but not after the second. He knew that's the one that was attached to mine, so I guess they were a little bit more messed up than I was. I was in shock more than anything else. I almost knew he didn't make it. At that point, I was trying to figure out, "Why did I survive and he didn't?" So what happened? Why would this happen? F15s were flying over your head down Fifth Avenue. I mean, you're not supposed to see them. They're lower than the buildings. Police were everywhere. No one knew what was going on. You just knew life wasn't going to be the same ever again. My life for sure wasn't the same ever again.

My brother was 20 years old. He didn't actually have a life. For me, it was just a lot of recovery and a lot of therapy after that, I guess. In a good way, I had 2 failed suicide attempts. I was finding out who I could rely on - what family and what friends. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't do anything. I would walk around with a pillow with a picture of my brother and me on top of the pillow and wouldn't let anybody touch it - I was told that by many people. I remember parts of that - a lot of things are blurry in my mind. The pieces that I'm telling you about are the pieces that I remember more vividly than the other pieces.

I had PTSD. Technically, I still have PTSD because I still get flashbacks of survivor guilt. I got my brother the job there. I got Scott the job at Cantor Fitzgerald - one of my friends hired him - and I told him he had to go to work that morning. The day before, he had laid off 50 people at Cantor Fitzgerald. He knew it was coming. He was having what I thought were nightmares and trauma as a result of it for about 3-4 weeks beforehand because he kept saying, "They're after me. The bad guys are coming." The dreams were happening and he couldn't bear it going on. All he kept telling everybody is how much he wanted to be with his family and how much he loved them. He kept telling my mom how much he loved them. We knew something was wrong. We were arranging for him to talk to somebody. I mean, it's hard. A 20-years-old having to lay off 50 people is traumatic, and we thought it was all that.

That night, after he laid off the people, he said he still couldn't sleep. They were following him all over. He didn't want to go to work because he said they kept following him, but I made him go to work. So I blamed myself a lot. Obviously, I know it's not me, but part of me will always think, "If I didn't get him the job or if the subway was 5 minutes late, we would not have been there yet." But I don't think it's what happened.

None of my memories is without him. I was two years and three months older, but I don't remember anything without him. As we got older, somewhere online, we became friends. Our groups commingled when we got older. We go out to Manhattan. We go down to LBI at the shore. We became friends, and I lost one of my best friends. I see a lot of him in my kids. I sometimes joke that I gave birth to my own brother because my son has his sports abilities - significant abilities. My daughter has his blue eyes and blonde hair. As you can see, I'm not blind or blonde. We don't know where it is on my husband's side and he can't remember how far back it has to be. Obviously, there is someplace but nobody knows where it is. I still see him in my dreams.

The hardest part for me is when my kids asked why they can't meet their Uncle Scott or see their Uncle Scott. I had to say that he's in heaven and they were like, "Well, where is heaven?" because, to them, everything's a place on a map. I have to try and explain it in a way that a 4.5-year-old and 2.5-year-old could understand without telling them too much. So that's hard for me right now. I found ways to make sure people remember him. The town I grew up in was North

Edison— I got our street named after him. I got a bench in Central Park named for him outside of Tavern On The Green. We have a butterfly garden and a grammar school that was funded by neighbors. Those are just ways that we can find to remember him.

Obviously, I've been to the towers since everything happened. For me, it doesn't look normal or right. I don't know why anybody in the right mind would want to be in a building that tall ever again, but that's your choice, it wouldn't be mine. I couldn't take it. I had a special colored pass that said I was a family member. I went with my husband. Obviously, security knows what that pass color means and they, kind of, stick around by you just in case people want to read your badge. I went into the room where they went into the full details and I lost it. They rushed me out to the family center and let me just sit where a security guard doesn't. There's a whole area where only family can go. It sounds stupid but they have water and, like, a little snack for you just so that you can gather your composure again. You can stay there or continue. I stayed there. It was hard.

I've only been there once since being out here. I went to every Memorial for the first time - both the big Trade Center and Cantor Fitzgerald have their own. I've met a lot of people through it - other siblings. Of course, obviously, there are the politicians and anybody else who is somewhat a VIP or whatever. I've gone to all of them and it's hard. It's very hard to be down there. For me, it doesn't look like it should look. They're just rebuilding right on top of it. For me, I wish they never did. We were, I guess, lucky - for lack of a better word - that they found a part of my brother. I don't know what part my dad does, but he will die with him when he passes - hopefully, not soon.

They told you where he was found and who he was found with. He was found with his co-workers, which means that they were all together. I thought long and hard to get through a point where I was like, "I'm a survivor. There's not much that can be done to me anymore that I can't survive." You learn that your family is the most important thing in the world. In my house, we always say we love each other every day. We give each other hugs because you don't know when the last one is going to be.

Obviously, there are some details that I don't even remember, which is probably for the best. It took me a while to get off the meds they put me on. I needed to go to sleep to wake up and make it through the day for about 4 years, but I'm here - that's what I keep telling myself and that's what's important. Probably up till now, most people out here didn't know about my brother - about what Scott and I went through. There's a big divide. I think people don't remember it out here. I don't know if it's thought of as much.

Back east, the major networks would run every Memorial with the names on the bottom. You're lucky if you see, like, a 5-minute glimpse here as they're discussing traffic like on the highway. It's not the same. I just don't see it being the same. It's just like an ordinary day but it's not. If you were back east, it's not an ordinary day. They need to know that there are families and people who died - it's not just the building that came down, the lawsuits over the buildings, and the rent afterwards. There were 3,000 people that passed away with 4 planes going down between New York, Pennsylvania, Shanksville, Pennsylvania and DC. Those are what you have to remember. Those 3000 people didn't get to live their lives. They all have family members. They have brothers, sisters, moms, dads, and kids. Some of those kids never even knew their parents. That's what people need to remember. I think if you weren't personally impacted, it's just like another day to you. "Okay, I'm just gonna go on." You went to work. The next day, I didn't go to work for a month and a half. I know people will sit there and compare and say, "Well,

we've lost loved ones but you got to say goodbye." What I kept telling people is, "I didn't get to say goodbye. We just went to work. We went to work in a business on Wall Street. We did not do anything that would have caused it."

I lost him. I know that I am Jewish - that's why I go to the JCC and my kids go to the JCC preschool. I'm not sure if there is a God there anymore. Even Sister Elizabeth from Catholic Charities came to our house a lot - Sister Elizabeth was one with the sister - and she was like, "You don't have to believe in this. If that's what you need, then don't believe." I don't know if there is one up there because I can't imagine someone allowing this to happen. So it's really hard for me to reconcile that.

I talked to my brother almost every day. Obviously, I talked to my family a lot. For my wedding, we set up a place setting for him and we left the groom's spot open because that would have been his place. My son is named for my brother - Steven is named for Scott. I couldn't use the same name. It was just too hard for me. I didn't want to look at my son's face and cry every 5 minutes, so I just reach out with the same initials. Every day, I remember I have his I have the flag that we got - it's in my house. As I said, I guess, unless you know me, you don't know. This is my story.

Scott

Joe Falco...

Joe Falco

We get a run in the morning around 8.30 to Penn Station for an EMS call. We got to Penn Station and I was waiting at the taxi ramp. The guys went into Penn Station looking for the victim. All of a sudden, over the radio, I heard the chief from downtown saying that he has a confirmed plane crash in the World Trade Center. So, right away, I called the officer on the radio and I told them that we have confirmed a plane crash in the World Trade Center. They came back within minutes. An ambulance showed up to take care of the patient. They came right back to the rig.

So they made it a second alarm automatically and, then, the third alarm. We were on our way back to the firehouse which is only a block away. We got to the firehouse. We back into the building. The guys were watching it on TV. Now, it became the fifth alarm - this is only minutes later. Now, we got the ticket to go to the box - I'm not sure the exact time it was. It would probably be 9 o'clock exactly when we got transmitted to go. The one guy, Kurt, said, "You want to drive or you want me to drive?" I was already driving - I was still in the rig - so I said, "No, I'll drive" because I was getting off that morning. I was supposed to go home, but I was waiting for details to come to the firehouse. Kurt should have been driving that day but, since I was already driving that night, I drove. We got down to the Trade Center. Everybody got off the rig.

I don't even remember the ride down. All I know is we got there fast. I mean, there was traffic but we weaved in and out. The cops had the roads blocked. We got there so fast that it was pretty amazing how fast we got there. So we propped the rig and I got as close as I can get - a lot of rigs were in the way. Everybody got off. I got off. I got dressed. I got my gear. I went in and see. The guys were ahead of me - they were already in the building by the time I get there. So I caught up with the officer and the men in Tower 1's lobby and talked to him. He saw me and he said, "I don't want you in a building." It was Lieutenant Esperado who said, "Go outside and help

somebody to get water, or get water yourself." That meant helping somebody hook up to the building and pump water into the building, or doing it myself if I can find a handrail on my rig. So I told him "Okay." As I looked out the door - the windows of the Trade Center - I saw 65 engines. They're right in the middle of the highway. He was in the process of hooking up to a hydrant, so I made my way over to him.

I have no recollection of anything in the lobby. I mean, they said that there were bodies and debris everywhere. I don't remember any of that. I mean, I was like, "Whatever". I just didn't focus on any of that. I didn't know that there you could hear thumps and crashes - those were people jumping and hitting all over the place, so you had to watch. You couldn't just go out the door. You had to stop and wait till it was clear and then go. I went across the street to the chauffeur - I knew him but I didn't know his name. We hooked up to the hydrant. We charged the line. We were looking at the building and it was a direct shot right across the street to where the connection on a standpipe is for the building. It was impossible to hook up to this while there were still debris and people falling off the building, and it's right in our path where we had to go. So I said to him, "We can't go over there to hook up. We'll get killed going over there."

So he looked around and he noticed a hydrant right on the corner of Liberty and West Street. We packed everything back into the rig and we drove his rig around to the front of the hotel on Liberty and West. We hooked up to the hydrant and we stretched a line down the sidewalk to that standpipe. I hooked it up to the rig and the rig was pumping water. We were just sitting there watching what was going on. Because debris was constantly falling down, you have to watch every minute and every second because stuff is coming down.

To the side of us was a pretty big parking lot full of cars and there were cars on fire from the debris. I guess, when the plane hit, stuff came down and that was causing fire, and it was just right across the road from where we are - just a road's width away from us. So we decided to try to put these car fires out because we're going to be here all day - well, we figured that we'd be there all day, all night, and who knows when we'd get this fire out. I never thought that the building was coming down. So we hooked up a line. We didn't even hook up to the hydrant right opposite of it. So we had one of the hoses hooked up and I was trying to put this van fire out, but I couldn't put it out. For some reason, it couldn't go out.

The whole time, I was looking up at the building on top of me because I noticed that, at Tower 2 - The South Tower - stuff was falling down. Those were light stuff, but it's falling everywhere all around us. So, after a few minutes, I said, "Forget it. We'll just keep an eye on it. If it gets really bad, then we'll worry about it later because it was just too dangerous to be back at the building. Everything was shut off.

As we stopped doing that, a police officer came to the door of the hotel lobby and yelled to us, "Let me know when it's clear to let people out." So I got in the middle of the street. The other fella is halfway between me and the cop. I was looking - I could get a better view from where I was - so I told the other guy, "Clear." So the cops sent people out of the building but it wasn't that many people - maybe 20 people. A person came out in a wheelchair and a person came out in a stretcher. Then, he brought these people over to the south pedestrian walkway where there were a few ambulances parked under the walkway. Now, these people were getting well taken care of by those ambulances. So we did that. A few more EMS people came up, so we relinquished the street to them. They were taking care of people. We then let them evacuate and direct people out to the hotel.

Going back to when I came out of the building and hooked up with the chauffeur 65 engine, the rig was right there. As far as you could look to your left and as far as you could look to your right, they were nothing but body parts everywhere. There was hardly any space in between parts - I mean, it was just everywhere. Before we decided not to hook up to that standpipe in front of the building, an engine pulled up right where the standpipe was. We were still thinking about what we were going to do. As that rig pulled up, all of a sudden, a person landed on top of the rig and there was a big thud, so we said, "We can't hook up over there. We're gonna get hit." That was our main deciding factor to not hook up there - when that person fell on top of the rig right in front of where we had to go.

So we went back to the rig and this one other fella showed up - the guy, Kevin Shea from 35. Truck - and came out of nowhere. He said, "You want to try to put these fires out?" I said, "Well, we tried it already. We couldn't do it. The three of us will try." So, we tried to put them out. We stretched the line on one side of the staircase of the pedestrian walkway on the north side. We couldn't get a good shot at the van, so we wanted to come around to the backside and shoot between the two back windows of the van. We brought the hose line to the south side of the walkway behind the staircase. The guy, Kevin, was on a nozzle. I was backing him up on a hose and the other guy - I cannot remember his name - was standing and watching. I was constantly looking up at this building because stuff, like I said, is just falling everywhere. We were operating for, maybe, five minutes - I don't know if it was much more than that.

I looked up one time and the building was just crumbling and coming down. So I yelled to the 2 guys to run. At that time, I didn't know that it was the whole building. I just thought that a large piece of debris was coming down, so I yelled to them to run. I turned and ran south up to West Side Avenue. So I was running south. I didn't get very far. With the force of the air from the building coming down, my arms went out like Superman and my helmet went flying off. Once my helmet went off, I said "I'm in trouble because something is gonna hit me in the head." Stuff is pounding me in the back like somebody's punching you in the back - it's just the dust and everything coming down but it's coming down from 1,000 feet up, so there were so many beating you. As it gets stronger, I got into a tumble and I was just tumbling head over heels, rolling. I said to myself that I'm not dying like this - I know I said that.

Before it got dark, the last thing I remember was hitting the center divider on the highway and getting pushed up over. The last thing I saw was the white of the divider. I rolled right up onto the other side and was thrown onto the other end. As this was happening, I don't know why but I either yelled or heard my daughter's name - your life flashes before your eyes. Well, one thing I heard was my daughter's name Jessalyn.

I don't know if I got knocked out. I don't know how much time passed. I was on the other side laying flat on the ground. When I realized that it was pitch black and as dark as it could ever be, I think stopped breathing and was holding my breath. I was laying there. You couldn't hear a sound. You couldn't see anything. I didn't feel any pain or feel anything. So I said to myself, "Well, I must be dead." So I was laying there and the first thing I thought of was, "There's no light. Where's the light?" Everybody says, "When you die, they already see this bright light." But there was no light, so something was wrong. Then, within seconds, all of a sudden, you could hear, you could feel stuff, you were coughing up, and you know now that you're not dead. You were sitting there hurt.

The whole time, in my mind, I was thinking that I got to be buried under rubble because it was like a freight train right on my back - the steel just crumbling - that I thought I was definitely

buried - stuff had to be on top of me. So, my first instinct was to reach up. I reached around and I didn't feel anything, so I felt better as well. I was buried but I'm not in a tight spot. Now, my knees were back. My whole body was hurting. I could feel a pain coming back. I was trying to get up but I couldn't even stand up with my leg, so I was just laying there. The dust was starting to settle. I have no idea what the timeframe was, but I know it does start to come down. In front of me, maybe 10-15 feet away, I see headlights and, then, I could start to see the outline of an ambulance. So I felt much better now that there's an ambulance in here. There must be a radio in the ambulance or something I can get to contact somebody, but I still couldn't move. As time went by, the dust settled. I looked the other way and I could see another ambulance maybe 25 feet away from me facing the other direction - I can see the outline of it and know that it is an ambulance.

So I was sitting there. In a distance - I think it was coming towards me from the south - I saw some firemen coming with flashlights and yelling, "Anybody here?! Anybody here?!" I yelled to them. They came over to me. "You're alright?" I said, "I'm good. I'm alright." That made me feel a little better to know. I think there were other people around, so they left. Within a minute or less, I heard a guy yelling from the front of the ambulance where he was trapped in, "Help me! Help!" So, at that moment, I tried to stand up. I got up on one leg, but I couldn't move. I couldn't walk from where I was to the ambulance because there was so much debris in the way. I got as far as I could. I couldn't lift my leg up, so I got as far as I can and then I just sat on the pile of debris and started yelling for help.

The front of the van was on fire. The EMS guy came up with a fire extinguisher. You couldn't breathe and you couldn't really see too well because it was so dusty. The guy got a dry chemical extinguisher and he was going to put the dry chemical on this fire, so I told him, "Don't do that! The guy couldn't breathe now. Forget it." So he just pulled the debris away from the ambulance. At the same time, the 3-4 firemen that passed me earlier came back. I told them that there was a guy calling for help in front of the ambulance and I couldn't get him. Luckily, the 4 of them - the EMS guy and firemen - were able to drag whatever was in front of the ambulance away. The guy got up and he just walked away. I don't know where he went after that. He just walked into the dust.

Getting back to the part when I was laying there in pitch-black darkness after the tower had collapsed and I got thrown to the ground, a fella from 7th truck was also a volunteer in Freeport with me. I've known him since he was a kid. His name was Richard Muldowney and we had an ongoing thing. For years, in the fire department in the city, he was in 7th truck on the east side, and I was in 1 engine, which is on the west side, which is almost directly across. He was on 29th Street between second and third and we were on 31st Street between sixth and seventh, so we were almost directly across. So, in a lot of boxes, we run in together. If it's in the middle, we would go to the east side and they would come off to the west side sometimes. A lot of times, we run in together. In order to know if he was working or if I was working, we'd get on the radio on a handy talkie and we would just say "Boy". If he was working, he would say "hey Boy" back or if he called first, I would say "Hey boy". It was just the way that we knew if each of them was working that day that night. So this has been going on back for years even before he was in the fire department back when we were in Freeport - this whole "boy" thing started way back then and just continued on. Every time we saw each other, we would call each other boy.

While I was laying on the ground, I got no sense of where I was or what have you. I heard the word, "Hey, boy". It's not that I can hear or see what I hear. I have no idea if Richard was working that day. I didn't even know that 7th truck was there. I mean, I assumed but I didn't

think of it that way. I came out to find out later that he didn't make it that day - he was working. Was this something I just thought in my mind or was he really talking to me that day? I was sitting there and saying, "What am I gonna do? I can't do it. I can't walk. I don't know where I'm coming from. More people are coming around head-to-toe with us.

Then, out of nowhere, 2 guys from my firehouse showed up. They were in the hotel lobby when the building came down. They and the whole company got out and somehow walked away. They went around the way they came out and we just met eyes. It was Tyrone Johnson and Jimmy Grill from LA 24. So they came over to me, and the 2 of them helped me get up. They said, "We got to get over the water and away from the buildings." Jimmy got a broken nose and his arm was all messed up. So they had to help me get over and away. When you got a bad and somebody was dragging or helping you walk, and they're pulling you too soon too fast- my leg was just so hurt so bad that I was like "Forget it. I'll do it on my own. I'll just take it easy."

We were walking away. Just as we got in front of the North Tower, you could get good visibility. You can see that the other tower was already down. So we were in front of it on the other side of the highway and far enough away from it. Tyrone and I heard the boom, boom, boom. We turned around and we saw that building coming down. So, I went from not being able to walk to running. The three of us started running out right away. Again, the dust cloud, the air, and everything started pelting at you. We didn't fall down, but it was enough to knock you down and choke us. This time, I was able to put my head in my coat to breathe. In the distance, I could see that there were stairs, and then we went down to the water's edge - it was a brick concrete walkway that went along the waterway. I just started to walk. I said, "Whatever going to happen is going to happen. I couldn't run anymore." So I was just taking one step at a time and I found the staircase. It was only a couple of steps. I walked down the stairs. I got to the concrete wall. I knew I had to go north. So I turned to the north and I just started walking out until I came out of the dust cloud.

I could see Jimmy. He was already at the dust cloud pretty much and he was near the water's edge. I almost got to him, then I turned and Tyrone was not behind me. I didn't want to go back into it. I said, "I can't leave him. I gotta go back." So I took, like, two steps. By the time I took 2 steps - because I wasn't moving too quickly - I could see a shadow coming at me and, thankfully, it was Tyrone. He didn't see the stairs. He fell down the stairs. By the time we got up and got ourselves together, the three of us walked north out of the dust cloud. There were boats and everything taking people from New York to New Jersey. Once my adrenaline stopped and everything else, I couldn't walk at all. I couldn't even take baby steps, which is so bad.

They did tell me, "Get on the boat and they'll take you to the hospital in Jersey." I didn't want to go to Jersey because I didn't know where the rest of my company was. We know that the guys were in trouble because they were on the radio with them, but the engine 1 guys were not even answering the radios. They convinced me finally to get on a boat, so I got on the boat and they brought me to Jersey City Medical Center instead of the big triage area set up on the Jersey side. They wheeled me off on a stretcher. They put me on a park bench. Then, everybody left me. I was going there all by myself. Nobody else was taking care of me. Finally, a couple of guys came over. They took my blood pressure and everything out and then they leave. I was just sitting there by myself.

A woman came by and she wanted to know if there was anybody I wanted her to call for me. I gave him my wife's number at work and she finally, eventually, in the course of the day, was able to get through to me. I tell her that I was alright. Eventually, they put me in an ambulance

and brought me to Jersey City Medical Center and they were mobbed. There was mass confusion over there. There were so many people that evacuated to Jersey. They figured that New York would be overrun but it was the other way around. Jersey was overrun and New York hardly had anybody. So they checked me out. They took X-rays and stitched up my leg where it was torn off. Then, they put us in a room with just cops, firemen, and EMS people. There were no windows. We couldn't see anything. We were sitting all up there.

I was covered in dust from head to toe. I was filthy. Eventually, they're letting guys go take showers and get cleaned up. Everybody kept asking me if I wanted to go take a shower but I just didn't feel like doing anything at the time - I just wanted to sit there. I kept saying "No, I'm alright." So I was watching these other fellas taking showers. They were dirty but some of them weren't really that bad. Finally, I went and took a shower. I walked past the mirror in a bathroom and there was so much dust on my hair and my face. I guess that's why they wanted me to take a shower - I was so dirty. I just had stitches in my leg and they said, "How are you going to take a shower if you don't get your stitches wet?" I used the bottle of shampoo and bar of soap and finally got most of the dirt off of me. I came back and they rebandaged my leg, which got infected after a few days.

Then, I asked the caseworkers - there was a bunch of women getting us whatever we needed and they were very nice - "Is there any way we can find out who's in the hospital? Are there guys from our company?" She said she would go downstairs and make a list. They had a bunch of blackboards in the triage area and had your name and your medical condition on it, so she could go find out. She came back with a bunch of papers and there were names all over it - some firemen, some civilians, some cops - and it could be anybody. Finally, I saw the name of my lieutenant on it. Actually, that lieutenant was working in the truck that day. He's Lieutenant in Engine 1, but he was working in 24 Truck as Lieutenant. I saw Blake McLaughlin. So I asked the nurse, "Does this mean that they're here and fine or does this just mean that they've been brought here but could be deceased?" She said "I don't know. They're just on the board. Sorry."

Ten minutes later, Blake came walking into the room, which I was glad to see because now I had somebody with me. I was pretty shaken up. I told Blake that day, "I wish I could have talked to Fr. Michael Judge." He is a priest in a church across the street from St. Francis of Assisi and he is also the fire department chaplain. He is a really good guy and we all know him in the firehouse very well. I didn't know at that time, so he told me, "You didn't know?" I said, "What?" He said, "Fr. Mike didn't make it." That really took me for a loop.

Finally, they brought us back to New York in a bus that they got from New Jersey and they dropped us off at a different firehouse. Then, we had to get right back to our firehouse. Then, a few friends of mine, Yoshi Marry and Recoda drove in. About - I'm not even sure what time it was - 10 o'clock at night or something like that or maybe earlier, they were able to get into the city. They drove me home because I couldn't drive. I told them that I was in the hospital. They said, "Well, did you black out?" I said, "I don't know. How would I know?"

I think if I would have stayed in New York, I would have gotten better care. I don't really think I got too good of care over in New Jersey. I think I should have definitely stayed the night. I mean, they sent me home. They didn't really know if I had any kind of internal injuries or anything. They were so overwhelmed. We can't really blame them. They just had limited staff and so many people to take care of. So I just think if I was in New York, St. Vincent's, or any of the other big hospitals, that would have been to my betterment because when I woke up the next day, I had a big lump on one side of my head on the right side. The next day I had about

100 lumps on my head from getting hit in the head. So I'm sure I should have stayed overnight for observation, at least.

I was basically hurt from head to toe. Every part of my body was injured. My big injuries were on my left shoulder, which I needed a shoulder replacement for. The doctor said, "There's nothing I can do for it." The joint was messed up. I had my left knee operated on. The whole knee was torn apart. The ACL, PCL cartilage were damaged. I had a crack in the tibia. I got a crushed bone in the top of the tibia. My right side got a torn ACL. I had a torn meniscus. The left side was repaired. They repaired the ACL and the PCL. While I was in a cast for a month— the bone was split and healed itself, and so that was alright. They thought they would have to reattach the medial collateral ligament - it was stretched - but while being in a cast for a month, that shrank back on its own, so that was alright.

I had that operation - ACL reconstruction - and it's over, but I was in constant pain every day. It was just something you got to live with that says you need replacement. Until I do that, I was just in pain 24/7 and I have to watch what I do. If you got to kneel down, you got to think about it before you actually do it. You just can't just kneel down. You got to know which knee am I going to kneel with - my left one or my right one. Then, I went in for an operation on my right knee and the doctor said that he wouldn't do it. He said that "I wouldn't replace the ACL because you have too much damage to that knee. If I replace the ACL, it'll just make the knee tighter and you'll be in more pain. You need two knee replacements." So I need two knee replacements and a shoulder replacement, but he advised me to hold off on everything because you're too young to do it right now. He advised to really hold off the shoulder replacement because once you get to shoulder replacement, you're really limited to what you can do.

My son doesn't show it much now - I think. I don't know if it does affect them or they're just able to hide it more. It seems like it really affected my daughter. At that time, she was 10 or 11 years old - I have a problem with her age, I always forget her age. She still has a problem with it. Whenever I go into the city or to the firehouse for whatever reason, she has a problem with me going back into the city. She took it hard - I'm sure both of them did, and also my wife. They were so close to losing me. It took a toll on them. Even though I'm still here, it still bother them.

In the beginning, I had - I don't know if they were nightmares because nightmares would scare you - a lot of dreams. There was basically one dream, that I had over and over, that I was on a, like, a long hallway with another stair going up. I was standing on the landing on the staircase and the whole building was collapsing in front of me and coming down like a chute. The staircase was just collapsing on top of the other. Then, civilians and firemen just ran past you while everything was collapsing and I was standing there on an area that's fine. I had that dream quite a few times. It was just constantly on your mind. Every day, one way or another, you either wake up thinking about it, or you go to sleep thinking about it, or you do both, and it still happens to this day. It's basically on your mind 24/7 not to the point where you can't function, but you're always thinking about it.

There were so many guys that were lost that day and so many of them that you knew. There's a lot of guys that you knew by face and by name that you actually talk to - guys from my firehouse. We had 4 guys from my firehouse alone who were good friends - it was Captain Braffel and Steve Belson from 24th truck who was working as an aide that day for Oil Palmer. Actually, Captain Braffel drove Fr. Michael Judge down there, I think, to the scene. He was good. He got off that morning. Then, Mike Weinberg from Engine 1 came from home. Because his sister worked in the Trade Center, he went down there to make sure she was right. He

ended up with Captain Braffel - they were found together after the aftermath. Then, the other guy was with Lieutenant Esperado from Engine 1. All the guys from Engine 1 made it out, but he didn't. He was with a fella from the Port Authority - he was right behind everybody - and he was also involved with, I believe, the guys from Lotus Six who were trying to help that woman out, Josephine. All the guys were all together at one time on a staircase helping her down and then they got split up. The fella from the port authority was fine and he was right next to him, but he didn't make it. So they say you'll always remember those kinds of things

Scott

You can get a full transcript of this episode at WhatWasThatLike.com/149.

And I want to extend this invitation. We hear stories from 9/11 survivors in a special episode every September. So if you have a personal story of survival on that day, please contact me through the website.

And now, some happy news – I have an update on our Food Service Worker Project! As a quick update, I set up a little project where we would all chip in a few dollars, and I would then give that as a gift to a food service worker. This is all set up through a GoFundme, and I have turned off the donations now. We got that dollar amount up to \$542 thanks to a bunch of generous podcast listeners!

I'm planning on giving that money to someone sometime during September, and I'd really like to get that on video. So I'm working on that, and of course when it happens I will let you know. And the first ones to know will be the 5000 people who are in the podcast Facebook group. If you're not in there yet, get over to WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook. In fact, for the next 100 people that come into that group, I'll waive the \$25 annual fee, so you'll get in completely free! Just kidding, it's always free.

And now, I got this voice mail from John, who was listening to the episode called "Jayna's hotel was a crime scene" and he had some observations about how it was handled.

John

Hey Scott, my name is John. I'm calling from the US, and I'm just absolutely cracking up here listening to Jayna's story about her wedding and the gunman at the hotel. What a firecracker she is. But what I'm cracking up the most about is the fact that a gunman, who they knew they had contained to one floor in a hotel, shut down an entire city for eight blocks and he had a handgun. Now, I haven't listened to the end of it yet to find out if he had a bomb strapped to him, but you would think he had a nuclear weapon attached to him based on how much they overreacted shutting down the city. Anyway, can't stop laughing here thinking about it. The police in the US would have shut down the floor above him, the floor below him, and the floor he was on, and it would have been over in about half an hour. So, different worlds, I guess. Love the show.

Scott

Jayna and I have stayed in touch and we were recently messaging online, and I had her listen to that voice mail from John. She was cracking up about the "firecracker" comment, and she also had this to say:

Jayna

Thank you for sharing that voice message with me, Scott. You just cracked me up because my American friend is not wrong. It's so different in Canada versus the United States. My friends and I often joke about how different it would have been if what happened to me happened 15 minutes. It almost felt like they cared more about the well being of the guy with the gun than everybody else in the hotel. Like, are you okay? Did your mom love you? Do you need counselling? How about a glass of water? Meanwhile, we're all hungry up on the ninth floor. I was actually just in Atlanta only two months ago and there was an active shooter just a block away from me. Yes, I know. It sounds like craziness follows me wherever I go, but the city was just business as usual. Some of the businesses chose to lock their doors, but everyone else was just going about their usual business while the guy was actively shooting up a hospital and running around the streets. But yeah, we're just not used to seeing guns in Canada at all. So I do appreciate the extra precautions though. I'm glad it's better to be safe than sorry but, in Canada, we're extra, extra, extra safe.

Scott

You know, just hearing Jayna's voice makes me want to go back and listen to that episode again. She is so much fun. Hoping to meet her in person at a podcasting conference sometime in 2024.

Recently I asked if you would go to Apple Podcasts or Spotify and leave me a 5-star rating. And I appreciate that! Some people also took the time to write a review, and one of them was "Jojobeaner01", who wrote: "I look forward to WWTL every 2 weeks. Scott is compassionate and the stories are all different and interesting. Highly recommend."

So thank you for that, and if you would like to leave a review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, you might just hear YOURS on an upcoming episode.

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz. Full episode transcription was created by James Lai.

And now, this week's Listener Story! Every episode ends with a story like this, sent in by a listener. And I'm sure that YOU have a story that's interesting, that you can tell in about 5-10 minutes, so get busy and record it on your phone – then send it to me at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com.

This week's story is about a young girl and her horse.

Stay safe, and I'll see you back here in 2 weeks.

(Listener Story)

Chloe

My name is Chloe. I'm a longtime listener. I love your show, love your content, love everyone who contributes their stories. It's been such a blast listening as the years have gone on. So thank you for everything you do. I thought I might share a little bit about something that happened to me when I was in middle school.

In middle school and high school, I was growing up in the suburbs of Seattle, specifically Woodinville. It's now a very touristy kind of wine town. But at the time, it was very, like, semi-rural - just lots of horses, lots of open space. So I grew up riding horses competitively. I loved it. I was very socially awkward and was not very athletically inclined, so riding horses just really scratched that itch for me. It made me feel like I could work towards things and accomplish things. I had great coaches. It was just a win-win-win.

I wasn't able to own a horse at the time, so I just kind of semi-leased a couple for different show seasons. The one this particular year I was leasing was named Colette. She was a part quarter horse, part thoroughbred. She's about 15 years old, I want to say, and she was just lovely. We really vibed. So we went into this particular show season. I did hunter jumping. That meant we would do several different courses and we would get scored on a point basis for each course. There were three in an event. Then, at the end, all those points would be calculated to figure out, sort of, who got grand champion, reserve champion, first, second, third, fourth, fifth, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We had been doing super well this particular day before my 8th grade year. I was so excited. I was having so much fun.

We went into this third course. You're basically given the course a couple minutes before you're supposed to go on. You have to look at the chart. Then you look at the actual way the jumps are configured on the ground and you have to sort of eyeball it and figure out your strides and your plan of attack, essentially. So I did that and I talked it over with my coach and I thought it through, and I said, "Yeah, you know what? I know what I'm going to do."

So we went in, we did our little opening circle like we're supposed to do where you sort of show off. Then, we got into the course and we were doing great until this two jump sequence where I miscalculated the number of strides that should have been between the first jump and the second jump. I thought that it was only going to take a landing stride in between stride, I guess, and then a takeoff stride but, really, there should have been another one in between there. So I knew it once we were in the middle of those jumps. My horse Colette knew it, but she was still listening to me and I couldn't back out because I had already cued her. So we're just like, "Well, let's hope this works."

So she took this enormous jump. She had to throw her head back a lot further than she normally would have if it had been a normal jump. So when she threw her head back further, she hit me in the face because of the way I was positioning my body to go for the jump. So I fell sideways off of her. We're taught to sort of unhook our legs from the stirrups so that we don't break our ankles if we're falling, so I did that and I just fell off to the left side of her. As she kept going over the jump, I fell on top of the jump and all my wind got knocked out of me instantly. My first thought was, I was just pissed because if you fall, you're disqualified.

I thought that we could have cleaned up the whole thing. We were doing so well. My second thought was that I was worried about her because she's just running around. Horses have very strong emotions. So she came kind of trotting up to me with her head hanging low, thinking she had done something wrong when, really, it was me. So I collected her. I was trying to kind of comfort her. I was gimping off of this course. Everyone's sort of pity-clapping me. I was just pissed because this was the last show of the season, the last day of the events, and I had blown it and I was sore and it just sucked.

So then I got home. My family's sort of Sunday night tradition was to all pile into my parents' room and watch Survivor with ice cream, so we were doing that. There was a commercial break.

I tried to get up to use the restroom and I could not move. So it turns out I fractured two of my vertebrae, slipped 2 of my discs, and I had to wear a back brace for the most socially awkward year of my life in 8th grade. On top of that, I had some kind of allergic reaction between the pain medicine and another medicine I had already been taking that caused my top lip to blow up like Kardashian's gone wrong and caused me to break out in hives. That also happened to be on the day of our first 8th-grade dance. So I sat in an oatmeal bath the entire day with an ice pack on my lip, taking Benadryl just loopy beyond belief.

My mother - bless her heart - did everything in her power to get me into my Corduroy Hollister skirt and iridescent star-printed T-shirt so that I could go to this dance, and I made it! But that was a rough year of physical therapy and a back brace and not being able to have that athletic outlet that I had loved for so long. Finally, I was able to get back up on not only the proverbial, but the literal horse the following spring, a little bit less than a year after my accident. But that was a very tough time. 0 out of 10. I do not recommend breaking your spine when you are 13 years old.