WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

FIREFIGHTER LIEUTENANT ANTHONY MANCUSO

Interview Date: December 7, 2001

Transcribed by Elizabeth F. Santamaria

BATTALION CHIEF BURNS: Today's date is the 7th of December 2001. The time is 4:13 p.m. I am Battalion Chief Robert Burns, Safety Battalion New York City Fire Department. I'm conducting an interview with Lieutenant Anthony Mancuso from Engine 239 in regards to the events of September 11, 2001.

- Q. If you would, in your own words, tell us what you saw on that date.
- A. We had gotten the order to go through the Battery Tunnel after the second plane hit. We were heading north on West Street. I had told my chauffeur we might as well move away from the towers, because there was no place to hookup. We ended up getting to Barclay and West Street, and that's where we hooked up.

In the meantime, I had seen a lieutenant that I knew, Lieutenant Joe Torrillo. He was in the street, on West Street. He mentioned to me that companies are having water problems. We augmented 24 Engine, which was at Vesey and West, with the help of the whole company. We took roll-ups and we're a command post company so we have extra radios

and we took forcible entry tools. We figured we might be used in the towers either as an Engine Company or to operate elevators. We didn't know the status of the elevator problems or anything in the building.

We were heading south on West Street and we were told the staging area was at 2 World Financial Center, where Merrill Lynch is. We were in the middle of West Street, just about in front of the north tower, and we met Commissioner Feehan. He had asked us if we had any orders, and I had explained to him that we already augmented one of the Engine Companies. And he asked me if I knew where the staging area was. I said, "Yes, I do." He walked south on West Street away from us.

We started -- we were actually underneath
the -- we were just in front of the north tower,
heading towards the staging area. Maybe, I guess,
about 20 seconds later he walked away from us and
one of my firefighters, William Wheeler, he says to
me, "I think the building is coming down."

From what we could see, we couldn't see the whole tower that was coming down. We could just see the facade coming off, and we backed up. We were

about in front of the north tower, in front of -half of us were in front of one piece of apparatus
when it hit and a dust cloud came down. We
couldn't -- I don't think anybody knows how long we
were in the dust to make any decisions about -- it
just seemed kind of confusing for a while, because
you couldn't see anything.

Once the dust cleared, I was able to put all my members -- we were pretty close to one another and we all got back together. We walked north again to our apparatus at Barclay and West Street. Once I knew everybody was all together, I headed back. We headed back towards -- I know I was headed back towards the pile, because some of the members were saying they had trouble seeing. I went back towards the pile of the first tower that went down, not finding anybody. It was very quiet, silent. Then I walked over to the north tower. Companies were coming out of the north tower, but to this day I can't remember the numbers on their helmets. They were saying they were told to leave the north tower.

Civilians were coming out. We helped them across West Street and told them to head north.

Then it got pretty -- like there was nobody coming

out of the north tower. I'm not really sure if we got a transmission to stay away from the north tower or it just so happens I backed up north again up West Street and I was probably right about Vesey Street or probably just a little north of Vesey Street when the second tower came down.

Again, after that came down we knew we had all our members. We went back to some of the rubble from that and we had worked in that area for a short time and then we were told to keep feeding a couple of the tower ladders they had in front of 6 World Trade. They just didn't want anybody operating there. I think they were fearing about 7 World Trade coming down. So then we kept augmenting tower ladders and staying away from that collapse area.

I guess after that we were pretty well spread away from the collapse area for the rest of the evening. I can't really think of anything that I could say as far as companies or anybody else we saw before they came down.

BATTALION CHIEF BURNS: Thank you. That's the end of the interview. It's 4:19 p.m.