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TERRORIST ATTACKS

Those Boys Were His Twin Towers



BROTHERS IN ARMS: Firefighter John Vigiano, above left, and Police Officer Joe Vigiano are sons of retired Fire Captain John Vigiano, far right, one of the most decorated firefighters in FDNY history, and his wife, Jan.

"I THINK they're alive and fighting with one another like they did when they were growing up," retired Fire Capt. John Vigiano told me yesterday. "I can just hear John telling his younger brother Joe, 'Now listen to me, I know the way out of here better than you do.'"

Vigiano, 62, had just come back from a daily visit to the World Trade Center, where he believes his two sons — one a police officer, the other a firefighter — are trapped.

"It's the west quadrangle of the north tower," he said, relying on a veteran's instincts along with the knowledge of where the two departments assigned his sons last Tuesday.

"They called me every day before going to work and told me they loved me, and I told them I loved them," Vigiano said. He said Joseph called first and John a few minutes later.

"I told him to look out for his brother, he's working on the street," Vigiano said. "And that was it."

Vigiano is a legend even in a department where legends abound. He was given last rites twice in his 36 years of fighting fires. He was off a year while fighting throat cancer, and when he returned to work, he broke a shoulder. His father was a firefighter, and he wears a ring his father gave him.

"I'm going to pass this on to my grandson, Joseph, who is 8 now," he said.

The Vigianos, who live in Deer Park, are staying in a hotel in the city, and they are escorted by police everywhere they go. Vigiano appreciates what the police are doing to make him and his wife comfortable. "It means a lot to us. It's keeping us going."



Dennis Duggan

Vigiano is a former Marine, and he enlisted by forging his mother's name to an application.

"The Marines didn't like that," he said. His pride in his sons is evident as he recalls their boyhood high jinks and their ability to sew and to cook.

His older son, John, 36, is a firefighter in Ladder 132 in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and his other son, Joe, 34, is a detective now working with the Police Department's Emergency Services Squad 3 in Harlem.

"I'm praying for a miracle," Vigiano said, his eyes welling up. "They are the light of our lives."

Vigiano and his wife, Jan, 61, are deeply religious. When I asked Jan how she coped in a family where her husband and a son fought fires and another son fought bad guys, she said, "I prayed."

There are a lot of firefighters and cops who are

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