NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

TERRORIST ATTACKS



Newsday Photo / Nicole Mendez

being tested by this ordeal. But few are being tested more than the Vigianos. It is impossible to understand their feelings because they are so singular. Few in the uniformed services have had to deal with the loss of two sons at the same time.

"Those boys were his twin towers," said First Deputy Commissioner Joseph Dunne, who was commanding officer of the 75th Precinct in East New York when Joe Vigiano worked there.

"He was one of the best cops I ever met," Dunne said of Joe Vigiano, who was wounded twice in street encounters.

Both of the Vigiano sons are married. John and his wife, Colette, have two girls, Colette, 5, and Ariana, 2. Joseph and his wife, Kathy, who is also a cop, have three boys — Joseph, 8, James, 6, and John, 3 months old.

John Vigiano has pictures of all of his grandchildren in his wallet. He's quick to show them. But his thoughts always come back to his two sons.

"Joe, he was the one who made people laugh. John was the serious one but he could raise hell, too. They are amazing boys and close. When Joe was about to become an Eagle Scout, John said to him, 'Wait for me, we'll do it together.' And they did a few months later."

Mario Zorvic, who worked with Joe Vigiano, said Joe "was a stand-up guy, always willing to do anything and help anybody."

"He was fun-loving, joking," Zorvic told Newsday's Sean Gardiner yesterday. "With so much of this work being tragedy, we have to joke around just to make it bearable. It's our way of dealing with tragedy."

The Vigianos met President George W. Bush at the Javits Center on Friday. "The president looked at Jan, my wife, and he said, 'She reminds me of my mother.' "

He pauses for a moment and then shakes his head, reflecting on the emotions he is feeling.

"Now I am finding out what my wife went through with me all these years. Firefighters are mostly kids at heart," he said.

Earlier, I watched Vigiano talking to young cops and firefighters who had come to an interfaith service in the police auditorium. They hung on his every word.

"I tell them that there are three things they need to pay attention to. The first is their family, the second is their unit and the third is their department," he said. "And I tell them to kiss their wives every morning."

Vigiano reflects on what he has seen in the past few days. "It is beyond belief. It's like a war. But we'll come back."

Being a firefighter is a calling. "It's not just a job. My sons went into that building not to fight a fire but to rescue people, to get them out of harm's way."

Mayor: Escape Was A Close Call

By Pete Bowles
STAFF WRITER

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who has received praise from all corners for his steady presence and leadership during the city's calamity, last night said he thought he might die during the attack on the World Trade Center.

In an interview with Barbara Walters on an ABC News special, the mayor described how he escaped from a makeshift command center at 75 Barclay St., adjacent to the Twin Towers, as the first tower was falling.

The mayor said he and his aides had set up an emergency command center in a Merrill Lynch office at 76 Barclay shortly after he had been told that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center.



Mayor Rudolph Giuliani

"The vice president called," he told Walters. "And when I got on the phone to talk to the vice president, the phone line got cut off. And it was at about that time that I heard a tremendous noise, and I heard someone say one of the World Trade Center towers had come down."

Giuliani said he and an entourage of 15 aides ran down to the basement, only to find two exit doors locked. They then ran back upstairs to the lobby, where, he said, "Things had gotten worst."



Barbara Walters

"When we looked outside, it looked like Armageddon, and it was black and white, and there was no visibility at all," he said.

Giuliani has said that a building worker led him and his aides to an opening that led to safety through 100 Church St.

Asked by Walters whether he was thinking he was going to die, Giuliani said: "Now I do . . . when I think back on it."

Giuliani said he has tried to be "sensitive but honest" in disclosing the grim statistics on the missing and dead.

He agreed that as time goes by, the hope of finding more missing victims lessens. "But I'm told by the experts who do recoveries that there's still a chance that we can save some lives," he said.

Giuliani said that during the crisis he has leaned on a number of staff members and his girlfriend, Judith Nathan.

Asked how he had been able to remain calm during all the turmoil, he gave credit to his father, who "taught that when there's a crisis going on, the most important thing is to become calmer."

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