

Survivor Stories



Victor M. Guarnera was the Chief Technical Advisor for Security Systems to the World Trade Center. After the attacks, he responded to the emergency by directing security operations to assist evacuees and first responders. On June 11, 2002, he was awarded the Civilian Commendation Medal for Bravery/Valor for his actions on 9/11. He said that although he was honored by the award, he felt that he was one of many who responded in a similar way. “I don’t think of what I did as a big deal, there were hundreds of us who reacted in similar fashion – just doing what we had to do, what needed to be done – doing our job.”

In describing his experience on 9/11, Victor spoke of the bravery he witnessed in the World Trade Center as rescue workers tried to help civilians out of the buildings.

“Along the way, I met a ‘civilian’ trying to assist a heavy-set woman down the stairs. He was literally carrying her on his back. A few of the firemen said they had her as they knew how to provide that kind of assistance. This civilian turned out to be Sgt. Dennis Franklin of the PAPD.”

~ Victor M. Guarnera



Sgt. Dennis Frederick was seated at his desk at the Port Authority Police Academy in New Jersey when the first building was struck. Responding rapidly, he travelled with his Captain through the Holland Tunnel, which had been closed for emergency vehicle use only. He entered the World Trade Center to assist in the evacuation.

“This next period of time in the stairway was quite terrifying. I was now separated from my fellow officers and knew my life was in extreme danger. I needed to remain calm and decide what to do, to go back up or down. I have poor recollection where I first met a Mr. Victor Guarnera, a high level Security Officer with the Port Authority. He later told me that it was near the twenty-second floor where I had surrendered the lady to the fireman.”

~ Sgt. Dennis Frederick

The two men met briefly in the hours after the buildings fell. More than ten years later, the two men reunited at the VOICES office in New Jersey. The reunion needed no words. Their warm embrace said it all. In the 10 years since 9/11, Victor’s work has focused on telling the story of the 9/11 attacks as a volunteer at The Tribute Center.

“As a survivor of two terrorist attacks in 1993 and 9/11/2001 my message is: do not be afraid. On both days, I was on the 82nd floor in the North Tower. On 9/11 I was saved by two “angels,” mercantile brokers. The three of us were still inside the Concourse when the South Tower collapsed. In my prayer to God I told Him that it is fine with me if I have to die, although I don’t like it, and asked Him to spare the lives of these young men because it wouldn’t be fair if they died since they were helping me. Acceptance of death liberated me from fear.”

~ Juliette Bergman

