

# 9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

### Carl Selinger

Carl Selinger. I was a Port Authority staff member in 1993. I went down to the Port Authority cafeteria and went and got a salad and went back out with my salad to the elevators, and two of those sky lobby elevators came down to the 43<sup>rd</sup> floor. So I got on one of them. There was nobody on it, and after about 30 seconds, it just stopped. I felt like a shudder and it stopped. There I stood. Now, it turned out that I was in that elevator for the next five plus hours, but at that point, it was just, "Okay, what's going on?" I looked at my watch, and after a little bit, I thought, "Well maybe this is a power failure. This is going to be for a while. Let me sit down and eat my salad." So I sat down on the floor and started you know, open my salad, and lights were still on at that point, and I began to smell smoke. And it started to be more smoky. Gradually, very very gradually, very gradually, but it was a very engine-y type smoke.

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I took my handkerchief out and I started putting it over my nose, thinking that would filter the air. And that went on for a while, ten minutes, maybe fifteen minutes. And then I started sniffing. And I looked at my handkerchief, which was white, and now it was like sooty. And I said, "Whoa. This is not going in the right direction." Then it suddenly occurred to me that I might not get out of there. This was serious. I'll probably just get kinda drowsy and then be unconscious. So let me write something down, let me write a note to my family. So I looked for a paper, and I had in my pocket a single piece of loose leaf paper. So I took it out and I wrote very methodically a letter to my family, thinking that they're going to be reading this and I probably am not going to be there when they read this, so let me be careful what I say and how I say it. You know, I signed it "Dad" and then put in parenthesis "Carl Selinger" and it had information so when I'm found... I put it in my breast pocket very prominently. It turned out to be, you know, one of those once in a lifetime opportunities to say what you want to say in a certain way, under circumstances. So I don't regret any word I wrote. But when I started it to when I ended it, it was maybe about fifteen, twenty minutes.

[02:26]

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Fortunately, I think this at the time, because not long afterwards, the lights went out. It was black. Blacker than black, and I could not have written that note in the dark. You could not see your hand in front of your face. It became apparent after an hour or so that I didn't feel the smoke anymore, so I said, "Well, okay, it's—probably not going to die here. And we'll just have to wait." Then the lights went on after about four hours or so. They were on for the last hour, the lights. So I said, "Whoa." You know, when the lights come on I'm like [exhales]. Bang. Right. From black, pitch black, to the lights are on. It was so quiet after people kinda had left, that I was wondering if was a nuclear attack. And how could this be so quiet? You put your head to the wall-type thing, there was nothing. And so it was this really eerie feeling. What finally ended it was I had my ear against the wall and all of a sudden, the wall moves. "Oh!" They're pulling the cab up. I hear voices, so I yell, "Hello!" I yell out, "I'm here!" And somebody says, "Hey, there's somebody in this one!" So they lift me up and I get there, and they pried open the doors, and there I was! You know, like, "Hi!"

[03:45]

But I had no--never any fear about being in the trade center under any circumstances. I think the experience, the self-awareness stays with me. That's what I got out of it, mostly. And so it was, at the time, it was a very disturbing incident, certainly. But to people like myself, I volunteered immediately to come help supervise cleaners, the cleaning staff that came in, and did an extra shift for about a week or two, but that was the pitching in. That was kinda setting the way the Port Authority would do things, and to this day. So that's not changed.