

# 9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

### **Dianne DeFontes**

I'm Dianne DeFontes. I was on the 89<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Center on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and I am a survivor. And I remember what an absolutely beautiful day it was. The sky was this beautiful blue. There were very few clouds. When I got into my office, I took one last look out the window, and then went to my desk. Then all of a sudden, this bang happened. The bang and being thrown out of my chair and having the door partially opened—it like all happened at the same time. And not only that, but the conference room that was on my left, the ceiling fell down and hit the table and cracked the conference room table. So all this noise happened at once. I'm getting up, said, "Wow, how the heck did they get a bomb up this high?" Because what else could it be? I said, "I think I better get my things together."

[1:00]

And then so I put my sneakers on and then while I'm getting my things together, the people from Met Life came across, and some of them had blackened faces. They said, "A plane hit the building. We watched it. We saw it hit the building and our office exploded." I said, "Oh my God." So when they told me that, I said, "Alright, let me make another phone call." I called one of my dearest friend and I asked her, "Turn on the TV and let me know what's happening." And she said when they showed the building on TV, she said she was trying to count the floors to see where it hit, but she just couldn't do it. I told her, "Listen, I know that I'm gonna make it, but just in case, just in case I don't, give your daughter a big kiss for me. I love you and that I'm thinking of you and I'm gonna get out of here." Because part of me wanted to say that because I wanted to believe it. And then shortly after that, Pablo came to our door.

[2:01]

All I remember is that yellow helmet, a flashlight, and him standing at the front door and saying, "We have to go now." It was Pablo Ortiz. He got us all together. We made a turn and went directly down the hallway. But further down the hallway at the very last door was another exit. And he and Mr. DeMartini had broken through that door, because when the plane had hit the building, it had buckled all of the

# 9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

frameworks from the doors and nobody could open doors. I'm so grateful that somebody came to that floor because, even if we had gone to that exit, we would have been able to get out because it was stuck. One of the scariest things was when—I don't remember what floor we were on, but water started coming down the stairs and it was like a waterfall.

[3:00]

And I'm saying, "Oh God, this feels disgusting." 'Cause I'm wearing sneakers, I've got long pants on, my pants are getting soaked and they're getting dirty and my feet are like squishing, which is a feeling I really hate. Trying to hold onto the banister so I don't fall. And there were people huddled together because it was dark. And then [Teresa?] took out her keychain and it had a little light on it! And I said, "Oh wow. I have a flashlight in my pocketbook." Too many things were going on and I couldn't think. And then I finally found it and I held it up and people in back, they said, "Thank you." But I had to turn the corner, and there was no more light for them. But I remember the worst time was when the other building went down. The lights flickered. This tremendous roar, and the stairways shook. And we're holding onto the banister and the building is shaking, and no one said a word.

[4:02]

It was silence until the noise had stopped. And that's when we were very afraid. I actually started to cry when we're almost out of the building, we're almost downstairs to the main floor. [Teresa] and Raphael went down and disappeared. People in back of me went up and disappeared. I'm standing in this little place, and I'm by myself, and I don't know if I should run upstairs or run downstairs, and I started to cry because I didn't know what to do. And then someone who was above me said, "Come up this way. Come this way." And I ran up the flight of stairs to meet him. I didn't want to go upstairs, because you know, my heart's telling me that if you're going upstairs, you're going up and you're further away from the exit, but I was wrong. When I walked through that exit to the outside, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. And I realized what a mess I was when I finally saw myself, because when I walked past a store and I turned around and I looked, I didn't recognize myself,

**9/11**  
**MEMORIAL**  
**& MUSEUM**

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

because my hair was white, my pants were black to the knee, my face was covered with ash... I didn't recognize myself.

[5:26]