Hello, my name is Sam. I want to tell share with you my story about Tuesday, September 11th, 2001. I was a firefighter in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and I was assigned to the 40th Battalion. I go to work around 6:30 that morning. After 8:45 when the first tower was struck, the radios came to life and were busy with communication of who to go where and what to do. At around 8:50 we were assigned to a staging area on the Brooklyn side of Battery Tunnel. This is where Chief Smith decided where we were supposed to go and what to do. All I was doing on the ride there was praying that God would keep me safe. As we got closer to the scene, my heart began to sink. All we could see where flames billowing from the tower, debris, and black and grey smoke. My eyes were tearing up seeing the damage. People jumping out of the building one, two, and three in a row holding hands. I said a prayer for them and their families. It didn’t occur to me at that spilt second that this morning was the last time their families would give them hugs and kisses and exchange “I love you’s”.

Getting through the city was a hassle, but when we got there I was astonished. Seeing the damage up close was even more overwhelming than seeing it far away. The holes in the buildings were larger than life. I remember it being about 9:00 a.m. when the second tower was hit. The scene flashes through my mind vividly to this day. All of the people fleeing the scene was unimaginable. I had to keep reminding myself that this was the real life, not a dream.

When everything got as calm as is could get Chief and I, along with other friends, headed into the lobby of the North Tower. We were quickly talking about who was to go to what floor when we began to hear a loud rumble; everything began to shake around us. We took the best safety precautions as we could. The noise became louder and louder and at that moment everything came falling down on top of us. All I saw was black. I prayed again to God for his safety and guidance. I was one of the few people not to be injured. We helped the injured, some were workers and some were friends to the nearest openings we could see. We could hear the chief calling to us from the radios nearby to jump over the large pile of debris lying in front of us that had to have been close to 4 feet in the air. As I helped the others over, I jumped over myself. The chief motioned me over to him. As I was running over there, there was another loud rumble, the ground began to shake again, but this time it seemed more rapid. The south tower came crumbling down to the ground. In this moment the chief and I began to run. That was hard to do the tanks on our backs seemed heavier than usual, and my legs felt like limp noodles. Chief fell to the ground behind a truck, as did I when we once again saw the black clouds rushing down the streets, flames and debris, all around us. As I could start to see light again the same scene that I saw coming into the tragedy that day was the same scene that was right in front of my face, but just more real, up close, and unimaginable. I was sick to my stomach. I the midst of all of this tragedy, I prayed. This is one of the things that kept me going and never giving up.

Cassandra Rubolin

\*\*\* Some of the information I used was gathered through a testimony if a friend of my dads, John Picarello.