

# 9/11 anniversary evokes memories of friends killed at World Trade Center

BY FRANK MISURELLI

Picatinny Public Affairs

On the morning of 9/11, I was driving to Picatinny Arsenal, just like thousands of others listening to the car radio on WCBS news radio, when at 8:45 a.m. American Airlines Flight 11 out of Boston, Massachusetts, crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

As an aviator I knew it wasn't uncommon for planes to smash into buildings. When the second airliner, United Airlines flight 175 from Boston crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m., I knew as the rest of the world would eventually learn that these were acts of terrorism.

Like millions, we prayed for survivors from both the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon. As months passed, the names of the 2,753 killed at the World Trade building would slowly and painfully emerge. Timothy F. O'Sullivan, 68, and Thomas Patrick Farrelly, 54, would be part of this group.

Tim was the first person who gave me a job as a seasonal food vendor at the Bronx Zoo from 1969 to 1974 during high school and college. He was always watching over me because I ran track during high school and had to take off from work to compete in track meets in New York City on weekends.

When I decided to enter Manhattan College in the Bronx and join the U.S. Air Force Reserve Officer Training program or ROTC, Tim became my biggest supporter, especially when I had to perform summer training with the U.S. Air Force.

He confided in me that prior to becoming the personnel manager at the Wildlife Conservation Society; he had graduated from Manhattan College in 1964 and later became the director of personnel. He loved military history, as I found out later and realized why he supported my military career so strongly.

When I graduated and was commissioned an U.S. Air Force second lieutenant, I never forgot this incredibly tall 6-foot-7 Irishman with an unmistakable New York City Irish accent. His signature sentence was, "I always take care of my Manhattan College men."

Years later after I left active duty, I applied to become the public relations director of the Bronx Zoo and he supported me but I didn't get the job. Years passed and

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my father, a retired machinist, wanted to work part time at the zoo. Tim kindly told me that Dad was too old.

Retirement from the Wildlife Conservation Society took him west to the Poconos in Pennsylvania. He worked as a consultant, one day every six or eight weeks, to the World Trade Center.

Around 8:30 a.m. on the day of the 9/11 attacks, Tim phoned his wife, Geraldine, earlier that morning to say that he arrived at the World Trade Center. He phoned her again shortly before 9:00 a.m., saying that an explosion occurred in the upper stories of the north tower and not to worry. Soon after, he and his colleagues began their descent from the 39th floor via the stairwells, the only available exit.

Tim previously had a major heart bypass operation and now wore a pacemaker. As he reached the 6th floor, witnesses said, his pacemaker came on. Breathing became difficult. He had to rest.

New York City firemen ascending the stairwell administered him oxygen. Tim urged his colleagues to go on, as he was in good hands and would see them all later. This was the last known location of Tim—on the 6th floor of the World Trade north tower, receiving oxygen.

Many speculate that eventually Tim made it to the ground level lobby and was being triaged in either Five Acres Plaza or on the street, and that he was subsequently killed by falling debris from the collapsing towers.

On the evening of Sept. 12, 2001, his brother, Michael, received a call from his nephew that Tim was among the list of those missing. On Sept. 14, Tim's oldest daughter, Denise, was at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York City and saw her father's name on a list of the deceased. His body was among the fewer than 300 that were recovered from the terrorist attack. Tim was identified through the driver's license in his wallet.

Tim's death certificate would read: "Cause of Death—a massive blunt trauma to the head." Tim was buried Friday, Sept. 21. I would learn of his death in the



Wreath placed at Picatinny Arsenal to commemorate the 13th anniversary of 9/11 attacks on the nation.

Manhattan College alumni newsletter.

Thomas P. Farrelly was my math and track coach from 1970 to 1972 at St. Helena's High School located in Bronx, New York. To teach me math you had to have patience—lots of patience. He loved teaching math, but especially loved coaching track.

He consistently stressed to me to do my personal best or "P.B." I remember sessions after sessions of math tutoring, which I needed badly, especially for "jocks" just to graduate. I could not thank him enough. "Don't thank me," he responded, "You did it on your own." The same applied for track—always try to push yourself to do your "P.B."

I read a feature about Tom in Newsday and found out that he met his wife while teaching. Tom proposed to his future wife, Virginia, on top of the World Trade Center in April 1978. The family grew to four children. Tom left teaching to earn more money as a computer programmer at Accenture and was working as a consultant for Marsh and McLennan. His body was never recovered.

I learned of Tom's fate at my 40th St Helena's High School reunion in the spring of 2012.

As we move past the 13th year of remembering 9/11, I don't know how many others lost two friends on that day.

I hate to think that we will forget their faces and what they gave back to the community. I prefer to think that Americans will always remember these great Americans.

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Printed on recycled paper

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For matters about business, advertising and subscriptions, contact the printer, North Jersey Community Newspapers, 100 Commons Way, Rockaway, N.J., 07866 at (973) 586-8195/8197.

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