

Lessons Learned from the North Tower

NYFD Battalion Chief Richard Picciotto shares hair-raising and inspiring lessons from Sept. 11, 2001

Each of us has personal moments in our lives for which we will always remember where we were and what we were doing. It could be the birth of a child or where you proposed. However, there are only a few days for which most people across the country remember where they were. Sept. 11, 2001, is one of those days.

New York Fire Department Battalion Chief Richard Picciotto especially remembers, because he was in the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) when it fell.

The fire chief spoke candidly to attendees about the events of that day to kick off the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 4-6, 2014.

He saved hundreds of lives by using previous experience evacuating the north tower after the WTC bombing in 1993. The rescue Sept. 11 started as a normal mission to stop or contain

the fire and help those trapped. Priorities changed when the south tower collapsed.

Picciotto's experience from 1993 told him that the bombing had almost taken down the building, and if the south tower collapsed, it was only a matter of time before the north tower would follow suit. He was on the 35th floor when he made the decision to evacuate the north tower.

This meant firefighters stopped moving up the tower to check the floors above and concentrated their efforts on getting all those on their floor and below down three narrow stairwells. Picciotto said it was one of the hardest decisions he had to make.

After making sweeps of each floor, he was in the stairwell helping a group of nonambulatory people when the north tower collapsed. It only took 8 seconds, but he said they were the slowest 8 seconds of his life. When the intense rumbling stopped, he thought he was dead. Upon realizing that he and 13 others were alive and in a void in the rubble, he tried establishing radio contact.

Obviously, there were issues, and the group of survivors spent many hours in the void. Refusing to submit to asphyxiation, he noticed a small area that was lighter in color than the all-surrounding black. He carefully went to the spot and shifted some of the rubble. Luckily, it ended up being an opening to the outside. He and the other ambulatory survivors emerged from the wreckage and debris. He likened this to how the country became stronger amidst the wreckage by uniting.

Picciotto said he took four major lessons from Sept. 11, 2001, and the following months of recovery.

(1) You have to put priorities in your life. Enjoy your career success, but don't exclude your family and friends. The best thing that came from Sept. 11, 2001, is that the country strengthened in unity, he added. He warned against voting for politicians that divide the parties instead of working for the common good.

(2) There is always hope. Look forward to the future, he recommended. The American spirit brought the country through the events of 9/11, and it is necessary to overcome future challenges.

(3) Charity is necessary. He explained that he lost many friends in the collapse of the towers. Support, both financial and emotional, was needed and felt. He shared that a charity was organized for kids who lost fathers in the fire department, and the emotional support was felt from all over the country.

(4) Pray. As the north tower collapsed, he prayed as hard as possible to die quickly. That prayer was unanswered, and he is thankful. He recommended being glad for the things still in store for you from unanswered prayers.

More details of his experience from 9/11 can be found in his book *Last Man Down: A Firefighter's Story of Survival and Escape from the World Trade Center*.

— by Kasey Brown, associate editor



► NYFD Battalion Chief Richard Picciotto shared the four lessons he learned from 9/11: You have to have priorities, there is always hope, charity is necessary, and prayer is important.

PHOTO BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL



PHOTO BY KASEY BROWN

► Attendees could get a signed copy of Richard Picciotto's book at the Angus booth.

because it is a very good tool, and it's a tool that's being used more and more all the time."

— by Shauna Rose Hermel

Speer, Rosser and the panel spoke Wednesday, Nov. 5, during the Angus University program featuring "A Story of A Steak." This extension of the award-

winning series of articles in *High Plains Journal* and segments on *The Angus Report* was sponsored with the support of Merck Animal Health. For more information about the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show or to listen to their presentations, visit www.angusconvention.com.



Rural Matters

There is power in individuals in rural areas working together.

Chuck Schroeder, director of the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska, said it is imperative that rural areas attract the people who can make small communities the better choice. Schroeder said rural communities matter economically, socially, culturally and environmentally for the counties and states in which they are located and for the entire country.

"We have to take what we have and what we know and turn it into what we want," Schroeder asserted. "We look for local leaders who say, 'We're not OK with the way things are, and we're going to do what it takes to make it better.'"

Schroeder said there are many challenges to rural development, including job creation, business development, leadership, youth engagement, education, health care, child care and more. He said it comes down to individual responsibility and individual contributions that lead to a better community and a better country. Schroeder said many of the graduates the institute surveys every year and many young people who started their careers in large urban areas would like to live in smaller communities with some chance to make a positive difference.

"There are legitimate opportunities in rural areas for innovators and entrepreneurs," Schroeder said. What the Rural Futures Institute hopes to do, he added, is build the capacity of individuals and build their confidence. Schroeder said impacting and imparting hope — genuine hope — matters.

Schroeder quoted Shane Lopez, "Hope is an active choice. Hope can be learned. Hope can be shared." Schroeder said the Rural Futures Institute wants to make hope contagious. He said they use information from the Nebraska Rural Poll, which has been ongoing for 19 years. Though 65% or more of the respondents say they want a thriving rural community, only 30% think it is possible in the next 20 years.

Schroeder said hope inspires young people and agricultural leaders to strengthen rural communities and, thereby, strengthen America.

Schroeder spoke Wednesday, Nov. 5, during the Angus University program. For more information about the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show, visit www.angusconvention.com.

— by Linda Robbins, assistant editor



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► "There are legitimate opportunities in rural areas for innovators and entrepreneurs," said Chuck Schroeder, director of the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska.

Active marketplace

Angus enthusiasts attending the 2014 National Convention & Trade Show in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 4-6 took advantage of the opportunity to see new products and talk to company representatives in the trade show. It was a popular venue throughout the convention.



PHOTOS BY KASEY BROWN

