

Narrator: Salvatore Annerino

Interviewer and Transcriptionist: Quin DeLaRosa

DSNY – Oral History Archives Project

April 17, 2021

Remote Zoom Interview

*Salvatore Annerino served a 20 year (1985-2005) career in the New York City Department of Sanitation, with the bulk of that time spent as a District Superintendent. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Mr. Annerino distinguished himself as a dedicated member of the World Trade Center recovery and cleanup efforts. He consistently worked alongside others in the vicinity of Ground Zero from 9/12/01 until the last piece of WTC steel was removed from The Pile. In this interview, Mr. Annerino recounts his personal experiences during that time, as well as his persistent efforts to document and remember the personal tolls which the 9/11 attacks continue to inflict to this day.*

Quin DeLaRosa (QD): Hello. The date is Saturday, April 17. The time is 1:38PM. My name is Quin DeLaRosa. I am the interviewer and I am speaking to Sal. Sal, would you like to introduce yourself?

Salvatore Annerino (SA): Hi, my name is Salvatore Annerino. I live in Port Charlotte, Florida. I'm retired from [the] New York City Department of Sanitation, where I was a District Superintendent.

QD: Thanks, Sal. When were you hired by Sanitation and where were you first assigned?

SA: I was hired on 3/4/85 and my first assignment was in Bronx East 09.

QD: Great. I'd like to understand just a little more about how you got to where you are. Would you mind giving a brief overview of your career in Sanitation?

SA: I came on the job on 3/4/85. I got promoted in '89 to Supervisor for New York City Department of Sanitation. I held that for approximately 10 years and then I got promoted to District Superintendent. Most of my time on the job was spent in the Bronx. I worked for Bronx Borough. When 9/11 happened, I ended up wanting to work there because I felt it was my civic duty and I was being pushed back to the Bronx, so I put a transfer in from Manhattan and I ended up finishing my last from 2001 until 2005 as a Superintendent in Manhattan, New York.

QD: Thank you so much. Pretty long career in Sanitation-1985 to 2005-pretty impressive. And over that time working as a Superintendent in New York, what kinds of duties did you perform for Sanitation?

SA: As a Superintendent I was in charge of a district. The district could be anywhere from five square miles to an unlimited square mile area. I would have section supervisors that worked on beneath me. I worked for the Department of Cleaning and Collection.<sup>1</sup> We would be in charge of

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<sup>1</sup> According to the DSNY, the "Bureau of Cleaning and Collection cleans streets, collects refuse, recyclables and organics, and removes snow." See "Bureau of Cleaning and Collection," DSNY, City of New York, 2016, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/about/bureaus/bureau-of-cleaning-and-collection>.

cleaning the streets of New York City and collecting the garbage and when it snowed I'd be in charge of the snow removal.

QD: I understand that snow is quite a big part of Sanitation in New York, right?

SA: Yes, it is.

QD: Thank you for that insight. Moving on now, I guess we should get into our questions about 9/11. You mentioned previously that it was your first day back at work in a while when 9/11 occurred. Where were you and what were you doing when you were first made aware of the 9/11 attacks?

SA: I was an extra Superintendent working in Bronx 08.<sup>2</sup> I was an extra for the day, so I had no particular function. Somebody came on and said "Look on the TV," and we went up to the break room and we saw the TV. The plane had hit and then we looked outside. We were up on 215th Street on Broadway in Manhattan. We looked outside and we can see the smoke coming up and then the second plane hit. Then we went back to the TV and we heard about all the other planes hitting.

QD: And what was that like during that?

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<sup>2</sup> The DSNY divides the city into 59 districts encompassing the five boroughs, each with its own garage. The garage for Bronx 08 is located on 215th St. in Manhattan, a few blocks South from the Bronx district it serves.

SA: Very scary. Very scary. That was on 9/11 and I did not go down there until 9/12. When I saw it in person, the first time was on September 12.

QD: And on September 12, could you give me an idea of what it was like that first time on Ground Zero? What were you doing and when were you doing it?

SA: On September 12, I left out of Bronx 01. We had 200 sanitation workers assigned to us and a bunch of supervisors and it was me and a couple other superintendents. We took the workers down to Manhattan East 03, which is on the FDR Drive by the Southwest Seaport. From there, we were all given sectors that we were in charge of cleaning up the area. My sector included right across the street from St Paul's Church on Broadway. Behind St Paul's Church is where building #7 used to stand.<sup>3</sup> The crews were out there sweeping the streets. We had front end loaders, we had dump trucks, we set up a line that the dump trucks would come in. The front end loaders would start picking up the debris, the mechanical brooms would be sweeping streets, we had flushers to put water down to hold the dust down as much as possible [pause] and it was unbelievable. The words cannot describe what we saw. It was just unbelievable. I was there for 12 hours. I went home that night and I went to three different churches to find a church that was open. When I found the third church, I was in uniform. You could not tell if I was White or Black or Asian or any race, color or creed. And I just stood in the middle of the church and I was crying like crazy. There was a mass going on and everybody in the church was standing there looking at me. My function when I was down there the first night was cleaning up around St Paul's Church. Since I was a Superintendent, we were also driving up and down checking on everybody, making sure that all the other sectors were doing their function. I had brought a big,

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase "building #7" refers to WTC-7, which had stood near the North Tower.

giant, battery operated spotlight with me. I came across a bunch<sup>4</sup> of police officers that were holding a bunch of people that were looting. It was probably about 12 of them. They had them up against the wall. And they were trying to keep tracking them with their little flashlights so I lit up my big, giant spotlight and framed them all out nice. And then backup finally arrived to help the other officers out. Then I left and, as I was driving back up towards the northern part, I came across some guy who begged me, if I had a flashlight, [to help him]. His dog was in the building and he wanted to get his dog. I walked him up the building with the flash light after he showed me identification showing that he lived in the building and his apartment number, walked him up there to get his dog, and then I went back to my regular routine. I don't know what else. It was so much. There's so many things. I remember, one of the first nights, when we came upon the Millennium Hotel, all you could see was firemen with their backpacks and their turnout gear sleeping on the steps of the Millennium Hotel. [They were] laying there passed out from working 24 hour shifts already. That was devastating to see. There was National Guard assigned down there. You had the police, the firemen, the FBI, some Secret Service, DOT, every city agency and volunteers came in. Everybody was a real New Yorker even if there was people there that were from outside of New York. Everybody was together [pause]. I do remember driving down there on Second Avenue when we left Bronx 01 heading down [to Ground Zero] and there was a bunch of people sitting in an outdoor cafe eating their dinner like nothing had happened. When I got down there and saw what had happened it kind of bothered me to see that these people thought there was nothing going on.

QD: Thank you so much for all that. One thing I noticed from everything you just said was [the phrase] there was no white or no black, implying that there was a sense of unity there as well as

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<sup>4</sup> Correction: there were two police officers.

saying that everyone was a New Yorker, even if they weren't from New York. But if they were there, there was a kind of shared experience. At least that's what I was getting from what you were saying. In relation to that, some have spoken of this sense of unity and camaraderie among those who experienced this firsthand. As a member of the DSNY during that time, how do you relate to that feeling?

SA: Well, DSNY, there was really no white and black. We were all friends. We were green. We call ourselves the brotherhood of green. There was no white, there was no black. I got to meet firemen from Japan later on. I got to meet people from Toronto, Canada or I got people to meet people from other places. The time lapse period is all like a blur because it was 12 hour shifts 7 days a week non-stop. You drove down there [and] went to a central location which, for me, was Bronx 01 in the beginning. Then we would take the crews and go down [to Ground Zero]. Then, after a couple days, they had people start reporting directly down because we had the equipment down there already. But I would still report to Bronx 01 in order to pick up a vehicle to drive down. It was devastating. There's no word to describe it but "devastating." I remember people coming in from Toronto and they interviewed me [for their newspaper]. They asked me to point to the Deutschland Bank, which was netted. Now that was a major thing, that Deutschland Bank. That Deutschland Bank had lasers aimed at it that were precise as can be and that building was still in earthquake aftershocks, so that building would start shaking. And if the building started to move a little bit too much the sirens would go off and everybody would have to run to make sure that the building didn't come down on us. They ended up covering up that building with netting and then they put a big American flag on it later on. And years later, that Deutschland Bank, they actually found additional body parts in there. The Deutschland Bank also became a place that a

couple firemen got killed because one of the construction workers had cut the pipe for the sprinkler system by mistake and there was a fire up top and the firemen got caught up there. And they ended up dying.

QD: That's quite a story. Thank you for sharing that. Another thing that you mentioned as well during all this was the story of finding that dog. That was quite interesting. Now correct me if I'm wrong, but that was on 9/12?

SA: Excuse me? That was on 9/12, yes.<sup>5</sup>

QD: So that means that the owner of that dog was probably separated from it for more than a day. Does that give a sense of the chaos to some of us who weren't there?

SA: There was so much chaos down there forever. It's amazing, though. Within nine and a half months, that whole building, everything was removed. It was The Pit there. You could see from one end to the other end when they had The Pit and you can actually see the train tunnel where there was part of the train still in there. And it looked so small because the hole<sup>6</sup> was so big.

QD: Wow, that's quite something. Another thing you mentioned earlier was St. Paul's Church and I've heard that that particular church played quite a role for the first responders who were working on Ground Zero. Could you elaborate on that?

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<sup>5</sup> Correction: this incident actually occurred on 9/13.

<sup>6</sup> In this statement, "the hole" corresponds to "The Pit."

SA: St. Paul's Church was a church from the 1700s. Its sister church is down the block, which is the church that President George Washington was inaugurated in. And that church there, they had a cemetery in the back of it. There was some slight debris from trees falling, pieces of branches and stuff, little debris. It had a wrought iron pick a picket fence around it. And the only damage to that whole church was the wrought iron fence. Two spades were knocked off the top of it and, when I was there, I found one of the spades that I held onto as a memorial. And they had a nun there. I can't remember her name right off-hand. But she was there all the time and she helped out everybody. She was like the Energizer Bunny. She was just non-stop. And when Sanitation finished up, we had a plaque made and we had that spade added onto this trophy-type plaque. We gave it to her as a memorial from New York Sanitation Department. All of us in New York Sanitation also got involved for doing our own fundraisers. I had the bar in the Bronx where I used to hang out. They raised over 2,500 dollars to give to St. Paul's Church. We had people that knew people that worked for Coca Cola and stuff. We were able to get tractor trailers of water and soda for them. St. Paul's Church was a sanctuary. One of the things I loved about it was the peace. Even though it was right there and, if you walked out the front door and you went around the side, you could see all the devastation, but from inside it was just so tranquil. On the fence for St Paul's Church is where all the people that lost somebody—a loved one—hung the posters with their names; missing, lost due to the devastation, please call if you spot him or her. So, you go into the area and many times we found body parts. Unfortunately, it would look like a piece of roast beef and that would be all that was left of the other person—a soul. But we made sure anything that we found was turned in, cataloged and logged to try and help the people to have final closure on their loved ones. One of my supervisors was the one that found the black box to one of the planes that came down. Another one found one of the engines for the airplane.



So we had one of our cars that belonged to a lieutenant for the Sanitation Police. A good friend of mine who has very bad cancer, Chuckie Diaz, happened to actually be there when the building came down and he rescued a bunch of people and he ended up breaking his leg. The debris came down after he saved a bunch of people. I do remember in one of the beginning days, we were on one of the side streets. I'm not sure the name of the street. And there was a candle store there. And me and one of the police officers ended up breaking the windows—even a little bit more than they were broke, because everything was devastated—to get to the candles and we started putting candles in the street and lighting them. So that's a good memory. When they came in later on to put the lights up to replace the Twin Towers, I had my crew clean the area for them and I was there with them when they first turned on those lights. So I actually have a tattoo here of the lights on my arm, so I'll never forget that. Somebody gave me this shirt. This is not an official shirt. [It says] Emergency Response Division, New York City Department of Sanitation.

QD: I remember you sent me a picture of your motorcycle too and you had a painting on there.

SA: I have a 2020 Harley Davidson CVO and I have a picture of my tattoo on my other forearm. On the front of that bike—I bought that bike in 2020—[as well as] my Harley trike that I had before that, I had that on the rear of the trike. I also had the logo for the New York City Department of Sanitation Emergency Response Division. That logo was approved by Commissioner John Doherty. Me and three of the supervisors that work for me, Joe Curran, Kevin Melfi, and Anthony Quaranti, designed that logo. We also designed pins that we sold down there at a very slight profit and it was actually nonprofit because all the money was

donated to St Paul's Church. So we raised probably another 4,000 dollars right there for St. Paul's Church.

QD: It really seems like you're living that mantra of "Never Forget."

SA: I can never forget. No matter what, I can never forget. I suffer from PTSD. I will admit I am an alcoholic. It started getting to me so bad, especially living here in Florida afterwards. Even when I was in New York, my drinking started to get really, really bent out of shape to the point that I was drinking 'till I fell down. I did become a member of AA<sup>7</sup>. I just celebrated five years on April 5th. I believe in service in AA. I was a chairperson for meetings. I was a GSR, which is a group service representative, and now I am a district committee member. It got me out of my drinking and talking to a psychiatrist helped get me out of my head. I take a pill every day for my anxiety from it.

QD: It really sounds like there are some invisible scars that were left on people from that day.

SA: There's scars all over. [In] 2014 I was told I had lung cancer from my time down there. I went through six months of PET scans and CAT scans that I had lung cancer. I got an appointment set up for surgery on a Tuesday. On Sunday, I went to Sacred Heart Church. Father Jerry is the priest there that I know quite well. He gave me a blessing and whispered in my ear "Sal, everything will be fine." [I] went ahead and got a call from the doctor on Monday and decided to do Dr. Vance Browning at Florida Cancer Center. The doctor decided to do one last CAT scan. And I got a call on Monday night. Here I was getting ready and I had put everything

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<sup>7</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous. See <https://aa.org/>.

in God's hands. This was nothing I can do. Worrying wasn't going to help and I got a call from Dr. Vance Browning on Monday night, late at night, crying. She finally stopped trying after it seemed like an eternity and says "Sal, I don't get to say this, but you've been blessed. Your cancer started shrinking." Six months later, it was half gone. A year later, it was all gone. Later on, they found three lymph nodes in my abdomen. Um, went PET scans and CAT scans on them for a couple years and, miraculously, God took care of me a second time. And, all of a sudden, they stopped growing. One of them out of the three starts shrinking a little bit. [I] saw the doctor three years ago. She told me "if it stays like this for two more years you will not have to come back to me." Did that last year and did it this year and, she told me, "the next time I'll see you will probably be in the street" because the cancer miraculously has just stopped. So, it's been unbelievable. I run a Facebook group for World Trade Center, which my interviewer Quin is [an] observer in. I am the one that helps all the widows out as much as I can. I help hook them up with the lawyer, help them with the NYCERS–New York City Employees' Retirement pension System—to make sure—they passed a bill a couple years ago that the widows are entitled to, if the person is on the three quarters permanent disability, the wife will get that money now.<sup>8</sup> They came out with another bill that the wives will get complete medical coverage for the rest of their lives, as long as it's a certified permanent disability due to World Trade Center. I have lost 96 souls that I run a memorial for. And New York City Department of Sanitation stepped up and they're putting a memorial this year. They had put one previously. The new one is going to be right at 125 Worth Street, which is the Department of Health. Sanitation is upstairs from that. So when you walk into the Department of Health building you're going to be able to see the names of the 96 souls we lost right on the wall in brass tags. Due to COVID and pension cuts, we were

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<sup>8</sup> New York City 2013 Laws Chapter 489—Certain Vested Members Allowed to Apply for ¾ Disability Pursuant to WTC Law. See <https://www.nycers.org/post/2013-laws#--chapter-489--certain-vested-members-allowed-to-a>.

supposed to get a big memorial with a piece of steel on Canal Street on the West Side Highway. But that did not happen for this year. Our Commissioner, Ed Grayson, was actually one of the first ones that was down there, the first couple of days. So he is all into it, helping us out with it. Three star chief Paul Brown from the New York City Department of Sanitation, in charge of Personnel Management Division, used to be a clerk after being in the street for a long time. Pauly was one of the workers that went into the stores that were down there that had the food in it. And he would be with sanitation workers and Health Department employees and garbage truck. And the Supervisor would be assigned and they would clean out these stores with the rotten food in it. That I got to be a very little part of, but I had enough of things to do. I think, later on, a company came in called Angel Aerial. The owner of that, Jim, I became good friends with. His trucks would work for me. Our flushers did not do the job that his trucks could do. The motor on his trucks to put the water out was probably 50 times better than ours. In the beginning—I'm jumping around. Things pop into my head, so excuse me for that. But in the beginning, I would go out with the flushers and everybody worked on The Pile for a little bit, helped out any way they could. I would go out with the flushers and I would stand in front of them. And people would be working on The Pile and I would guide the flushers forward to the point that the dust was coming up and it's just overwhelming me. And I am lucky I'm still alive. That's for sure. We have lost a lot of our mechanical broom operators because, as well sealed as those mechanical brooms could be, there was always an opening somewhere that that dust that they were sweeping up, even though they were spreading water down, came in and killed a lot of them.

QD: Now I understand, in addition to the vulnerability of the mechanical broom operators for the dust, you also mentioned to me in our previous conversation that there was a lack of available respirators. Would you care to elaborate on that?

SA: They were giving out paper masks that did nothing. On the first day I was there, the day I went to that church, I had on one of those paper hazmat suits and let me tell you something: it did absolutely nothing. And I was there for three months before I got certified on a respirator. And all they kept telling us was that the air was safe—that we had nothing to worry about. That was definitely not true. I got to meet President Bush a couple of times. One of my good friends, Frank Silechia, was the one who found the cross at Ground Zero. We became good friends later on. I used to go to the mass and all my workers would go to the mass on every Sunday. We had a sanitation worker named Andrew Maccio that they called the “Singing Sanitation Worker.” He would be down there with us. Later on, he became a garage man. He worked in the garage and he would be the one that had to go into the dump trucks and take this big iron pick and try and break out stuff that was caked in there. And he ended up dying from melanoma. May he rest in peace. But Andrew would come to [St. Paul’s] church and he would sing at the masses. Not only was there the big 9/11 cross. The iron workers down there would make crosses for us. And, one of the ironworkers, you gave him a sandwich he made you a cross. He would make as many as you wanted. Though I gave my cross to a priest. I do have a piece of steel in shape of the buildings. It’s my memento that I keep; very dear to me. You know, I don’t know where to go. There’s so much. Yeah, I’ll go back to the masses. The masses were held down there in the beginning right in the street. I remember, one of the masses, I was walking around. I had three city radios. I had two radios and a Nextel. I had a sanitation radio and then I had a federal radio. And I remember

the federal radio going off like crazy during one of the masses and that was the plane that had gone down from Laganardia that had taken off and crashed. And one of the people that happened to be on that plane was a friend of my sister-in-law's. She had gone outside on 9/11 to smoke a cigarette. While she stood outside to smoke a cigarette--well she came down to smoke a cigarette--and that's when the first plane hit, so she got spared. And, unfortunately, she went on vacation and she ended up dying on that plane that crashed into Long Island Sound. So [PAUSE].

QD: Wow.

SA: Like I said, 96 people that worked with me--for me--for New York Sanitation Department. I was an employee of New York Sanitation Department. I worked for the city of New York. I did what I was assigned to do. And I did it 100% because, to me, it was the most important thing. I was an officer. Like I said earlier, I am jumping around a lot because there's no real timeline. Everything's just phasing to one another. Oh, I lost track now. Oh, I was assigned to the Bronx. After two weeks I was supposed to come out and go back to the Bronx and I got a call and was asked if I wanted to run the night shift. We wanted the supers that ran the night shift. At that time it was a couple of us. One of them was a superintendent named Marcellus Clark, who ended up running in the night shift right to the end. He was a Manhattan superintendent. Unfortunately, Marcellus Clark was the first one that we lost due to cancer. One of the supervisors that worked for us used to go to the meeting with the OEM, Office of Emergency Management, [and] was one of the first people to die. Also--back in church--and then the cross. We would have the

masses-Sanitation. There was a metal cross made by the iron workers. Excuse me for jumping around but this is very, very hard to do.

QD: Please go ahead. It's all up to. Wherever you want to divert this.

SA: It's bringing back a lot of bad memories. Sanitation—we held the cross that was used. A pretty big steel cross, we kept it in our office on Manhattan 03. We were assigned out of there and that cross was used at the mass every Sunday. And back to Andrew Maccio, my good friend. Andrew the “Singing Sanitation Worker” would come there and he would sing. Me and a couple of my supervisors that worked for me would actually end up being altar boys handing out the host. And one of the people that we saw a lot at Ground Zero was Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Mayor Giuliani was so easy to talk to. He was there for us. He was there for New York City. I remember going up to Bloomberg right before he was sworn in as Mayor and asked him if he was going to come to our mass every Sunday and he says “No. Don't you know I'm Jewish?” So I told him it's [a] non-denominational church. He never showed up, not once. Giuliani, even after he was no longer mayor, used to come all the time. And it was good seeing him. It was great seeing President Bush down there. Hillary Clinton came there. I got to meet Hillary Clinton. I did a commercial. Nextel came in and they gave us these phones that were huge. They was solid encased in rubber. You could probably take them up onto the fiftieth floor of the building and throw them off and they wouldn't have broke. That's how solid encased in rubber they were. That was our way for all of us to communicate. All my offices were given one of the phones. I actually did a commercial for Nextel for training purposes for them. I became good friends with one of the Vice Presidents of marketing and he gave all my officers phones. And it was a great

way to be able to communicate. I do remember having that phone for the whole time I was there and had it even for a while afterwards. And towards the end they started letting celebrities come in. That was about the seventh month they were really letting them in. And they would go ahead and they would get on the phone and thank my wife for me being there. So my wife got to talk to Ray Romano, Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, Chuck Norris, Cheech [Marin], Kevin James. Oh my God, there was so many. [There was] Goldie Hawn, who my wife says I had the biggest smile ever because Goldie gave me a kiss and then took a picture with me. So I had this huge smile after Goldie Hawn gave me a kiss. Tom Cruise, when he was there, stood at the top up [of The Pit] on a hill with a fireman's hat on and you could just see how devastated he was. Nobody would even go up to him and talk to him 'till he came back down from that hill that he was on. Alec Baldwin served me lunch. He was a volunteer at the Salvation Army. One of my good friends still to this day was captain for Salvation Army and I'm talking right from the beginning he was there. I didn't find out 'till later on, but he owned an apartment building on Mott Street. This guy was a multi millionaire and he was down there. I remember every day, right from the beginning, seeing the actor who played the father in the Golden Years.<sup>9</sup> He would be driving an ATV right from the beginning, right from the very beginning, when we had no roads at all. And he'd be out there carrying all these cases of water in the back. And he would hand out water to everybody. In one of the first weeks, so it's probably one of the first couple, about maybe the fifth day, the blooming onion company, Outback, came in. They wanted to set up over by the East River Drive so that they can distribute food to everybody and I remember them coming. I got a call to go over there to help them set up a location. I brought my trucks over there and the brooms and stuff and a couple guys and cleaned out a nice area for them and they started cooking. And people would just go over there and they would load trunks of the cars or load up

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<sup>9</sup> Correction: The narrator is referring to Daniel Lauria from "The Wonder Years."



the ATVs and bring food out to the workers that were working on The Pile. And they just, 24/7, just kept cooking and serving us food. We ended up later on having a really good Italian restaurant named Nino's up on Canal Street. And they would give us free food for any Emergency Response Division. They closed their restaurant down completely to the general public. The only people that were allowed in there were first responders. And then on Canal Street you had these volunteers that just stood there with signs, waving, holding signs up, waving flags, and thanking all of us. That was awesome, you know? [At] St. Paul's Church, they had cots upstairs that the first responders—they couldn't get home—they could sleep there. They had food coming in out of there. They had shirts, gloves, the essentials you needed. They had psychiatrists there. They had foot doctors there. They had chiropractors there. They had regular doctors there. They started having all these volunteers coming in and they would go ahead and offer us free services. Masseuses, I remember. Instead of having lunch, a lot of times I was driving an ATV down there and there was no roads, so my back was gone from hitting all these bumps and to this day it's still gone. I need surgery on my back. They're going to do special injections right into my discs. They usually do them between the discs but that ain't working. I have five bad discs in my back from being there. I have bad discs in my neck from all the bouncing in the ATVs. With the volunteers, I used to love to go for the massage and the chiropractor. I could take my hour lunch or twenty minutes or a half an hour—whatever time I could get—and get a quick massage. A lot of times I had to see a foot doctor because, like I said, I was standing in front of spreaders. I was wearing these boots that I got from some place down there. I don't remember exactly where [I got them]. One of the tents that was set up and down the street [was] giving out free stuff to us. And I got these pair of steel toe boots. They're actually in the New York City Department of Sanitation there. They're at 125 Worth Street. I helped set up a

display there with the ex-Commissioner of Public Affairs, Vito Turso. I have a nice piece of steel there that says “WTC Emergency Response Division DSNY.” There’s a jacket there. My hat is there—my hard hat that’s signed by the President of the United States [George W. Bush], Hillary Clinton, and a bunch of other people and the workers that were with me. Kevin Melfi—his hat went to the World Trade Center Museum.<sup>10</sup> To me, I’d rather have my hat at the Sanitation Department than be at the museum. To me, Sanitation meant more. Sanitation was my life. I am retired 16 years, coming up on 20 years since 9/11. I’ll still wake up in bed, dreams and sweats and stuff from it; [it’s] something that’ll never go away. I know after this interview today I had done a pre interview with Quin. And I know that I’m going to have bad flashback memories again and I’m gonna have to deal with it tonight. There’s so many—there’s so much there. We went from nothing there—no roads, debris all over the place, the ConEd coming in, hooking up electricity, the phone company coming in, putting up telephone lines. In the beginning, there was nothing. Nighttime was nighttime. We, Auxiliary Field Force<sup>11</sup>, which is one of our divisions for Sanitation Department, and OEM, Office of Emergency Management, and DOT and any other agency did add portable generators with spotlights. That was the only way we could see. You know, I want to get into something. One of my first nights there—this is going to bring back very bad memories. One of my first nights there—probably second, third night—they had all these flatbed trucks sitting around and all these other trucks with all the debris and nobody was doing nothing with them. They were hauling in the garbage trucks and in the dump trucks they were hauling debris but the big pieces of fire equipment, I ended up getting put in charge of removing them. We would just bring them a couple blocks away and then they would get moved

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<sup>10</sup> Refers to the “9/11 Memorial & Museum” located at the former site of Ground Zero. See <https://www.911memorial.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> Auxiliary Field Force of the New York City Department of Sanitation. See [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/docs/about\\_v3-appa-and\\_0815.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/docs/about_v3-appa-and_0815.pdf).

afterwards. But the first fire truck was a hook-and-ladder. I went to Assistant Borough Super—which is the level above me; they now call him Assistant Chief—and says “Listen, we got all these DOT trucks sitting here. Do you mind if I start hauling these fire trucks outta here?” And he says “No, let’s do it.” I found the guy in charge of these huge flatbed tractor trailers. Now, I had hauled oversized equipment in New York. I worked for a company called Gerosa. And they’re gooseneck trailers. They come out, they come down, and then they’re flat. They usually use them to carry cranes and heavy material on them. But they’re huge, the ones that they had from Buffalo, New York. They weren’t limited like the ones that I worked on in New York City because of length restrictions. We would go 80 feet. These things get a little bigger. I found the guy in charge of them and he called his office and they says “Yeah, work for them!” And I ended up getting one of the claws. They had these giant, on-track motorized equipment that had a big giant claw on it. We tried to take a hook-and-a-ladder fire truck and load it onto one of those trailers and it was too long for the trailer, so now we had to get one of the iron workers to separate the fire truck from the cab part. The first piece we went to load was the cab, now. When the iron worker cut it, it caught on fire. Now I was right next to the command center for the Fire Department. I was within 100 feet of it and I had to find the Chief of the Fire Department and get him to put out a fire on one of his fire trucks. And it just got to me. They were going through so much. There was so much going on. And to have to go ahead and get him to put out a fire on the fire truck. And they put out the fire. They said to me “Don’t worry about it. We want to get the equipment. You know, these are our people” and I felt devastated, but to them it was nothing. They just wanted the equipment out of there. They wanted to be able to go through it, whatever they can do. So they were loading the cab up and the side door opened where the crew would sit and, I don’t think I ever told you about this, but, when the door opened, a uniform dress hat fell

out of it and it landed right by my feet. And it seemed like it was doing 360s, spinning around forever and then it finally ended up with the bill of the hat facing right to me. Next thing I know I felt my whole body start shaking, my knees gave out, and I passed out on the floor. I still to this day swear that I felt the souls go right through my body. I felt their presence. There was other times that I felt presences down there, especially in the beginning at night, where I can actually feel and I could actually see what it looked like: a glow of a soul just going up to heaven. I don't know if they were figments of my imagination. Don't forget, we were under a lot of stress at the time. But [in regard to] that fire truck, the souls just went right through me and, that, I know they went through me. I felt that. And I got to be there from the beginning to the end—well, second day to the end. We ended up being part of the last piece of steel that came out of there. We all lined up. My name is actually written. I have a tattoo. It's "Casa Love." It's "Cindy Annerino, Sal Annerino, House of Love." It's my tattoo on my arm. And I wrote that "Casa Love" on that piece of steel. I scraped it in. To this day I don't know if it's still on there. The cross, my name is also on that cross somewhere. Uh, the last piece of steel. To stand there and watch them march up the ramp with one of the Chiefs from the Fire Department who I became friends with. Then we fell in behind them. And we marched down the street. And that last piece of steel was taken—I believe it's now part of the main, um, steel at Ground Zero. I was in charge a lot of hauling of the steel. They had a place set up on the East River Drive where they used to bring steel for a while. They brought it out to Fresh Kills<sup>12</sup> out in Staten Island. They brought it to Hamilton Avenue in Brooklyn. We have lost a lot of workers that worked at those places. The dust was just unbelievable. I remember one of the schools that was there. I mentioned about Angel Aerial earlier, how he had these big water pumps. We actually used it. I was there. I went inside and

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<sup>12</sup> Fresh Kills Landfill became the primary repository for World Trade Center materials over the course of the roughly 10 month long cleanup effort.

talked to somebody there and I told them “Make sure all the windows are closed,” which they were already anyway because nobody wanted them open. And we just washed down the whole building. The owner, Jim, from Angel Aerial brought these hats. They’re hard hats and they had the stars and stripes on them. And he gave them out to everybody, so everybody was honored to wear them. His company logo was not on it anywhere. His main job—he was the guy who provided the rainfall when they do movies and TV shows and here he ends up being at Ground Zero.

QD: Speaking of that, one thing that really strikes me about your story is that you keep mentioning this outpouring of support from celebrities, politicians, the international community, [and] volunteers from every walk of life. One thing that I can’t help but wondering that I believe some in the future might be interested in is what the public reception was to Sanitation’s role in this particular. And so, in regard to that, how do you think the public has succeeded or perhaps failed to acknowledge Sanitation’s role in this?

SA: You know what?

QD: Yes?

SA: I don’t have the article here next to me but there’s an article that was written in the New York Post by their writers and we were called the unknown heroes down there. At least we got that recognition. There were so many other city agencies that didn’t get no recognition at all. So we got one article out of the whole deal. But we were treated by the Fire Department. My actual

office, later on, we had a trailer over on the West side of the site that we used. When they needed to get into that location and we needed to lose our trailer, I actually was given an office in a building by the Fire Department that day they had their setup. I was given a jacket that meant a real lot to me. I kept it for 17 years. I actually sent it to New York Sanitation Department to put it as part of the memorial. It was [the] same Carhartt jacket that the Fire Department wears and it says 9/11 on it right above over here. It says DSNY instead of FDNY. We had patches put on it. Then I had gathered a whole bunch of patches from other places, from Firehouse 10 and [a] couple of the other firehouses and from EMT and FBI and I put them on that jacket also. I donated that jacket. Now it's part of the Sanitation memorial which is in 125 Worth Street up on, I believe, the seventh or eighth floor.

QD: Another thing that you—oh, you'd like to take a break? Okay, so we're going to be stopping the recording right now but we may be back soon.

[INTERRUPTION] - 00:55:30

QD: Alright, so we're resuming the recording. I'm back here with Sal. Sal, please tell us where you are.

SA: Okay, I am in my garage right now. Quin had spoken earlier about my motorcycle. I just wanted everybody to see a picture of the motorcycle with the 9/11 on it. On the back of my

motorcycle, I have two “Never Forget” 9/11 flags and American flag, of course. This is a picture of me over here, Anthony Quaranti, and Willie Orosco. We’re on The Pile at Ground Zero.

That’s a picture of Alec Baldwin and me, Alec Baldwin serving us lunch at the Salvation Army tent. This is the ERD, Emergency Response Division of New York Sanitation. I am in the white shirt. In front of me is Andrew Maccio, the “Singing Sanitation Worker” who passed away. That is a memorial thing I had made for me for my garage. Now remember, the celebrities did not come down in the beginning. They came down towards the end. Nobody was allowed in the beginning. There’s me with Cheech. Chuck Norris. Chuck Norris was so nice but he wouldn’t stop kissing me and hugging me and I ended up not being able to get a picture with him. I hung out with his wife, who was pregnant with the twins at the time. That’s the vehicle that I drove, the ATV at Ground Zero. This is a picture of Kevin James, me, and one of the Sanitation police officers that worked for me. Kevin James told me “I’m sure there’s people that you owe favors to” and he went ahead and went around and told everybody he was my cousin. So, he drove around with me for about three and a half hours thanking everybody that was down there for being there. This says on it, “For Sal & Cindy,” who is my wife, “keep it clean.” This was what it looked like down there in the beginning. That’s Tom Cruise. That’s me over here, Tom Cruise, and the supervisor that worked for me, Kevin Melfi. Here’s that picture with the big giant smile with Goldie Hawn. And that’s me standing on the ramp above The Pit. This was the first pass to get into the area. They gave us passes. Our badges weren’t good enough. You had to have a pass because they wanted to make sure it was legit. These were World Trade Center emergency office, Mayor’s office. This was for the last truck ceremony, this was a vehicle pass, and this was a ramp pass, so that was actually for later on. This is for 2004. I used to go back there. And we take the families in. I did that from 2003, 2004, and I couldn’t do it no more after that there. It was so

devastating, being with the families. They were suffering so bad. As mentioned earlier, I went into the Millennium Hotel and they had a newspaper stand that had postcards and stuff. And I wanted a memento from down there, so I went ahead and took one of the postcards—that one there. All the plaques and all the citations for being down there came to me. This is Chief Paul Stokes. He was a three star chief. I had oak leaves.<sup>13</sup> I was a district superintendent, so when I got all the plaques, I wanted to make sure that the others that were down there got something. So I had this made up. Vito Turso helped me have that made up. This one here, I don't think you'll be able to read it. This was given to me at the end. It says "Superintend Sal Annerino 'Field General.' Thank you from the men and women of the Emergency Response Division World Trade Center," dated 6/5/02, which was our last day there. This is a school out in Brooklyn, P.S. 226 May 24, 2002. They had a bunch of us: two from Sanitation, two from Fire, two from Police, two from EMT, two from a bunch of other things. They had us on stage and P.S. 226 Arista/Archon Society: "In appreciation for your outstanding service to our community. Presented to our heroes on September 11, 2001." And they sung the song "Heroes" to us. And at the end, when they got done, they stood up and gave us a standing—well they gave us a standing ovation first. Then they sung "Heroes." When they finished the song "Heroes" I screamed out and raised my fist in the air and said "Thank you!" and they all stood up and went crazy. They were so happy. This is a poster for World Trade Center Health Registry.<sup>14</sup> I am in the white shirt. I was a poster boy on all the New York City buses and trains. If anybody has not registered that has been involved with the World Trade Center, please register. They find cancers that the regular doctors do not look for and it says who can tell us how 9/11 was affecting people who

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<sup>13</sup> Oak leaves indicate the rank of Superintendent in the DSNY.

<sup>14</sup> The World Trade Center Health Registry has been collecting data since 2003 in order to track the health conditions of those impacted by the 9/11 attacks. See <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/911health/about/wtc-health-registry.page>.



were near the WTC site. It was an honor and a privilege to be part of that, to be a poster boy for that. Thank you. That's me with my wife at a Christmas party. And this is me. I was a speaker. You see the piece of steel right there. I used to belong to a law enforcement motorcycle club of law enforcement, first responders, and veterans. And I gave a speech about three years ago on 9/11 at that location.

[INTERRUPTION] - 01:03:03

QD: Hey, Sal. So thank you so much for showing us around your garage. That was very interesting, showing us all of your personal mementos and your photographs. Another thing I wanted to ask you about was the role that your remembrance group on Facebook has played in documenting a lot of these public health issues and adverse health effects that the first responders and people present at Ground Zero faced as a result of the cleanup effort. Would you like to go into detail about that?

SA: Yes. All of the agencies were not prepared for anything like this at all. So there was a lot of people that were there in the beginning that were never really documented as being there. So my Facebook group that I have, DSNY World Trade Center Emergency Response Division group, we go ahead and we help the widows and the widowers get proof that their husband or wife was at that location by getting signed affidavits for them, for NYCERS, and for the lawyers. The class graduated in September of 2001 and 9/11 became one of their first assignments. So we had

people that were brand new on the job and this ended up being one of the first places they ever ended up going to. A lot of them never finished probation and ended up dying. We had quite a few that ended up dying that never hit where their pension was guaranteed. That meant their wives would get three years of pay. No medical, no nothing. So we help document these people—these souls—that they were there. Those widows knew nothing at all about any of this stuff and there's people still nowadays that don't know nothing about it. So I have all these Facebook groups and I try to get the word out and I tell other people to pass the word. You have a widow that the husband had died within three years on the job. You needed five years at that time to be vested. Like I said, they got three years' severance pay. No medical benefits at all. So they passed a couple of laws. I have a very close friend who's a lawyer. His name is Mikie Barasch and Mikie Barasch is one of the ones that walked the halls at the White House to get the James Zadroga Act passed to get people money to make up, you know, a person like me. I ended up retiring at 51. There was no way I could work anymore. I'm disabled. I walk so slow nowadays. When you get flashbacks and stuff, which, thank God they're not as bad as they were no more. They will be today, I can tell you that. But I helped them get the coverage and Mike Barasch also helped the widows get the permanent pensions of their husband that died due to cancer exposure from being there. One of the, you know, the 96 souls that we know about—there's probably many more that we don't know about because a lot of people left New York afterwards when we retired. Like me. I moved to Florida. And not only medical benefits, [but also] pension benefits. We help get them proof that their husband or wife was there by doing affidavits with Mikie Barasch. Mikie Barasch does not take a penny until he wins the case and some of these lawyers were taking 20, 30%. There was actually a couple lawyers that were frauds. They were actually keeping all the money while charging people 50%. Mike was only

charging 10%. We found out about it on the last day we were eligible to sign up for the original one before the Zadroga Act. A fireman happened to mention it to us and I went ahead and pulled me and three of my officers and we went over to Mike's office. He went ahead and, staying open at night, I pulled all my guys off the street that were working days. Then I had Marcellus Clark—who I mentioned earlier was one of the first that we lost from cancer—I had him send the whole night shift through over there to sign up. But what's good about Mike is, even if you don't have a case with him, he will help get you registered with the World Trade Center Health Registry. He will make sure that God forbid anything happens in the future because you only have like another year or so, or two maybe at the tops, that you can register with the World Trade Center Health Registry. After that there, if you develop cancer and it's proven that it's caused by World Trade Center exposure—You know, all cancers don't strike that quick. There's a lot of cancers that people are suffering and dying from that they're like one in a million type cancers. Like I said in the beginning, we were covered in dust from head to toe. They told us the air was safe, which it wasn't. Mike has been a really great asset. I mentioned Ed Grayson before and I mentioned Paul Brown. Paul Brown—now, when I need to get somebody certified, if they are in the medical system, I can get an answer instantly from Paul Brown. And that's the blessing of Sanitation Department: helping. They're working with us now. Before, we did not get that. We had such a hard, I had such a hard time getting people certified because a lot of the records were brought out to Staten Island and Sandy<sup>15</sup> hit and most of the records were lost. Stuff was on paper. It wasn't digital. So, since it wasn't digital, there was no way to pull these records back up.

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<sup>15</sup> Hurricane Sandy struck the East coast of the U.S. in 2012 and dealt significant damage to the New York City metropolitan area.

QD: Another point on those records, too. I think this is a good starting off point for another question, which is what does documentation for all of this mean to you? What does it mean to document the effects of this tragedy on the people who lived it?

SA: In order to be certified with the World Trade Center Health Registry, you need—I can tell you the first one. You need four hours on any of the first four days on site of the 9/11 disaster or any of the other disasters that happened that day. It gradually increases that you need like a couple weeks, a couple of months, depending if you weren't there in the beginning. So you could have somebody like my wife. My wife ended up with ovarian cancer. My wife, who ended up being a volunteer, would come in starting in like March, February, something like that. I think it was February. She started coming to the masses with me on Sunday and then afterwards she would go to St. Paul's Church and she would hang out there and she'd hand out bottles of water. You gotta remember this was very hard for my wife. My wife suffers from cerebral palsy. But she still went ahead and tried to help in any way she could. She ended up coming down with ovarian cancer. God blessed her. There was four women in the room with her and she was the only survivor of ovarian cancer. It's a silent killer. So I got her certified for being down there, which was very easy to do because so many people saw her down there and even have pictures of her down there. What I'd like to talk about: Sister Grace—that's her name—from St Paul's Church. Let me tell you something. What a nun, what a lady. I mean, she gave 2,000% every single day and she was working there 16, 18 hours a day helping out responders, sitting there just talking with the responders. There was a lot of priests, a lot of chaplains from all different religions that came in. I'm trying to think of a name. Can we pause one second?

[INTERRUPTION] - 01:12:42

SA: Father Jordan. I had to ask my wife the name because I couldn't remember it. Father Jordan was the one that held the masses at Ground Zero. He adopted the Sanitation as part of his family. And to have him to be with us and help us out because we were going through so much—you know, Sanitation played a really big role between the cleaning. We had PIP, which was one of our police departments for Sanitation. They would monitor the dumps right from the beginning, following the trucks that were hauling the material out there to make sure that it was taken to where it needed to go. You gotta remember, you could have micro things on there of somebody's blood and they needed to prove that the person was there. So we had to make sure that none of the steel disappeared, that nothing disappeared, [that] none of the debris disappeared. They would take it out. In the beginning, it was being taken to Hamilton Avenue and you had so many people working out of Sanitation landfill out in Staten Island there and they would have to go sift through this stuff.

QD: That was in Fresh Kills, right?

SA: Yep, Fresh Kills landfill. And they'd have to sift through every single tiniest piece because the tiniest piece of bone could mean a person being recognized. Now there's still to this date people that have never been accounted for. You also have the fact that till this date we had people that were trying to say that they were there. They just had one down here in Florida. He was

trying to saying that he was a 9/11 first responder and he wanted to do every 9/11. He wanted to do a speech that he was there and he wanted to be recognized. Well, you know what? The real ones that were there don't want to be recognized. We don't want a pat on the back. That's why we were known as the unknown heroes, Sanitation Department. We didn't want a pat on the back. We were there to assist the police department, the fire department, and all of the other agencies in the recovery and clean up. At first, it wasn't recovery. At first, it was search-and-rescue, trying to find people that was still alive. So it progressed to being a recovery. There was people found a couple days later and you'd walk around it. One thing I will never forget is the smell of being there. That is a smell that will be with me for the rest of my life. I remember one of the countries that was accused of being part of the terrorist organization and over on the West side of the area they had a stage set up. One of these big sheiks from one of these foreign countries came in and tried to give Giuliani, Mayor Giuliani at the time, a big check. I mean a huge check, billions of dollars. Giuliani just looked at him, threw him off the stage, and ripped the check up. And that was like "That's our mayor! Thank you." Yes. These people were accused of doing this to us. I remember every time the President came in I'd be assigned to the FBI and Secret Service. I worked with many FBI and Secret Service guys. And they would go ahead and we have our dump trucks or salt spreaders, whatever we weren't using. Most of the time it would be salt spreaders if it wasn't wintertime. And they'd be loaded with sand and they'd be used to block off the area because whenever the President came in we had to close the area off completely. And they would go around and they'd weld every single sewer cap that was on that roadway that that President was gonna travel on. Every single sewer cap was welded shut. Every car that was on the street was hauled off. But you gotta remember, we were suffering. We were hurting so bad inside. All of us, Sanitation, everybody. Every single agency,

every single person that was there, we were hurting. This was a slap in the face to New York City. This was something nobody ever thought could happen. I remember seeing buildings with the Police Department, three X's<sup>16</sup> on them, Fire Department, Police Department: "This building's been searched." "No occupants." "Safe." I remember a McDonald's becoming a Police Department headquarters right in the middle of the site. The tent that the Fire Department used that I had to go to when the fire truck caught on fire. And then when we started hauling the cars outta there in the first two weeks, I remember we were bringing them right over the Brooklyn Bridge to the other side. And I remember calling in AFF, Auxiliary Field Force for Sanitation Department, to bring lights in. Those lights were there within an hour. That's how fast they responded so that we can see where we were hauling the cars at nighttime. You know? And I remember we used to get calls. You gotta remember, in the beginning, there was still a lot of stupid people out there that thought it was a joke. They would make phone calls and they would end up shutting down the Brooklyn Bridge, the Manhattan Bridge and stuff because they would say they're going to be bombing it or something. So we had guys that couldn't get to work. We'd have to go short on a shift and I would tell them personally, "When you get here, you get here. I understand what's going on. We heard about it already that the Brooklyn Bridge is shut." I gotta admit, I worked with a family down there. Not only Sanitation, but every single agency, I remember standing there when they took out the body of a person. I remember especially when they took a fireman out. The Fire Department would line up and they'd bring that body out. It was so devastating, you know? We had the iron workers, we had Port Authority Police Department, we had fence all around the whole area, and they had personnel assigned to the outskirts where the gates would be and you had to show your ID to get through. I was allowed to bring people in. That was one of the reasons Kevin James thanked me later on and asked me if I

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<sup>16</sup> Search and rescue personnel would mark buildings with 3 X's to indicate that they had been searched.

had anybody that needed special things. I would bring people in. Like I remember one time bringing eight Navy personnel. It was Fleet Week going on. I had eight navy guys—I showed you the all terrain vehicle I drove—so imagine them all standing, climbing on that little thing. It was like unbelievable. You had to tell me which way to turn because I couldn't see nothing in front of me. And the Fire Department, when we started going into The Hole, these guys had to walk between six to ten blocks, if not more, because that's where their setup location was, there where they turned out of. They'd have to walk there in full gear, walk down that ramp and into The Hole. So, I had grew up in a bar. It was owned by a captain for the Fire Department. I had a lot of friends that were down there. I had other people that worked with me who had friends down there. You had corrections officers that were down there, also, and Port Authority guys. We started going down there and picking them up and I had one of my officers [who] drove a van and we take them out of there. But Sanitation played an essential role. From the cleanup, to the recovery, to search-and-rescue, we assisted in any capacity that we could and that place was pretty clean within two weeks. And the whole thing was searched right down to the bottom, except for that one building that they couldn't get to—the Deutschland Bank that they found debris later on from because they really needed to wait for that building to stop shaking and it took a long, long time. That was a very dangerous situation. I got to go up to the roof of the Millennium Hotel one time. One of the guards allowed us to take the freight elevator up to the roof. Even having been down there for two months already and then looking down onto the site, was unbelievable. I used to get to go once in a while to OEM meetings, Office of Emergency Management, where all the city agencies, I would get to go to the meetings with all the other heads—and the guy from the company that was in charge of the cleanup was a young kid, but he knew his stuff—and get to talk to the chiefs and get to know the people. And, like I say, we were



all one. No, it didn't matter what agency you worked for. So, that's about all I got, unless you have any questions for me, Quin.

QD: Yeah, of course. I mean, honestly, there are so many directions I can go with this that it's hard to really know. One thing that I would like to ask is, earlier, you showed the several passes that you had had over the course of your time working at Ground Zero. Now what was it like coordinating the security procedures and who was doing what among all these different agencies that were all there?

SA: That came from the Mayor's Office, Office of Emergency Management. That we had nothing to do [with]. We were like every other agency. We had to go ahead and get a pass.

QD: I see. Thank you. Now, I do have one other question as well, which is, if you had to choose what you wish the world would understand about Sanitation's response to 9/11, what would it be?

SA: Never forget. Never forget any agency that was down there. We saw things that you don't want to remember. We have smells that are in our brain permanently that you don't want to remember. You have memories. Oh, they're so bad. Sanitation played a major role just like every single agency down there did. You can't single out one particular agency because you have the Port Authority that lost officers and people. You have all these companies. People were jumping out of a building. I'm one of the lucky ones that I didn't go in 'till September 12, so I didn't get to see that. I heard a story recently. One of our nurses—head nurse—at the Sanitation clinic down

on Beaver Street in Manhattan, which was part of the zone. They were taking people in that were sick and helping people wash off and helping people out down at the clinic as they were walking by. And one lady comes walking down the street, the cops were trying to get her to stop and to give it up. She had an arm in her hand. Somebody who had jumped out of the building, their arm came off. And this lady was in such a state that she was walking down the street with this arm and she wouldn't give it up. And our nurse, who is just our 96th soul that we lost, Sandra McCaffrey, actually was able to talk to her enough to explain to her that the family would never have closure unless she gave up the arm. And for two weeks afterwards that lady came back every day and thanked Sandra McCaffrey because she said she was in such shock she didn't even know what she was doing. I have many pictures. I don't need to even look at the pictures. On my Facebook group is our pictures. It's just devastating. Sanitation played a major role. Every agency, every person, every volunteer—you know, not only sanitation lost 96. I couldn't tell you how many Salvation Army lost and how many the Red Cross lost. I can tell you, from my perspective, the Red Cross, if you aren't a cop, you aren't treated as well. Salvation Army treated everybody the same. That's why I went to Salvation Army all the time. But, you know, seemed like the Red Cross—I don't know, they just catered to the police officers, which wasn't right. They did take care of everybody, but they catered a lot more to them. In closing, I'd like to say thank you for letting me share my experience, strength, and hope, and remembrances of my time, nine and a half months of my life, down there. And I appreciate very much that this is being documented. I was called by the World Trade Center to do an oral history. COVID hit and [I] never heard back from them. That was the third time they had called me. The first two times I turned it down because I didn't want to do what I'm doing right now. Well, this is the first time I'm actually doing an oral history.

QD: Thank you so much, Sal. There's no substitute for your experience, so it's amazing to have this documented and for you to take the time to articulate all of this on a recording. I can't thank you enough. Is there anything else you'd like to say before we end today?

SA: I hope it never happens again.

QD: Thank you so much.

SA: Thank you, Quin.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

*Immediately following this transcript and starting on the next page of the document is a series of photographs captioned by the interviewer/transcriptionist. Much like the interview, these photographs document the aftermath, remembrance, and lingering effects of 9/11 through the narrator's eyes. All are courtesy of Salvatore Annerino and shared with his consent.*



**Figure 1.** Members of the DSNY stand in front of The Pile at Ground Zero. Included are Willie Orosco (from left), Anthony Quaranti, and Salvatore Annerino – c. 2001-2002.



**Figure 2.** Salvatore Annerino (center) in front of The Pile with other 9/11 response workers – c. 2001-2002.



**Figure 3.** Salvatore Annerino stands on the ramp above The Pit at Ground Zero – c. 2001-2002.



**Figure 4.** Alec Baldwin and Salvatore Annerino at Ground Zero Salvation Army tent, where Baldwin served lunch to 9/11 response workers – c. 2002.



**Figure 5.** Tom Cruise at Ground Zero with Salvatore Annerino (right) and DSNY Supervisor Kevin Melfi (left) – c. 2002.



**Figure 6.** Kevin James with a DSNY Police Officer (right), Salvatore Annerino (left), and the vehicle which Mr. Annerino drove at Ground Zero – c. 2002.



**Figure 7.** Salvatore Annerino (from right) with Cheech Marin and other 9/11 response workers at Ground Zero. On bottom left, a Chuck Norris trading card signed by Norris at Ground Zero – c. 2002.



**Figure 8.** Salvatore Annerino with Goldie Hawn at Ground Zero – c. 2002.



**Figure 9.** Salvatore Annerino stands beside the famous cross from Ground Zero – c. 2001-2002.



**Figure 10.** Close-up shot of the Ground Zero cross – c. 2001-2002.





**Figure 11.** Group shot of DSNY Emergency Response Division. Salvatore Annerino pictured in white dress shirt. Andrew Maccio, the “Singing Sanitation Worker,” kneels in front of him – c. 2001-2002.



**Figure 12.** Postcard salvaged from the remains of the Millenium Hotel beside Ground Zero by Salvatore Annerino and kept as a memento – c. 2001.



Figure 13. Inactive passes for accessing the premises around Ground Zero.

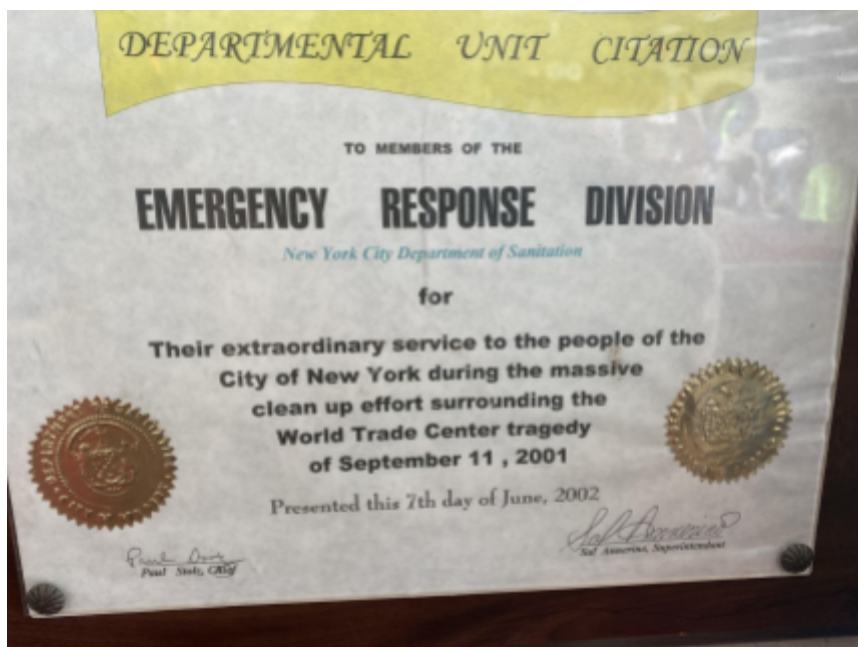


Figure 14. Certificate commending the Emergency Response Division. Signed by Salvatore Annerino and DSNY Three-Star Chief Paul Stolz – June 7, 2002.



**Figure 15.** Commemorative plaque presented to Salvatore Annerino by the Emergency Response Division on the final day of the WTC cleanup effort – June 5, 2002.



**Figure 16.** Commemorative plaque presented by a Brooklyn public school, P.S. 226, to Salvatore Annerino amongst other city workers who participated in the response to 9/11 – May 24, 2002.



**Figure 17.**  
Commemorative patch  
for the Emergency  
Response Division.



**Figure 18.** Wood carving  
commemorating the  
Emergency Response  
Division. Commissioned by  
Salvatore Annerino.

# NY Sanitation Supt



## Sal Annerino. White Shirt

**Figure 19.** Advertisement poster for the Word Trade Center Health Registry featuring Salvatore Annerino.



**Figure 20.** Salvatore Annerino's tattoo depicting the Twin Towers as a commemoration for 9/11.



**Figure 21.** Close-up shots of decal and flag commemorating 9/11 on Salvatore Annerino's motorcycle.



**Figure 22.** Other angles of Salvatore Annerino's motorcycle.