

Advertisement

The Blood Sugar Shocker...

HealthResources.net

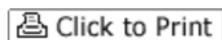


Conventional wisdom about blood sugar is wrong!

[Free Reports reveal how to balance blood sugar naturally!](#)



Powered by Clickability



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Miracles emerge from debris

By Dennis Cauchon and Martha T. Moore, USA TODAY

The bodies of 2,803 human beings were buried when the World Trade Center crumbled into 3 billion pounds of debris. Miraculously, 20 people survived the collapse, amid steel beams, concrete slabs and other wreckage. They escaped death in the most unlikely of ways and in the most surprising of places. Fourteen people survived inside the remnants of a stairwell at the center of the north tower. One man remembers falling from a 22nd floor stairwell in the north tower and regaining consciousness atop the 12-story-deep pile of rubble at Ground Zero. Two police officers, trapped in debris between the towers, barely survived both collapses.



New York firefighters, from left, Matt Komorowski, Billy Butler, John Jonas and Sal D'Agostino survived the collapse inside a stairwell.

By Todd Plitt, USA TODAY

USA TODAY took a comprehensive look at who survived the collapse and why. The newspaper interviewed nine survivors and consulted construction experts and the architectural and engineering plans of the twin towers.

The survivors had one thing in common: All ended up near the top of the debris. When the buildings fell — the south tower at 9:59 a.m., the north tower at 10:28 a.m. — the towers compacted into a rubble pile that filled a six-story basement and rose six stories above ground.

Other people — no one knows how many — also survived the immediate collapse. They were heard on fire department radios, or their bodies, with no apparent fatal injuries, were found days or weeks later, almost intact, inside protective pockets deep in the tangle of steel and cement at Ground Zero. They could not be reached in time because of the immense depth of the rubble.

On a day of terror, miracles were rare. For the 20 who survive today, the difference between life and death was that they could see sunlight after the collapses or were with someone who could. It was, in the truest sense, a ray of hope.

These are the survivors' stories.

'We'll get out of here'

Tom Canavan, 42, should have been long gone by the time the World Trade Center towers collapsed. He worked on the 47th floor of the north tower, processing securities in the trust department of First Union Bank. After American Airlines Flight 11 struck his tower at 8:46 a.m., he delayed leaving to help put securities back in the vault, and then got stuck in a congested

Advertisement

stairwell. That's where he was at 9:03 a.m., when the south tower was hit by United Airlines Flight 175.

More than an hour after the first crash, Canavan walked through the lobby's revolving doors into an underground shopping mall that connected the north and south towers. This was the primary evacuation route, where rescue workers directed thousands of survivors.

The floor was covered with glass. It was dark except for emergency lights. The sprinklers rained water from above.

Canavan had his arm around a colleague, Antoinette Duger, 44, a trust officer who sat two desks away. "Do you want me to go back up and get your umbrella?" he joked.

"How can you be so calm?" she asked.

"Don't worry. We'll get out of here," he said.

He turned around to help an older couple coming through the revolving door. He lifted his arm off Duger's shoulder just as a thunderous rumble began. The south tower was falling.

This can't be happening, he thought. This is New York City. It's the World Trade Center.

Canavan was knocked face-first to the ground and engulfed by smoke and debris. He opened his eyes but couldn't see. He listened but couldn't hear.



I'm

By Todd Plitt, USA TODAY

Tom Canavan: With son Matthew, 3, and daughter Meaghan, 5 months. He says: "It sure is great to be alive."

dead, he thought. He considered what it was like to be dead: It's not so bad.

Then he tasted dirt. His mouth was in it.

He smelled smoke. His pants were on fire. He threw dirt on himself to extinguish his burning cuffs, singeing his fingers. I can't stay here, he thought.

He was bent over, face down, inside a tent-shaped cocoon. A slanted concrete slab ran 4 inches above his head. Paper was burning, and the flames offered some light. Canavan put his hand on the edge of the slab above his head and pulled himself forward.

"Don't leave me!" a man cried.

"Who is that?" Canavan asked.

"Maybe they'll find us here," the man said.

"We'll suffocate if we stay. I'm going," Canavan said, and he started to crawl, seeking a path through the rubble. The man — who seemed young — grabbed his ankle. That was the first time Canavan knew where the man was. They began to crawl together in nearly total darkness.

They slithered like snakes, heading up and forward, when possible, through a maze of debris. They went over beams and under beams. They pushed aside debris.

After 20 minutes, Canavan smelled fresh air. He took a deep breath of cool air. Above him was a small hole, about the size of a saucer. He forced his head out, like a rat coming out of a hole. He was on the outdoor plaza near a globe-shaped sculpture that was a World Trade Center landmark.

Canavan tried to squeeze out of the hole, through steel reinforcing bars sticking out of a concrete slab. He couldn't get out. He was too big — 205 pounds on a 5-foot-10-inch frame.

He pulled himself back inside the hole and helped the slender young man squeeze through. Canavan waited for the young man to help lift him out. Instead, the man, apparently traumatized, walked away. Canavan stuck his head out of the hole and yelled: "Yo! Yo!"

The young man waved for Canavan to follow him, then kept walking east toward Church Street. Canavan picked up a rock and threw it in anger at the man, who disappeared in the distance.

Canavan renewed his effort to get out, tearing his shirt and his skin as he forced himself, this time successfully, on top of Ground Zero.

Twenty-five minutes after he was buried in the south tower's collapse, he was free. The debris was so deep he could put his hand atop the 27-foot-tall bronze globe — a Fritz Koenig sculpture called *The Sphere*. He walked north to Vesey Street and escaped the north tower's fall minutes later.

Canavan and the other man had crawled 40 feet east and up through 30 feet of debris, from an underground shopping mall to an outdoor plaza.

Today, Canavan is not angry with the young man, whose identity he doesn't know. "I don't blame him at all." The man, who had lost his shoes, walked over burning debris that was so hot it melted the bottom of Canavan's shoes.

Antoinette Duger, who had been next to him, did not survive. "A beautiful person — always smiling, always had a nice thing to say," he says of his colleague.

Canavan recovered from minor injuries. He went on a diet and lost 22 pounds. He's put the weight back on, but he hasn't lost the feeling that "it sure is great to be alive."

'This is bad'

Will Jimeno, a rookie cop assigned to a bus station, saw an airplane's shadow pass over 42nd Street. Minutes later, he was on a commandeered bus with 20 other Port Authority police officers on their way to the World Trade Center. The men rode in silence.

Outside the World Trade Center, Sgt. John McLoughlin, 48, a veteran police officer trained in rescues, barked, "I need three volunteers." He wanted only cops who could use a 30-pound Scott Air-Pak, a self-contained breathing device used by firefighters. Jimeno, 33, had learned how at the police academy. He stepped forward. So did Antonio Rodrigues, 35, and Dominick Pezzulo, 36.



By Todd Maisel, New York *Daily News*, via AP

Chris Amoroso: Port Authority officer, right, helps people to safety before re-entering the World Trade Center. He would die in the collapse.

They tried to squeeze into fire-resistant protective gear, but the muscle-bound, weight-lifting cops were too big. They would head up into the towers in their service uniforms. Officer Chris Amoroso, 29, who had already carried people to safety, met the crew. He hugged Jimeno, his friend.

The five-member team was set: an Irish sergeant, two Italians and immigrants from Portugal and Colombia. A classic group of New York cops. They were going to the fire atop the north tower.

The men were pushing carts of air packs in the shopping mall that connected the north and south towers when they heard a boom. Then a rumble. Then a fireball the size of a house was rolling toward them. They didn't know it, but the south tower was collapsing.

"Run towards the freight elevator!" the sergeant yelled. Pezzulo was closest. Jimeno followed. The sergeant was third. Amid a thunderous roar, a rain of concrete and steel buried the men. At the first silence, McLoughlin called: "Is everybody all right? Sound off!"

"Pezzulo."

"Jimeno."

Silence.

"A-Rod?" Jimeno called, using Rodrigues' nickname. "Amoroso? A-Rod! Amoroso! A-Rod! Amoroso!" For two minutes, the rookie cop shouted their names.

Finally, Pezzulo said quietly, "They're in a better place."

Jimeno was pinned by a concrete wall that had fallen on his lap. The air pack on his back propped him up, so he was sitting at a 45-degree angle. Pezzulo was buried nearby. They were in a triangle-shaped cave. Through the nooks and crannies of rubble, they could see a hole that let in wisps of air and light 20 feet above.



By Todd Plitt, USA TODAY

Will Jimeno: Trapped in a pocket in the rubble after the collapse of the towers, the rookie cop told his sergeant, "We're going to get out."

McLoughlin was 20 feet away and a little below. His crevice was the size of a coffin.

Pezzulo freed himself and repeatedly tried to lift the cement off Jimeno. It always fell back. Pezzulo took out his gun and fired out through the hole, hoping someone would hear the noise.

Then, a second rumble began. The north tower was collapsing.

"Dominick, something big is coming," Jimeno said. He took his fingers, put them over his heart and, in sign language, signaled with both hands: "I love you."

Pezzulo stepped back. The men looked each other in the eye. "If it's going to hit me, I will die seeing my friend," Jimeno thought to himself.

Over 15 seconds, the rumble loudened to the roar of a thousand freight trains. A falling concrete wall batted Pezzulo to the ground. He let out a cry, loud and excruciating. Then he said calmly: "I'm hurt. I'm hurt bad."

They both knew he was dying. They spoke quietly, about life, about their families, about being cops.

"I love you," Pezzulo said.

"I love you," Jimeno said.

"Willie, don't forget. I died trying to save you guys."

"Dominick, I'll never forget."

Pezzulo slouched back. His body relaxed. He died facing the light above him. After a period of silence, Jimeno spoke: "Sarge, this is bad."

McLoughlin's legs had been crushed fully in the second collapse. The two men could not see each other. The sergeant spoke into his radio. In response, he heard only static.

Flames shot into the hole. Jimeno thought burning to death would not be a good way to go.

Then fire enveloped Pezzulo's gun. It started firing. The 15 bullets remaining in the magazine ricocheted off concrete in the hole that the second collapse had reduced to the size of a pup tent. Jimeno covered his face.

Then it stopped. The fires faded. The two wounded men were alone, pinned 30 feet below the top of the ruins. They talked to keep each other awake and alive.

Sometimes they yelled for help. But mostly the 46-year-old sergeant, a 21-year veteran, and the 32-year-old rookie talked intimately, sometimes revealing personal things — about kids, families, feelings — that they had never shared with anyone.

Jimeno asked the sergeant to deliver a message over the radio to his wife, Allison, who was seven months pregnant. They had received no response earlier, but he thought maybe their radio call would be picked up on a police tape recording.

"Attention," McLoughlin announced. "Officer Jimeno requests that his baby girl be named Olivia." His wife had liked the name. He hadn't been so sure. Now, as he prepared to die, he wanted to think of his baby girl, Olivia.

Then, a voice came from above. A man yelled into the hole. He gave the last name of a man he was searching for and wanted to know whether he was down there.

"No," Jimeno yelled. "We're down here. PAPD (for Port Authority Police Department). McLoughlin and Jimeno."

The man walked away.

"Don't leave us!" Jimeno cried. But the man vanished. Jimeno began yelling.

"Don't get mad, Will," the sergeant said. "You don't know if they're hurt. We don't know anything."

Night fell. Jimeno and McLoughlin passed in and out of consciousness. Jimeno, a Catholic, had a vision. Jesus walked toward him, dressed in a white robe. Tall grass waving in the wind could be seen over one shoulder, a large lake over the other. Jesus was bringing him a bottle of water.

Jimeno awoke. He felt suddenly at peace with dying. But with that peace came a renewed spirit to fight. "We're going to get out of this hellhole, Sarge," he shouted.

He began banging a pipe in front of him to make noise. He banged on the pipe with his handcuffs. He got out his service weapon. His hands were too swollen to pull the trigger, so he banged it like a hammer.

"Keep yelling, Will. Keep yelling," McLoughlin ordered. They found themselves breaking into laughter. Jimeno recalled a line from the movie *G.I. Jane*: "Pain is good. Pain is your friend. If you're feeling pain, you're still alive." To a pair of men whose legs were crushed, this was raucously funny.

Time passed. It was about 10:30 p.m., 12 hours after the second building collapsed.

Suddenly, Jimeno heard a distant voice. "United States Marine Corps!" a man yelled from far away. "Can anybody hear us?"

McLoughlin and Jimeno began to scream in unison: "8-13! 8-13!" It was the code for an officer down.

"Keep yelling," the voice said. "We'll find you."

The Marine poked his head in the hole. Jimeno looked at his face 20 feet above. "Please don't leave," Jimeno begged.

"Buddy," the Marine said, "I'm not going anywhere."

It took New York Police Department rescue specialists three hours to free Jimeno. It took another eight hours to rescue McLoughlin. Rescue workers wrapped Pezzulo's body in an American flag before they removed it. He was buried Sept. 19.

McLoughlin spent six weeks in a medically induced coma while doctors performed 27 operations on his legs. Jimeno spent nearly three months in the hospital and rehabilitation. On June 11, McLoughlin (with a walker) and Jimeno (with a limp) walked across a stage at Madison Square Garden to receive the Port Authority's Medal of Honor. Olivia Jimeno was born on Nov. 26, her father's 34th birthday.

'I'm alive!'

"Don't be alarmed, dear, but I think there's something wrong with my building."

Pasquale Buzzelli, 32, a structural engineer at the Port Authority, was on the phone. He had awakened up his pregnant wife, Louise, to ask her to turn on the television. She turned on New York One, an all-news cable channel.

"Oh, my God!" she cried. "Your building has been hit by a plane. Get out of there."

But Buzzelli didn't leave. In one of the odder stories from the north tower, he and 15 Port Authority colleagues stayed inside their 64th floor office for 80 minutes after their building was hit at 8:46 a.m. They stayed even after the south tower was hit and then collapsed. They spent most of the time worrying, wondering what to do and making phone calls to loved ones.

After the south tower was hit at 9:03, Buzzelli called his wife again. "What are you on the phone with me for?" she asked. "Get out. Get out."

But on the northeast corner of the 64th floor, the office was strangely normal — at least in the beginning. The lights were on. The phones were working. There was little smoke.

After the first crash, several colleagues had called the fire safety desk and asked what to do. They were told to stay put and wait for an announcement. Many of the 16 had been in the building in 1993, when terrorists detonated a bomb in the underground garage. The stairways had filled with smoke then. They remembered that inside the towers was the safest place to be.

But there would be no announcements in the north tower on Sept. 11. The public-address system, which used transponders attached to an elevator shaft, had been destroyed by a fireball of jet fuel that rolled down the shaft.

"It seemed like a regular work environment, except for pieces of metal fluttering down outside and some fires on the top of other buildings," Buzzelli recalls.

When the second jet hit the south tower, they heard a boom but didn't feel anything. "We thought something had happened in the top of our building," Buzzelli says. From their offices, the south tower was not visible.

As the smoke increased, they put wet coats under the doors and sealed the sides with tape. Buzzelli did not call 911 or the fire safety desk himself, but his boss and others did. He says they were told not to leave. The phones stopped working before the south tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m., but the electricity stayed on.

When the south tower collapsed, the north tower shook and smoke poured into the 64th floor office. Buzzelli and another engineer, Steve Fiorelli, went into the hallway and inspected the stairwell. It was empty and smoke-free. The engineers returned to the office and said it was time to evacuate. It was the first time anyone had suggested leaving. A woman said, "I'm not leaving unless I'm told to."

They discussed what to do in a conference room. A consensus formed: It was time to go. When they entered the stairwell at 10:08 a.m., they still did not know that the south tower had fallen.

Buzzelli went first. He took his briefcase. He was followed by two secretaries, Rosa Gonzalez and Genelle Guzman. The group spread out over two floors in Stairway B, a stairwell in the center of the building. "We walked at a normal, calm pace — quickly but not running," Buzzelli says. They met six exhausted firefighters sitting on the stairs around the 45th floor. The Port Authority employees walked past them.

They met two more firefighters near the 30th floor. "You can take an elevator if you want to," one firefighter said. Of the 99 elevators in the north tower, one freight elevator had continued to work.

The group declined.

At 10:28 a.m., a tremendous noise began and the building shook. Buzzelli remembers being on the 22nd floor when the north tower began to collapse. Guzman, who was next to him, recalls being on the 13th floor. Regardless of the exact location, Buzzelli knew the building was collapsing.

He dived halfway down a flight of stairs and curled up in a fetal position on a landing.

I can't believe this is how I'm going to die, he thought. Please God, take care of my family and my poor daughter. Please God, make it quick.

The building crashed down around him. He saw five flashes of light. His face felt like it was being sandblasted. He fell for what seemed four or five seconds. He got hit in the head and saw stars.

"It seemed like a second later I opened my eyes and was sitting on a pile of rubble," Buzzelli says. It was actually three hours later. He had been knocked unconscious.

He found himself on a battered cement slab, surrounded by pipes, on a hill of rubble. He was in a reclining position, looking at the sky. His cell phone had been thrown from his belt clip and couldn't be found. His briefcase was just out of reach. He pondered his fate from a perch that was 15 feet above the rest of Ground Zero.

"Richie! Richie!" a firefighter yelled, searching for a missing colleague. Buzzelli had been found. In an ambulance, a medic loaned Buzzelli a cell phone.

At 3:30 p.m. on Sept. 11, the Buzzelli home was full of friends and family trying to comfort Louise. The phone rang. Louise answered it.

From a stretcher, Pasquale Buzzelli called into the cell phone: "Louise, it's me, it's me. I'm alive! I don't know how, but I'm alive!"

Genelle Guzman, 31, also survived the collapse. She was pulled from the rubble, just below the surface, 27 hours after the collapse. Guzman, who declined to be interviewed, has returned to work and was married in July.

Buzzelli's physical wounds — a broken foot, cuts and a concussion — have healed. But the emotional scars remain. He suffers tremendous survivor guilt. He has nightmares and anxiety attacks, he says. He returned to work, but he couldn't concentrate and felt profound sadness over the deaths of his colleagues. He is on paid leave from the Port Authority.

In an interview about his experience, he began cheerfully but grew dispirited. "It's hard not to choke up," he says.

He's trying to turn his story into something positive for those who died. He created a Web site — www.songforhope.com — to promote a song his wife wrote for the unborn children whose fathers were killed Sept. 11. The proceeds from the song, *Hope*, will go to those families.

Hope Olivia Buzzelli was born Nov. 18, 2001. She weighed 7 pounds, 13 ounces.

Stairway B

Twelve firefighters. One cop. One civilian.

The firefighters and the cop had been on the 23rd through 35th floors of the north tower when the south tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m. Ordered to evacuate, they joined a line of uniformed colleagues descending Stairway B, the center stairs in the building. The evacuation procession extended from high in the building, down the staircase, through the lobby and out to the street.

"Davey, we gotta go! Now!" yelled Capt. Kathy Mazza, 46, the highest-ranking woman on the Port Authority police force. She was yelling up the stairs.

"I'm right behind you, boss," responded canine officer David Lim, 45. Then he stopped for a moment to help firefighters who were carrying a 59-year-old Port Authority secretary, Josephine Harris.

The firefighters of Ladder Company 6 had found Harris on the 22nd floor, tired and crying, unable to continue. "Cap, what do you want to do with her?" a firefighter asked.

"We'll take her with us," said Capt. John Jonas, head of Ladder 6.

Firefighter Bill Butler, a bull of a man, began carrying Harris down the stairs. Others searched for a

chair that could be used to carry her down.

The rumble began at 10:28 a.m.

The noise was so loud, "it sounded like you were standing between two Amtrak trains going in opposite directions," Butler recalls.

Firefighter Sal D'Agostino jumped for the protection of doorways. Jonas hustled back into the stairway from a floor where he had been searching for a chair to carry Harris.

A hurricane-like wind blew down the stairway. Firefighter Matt Komorowski flew, literally, from the fourth to the second floor. Battalion Chief Richard Picciotto, 51, was thrown from the sixth to the second floor.

Then the noise stopped. The stairwell was dark, smoky, dusty. The men's eyes, ears and mouths were clogged with dust.

The firefighters sounded off. There were a dozen, plus Lim and Harris. The 14 who survived were scattered inside the stairway from the lobby to just below the sixth floor. Miraculously, none had life-threatening injuries.

Two firefighters who had been above and below them in the same stairwell cried for help.

Battalion Chief Richard Prunty, 57, radioed from the lobby that he was pinned under a steel beam and losing consciousness. Michael Warchola, 51, a lieutenant on Ladder 5, radioed that he was trapped on the 12th floor of Stairway B. He did not know that the 12th floor did not exist anymore. He had been thrown somewhere else.

The uninjured firefighters tried to reach Prunty and Warchola but were blocked by debris. Prunty and Warchola died. The body of Mazza, the police captain, was later found outside the building.

But the 14 people inside Stairway B from the lobby to the sixth floor were spared. Why? Nobody can say for sure, but the survivors were in a structurally unique location in the 110-story tower.

The stairwell was at the center of the building's core, a rectangular area of elevator shafts, plumbing and stairwells. On the bottom six floors, the core was surrounded by open space — a giant atrium that gave the lobby a grand look. Just above the survivors, a thick reinforced cement floor supported a mechanical equipment room.

When the towers fell, the reinforced seventh floor — like a protective helmet — helped slow the collapse just enough to divert the debris into the open air of the six-story atrium.

"When the debris hits the atrium, it has zero resistance," says Gene Corley, chairman of a federally funded study of the collapse of the buildings. "It's a viable theory that the debris diverted around them just enough to protect the stairway."

Jonas describes it more colorfully: "The tower came down like a peeling banana, and it peeled around us."

The stairway itself barely survived. Railings were bent. Debris covered the steps. But, amazingly, it was passable from the second to fifth floors.

After the dust settled, the trapped firefighters went exploring.

After three hours, they made a discovery: sunlight. Between occasional breaks in the smoke, they could see the sky from a hole on the side of the fourth-floor stairs.

Picciotto was the first out. He walked up the stairs and onto the top of Ground Zero. He was alone in an endless field of debris. Buildings burned in the distance.

Lim walked up the stairs and joined him. They stood in silence atop 16 acres of rubble.

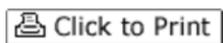
"Chief," Lim said finally, "what do you think the chances of surviving something like this are?"

"One in a billion," Picciotto said. "One in a billion."

Data analysis by Paul Overberg. Contributing: Staci George and Nafeesa Syeed

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/sept11/2002-09-05-miracles-usat_x.htm



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright 2008 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.