

We Must Memorialize the Ultimate Sacrifice of the Uniformed Heroes of 9/11

by John Finucane

Friday, February 28, 2003 11:51 AM - Last Updated Thursday, March 22, 2012 11:19 AM

One magnificent memorial to remember every precious life lost. An appropriate recognition of the uniformed rescue workers who willingly and selflessly gave the supreme sacrifice to save others. Keep the names of the rescuers together so they remain united.

This is the mission of our group, the [Advocates for a 9/11 Fallen Heroes Memorial](#) . A retired firefighter, I started the advocates group because I was concerned that there might not be a memorial to recognize the courage and sacrifice of the firefighters, and other rescue workers.

If the memorial design includes a wall, we hope to see engraved in it all the names of the equally precious civilians listed together, the firefighters listed together, with their name, rank, serial number and company, and the same with the New York police officers and other rescue workers killed on September 11. The memorial should properly and accurately reflect the valiant rescue effort and historic sacrifice of New York's uniformed rescue services. This in no way seeks to diminish the lives or careers of the cherished souls who were working in the trade center on that fateful day.

We cannot expect future generations to understand fully what those who came before saw, experienced and felt on 9/11. But, we can make sure that our children know enough to say, "Thank you."

What should the World Trade Center memorial mean to future generations? It should serve to educate and remind all who visit the memorial that the terrorists did not harm the American spirit. And the members of the fire department, police department and Port Authority who knowingly and willingly responded to the World Trade Center tragedy on 9/11 greatly reflected that spirit as they gave the ultimate sacrifice so others could live. Over 25,000 people were saved because of the efforts of the uniformed men and women. And it should be noted for historical record.

The board members of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation unanimously voted this past April on a resolution to ensure that the permanent memorial on the World Trade Center site not bear any "hierarchy of victims." In other words, no separate designations for the uniformed rescue workers who sacrificed their lives to save others.

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There is no question that it is vitally important to honor the loss of life equally and remember all who died in the September 11th attack, as well as the 1993 bombing. Each innocent life lost was precious and our city continues to mourn as we remember the victims of our city, state and nation's most devastating terrorist attack. The permanent memorial will inspire us, and future generations, to continue to reflect on their lives and our loss.

However, every brave step forward our firefighters, police officers and emergency workers took in the midst of the tragedy must also be remembered.

We cannot forget the image of our uniformed members of the emergency service departments rushing into the burning towers as they selflessly honored their commitment to serve and protect. It is now time to make sure future generations do not forget as well. This in no way detracts from or places less value on the lives of civilians.

The development corporation's guiding principles state the memorial should recognize "courage and sacrifice." However, the board's move to permanently block this recognition seems to contradict the very spirit of their very mission. What is worse, it fails to demonstrate sincere gratitude and understanding of the sacrifice made by our fallen rescue workers.

Surely honoring their willingness to lay down their lives for others by designating a part of the greater memorial for them is the least we can do. We need to embrace our heroes left behind so we can go forward knowing they did not die in vain and we will remain forever grateful for their sacrifice.

We are thankful to Kevin Rampe of the development corporation for clearing up some of our concerns regarding this matter, and hopeful that the jury will honor the memorial guidelines' requirement to honor the role of the rescue workers.

On the fateful morning of September 11th, Battalion Chief Orio Palmer led his men of Battalion 7 far up the South Tower to the burning 78th Floor. Audiotapes of Chief Palmer's radio transmissions from the crash zone released one year after the tragedy are a resounding reminder of the courage and bravery of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. In the tapes, Chief Palmer does not sound fearful or panicked. Rather, he can be heard signaling to those on the ground that he would continue to climb higher into the inferno to come to the aid of the

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victims who were counting on him to be there.

We must never forget the pride we felt the days, weeks and months following September 11th. We were proud to be Americans. And we were proud of our firefighters, police officers and rescue workers. They were our heroes. And we were grateful.

We must now make sure our gratitude is forever remembered by future generations on the site of New York City's uniformed rescue services' greatest sacrifice. They did their job. We must now do ours.

Chief Palmer's 12-year old son Keith said it best in a poem he dedicated to his father that was recited at his funeral. He wrote, "because of you, I am a hero's son."

10-4, Keith.

And New York will always remember.

John Finucane, a retired FDNY Lieutenant, serves as Chairman for the [Advocates for a 9/11 Fallen Heroes Memorial](#)