



This is what I remember of September 11, 2001

Originally written for Labusas.org by "Rhino"

I wrote this yesterday. I am no writer so please bear with me. I also left a lot of details out that I care to forget but most of the account is here.

It was an ordinary day. A beautiful September crisp clear day. I rode the Busa into work like I did everyday. I started my crew and went to work in my little office on the 60 Floor of One Chase Plaza. At 8:46 A.M. I heard a loud Explosion and looked out my window and seen that the World Trade Center was on fire. It was near the 85 floor. I put on the news and they said a plane crashed into it. I was watching the tower and then all of a sudden I seen the Second plane Smash into one side of the building of the south tower and a fireball engulf the top of the building. Pebbles and debris hit my window. I backed away in horror. An announcement came over our Class E fire system that we where going to evacuate the building. I got on the Radio and told my Men to get out and meet over by Maiden Lane. It was around nine 9:30 when

we heard the banging sounds I looked up and could see a huge Smoke ball by the towers. With that I ordered the men to leave the area and I got on my bike and headed out of the city. To me we were at war. That was my first thoughts that day.

As I got into my house the phone was ringing my cell phone had over twenty missed calls. I started calling people back and was watching the TV. Then it came, a call from FEMA. I was told to get the gear, Pack the dog and supplies and get down to Chambers and West Street. I always have my stuff ready to go so I loaded everything into the truck got a water supply and headed out in the truck. Only to get about four miles and people where WALKING out of the city. I could not get into the city. Even with FEMA ID they would not let my truck into the city. A cop offered me a ride but we couldn't get the cage into the car. I called FEMA and they got in touch with the Red Cross. The Red Cross came with a van and loaded me up. I was going over the 59 street bridge looking down town and noticed that the second tower was down. I asked Pete the guy driving the van where did the other tower go? He said it fell at 10:30. Shit with in an hour and a half both tower a quarter mile high with a daily average population of 50,000 were down. I turned and opened

Diavlo's cage. He came out and sat next to me and just stared at me. He could feel my sadness and tension. I told him he was going to be busy but I never knew what we were really in for... As we drove pass the mass exodus of people. I was thinking about my training and what I was going to be doing down there. I knew Diavlo could do the work. He was just certified for SAR just a few weeks before this and he did really well in his field trials. But this was Urban SAR work much different than what we trained for. What I didn't know was just how different it was going to be. This was going to be a day that was going to put man and dog to the brink of what I knew as reality.

We traveled across town where we picked up a few cops that needed a ride. The amount of people just trying to get out of the city was astounding. I got down to Chambers Street and got suited up. The first thing I remember was the Smell. It was not of this Earth. It was very foreign. The smell was like brunt marshmallows along with

human flesh. I took Diavlo and walked over to Greenwich Street. I could see 7 world trade center was on fire. I checked into what was our temporary command post. At four thirty a fireman came over and asked me is that an SAR dog? I said yes he said come on I need to find my crew. I was given a pack that contained an Emergency beacon some basic first aid supplies and headed out. He was asking where I got the containment suit from. Told him Government issue. I was not prepared to see what I seen next.

As we rode down west Street I seen the towers or

should I say skeleton. The once mighty towers and surrounding building where a pile of debris. I looked at Diavlo who kept squinting from the smoke and dust. As we walked I noticed the people around us being treated. Their blood dried from the dirt. Their faces where covered in this grey past. You could not tell a black man from a white. Men where walking around with tears. I mean real men not no freaking girly guys. Then Diavlo alerted. God tell me that this is not a person. It was one of the Jumpers. The Fireman

whose name I still don't know said that there are a lot of them and for me to watch my step. He dragged me away and snapped me out of my already growing

Shock. I wanted to leave. This was not what I trained for who could I find? Could any one really survived all this. He took me by the South tower. He said his buddies where in this area. I started doing a search of the area but the smoke the heat and the debris was

way more than I had expected. I felt Diavlo was in Danger. He kept hitting on parts one of my team guys came over with bandages and duct tape we wrapped both dogs' feet up and continued the search. My facemask kept fogging up. I heard a bunch of men yell over here over here. Turned out they found some firemen still alive. Good find I thought there has to be more. The out skirts where littered with what was later determined to be body parts. When Diavlo hit on things I thought the Smoke was getting in his way to do the job. What I didn't realize was that there where that many people that jumped before the building fell.



God what a choice to have made I thought. Burn or jump. No one deserves to go like that. My first search lasted about three hours before I started to think about Diavlo. I called my Vet and told him what was down there. Dr. Wen immediately got in touch with supply houses and got everything you could possibly think of. Dog boots, mashers balm Anti biotic, Sutures, Saline solution, food water, it was all on the way. And he was 80 miles away. He came within an hour. I was so glad to see him. Diavlo was covered in dust. He told me to take him and hold his head he washed his nose out and said for me to come to him every half hour. He got in touch with the Suffolk county ASPCA. They had a mobile unit that they already had on the way. I thank you Dr Wen you are one of the first I thank for helping me deal with things down there.

As I started my second search I came across a burnt body. Head to toe. It looked like a statue. Then a full body with nothing totally intact. Not more than four feet from each other. That was the last full body I would find that night. It was getting dark already and I was boiling hot and filthy. Diavlo was now a Gray dog. I helped as they dug another body out. And then every now and then I could see a huge gap and maybe a twenty to thirty foot drop. They had lights set up and generators. But it was getting dangerous for me and Diavlo. I decided to pull him for the night it was ten thirty we did six hours of recovery that night. I wanted to go home but something inside me made me stay. I went to my building and used one of the Executives showers to wash Diavlo. Then I took a much needed shower. When I was drying Diavlo I noticed he had cuts on all four of his feet and had a burn blister on his neck. He never yelped or made a flinch. Man was I proud of that dog. I sat in the cafeteria but I could not stay I had to go back. I was pulled at two AM and told to get some sleep there will be plenty to do in the morning. I went back to the building and fed Diavlo. As I walked back to the building A few firemen and policemen stopped me and we chatted about Diavlo. He loved the attention giving licks to every one. One he really liked John Murphy. Who later just by chance became our fireman partner. One thing I thought about is when I lay in the building that night was how the people that were trapped felt. Some stuck in side the building above the fires and collapses from the initial hit. How some died a fiery death. How some died slowly with great pain from their injuries. Those poor souls that choose to jump. The people that knew they were going to die and the ones that heard the building coming down on them floor by floor finally smashing them into oblivion. I thought about the bodies, the faces the people being held out of the site that wanted to find their love ones. I didn't sleep much that night.

September 12,2001

Day two 5:00 A.M.

I woke up thinking it was all a dream. But wait this is not my bed. I am in my office. I looked out and see the lights, smoke and wreckage of what once was the World Trade Center. It is September 12. I look at Diavlo and asked him what has the world come to? What evil people must have in them? Diavlo being a dog can't understand why Humans act the way they do and right now neither do I. I get all geared up and start to head out. As I made my way out some Building Engineers asked if I needed anything. I said no as I looked from the roof of our building 65 stories up from what is now known as Ground Zero. I go down to street level and see so many people just trying to get into the site to do whatever they can. People from all over our country have started to gather. I had to go get a Mayors pass to get into the site. Even with my ID they wanted passes given out. I checked into what now is a mobile trailer and what would become Home base for me. As I walked up Broadway People were coming up to me and asking if I saw their loved ones. They were holding up pictures of missing people. They would come up and pet Diavlo. This went on every time I left the site. A priest came and blessed me and Diavlo as I looked and gathered everything in. This time I looked at the wreckage. The fire engines that were burnt and crushed. The plane engine on Wall Street. The buildings that are now just a pile of broken Lincoln logs. There where people all over the site. There were chains of people that volunteered to take the rubble out in buckets. Construction workers from all the Union trades lined up. Equipment stood at the ready but first a path had to be cleared to the site. As that was all going on, I got teamed up with a few firemen. One of them was John Murphy. This man was great to work with when I was down John was always there with a pick me up funny line. We got to work searching. I was given a GPS so I could document when the recovered bodies were found. As everyone worked every now and then all the guys would yell quite because someone thought they heard tapping. The smoke was always around. There where fires still burning below the pile. I was given flags to put down on where the dog alerted. I could keep working and recovery crews would dig the victims/parts out. Then Diavlo alerted to a live find. I was so excited. It was around 1 PM. It was an Old lady. She was around 55 - 60 years of age she was under some metal and dirt. I saw her eye open when I yelled for John to come over. As the fire men and I dug her out I could see that the side of her head had a huge wound and I could see her check bone. Her eye was swollen shut and

the other was blood shot. She was caked in dry blood. She tried to say something but the medics were telling her to be quiet. As they dug her up my eyes could not break eye contact with hers. Then she started to bleed. First out of her ear then her nose. Finally she opened her mouth but bubbles of blood are all that came out she was staring at me when I seen her die right there as we all worked to get her out. I turned and walked off the site. I headed for the Hudson River. I sat there and was talking to Diavlo. I laid there, tears coming down my face. Just holding Diavlo tight. I was asking Diavlo why did I get involved with SAR. I never trained or thought about this end of the work. I thought about the first time I was exposed to SAR work.

It was seven years ago I was hiking some trails up state. It was almost dark when I returned to the lot where I parked my truck. I had a Rottweiler but he was just an obedience dog. There were about fifteen people there with some rangers and police that were organizing a search party for a missing kid. They asked if I knew the area? I said yes and they asked if I would like to volunteer. I said sure and then we headed out. I watched closely to the dog team that was there. It was a German Shepherd. In about three hours the dog took us right to the kid that wandered off the trail and got lost. That is the day that I said I want to do this type of work with dogs. As I lay there on the ground tears would just not stop. I was thinking about leaving and just going home. Then the phone call.

HAPO a guy that I met from LABUSAS called my cell phone. I posted on LAB the night before and when the planes hit. He read the post and wanted to know what he could do to help. I told him to come on down. He was there in Connecticut watching it all on TV. He could not sit by and do nothing. He packed his truck with all types of stuff and made his way towards the city. As I hung up with Hapo I realized who the heroes were. It was people like him that HAD to do something. I didn't want to go back there. John came over and took me to get some food. A mess tent was set up to feed us. I just looked at the food but could not eat it. As we made our way back I was amazed at the amount of people now working the site. Endless lines of brigades worked to get the dirt out of the site. Welding torches were cutting the beams away. Exhausted Firemen, cops and Union construction men worked until they were ready to pass out. I found more than one hundred body parts as I left the site that day. We recovered three full bodies and one live find that went bad. That one will stay with me forever. I met her a few times a month around three AM as I get awoken from a hard sleep. I got a ride out of the City

about 6:00 P.M. As I rode out, there were lines of people gathered on West Street. They had signs of support and were clapping as I was driving by. They were yelling Thank you and we love you. God I was so over whelmed. I took a shower and gave Diavlo a bath when I got home. Dr. Wen came over and he slept the rest of the night at my house. Diavlo was exhausted and every now and then would SNORE loudly. Hapo called me about nine thirty. He said he is at the Jacob Javits center. I drove into the city with my ID they know let me drive into the City. Hapo and I talked for a few hours. I showed him Diavlo we talked dogs and it was good to have him there. He helped me with the passing of the old woman. He told me that it was good she died around people. She could have died all by herself under all that debris. Instead she fought to stay alive so she could have comfort in passing with people around her. We then called Ducmanic. In California. I gave him a brief report about what was going on. THEN Hapo said he was going to hang and get ID from the Javits Center so he can go into the site first thing in the morning. I said good-bye to him and drove home and drove home. IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIM I RETURNED. HAPO THANK YOU. I WILL REMEMBER THAT THE REST OF MY LIFE. Some of my neighbors were holding candles outside my house. One came over with a bottle of Crystal. He opened the bottle and made a toast to me and Diavlo. Two of the girls had tears in their eyes as I told them about things I seen. Then we all hugged and I went inside to try to get some sleep for day three

I will not post about day three. The rest I will keep inside.

Day Three

Thinking of Diavlo last night and looking over some things I kept for Ground Zero I found some notes I jotted down so I would not forget the facts of the first few days. For those that saved the account of my first two days down there add this to the account.

Another sleepless night. Can't seem to clear my throat. The smell is encased in my cloths even though I was wearing a containment suit. The bottom of my boots are melted so I will take another pair today. They have us working twelve-hour shifts. I think that is nuts being the dog can't do more than twenty minutes at time in these conditions. I load my stuff and have to stop by the dispensary to pick up some more supplies. As I drive down the FDR I am numb. Seeing the smoke still lingering in the distance brings a feeling of disgust for humans that will do this to other humans. What is wrong with people I think to myself? As I go

through check point one and show my ID they tell me my ID needs to be changed to a new Mayor's pass. My Federal ID supersedes any city ID I tell them. The cop calls his sergeant who calls over a lieutenant who realizes that I am SAR first federal responder and sends me though without another word. Cops are doing their job but they have no clue who should be let in and who should be kept out. Stopping by the Dispensary I am amazed at the supplies available to us. There was everything you could imagine. From boots to inflatable rafts. It makes me proud to be an American and see how this country can pull together in a time of need. All these supplies are donated and within 48 hours are on site and are being dispensed to those that need it. I pick up everything I need and then head over to FHQ for my assignment. We have to park on the East side of town and walk across town through the now returning workers. People trying to

get a look at the site is becoming annoying to me. They stand their taking pictures like it is a new tourist attraction. As others hold signs looking for their loved ones. The smell of hell still lingers here very strongly. I am assigned to a red zone. Which is tower two. There are many people here now. Much contamination of the site. Welders are cutting big steel guarders

and there is three cranes working the site. As Diavlo hits on our field finds they are inputting them into the GPS. We are stopped by three blows of the horn. That signal means someone hears something and they need silence so they can hear where it is coming from. Around noon we found three seats from the plane. No people but plenty of scent. By 2:00 I am spent. Diavlo has had three nose cleanings and one bath. His paw his scuffed and his sixth pair of dog boots are toast. I check off the pile and take him to Battery Park for some rest. Federal agencies are all over today. People come up to me on Broadway and want to take pictures with me and the dog. In uniform I have to be polite. But inside I wanted to tell people to fuck off.



Diavlo loves the attention. He'll take the petting to who ever wants to give it.

Coming out of the park we meet a Jesus freak. She is blessing me and the dog. She was from some where out west and came to offer prayers and guidance for people that seek that type of stuff from God. There is a huge billboard of letters and signs listing the names of the missing. I stop for a second to reflect. The mother that I meet yesterday is back. She asked Diavlo if he had seen her son. I directed her to a field information person that would answer any question in regards to finds. We are not allowed to talk too much about finds to victim's families. People are patting me on the back as I walk up Broadway. I am taken back by all the attention. There are no heroes just Americans pulling together. Just the way I see it I guess. I escort a bunch of transit workers into the

Rector street train station. They want to search a train in the tunnel. I am with four other police search units. One has an asshole dog. He is a dual purpose. (SHIT IN MY OPINION.) We head into the tunnel and notice one

of the steel guarders came right through the street and into the tunnel. That was amazing. The tunnel was filled with water. The transit workers started to go into it when they realized it was a slopping hill. The water got waist high before they decided to pump the area out so they could get down to the cars. This caused a major concern that the bathtub was cracked and leaking. The bathtub is what holds the Hudson River back from flooding into the lower floors of Ground Zero. The dogs got reassigned back to the red zone. The reality hits me as I make it back onto the pile. This is now a recovery. But some people especially the firemen believe that people can be still trapped in pockets

below. I am asked if I would take the dog with a unit in a litter

basket into a few voids. I said sure. We repel down two levels. First thing I notice is how hot it is. Then they lower the basket with Diavlo in it. He makes it down fine. We start searching but the heat is unbearable. I want to take my gear off to try and cool off. After another ten minutes and no finds I ask for an EVAC out of there. The dog is just too hot. I get him to a fire crew that was spraying water down the shaft. And let them spray him down. Went to check with the Vets and they pulled him for the rest of the night. All in all 137 finds today. Out of that six were jumpers. Jumpers are the hardest finds. The parts implode on impact and because of the dust that covers them look like mannequins. The rest were parts or unidentifiable pieces. As I sat next to another SAR dog handler that refused to send her dog into the voids.

She said I was reckless sending my dog into those areas. I told her maybe she should go back to searching woods for lost scent articles. This is real and we don't get to choose where someone may be. Walked off in disgust. Went by Battery Park. Noticed a sign that said no dogs. Ripped the sign down let Diavlo bite it and rip it into splinters then threw it in the Hudson River. Exhausted. Drank enough Poland spring to float a ship. But I sweating it out just as fast. Sunset falls over the city as the lights from the construction unit's light the eerie sight. A glow of blood red shines through the lights as the sun finally disappears. It is a bad day for most as we in SAR realize that after 72 hours humans are presumed dead. Unless they can get to water. But after feeling the heat that is highly unlikely in the depths of what I seen as hell.

My account September 13 2001

Now for the hardest part of the anniversary of this tragic event. As you know I had to get rid of Diavlo. That was hard. I didn't want to go to any 9/11 functions this year for I didn't have my dog. I didn't do any of this for thanks or to become a Hero. I had a tool. A dog that can detect people. All I did was take



him to a place to do what he was trained to do. Not having him with me as I went back down there was not an option.

Diavlo's new Handler didn't think it was a good idea when I first asked him. He gave me his valid reasons. But John the Fireman got in touch with him. And asked for Diavlo to be there. But Dominick was still not convinced. So our team leader from Task Force gave an official request for Diavlo to be present on 9/11. Dominick called me and told me he was giving in. He also said it will be very hard for me when I am going to say good bye a second time to Diavlo. I told him that Diavlo will come as soon as he heard me call for him. Dominick said No way. He has this dog in total control. So we made a bet that the dog will come to me in Battery Park from over a block away. This is what happened that morning.

It was VERY bittersweet reunion. I did win the bet. But Dominick was right it was not a good idea. I have been crying since he left. I soooooo have to find another dog. SOON. He was so happy to see me that he actually peed. His little stump was going a zillion miles a second. I called HHHHEEEEEAAAAARRRRREEEEE HE CAME CHARGING FROM OVER A BLOCK AND A HALF

AWAY. He came tearing through the crowd and ran right up to me and came in so fast he actually slid on his ass in the sit position right in front of me. I gave him a hot dog and freed him and gave him a tug toy he ignored it and jumped up and knocked me to the ground. We rolled in the grass as people stared they didn't know what to make out of our reunion. Dominick came over and said thanks that puts me six months back in training. I said I know but he will always be MY DOG. Enough I am messing my keys up with my tears. I miss him so much.

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<http://www.labusas.org/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=16781&highlight=>

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