

9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Rita Calvo

I'm Rita Calvo. I grew up in Tribeca. Me and my brother were part of a first Tribeca baby boom. It was a great place to grow up. Literally right in front of our windows was the World Trade Center. My whole life, like, I really enjoyed the World Trade Center. I enjoyed looking at it. I loved them at night. Just seeing the patterns of the windows, and some offices, you know, whole floor would be lit up, and then other floors would just have a couple of lights here and there. I never, ever thought something would happen. There was no fear whatsoever. I went to my first class. It must have been 9:15 at this point, and my teacher, told us, he's like, "Two planes have crashed in the World Trade Center. They're both passenger airliners. It looks like terrorism. Someone did it on purpose." He said, "And I'm gonna put the radio on." And that was the first I had heard it. There was a woman talking on the radio, saying, "I'm down at the World Trade Center where both planes—" And she just stopped. And I just hear a roar. And screaming. She was like, "Hold on. Hold on." I felt my entire body tense up. And they're like, "It seems there's been a collapse." And all I could see in my head was that tower falling north, directly onto my house.

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And every single person in my class turned to look at me, because I was the only person in there that lived downtown. I finally—I called my house and it kept ringing and ringing and ringing, but my dad was there and everything was okay. It didn't fall on our house, didn't fall on our apartment building. And I just hear him go, "Oh my God, Rita. We're sending Aunt DD to come get you. They're not gonna let you down here if you're not here soon." I remember we came down to Greenwich Village, and that was the first time I saw the smoke. And I couldn't believe how big and dark the cloud was, and the sky was so blue behind it. I just went upstairs to my house. I wanted to see what it was gonna look like off the terrace. Having seen the World Trade Center outside my window for sixteen years of my life, you know—I went upstairs and my dad just told me, he's like, "They're both gone." I think the worst part was looking at the news and then looking outside and seeing right outside my window. My dad handles things very strangely when he gets bad news or when something's, you know. And one of the first things he told me to do was, "You gotta walk the dog." So I took the dog out for a walk, and I'm walking, and people are

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running towards, you know, uptown. Kids from Stuyvesent walking with their backpacks, and people with their briefcases, just turning around, looking back in horror and disbelief, and I'm standing there with my dog. Second day was the worst because that's when it really hit me. I noticed that there's papers everywhere, you know. Pieces of paper with burn marks on them. We were about on—I think Duane Street? When a piece of paper hit me in the leg. I picked it up, and it said, "World Trade Center 192nd floor." It wasn't until I kept running into them that I started thinking. I was like, "Oh my God. These are from the building." And here's my dad, like, "We should go to the supermarket." It was open! Except, there was no electricity, so everything is pitch black dark, and everything is melting onto the floor. It was me, my dad, and my brother, like eight firefighters who were looking for bottles of water. It was so surreal to be standing in this place, shopping by flashlight. When I got home that day, I was covered in dust, like I could smell it. And apparently, which I only found out later, when my brother and I were still sleeping, my dad had gotten up and gone out, and using his New York Post Press Pass, had managed to finagle his way down below Chamber Street, where people weren't allowed. And he actually saw the buildings, and I think that really made him realize that it was actually time to leave. We couldn't stay down here.

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