



TULLY RINCKEY PLLC
YOUR LAWYERS FOR LIFE - 1888LAW4LIFE.COM

Mathew Tully, 9/11 survivor, shares story at Saratoga event

Fate spared Tully from World Trade Center attacks

By Justin Mason

September 12, 2014

** Keynote speaker Mat Tully speaks during the Saratoga Springs 9/11 Ceremony and Remembrance at High Rock Park on Thursday morning.**

SARATOGA SPRINGS

— Mathew Tully’s life was unalterably changed at 8:46 a.m. Sept. 11, 2001, even though he didn’t immediately know it. Before that day — that minute — he was living in the Bronx and working a 9-to-5 job at Morgan Stanley on the 65th floor of Two World Trade Center. “I wouldn’t say that was a usual day,” said Tully, now a local attorney and the keynote speaker for Saratoga Springs’ Sept. 11th remembrance in High Rock Park on Thursday, “but in New York City, weird things happen on a usual basis.” With about a half-hour before an appearance in a nearby court, Tully decided to forgo a trip to his office. It was a decision that may have saved his life. He emerged from a subway station three blocks away from the towers just in time to watch the second plane strike the southern facade of his building, about a dozen floors above the one that held his office. A1-C Heather Riley of Clifton Park and who is stationed at Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee Mass. takes a moment to reflect after the Saratoga Springs 9/11 Ceremony and Remembrance at High Rock Park on Thursday morning.

Still, the gravity of the situation hadn’t sunk in. He

thought maybe a catastrophic air traffic control error might be to blame and his trajectory in life would go forward in a normal manner. Tully pushed forward with his day. He made his way into the courthouse with a view of Two World Trade Center and was preparing to give testimony when he saw his office building begin to crumble. "I was standing there with a prosecutor and a judge, and we were looking out of the windows at the World Trade Center," he recounted. "It was right at that moment I saw my building collapse. And that's when the gravity of 9/11 sunk in for me. That's when I realized America was at war." Within hours, Tully, who also served in the National Guard, went from a weekend warrior to an active-duty soldier. His eight-hour workdays in an office or courtroom turned into grueling 20-hour shifts as a liaison between the New York Police Department and the Guard. The changes didn't end at ground zero. He was deployed to Iraq with the 42nd Infantry Division in 2005 and served as chief of operations. Six years later, he volunteered to join the 42nd Infantry Division in Afghanistan in an effort to train the National Police. It was there he was seriously injured by a suicide bomber who veered a truck filled with explosives into the gate of a NATO military base south of Kabul on Aug. 7, 2012. Tully was later awarded a Purple Heart, which he wore on the lapel of his suit Thursday. Now retired from the Guard and 13 years removed from the horrors at ground zero, the memories are still raw. The gut-wrenching feeling of his life slipping into a surreal trajectory is still fresh in his mind. "My course of life changed because of 9/11, and having these ceremonies is important to remember not just the people who died on that horrible day, but the people who died afterward," he told a crowd gathered around the Tempered by Memory sculpture, created out of steel beams from the rubble of the towers. "Definitely remember the people who passed away, but also remember the survivors and the people that are still dealing with the horrors of 9/11." For some, realizations about the impact of the terrorist attacks are still coming. Glenn Guerriero, who moved upstate from Brooklyn two years after the attacks, only recently learned a childhood friend perished in the attacks. Michael DiAgostino, 41, was working for Cantor Fitzgerald in one of the towers. He and Guerriero were classmates and friends, neighbors from Brooklyn's Gravesend neighborhood who went their separate ways after high school. Guerriero placed a wreath of flowers around an image of his old friend at the base of the sculpture. After 13 years, he felt it was only fitting. "I just felt like I had to do something," he said. For Anne

Marie Verbil and John Hoey — who moved to Saratoga Springs from New York City several years ago — there's nothing more critical than keeping the memory of that fateful day fresh as it grows increasingly distant over the course of time. Verbil was an NYPD sergeant in Brooklyn who joined a group of officers that charged into Manhattan after the plane crashes, while Hoey was working in a New York Fire Department station in Queens that also was called to the scene. Verbil recalled being a child and having war veterans telling her to remember the attack on Pearl Harbor. Now retired, she's finding herself in a similar role. "We're going to be those World War II vets telling children to never forget," she said.