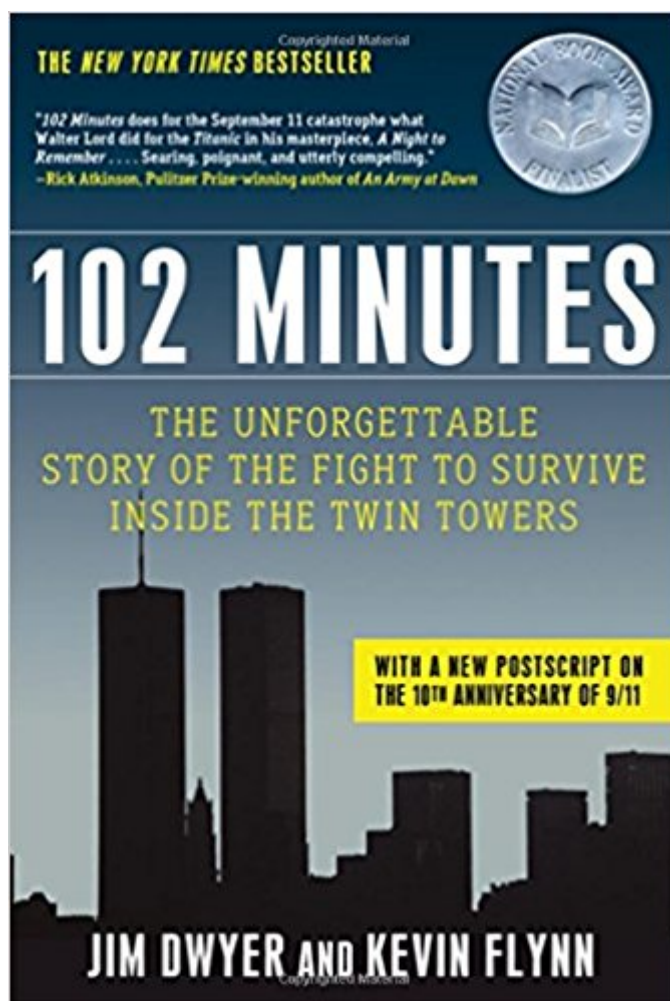


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# 102 Minutes: The Unforgettable Story Of The Fight To Survive Inside The Twin Towers



## Synopsis

"102 Minutes does for the September 11 catastrophe what Walter Lord did for the Titanic in his masterpiece, *A Night to Remember* . . . Searing, poignant, and utterly compelling." •Rick Atkinson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *An Army at Dawn* Hailed upon its hardcover publication as an instant classic, the critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller *102 Minutes* is now available in a revised edition timed to honor the tenth anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001. At 8:46 a.m. that morning, fourteen thousand people were inside the World Trade Center just starting their workdays, but over the next 102 minutes, each would become part of a drama for the ages. Of the millions of words written about this wrenching day, most were told from the outside looking in. New York Times reporters Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn draw on hundreds of interviews with rescuers and survivors, thousands of pages of oral histories, and countless phone, e-mail, and emergency radio transcripts to tell the story of September 11 from the inside looking out. Dwyer and Flynn have woven an epic and unforgettable account of the struggle, determination, and grace of the ordinary men and women who made 102 minutes count as never before. *102 Minutes* is a 2005 National Book Award Finalist for Nonfiction.

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## Customer Reviews

In *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*, New York Times writers Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn vividly recreate the 102-minute span between the moment Flight 11 hit the first Twin Tower on the morning of September 11, 2001, and the moment the second

tower collapsed, all from the perspective of those inside the buildings--the 12,000 who escaped, and the 2,749 who did not. It's becoming easier, years later, to forget the profound, visceral responses the Trade Center attacks evoked in the days and weeks following September 11. Using hundreds of interviews, countless transcripts of radio and phone communications, and exhaustive research, Dwyer and Flynn bring that flood of responses back--from heartbreak to bewilderment to fury. The randomness of death and survival is heartbreaking. One man, in the second tower, survived because he bolted from his desk the moment he heard the first plane hit; another, who stayed at his desk on the 97th floor, called his wife in his final moments to tell her to cancel a surprise trip he had planned. In many cases, the deaths of those who survived the initial attacks but were killed by the collapse of the towers were tragically avoidable. Building code exemptions, communication breakdowns between firefighters and police, and policies put in place by building management to keep everyone inside the towers in emergencies led, the authors argue, to the deaths of hundreds who might otherwise have survived. September 11 is by now both familiar and nearly mythological. Dwyer and Flynn's accomplishment is recounting that day's events in a style that is stirring, thorough, and refreshingly understated. --Erica C. Barnett --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Drawn from thousands of radio transcripts, phone messages, e-mails and interviews with eyewitnesses, this 9/11 account comes from the perspective of those inside the World Trade Center from the moment the first plane hit at 8:46 a.m. to the collapse of the north tower at 10:28 a.m. The stories are intensely intimate, and they often stir gut-wrenching emotions. A law firm receptionist quietly eats yogurt at her desk seconds before impact. Injured survivors, sidestepping debris and bodies, struggle down a stairwell. A man trapped on the 88th floor leaves a phone message for his fianc  : "Kris, there's been an explosion.... I want you to know my life has been so much better and richer because you were in it." Dwyer and Flynn, New York Times writers, take rescue agencies to task for rampant communications glitches and argue that the towers' faulty design helped doom those above the affected floors ("Their fate had been sealed nearly four decades earlier, when... fire stairs were eliminated as a wasteful use of valuable space"). In doing so, the authors frequently draw parallels to similar safety oversights aboard the ill-fated Titanic nearly 90 years before. Their reporting skills are exceptional; readers experience the chaos and confusion that unfolded inside, in grim, painstaking detail. B&w photos. Copyright    Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dwyer and Flynn rise to the challenge of depicting the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, events permanently seared into the collective memory of an entire nation. They do it by pulling together many vignettes, culled from thousands of victims, survivors and emergency personnel, to tell larger stories. The key story they've got to tell is this: Hundreds of firefighters died unnecessarily when the North Tower collapsed, because radio malfunction meant they didn't know they'd been told to evacuate it. An estimated 1500 people who survived the planes' impacts on upper floors died because they couldn't escape. Firefighters in the south tower die because it collapses in only one hour instead of the two hours the steel was supposed to last. They thought they had another hour. In other words, maybe three quarters of the 2753 dead, were killed by the buildings' design and construction, or by radio system failures, not by the hijackers. The buildings are lead characters in the book. Marvels of modern engineering when built in the 1960s and 1970s, they were deeply flawed in their levels of safety. Made of lightweight materials allowing them to soar higher than buildings ever had, they contained less fire-resistant masonry. They contained fewer staircases and less fire-resistant ones. Their steel members had experimental and unproven fire-resistance coating. Warnings from firefighters experienced in high-rise firefighting went unheeded. It was a transitional era of changing building codes, and the WTC got built before new safety strategies fully kicked in. Estimated times that structural components must resist fire were shaved down, and on September 11, they didn't last even that long. The WTC terror bombing of 1993, a truck bombing in the basement parking garage, highlighted shortcomings. But while some changes were made, others were never fully implemented and the buildings could not be rebuilt. The World Trade Center was like the Titanic: Huge, glorious and seen as unlikely to fail. So why worry? Fires would be contained to a floor or two, just as the Titanic's compartmentalized hull was supposed to have made it unsinkable. Fewer stairwells were like the Titanic's too-few lifeboats. Most people would be safest staying in place, anyway, so why waste rentable space on stairways few people would ever use? To save even more space, the existing staircases were grouped more closely together – a safety no-no, making it less likely at least one would remain open in case disaster struck. The police and fire departments struggled for years over who was in charge where, and what radios to use. A radio repeater system amplifying firefighters' radios inside the building was buggy. Many systems – electronic and human – break down in the chaos. When a building engineer on 9/11 warns of imminent collapse, a runner must be sent with the news to the scene, because there are no radios reaching the fire chiefs on scene. The authors find moments of dramatic light against the day's overwhelming darkness, as people struggle to survive – and

many do. People help friends or complete strangers who are asthmatic, disabled, paralyzed overweight or elderly to escape. In some cases they stay with them until the end rather than abandon them. Maintenance and security employees lead rescue attempts on upper floors in the absence of direction or outside help. One is the story of Richard Fern, a systems operator from Euro Brokers who bolts for the stairs on the 84th floor at the first moment of the south tower's plane impact. At a dead sprint, even running over people, he charges downstairs, letting nothing stop him. He clears wreckage that others turn back from. He tells a guy who wants to join him, "Fine, but you'll have to keep up with me." When he gets to the bottom, he has blazed a trail, discovering the highest working staircase in either tower, one still passable as high as the 84th floor. He is one of only 18 people who use it. Tragically, the word doesn't get back to those who might make use of it "firefighters, trapped building occupants on the upper floors still in touch with the world by cell phone or laptop" and so hundreds die who otherwise might have escaped. Sprinting in the opposite direction is fire commander Orio Palmer, a marathon runner, physical fitness fanatic and, carrying 56 pounds of gear, the first firefighter to reach the south tower's plane crash zone starting at the 78th floor. He is the first outsider to see the devastation, radioing back just minutes before the building collapses. There are many tales of heroism, most notably from building personnel who go up instead of down to rescue people trapped in elevators or under wreckage. The authors tell the story in an evenhanded way. They describe the background and context of bureaucratic decisions that look horrible in retrospect but may have seemed reasonable at the time. They leave some names off to avoid embarrassing those whose behavior may not seem perfect in retrospect. But, really, who among us can pass judgment?

This book is far and away the best and most detailed account of what happened inside the towers that I've ever studied. I've read so many accounts of that day, most of them written by survivors and eyewitnesses who unfortunately were not professional writers...and it showed. But this book is different in that it is clearly authored and edited by real journalists. It hooked me from page one and I read every single page, including the epilogues. It brought me to tears in places, and I was truly sorry to finish the book. It's extremely well written. It's not in any way preachy or political and it isn't a documentary. It's straight, solid investigative reporting, combined with the first hand accounts of both the living and the dead, woven together into a chilling and unforgettable narrative of courage, sacrifice and the raw instinct to survive. The authors somehow managed to tie hundreds of personal stories into one cohesive and symbiotic narrative that made it feel like I was actually there, inside...watching it all happen. My heart was racing for most of the book. Knowing what's going to

happen gave the passing of time in the book a feel of intense urgency as you travel with these people down staircases, get stuck with them in offices, agonize with them as they lie on the floor choking on smoke, and hang out of windows with them. Like everyone else who watched these events unfold on TV that day, all I saw were two burning buildings that ultimately fell. When they fell, I was overcome with grief at the staggering loss of life I'd just witnessed. But even so, the deaths of all those people felt so impersonal and forensic somehow. The dead were just statistics to me, and that felt so wrong. My only real connection to the terrible human cost in blood and suffering was in seeing the people falling from the buildings. I watched them die, and the sight kept me up nights. Perhaps it's only morbid curiosity, but I couldn't help but wonder what could possibly be happening in there that was so unbearable that jumping became the better option. Who were these people? Who loved them and lost them? What were their last minutes of life like? What did they endure as the building fell apart around them? Who spoke to them, saw them, or tried to save them? That's what makes this book so special. It does an incredible job answering those seemingly unanswerable questions in a detail I didn't think possible, and I'm deeply grateful for that. I feel a genuine need to connect personally with their experiences because otherwise, I'm in great danger of becoming desensitized to their loss. I don't ever want to start to think of that day as the day I watched two buildings burn and disintegrate before my eyes and a bunch of people died, because that's all my eyes could see. I knew there was so much more to the story, but when the towers fell, it was as if that hideous boiling debris cloud also shrouded the personal stories of all the people who died that day. I was forced to witness a mass murder, and I feel like I have a right to know what happened to the people I saw injured and killed. What makes their stories even more tragic is the fact that so many of those people could've been saved. This book carefully documents the multitude of catastrophic failures that day that ultimately sealed their fate, right down to the design of the buildings back in the 60's. The missing stairwells, the inoperative communication systems, the complete inability of the police & fire departments to collaborate, the inadequate fireproofing, the builder's decision to reclaim marketable floor real estate at the expense of public safety. And then there's that God-awful announcement telling people to go back upstairs and get back to work, contravening their natural instinct to exit the building, or telling people to stay put at their desks when they should've been evacuating...that whole Titanic mentality that had even me believing that the towers could never fall. This book completely dispels the myths surrounding the highly-vaunted bulletproof construction of the towers. In retrospect, it's clear now that the buildings were a death trap from the very beginning...nothing but sheet rock, drywall and inadequately fireproofed steel that collapsed like a house of cards. The fact that they collapsed and were completely obliterated in just

10 seconds proves that the American public was sold a giant bill of goods regarding the "indestructible" construction of the towers and the safety of the people inside. There was never any proof of that claim...just a mountain of hubris and a lot of wishful thinking. This book sets the bar very high, and future scholarly works on the subject will have a hard time attempting to meet or exceed the outstanding quality of the journalism used to create this account of September 11th. In years to come, I can easily see this book becoming required reading for students of this event in American History.

The full drama of the event has been portrayed brilliantly and so many desperately important facts have been uncovered that have far wider implications such as the building design's failure to address even the basic requirements of escape in the event of fire and the failure in the most elementary means of communication between the essential services - there is a lot to learn. The question is: will we really fully learn anything at all from all this? Other issues that the book uncovers are the positions of power and immunity that vast public service 'corporations' such as the NY Port Authority enjoy with, in this case, disastrous consequences, and some answers, at least to some of the more outlandish claims by the conspiracy theorists. Indeed, so outlandish are some of these claims that one might conclude that they were false flags from the powers that be in order to discredit theories that might contain a measure of truth. Of course the main theme is the way in which people from all walks of life can get together in such times of extreme stress and danger to help each other. It is awe inspiring. A very important book in many ways.

Amazing book, Great stories about those who got out of the towers and those who didn't. Great detail without getting too bogged down. The only criticism I might offer is that I wish there were more photos. The authors are so good at drawing the reader in to each person's story that it would have been good to be able to identify with each one through pictures. I usually give my books away after I've read them but I'm keeping this one for future re-reading.

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