

Ron DiFrancesco

Ron DiFrancesco is a survivor of the collapse of World Trade Center 2 (South Tower) on September 11, 2001. He has stated a number of times that he experienced, and was heavily injured by, a fireball explosion from the base of the collapsing building as he was escaping.

9/11/2002 ABC News Special with Peter Jennings

In an appearance on the 9/11/2002 ABC News special [9/11¹](#), DiFrancesco recalled his last memory of escaping the collapsing South Tower.

Narrator: *"As the South Tower began to fall, Ron DiFrancesco was just reaching the exit. He is one of the last people to make it out alive."*

Ron DiFrancesco: *"I looked out to Liberty Street and saw a big fireball coming. That's all I remember."*

Narrator: *"Ron DiFrancesco was blown across the street. He regained consciousness days later in a hospital. He had a fractured skull and burns over sixty seven percent of his body."*

[9/11 - ABC News Special \(2002\), Pt. 1](#) Youtube Link ([skip to 14:25](#))

[NIST FOIA release 28](#), 42A0282 - G27D4

9/11: A Tale of Two Towers

In the 2002 British documentary 9/11: The Tale of Two Towers by Michael Atwell^{[2](#) [3](#) [4](#)}, DiFrancesco retold his story.

Narrator: *"After his escape from the South Tower, as Ron DiFrancesco ran away, he was hit by a fireball, apparently caused by the building collapsing. He was probably the last person out alive."*

Ron DiFrancesco: *"I saw the fireball and heard a loud noise and that's all I remember, and I woke up six days later at Saint Vincent's... I got hit on the head and I had a big gash in my head here and I was in the ICU for six days, five or six days, and I wasn't really conscious and I had third degree burns on both my arms."*

[9/11: A Tale of Two Towers \(2002\) :: full length documentary](#) - Youtube link ([skip to 1:18:46](#))

[NIST FOIA release 27](#), 42A0250 - G26D126

Last One Out Alive by Andrew Duffy

Journalist Andrew Duffy interviewed DiFrancesco and wrote an article in National Post on June 4, 2005 entitled *Last One Out Alive: A 9/11 Survivor's Tale* ^{[5](#) [6](#)}.

"Walking south, they tried to leave the tower at Liberty Street, but another guard redirected them to the northeast exit that led to Church Street. They made their way back through the concourse. It never occurred to either of them that they were still in danger. But the South Tower's steel supports were failing; the building was in its final moments as a skyscraper. As Mr. DiFrancesco and Mr. Kren passed

an adjoining hallway near the Church Street exit, they heard an ungodly roar. Mr. DiFrancesco turned to his right in the direction of Liberty Street, to see a massive fireball -- compressed as the South Tower fell -- roiling toward them. "Run!" he yelled. The two men bolted for the exit. Mr. DiFrancesco was bowled over by the explosion as he reached some stairs. Something slammed into the back of his head. The last thing he remembers is the sound of his own voice: "Help me, help me!"

Beyond 9/11: Portraits of Resilience

Six years later, DiFrancesco appeared on the 2011 HBO documentary *Beyond 9/11: Portraits of Resilience*.

Brian Clark: *"Ron DiFrancesco who went in the 81st floor with me, he went up to 91, caught up to the people laying down on the floor thinking that there was fresher air at floor level. He made his way back through the stairs and I guess he went through the slot that Stanley and I had sort of created down Stairway A."*

Ron DiFrancesco: *"And so I started to run downstairs and so I ended up on ground level and I went to walk out. And I wanted to walk out into the courtyard, but there was a lot of debris and people jumping and it looked like a war zone. So they made us go through the concourse area."*

Brian Clark: *"When he was exiting the building, he heard an explosion, he spun around and a fireball was coming down the hallway at him. He put his arms up, blew him across Church Street. He woke up in the hospital two days later."*

Ron DiFrancesco: *"I had burns they say on 80 percent of my body and I had broken a bone in my back and, you know, I had my contacts in so they were melted to my eyes and my wife said she came into the hospital two days later and walked right past me. I guess my ears were turned inside out just with the burns my head was very swollen. And so I was in the hospital for 12 days and then I went home back to New Jersey to recover."*

[Beyond 9/11 - Portraits of Resilience \(HBO Documentary Films\)](#) Youtube link ([skip to 10:10](#))

[Beyond 9/11: Portraits of Resilience: Full Film](#) on hbo.com

[DiFrancesco's unedited footage on time.com](#)

[Beyond 9/11: Portraits of Resilience synopsis](#)

[transcript](#)

The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible

Writer John Geiger, who interviewed DiFrancesco on August 23, 2005⁷, wrote in his 2010 book [The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible](#): *"DiFrancesco continued down as fast as he could, finally reaching the plaza level. He headed for an exit, but was stopped by a security guard who told him it was too dangerous. He looked out in horror at the falling debris and victims. He was directed to another exit. He walked back through the concourse towards the northeast exit, near Church Street. He was still in extreme danger. Fifty-six minutes had passed since the plane hit. The impact had severed*

many of the South Tower's vertical support columns. The heat from the explosion and fire had weakened the steel trusses. The floors of the crippled building began to "pancake down" in a floor-by-floor collapse. As he approached the Church Street exit, DiFrancesco heard an "ungodly roar". He saw a fireball as the building compressed. He doesn't know what happened next, and was unconscious for some time after his narrow escape, waking up much later at St. Vincent's hospital in Manhattan."^{8 9}

Explorer: The Angel Effect

Ron DiFrancesco once again told his story on the National Geographic documentary [Explorer: The Angel Effect](#), based on John Geiger's book.

Narrator: *"Fifty-six minutes have now passed since the plane hit the South Tower. Ron and his colleagues make it out of the building."*

Ron DiFrancesco: *"We heard this loud roar, and looked down to the right and saw this huge fireball coming at us and I just yelled at them to run. And I was trying to get out, and i was- the fireball hit me and knocked me down and I woke up three days later in Saint Vincent's."*

[The Last Survivor segment](#) on nationalgeographic.com

[The Angel Effect](#) on Youtube

SEE ALSO

[Ron DiFrancesco, 911 Twin Towers Survivor, Speaker January 10, 2014](#) by Carol Bieser

[Survivors of 9/11 have found new purpose, but the scars remain](#) by Leslie Scrivener

[A Twin Towers' Survivor Story](#) by Brian Clark

[Final survivor of south tower collapse struggles with scars of 9/11](#) by Torrey AndersonSchoepe

[Brian Clark \(September 11 survivor\)](#)

[Stairwell A - The only way out.](#) by Robert Kolker

[Near death, aided by ghostly companion](#) by John Blake

[Four survived by ignoring words of advice](#) by Dennis Cauchon

[World Trade Center Survivor PUBLIC POSTINGS](#) (cites a now-defunct page from <http://wtc.ny.com/>)