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## Retired responders living in Buckeye remember Sept. 11 attacks

by **Jackee Coe** - Sept. 9, 2011 07:53 AM  
The Arizona Republic

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Sunday marks the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City.

Retired New York police Detective Sgt. James Cerven and Detective John Rowan, and retired New York Firefighter Raul Muniz, all Buckeye residents, shared with *The Republic* their experiences during the attack and their thoughts 10 years later.

Cerven, a criminal justice instructor at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale, watched from Brooklyn as the second plane crashed into the South Tower. He and his officers spent the day helping people out of the area.

Muniz, director of the fire science program at Glendale Community College, helped evacuate people before the collapse and conducted searches in the rubble.

Rowan, assistant to the Goodyear police chief, lived a few blocks from the World Trade Center. He helped evacuate people from the South Tower, barely escaped its collapse, and helped survivors find refuge.



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## **JAMES CERVEN**

**THE IMPACT** "It just reiterated that old cliché that life is short. You can't take life for granted. . . . These were innocent people that went to work and you had . . . victims in the towers, you had victims in Washington, victims in Flight 93 that just went about their daily day and as a result of this attack, they were murdered. They were killed. You never know. Every day is an important day."

## **MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT**

"I saw the plane hit the towers, saw people jumping out of the buildings, out of the windows. That was a sobering sight . . . That's when it really sunk in that this is really bad. The magnitude of people that were in that building, you're talking 30,000 people between both buildings that were working at those times and you see several floors engulfed in flames, you see people jumping out the windows, (and) you realize the magnitude of the loss of life."

## **BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED**

"Whether it's coming from foreign shores or homegrown terrorism, we have to be vigilant and we have to be one step ahead of them."

## **GOVERNMENT REPONSE**

"We had (government) help that came in from all over the country during the attack. . . . A lot of police departments from all over the country came in to help out, so we had a lot of help down there. . . . A lot of resources were brought in. . . . The people were phenomenal. Ordinary citizens did extraordinary things that day. There were a lot of other civilians other than rescue workers that helped each other, that assisted people that were injured, that brought water to the rescue workers, they brought food to the rescue workers."

## **WHAT MORE TO DO**

"Continue to fund the veterans programs. I got a lot of veterans in my class here and a lot of them were on multiple deployments and I want to see the government continue funding the programs for them and whatever services they need, you know, counseling or whatever it may be when they come back, any job assistance, things along those lines."



## **RAUL MUNIZ**

### **THE IMPACT**

"I lost a lot of good friends. . . . My original academy class of over 150 cadets that I had graduated (with) over 20 years before that date, 14 of those were killed in the towers. . . . You really get to appreciate life. You realize that there's only one go-around and you have to make the most of it. . . . I finished my education. . . . I had always had a lifelong desire to go to law school so I went to law school. . . . It made you much more aware of the important things in life, such as being close to your family and friends."

### **MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT**

"Seeing the amount of destruction, seeing what I considered to be indestructible fire trucks bent like little toys and cut in half. Obviously the loss of human life, and the people who . . . were jumping. They were trapped in there and they were jumping and they were impacting on the ground and it was actually dangerous. In fact, the first firefighter killed in the line of duty was killed by a jumper landing on him, so we were very careful as we moved back and forth."

### **BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED**

"Appreciate your time on earth and appreciate the people you spend that time with."

### **GOVERNMENT REPONSE**

"It took nine years for them to pass a World Trade Center bill. . . . Right now, we still have firefighters and police officers dying from their exposure down in the towers and it took a long time to address that issue for them and for their families and to pass a bill that would cover them for that. And I guess in that way, there has been (disappointment). . . . In terms of the national security, I think we responded properly and I hail their efforts. But again, we should be mindful never, never ever to forget and don't let our guard down."

### **WHAT MORE TO DO**

"We went out and we took care of the menace. You can't fault the government for not getting everything right. They do the best they can and so we've reached a point now where maybe our troops can come home. But we're still going to have to get our internal stuff together. We're going to have to

be more vigilant in terms of national security. But I think I speak for most Americans, I think we definitely want to have the troops back home."



## **JOHN ROWAN**

### **THE IMPACT**

"It impacts my life on a daily basis. I injured my right foot that day and to this day I'm in pain in my right foot. . . . It made me spiritual as a result because so many religious volunteers came in to help us afterwards. . . . I started that day off as a rescuer and I ended up as a refugee. I lost my house; I lost 90 percent of my possessions. I lost 17 friends. . . . It had a very strong effect on me, very strong emotional effect, a strong spiritual effect and a strong economic effect."

### **MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT**

"When we were cut off after the South Tower came down and we were trapped in that restaurant, I remember I ran into a detective who worked in the mayor's Office of Emergency Management and he told me that his office was under a hundred feet of debris now and that there would be no help from the outside. . . . That was the only time that day I remember feeling fear. The idea that no help was coming and we had all these wounded people, I remember that was a very fearful moment."

### **BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED**

"We are vulnerable and we as a society have to stay vigilant. There are other groups out there that think just like al-Qaida."

### **GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

"For the first year, I felt our response overall was remarkable and remarkably quick. But I am to the point that, you know, 10 years later, there really isn't anything even built on that property at this time. There's nothing significant there. They're just starting really. And we're still fighting more or less in the two countries that we invaded as a result of 9/11. We're still involved in this war on terrorism and I was hoping that it would be over by now."

### **WHAT MORE TO DO**

"It's vital for our safety that the Patriot Act become a permanent part of our legal landscape, because that gave the government the proper tools to combat worldwide terrorism. . . . I think everyone is disappointed . . . that there's been so little construction on the property after 10 years. Certainly for the people that lived in that area, which I was one, that's a major scar, and that scar was left open for years." - *Jackee Coe*



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