

TAPE # BL19 09.09.2005

Brian Lyons

JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director

PROJECT REBIRTH

01.01.18 PICTURE UP

JW : It feels like more than a year since our last interview?

01.01.20 BRIAN LYONS : I think it was a year, we were trying to figure out how long it's been since my uh, our last interview. I thought it was like in August or something like that last year. You know, but it's been awhile. And this year's a little different, because it's right near 9-11. And just feels, it feels, this, this whole week is uh, you know, things start, on Monday, things start to build up about the, the 9-11 things. You know, you start seeing things on TV. You start getting telephone calls from, you know, you know, your loved ones about it.

01.01.57 You know, what are you doing on the weekend? There're ceremonies to go to, you start planning like you know, you're going to the 9-11 one down here, then you're gonna go to the firehouse, then you're gonna go you know, somewhere else you know, uh, stuff like that. You know, so it's uh, you know, you have all that stuff going on in your mind this week, you know, so it's a little, and then to have an interview this week, you know, and I mean, when I first seen the email about the interview being like September 9th, I was like uh, oh, wow, that's right near 9-11.

01.02.32 So it's like, it's part of that whole weekly, you know, 9-11 syndrome (LAUGHS). You know?

JW : How did it make you feel?

01.02.47 BRIAN LYONS:At first it was like oh, man, now I got, now I got that to add, that just, it's just another thing I've got to do, you know what I mean? But then after awhile, it's just like well, that, I guess that's good, you know, I could talk about, I'll be in the 9-11 mood, so I'll be able to talk about all that kind of stuff.

JW : How has it been this week?

01.03.07 BRIAN LYONS: No, good, like last night, I was on the news. I was uh, I was interviewed by Ernie (Anastas?), Channel 5 news, about three weeks ago, so I had a piece on uh, the 10 o'clock news last night about uh, rebuilding you know, building number 7, World Trade Center 7, about Ground Zero, about uh, the Freedom Tower and stuff like that.

01.03.29 So you know, it feels good, then you go to work the next day, everyone's like hey, I seen you on TV, I seen you on TV, I seen you on TV last night. You know, so it kind of makes you feel a little bit better.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.03.41 BRIAN LYONS : Work is good, work is good, you know? Uh, you know, I'm more acclimated now 'cos it's a new job this year, you know, so I've been there like 6, 7 months now, so uh, you know, the building that we're building, it, it was the last one to fall but the first one to be build. World Trade Center 7.

01.03.59 And uh, it's just about finished. We're turning it over to the client in a couple of months, in like, you know, another month and a half, November. So then that project'll be over. And you know, I'm probably switching over to the Freedom Tower then. You know, 'cos they, they put a delay on the Freedom Tower, but there's still stuff going on. There's pre, pre-construction issues that's gonna have to happen and stuff like that, you know, so. You know, I'm looking forward to, to working on that.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : How's your family?

01.05.44 BRIAN LYONS: No, well, my family's great, you know, with the wife is you know, doing good. The girls are uh, doing Irish dancing, you know? One of them's a championship

dancer, will be going to uh, North American Championships uh, in November in uh, Philadelphia.

01.05.59 So that's gonna be fun. Actually, the little one's gonna be in it, too, this year, so uh, she's practicing and uh, she's, she's on a team that does uh, a Kaeley, which is a four-handed uh, four-handed dance, which four girls do like a symmetry type of Irish dancing, you know, and uh, gonna be in competition doing that. So that's gonna be, that's gonna be good, you know? They just started school this week, so that's an exciting, big, was a big, exciting thing, you know, the school, the whole school thing.

01.06.30 So uh, everyone's been healthy, knock on wood, you know? And uh, we had a really good summer. You know, we planned on really having a good summer this year, you know, like planned it out. You know, from Memorial day to Labor Day, we went camping Memorial Day, we went camping Labor Day. We went camping one time in between. We went to like every amusement park, you know, each weekend we went somewhere, you know? We had, it was very hot, so the pool, I have a pool that got used like every day after, they used it every day.

01.07.00 And when I would come home from work, I used it, you know, so we got a lot of usage out of the pool, amusement parks, camping, you know, so it was a very active summer. Everybody had a good time, it was a lot of fun, lot of fun this year.

JW : You wanted to lose some weight?

BRIAN LYONS: Lost weight, I lost 30 pounds.

JW : How'd you do that?

01.07.24 BRIAN LYONS : (LAUGHS) yeah, just uh, portion control, portion control of uh, eating (?) watching the snacks at night with the kids, and uh, you know, not eating you know. Like my wife would make, she's gonna make chicken cutlets, she would make like 24 chicken cutlets, you know what I mean? And like, you know, you put that on the table, it's like you know, I would eat it 'til I'm full. Now I just have like two and then stop. So they got to keep you know, you know, my lovely figure there (LAUGHS).

JW : You look different in your eyes?

01.08.10 BRIAN LYONS : My eyes are different right?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.08.19 BRIAN LYONS : You know what it is, is what that is, is uh, uh, my wife has that problem every day like what, what she tells me about it is, I was diagnosed this year with PDS, post traumatic stress syndrome, OK? And I think that has something to do with it. My eyes are very, very weird-looking sometimes. I'm on some medication. I take uh, (colozopan?) and some (rospital?) you know what I mean? I go for therapy once a week, uh, once every two weeks now, it's uh, we, we spread it out a little bit. So that started back in November. I started uh, remember actually the last time we, we had an interview, all right, so that was in October.

01.09.07 I went, I went in November, so we probably had it after 9-11, maybe. Uh, the interview like October. And I said I was gonna start, I, I started having symptoms of uh, you know, of, of a lot of different problems, and I was gonna go take care of that. And (?) that's what I did. I went, I went, I went to a uh, made some phone calls.

01.09.32 Got with a uh, a group that, that it's called CREW, Center for Recovery and Emergency Workers, that treats people that worked at 9-11 that have problems dealing with things, and uh, you know, emotional problems and uh, all these psychological problems and, and post traumatic syndromes. And that, that's what happened with me. So I got diagnosed with that.

01.09.57 My symptoms, like uh, disassociation, like you know, dazing off, my eyes, my eyes drift off into (?) you know, I might be looking at you, but I'm really like looking almost through you type of thing. That's kind of like uh, kind of like what it is, you know. So it's uh, I can't help it, I don't know you know, how to change that, you know what I mean? It's just that, that's (?) kind of like what it is. It's some of them, my weight loss, too, is, is my uh, I'm thinner in the face.

01.10.29 And thinner in the body makes me look you know, a little different, too. You know?

JW : I just wanted to say that there is a difference only to be honest?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.11.10 BRIAN LYONS : It came back, things started coming back. I wasn't involved down at Ground Zero anymore. I had moved uptown to a different job. So then I had time to reflect and my body or my mind went into the traumatic syndrome, you know, post traumatic syndrome type of (?) symptoms that you get.

01.11.30 You get you know, uh, uh, you know, wandering mind, you know, you uh, you know, you get uh, (?) disassociation, which is can't concentrate on certain things, you know what I mean? Uh, you know, different things like that. And, and that's what was happening to me. So I went, I went and I, I've been going to therapy and it's helped a lot (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : I'm curious about it?

01.12.09 BRIAN LYONS : Well, well some of the symptoms are like anger and, and, and screaming out and like, so like at work, you know, uh, during, even at the work place when I was working, you'd be yelling at the workers more. You know, having arguments with your wife more. You know, those type of things.

01.12.27 So now that I've been treated and I, I've been working on the symptoms now that you identified the symptoms and then, you know, you work on you know, trying to solve them, you know one by one. That's all calmed down, now, now I have a nice calm, (?) complexion or composure, you know? Uh, I didn't, I don't have arguments with anybody. I work out things verbally, you know what I mean? Uh, at work you uh, think things through better.

01.12.57 You focus more on, on things that you need to focus on, you know what I mean? And uh, you know, that's some of the stuff that (?) you do uh, happens when you go to therapy on it.

JW : I think about how you went down to Ground Zero and worked so hard sticking to the task at hand?

01.13.44 BRIAN LYONS : Exactly, exactly what happened. I, I got this thing, I want to get it fixed, I want to fix myself. So I focused on it. I stay focused on it. And I you know, go to therapy, don't miss, I haven't missed one time, you know? I want to make, try to get (?) myself better, you know, and uh, you know, you know, move on from there.

JW : What causes it? What is it associated with other than war?

01.14.31 BRIAN LYONS : Well, (?) I, I asked yesterday about it, 'cos I went for, for, to my therapist yesterday, you know, what causes it? You know, a death in the family can cause it because it's just such a traumatic event. Uh, obviously like a war thing or some of the things that we did, finding and digging for all the bodies, and, and uh, you know, work, working down in that type of environment and stuff like that, that's the type of thing that triggers this type of syndrome, you know what I mean?

01.15.05 So uh, that's how you get it, by being involved in traumatic, traumatic events that don't normally happen, you know what I mean? And not everyone, not everyone can get it. People could go down there, and, and one of the things was that what we decided was because I lost a brother and had a death in the family and did that, that that both combined gave me the (?) symptoms.

01.15.37 Like if I had just lost my brother and didn't go down there, I might not even have gotten it. It might have been just a mourning and then it would have went away. Or, if I just, no one died, and I just went down there to work, and then the work was over, I might not have gotten it. But be, with, with both of them combined, they figure that that's what was the trigger to, to getting the post traumatic syndrome.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : You were totally focused on the task at hand when you went down there?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.16.49 BRIAN LYONS: Right, right, to grieve, because I was (?) so busy working and building and rebuilding and getting it all done, and then we opened the train and we finally had opened the trains uh, you know, uh, station and, and got everything going and then, then I got transferred. Then it was time to like say, holy mackerel, you know, what, what actually did happen down there?

01.17.10 You know, now, now it was all like hitting you type of thing. You had time to reflect and time to you know, uh, figure out you know, what, what went on and, and so on. And then some of that I guess then, then what blossomed from that was the syndrome was (?) the symptoms of, of post traumatic stress syndrome.

JW : Was it like anger, or was it having flashbacks?

01.17.46 BRIAN LYONS: No, no, no, they stopped now, you know? Some of the medication helps, some of the, talking it out helps. Focusing your brain to, what happens is you train your brain to go back to like if you, if you were thinking of something, like thinking of when you dug a body up.

01.18.03 And, and instead of thinking about that for the next five minutes, like oh, my god, I remember that happening, you just say you know what? That's a thought. I don't need to think about that no more, go away. And then trains your mind to, if any bad things come in or things, you know, your mind is always collecting thoughts, and you know, thinking of different things and so on like that.

01.18.29 So you know, part of the therapy and part of you know, training yourself is retraining your brain to think normally again. So if you think of, you know, bad things, or think of things that make you feel unpleasant, you just say, you know what? I don't need to be thinking about that right now, go away. Uh, I'll think about something else, and you, and you do that. And it's all, it's part of training yourself to, to do (?) that.

JW : Have you felt like you've been able to do that?

01.18.59 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, been, you know, from uh, from the very beginning 'til now, like you know, my therapist, what we talked about was I read, progressed a very large amount in that area, you know, to, to be able to do that. You know, don't, no, no flashbacks, no nothing now.

JW : Is that hard for you?

BRIAN LYONS: No, yeah, very hard to do. And you know, he, he'll agree. He said, that's extremely hard to do.

JW : It takes lot of will power to do that?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.20.09 BRIAN LYONS: No, there's different things. Like if you're on a project and you're thinking, you know, why is that happening, why is that guy doing that, why is that happening, why is he keep doing that? He's uh, I told him, I told him, I told him, and you keep, your mind stays on that one thing for such a long time, ok?

01.20.27 That that's the type of thing that I've trained my mind to say you know what? I don't need to think about that right now. When I see him, I'll talk to him about it. But I don't need to think about it for the next three days 'til I come in contact with that person. You know what I mean? So and it so it relieves some of the stress of actually you know, compounding the, the mind issue of it if you follow what I'm saying.

JW : You've been able to apply it to getting angry?

01.21.06 BRIAN LYONS: Right, sure, right, right, you get angry.

JW : You're able to apply it to your work place?

BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah, yeah.

JW : What about your new job?

01.21.22 BRIAN LYONS: See (~JW~) I have a whole new job and everything now. This is you know, I was, I was working with Tully construction. They got slow, they got like they ran out of big jobs to do, you know what I mean? So uh, and in the back of my mind I knew Ground Zero was starting the Freedom Tower, so I was like thinking, you know, I would love to get involved with the Freedom Tower, all right? So I left Tully Construction and got a job with Tischman Construction. I went in there and told them, you know I was interested. My job was slowing down, they didn't have a lot of work left over that, that would fit my, my, my resume, if you will, you know what I mean?

01.22.03 To run bigger jobs, to be involved with a lot of people, you know, that type of, that type of thing. They had, they have smaller jobs and smaller type of things. So you know, it was kind of like a uh, a compatibility type of issue that was just, I just said let me go and see if I can get a job at Tischman, that to be involved with the Freedom Tower. So I did that, and they accepted my offer, and I accepted their offer.

01.22.32 So the next thing you know I, you know, I resigned from where I was at and uh, got a job with uh, Tischman Construction to start the Freedom Tower, let, lo and behold, like about four weeks later it got put on hold. But you know, it was uh, you know, it was, it was something that, you know, I wanted to do. But it was still a good place to work where I was, because I was comfortable.

01.22.57 I knew everybody, you know, you were like hey, Joe, hey, Bill, how you doing? You know, and you were very comfortable with that. And uh, (~JW~)

JW : You knew them from before?

BRIAN LYONS: No, I mean, I'm talking about Tully Construction (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.23.13 BRIAN LYONS: So where I was at, I was very comfortable, but you know, there was (?) no more work coming up, you know what I mean? So it was kind of like so when I left, I kind of

like had a mourning of it a little bit, you know what I mean? It was like I felt, and then I had a new job and you know, you go in, you don't know anybody.

01.23.33 You know, and I had this post traumatic syndrome and you're like, you know, your feelings are all over the place. You, you know, you're trying to, to uh, you know, get involved with new people and see how they act, react to you. And you know, that type of whole type of thing. So there was a whole big change right there, leaving a job that I was at, that I worked very hard at for three years, you know what I mean?

01.23.58 With a company. And then moving to a new company, which you don't know anybody there, and you have to like learn, you know, new faces, new friends. You don't know, know anybody. And so that's a big you know, that's a big uh, you know, change to, to, to swallow, you know, so it was, it was tough there for a little while to uh, get acclimated with everybody. But now, now, now I feel comfortable. Now I know the guys where I work at. I know how uh, I know the people, I know how they act, how they respond to me, how I respond to them.

01.24.31 And uh, you know, I feel comfortable where I go to work now, and stuff like that. So it's you know, it was a big change.

JW : This sounds a little lonely?

01.24.44 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, well, right, right, you get lonely. You know, you, you're, you're put out there, you just go right into a new company. You're by yourself, you're Mr. Lonely. And uh, no one talks to you and uh, you know, you don't know (?) what to say to anybody, or whatever, you know, you don't know who to talk to or, you know, they don't want to, you know, they, if you talk to them, they're busy, they don't want to talk back to you.

01.25.06 So you, you know, you're kind of like grasping at straws. So uh, you know, then (?) you learn who to talk to, what's people's personalities, you know, what your job role is, what their job role is. And then, you know, you figure out the game of it all, and then you, you know, become acclimated to it.

JW : You also add what you were dealing with?

01.25.35 BRIAN LYONS: I'm curious to say is about my eyes. What was, what was different about my eyes? Because you, only you and my wife are the only ones that, that picked that up about that.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : You looked right through me?

01.26.06 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, now see, see, that, that's amazing. See what happens is, that my therapist, I go to a therapist and I go to a psychiatrist. He gives me the medicine. And, and he said the same thing, the first time I seen him. It's like he doesn't know how to describe it, but it's like you look through me when (STUTTER) you talk to me. You're like, and that's what, part of what that is, is it's called disassociation.

01.26.28 When I see you, I'm really thinking of something else.

JW : What are you thinking of?

01.26.33 BRIAN LYONS: You know, uh, at, at the time, whenever, (?) whatever, when I first had met you or whatever, your brain went into thinking of something else. And now that's part of that, part of, part of trying to fix that is, is to train your brain not to do that anymore. When you meet somebody or talk to somebody is stay focused within, within them and talk to them about what they're talking about and stay focused.

01.27.03 Don't let your mind drift off and just you know, go, go the other way. 'Cos you know, your, your eyes, I guess, something happens with your brain and your eyes. That's, no, no one can figure out why that happens or whatever, but that's one of the symptoms.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Disassociation is something people do naturally and innocently?

01.29.00 BRIAN LYONS: No, no, it is, it (?) is what it is, because like you'd be talking to somebody and you're thinking of, especially guys, people that are very busy, you know what I'm saying? That they are doing a lot of tasks at one time. Sitting here talking but it also your brain is thinking of three other things at the same time. But you have the power to stay focused on what you're talking about, why you're doing that.

01.29.29 So other thoughts come in and when you're finished talking maybe some of those thoughts need to be brought up in that conversation. You know what I mean? So you know (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : So you're thinking ahead of the person you're speaking with? Do you feel like you're thinking about something directly related to the event?

BRIAN LYONS: No, no, it's just something that happens (~JW~) yes.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.30.22 BRIAN LYONS: (MID-STATEMENT) It's not, what one of the, one of the things which is good in my case is it's not that I'm thinking of a dead body that I dug up. It's not that I'm thinking of, you know, something that I have to build that we were building, you know, during the, during the process. You're not going back to the Ground Zero issues, you know what I mean? It's just it's symptom that happens, and some of the thoughts are thoughts, but they're not the thoughts, they're not bad thoughts from down, from down at Ground Zero.

01.30.56 I, I don't have those. Which is a good thing, I guess, you know?

JW : It's probably a process like anything of breaking it down?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : I did notice right off your weight loss, and that your eyes are different.

01.31.43 BRIAN LYONS: See, and a lot of people say that, too, like they look at you like it's some people are like you know, you lost too much weight. And (~JW~) I went to the doctor, and the doctor's like, you know, you got to lose more weight. If you, if you look at the scale and you look at your height and you're supposed to be at your certain level, I'm supposed to lose another 10 or 15 pounds.

01.32.03 I'm like I can't lose 10 or 15 pounds more, I'll be like uh, you know, like (?) you know, (LAUGHS) skin and bones, you know? So I, I was always more huskier to everybody. Now that I'm thinner, you know what I mean? People see uh, they, they see you in a different light type of thing.

JW : What's that like, what do you mean by that?

01.32.25 BRIAN LYONS: Like I haven't met a lot of people you know, that, that I've (?) haven't seen in awhile, but when I do see them, they're like, you know, holy mackerel, you lost a lot of weight. Uh, you know, are you all right, are you sick? Everyone thinks you're sick right away. Type of thing, you know, and no, no, I'm not sick. I'm just watching my weight. I'm trying to get back to (the way?) normally I was.

JW : Do you think it has to do with the anxiety?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.33.00 BRIAN LYONS: No, no, I purposely controlled my diet so I could lose weight. 'Cos my pants weren't fitting anymore, you know what I mean? That was like clue number one, you know, I got jeans, they don't fit no more. So it's like you know what, I got, I got to lose weight, you know, it's (?) a little ridiculous. You know, I was (?) 208 pounds, I was like 208 pounds? Holy mackerel. 'Cos I would, I would eat, eat, and that was part of like the working issue, like you're working and working and working, and then you eat a whole bunch of food, and then you go home and you don't get the right sleep.

01.33.34 You eat just before you go to bed. You know, then you, you know, you wake up and uh, you know, you, you know, you don't have time to burn it off and stuff like that, you know, so I've

tried to balance my life out a little bit over the last year. Do the same things at the same times, eat the same type of foods, be healthier with, with the foods that you eat. You know, I'm getting older, I'm 40, I'm 45 years old, so I wanted to be healthier.

01.33.58 So that, that was, that was the main objective of losing weight. You know?

JW : How's the balance?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.34.16 BRIAN LYONS: Well, no, balance, I mean, in uh, you know, uh, uh, you know, energy levels, you know, you're not, you know, you're (?) not carrying around another 30 pounds, you're tired when you wake up in the morning. You, you stay tired.

01.34.33 You want your energy level to be better, so you know, you uh, obviously lose weight to do that, too. But I mean, if you lost weight, your energy level should come up a little bit, you know, 'cos, 'cos you're not dragging all that other poundage around with you, you know what I mean? So you know, and that's all worked out pretty good, I guess.

JW : You do look great, and I wasn't sure how it was all related.

01.35.04 BRIAN LYONS:(MID-STATEMENT) you know, if I wear a suit, I have a suit that fits nice, I would look nice in it, you know, that type of thing. Not that, not that the button don't fit, you know, and, you know, the last button don't fit, that's the way my suit used to fit.
(LAUGHS) you know?

JW : What about your phrase, every grain of sand in a bucket?

01.35.34 BRIAN LYONS:(MID-STATEMENT) but I use it, I use it as a guide on what, on (?) things that I got to do, that you know, any time I got to accomplish a task, every little issue that you do towards that task, just is one more piece to the puzzle to get it finished, you know what I mean? It's like one more piece of sand, grain in the bucket, you know, you want to get the

bucket full, you just add a piece of sand, add a piece of sand, do another task, do another task towards that, do another task towards that, do another task towards that.

01.36.09 And eventually, the bucket's full and your task is done. Like I'm trying to build my house, that's uh, like a whole 'nother, that's a whole 'nother project, in itself, you know what I mean? So it's like I'm doing the roof now. So it's like we got the main roof done, now I'm doing the little roof. Now I'm gonna be doing the garage roof this weekend. So I do a little bit every weekend, every weekend, a little bit more, a little bit more.

01.36.34 And then, then was summertime, so we didn't want to use every single weekend, so you know, weekends we went away and uh, you know, we went you know, camping or whatever, so. I put that, I put that uh, in priority matter and, and working on the house, we went away on vacation or, or had fun or something like that, you know?

JW : You have a house and a cabin?

01.37.03 BRIAN LYONS: No, my house is a log cabin. (~JW~) My first house I built out of logs, I, I built a house out of logs (~JW~).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.27.23 BRIAN LYONS: And so then when I moved into the house, which was it'll be uh, this past March was ten years ago, it, it was, it's a log house. You, people can call it a cabin, a house, we call it a house. Some people call it a cabin, all right? Now I'm building an extension, a lot extension. It's a family room with a breezeway and a two-car garage. That's built out of logs, also. So it's, you know, just you know, another extension that's gonna be you know, made out of logs.

JW : How's that going?

01.37.57 BRIAN LYONS: No, It's, It's going slow, but it, it's. it's, it's going slow but it's a huge piece of, piece of real estate, you know, and funding is a problem, you know, and so you know, that, that's the issue. Like if I had more money, I probably, if I had money, I'd be done. But I

don't, I ran out of money, so I'm like, you know, going slow with it now. So that, that's basically the way it is. It uh, it's basically economics, yeah.

JW : I'd like to go see it.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : You have an official position?

01.39.25 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, I'm a project manager, and I'll be a project manager at the Freedom Tower, which I'm very excited about. And uh, even though there's a delay on the project, there is some stuff coming out about it for us to do some preconstruction uh, you know, cost analysis and stuff. There's a couple of people in our office that are working on it. I'm still working on World Trade Center 7, so like we said when that, when that's finished at the end of the year, I'll probably be transferred over to that project, ok? And then I can't wait, you know, I'm gonna be building the biggest building in the world, so you know, I'll be a project manager on that job.

01.40.02 And uh, you know, like just looking forward. I don't know exactly what positions they're gonna give me, what to do, like I know I'll be doing utility relocations, that's down where the PATH train was. Because that's the part that I built with the Tully Construction with the YTP people. Uh, the, the tri-venture. So I know I'll be involved with some of the train issues, where we have to put footings and so on and so forth.

01.40.32 Because I, I helped build where the train went. So that was one of the reasons, main reasons why they hired me, to help coordinate the utility issues around the trains. So I'm assuming that's uh, the first areas that I'll be working on. You know, and I'm looking forward, forward to that. It's gonna be fun.

JW : Is that like a dream job?

01.40.55 BRIAN LYONS: Absolutely, right? It's a part of the first day arriving at Ground Zero. You get there, you want to evaluate stuff. In the back of your mind, you're saying, you know

what? You're gonna, you're gonna find out what's happened here, you're gonna find my brother, they're gonna find my brother, then we're gonna clean this place up and then I'm gonna rebuild it. And uh, you know, so far, we've cleaned everything up, rebuilt stuff, and now we're gonna uh, keep rebuilding 'til it's finished, you know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What about the remains?

01.41.48 BRIAN LYONS: Right, right. The remains are still (?) uh, as a matter of fact, the other day I couldn't even believe it. I seen it on TV, they, they buried a fireman. They, they found uh, it was on the news. They uh, they got some DNA that, that they uh, that they (?) positively identified, and then they, he got to be buried.

01.42.09 And uh, so that's, gives hope still, you know what I mean? No, his remains are still uh, unidentified. They uh, the, the uh, the medical examiner's office still has the bone fragments that I know that we found, all right? They haven't got any DNA out of that yet. Or whatever. So he's still unidentified as a uh, missing person, you know?

01.42.35 You know, and it's uh, you know, uh, I want the, I want the closure, but you know, it's gonna be uh, you know, I don't know, we don't know what, what can you do? There's nothing to do. You're (?) at the mercy of uh, superheated bones that, you know, were destroyed during the, during the fire. You know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : How is his wife?

01.43.14 BRIAN LYONS: No, Elaine, I just talked to her, she's doing good. Today, today uh, my older brother went down to Washington for her, 'cos she (STUTTER) didn't want to go. But they gave out the Medal of Valor to, to uh, Michael today. I guess the family members received, uh, there was a big ceremony in Washington, D.C. Like I uh, didn't see it on the news. I didn't see it in the paper, I didn't see it uh, anywhere.

01.43.37 But I guess we'll see it on the news tonight. Uh, the Justice Department gave victims' families, whether they were firemen or policemen, something like that (?) from what I heard was just firemen and policemen. It could have been everybody but I, I don't know. I think it was just firemen and policemen, because they were responders that, that went to the building.

01.44.00 Not (?) that they were in the building, you know what I'm saying? So I, I don't know the exact criteria for getting the medal, but he received the Medal of Valor from uh, the United States of America, I guess. And Kieran went, flew down there this morning to get it for her, and then he's flying back with it. So that, that was uh, you know, quite a, you know, good accomplishment, I guess.

JW : How do you feel about that?

01.44.29 BRIAN LYONS: You know, I, it's just another medal. What, you know, it's for her, she, she's just gonna, that's why she probably didn't go. She, she would rather have him than the medal, you know I mean, it's just uh, just another, another thing that they give you. They named a star after him, they give uh, some Chinese guy wrote, put a, put his picture on an egg, you know, and (?) it's like a million things I could tell you that, that she has, ok?

01.44.57 It, you know, she has a ton of things that people give her, have given her. Medals and honors and certificates, and you know, all sorts of stuff. It's just another one in the box. That's the way I would look at it. You know, he ain't there. You know, I miss him still.

JW : You've never said that before?

BRIAN LYONS: No (LAUGHS) I miss him still.

JW : What about your brothers?

01.45.28 BRIAN:What, Kirin and Sean? I have, I (?) don't get to see them too much, 'cos you know, Kieran lives in Connecticut, and Sean lives in Cape Cod, so I haven't seen him in about a year or so. You know? But I, I know they miss him, they miss him, too.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.45.53 END OF TAPE # BL19 2005

TAPE # BL 20 09.09.2005
Brian Lyons
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

02.01.00 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : You hadn't ever said you missed your brother?

02.01.33 BRIAN LYONS: That I missed him? Uh, now I miss him now, you know, it's uh, it's a fact of life, you know? And I was too busy all the time to uh, to, to do that, you know? Now, now it's uh, you know, he's got kids growing up, you know, it's, it's a shame. You know, last night on uh, on the Fox 5 uh, uh, piece that they had, they actually went to Squad 41 and they, they took a picture of the engine coming out of the house.

02.02.07 They went inside, they must have went inside, they took a picture. There's a, there's an artist uh, rendering of my brother's portrait that, that some lady donated, of all the six firemen that died there. It's pretty big. They had, they had a photograph of that. You know, it looks just like him. And next to it was the, was the girls' Christmas pictures was stuck in the frame of it, you know? His little girls. And you could see that on, on the uh, on the TV screen, you know, it was just like they look. There's Michael with his little girls uh, but he ain't around, you know, so. It's very sad.

JW : Do you find yourself being more emotional about it?

02.02.53 BRIAN LYONS: No, I don't, I don't think so. I think this is probably the first time I talked about it, really to, a little bit, you know? You know, I, I kind of uh, just go through daily life. You know, I, I look out. I look uh, every day I look out to Ground Zero, 'cos I can we're up on 60th floor of a building every day. I can look right down into the pit. I always look over to

where I found his remains. So it's like every day it's like I think of him, just about. Almost every day. You know? So.

JW : You told me a story about your girls?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.03.41 BRIAN LYONS: I still do that. I used to always think of Michael doing it, you know, that, that went away. You know, you (?) when that went away? There (?) it was funny. When it, what would happen was, 'cos they were much younger then, right? I could carry my girls upstairs, put them to bed. Tuck them in and give them a kiss goodnight.

02.04.01 And when I did that, I felt like Michael was actually kissing his girls goodnight. You know, like got that feeling all the time. And then one time I told it to Elaine, all right? I said, you know, Elaine, when I bring up Patricia to bed at night and I tuck her in, I always think of you know, Michael tucking in uh, Caitlin or Mary. And then from that day on, I never had that feeling again.

02.04.31 It, so it was very weird. You know, it's just like uh, it all went away after that.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : The feeling?

02.04.48 BRIAN LYONS: The feeling, the feeling of him doing it. You know what I mean? 'Cos see, I you know, and I told you, you know you all the stories of the history of me. I had all these things happen to me with, around Michael.

02.05.04 Finding his ID card, finding you know, the halligan, you know, uh, you know, the guy on the train, you know, all these things happens, you know? So uh, and that was another one and I thought, and that was just another, another event that had happened. That and I said, you know what? Maybe when Michael, when I told, when I told uh, Elaine, then it just a feeling you know, the spirit or whatever went, left.

02.05.33 You know, I guess.

JW : Did it go to her?

BRIAN LYONS: Probably went to her, you know? You know what I'm saying? So that's you know, that's, that's what I mean. You know, I don't know what happened, but it just went away.

JW : What you're suggesting is you really felt it?

BRIAN LYONS: Oh, sure I did. I absolutely, sure. I did.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 02.06.07 BRIAN LYONS: Because the next day, the thing went away. It's absolutely went away. It was the same thing, what happened was the day I found the halligan. I had like all this super energy until St. Patrick's Day, ok, the day, St. Patrick's Day 2002, which was the day that we found the halligan and, and the tools and bones and everything from Michael's remains.
- 02.06.38 The next day I felt totally different. It was like because I, I filled up a bucket of sand right then. It was just like ok, get another bucket, I guess, you know what I mean? (LAUGHS) for something else. But it was just like, it was just like that. I felt it.
- 02.07.01 It was just remarkable that you know, I was just like you know what? I can't believe that I feel this way now. It doesn't (?) found the halligan. Found, found all that stuff. It was just, it was just instantaneous.

JW : Good or bad?

- 02.07.24 BRIAN LYONS: Instantaneous bad, I think. Because I got drained a little bit. Because I had, I had adrenaline probably in my body you know, pumping it like you know, 45 gallons a minute or whatever adrenaline pumps at. To find these things, or find the body or find everything, and so when that happened, I, this is the way I feel, feel about it. The adrenaline

issue stopped. So I got drained, I got drained (?) my you know, my energy level went down a little bit.

02.08.02 You know, and then you were just there (?) finding you know, the rest of the story, you know what I'm saying, helping others. It's normal. Still looking for firemen, still looking for bodies, you know, still looking for things. And then hoping that they would identify the, the stuff that you handed in, you know what I mean?

JW : What do you think of the ebb and flow?

BRIAN LYONS: What do I think of it?

JW : Are you about to experience another ebb and flow with the towers?

02.08.38 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, I think so. I think, I think, I think the tower's gonna, gonna bring back uh, bring that back, bring, bring some of that back. 'Cos I'll be close bound right down, down, down in the bottom of the pit. The bottom of the pit is a spiritual place. It's like really weird. When you're down at the bottom, down, standing on the ground. It's, it's just you know, it's just different. It's, it's you know, you, you're there, you're at the bottom.

02.09.05 You know, for me it's, that's uh, it's. I don't know. It's just like, it's a special place, I guess. You know, what, (?) found my brother's remains there. You know, uh, I've been down there for so long, we're rebuilding the whole thing, walking along the bottom, you know what I'm saying? So when we start building the tower, you know, I'll be at the bottom. And it'll give you, give me strength or energy, or you know, the, and that's the way I look at it.

JW : It's a very spiritual place, I agree.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What do you think about the rebuilding, do you have a point of view?

02.10.16 BRIAN LYONS: No, no, not really. I guess, you know, uh, you know, it's uh, you know, I'm you know, the, the process has been just delayed, actually. That's the only thing, you know, it's just sad that it had to get delayed.

02.10.30 You know, we're looking forward to building a tower and uh, we're gonna move forward from that. That's gonna take five years. When that's built, gonna move on to another building, probably. Hopefully I'll have a nice career with Tischman Construction. And they, they'll (?) surely be (?) involved with a lot of stuff that's gonna happen down there, and uh, you know, my career will hopefully follow a good path through that. And uh, we'll see how that thing goes.

JW : We also talked about your goals and what a hard time you were having with completing them. Is that still happening?

02.11.13 BRIAN LYONS: See, that's changed. That's, that's, that was one of the, that was one of the symptoms of completing goals, so now you focus and complete a goal and get it done, and the move on. That's it.

JW : You felt like you've been able to recapture that this past year?

02.11.30 BRIAN LYONS: Yeah, absolutely, yeah, 'cos I've been going to therapy and training myself and getting my mind to think back you know, the right way and you know, to get back to normal, some normalcy.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Anything you were not looking forward to talking about?

BRIAN LYONS: I think so, but I think we talked about them, maybe, about you know, my job, like changing my job and stuff like that. You know, I wanted to bring that up and make sure that we talked about that a little bit, yeah.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.13.51 BRIAN LYONS: (MID-STATEMENT) what you have now is because we've been, it's four years later, right, and we got all these cameras, so you got like a, like a bird flies by maybe once in awhile, or a guy walks by, you know? Car goes down, turns around and comes up. And that's what we got on film. We got 9,000 yards of film. We got two, two pigeons and a guy in a truck (LAUGHS) all right? That's what we got.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.14.24 BRIAN LYONS: (MID-STATEMENT) It's sad that it's taking so long to get the construction started and everything, you know what I mean? We thought by now we'd be building the Freedom Tower, you know, we'd be well into that. You know, even the, the delay that they had before, before they delayed it, it was still delayed, you know what I mean? So it's like you know, hopefully this thing will get started so we can get some footage, you know, and get, get going on this thing.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Do you still experience the camaraderie with the firefighters?

02.15.25 BRIAN LYONS: It's, it's not evolved, but it's probably stayed about the same now, like type of thing. People that, the construction end that, that was, that was the issue with, at the construction end, I was involved at my last company was all these people I was involved with, I went through the recovery with. So it was like we were a small family of, of what had happened down there. So I felt very sad when I left there, you know? The firemen, lot of them retired, they moved on, they've, they've, you know, they've you know, got transferred and stuff like that.

02.16.03 I've talked to a couple of them last week, you know, they, they having retirement parties and stuff like that coming up. But uh, you know, that's, that's kind of like where, where they are, where we are with that type of stuff. (~JW~) I talked to them on the telephone a little bit.

(~JW~) Yeah, yeah, call them up, say hey, what's going on, how you doing? How you been? You know, what's going on, you know? Just if anything just nice to hear your voice again, you know, stuff like that.

02.16.31 And that, that's what happens this week. Nine-eleven, a lot, a lot of that happens this week. You, you call people up. I, I call a couple of people, people call me, you know? I got this guy, this guy seen, this guy seen the footage on Fox 5 News last night. He was, he was just like ecstatic that he found me. 'Cos they said I'm working at World Trade number 7, I'm project manager there. He was down at World Trade number 7 this morning, 8 o'clock looking for me.

02.17.08 He was the one of the first guys that I worked with at 9-11 when I first got down there. When I did the, when I did the walk through, and I got involved, I ended up with a guy that worked for the city of New York that had a mobile van. And I ended up staying in this mobile van with this guy, Donald Anderson, for like a week. (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What are you looking forward to in the process?

02.17.56 BRIAN LYONS: No, why, well, I was interested in uh, uh, when the Freedom Tower you know, starts to be built, what position I'm gonna have when we, when they open the doors to uh, start giving positions out to uh, manage different sections of the Freedom Tower, which one I'm gonna have, you know, so I'm very interested in, in uh, in uh, finding out what that's gonna be and be excited to uh, to uh, see what that's gonna be.

JW : Anything in particular you're thinking about?

BRIAN LYONS: No, no, no, not, not, nothing in particular, actually, you know?

JW : What about the light bulb?

02.18.32 BRIAN LYONS: Right, right, right. Well, I still have a chance to put that red light bulb on the top of the tower like I said one time before. I want to build the biggest building in the world and then put the light on top. This is gonna have a little different light, supposed to be uh, uh, one that changes colors and spins around and, and makes like a beacon of light. It's a special type of light. So uh, you know, I could possibly be involved in uh, managing that section of the project.

JW : You had your wedding proposal on the top of the building?

02.19.19 BRIAN LYONS: Oh, right, this is, one of the things me and my wife talked about was when we, when our 20th anniversary comes, if the building is built, we want to renew our vows at the top of the freedom, new Freedom Tower. So that would be interesting, you know, if, if it was built in uh, 2010.

02.19.36 If it was built by 2010, that would be, I would be married 20 years. So I could uh, we want to renew our vows on the top of the building.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Could it be earlier than 2010?

BRIAN LYONS: Oh, yeah, that, I think, I think uh, it could come in a year ahead of time.

JW : I have two images stemming from your conversations. What's your commute like?

02.20.14 BRIAN LYONS: Right yeah, I have a very bad commute. My commute is, it's, it's not a bad commute, but I consider it you know, bad, because I used to have a car to travel in with, to the city. And now, now that I work down at Ground Zero, you can't park down here, you know, the traffic is horrendous in Manhattan.

02.20.35 So having a car is not, is not the way to do it. I mean, you use public transportation. So you lose your independence a little bit when you don't have your own vehicle. So that, that was taken away from me, so that, that was, I did some mourning on that, you know what I mean?

So I got to get up at 4:30 in the morning, take a 5 o'clock train, Metro North train into Grand Central, then I got to take the subway down to Ground Zero, you know, and the subway is just you know, with the stinky, smelly, standup place all the time, and it's not, not a very pleasant you know, it's uh, crowded and uh, you know, stuff like that.

02.21.13 So that's, and uh, by that time I still haven't had a cup of coffee or anything like that, you know, because I can't drink coffee in the morning, you want to try to sleep on the train. You can't go to sleep, you're bumping around, you're half asleep, half awake, that type of thing. So uh, you know, the commute is a two-hour commute in, and a two-hour commute back.

02.21.31 So it's four hours commuting every day, you know, it's, it's a long commute, but that's, it's (?) it's worth it because you know, uh, you know, there's, (?) if you're gonna work in the city, you know, you got to pay the price of commuting down here, you know, that, that's all there is to it.

JW : You used the word mourning twice?

02.22.02 BRIAN LYONS: Mourning, meaning you know, uh, uh, I guess you know, feeling sad that, that I don't have that, that thing anymore, you know what I mean? Mourning of uh, not having a vehicle, independence of driving your own car, and being able to go where you want to go.

02.22.28 It's like, you know, you're mourning uh, uh, it's like a loss of uh, of (?) a, something that you had, you know what I mean? (?) That's, that's what I mean by it.

JW : What about the time that things were tough at home?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.23.10 BRIAN LYONS: (MID-STATEMENT) I was sleeping in my car because I was having arguments with my wife. So I'd sleep out in the driveway some nights. You know, and, you know, different things like that. And that all was a part of this post traumatic stress syndrome that you know, was anger, not thinking straight, you know, not talking things out, you know, not, you know, those are all symptoms of, of that process.

02.23.36 And that's why you know, I'm much better. Now none of that happens. Now I have (?) me and my wife's relationship is very, very good, you know, everything is fine at home. You know, uh, you know, there's no problems, there's no arguments, there's no fights. You know, that type of thing.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Have you experienced a strengthening?

BRIAN LYONS: No, right, right, it makes you stronger, yes, yes.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.24.10 BRIAN LYONS: No, no, I think that we've, we've become stronger as, as one, one unit now, that we share things together, and we work things out a little bit more and uh, we discuss stuff more and we're more sensitive and to my wife's needs, and you know, talking about different things and talk a lot about you know, different issues and stuff like that, so. It's definitely been a big improvement.

JW : Why did you sleep in your driveway?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What do you hope for the future?

02.26.08 BRIAN LYONS: Well, yeah, well, I got an agenda, that's why I have, you know, I go to therapy and I do this as part of, of your life is to manage your life, so that you don't have stress and that you can focus on things that you need to get done. Obviously, the first, the next year is to you know, you got work, life and family life, right?

02.26.31 Family life was, was is getting better, trying to get my PS, post traumatic uh, stress syndrome, you know, gone and, and you know, get off medication and get back to normal.

That's absolutely the goal for next year, you know, which could possibly happen. And then, you know, fix your house up, get it back to normal, got to do the kitchen over, you know, that's a whole thing with that.

02.26.57 You know, and plan nice vacations with the wife and kids. So you know, that's you know, always an ongoing uh, ongoing uh, goal that you want to have for your home life. Professional life is I'm gonna, I want to be, you know, deeply involved in the Freedom Tower or rebuilding Ground Zero. Now once we get involved with the Freedom Tower, that's a five-year project, easy. Five, six year project. And then from that, want to move over to the next building, Building 2, or Tower 2 that they're gonna build.

02.27.29 And Tower 3 that they're gonna build. So you know, my, my career will be most likely down at Ground Zero if, if I have anything to say about it, pretty much. And uh, the company that I work for, hopefully, I'll be able to grow with the company. And uh, you know, get promoted and, and move upward through it, and as we move from project to project.

JW : What about fate?

02.28.02 BRIAN LYONS: I, I think (?) I think it's fate that I'm there, of course. The things that happened at my last job, why I left and what happened, and whatever, was all fate for me to get down to Ground Zero again, for some reason. For me, to, to work on the Freedom Tower, for me to be down there where Michael was, to, for me to you know, probably work down there for a very long time. That, I believe that fate had great, great powers towards that, absolutely.

JW : Anything else you'd like to share?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.28.48 BRIAN LYONS: Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, that's (?) what it's called. And by this time next year, hopefully I should be you know, 99% cured of most of those symptoms, you know, and uh, you know, let's see how it goes. (?) Day by day.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.30.59 ROOM TONE

02.31.30 END OF TAPE # BL20 2005