

TAPE # JK 25

Joe Keenan

JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director

PROJECT REBIRTH

01.00.30 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

INTERVIEWER : What kind of a year has it been for you?

01.00.41 JOE KEENAN : It's been a good year. It's (STUTTER) been an eventful year. It's been uh, we had an addition to the family, which was good. You know, and uh, uh, we've, we've had a good year, good time.

INTERVIEWER : What was the addition to the family?

JOE KEENAN : Well, my (~I~) (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.01.28 JOE KEENAN : Well, my oldest girl, Janine (~JW~) who when we first met, wasn't married. She was married in uh, September of '02, I believe, right, September of '02. And uh, she had her first baby, and it's been good. It's uh, it was uh, it's our first grandchild, so it gives us a whole new perspective on life. My friends had been teasing me because in my group uh, uh, nobody else has grandchildren. Just one, just one friend. and they've been teasing me, so you ready, are you read?

01.02.00 And I said yeah, I think I'm ready. I had no clue how ready I was (LAUGHS). It's, it's been very good, it's been fun.

INTERVIEWER : Whwat do you do, do you spend your days/

01.02.10 JOE KEENAN : I uh, she's pretty much now you know, it sounds, it sounds trite and very clichéish but she's pretty much the focus of my day now. Uh, which is good, I enjoy it. When uh, when uh, when you're a young, married person uh, as I was many years ago when you, and you first had, have your children. You're busy working.

01.02.30 You have uh, responsibilities. You have things you have to do, getting working two jobs, moving in a house, in and out of a house as a young cop, and when I had my children, I was, it was great and I loved it, but I didn't really have the time that I have now. So now I'm uh, devoting the time that I missed the first time around (LAUGHS). I don't know if I'm annoying my daughter and son-in-law, but that comes with the territory. They're gonna have to learn to live with it (LAUGHS).

INTERVIEWER : It's ok with you living there at the house?

01.03.00 JOE KEENAN : Uh, pretty much yeah (LAUGHS), I'm pretty much there. Well, we uh, uh, Janine is still working. She has to work until January. And then in January she'll uh, she'll stop working and she, she'll stay at home. So she works 4 days a week now. So my wife, Jane and I watch the baby now for (?) four days a week and uh, it's great. It's great.

INTERVIEWER : So you're there during the day for what?

01.03.25 JOE KEENAN : Well, it (?) we are. Uh, we'll uh, they come to us in the morning. They drive in, and it's easier, it's easier that way. They drive in to us and then I drive them to the train and they go to work. And after work, they come back to our house and we'll have dinner and then they'll go home. Uh, but uh, it's (?) responsibility now, but we don't let it hinder us. We put her in the car. Go wherever, she's five months old. And we go wherever we have to go, do what, what we have to do and uh, we're uh, it's uh, it's not nice to say, but it's a little bit like a toy (LAUGHS).

01.04.00 And we're enjoying it that way. So it's uh, it's very good. I, I uh, I warned Janine in the very beginning when the baby was probably about a day old. Is aid, you know, you have to understand the rules, and the rules are I'm allowed to do whatever I want (LAUGHS). And she just looked at me and said, ok. (LAUGHS) She uh, it didn't quite know what to expect.

But uh, I try to behave. I, I uh, I know I don't disturb her when she's sleeping or whatever, but uh. We're becoming buddies. (LAUGHS) That's good.

INTERVIEWER : And the Mets/

01.04.35 JOE KEENAN : Uh, the Mets. Uh, we had a, we had a better year this year. We uh, we're, we're on the way back. (~JW~) They're rebuilding. I took her to the Met game uh, but she has to start early. She was about uh, uh, guess about 3 months old. And I called Janine one night and I said I have four tickets to the Met game tonight. You know, want to go? She says, what about the baby? I said, we're along that, that's the idea.

01.05.59 That's why I'm inviting you so that the baby can come (LAUGHS). A funny thing happened, we were sitting in the, sitting in the seats and uh, there were four, four young fellows sitting behind us. Uh, late teens, early 20s maybe and they were having a great time. They were, jumping (?) up and down and cheering and just enjoying the game. It was a good game. They were enjoying the game, and at one point the baby fell asleep and uh, the Mets scored a run. And one of the guys jumped up and screamed and the other fellow next to him punched him in the arm, and said bet quite, the baby. (LAUGHS).

01.05.29 Because they had been poking their fingers over playing with the baby during the, during the night. But uh, it's been uh, it, it's been fun. It's uh, I don't know if it's as much fun for Janine and Andy as it is for me, but uh, uh, that's not my concern (LAUGHS). So I've been uh, I've been enjoying it.

INTERVIEWER : I'm about to have a baby soon and people tell me I'm calm. You come into a zone of like a great feeling. What did you feel when the child was born?

01.06.28 JOE KEENAN : Both sides of the family correct, and this is the first grandchild on both sides of the family. Uh, it was uh, I guess sit was a unique feeling to see your child have a child. That's a, next time I'll already have experienced it. So that part will be different. But to see your child have a child uh, and then know that that baby is uh, is part of your family, you know, part of you uh, it's a, it's a different feeling altogether than with your own children.

01.07.00 And uh, some day you'll be fortunate enough to experience it. It uh, it uh, as you say it, it's another stage. Uh, I wouldn't think that this stage of life we could enter another stage. But it did happen. It did happen. It's amazing how a uh, a baby can uh, change the activities of a whole family. And uh, and it's good.

INTERVIEWER : What do you mean by describing it as another stage? Because you're day-to-day?

JOE KEENAN : It, it's uh, it's a new feeling. It's uh, it's.

INTERVIEWER : And what's that feeling?

01.07.37 JOE KEENAN : It's a good feeling. It's hard to, it's hard to describe. It's uh, it's an anxious feeling every morning when you're waiting to see her. Uh, and uh, and, and playing and I, and I jump right in there. I don't, sometimes my wife just shakes her head, like yeah, go ahead. And I'll uh, change her and feed her and give her a bath, and I like do to that stuff.

01.08.00 Because uh, I, I tried to do it with my own children, but many times I was working, and (STUMBLE) I missed out on that. What, what seems to be a chore isn't a chore when you want to do it. So I, I enjoy doing it. And uh, uh, we, we I, I tease her while she's laying on a table and tickle her and play with her, and I, I told my daughter when we're now we're away for uh, well, it'll be 7 days, and I said, you know, make sure you put my picture in the crib. So she doesn't forget who I am (LAUGHS). And they just shake their head at me.

01.08.33 (LAUGHS). But uh, it, it's starting to become a little bit of a, a thing at home, so I'm playing it up. Yeah, I'll, I'll get everything I can out of it. (LAUGHS).

INTERVIEWER : What's that, what are you?

01.08.43 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, the uh, the uh, uh, leave him alone, he's playing with the baby. Leave him alone, we'll get up and go in the other room and walk. Uh, we went for a (CLEARS THROAT) we went for a walk one day. We were at Janine' house. And I, she was

uh, maybe a little over 2 months. And a few blocks from Janine's house is a park, so I put the baby in a carriage and I said I'm gonna go for a walk.

01.09.02 And we go for a walk. And uh, time started to slip. And uh, my phone rang, and uh, my wife was on the phone and she said, where are you? And I said, we're in the park. She said, well, it's dinner time. And I said, well, what time is it? She said, you've been gone two hours. Where are you? (LAUGHS) And I said oh, I'm just walking around town. (LAUGHS) I said, I'll be right home. We really weren't far. We just kept walking up and down different blocks and spent some time in the park, and walked around, and.

01.09.31 But it's good, because it uh, it clears your head. It gives you uh, a time to think about new things, and that's good. It's good. So we went to the uh, it was uh, it was nice. We entered a, a new stage. A new feeling. It's uh, when we had our own children, it was a great feeling. But this is a different feeling. It's a feeling of watching someone else have a, have an accomplishment that you can uh, wallow in.

01.10.00 I didn't do anything, but yet I can enjoy it (LAUGHS). So it's I'm like stealing the, the fun from someone else's effort. (LAUGHS). And, and that's good.

INTERVIEWER : The feeling when a child is first born, it was almost like a part of me would be gone, but that's not so?

01.10.51 JOE KEENAN : Well, as you just said, uh, to think about the things that you want to. Well all of a sudden that changes, because the baby's what you want to think about. So things that seemed important before still are. And you have to take care of them. But they (?) have a (STUTTER) new reason or a new thing to think about. And uh, I know that sounds corny, but it, you have to experience it. It's true. Uh, it's the way I'm experiencing it. Uh, I, I know my wife feels the same way and uh, my daughter just shakes her head. Yeah, go ahead, do what you want to. (LAUGHS).

INTERVIEWER : How would you describe this year? This is our fourth year.

01.11.35 JOE KEENAN : Well, this year's become uh, uh, a little fuller for me, with the baby. And uh, and uh, with the reason for (?) me being in San Diego right now is that I'm involved in

the uh, uh, a national organization uh, of police societies. And uh, in the past, I was a uh, just I was the New York representative to that organization. I was just a delegate.

01.11.58 And then last year of a, a number of, we had an election and, and a number of people got together and we discussed it and we decided to uh, run a board and you know, see, see if we could take a shot at uh, running for office in the organization, and we won. So uh, now that's a whole new responsibility again. So I'm no longer just a delegate who goes to the conventions and sits in the audience. Now I have a responsibility. And uh, that's good, too, because it's given me uh, it's given me uh, uh, a new responsibility.

01.12.30 So between the baby and this, the new responsibility. In fact, I take the baby and I, I bring her downstairs with me, and we, I sit her by the computer, I turn on her shows on TV and I'll be working on the computer (LAUGHS) at the same time, trying to get some work done. And for, for the national. So we have responsibility. That way where I've moved on from the Emerald Society where I was in the police department, because you only stay there a little while as, as an officer and (?) move on, that's the way it's, it works. We, we have a constitution that makes it work that way.

01.13.00 Because we don't want the organization to become stagnant, so you only stay in office two years. And then you move on and, and new people take over, and that's good. That's, that's a, a good way to run things. So now I'm really, I, I really don't have responsibility there anymore. And this new responsibility is good, it fills a little bit of a hole. So uh, (~JW~)

INTERVIEWER : You said you had to run for this?

JOE KEENAN : Yeah.

INTERVIEWER : What does it mean to?

01.13.22 JOE KEENAN : Well, what it is, is the, it's the police, police departments across the country have fraternal organization, and ours is the Irish organization, the Emerald Society. So they're, there (?) was always some networking amongst these societies. But now, oh, about ten years ago, some guys got together and they decided to start a national organization which would represent all of these individual police organizations.

INTERVIEWER : And they vary from emerald societies to other societies?

01.13.50 JOE KEENAN : Oh, no, it's just Emerald societies (~JW~) it's a national conference of uh, law enforcement Emerald Societies, and we have members all the way from Maine to San Diego, where we are now. And uh, each organization will send a delegate to a meeting twice a year. And once in May we meet in May every year at Police week. And there we, they have the police memorial in Washington, and our organization is in charge of running the parade, for the uh, police memorial, and we're also, we also work at the Candlelight vigil that night. And uh, we have pipers who do uh, lone piping at midnight.

01.14.31 So we're uh, we're involved in that, the three-day function down there, we're involved in something uh, each part of it, the fraternal order of police uh, is the parent group. But we're one of the groups who uh, who help and uh, we uh, we're busy when we're there in Washington. Then, every November, we'll meet in a different part of the country uh, one of the Emerald Societies will sponsor the meeting. We'll meet in a different part of the (?) country and we'll try to do our uh, our fraternal business.

01.15.03 So this is pretty much our business meeting, and in May is a working meeting. Well, uh, this one uh, in May uh, pretty much the delegates just go and the guys will go, the officers will go in November. They'll bring their wives or husbands and we make a little bit of a, a vacation out of it, also. So that's where we are now. We're, we're at our uh, fall business meeting, and uh, and convention. We're not wearing funny hats or anything, but (LAUGHS) we're at the, we're at our convention, so. Now being an officer in that organization (~JW~)

INTERVIEWER : What's your position?

01.15.34 JOE KEENAN : I'm uh, I'm what's called the third vice president. We have three vice presidents across the country. And we, we break up the country into regions, and each vice president is responsible for a region of the country. It's for communication amongst the organizations, and recruitment for, for new organizations uh. Organizations (?) and we'll call us, I got a uh, call from an organization in Maine saying that they uh, were interested in, in joining the national what do they do.

01.06.01 So we help them along. And also some police departments uh, areas will contact us, how do we start an organization? How do we, we want to start our own Emerald society and wherever they might live, you know, Rochester, New York City, wherever they live, they want to start their own organization, we'll help them with that. We'll show them how to, how to do it, the procedure. We'll help them with their constitution, we'll, we'll get them moving along. And then if they so wish after a year or two, when they get on their feet, they'll usually join the national organization.

01.16.31 So we'll have, we have I don't now if there're problems, but we have common concerns across the country as police officers. And this is a good way for us to network and find out what's going on and uh, we'll have uh, somebody in Nebraska has an unusual case where they need a little pressure applied on a judge. You know, we, we can write letters from all over the country. And we can uh, uh, show that there (?) are people concerned about this issue.

01.17.01 And we also uh, uh, watch legislation in, in Washington that concerns police officers. It's not a political organization. But it's an organization that watches out for our own concerns. And that's good.

INTERVIEWER : Why is that important to you?

01.17.18 JOE KEENAN : It's important to have uh. It's important to (?) show some responsibility for your profession. Uh, of course, I'm retired now, so I'm, I'm no longer involved actively.

01.17.33 But you have to, my work now, my concern now might make it easier for a younger police officer, and that's important. Because when I was the younger police officer, iw a working the street, and I didn't have time to worry about this and I was hoping that somebody else was. Well, now I guess I'm that somebody else, me and all the other delegates from across the country and all the other officers. We're the somebody else. We're, we're a little bit of a watchdog for ourselves.

01.17.59 To make sure that if there is, there is something that can help us. If there's a law that might uh, be of interest, that might, that might help in police work that we can let our senators know, let our congressmen know that we're interested in that, and it's not just Joe Keenan calling from New York City. It'll be people, we'll send out uh, the word. We'll contact the

other organizations and they'll start to see that people in Nebraska and people in uh, Chicago and in Milwaukee and in California are all (?) concerned about this same issue.

01.18.30 Maybe they'll listen, maybe they won't (LAUGHS). But maybe they will, maybe so. That's, that's important.

INTERVIEWER : Remember during the first year and you were going to a ball game and having some beers? Feels like a big step?

01.18.51 JOE KEENAN : Oh, it is a big step. Well, that, see that's a, that's a social activity. Uh, that was a social activity with, within our local organization. Uh, the local organization also works the same way. Within, within their individual departments. Uh, but now what this is, this is an organization where I can share information with other police department members. Or ask them questions. Did you ever have this problem, how did you handle it? Uh, And, and that's good, because it's good to be able to turn to someone else who knows your situation. It doesn't matter if the fellow's a police officer in New Orleans or Miami.

01.19.29 If it is a police officer, he understands uh, what I'm saying. And uh, if he's been involved in a situation, that I'm uh, that I'm trying to, to correct or trying to work through. If he's been involved in that himself, he'll be able to give me an educated answer, an experienced answer. And, and that's good. Now of course, on the side, there are always social activities, you know, and uh, uh, that's what we're doing here now. Well, have, we had a meeting yesterday. And we have our main meeting today and uh, we'll uh, go on a cruise tomorrow (LAUGHS). So uh, a little bit of both.

INTERVIEWER : Putting things in your own words, about your feelings, for you right now, being a part of this.

01.20.26 JOE KEENAN : Well, it's, it's good for me personally. It, it's refocused me a little bit. Uh, after I retired, did (?) I don't know how it is to retire from another profession, but to retire from a, a law enforcement profession is a big step in your life. Because uh, law enforcement personnel that's, that's how we identify ourselves. It's not what we do, it's who we are. That's, that's our whole focus, our whole life when we're working revolves around our work.

Every, every hour of the rest of the day is, is mandated by what we're doing at work, what, what we ha to do.

01.21.02 So when we retire, we, we pretty much go from uh, if you're an active, if, if you're active one day you're going 100 miles an hour and the next day you're standing in front of a window with a cup of coffee looking at the other people go to work, and that's a big thing. You know, uh, a lot of police officers have a problem with that, and I have to admit it wasn't easy. It, it wasn't easy to retire. I was not only giving up my job, I was giving up pretty much who I was. I was, I, I no longer do that.

01.21.32 And I, and I never will do it again. Uh, so that's a, that's a big step. Now, being active in organizations such as this it's good because it refocuses me, it gets me back on track. Where for the first, first year of retirement I didn't uh, it wasn't bad, believe me. It, it's been fun, it's been good. Uh, but I was slipping away a little bit. Uh, I was no longer in touch with what I had done my whole life.

01.22.01 And this is good, because it gives me uh, it's no police work, but it, I'm still involved in an organization that is involved with police work and police officers. So that's good. Uh, I'm not doing a (?) forty hours a week, I'm not doing it uh, 20, 25 days a month. But each day it touches me a little bit. I have something I have to take care of or some correspondence I'll have to answer or, ore letters I have to send out, some work I have to do on the computer to send to somebody else.

01.22.31 So it gives me a, it gives me a new function. A new function within the same organization, a small one. A little one on the side. Uh, a function that may be some of the young guys in the profession don't even know exists. But it's all part of the puzzle. Uh, and it's good. It was a good move. I'm glad I did it.

INTERVIEWER : And you talked about the vice presidents' areas of coverage?

01.22.55 JOE KEENAN : Well, we cover the, I cover the uh, uh, northeast region. Now of course that's the most populous region. So geographically, my area's small, yet I cover a lot of police departments pretty much from Maine uh, through uh, uh, through (?) up to Pennsylvania. This is all uh, New England, New Jersey, New York and, and it's my responsibility to be the contact for those people when they're trying to reach out and they

have a question or they want to know what's going on. I'm, I'm the person they're supposed to call through the organization.

01.23.29 And uh, I'll help them, I'll answer their questions if I can, I'll get them the information that they need. And then there are two other fellows, one fellow's a, a he's president from Milwaukee, uh, he's a vice president, and he lives in Milwaukee, and he has the pretty much the western part of the country and the other fellow is from uh, Baltimore. And he'll have uh, mostly from uh, Maryland down south over towards the Mississippi. We split up the country that way, geographically, it looks like I got it way easy, because I have a smaller piece.

01.24.00 But uh, a good portion of our membership is from the northeast. That's where most of the people live, so it's where a good portion of our membership is.

JW : We talked about Katrina earlier and the movie I was working on which came out this fall. I was in a daze because of the film and wasn't paying attention to it. What were you doing when you were tracking Katrina and your involvement?

01.25.02 JOE KEENAN : It, it really wouldn't be fair to say I was tracking it. Uh, pretty much like you, I was, I was reading about it in the newspaper. Oh, another hurricane coming, too bad (~JW~)

JW : Yeah, that was my reaction, too. Was kind of too bad.

01.25.11 JOE KEENAN : See, we don't experience that really in New York, uh, if we have uh, a what they call a hurricane, it's usually the remnants of something that's already happened uh, in (?) the eastern Atlantic or the southern Atlantic, and by the time it gets to us, it's a real heavy rainstorm.

01.25.30 It's, it's really not a hurricane. So we don't' really experience that. We don't uh, understand it fully and as it was coming uh, like everybody else we saw the news on TV and we read aobu tit in the paper. But uh, when I wasn't watching it on TV or reading about it in the paper, I wasn't thinking about it. It, it just didn't uh, uh, focus in. It didn't uh, uh, it didn't become a part of my daily uh, thought. Then when it hit, uh, like everybody else across the country, we were surprised. We didn't think it would have that kind of, that kind of damage.

- 01.26.04 Now we have a uh, one of our chapters is in New Orleans. Its' the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Organization from uh, of police officers, New Orleans and the surrounding area. And those guys got hit pretty hard. Uh, not only did they have to work to help uh, help the, the people there and (?) uh, try to maintain some sort of order, but they were also victims.
- 01.26.29 Many of them uh, most of them lost their houses. Last uh, last report I saw was in the uh, LA Times uh, wrote an article that said uh, it was talking about the police officers, and they said over 80% of the police officers in the new Orleans area lost their homes. Now it's pretty difficult to go to work all day and work 15, 18 hours trying to take care of people who have been victimized while you at the same time are that victim. So and those poor guys, they were torn.
- 01.26.59 You know, do I say home with my family? Or do I go to work and, and help the other people. And it seems, you know, it's hard for me to say because I wasn't there, but it seems to be that there was some confusion in the beginning. Uh, where they weren't sure where some of the guys were, and actually what happened was now that we're starting to learn more about it, is they were there working. Its' just they had no communications. So nobody knew where each other was. And uh, so the guys were, were pretty much down there, doing what they have to do. Uh, it's just nobody knew. Nobody uh, there was no accounting.
- 01.27.30 There was no head count. Uh, people that we knew, they, we thought they were missing, when actually they were working. So that's interesting. Then uh, (~JW~)

JW : Did you have moments where you were contacting people?

- 01.27.48 JOE KEENAN : Well, what (~JW~) one of our, one of our friends there has a brother. He has two brothers who are police officers also, and I, I really don't know them. I've met them but (?) I really don't know them.
- 01.27.59 Would be unfair to say that they're friends of mine, that I know them. But one of them had reached out uh, to us and he says has anybody heard from my brother? Uh, I don't know where he is. And uh, that was interesting. You know, that, that he was reaching out to other people around the country uh, through the emails uh, does, has anybody heard form, from my brother, we don't know where he is. We haven't. and in the meantime he was wondering

where his brother was. And he was, he was working. Fortunately, as it turns out they were both fine. They were just in, in actually it was a little odd because they were, from what I understand they were within the same district.

01.28.33 It was just probably a half a mile uh, uh, in area and they were both in the same place. They just didn't know it. And they uh, and eventually as things started to calm down down there and as communication got a little better uh, we found where everybody was. Now what happened after that was uh, one of the fellows from the, from the national said, gee, we have to try to help these guys.

01.29.00 We have to, we have to do something. So they wanted to start a uh, a fund raiser uh, through our organizations nationally to see if we could help these guys. Now, it would be pretentious to think that we could correct their problem. We can't, we can't, you know, we're just, we're not that kind of organization. We're not the Red Cross. We're not the Salvation Army. We're just a group of police officers from around the country. But what we try to do and, and is to reach out to them, to see if uh, they have immediate concerns that we can help them with.

01.29.31 You know, uh, uh, something as uh, as simple at the time of you know, do you guys need clothes? You know, do, does your family need food? What, what can we do to help? So we started a, a fund within our organization and since our Emerald Society is the oldest, our police emerald society in New York is the oldest, they reached out to us, would you guys administer the fund for us? So we've been, we've been administering the fund for the national organization.

JW : Were these guys who reached out were the ones in your organization?

01.30.07 JOE KEENAN : No, no, no, the people from New Orleans didn't reach out to us at all. Uh, in fact, we, we pretty much started this without knowing where they were. Uh, this whole uh, uh, steamrolled within a couple of days. Uh, and it was uh, one of the guys from uh, Milwaukee, one of the fellows from Omaha uh, everybody was talking back and forth, and we said, you know, we have to do something, what can we do?

01.30.30 And this is what we, you know, we decided to do. So the president of the organization asked us if we could administer the fund, because we're the largest organization. we're, we're pretty much this, the most advanced organization within the group uh, just, just from the

mere fact that we're an older organization and larger. So we said we went to our friends in uh, in a local bank, (?) Immigrants Savings bank and we said we'd like to set up a fund, can you help us? So they set up a special account for us, and uh, the local organizations around the country have been doing fundraisers and sending them to us.

01.31.04 And we've been administering it through the uh, through that fund in uh, we, we calling it the Katrina Fund for lack of a better, better name. we, we didn't put the bank account in that name (LAUGHS) You know, we made it a disaster relief fund for official purposes. So that's what we, a small, small thing that we're trying to do to help. Uh, again, it, it would be foolish for us to think we could rebuild their houses. We can't. but it just shows uh, guys that somebody else is there. You know? If you, if you need something, give us a call, we'll see what we can do to help you. And it's good to know that.

JW : What does that mean to you?

01.31.40 JOE KEENAN : Well, it, again it, it gave me uh, it, it gave me something to touch, something to actually do, each day now I'm doing something in relation to this fund, whether it's writing letters or, or opening envelopes or going to the bank, whatever it is. Uh, it's, it's involved me a little bit more in the, in the police fraternity to uh, to help others. So, that's, that's good. That's good.

JW : Remind you of 9-11 at all?

01.32.11 JOE KEENAN : Yes, and no. Uh, uh, a victim is a victim, no matter how he becomes a victim. And to that individual, the tragedy is all-consuming. But it was different. Uh, there's a, there's a difference between uh, uh, I would (?) you know, now maybe I'm wrong because I'm, it sounds like I'm speaking for the people in (~JW~) so I'll speak for myself, I'm not (LAUGHS) speaking for the, for the people who experienced this. (~JW~)

JW : And that's part of the interview process.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.32.53 JOE KEENAN : Well, there is, because there was, people need help. And, and as I said, that tragedy to the individual is all-consuming. His life is completely altered forever. Uh, when he gets back up on his feet and continues on and five years from now when this is history, his life has changed. Because of that. And that did happen at 9-11. But I don't know and this is just my feeling, I don't know if they can (?) if they're experiencing the same anger that we experienced. Because in the midst of our tragedy, that was forced upon us, just as this was uh, to the people down south.

01.33.31 We had an anger. Uh, you know, we had a, gee how could you do this to us? Now with a, with a natural disaster, even though at times that disaster can be worse uh, a hurricane or an earthquake uh, people uh, might view it differently. Uh, 'cos they tried to fight against it, they tried to protect their property, whatever. We were completely caught by surprise. We were uh, angered and bittered, and, and that went on for awhile.

01.34.00 So I don't know if they're experiencing that. Uh, they I'm sure they have anger and concern about losing uh, losing all their possessions but it's just not, I think, I, I don't know if it's the same. I don't know if they're (?). The uh, the level of their concern I'm sure is 100%, just like ours was 100%. But it's in a different area, I think.

JW : Talk to any of them?

01.34.25 JOE KEENAN : Uh, I spoke to two of them. You know, and it's hard to uh, to get a hold of them because they're, they're, they're busy. But I have spoke with two of them, and uh, (?) you know, gee, how you doing? You know, well, it's tough, you know, it's uh, it was bad. You know, it, it's bad and (?) can you imagine walking around where you live and nothing's there anymore? Everything's gone. And, you know, water up to your waist, and not only is everything that you owned gone, but everything you knew as a kid or everything you grew up with is altered and changed. That's got to be terrible.

01.35.02 It's a, it's a whole different feeling than we had uh, at 9-11 because ours was sort of like a punch. And we got a punch and we, we fell down and we got back up and we said, oh, yeah, try to punch us again. And uh, but down there, it's different because it's just, it's going on for them, and it's going on, and now they have to, the water has to uh, go back and they have

to rebuild. And there's a danger it might happen again. Uh, so that's uh, it's a tough feeling for them.

01.35.33 I'm sure uh, it's as terrible as ours was, but I think it just might be a different terrible. I don't know if that makes sense, but it uh, it's a, I think it's a different feeling. It's a left arm and a right arm (LAUGHS).

JW : You had this feeling of we're the New York police and we're tough, but we had people around the country come to support. Was this a way to give back?

01.36.17 JOE KEENAN : Yes. But (?) of course, not as great because I wasn't able to go there. But uh, New York City sent people there. Sent uh, police officers and firefighters and uh, uh, Con-Ed workers.

01.36.29 Yeah, think of that. People lost all their electricity down there and they had, they sent convoys of uh, trucks and uh, emergency vehicles and police officers and police vehicles and hundreds of guys went down there. The department sent them down, so that was good. Uh, and, and from around the other parts of the country, too. But I think we felt a responsibility to do it. Everybody did it, everybody who could help, did. But maybe if only one person helped, I think it had to be us. Uh.

JW : What about that?

01.37.00 JOE KEENAN : Because we have to uh, uh, it gave us the opportunity uh, to show appreciation for everybody who helped us. Everybody helped us. We had, we had police officers from Indian reservations in Montana come to New York to help. People we didn't know existed uh, riding in patrol cars. Uh, with, with the New York city police officers, splitting up so that we could extend our manpower.

01.37.32 And that was good. To know that we could turn around and, and uh, have somebody sitting next to us that spoke the same language who understood. And we have to show that. You know, we, you have, there's times where you have to buckle up and, and do what you have to do. And I think this is one of those times, and I, I was, I was glad the department did that.

Again, I'm not involved in it any longer, so I have no say in the matter. But it made me feel good to see that uh, the city and the department didn't even hesitate.

01.37.57 They immediately formed (?) within a day, they were taking names from all the precincts around the, around the city of police officers who were volunteering to go. And uh, from what I understand of, of a pool of something like 10,000 officers who were able to go, they got about 8,000 volunteers. And that was good. That, that uh, that shows that the guys were concerned and they wanted to help.

JW : Could you have volunteered?

01.38.20 JOE KEENAN : I couldn't have volunteered as a police officer, no. I would have had to just go down as Joe Blow, you know, and if I got there, I'd probably have to have worked with the Red (?) I don't know what I could have done down there. But uh, my function was up here with the, with the organization, to run the fund. I don't think individuals were uh, uh, I'm not going to say welcome, but needed. Because you have to know what you're doing. And I have to go down there and uh, and be organized and have a uh, and, and uh, have a structure. Uh, sometimes when uh, individuals come, they mean well, but they get in the way.

01.38.59 You know, that happened (~JW~) yeah, I saw that quite a bit here (LAUGHS). you know, there would be times where we would just have people uh, all right, walk to the door, take the next person and walk them in. (LAUGHS) Just to give them something to do, and they felt like they were being helpful, but you know, sometimes people get in the way. You have to uh, you need all the help you can get, but the help has to be the right type of help. So. Uh, the guys who went, they, they were the people who should go. They were the qualified people. They sent the EMT's from the department. Uh, the department has police officers who were you know, medically qualified, they sent them.

01.39.34 They sent rescue personnel. Uh, they sent people who could uh, uh, who were trained in recovery, they sent them. And then they sent regular patrol officers also to help patrol the streets. So that was good. You know?

JW : Do you miss being a cop?

01.39.48 JOE KEENAN : Sure. Sure. You know, yeah. I uh, I don't miss getting home late. Uh, I don't miss uh, working long hours. But uh, if I, if I had the opportunity to do it again, would I? Sure. Sure, I would do it all over again.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Sorry to use the word cop.

01.40.20 JOE KEENAN : It's ok (LAUGHS). It's, it's a word that's worked its way into the vernacular, it's (~JW~) ok. It doesn't mean what it used to mean. (~JW~) if you said that in the '50s, you'd get a crack in the head. But (~JW~) yeah. But it doesn't uh, it doesn't uh, affect that way any (?) longer.

JW : What feelings or stories do you have regarding the Katrina situation? Were you feeling good to help?

JOE KEENAN : Well ,you have to (~JW~) you have to keep it in perspective (~JW~)

(SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION)

01.40.56 JOE KEENAN : What was I really doing? (~JW~) I was sitting at a computer, sending out information to other guys or uh, going to the bank to uh, open an account there. In my small way, I did what I was supposed to do at that moment. But I didn't really uh, uh, I, I didn't really help the overall effort. Again, little piece of the puzzle. As long as all the little pieces of the puzzle are put together, a puzzle's made at the end. and if a little piece is missing, you're not finished. So everybody has to have their little, if I, if my one half of a percent of work fit into the whole total program, then that was good, then I did what I was supposed to do.

01.41.32 And that's good. You know, you have to, one thing you learn as a police officer as a cop (LAUGHS) is to uh, you know, you have to do what you're supposed to do at that time. You

know, you can't, can't be too much concerned about what you're gonna do tomorrow. Or what somebody else is doing. You have to do, you have to handle what's confronting you at that moment. And as long as you do that, then you're doing your job. You're doing what you're supposed to do. And that's important. And (?) that's good, a little good advice (LAUGHS). Because it uh, I, I'm sure it would work everywhere.

01.42.02 If everybody just did what they were supposed to do at that moment, I think things would be a lot easier. But uh, that's the way we're trained to work. We're task-oriented. Task in front of you, accomplish that task, move on to the next one.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : You described the 9-11 experience as a flicker between human and officer. When you talk about the storm victims, is this true? Is there also a similarity there?

JOE KEENAN : I guess there is, I, I didn't think of it that way. But uh, but I'm sure it now that you mention it, exactly. Sure (~JW~)

JW : Did you have conversations with anybody where they described that?

01.43.06 JOE KEENAN : Not really, not yet. Uh, maybe tonight (LAUGHS). When I see them again tonight after the meeting is over and, and uh, we've relaxed a little and uh, after our meeting today we'll be uh, a little freer to, to be in a group and exchange. But I just haven't really uh, seen them yet. So I haven't discussed that with them yet. And you know, sometimes you're a little careful what you ask.

01.43.31 You know, you don't want to uh, sometimes more can be more information can be an exchanged in a nod and a hug than asking 100 questions. When I, when I saw them last night for the first time and I greeted them, and uh, I knew how he felt. I knew how the two guys who, who are here now that were in new Orleans when this happened, I knew how they felt. And uh, I think they understood that I did. And that's good.

01.43.59 That's the way friends have to exchange feelings or (?) information. Cops aren't the easiest guys to uh, exchange feelings with. You know, we always have this little shell of, we, we're

like an M&M. We always have this little shell surrounding us, and we try to deflect what uh, what might be coming in. And we'll do that with everybody except ourselves. And uh, we'll have a better relationship with another, another police officer than we might with a lifelong friend. so we can, (?) when you, when you're a kid and the father gave you the look.

01.44.34 And you knew (LAUGHS) (~JW~) so uh, we can do that with each other. Just by uh, a few words or, or a nod or a, or a certain expression, we'll understand what (?) each other's thinking.

JW : That makes sense. So today is a first time?

JOE KEENAN : It's actually the first time I'll be, I'll be seeing them.

JW : Interesting. And are you gonna present a check?

01.45.03 JOE KEENAN : We'll, we'll present a check today uh, I think uh, uh, gonna let the, the president decide that. We're gonna continue the fund at least until May, when we have our next meeting. Because a lot of the organizations are still uh, planning how they're going to raise money and (?) send it on to them, send it on to us. But we'll present a check today. Uh, and then we'll, we'll continue from there.

01.45.27 (?) we're gonna uh, give it to uh, the president of their organization and he'll uh, he'll handle it how he, you know, how he sees fit, whoever needs whatever small thing they can, we can do for them. And uh, this is just the beginning. Uh, uh, you start something like this, and it steamrolls, but it takes a little while to happen, because by the time we get all the information out to everybody and by the time they call back and ask their questions and how are we gonna do this, and uh, uh, what are you doing and oh, that's a good idea, maybe we'll do that.

01.46.01 So it takes a little while for it to get rolling. But once it gets rolling, and we're at that stage right now. We're just starting to get rolling. And uh, we planned it as not an immediate thing, but as a uh, a long-range thing. To us long range is 'til next May. And uh, that's (?) the way we're uh, hoping to work it right now. But we'll make a little, since we're having our

meeting now, since we're having our uh, our, our annual and all the representatives will be there, we'll, we'll do uh, you know, the, the meeting thing.

01.46.33 We'll make it a token (LAUGHS) presentation. You know, we'll, we'll make a ceremony of it. But uh, yeah. We'll, we'll probably do that today.

JW : You're patient?

01.46.41 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm uh, I think that's good. Uh, you know, just uh, try to take everything in before I react. And uh, it, what's going to happen is as long as everybody does what they're supposed to do, what's going to happen will, will happen. We'll get it all done. Uh, if you jump too quickly, I've learned that a long time ago.

01.47.01 Sometimes you jump too quickly and you believe you're right at that moment and you always aren't. And uh, got to be careful. You just got to lay back and not everybody's like that. I'm like that. I don't know where it comes from. But that's just the way I am.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.47.25 END OF TAPE # JK 25

02.00.30 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : Any struggles for you this year, anything that you thought sucked?

02.01.31 JOE KEENAN : I don't think so. I think we had an up year. You know, uh, uh, of course, you know, the Katrina thing w worked with wasn't pleasant, but uh, uh, not being directly involved uh, you know, personal downs, no, no. I think we had a, I think we had a good year. As I mentioned before, you know, the baby just really focused the year. She was born in May and of course the anticipation of that before you know, leading up to it and wondering

what was gonna happen and, and once it, once the baby is born, you forget everything else, and I think we had a good year. Uh, yeah, it was a plus (LAUGHS). The year was a plus.

JW : What about over the last four years, and retirement? Do you think there's an emotional throughline?

02.02.26 JOE KEENAN : Well, when we started of course we were at a complete lull. We're (?) real negative point when we started. And then uh, uh, leveled off I guess with retirement and an ambiguous area, not sure what was going to happen. Maybe now we're on a little upswing. So that's good. Uh, in our household, we're (LAUGHS) on a upswing, so that's good.

JW : What about the memorabilia in your basement room? Does the date of 9-11 come up at all much?

02.03.13 JOE KEENAN : Nine-eleven now is uh, it's sort of a cultural thing now. It's a uh, it's something that's ingrained in me. And I'll things will happen that will spark a memory. Uh, but it's nothing like it used to be.

02.03.33 Uh, now when I think about it, (?) you know, what we did, and uh, that was bad. But I don't think it gets the emotional pull out of me that it used to. Uh, you know, time moves on. I guess (?) It's uh, everybody says it, but it is true. Uh, it is true. Time does move on and I'm no longer connected to that project.

02.04..00 Uh, I still have friends, once in awhile something will trigger it, what I'm not exactly sure. But you know, a thought will trigger it or especially around 9-11 when uh, people I worked with at that time will contact me and say you know, just thinking of you and yeah, I was thinking of you, too. You know ,and that's the end of it, you know, and then we uh, (~JW~) like the father look, right. I know exactly what they meant. And uh, it's all we have to do.

02.04.28 Uh, and that triggers the emotion within you, but the emotion is within me, I don't let it uh, you said I was patient. I'm also not very emotional. It's a little bit of a family joke. But it's hard for, it's hard for the rest of family to read me, because I pretty much look the same all the time. But it's you know, that's just the, just the nature of the beast. That's the way I am. And uh, if I have a moment and I think about it, maybe I'll just go off on my own and take a

walk with the baby (LAUGHS) or go in the backyard, and just uh, think about her for a little while and then come back in and get on with whatever we were doing.

JW : Is that a function of being Joe Keenan or a cop?

02.05.10 JOE KEENAN : No, I think that's me. I think that's Joe Keenan. Uh, I know other people who have been permanently affected by it and I don't know if that's good or not. Uh, I don't think it is good. Uh, you have to regroup. (?) if you make a mistake in life, you have to regroup from that and, and try to correct it.

02.05.31 Something happens to you in life, it'll always be there. It'll never leave. It'll always be the scar. But you have to, I think you have to move on. If you don't move on, you're just gonna live in that moment, and, and you're gonna be miserable and you're never gonna progress. And that's not good.

JW : Losing my mother gave me the impetus to do this project, no matter what the outcome. I was also interested in these ten people because I'm curious about how we all handle healing. How we choose to heal or don't. You are a very emotional person.

02.07.36 JOE KEENAN : I personally was lucky, because I had the chance to escape when I came back home, because fortunately you know, thank God we didn't lose anybody in our family, and uh, we lost friends, but we didn't lose any family members. So uh, I was lucky in that sense, that uh, no matter what I did during the day at work, no matter how distasteful it was, or how much I didn't want to do it and had to work my way through it, I did get to leave it, and come home for a short time before I went back again.

02.08.06 So I was lucky in that way. I, I could divorce myself, each day I tried to divorce myself for a few hours. Uh, it didn't always work, of course it's always there. You're always thinking about oh, gee, I have to, you know, I got to get to bed quick because I have to get up. I got to get back. You know, a police officer, when something's going on, the only place he can be is there. He has to be there.

02.08.26 It's just you know, uh, if you're, if you're in (?) a precinct working and you hear something on the radio three precincts away, your only thought is gee, I wish I could be there. I have to

be there. And it doesn't always happen that way because you have to cover your responsibility where you are. So I would daily uh, go back and, and do what I had to do, but I was fortunate because I could come home and escape a little bit. Uh, so I wasn't uh, uh, I was involved, I was as involved as everybody else, but I wasn't uh, uh, as scarred as much, I think.

02.09.00 Uh, I had my own feelings about what happened, and my own thoughts. But uh, I, I could separate them a little bit because we were lucky.

JW : You chose to say, hey, this is how I do it. You're a patient person and you need every piece of the puzzle.

02.09.30 JOE KEENAN : Well, it was my responsibility, it was my job. I had to do it. Uh, I'm not saying that I, I went there and not unwillingly, I didn't go there unwillingly. I went, I went there willingly. I wanted to help, I wanted to do what I could. But it was my, it was mine and 39,000 other guys' responsibility to, to get our work done when uh, being a cop's you know, it's an interesting thing. You can be standing on that corner all day long and nobody'll see you. And as soon as something happens, everybody sees you and turns to you.

02.10.00 You know, and you're the guy who has to do what has to be done. And uh, it was, it was what we were supposed to do.

JW : In the meantime, the years have passed, but you've also made a choice to take that moment outside?

02.10.17 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, yeah. Well, I don't know if dwell is the right word, but you, you can't dwell on things. You have to uh, you know, it sounds philosophical and I'm not a, you know, I'm not, I'm not educated at that.

02.10.31 I don't have the uh, uh, I don't have the right to speak that way, but it, it's everybody's own individual philosophy what they have to do and uh, something triggers a memory, you think about it. And uh, you handle it at that moment, however you want to. Whether it'd be uh, I'm not the type to usually I'm not the type to lash out in anger. So I, I won't walk outside

and kick the puppy (LAUGHS) I won't do that. But uh, uh, you handle it however you individually do.

02.11.01 And I know I have friends who, when the moment come sup, they get a little boisterous and you know, and say a few things that might not, that might be a little stupid, but it's ok, because they're saying it you know, in front of us, it's ok. Uh, and then you move on. I just don't usually react that way.

JW : How would you describe your reaction?

JOE KEENAN : Sadness (~JW~)

JW : What's that?

02.11.24 JOE KEENAN : Sadness. You know, I'm sorry it happened. Uh, I wish it didn't. Uh, and I wish I could make it so that it didn't, but I can't. so it's sad. And that's how it affects me. Yeah. and I wish it wouldn't but it does.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : I'm becoming more philosophical and more educated with the process of making this. You explain that you like to live in the moment. That's fairly philosophical whether you believe it or not.

02.12.34 JOE KEENAN : I, I just thought of something. It just uh, it triggered a response to (?) a question you asked before. You asked, what's, what was the difference between helping with Katrina and, and uh, with 9-11 at that moment. Uh, our guys who went down to help uh, in uh, Louisiana, they had the opportunity to prepare and get ready, and know what they were doing and, and think about formulate a plan.

02.13.00 What are we gonna do when we go down there? We didn't have that luxury. Uh, it just happened. All of a sudden you'd be standing there, and it happened. And I think that was the difference between uh, 9-11 and Katrina, being a natural disaster. At least uh, with the

natural disaster you had some warning that it was coming. You had the opportunity to formulate some sort of plan about what you were going to do. And of course it was worse than anybody had ever expected and it threw all the plans out the window. But it was a little bit of a different feeling, that this uh, 9-11 was thrust upon us.

02.13.30 We had no idea. As you, as uh, you know uh, you hear from so many people who were involved at the time is you know, nice sunny day and everybody walking to work and all of the sudden the world blew up and that's what happened. (~JW~) That's what happened.

JW : One minute was preparing for a meeting and the next minute you're on top of the roof.

JOE KEENAN : Buzzed by an airplane. That airplane came so close to us we could see in the window. Yeah.

JW : How's Karen?

02.14.02 JOE KEENAN : She's doing fine. Yeah. She's, she's almost uh, let's see. I guess she is 3 years in, 4 years in. She started in uh, she started in the police department in July oh, no July '02 she started. Right, July '02, so she's in 3 years now. She's doing fine. She's studying for promotion. I told her get in there, get promoted (LAUGHS). We have an expression, it's a boss' job and it's so true. It's so true.

02.14.30 Uh, so she's right where she should be at this time. She's doing fine. She's enjoying herself. She likes the work. She's happy at this work, where she was unhappy at the work she was doing before. She's not making as much money now (LAUGHS) which you know, which is a little difficult. But uh, you have to like what you're doing, you know, and then you'll worry about the other ends. Yeah. Yeah, she's doing fine.

JW : You still had this conversation about her joining the force?

02.15.20 JOE KEENAN : Maybe more so, because now as she's understanding things more fully uh, I think it's, it has, I've just thought of this just this moment. I think it's probably given her a better insight into who I am uh, as opposed to just the guy she grew up in the house with,

who's always telling her to do things. (LAUGHS) Maybe now she understands a little bit better why I was telling her to do those things. Because the longer she stays in this work and, and sees things and, and uh, uh, performs as a, a functioning police officer, she has a better understanding of that whole situation, which is where I am. I was in that situation.

02.16.00 So she might be getting a better understanding of, of who I am. It would be silly to say we get along better now than we ever have, but maybe we do. You know, uh, maybe we do, 'cos we understand each other a little more. Uh, I know what she's going through, and she can come to me and ask me a question and I'll say all right. You know, here's what's going to happen next. And uh, so I know where she is at this moment in time, and maybe she understands where I was. So that might help her uh, uh, know why I punished her and made her come in and sit in her room (LAUGHS).

JW : How is she doing emotionally?

02.16.39 JOE KEENAN : I, I think she'd doing fine. You know, it's hard to tell, you know. She, she has her own place. She doesn't live at home, so uh, we see her, you know, uh, quite a bit. Uh, but uh, I don't see her at those quiet down moments but (?) I don't suspect anything. Uh, I think she's doing Ok.

JW : Any scares on the job?

02.17.01 JOE KEENAN : Uh, she's, she's tight-lipped. She doesn't tell me anything. my spies tell me more about her (LAUGHS). At work than she does. (LAUGHS) But that's what you do. You don't you know, you don't bring it home. You shouldn't bring it home. People who bring it home have a problem. They create a problem at home. Uh, so uh, so I'm home to her. She'll come home and she'll ask me, you know, what would you have done, and I'll tell her, she said, well, that's what I did. Uh, uh, ok. So I, I did it the right way.

02.17.31 But she doesn't come home and tell me what she does daily. I know she's had a couple of scrapes, but uh, somebody else told me. Uh, and uh, said, gee, you know, I saw your daughter the other day she (?) you know, she did a good job. She did. They don't mean to be tattling on her, but they are (LAUGHS). And they'll say uh, yeah, she was involved in this

situation, involved in his arrest. She handled herself well. And then I'll ask her, I'll say did you have uh, oh, yeah. Yeah. But that's, that's all right.

02.18.00 I don't mind that. I don't mind that she uh, doesn't come home with it. 'Cos when I, when she comes home, I expect her to be my daughter. I don't expect her to be the cop in the street.

JW : Just like you?

02.18.12 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, hopefully I did. I don't, I don't know if I did it as well as I think I did, but hopefully I did. I'm sure there were days I came home I was uh, uh, difficult to be with. But uh, I didn't do it deliberately. I didn't try to , and I didn't, and I deliberately didn't bring it home. I made a conscious effort not to.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : How's her boyfriend?

02.18.37 JOE KEENAN : He, he's doing fine. He's uh, he's home now for, when did we meet last? Six months ago or (~JW~) yeah. And he's, he's been home for awhile now and he's back to work. And he's doing fine. It's (?) I'm sure it's a slow recovery for him. You know, he uh, he was in a tough situation over in Iraq, and uh, he was in (?) a unit that was uh, at the forefront uh, the first unit in, into a couple of cities, so.

02.19.05 He didn't have it easy. Uh, uh, and uh, I know I know he has bad memories. I know he has. He's a, he's alluded to it a few times. But he's very good about it. He uh, you know, he's, he's home now. He's home and he's gonna, and he's back on the police force and he's uh, enjoying his work and chasing people down the street. And he's having a good time.

JW : Is he more fearless?

02.19.32 JOE KEENAN : I don't know. Hard to tell (LAUGHS) I'm sure he's more cautious (LAUGHS). I'm sure he's more careful.

JW : What was his tour of duties?

02.19.51 JOE KEENAN : Well, he was uh, most recently he was in uh, in Iraq proper for uh, ten months. Uh, I think ten or eleven months, and he was in a uh, an MP unit, and now the MP units uh, were used to secure areas, you know? House to house, door to door and uh, that was one of the most difficult situations uh, in Iraq. So he was involved in that quite a bit. Uh, he was up north from what I understand. Uh, he's really not uh, too forthcoming with it, so I don't ask him, and uh, and I tell my son and my son-in-law don't ask him. You know, if he wants to tell you, he'll tell you. Just you know, just leave it alone.

02.20.31 My son-in-law's very curious. He's always asking questions, and so uh, sometimes I tell him, you know, don't ask. Just, just leave it alone. Uh, when he has something he wants to say, he'll say it. And uh, don't, don't delve into something that might upset him. Just uh, just leave it alone. My son was good about it. He understood. He just said, ok. Ok, and he walked away (LAUGHS). But uh, uh.

JW : What makes you so sensitive to that?

02.20.58 JOE KEENAN : I don't know. Uh, I don't know. I know he had uh, I've seen people in the past who have had a bad time. And I know he had a (~JW~) at work. And I, and I know he had a bad time there. And uh, you know, just uh, let him (?) let him come to peace with it. And I think he has. I think he is, I think he is, rather than I think he has. I think he is coming to peace with it. And uh, and everybody moves at their own rate, their own speed. He seems fine. (?) he's seems like he was before he went.

02.21.33 But I know he had a, another dimension in him. I know he, he saw things that I never saw. And uh, hopefully he will never see them again. And uh, he has that uh, uh, that experience within him. That will always be part of his makeup. But uh, he seems to be dealing very well.

JW : Is there a chance he'll go back?

02.21.56 JOE KEENAN : Oh, no, I don't think so. Uh, I don't really know the way it works. Uh, I'm not fully up to speed with it, but I, from what I understand there's uh, you can only go away

for so many months on a presidential order, and he's fulfilled that. I think it's 20 months, and he's been away that long. He went away twice, and uh, uh, so I, I don't think that he'll go away again. I don't think he'll go back there again.

JW : What generation is now in the police?

02.22.27 JOE KEENAN : Well, my father (~JW~) my father had an uncle in, in New York City police department, and then my father, and my father and his brothers, so that counts as one generation, then myself. And now my son and my daughter.

JW : What about your son?

JOE KEENAN : That's the newest addition (LAUGHS).

JW : I remember it was Dad I'm doing this job. He took all the tests. How did it happen with him?

(SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION)

02.23.08 JOE KEENAN : Yeah, I don't think it happened the same way with him (~JW~) I, I think when he said to me, uh, I'm willing to do this, I think I was glad. Uh, I mean, it was, not that I wasn't glad when Karen said it, it's just Karen surprised me. I, I didn't, I didn't picture her uh, doing this. Uh, my son I did, he was going to school and he was working, then he was going to school and he was working.

02.23.30 And you know, I don't think he had his heart in either. And uh, to see him focus on something, I thought, was good. And uh, when he said he wanted a, he was gonna do what he wanted, wanted to go ahead and try it, I encouraged him. I said, ok, good, good, you know, here's what we'll do. (LAUGHS) let's get a plan ready. (LAUGHS) let's get your car (?) already and (LAUGHS) and, and get to work. I think I handed it a little bit uh, differently than I did with Karen.

02.24.00 But you'll find out now, you have your second child coming. You'll find that you even though you don't show favorites, you handle each one a little differently. Uh, because everybody's different. They were all, they're three personalities. They all have the same name, but they're three personalities. And you, you uh, try to juggle back and forth when you don't get the names mixed up and yell at the wrong one uh, you'll (LAUGHS) try to handle them uh, in a different manner. So I, I was glad. I was uh, concerned, you know, 'cos I didn't want him to flounder. Not that he's old, but he was you know, he was, he was no longer a teenager, he was no longer a baby.

02.24.33 He had a, he was at the point where he had to start making some life decisions. And he did. So that was good, I thought that was good. And now he works in Brooklyn. He's on uh, he's in uh, uh, year and a half, well, it'll be almost two years. It'll be uh, two years in July. NO, wait, where are we, we're in November? Yeah, so it's a year and a half, it was a year in July, so he's a little more than a year in, and he's been in the street for about a year now. You know, not counting training. He's doing fine. He's uh, he's uh, out in the street working every day.

02.25.01 He hasn't come home and complained. He, he's enjoying his work. He likes it, which is good. He didn't like what he was doing (?) he didn't like standing up on those construction buildings in the middle of the winter, that wasn't fun (LAUGHS). But he doesn't come home and complain about this. He's uh, I think he's enjoying this work and that's good.

JW : What was he doing before?

02.25.18 JOE KEENAN : Well, he was going to school, and he was working as a, an electrician's helper uh, working along to uh, to get into that profession, become an electrician. And you know, electrician's helper is uh, is (?) as with all helpers, no matter what the field is, it's not a glorious task (LAUGHS).

02.25.34 It means you do everything that nobody else wants to do. And uh, and that's not easy. So now uh, he seems to be in the right direction and that's good. That's good.

JW : Have you been following what's happening at Ground Zero?

02.25.51 JOE KEENAN : Honestly, no. not really. Uh, but my connection with 9-11 really wasn't at Ground Zero. I, I was there, uh, in the beginning briefly, but then when they opened up the recovery, when they started the recovery, I immediately moved to the recovery site, and I spent a year at the recovery site. So uh, my connection with the actual property of Ground Zero. I read in the paper, just like everybody else, and complain just like everybody else. Why don't they get this thing moving, why are they waiting so long for, you know? What's so hard about picking a design. Uh, but of course we're, we're laymen, we don't understand that particulars of what's going on.

02.26.31 And uh, but uh, I think I just follow it like everybody else. I don't know if I have any particular connection.

JW : You have an opinion?

JOE KEENAN : Everybody has an opinion.

JW : What's your opinion?

02.26.41 JOE KEENAN : My opinion is (~JW~) right, everybody's got one. Uh, my opinion is that it's time for them to get moving down there. Let's uh, let's get it going. Let's uh, decide what you're going to do. Uh, I think that they should rebuild and I think at the same time, they should have some sort of uh, some sort of memorial for lack of a better word.

02.27.07 Some remembrance, remembrance is a much better word. Have some sort of remembrance there, and there should be a tone when you, when you walk into the place, that you know where you are, and you know that something happened here. But in the meantime we have to get on with business, and, and you know, we have to build up that area and get uh, people working again. A lot of people who were working there aren't working anymore.

02.27.29 We got to get it going. We got to start uh, recovering from it. And I, I hope they are. You have to, you have to sometimes have blind faith. So you have to have blind faith that the people who know what they're doing are doing what they're supposed to do. Probably they aren't, but (LAUGHS). Have to fool yourself that they might be.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW : What's it mean to you that they get going? They started to pour cement.

02.28.02 JOE KEENAN : That's good. That means they're building. They wouldn't be pouring unless they had a plan. And that's good. But that, that means they're moving, to me, that means they're moving in the right direction. I have to go home and uh, check up on it to see what they're doing. But that means they will, now all this foolishness about uh, you know, should we build the towers as large as they were, or should we uh, have this design or should we have another design? I don't think that's really what's important.

02.28.29 What's important is that the, the scar's healed and uh, we tried (?) to get back to where we were. And at the same time, always remember, always remember what happened. And I think that's why they should have some sort of remembrance there. There's a lot of land there. They can, they can do both. Yeah. If you could picture the towers the way they sued to be you know, the day before on, on September 10th, there's still plenty of land there. Still plenty of room to move around.

02.29.00 So they can uh, they can build and at the same time uh, have some sort of remembrance. Uh, so place where people can go, place where people who were victims can return, and a place where people who just want to see what happened can, can go and understand. (~JW~) Maybe I'll call somebody and tell them that (LAUGHS).

JW : Who would you call?

JOE KEENAN : I don't know. I'll have uh, I'll go home and I'll call the mayor and tell him that (LAUGHS). Get on the stick, get this moving.

JW : Freshkills?

02.29.35 JOE KEENAN : Freshkills is a different story. That's where I lived for a year. Uh, uh, I know uh, as I mentioned to you before, I know in my heart that we did absolutely everything

we could to recover anything that passed through those gates. And I'm convinced we did.

Uh, because I know the job that was done there, I was there every day, I saw it.

02.29.57 Uh, I think as (?) I mentioned to you before I uh, I think maybe in the past month I'm starting to have just a little bit different feeling about that. I think I uh, I think I was a little bit indignant about it before. Where (?) I would say to myself, you know, you're saying that we're not doing our job up here, that we're not recovering anything. how would you know, you're not here, you don't know what you're talking about. And uh, and I think I was a little uh, put off by that. Uh, because I always had the feeling uh, how can you come up here for one hour and take a tour and tell us what we've been doing, you know, for 24 hours a day, for ever since it happened?

02.30.35 Uh, now, maybe I'm understanding that what they were taking about the sacred ground, originally I think, I think their plan, and I'm not really sure, but I think their plan was just to let the area recover, and have some sort of park there. Uh, and, and now the concerns of the uh, victims' families and, and other people that intermingled within that dirt might be the uh, uh, the remains or the, the remains of remains.

02.31.07 Of uh, of people. Maybe I'm starting to understand that a little bit. They're talking uh, they're talking about ridiculous things. They're talking about going down and picking up a whole foot of soil, of uh, of the area there, and, and uh, moving it to another place. And I don't know what that would accomplish. We did that. We did that. When we were all finished.

02.31.28 When everything was done, and every truck was cleaned and every uh, every piece of machinery was cleaned, and it was all over, we went down another six inches, and we cleaned everything out. So we took part of that hill that was there before we arrived, we took that away. So I don't know uh, what could remain there. But I'm not a scientist, so I don't understand the intermingling of uh, of the remains of people at (?) Ground Zero with the, with the air and with the debris, and with the dirt and what might be there.

02.32.01 There's no physical, there's nothing physically there to touch. There's nothing you could go and pick up. There's not a stone that you could go and pick up and say this was at the World Trade Center when it started 'cos it's not there anymore. We cleaned it all. It's all gone. But uh, you know, uh, I don't know what's there anymore. And rather than, rather than, I'd rather err on the side of, of caution, and if it's possible.

02.32.30 That uh, uh, there might be intermingling there with (?) the earth, with the dirt uh, maybe it's better just to leave it alone. Just you know, not do anything with the, we don't need it, don't do. It was an area we weren't using before, and it'll be an area we can not use in the future.

JW : Keep it sacred?

02.32.49 JOE KEENAN : Just keep it sacred. Just leave it, leave it how it is. Let it, let the environment grow with it, and let it, let it come back to whatever it's supposed to be (~JW~) just leave it alone. I haven't really gone back there, because it's a, it's a uh, restricted area.

02.33.04 You're not allowed to go back there. I'm sure if I went back and grabbed one of the guys who works there now, who used to be there, he'd let me go up. But it's not a, I've passed by. I've passed by many times, because it's an area you can see from the roadway. And as I pass by I'll remember oh, this was here, and that was here, and the trailer was over here, and this is where we worked. But uh, actually walk back in, no, no, I haven't. And I don't know if many people have. I'm sure somebody's you know, I'm sure people have gone back.

02.33.32 But uh, uh, none of the people who I was on staff with there, and we haven't gone back.

JW : Would you want to?

02.33.40 JOE KEENAN : I don't know. You know, uh, I don't know what that would accomplish, you know? Like if, if we said one day, if everybody contacted each other and said uh, you know, the staff is going back, the 15 people who were in charge, we're going all back, I'd, I'd go. You know, I'd go. I don't know what it would accomplish. But I'd go to be with them. And uh, talk, we could probably do the same thing if the 15 of us met someplace else.

02.34.03 You know, and, and share the, you know, share the same experience. But I wouldn't hesitate to go. Sure, I would go. I just uh, I don't know if it's uh, for me to go on my own.

JW : You ever get together?

02.34.16 JOE KEENAN : Uh, we talk a lot. But you have to remember, we were pretty much uh, unfamiliar with each other when it happened. We all came from different spots .and

(STUMBLE) were thrown together and became a unit. Uh, there, there's one fellow who I went with up there who I was with before.

02.34.31 And we're still close. And we still talk to each other. And, and see each other. But the others uh, maybe we'll go out to dinner once a year. You know, you'll say hey, have you seen So-and-so? And I (STUTTER) saw uh, you know, Jeff and he was asking for you. Or you know, or that type of stuff. But uh, talk, no. Not really.

JW : Anything else going on?

02.35.01 JOE KEENAN : No, I don't think so. I think uh,, I think (~JW~) we covered since the last meeting (LAUGHS).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.36.00 ROOM TONE

02.37.02 END OF TAPE # JK 26