



9/11 Pace University Oral History Project

Pace professor recovering from injuries received during September 11 attack

Sean Iannucci



Science professor Brian Gestring is still recovering after injuries caused by the collapse of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, which smothered his disaster response team and left him with multiple injuries and impairments. Gestring still suffers from post concussive syndrome, which has damaged his senses and mental reasoning.

"I've just recently regained the ability to read," said Gestring. "The entire healing process has been frustrating, because common skills have become diminished."

Gestring, a professor at Pace since 1998, also works for the Chief Medical Examiner's Office. A credited forensic scientist. Gestring was part of an early disaster response team dispatched by the Medical Examiner's office on September 11. The squad was under the South Tower when it collapsed. Sending Gestring and others in a dash towards safety

Gestring said *he* was heading for refuge under a parked fire truck when a piece of debris struck the back of his head, rendering him unconscious. A police boat later took Gestring to New Jersey, where he was eventually admitted to *Jersey City Medical Center*. Gestring's wife described the chaos at the hospital after his admittance.



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"Because of the disaster, the hospital was extremely packed and disorganized," said Gestring's wife. "I inserted the IV and helped clean the wounds and Brian's brother, Mark, who is a trauma surgeon, sutured his head and hand."

Gestring was unaware of the magnitude of the disaster and the state of the nation during his one-week stay at the hospital. He said the most shocking and distressing realization was the sight of an altered Manhattan skyline on his drive home from the hospital.

"Until I reentered the outside world. I had no idea the buildings collapsed," Gestring said. "I had no idea why everywhere I looked I saw American flags. I have been slowly visiting web-sites to gain information on the incident, to see how the buildings collapsed, frame by frame."

Gestring has recently begun teaching again at Pace and is regaining his once effortless abilities. When he is closer to a full recovery, he will resume his position with the Chief Medical Examiner's office, a job Gestring described as his passion. Every day is a step closer to normalcy for Gestring, and he holds each day more dearly since the September 11 attacks.

"You value the little things, like spending time with your wife and family, or just walking the dog," said Gestring. "Clearly you appreciate your life more."

