

World Trade Center nears 'top out,' workers reflect on building nation's tallest tower

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Rock Center

The iron workers assembling the last few floors of One World Trade Center say that their work above New York City's skyline is more than just a job.

"It's a part of history. It's a part of rebuilding you know, part of putting lives back together to show people that the spirit won't be broken," iron worker Marvin Davis told Harry Smith in an interview broadcast on NBC's Rock Center with Brian Williams.

Davis is the general foreman at the World Trade Center site. He is part of the generations of Mohawk Indians who have built New York's famous skyscrapers. Both Davis and his son are helping construct One World Trade Center, formerly called the Freedom Tower.

"It's a fortress. It's a better built building than I've been on ever," Davis said. "With the concrete and the steel, you know, both of them together combined, you know, this thing is, I think is impenetrable."

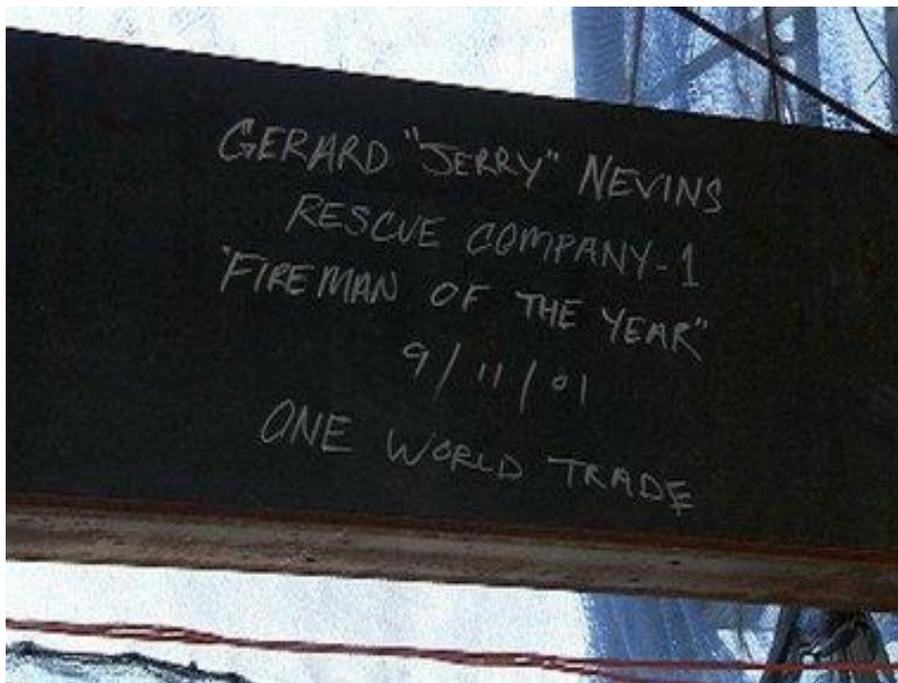
The original One World Trade Center was destroyed in the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers on Sept. 11, 2001. In the 10 years since 2,753 people perished in attacks on the towers, a team of more than 200 iron workers clad in fluorescent vests and hard hats have nimbly built One World Trade Center. The building now soars more than 1,244 feet. The tower is a couple of weeks away from surpassing the height of the roof of the Empire State building.

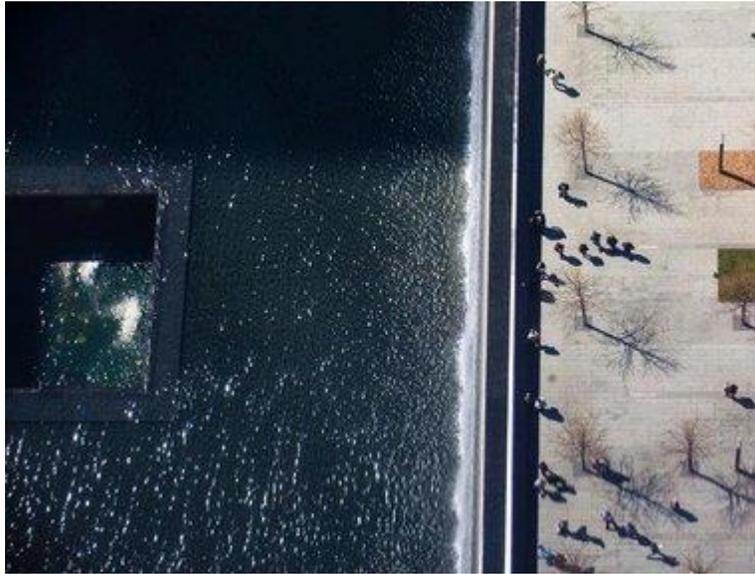
"We're right there," said iron worker Kevin Murphy. "In the next couple of weeks, we're there. That's going to be another big, you know, special day. Pretty much from here on up, everything's special, you know?"

Murphy is one of several iron workers who lost someone they knew on Sept. 11, 2001. The completion of the building will mark an emotional moment for Murphy, the lieutenant superintendent of steel erection at One World Trade Center. "Just to be part of something that's going to be the tallest building in the nation and a monument to all the people that lost their lives down here. As an iron worker, you couldn't ask for a better place to work," Murphy said.



John Makely/MSNBC.com





As the workers ascend farther into the heavens each day, placing and setting beam after beam, scrawled on some of the beams are the names of those who perished on 9/11. The building, made of steel and glass, is also full of emotion.

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“Way more emotion than we’re used to. We’re iron workers. We don’t show our emotions well, but around here, you can’t help it, you know. You see families come. You’re looking down at the memorial. You see everybody looking at the memorial. This is definitely a very emotional place,” Murphy said.

In a matter of months, the tower is expected to “top out.” That’s what it means when the last steel beam gets put in place. After the spire is added, One World Trade Center will be the tallest building in the United States at a symbolic 1,776 feet.

For Murphy, the construction of the World Trade Center towers is in his blood. His father helped build the first World Trade Center towers.



NBC News

Murphy came to Ground Zero to clean up in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks.

“[I] didn’t really talk about it with anybody when it first happened, because it was so intense, just to be down there and then to come home and have to answer the questions about it, but it was definitely surreal and the things we saw, nobody should really have to see,” Murphy said.

Murphy’s wife, Heather Murphy, said her husband’s chance to build One World Trade Center is helping him heal.



“Having been there right when it happened, I didn’t know if he would ever come out of that. He was so sad for so long, so the fact that now he’s in a place and bringing it back is so big, so huge. It’s kind of the best part about it. He gets to rebuild it. He doesn’t just have to have the memory of what it was,” said Heather Murphy through tears.

Murphy’s fellow iron worker, Eric Hunt, also helped sift through the smoldering debris 10 years ago.

“I was down here doing some burning one night and I was burning this big gusset plate open and I started on one end and worked my way to the other end and when the steel opened up, there was two ladies laying there holding hands,” said an emotional Hunt.

Hunt, a veteran iron worker who helped repair the World Trade Center after the 1993 bombing, said he’s thankful to be building One World Trade Center.



NBC News

Eric Hunt

“In the beginning, it was sad and every day, you had to overcome that, but as you get into it and you make it through your days and you spend a month, a year, whatever, it becomes a sense of necessity. You know, this had to be done,” Hunt said.

Hunt said that as they build higher and higher, the iron workers feel a “little bit of glory.”

“Every man here has put a sense of pride into this building and it’s just heavy duty, has armor. It’s modern day pyramids,” Hunt said.

