

Our Dad, Our Hero

The Asaro siblings became firefighters to honor their father, one of many heroes who died on 9/11.

Before going to bed on September 10, 2001, Rebecca Asaro asked her dad, Carl, for a pack of mints.

“In the morning, I saw him leaving them on my nightstand,” recalls Rebecca, who was 9 at the time. “He kissed me goodbye before he went to work.”

That was the last time Rebecca saw her father.

Later that morning, **terrorists** flew two planes into the Twin Towers in New York City on purpose. The 110-story skyscrapers were part of a group of office buildings called the World Trade Center. Carl was one of 343 firefighters who lost their lives trying to save others after the attacks.



From left: Carl Jr., Rebecca, and Matt Asaro hold a photo of their dad. Left: Carl Asaro poses with five of his six kids in the 1990s.



A plane had hit the North Tower.

A second plane slammed into the

South Tower 17 minutes later. Firefighters, police officers, and other emergency workers rushed to the World Trade Center. As panicked people ran from the burning skyscrapers, Carl and other first responders did the opposite.

Carl was assigned to set up a command center at the South Tower. There, he would help coordinate efforts to fight the fires and rescue the people trapped inside.

But without warning, the South Tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m. The North Tower crumbled less than

30 minutes later. The six Asaro kids and their mom spent days waiting to find out if Carl was OK.

“We held out hope,” says Carl Asaro Jr., who was 13 at the time. “We didn’t understand completely how terrible everything was.”

A Hole in the Family

Sadly, Carl never came home. All 15 firefighters from his firehouse who responded to the attacks died that day. They were among the nearly 3,000 people who lost their lives on 9/11.

Growing up without their dad was difficult for the Asaro kids. They missed riding bikes, playing football, and listening to music with him.

“He was a big kid,” says Matt Asaro, who was 12 on 9/11.

They also missed visiting their dad at the firehouse. They never forgot the special bond the



firefighters shared and the pride they took in helping others.

“It’s a big family and community,” Carl Jr. explains.

Inspired by Dad

When he grew up, Carl Jr. decided to honor his father by becoming a firefighter too. He joined the FDNY in 2014. His siblings Rebecca, Marc, and Matt later followed.

“It’s been the best decision I ever made,” Carl Jr. says. “I like to think he’s proud knowing that we’ve taken similar steps.”

Rebecca agrees. She has spent the past seven years working at her father’s old firehouse.

“I know my dad’s with me,” Rebecca says. “It brings me a lot of pride and honor to know that I’m literally walking in my dad’s footsteps.”

Rebecca and her siblings say growing up without their father taught them to be **resilient**. On the 25th anniversary of 9/11, they hope people never forget the bravery and sacrifices made by first responders that day—especially by their dad.

“Superheroes aren’t only what we see in movies,” says Rebecca. “He was my superhero.”

—by Alicia Green

Words to Know

terrorists *noun*. people who use violence to spread fear, gain power, or force a government to do something

resilient *adjective*. able to bounce back or recover after a difficult situation

The Twin Towers in flames on 9/11



Pages 2-3: Ilya Savenok/Getty Images (Asaro siblings); Shutterstock.com (frame); Courtesy of family (Asaro family photo); Jim McMahon/Mapman (map); Robert Groux/Getty Images (Twin Towers)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ... 9/11

- A terrorist group called Al Qaeda (ahl KAY-dah) was responsible for the 9/11 attacks.
- The Twin Towers weren’t the only targets. Terrorists flew a third plane into the Pentagon. The five-sided building near Washington, D.C., is the headquarters of the U.S. military.
- A fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Passengers on that flight fought the terrorists and likely prevented an attack on the White House or the U.S. Capitol.
- Since 9/11, the U.S. government has taken many steps to make the country safer, including tightening security at airports and in public buildings.