

September 11th Memorial Tribute
Honoring Court Officers
Harry Thompson, Mitchel Wallace and Tommy Jurgens
60 Centre Street - September 11, 2003

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: Good afternoon. Good afternoon and thank you all for being here. My name is Ann Pfau. I am the First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge of the New York State Courts, and on behalf of Chief Judge Judith Kaye, who is in Albany today presiding at the Court of Appeals; Chief Administrative Judge Jonathan Lippman, who will be speaking later in the program and the entire New York State Unified Court System, I want to welcome you to our judiciary tribute to remember and honor the officers who responded and our own officers who died in that unspeakable tragedy two years ago today.

We are particularly honored today to be joined by such distinguished guests. Our court family, now includes the families of the three officers we lost on that day. It is with great love and warmth that we welcome the families of Captain Harry Thompson, Officer Mitchel Wallace and Officer Tommy Jurgens. We are grateful that you are here and sharing this day with all of us. The memories of those hero officers are etched in our hearts forever.

We are also joined by members of the Federal Judiciary, including Circuit Judge

Barrington D. Parker, Jr. of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, who will speak later in the program. And court staff, the presiding justice of the Appellate Division, the Honorable John Buckley, Ms. Susan Thomas from Schneider Children's Hospital of Long Island Medical Center, who also will speak. And students who are former judiciary interns who will give us poetry readings.

I particularly want to thank Administrative Judge Jacqueline Silbermann and County Clerk Norman Goodman, whose beautiful courthouse we are sharing today for hosting this wonderful program.

We will begin with the Pledge of Allegiance, which will be led by Deputy Chief Joseph Baccellieri.

Deputy Chief of the Department of Public Safety Joseph Baccellieri: Everybody please stand. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you. Please be seated.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: At this time, I am very pleased to introduce two students, Ms. Cynthia Holt of New York University and Ms. Rosanna Yu of St. John's University, both of whom have worked with us in the judiciary and who will read selected poems.

Ms. Cynthia Holt: Good afternoon. I will be reciting a poem by Sandy DeGonia entitled “Thank you.”

*To those who came to rescue
And those who fell trying
To those who came to heal
All of those that are dying
To those that were on the flights
That tried to save the rest
You are heroes in our hearts
We know you did your best
Thank you for your courage
And your tender loving care
Thank you for your sleepless nights
And for the pain you've had to bear
Thank you for your patience
In this time of much emotion
Thank you for your sentiment
And your continuous devotion
And when your grief becomes too much
And your tears begin to fall
Find comfort in your country
For we stand behind you all
We thank you one more time
For all that you have done
For all that you have sacrificed
Thank you each and every one.*

Thank you.

Rosanna Yu: Good afternoon. This poem is entitled “In Service” written by Alicia Davis from Houston, Texas.

*Because of your calling to serve and protect
You answered without pause
When the people’s well-being is at risk
With all your heart taking on the task
With which you’ve been charged
With all of your senses on full alert
You witness devastation and despair
Yet through your own tears
In spite of any fears
You respond because you care
To all of you in service to America
Our gratitude must go
Law enforcement, military, fire, medical and rescue personnel
We see you, we thank you and wanted you to know.
Thank you.*

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: I am pleased now to introduce First Deputy Chief Jewel Williams from our Office of Public Safety. Chief Williams will introduce the families of our own heroes Harry Thompson, Tommy Jurgens and Mitchel Wallace. Chief Williams.

First Deputy Chief Jewel Williams: Good afternoon everyone. I’d like to have the family members for Joe Jurgens to step up to the plaque. We have his wife, his father, his two brothers, his mother, her brother and her father.

I'd like to have the family of Mitchel Wallace come up to the plaque, his sister Michelle, his fiancée, his mom and his dad.

I'd like to have the family of Captain William Harry Thompson, his two sons and his cousin.

At this time, I'm going to have Chief of Public Safety Matthew O'Reilly step up to the podium for the unveiling.

Chief of Public Safety Matthew O'Reilly: The 9/11 Heroes Memorial Plaque which will be permanently installed at 111 Centre Street, which we are about to unveil, is inscribed with the following citation.

“For their exceptional courage and selfless acts on the morning of 9/11 2001, the New York Unified Court System remembers these three heroes everyday with gratitude and wonder. In the face of extraordinary danger they never faulted. May their strength and enduring spirit inspire us always.”

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: We also have with us three officers who are going to share with us personal remembrances of each of our fallen heroes. To speak about Senior Court Officer Mitchel Wallace we have Captain Denise Massey.

Captain Denise Massey: Thank you Judge. Good afternoon. To the families of our fallen, honorable judiciary, distinguished guests, colleagues and friends. Two years

ago today we lost three good men, Captain William Harry Thompson, Senior Officer Mitchel Wallace and Senior Officer Thomas Jurgens. I'd like to take a moment and talk to you about Officer Mitchel Wallace.

Mitch began working in the Family Court in March of 2000. He brought with him to this job such an enthusiasm that I've never seen before and may never see again.

Mitch loved this job. In the short time that he worked here with us he excelled at it.

He received the Merit Performance Award from Judge Judith Kaye in Albany for saving the life of a man on the Long Island Railroad who had a heart attack. In

addition, he was recognized by court officers associations for other outstanding

deeds. Mitch was a great person. He was a great person to work with. He was

always there when we needed him. I can remember times working on the 8th floor,

or when someone was ill and we needed a hand and Mitch would jump in there and

he would make us all look so good, because he would just make us look like we

knew what we were doing. Mitch... he loved and he valued life. He loved his family

and his friends dearly. I noticed because we spoke of this often and you can take

comfort in that, he loved you. He touched so many lives in so many ways as did

Harry and Tommy. We would long remember the sacrifice made by these men and

they will forever be honored in our hearts and our prayers. I missed them and I want

to thank you.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: To share his remembrance of Captain Harry Thompson is Senior Court Officer Jeffrey Davis.

Senior Court Officer Jeffrey Davis: Thank you judge. Good afternoon to the families of our fallen, honorable judiciary, distinguished guests, friends and colleagues. I'm deeply honored to speak a few words about our friend, colleague and always our Captain, William Harry Thompson, conventionally known as Harry. When you talk about the measure of a man, you consider his heart, his deeds, his vision of the world and his character. Harry wore these attributes in good standing on his shoulders as he moved through life. He was totally dedicated to his family, mom, Mike and Tracey, her son, his endless photo array of the grand kids and his eternal soul mate Sandra. When he spoke of them his eyes twinkled with the gleam of proudness and contentment. Harry's next set of family was the members of the Unified Court System, particularly the uniformed force. He wore his honor, he exemplified his position, he exuded confidence. Harry lived by example, always well groomed and impeccably dressed. It was the unfortunate officer that appeared before him unkept... If his shoes weren't shined and his uniform up to the part, he would hear about it. It was a common sight to see him spit shining his own shoes. While Captain Thompson was friendly, easy going and fair, he was also a stern supervisor when called upon. When you were wrong you were wrong, correct the

situation and let's move on. When I considered going back to school to complete my undergraduate degree, Harry vigorously encouraged me. He constantly wanted to know my progress and counseled me through trying times. Your belief in Harry would make you believe in yourself. His compassion was contagious. When he asked you how you were doing or how certain member of your family was, he meant it, he truly meant it. The collage of pictures in his office drawn by officers' children was a testament to his likeability. Harry Thompson always understood that it was always possible doing something a different way to get the desired effect. He searched not only for fairness, but for understanding. Harry was a tremendous listener. I miss Harry, we all miss Harry. And his entering the unspeakable madness of two years ago was yet another one of his selfless acts of kindness, one that would be memorialized forever. So when we talk about the measure of a man, we talk about a man who raised the bar, we talk about Captain Harry Thompson.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: And to share his remembrance of Senior Court Officer Tommy Jurgens, Captain Richard Rosenfeld.

Captain Richard Rosenfeld: Thank you Judge. Thank you to the families, judges, colleagues and friends. I remember Tommy. Tommy Jurgens was a young man who loved life. For Tommy being a court officer everyday was an adventure and his enthusiasm for the job and for life was absolutely infectious. He was one of those

people you would look forward to seeing each and everyday. I remember the first time I've ever met Tommy, he was grinning, he always seemed to be grinning. He could get serious, you knew because his jaw would clench, his eyebrows would come together, but it never seemed to last and that smile would be back on his face in a short period of time. I remember Tommy standing post at 60 Centre Street.

Although Tommy was many years younger than I, we shared many similar interests. We were both equipment buffs carrying an incredible array of items on our duty belts, items like flashlights, rubber gloves, cut resisting gloves, two pairs of handcuffs because one was never enough, multi-tools, cell phones— Tommy always had the best cell phone— the list was endless. We clanked when we walked, we were ready for any contingency and we were always looking for new and better equipment. Tommy had one problem, he was very slim, his belt wasn't that big. I would tell him "Tommy you have to eat more a gain of 30 or 40 pounds would give you about six more inches of belt and you can carry more stuff." On one occasion Tommy and I bought identical watches. The watch had every feature imaginable, the instruction book was an inch thick and I remember it took us about three days to figure it out. It still takes me a few seconds to figure out the correct time. Tommy always said "It's a cool looking watch!" I remember Tommy believed himself to be a pretty good fisherman and I remember fishing with him on Jamaica Bay. A group of us went on a fishing trip on our friend Teddy's boat, and true to his word Tommy

caught the biggest fish. I can picture him now holding that fish with that big grin on his face, the quintessential fisherman. What Tommy didn't mention was that occasionally he got sea sick. In the summer of 2001, I was reading a book by author Mark Bowden called *Black Hawk Dawn*. It tells the true story of a group of U.S. Army rangers caught in an unexpected and deadly battle on the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia. Tommy and I had discussed the book at length, because he had read the book and as most of you know before Tommy became a court officer he was a soldier. In the book the ranger commander uses a quote from Shakespeare in an attempt to lessen the grief of the surviving soldiers. I know that Tommy, as well as myself, finds this quote to be so appropriate that I say it to you now.

“Whoever does not have the stomach for this fight let him depart give him money to speed his departure since we wish not to die in that man's company. Whoever lives past today and comes home safely would rouse himself every year on this day, show his neighbors his scars and tell embellished stories of all their great battles. These stories would teach his son that from this day until the end of the world, we shall be remembered, we few, we happy few, we band of brothers, for whoever has shed his blood with me shall be my brother. And those men afraid to go will think themselves less a man as they hear of how we fought and died together.” Thank you.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: I'm very honored and

pleased to introduce Circuit Judge Barrington D. Parker, Jr. of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, who will be our next speaker.

Hon. Barrington D. Parker, Jr: Thank you Judge Pfau for that kind introduction. I am honored to be here this afternoon and to have the opportunity to say to you just a word or two.

Like so many of you did on 9/11, I sat there that morning in front of the television set and watched that American Airlines plane hit the second tower. And then you and I watched both of those towers go down. Like so many of you and particularly most specially the families of Officer Wallace and Captain Thompson and Officer Jurgens, the losses were massive ones, the personal losses. Like so many of you I know the impact of that event on friends and families remains vivid and heavy. In my own life for example, a short way down the street from us in Connecticut there was a young woman who was 22 years old, whom I drove to school many mornings, we car pooled together. She was working on the 107th floor talking to her father on her cell phone when the tower went down. We have friends in Connecticut, a woman who had small business that she had worked for seven years to try to put together, she had eleven employees, she was late getting to work that morning, she was walking down the west side highway when the tower collapsed and every single employee she had was killed in that tragedy. But also none of us will forget

the heroism that we saw on that day. The courage that was demonstrated by so many New Yorkers in so many ways. I do not have to speak to the families of those whom we honor today about the courage, they know it. There were all of the uniformed services, the firemen, 380 members of New York's elite rescue units who went up into the tower trying to rescue people, and who did not come back. I always recall Mayor Giuliani reminding us that those firemen who lost their lives in those towers were still able to rescue more than 95 percent of the people who could possibly have been rescued. This is courage and performance that is beyond praise. I will always remember the morning I opened the *New York Times*. *The Times* published the transcripts of those firemen talking to each other as they made their way up into the tower. "I'm watching your back," "I'm right behind you," "Let's go, let's go." These recollections for me will always be indelible ones. And I recall with equal vividness those small moving obituaries that appeared every morning in the *New York Times* day after day, week after week, month after month, and through those obituaries we visited with the victims of that great tragedy. When you saw those pictures, you saw New York. They were black, they were white, they were Asian, they were Jewish, they were Protestant, they were Muslims, they were from every corner of the globe. Each of them had their own stories. Each of them had their own dreams. Each of them had their own space. And all those people we saw in the *Times*, they are all dead, but they still talk to us. They tell us that they chose

this city as their home because it was a better place to live than any place else they could find. Those people in those pictures and those obituaries told us that New York, that this city understood that differences in race and ethnicity and gender in the end didn't matter. Those pictures told us, those New Yorkers in the pictures told us that though their lives had come to an end we should not forget that far more things join us together than separate us. Those people told us that we were all New Yorkers, we were all human beings, we all count.

We live in a city that is still wounded. There is a vast crater just a short walk from here. The economy of the city still reels. There are those of you in this room who are still disconsolate, but I say that despite all of the sadness, all of the loss, all of the grief, this city is greater than it has ever been, because those faces in the *New York Times* will talk to us for the rest of our lives. Thank you.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: Our closing speaker will be the Honorable Jonathan Lippman, the Chief Administrative Judge of the New York State Unified Court System.

Chief Administrative Judge Jonathan Lippman: Good morning. Today, September 11, 2003 is a day for remembering. Obviously, for the surviving family members and friends, this day of remembrance is filled with the deep pain of having had their loved ones taken from them so suddenly and so viciously. For the rest of

us as well, this is a day in which we cannot help but relive the dramatic events and images of two years ago. But on this day of remembrance, we also know that there is much more to September 11th than the horrific attacks and senseless loss of life. On that day, we witnessed not just the very worst, but the very best that human nature has to offer. We saw incredible heroism, compassion and unity. We saw the unbelievable acts of selflessness by our uniformed heroes, including the ultimate sacrifices made by our dear departed brothers Captain William Harry Thompson, Senior Court Officer Mitchel Wallace and Senior Court Officer Thomas Jurgens. Today, their actions fill us with inspiration and motivate us to move forward with our lives in a positive way. Their actions fill us with confidence that our world can be a good place, a humane place that our lives and our futures can be fulfilling and hopeful. They have taught us to recognize our blessings and to live our lives more gratefully. They have helped restore our faith in humanity itself.

For those of us in the courts, both state and federal, in our professional lives, we are also grateful, on this day of all days for the resiliency of the rule of law. If

September 11th taught us anything, it taught us the importance of the rule of law.

After experiencing the chaos and destruction caused by acts of terror, we can fully appreciate the value of a society that relies on fair and orderly processes for resolving disputes. We can appreciate how the rule of law, serves as the foundation

of our freedoms and makes everything else in America, all that we have as a nation, possible. The rule of law is what we fall back on in all times of crisis. It enabled us to overcome 9/11 and for that matter, most recently, last month's historic blackout with civility, unity and strength. And it is faith in the rule of law that would allow us to continue to heal and to rebuild with dignity and compassion. The courts, the justice system serve as the most visible and impressive symbols of the rule of law. In the aftermath of 9/11, the courts met every challenge and more thanks to our unified uniformed officers, the entire court staff and the judiciary that they serve. I thank all of them and all of you here today for your dedication in the service of the rule of law. That is why is so fitting that this plaque was unveiled here today in this historic courthouse. It would be hung in a prominent place of honor as a permanent remembrance to the memories and deeds of those who were lost on 9/11. For loved ones who remain behind, we could only hope that this plaque provides even the smallest measure of comfort for the deep, deep loss they feel. We hope too that it would provide hope and inspiration for all of us to live our lives with meaning, with purpose, and with appreciation for those who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. Thank you all for being here today. Thank you.

First Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau: Thank you, that concludes our program. Thank you very much.