**Good-Bye**

**By Beverly Eckert**

**A phone call from the 105th floor**

**I**t was about 9:30 a.m. when he called. When I heard his voice on the phone, I was so happy. I said, ‘Sean, where are you?,’ thinking that he had made it out and that he was calling me from the street somewhere. He told me he was on the 105th floor, and I knew right away that Sean was never coming home.

He was very calm. He told me he had been trying to find a way out and what he wanted was information. So I relayed to him what I could see on TV, what floor the flames had reached and on what side of the building. I also used my other phone, my cell phone, and called 911 and told them where Sean was and that he needed to be rescued. Sean told me that initially he was with some people that tried to escape by going down the stairs, but they had to turn back because of the smoke and the heat. They headed for the roof, but when they got there, they found that the roof doors were locked.

He told me the other people were now in a conference room and that he was alone. I asked him to go back and try the roof doors again, to pound on them, and that somebody on the other side would hear him …

Sean was gone for maybe five minutes, and then he came back to the phone. He hadn’t had any success, and now the stairwell was full of smoke: He had actually passed out for a few minutes while pounding on the doors.

There was a building in flames underneath him, but Sean didn’t even flinch. He stayed composed, just talking to me the way he always did. I will always be in awe of the way he faced death. Not an ounce of fear—not when the windows around him were getting too hot to touch; not when the smoke was making it hard to breathe.

By now we had stopped talking about escape routes. I wanted to use the precious few minutes we had left just to talk. He told me to give his love to his family, and then we just began talking about all the happiness we shared during our lives together, how lucky we were to have each other. At one point, when I could tell it was getting harder for him to breathe, I asked if it hurt. He paused for a moment, and then said, ‘No.’ He loved me enough to lie.

In the end, as the smoke got thicker, he just kept whispering, ‘I love you,’ over and over. Then I suddenly heard this loud explosion through the phone. It reverberated for several seconds. We held our breath; I know we both realized what was about to happen. Then I heard a sharp crack, followed by the sound of an avalanche. I heard Sean gasp once as the floor fell out from underneath him. I called his name into the phone over and over. Then I just sat there huddled on the floor holding the phone to my heart.”