

# Man's Heroism after Attacks Earns Him National Praise

## Former Racine resident led rescue of children at center

*Editor's note: This is a portion of a story written by UW-Parkside alumna Jennie Tunkiewicz ('87 communication). The story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Oct. 31.*

When the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York was collapsing Sept. 11 and people in lower Manhattan were running away from ground zero, former Racine (Wis.) resident John Miskulin was running toward it.

Miskulin ('85 dramatic arts) was concerned about getting to his wife and son at a day-care center just a block from the base of the south tower.

When he got there, he coordinated an evacuation effort – using wet towels and commandeering a city bus that carried 17 children, ranging in age from 6 months to 6 years old, and 38 adults to safety.

His heroism led the American Red Cross to name him one of 10 Courageous Americans, and his dramatic rescue was being retold across the nation in newspaper advertisements.

Miskulin, 39, a graduate of Racine Horlick High School and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, was humble about his role. "I just did what any father would do," he said.

Just three days after the attack he was back at ground zero working with the Red Cross and Great Performances, the catering company he works for, coordinating the effort to feed victims' families and rescue workers.

The day of the terror attacks could have been much worse for Miskulin. His wife, Colleen (Quiggle), also is from Racine. She is vice president of an insurance company that was based on the 36th floor of the World Trade Center's south tower.

She was late for work on Sept. 11 because she had stopped at a post office before taking the couple's son, Alec, to Battery Park Day Care Center. It was at the day-care center that she learned that something had happened at the World Trade Center. She called her husband.

"She was nervous and upset. I told her to stay there and I would get her and Alec from the day-care center," Miskulin said.

He began driving to the day-care center 75 blocks away. When he couldn't drive any farther, he parked his truck and walked. "I got to a point where I had a very clear view of the twin towers and I realized that my wife's building had collapsed," Miskulin said.

He said people were rushing past him – some screaming, some crying, some angry. Then the north tower collapsed.

"You could hear each floor collapse with a pop, like a clap," he said. "The visceral image was immense, and it was very unsettling. I didn't know what was happening with my wife and son because the smoke and debris were so intense.

"I had to calm myself down in my mind. I had to tell myself that whatever happened, I can't change."

When he arrived at the day-care center, he found his wife and son first, then asked the day-care director about an evacuation plan. There wasn't one. He took charge.

He directed a day-care worker to get wet towels for all of the children. About 20 minutes later, he went to a command post just as a city bus was dropping off fire and rescue workers. A fire chief agreed to allow the bus to be used to evacuate the children.



The bus driver took the group to Battery Park, and Miskulin found a tug boat operator willing to take the group to Jersey City. They were all safe on shore by noon.

"As I was putting my son to bed that night, Alec said, 'Daddy, this was a very ugly day,'" Miskulin said. "Then, three days later, when I was going back to work, he said to me, 'Are you going to find more people?'"

Miskulin has worked 15-hour days at ground zero, helping to feed 35,000 to 50,000 people every day. The most difficult thing for him has been seeing the faces of children who have lost a parent.

"I look at those children and can't help going back to that day at the child-care center, looking into those eyes and seeing the innocence, the faith and the trust," Miskulin said. "I'm glad my story had a happy ending. I wish that were the case for everyone else."

## ~ Editor's Update ~

By the time you read this, more than three months will have passed since John Miskulin found himself in a position where he had to do something.

When he finally arrived at the Battery Park Day Care Center – after walking and running 15 blocks toward ground zero when it seemed like the rest of the world was running away from the area – John knew that he couldn't just take his wife, Colleen, and their son, Alec. He had to help the other children and adults who were there.

John is quick to point out that he wasn't the only person who was thrown into an heroic experience. When he commandeered the city bus, Miskulin asked the fire chief on the bus, who was in charge?

"The chief looked around, looked at me and said, 'I guess I am now,'" John said. "The baton

had been passed. Hundreds of thousands of people did something heroic that day."

John's mother, Madeline, who graduated with John from UW-Parkside in 1985, isn't surprised by her son's actions.

"I'm very proud of what he did, but John has always been a take-charge person," Madeline said.

Then she added something to the rescue story.

"John had just come through all the smoke and the dust, and the people," Madeline said. "He didn't want the children to have to see that – to have that memory. He wanted them to have a bus ride and a boat ride to safety – that's all, just a bus ride and a boat ride."

Two months after the attack, John was at home watching TV and talking with me on the phone. The screen showed New York Mayor Rudolf Guliani at ground zero.

"TV can't show you what that area really looks like," he said. "You have to be there to understand."

John Miskulin was there. He was there on Sept. 11 to arrange a bus ride and a boat ride to safety for 55 people.

And he was there for more than two weeks following the attack feeding and giving a little rest to thousands of rescue workers.

But, that's not where the story ends. "There is still a great need for aid," he said. "This is a huge recovery project and the American Red Cross needs everyone's help."

Then he talked about those who lost their lives on Sept. 11. And he said something that in all the news coverage had escaped me:

"The people who worked at the World Trade Center, the people who died in the attack, they were the best of the best," John said. "The companies in those towers recruited the best people to work there.

"We lost some of the best."

# Former Kenosha Resident Counsels U.S. Senate

January 24, 1995: Former Kenosha, Wis., resident Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie, is elected 61st chaplain of the U.S. Senate. His duties include opening the Senate each day in prayer, and counseling senators, their families and their staff members – more than 6,000 persons.

September 11, 2001: Ogilvie's constituency turns to him for support and guidance as it never has before.

Ogilvie said that since Sept. 11 his duties have intensified.

"There has been a great increase in our counseling ministry to the Senate. First, the immediate response to the Sept. 11 attack and all the trauma that went with that," he said. "From then on, my conversations with people and my counseling was much deeper and dealt with very significant issues. People began to evaluate their lives in the light of this crisis. People realized that maybe they had put too much of an emphasis on their careers and too little emphasis on their relationship with God, and too little emphasis on their families and quality time and growing as a person.

"That counseling was mainly among the staff. Among the senators, we did some very important work on how to communicate with their constituencies about the unique role of America in the family of

nations as a protector of freedom."

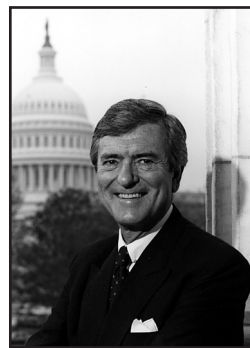
Since Sept. 11, Ogilvie agrees that politics in Washington has changed.

"As we dealt with the greater issue of combatting the enemy who had attacked us, the parties rallied together and worked together more closely and creatively. It was fellow Americans dealing with issues of the war rather than separate parties sorting out their position on issues," he said.

As he's traveled throughout the United States since Sept. 11, Ogilvie said the feeling about the attacks is not as intense as it is in New York and Washington.

"Simply because it's not on people's doorstep," he said. "For people who work at the Capitol and commute past the Pentagon – that has a gigantic, gaping hole in it – that reminds them of the fact that we have been attacked.

"The people in New York and Washington have dealt with stages of realization of their grief, and then fear and anxiety.



First, there was a numbness that kept them from really feeling through how they reacted. Then, as the numbness passed, they began to feel the reality of it."

While nothing could prepare any of us for the shock of the Sept. 11 attacks, Ogilvie said his more than 40 years of ministry prepared him to meet the needs of his constituency.

"I don't think there is a human weakness or problem that I haven't dealt with in my pastoral ministry," he said. "That has conditioned me to know that beneath the most highly polished surface or the most bravado attitude is a person who may be hurting.

"And I have been privileged to work with leaders. That has given me a sense of what is needed in the inner being of a leader and how to draw him or her out about what he or she is feeling, and then help prepare him or her for being strong and courageous and dynamic in the role of leadership.

"I have someone who says, 'It's been good to sit and visit with you, chaplain. I needed to talk until I knew what I wanted to say.' Very often, that is my role: help people identify their feelings and help them turn to God and experience his grace and mercy and power."