

Authors give women rescue workers of 9/11 a voice

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Where are all the women?

Seeking the answer to that question completely changed the lives of the two women asking the question as well as the lives of the 30 women who answered it.

The media and politicians seemed to have not noticed the women in uniform on Sept. 11, 2001, and the days after who were part of the effort that saved 25,000 lives as New York City struggled to cope with the terrorist attacks. Then Mayor Rudolph Giuliani praised the men in several speeches. Then President George W. Bush put his arm around a public servant, thanking all the men for their selfless heroics.



Susan Hagen
and Mary
Carouba sign
books after
speaking Sept.
15 in
Stateline.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Three thousand miles away Susan Hagen and Mary Carouba were

yelling at the television, baffled at where the women were. Why, they wondered, was the coverage so gender specific?

Words do matter, the authors told the crowded room at Harveys casino Sept. 15, where they had been invited by Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

“To be left out of the national conversation ... it’s huge,” Carouba said.

They were in their mid-40s, both with careers, both wondering what they could do. Hagen had been a reporter in the 1970s before becoming a firefighter in 1994. Carouba was an investigative social worker who also did some standup comedy.

“In that moment we realized we couldn’t let it go. That’s how the book was born. We could go to New York and find those women,” Hagen said.

They had no media credentials. They knew no one in New York. They had never been to New York. They had never written a book. They pooled the limits of their credit cards to come up with a budget. Within a couple weeks they were in New York.

Now, where are the women? They asked a cab driver to take them wherever female cops might be hanging out. To a dark bar they were delivered. After a bit of posturing by the women in blue, they came around. They had many stories to tell.

More than 6,000 of the 34,500 police officers in New York City are women. About one-third of the emergency medical technicians are women. Of the 12,500 firefighters, 25 are women. There might not be any female firefighters if it weren’t for a court ruling mandating they allow 25 in. They’ve never allowed any more than that number.

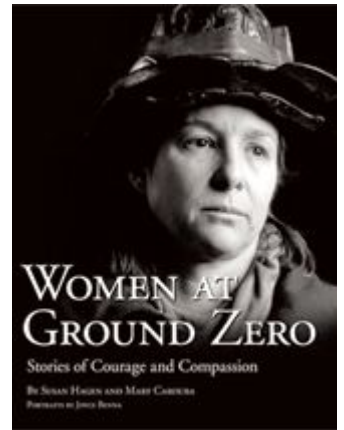
As word got out about Hagen and Carouba being in town, the women showed up at all hours of the day and night at the budding authors’ hotel room. Tears were shed. Words not before

uttered were shared with these Californians.

NYPD's requirements were two days of therapy that had to be taken within a year of the towers collapsing.

Carouba spoke to the families of the three women rescuers who died. Their stories are also in the book "Women at Ground Zero: Stories of Courage and Compassion."

Hagen and Carouba, who still live in Sonoma County, are working on a second book that will be out next year for the 10-year anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center. It will be a look at where the 30 women, who are still all alive, are today.



In their poignant, yet comedic, tale of how their book came to fruition, the duo spoke of bringing the 30 women and five others to the Wine Country a little more than a year after the planes crashed into the towers. They wanted to pay for everything. The invitations went all. Everyone accepted. Then Hagen and Carouba realized they had no idea what they were doing, and had no money to put the gang up.

People with money, they realized, weren't big spenders. It was a bag of \$99 in coins from high school students in Sebastopol who were looking for a way to help a 9/11 cause that was the seed money.

This was also the first time the authors realized what exactly Soroptimist could do. They can raise money and organize events. Hagen and Carouba credit the women's group in Sonoma

County for being instrumental in helping raise \$140,000 so the New Yorkers could have a weeklong respite.

“These women had to come all the way across the country to get the recognition they should have gotten in New York,” Carouba said.

For more information about the book and the authors, [click here](#).