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For Immediate Release

The definitive history of the world's largest ever waterborne evacuation—finally told in time for the 20th anniversary of September 11th

“The greatest 9/11 story you’ve never heard.”

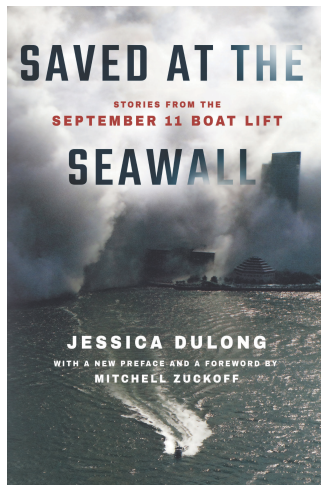
—Garrett Graff, author of *The Only Plane in the Sky*

SAVED AT THE SEAWALL

Stories from the September 11 Boat Lift

By Jessica DuLong

(Three Hills/Cornell University Press; May 15, 2021)



Within minutes after the first plane struck the World Trade Center, mariners began evacuating people from Lower Manhattan.

Not until 10:45 AM EST on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, did the United States Coast Guard issue the official call for “all available boats” to transport people off Manhattan Island. But tugs, ferries, dinner boats, and other vessels had already begun racing to the rescue from points all across the Port of New York and New Jersey hours earlier. As the World Trade Center was attacked and then quickly fell to the ground, survivors—civilians caught instantly in a war, some covered in blood and soot—fled south until they ran out of land at the water’s edge. In less than nine hours, approximately 800 mariners

aboard 150 vessels delivered nearly half a million people from Manhattan. This was the largest maritime evacuation in history—larger even than boat lift at Dunkirk. Yet the story of this heroic effort has never fully been told.

Jessica DuLong has righted this historical wrong with her new book **SAVED AT THE SEAWALL: *Stories from the September 11 Boat Lift*** (Three Hills/Cornell University Press; May 15, 2021). Here DuLong reveals the dramatic story of how the New York Harbor maritime community delivered stranded commuters, residents, and visitors out of harm’s way after the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks. A journalist and historian, DuLong is herself chief engineer, *emerita*, of the retired 1931 New York City fireboat, *John J. Harvey*. She served at Ground Zero, spending four days supplying Hudson River water to fight the fires at the World Trade Center. To tell the story of this marine rescue, DuLong drew on her own experiences as well as eyewitness accounts

to weave together the personal stories of people rescued that day with those of the mariners who saved them. Initially, “I didn’t grasp how history had been made along Manhattan’s shores,” DuLong recounts. “Indeed, still today few people recognize the significance of the evacuation effort that unfolded on that landmark day. This book addresses that omission. The stories that follow are the culmination of nearly a decade of reporting to discover how and why this remarkable rescue came to pass—what made the boat lift necessary, what made it possible, and why it was successful.”

In **SAVED AT THE SEAWALL** DuLong discusses topics such as:

- Why so many all-volunteer, all-civilian crews responded immediately to rescue survivors, even before the official call had gone out
- Why the story of the boat lift and its participants have been overlooked in traditional 9/11 narratives
- What the inner workings of the New York Harbor are like on a typical day and what they were like on 9/11
- What functions the mariners performed on 9/11, aside from evacuations
- What the close-knit nature of the harbor community reveals about collaboration and the power of the collective, especially in the face of a crisis
- The division of life into “before” and “after” when tragedies such as 9/11 and the Covid-19 pandemic occur
- The stark juxtaposition of the togetherness and unity that sprang from 9/11 in comparison to the isolation and fear that has grown in the days of Covid
- How stories not only help make meaning out of tragedy but also work to preserve history that would otherwise be lost
- The cyclical nature of grief and how it will impact the 20th anniversary of 9/11, compounded by the pain of the pandemic
- Why it took DuLong so long to write about her personal experiences on 9/11 and the days that followed
- How we move forward, individually and collectively, after a tragedy

Chronicling those crucial hours when thousands of lives were at risk, **SAVED AT THE SEAWALL** highlights how resourcefulness and basic human goodness triumphed over turmoil on one of America’s darkest days.

As DuLong writes, “We have much to learn from the mariners and others who, when the planes struck, stepped out of their workday roles to become first responders. Over and over again they chose to help. They recognized fellow humans in peril and did all they could to come to their aid. Each of us has this capacity within. What choices can we make today to act out our hope, our humanity? How can we connect with others by listening, really listening, to their stories?”

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About Jessica DuLong

A Brooklyn-based, ASJA award-winning author, journalist, historian, ghostwriter, book collaborator, proposal doctor, editor, and writing coach, Jessica DuLong has collaborated on a wide array of narrative and other nonfiction books including: memoir; history; trauma, psychology, and neuroscience; health and wellness; racism, equity, and justice; gender; parenting; law; and personal finance. She has taught writing with Voices From War and The Sackett Street Writers Workshop.

Her first book, *My River Chronicles: Rediscovering the Work that Built America; A Personal and Historical Journey* (Free Press), explores the value of hands-on work through memoir, history, and reportage. Lauded in *The New York Times* as “very fine and gutsy,” *My River Chronicles* won the 2010 American Society of Journalists and Authors Outstanding Book Award for memoir. Gay Talese called the book “elegantly written,” adding that it “carries forward the craft of literary non-fiction with grace and energy.”

Praised as “a confident and sensual writer” by Dwight Garner of *The New York Times*, DuLong was also named as “one of the best of the new generation of narrative journalists” by Mark Kramer, founding director of Harvard University’s Nieman Foundation Program on Narrative Journalism.

DuLong’s journalism has been published by CNN.com, *Newsweek International*, *Rolling Stone*, *Psychology Today*, *New York History*, *Huffington Post*, *Newsday*, *Parenting*, *CosmoGIRL!*, and *Today’s Machining World*. Her media appearances include: Spike Lee’s forthcoming HBO docuseries “[NYC Epicenters 9/11→2021½](http://NYCEpicenters9/11-202112),” TODAY show, CBS Sunday Morning, *USA Today*, History Channel, C-Span, NY1 “NYT Close Up with Sam Roberts,” WNYC’s “Leonard Lopate,” Martha Stewart Living Radio, *The New York Times*, and the *New Yorker*. She also appears as Jessica, who stands “at the controls in the noisy engine room,” in Maira Kalman’s picture book, *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey*.

DuLong is also a DONA-certified postpartum doula and a USCG-licensed marine engineer who served aboard retired 1931 NYC fireboat *John J. Harvey* for 20 years, 11 of those as chief.

DuLong’s latest book (published under her own name), **SAVED AT THE SEAWALL: Stories from the September 11 Boat Lift** (Three Hills/Cornell University Press, May 2021) is the definitive history of the largest maritime evacuation in history—larger even than boat lift at Dunkirk.

More information at:

<https://jessicadulong.com/>

<https://twitter.com/JessicaDuLong>

<https://www.facebook.com/jessica.dulong.1>

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More Advance Praise for SAVED AT THE SEAWALL

“DuLong’s remarkable book ... has brought to the surface long-overlooked tales of heroism and sacrifice, recounting the actions and sharing the character of a community response to tragedy as immediate and impressive as any in history.”

—**Mitchell Zuckoff, author of *Fall and Rise***

“*Saved at the Seawall* is the greatest 9/11 story you’ve never heard. Jessica DuLong’s impressive, vital work has preserved one of 9/11’s most dramatic and least-known stories. Now future generations will forever know of the courage and spirit of New York’s mariners.”

—**Garrett Graff, author of *The Only Plane in the Sky***

“Jessica DuLong brings this extraordinary episode to vivid, poignant life, using both literary and maritime expertise.”

—**Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold’s Ghost***

“No one has told this incredible story better than Jessica DuLong. *Saved at the Seawall* is a moving page-turner.”

—**Kenneth T. Jackson, president emeritus, New-York Historical Society**

“The horrific stories Jessica DuLong shares remain hopeful and inspiring. *Saved at the Seawall* is a compelling read and shows humanity at its best.”

—**Ann L. Bittenwieser, urban historian**

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