

NYPD Sergeants walk for 9-11 heroes

By Robert Mladinich
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On the evening of September 10, 2001, George Martin, a 14-year veteran of the National Football League and tri-captain of the 1986 Super Bowl champion New York Giants, was on an airliner about to land at Newark Airport.

A woman sitting next to him mentioned that she was visiting New York for the first time. Martin pointed toward the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, told her what architectural marvels they were, and said she just had to see them up close.

When Martin turned on the television at his New Jersey home the next morning, he saw one tower in flames. He then watched in horror as another jetliner crashed into the other tower. He and his tight-knit family, which includes his wife Dianne and children Teresa, George II, Benjamin, and Aaron, soon learned that two 23-year-old neighbors were killed in the attack. Martin, who is now 54, has described them as "God's special angelic kids."

Martin never forgot those neighbors, nor has he forgotten the nearly 3,000 others who perished in the attack or the scores of rescue and recovery workers who are now afflicted with an array of life-threatening ailments.

In an attempt to raise at least \$10 million to benefit the sick and injured Ground Zero workers, he embarked on a 3,200-mile fundraising walk across the United States on Sunday, September 16th. Still in tremendous physical shape, he has trained to walk between 35 and 50 miles a day.

The endeavor is called "A Journey for 9/11" and it has the official support of many sponsors.

The walk is expected to take approximately four months. It began



Former NFL star George Martin and NYPD Sergeant's union president Ed Mullins walk across the George Washington Bridge at the beginning of Martin's walk across the country to raise money for first responders who have become ill since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

on the New York side of the George Washington Bridge and will end at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco sometime in December.

Joining Mr. Martin for the first leg of the journey across the bridge from New York to New Jersey was SBA President Ed Mullins and Citywide Secretary Paul Capotosto. Mullins has plans for himself and other SBA members to also be at the finish line.

Four NYPD sergeants, John Coughlin, Michael Curtin, Rodney Gillis

and Timothy Roy, lost their lives while engaged in what is considered the most momentous rescue effort in United States history.

"While so many rescue and recovery workers have been lost and forgotten in a bureaucratic maze, George is going all out to help them," said Mullins. "I am honored that the New York City Sergeants Benevolent Association has been able to be part of his challenging and noble cause."

To make a tax-deductible donation to "A Journey for 9/11" log on to:

www.active.com/donate/aJourney-for911 or write to A Journey for 9/11, Rockefeller Center, PO Box 4862, New York, NY 10185-4862. Or you can call toll-free: 1-888-702-5080.

Robert Mladinich is the communications director for the NYC Sergeants Benevolent Association. He too joined Martin for the first leg of his journey. After spending just a few minutes with Martin, he has no doubt that he will succeed in this lofty endeavor. Mladinich can be reached at: rmladinich@sbanyc.org