

LIFE-SIZE HEROES

JOE McNALLY USES THE WORLD'S BIGGEST POLAROID CAMERA TO SHOOT ONE-TO-ONE PORTRAITS OF SEPTEMBER 11 SURVIVORS.

Last summer, Joe McNally used the world's largest Polaroid camera—a room-sized, one-of-a-kind device that now resides in a Manhattan studio—to photograph a principal dancer of the New York City Ballet. But in the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, he had a bigger idea for the big camera.

"I wanted to make some kind of contribution," says McNally, whose work has long appeared in *National Geographic*, *Life*, and other magazines. He arrived at the notion of using the giant Polaroid to make life-size portraits of the men and women who'd become larger-than-life heroes working at Ground Zero in Manhattan. With significant financial backing from AOL/Time-Warner, McNally shot portraits of 272 firefighters and other survivors of the attacks; the images have just been published as a book called *One Nation* (Little, Brown & Company), with an essay by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the last person McNally photographed. A large percentage of the proceeds from the book will go to victims of the attacks. In addition, a major exhibition of the life-size Polaroid prints is being planned.

Among those whom McNally photographed are the three men shown here. At left is Danny Foley, 28, an FDNY firefighter who worked day and night at the site of the disaster before finding the body of his brother, Tommy Foley, also a firefighter, on September 21. At right is Jan Deczmur, 48, a window washer who pried his way out of a trapped elevator with his squeegee. At far right is Louie Cacchioli, 51, a firefighter who rescued many people from the North Tower.

"Once the word about what we were doing got out, people just started showing up to be photographed," says McNally. "Everybody wanted to be a part of it. That was the spirit behind the whole project. That's what it was all about."

For more about McNally's project, see *On Set*, page 90.

McNally's life-size images of heroes and survivors. This page: Firefighter Danny Foley. Opposite page, left: Window washer Jan Deczmur. Right: Firefighter Louie Cacchioli.



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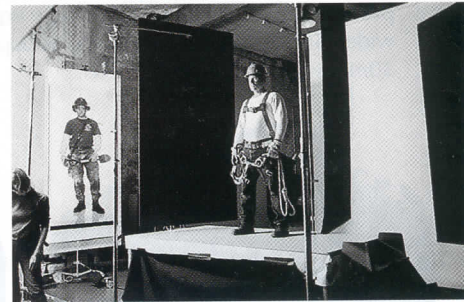
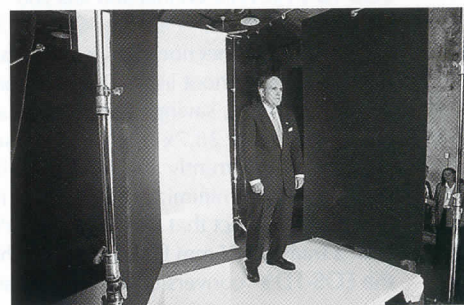
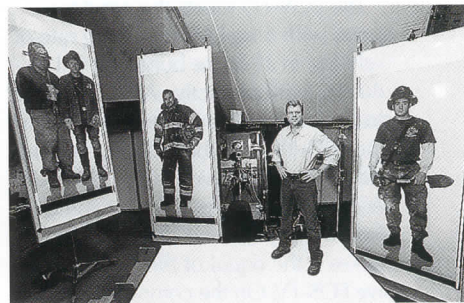
ONE-TO-ONE PORTRAITS

HOW JOE MCNALLY SHOT
HIS LIFE-SIZE POLAROIDS OF THE
SURVIVORS OF SEPTEMBER 11.

Mild-mannered photojournalist Joe McNally is not a techie kind of guy. But in his assignment work for *National Geographic*, *Life*, and other magazines, he has often taken on challenges that require super-human technical skills. Once, for example, he used 40 carefully positioned flash units to light a Manhattan intersection at night (for a Nikon ad about SB-series Speedlights). Another time, he made multiple stop-action photos of synchronized diving (for a *Sports Illustrated* story on new Olympic events). So when McNally conceived a project to celebrate the courage of September 11's survivors—both those who escaped the twin towers and the rescue workers who came to help them—he thought big. In fact, he thought biggest: McNally decided to use the world's largest Polaroid camera, the only one of its kind, to create life-size portraits of the tragedy's heroes. (See our exclusive story on page 56.)

The room-sized Polaroid camera, as it's known, now lives in a downtown Manhattan studio, just a few subway stops from Ground Zero. For years it was installed at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, where it was used mostly to photograph paintings at their actual

Clockwise from left: WTC firefighters Billy Ryan and Mike Morrissey; McNally with his Polaroids; Mayor Giuliani and a worker pose.



NINA RUSSO (3)

size; its New York business comes mainly from artists doing special projects. Working with longtime camera managers Mark Sobczak and Laurel Parker (partners in photography and life), McNally and his assistant Nina Russo spent three nonstop weeks shooting 272 people. (For more information about the studio itself, call 212-505-8814.)

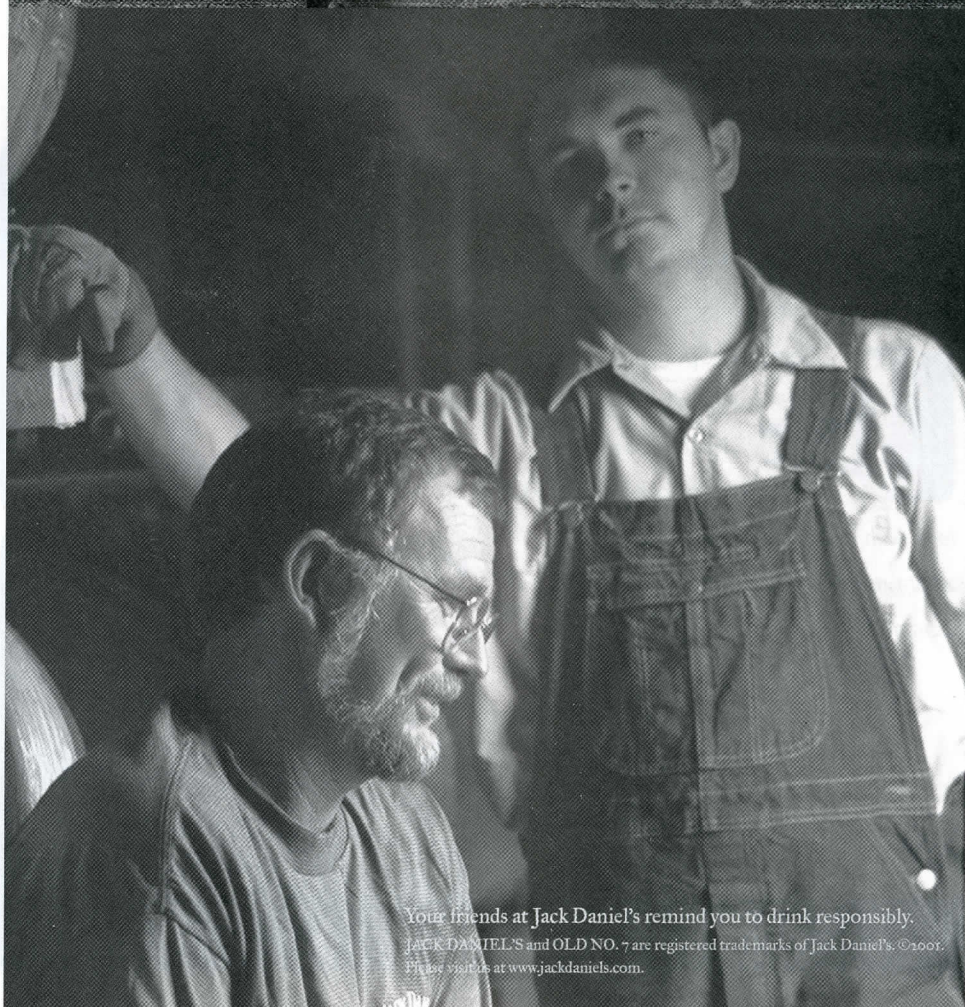
The room-sized Polaroid's tall, narrow format—its image area is about 40x90 inches, the print itself a nine-foot length of Polacolor ER film cut from the raw 44-inch-wide rolls used to manufacture Polaroid's peel-apart films—seemed tailor-made for full-length, life-sized portraits of people. As word of McNally's project spread among the rescue workers, they began to drop by the studio, where McNally stood them against a white seamless and blasted them with 28,800 watt-seconds of light from a dozen 2,400 watt-second Profoto Acute2 strobes donated by Jeff Hirsch of New York's FotoCare. (Other contributors to the project included Kodak, which provided the 120 rollfilm McNally used to shoot simultaneous 6x7cm chromes for an accompanying book titled *One Nation*, and New York's US Color lab, which provided the processing.) The photographer needed all that light in order to stop down the lens—a special 1:1 optic hand-built by Polaroid from parts of a retired U2 spy plane camera—for sufficient depth of field. Even so, given the lens's 12-foot focal length (about 3,600mm), depth of field was a mere quarter of an inch.

The exposed film was then processed inside the camera with a manual transport system that sandwiches the negative and positive print, using oversized rollers to spread developer between them. (Sobczak and Parker stay inside the camera during the exposure, then start the processing immediately, opening the door to the studio only when the lighttight sandwich has been made.) McNally usually shot just one or two frames per person, since the film costs \$340 a pop—though one subject, a young firefighter whose first day on the job was September 11, required four frames (at a cost of \$1,360) because he kept looking “like a deer caught in the headlights.”

When the Polaroid print was peeled away from the negative, how did McNally's heroic subjects react to seeing themselves as big as life? “The last time they were seriously photographed was probably at their weddings,” says McNally, who calls the project the most important work he's ever done. “So it was a unique experience for them.”—RUSSELL HART



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