

9/11 Whistleblowers: Kevin Ryan

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In the early 2000s, Kevin Ryan was the site manager at Environmental Health Laboratories. On November 11, 2004, he wrote directly to Frank Gayle, the director of NIST's Twin Towers investigation. The following week, he was fired. This is his story.

TRANSCRIPT

"But someone would have talked" say the self-styled skeptics that believe the government's official conspiracy theory of 9/11." After all, every major conspiracy has its whistleblowers, doesn't it?"

But there's a problem with this logically fallacious non-argument. "Someone" *did* talk. In fact, numerous people have come out to blow the whistle on the events of September 11, 2001, and the cover up that surrounds those events.

These are the stories of the **9/11 Whistleblowers**.

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In 2001, Kevin Ryan was the site manager at Environmental Health Laboratories (EHL) in South Bend, Indiana. At the time, EHL was a subsidiary of Underwriters Laboratories (UL), a global safety consulting and certification corporation that tests a range of consumer and industrial products for compliance with government safety standards. Among many other things, UL provides fire resistance ratings for structural steel components to insure compliance with New York City building codes.

Just weeks after the events of September 11, 2001, UL's then-CEO, Loring Knoblauch, visited Ryan's EHL lab in South Bend. During his speech there, Knoblauch [assured the lab's workers](#) that UL "had certified the steel in the World Trade Center buildings" and "that we should all be proud that the buildings had stood for so long under such intense conditions." Knowing UL's role in producing a fire resistance directory and providing ratings for steel components, Ryan thought little of the statement at the time.

But Ryan's curiosity about UL's role in the certification of the World Trade Center steel was piqued when, in 2003, he began to question the lies that the Bush administration had used to justify the invasion of Iraq, and, eventually, to question the official story of September 11th itself. Recalling Knoblauch's comments about UL's role in certifying the Trade Center steel shortly after 9/11, Ryan began to take a professional interest in the official investigation into the Twin Towers' destruction, an investigation in which UL itself was to play a part.

As Ryan began to learn more about the issues involved with the destruction of the towers and the ongoing investigation into that destruction, his concerns only grew. Why had the actual steel evidence of the towers's destruction been [illegally removed and disposed of](#) before a proper investigation could

take place? Why did not one or two, but *three* modern, steel-frame buildings completely collapse due to fire on 9/11 given that such an event had never taken place before? Why did the towers fail at all when John Skilling, the structural engineer responsible for designing the towers, [claimed in 1993](#)—just five years before his death—that his own analysis of jet plane crashes and ensuing fires in the towers had concluded that “the building structure would still be there”? And why had Knoblauch himself bragged about UL’s role in testing the trade center steel—a test that would have rated the floor components for two hours of fire resistance and the building columns for three hours—when the North Tower “failed” in 102 minutes and the South Tower came down in just 56 minutes?

These concerns prompted Ryan, in October 2003, to write directly to Loring Knoblauch, outlining his thoughts and “asking what [Knoblauch] was doing to protect our reputation.” But if Ryan was expecting Knoblauch to put his mind at ease about these issues, he was sorely disappointed. Instead, Knoblauch—who included [Tom Chapin](#), then the head of UL’s fire resistance division, in the email chain—wrote a response that only raised more questions than it answered.

KEVIN RYAN: Knoblauch copied Tom Chapin on his response to me, because it was Tom’s job as the leader of the fire resistance division to really address these kinds of things. And interestingly, Tom Chapin had written [a letter to the editors](#) at The New York Times in 2002 where he basically admitted, again, that UL’s testing had been behind the fire resistance of the World Trade Center towers. And so I’ve written about that a little bit, but he was very clear that the World Trade Center stood for as long as it did because of UL’s testing. And the problem of course with that is that that the south tower lasted for only 56 minutes after it was hit, and the testing that was required by New York City code was three hours of fire resistance for the columns and two hours for the floor assemblies. So 56 minutes and those

ratings do not add up. That's just not something that should go unquestioned.

So Loring Knoblauch wrote back to me after my questions in—it must have been October 2003 when I wrote to him. He wrote back to me a month later and he said all these things about how the company had tested the steel components used to build the World Trade Center towers. What he meant is he we had tested samples of those and provided ratings for fire resistance to the New York City Code—again, three hours for columns and two hours for floor assemblies. And that information established the confidence that the buildings would stand in those fire durations. And the test that was used was ASTM E119, which is the standard test used for this purpose. And UL is the leader in doing that testing, so it wasn't a surprise.

And not only that but NIST—the government agency NIST [the National Institute of Standards and Technology]—had made clear in some of their progress reports that UL had consulted with the construction companies for the World Trade Center towers, and throughout the building of the buildings that UL had provided that information. So it's really not a surprise at all.

And Tom Chapin replied further to me that the NIST agency was doing an investigation and asked me, basically, to have patience. And I did for maybe the next year.

In 2002, NIST began its three-year, \$16 million study of the Twin Towers' "failure." Tom Chapin had assured Ryan that UL was cooperating with this investigation, and that his concerns would be allayed once the [final report](#) was released. But by 2004, it was already clear that there were serious problems with that report and its preliminary findings, including findings from [tests conducted by UL](#) on mock-ups of the WTC floor assemblies that contradicted NIST's own conclusions

about the buildings' destruction.

RYAN: Well, it's very important to understand that with the official accounts for the World Trade Center, there were a number of explanations given in the early years. And for the towers the one that was settled upon and that lasted for three years was the pancake theory.

And the pancake theory was this concept where the floor assemblies had heated up and sagged and this steel had softened or weakened and then they started to collapse upon each other in a pancake fashion. And then the the columns basically just folded inward. So that was the official account, really. It was given by the FEMA investigators [Corley and Thornton](#) and others—who coincidentally had also given us the official account for the Oklahoma City bombing. But in [this video](#) from the television program Nova it was captured for everyone's benefit in little videos . . . animations. And so the pancake theory was the official account.

And [UL tested the floor assemblies](#) basically for the possibility of this in August 2004. So this was, again, nine months or ten months after I had asked my original questions. And they did so by using different assemblies with varying amounts of fireproofing. One of the assemblies had basically no fire proofing on it at all and they ran it through this furnace in this ASTM E119 test and concluded in the end that there would be no collapse. That the floors would not collapse even at temperatures and times greater than what we're seeing at the World Trade Center.

And they made that clear. NIST made this clear, that the pancake theory was not supported. So that left us all at that time with no explanation, in 2004, three years later. Having invaded Iraq, having done so much to invest in the official account that the World Trade Center had been destroyed by these planes. And that was a difficult situation for NIST and

for everyone.

Realizing that UL was not pressing NIST on the discrepancies in its findings, Kevin Ryan took matters into his own hands and, on November 11, 2004, [wrote directly to Frank Gayle](#), the director of NIST's Twin Towers investigation. That email began:

"As I'm sure you know, the company I work for certified the steel components used in the construction of the WTC buildings. In requesting information from both our CEO and Fire Protection business manager last year, I learned that they did not agree on the essential aspects of the story, except for one thing—that the samples we certified met all requirements. They suggested we all be patient and understand that UL was working with your team, and that tests would continue through this year. I'm aware of UL's attempts to help, including performing tests on models of the floor assemblies. But the results of these tests appear to indicate that the buildings should have easily withstood the thermal stress caused by pools of burning jet fuel."

After pointing out the problems raised by NIST's own investigation—including the tests that disproved claims that the steel in the floor area simply "melted"—Ryan got to the heart of the matter:

"This story just does not add up. If steel from those buildings did soften or melt, I'm sure we can all agree that this was certainly not due to jet fuel fires of any kind, let alone the briefly burning fires in those towers. That fact should be of great concern to all Americans. Alternatively, the contention that this steel did fail at temperatures around 250C suggests that the majority of deaths on 9/11 were due to a safety-related failure. That suggestion should be of great concern to my company."

“There is no question that the events of 9/11 are the emotional driving force behind the War on Terror. And the issue of the WTC collapse is at the crux of the story of 9/11. My feeling is that your metallurgical tests are at the crux of the crux of the crux. Either you can make sense of what really happened to those buildings, and communicate this quickly, or we all face the same destruction and despair that come from global decisions based on disinformation and ‘chatter.’”

Predictably, if unfortunately, Gayle never responded to the email. However, Ryan made the important decision to share the email, and his concerns, with the broader public:

RYAN: *Frank did not respond, no. Actually, that letter was sent to him and then also copied to a couple of people who were trying to find more information. Trying to find the truth about what happened on 9/11. Those two included David Griffin, who had just recently written a book, and Catherine Austin Fitz, the director of 911Truth.org.*

Dr. Griffin asked me almost immediately if he could share it publicly. And, of course, with some hesitation, but knowing the importance in believing what I wrote, I told him it was OK. And overnight there must have been tens of thousands of people reading this letter on the web and people calling our offices in South Bend at UL constantly, and calling me at home constantly. I think a lot of people were feeling the same—they were thinking the same thing: That clearly there was something wrong here and the story was not explaining what we needed to know.

So Dr. Gayle did not respond. He’s never responded. Maybe one day I will talk to him personally and find out what he thinks. But, you know, these things are clear in terms of job—this is not really just a career decision, although it is. It’s a career decision. It’s more than that, it’s a

decision about, you know, what kind of world we want to live in, and at a time where that kind of decision is really important. Because, you know, the book Nineteen Eighty-Four was supposed to be a fiction and it's evolving into reality.

Ryan did not engage in these actions naively. He knew that allowing his concerns to go public would focus public attention on himself and on UL, and that such actions would have ramifications for his employment.

But if he was bracing himself for those ramifications, he didn't have long to wait. His email to Frank Gayle was sent on Thursday, November 11, 2004. It was published on the web the following day. Immediately, Ryan's phone was ringing off the hook and UL was being contacted for comment. That weekend, the company reached out to him to let him know the consequences of his actions.

***RYAN:** The Human Resources folks called me that weekend and asked if I would contact the people on the web who had published it and asked that it be taken down. And I refused to do that and told them that I didn't think that was the right thing to do. And I think it was at that very point then they started making the plans to terminate me.*

So I had actually taken the next Monday off of work and that was convenient. It allowed me to get my thoughts together. And then on Tuesday when I came in—which I believe was the 16th—the leaders from the Northbrook, Chicago office were there, and they had told me they would be: "Please make sure you're there." They brought a letter on UL letterhead and made it clear that, you know, they felt that I had practiced poor judgment in writing this letter and sending it to their client NIST. It had harmed their relationship with NIST, and thereby I was terminated.

So, yeah, that was a tough spot for my family and I. But my

wife has been supportive. She knows the idealistic nature of her husband, I think, and she knew why it was important. And we've done fine, we've gotten by and gotten other jobs. And that's—I believe people should recognize that it's not the end of the world to lose your job. Sometimes it's a new beginning that was useful.

Not for courting controversy, but merely for pointing out the glaring truth, Ryan was fired from his job. Like so many other whistleblowers in so many other stories, Ryan paid a price for doing what his conscience demanded.

Also like many other brave men and women who have been thrust into the position of blowing the whistle, Ryan has found a way to thrive despite the setbacks. Rather than keeping quiet and moving on with his life, Ryan has doubled down on his efforts, founding several action groups, editing the [Journal of 9/11 Studies](#), writing articles and books on the subject of 9/11, volunteering on the board of directors of [Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth](#), delivering lectures on the destruction of the World Trade Center, and continuing to raise public awareness of the problems with the official story of the founding event of the “War on Terror.”

In the end, despite the high price he paid career-wise, Ryan feels that his decision to blow the whistle and call out the self-contradictions of the NIST investigation was worth it. After all, it is only when those who know the truth are unafraid to step up and speak it, regardless of the personal consequences, that we will ever hope to achieve true justice.

RYAN: What I've been able to benefit from is understanding a lot more about society, history, politics, being better at communicating myself. And I've met a lot of great people. We've worked together to raise awareness and try to bring justice for 9/11. You know, I've met and presented with 9/11 victims' family members. I've met 9/11 Commission leaders and

and other people who were very central to this story. So many great researchers. So many great people. So overall it was definitely worth it for me.

It's a personal decision, of course, and it has to be motivated by trying to do some good. If it's not motivated by trying to do some good then you're doing the wrong thing.