



**Reflections on the Passing of  
John C. Whitehead  
April 2, 1922 – February 7, 2015**

With deep sadness, I write to let you know that our Founding Chairman, John C. Whitehead, passed away yesterday evening. There are some losses so great it feels like the world has become a little smaller through their absence, and John's is surely one of them.

In the wake of 9/11, amidst devastation and loss, our great city and nation needed a true leader to help guide the recovery and revitalization of lower Manhattan. We were blessed to have John take on that charge. He embarked on a journey marked by emotional, political, and physical challenges, steering downtown's resurgence and establishing a master plan for the World Trade Center rebuilding that would help to heal one of our nation's deepest wounds. And then he founded the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. As our Chairman, John led us successfully through so many challenges, from early fundraising milestones to finalizing the design of the Memorial and Museum and getting construction started, all in the midst of a city still grieving and struggling with how best to memorialize our loss.

But John Whitehead was prepared for those challenges because of a lifetime record of serving his country when we needed him most—a career that stretched from storming the beaches of Normandy in WWII, to taking the helm at Goldman Sachs, to serving as Deputy Secretary of State under President Reagan, to leading some of our most essential non-profit organizations. Throughout his 92 years, John consistently stood up for what is just and what is right, and in so doing, showed us all that leaders who have integrity at their core can make a tremendous difference on the national and global landscape.

John lived a life that embodied that integrity. What's even more striking, given all that John accomplished, is that he was universally regarded as kind, thoughtful, and generous. John's approach—whether to global finance, world politics, or the development of a memorial and museum at the heart of our nation's loss—showed a true social conscience. His commitment to confronting the greatest challenges of our times never wavered.

There will be many tributes to John in the days, weeks, and months to come. For us, John was a shining beacon of true integrity, gravitas, and leadership, and so, in his honor, we will keep the lights shining up through the WTC tridents that stand tall in our Museum around the clock through his funeral.

In his book, "A Life in Leadership," John wrote:

"Looking back, I can't help thinking how extraordinarily lucky I've been. Mine has been a good life, filled with lots of fun, interesting experiences, drama, and an engagement with serious issues at the highest levels... I have lived in a time when there has been a lot to be done, from fighting the Nazis to battling terrorists. I like to think I have risen to many of these challenges in my own quiet fashion, and I am confident that the next generation of leaders will meet them in their turn. I have been glad to do my part in all of these great endeavors. More than glad. From first to last, I have been thrilled to be in on the action."

We are the lucky ones, John.

-Joe