



## SHOULDERS TO CRY ON

### TATTOO PAIN THERAPY FOR 9/11 GRIEF

By DAN KADISON

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September 5, 2006 -- Firefighter Tiernach Cassidy lost five friends on 9/11 and decided to remember them through the pain of the massive tattoo covering his back.

"It was a pain thing for me. It was a form of survivor's guilt," said Cassidy, who was at Ground Zero when the second tower fell.

"I felt like I got away and they didn't. And I didn't do good enough and I had to go through some sort of pain," Cassidy, 34, said near his West 19th Street firehouse. So he decided to spend \$5,000 on the tattoo, which memorializes the friends he lost and the day he'll never forget.

The friends are Battalion Commander Orio Palmer, 45 and firefighter Steve Belson, 51 of Battalion 7; Lt. Phil Petti, 43, and firefighters Mike Mullan, 34 and Angel Juarbe Jr. 35 of Ladder Co. 12.

Cassidy, an eight-year vet of the FDNY, got a tattoo when he was 18 and decided he never wanted to go through the pain again.

Sept. 11 changed his mind.

"Everybody heals in their own way. That's what I did to help me get through it . . . I sat for 50 hours for tattoos.

"My stress counselor said at the time this was pain therapy, which it was. I don't like tattoos."

The sessions at a West 23rd Street tattoo parlor, Rising Dragon, lasted a year. It was there he met his girlfriend, Cristina, who was a receptionist. They have a son Lucas, 3. This photo of his back, by Jonathan Hyman, appeared in this week's Time magazine and will be part of two exhibits featuring Hyman's work, at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and at 7 World Trade Center.

"Would I do it again? Yes," Cassidy said. "I don't see how emotionally I could deal with it without feeling the pain."