

NEW YORK

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They Built This City

Would construction workers actually want to work in all these buildings they're putting up?

WITH OUR SKYLINE forested with cranes, it's a good time to be a construction worker. Workers at the 52-story *New York Times* Building, rising across from the Port Authority, are practically celebrities: The developer hired superstar photographer Annie Leibovitz to spend her mornings shooting them. Ironworkers Teddy Noller and Cyril Stapleton and ironworker apprentice Brandon Gonzales (pictured left, above) sat down with Arianne Cohen.

What is your job? TEDDY: We hang the curtain wall, which is made of ceramic rods, on the exterior of the building. **How long does that take?** TEDDY: A year. We'll be done, I'm thinking, in November. **Are you afraid of falling?** TEDDY: When I was starting out, I fell four floors at the Winter Garden. I landed in a net. We had cheap harnesses then, just around the waist. **Why are cheap harnesses dangerous?** TEDDY: There's nothing around the shoulders. They turn you upside down, and you pass out. **What happens if you fall here?** TEDDY: You won't fall all the way down. You're gonna get hurt a little, but you won't die. We've got a bungee, so you'll drop five feet and get bruises. And a bruised ego. **When do you eat?** TEDDY: We have coffee break, and we order a little breakfast. **Does the delivery guy come up?** TEDDY: We got an apprentice that gets our coffee in the morning. Not Brandon. Another apprentice. **Is this like being hazed?** TEDDY:

No. It's like a rite of passage. I mean, you come into business, you have to get the coffee. We're supposed to teach him, but we teach him how to get coffee first. **Do you whistle at women?** TEDDY: We try, but we're too high. We can't even see them. BRANDON: They're like ants. **Would you want to work in this building?** TEDDY: I wouldn't want to work in an office. But if I had to, this building would be okay. CYRIL: They say it's supposed to be environmental and stuff. That would be good. **Teddy, what's your job?** TEDDY: I talk to the crane on a mike. I'm the foreman. **Do you have to work as hard as the other guys?** BRANDON and CYRIL: [*Shake heads vigorously.*] TEDDY: Do I work what? Oh. Yes, I do. I make sure that everything comes together. **Do you plan to do construction forever?** CYRIL: Unless we win the lottery or something. **Do pedestrians have any annoying habits?** TEDDY: Yes! They refuse to go across the street when you ask them. They'll stand under a heavy load and watch it go up. They're just amazed by this. **You ask them to please cross the street and they don't?** TEDDY: Yes. They'll stand there and just look up. I don't know what they're thinking. CYRIL: We don't stand under loads. That should tell you something. **Had you ever heard of Annie Leibovitz?** TEDDY: I knew her from, um, John Lennon. CYRIL: Yeah, John Lennon. BRANDON: And Demi Moore. **Did you talk to her?** BRANDON: I talked to her. I wanted to know if she could e-mail me the pictures. **Did she?** BRANDON: No.