


# Substantial Disruption



## The Year of the Dog

By Mike Tully

Salty was on the 71<sup>st</sup> floor of World Trade Center Tower 1; Roselle was on the 78<sup>th</sup>. Both were at work when terror struck on 9/11, serving as guide dogs for their blind masters who worked in the building. Salty and Roselle were yellow Labrador retrievers, trained at [Guiding Eyes for the Blind in Yorktown Heights](#), and had been with their humans since the late 90s. When the plane hit the building and panic, death, and chaos surrounded them, Salty and Roselle went to work.

Salty was sitting next to Omar Rivera, blinded 14 years earlier by glaucoma. Omar grabbed for Salty's leash and the dog calmly threaded his way through people and debris to the fire escape. At one point, a well-meaning but unknowing co-worker tried to grab Salty's leash, thinking the dog needed help. Salty refused to leave Omar's side and made it clear he had everything under control. It took 75 minutes to descend 71 floors to the lobby. They were a few blocks away when the tower collapsed. Salty had saved them both.

Roselle was asleep when the building was struck by the aircraft 15 floors above the office where she and her human, Michael Hingson, worked. Michael was blind since birth and met Roselle in 1999. Roselle, like Salty, rescued her human companion, along with 30 others who followed them down the fire escape. About half way to the lobby they passed several firefighters who were climbing the stairs and Roselle stopped to greet them. After descending 1,463 steps, Roselle and Michael were on the ground floor. As they left the building, Tower 2 suddenly collapsed, spewing debris that showered on them. "She saved my life," Michael said later. "While everyone ran in panic, Roselle remained totally focused on her job. While debris fell around us, and even hit us, Roselle stayed calm." She led Michael to a subway station, where she rescued a woman who had been blinded by flying dust and debris.

The reason I'm thinking about [Salty and Roselle](#), as well as [Trakr](#), who discovered the last human survivor of the 9/11 attack, is because we are about to commence the Year of the Dog in the [Chinese Calendar](#). Now, for a thought experiment. Remove all the dog references in the foregoing paragraphs and substitute the word, "Rooster." I know: you can't. It's impossible to imagine the same scenario if Salty and Roselle were roosters. Dogs rescued their humans and others. A rooster would have been a cock-a-doodle-do-nothing. It's time to bid farewell to the Year of the Rooster, also referred to as the Year of the Cock.

Was it ever! "The year of the Rooster is a time to cockadoodle-do about your accomplishments," writes Avia Venefica in [whats-your-sign.com](#). According to [chinahighlights.com](#), one of the lucky colors of the Year of the Rooster is gold and the lucky directions are south and southeast. Can you think of anybody who rose to prominence in the Year of the Rooster, who likes to crow about his accomplishments, loves the color gold, and escapes to his favorite property (Mar-A-Lago) in the Southeast? Yes, the Year of the Rooster was the year of the crowing, strutting, gilded rooster who rules the Oval Office.

The waning year was also the year of Harvey Weinstein and boorish males eager to drop their trousers and flash their roosters at vulnerable women in board rooms, casting studios, even medical offices. They strut and puff out their feathery chests, brandishing spurs and combs while crowing about their greatness, oblivious to their loathsomeness. They include the First Rooster, with his “Access Hollywood” braggadocio who sympathizes with wife-beaters, but not their victims. He defended his “Access Hollywood” remarks as “[locker-room banter](#).” It’s not locker room. It’s barnyard.

Roosters have their place, but mainly they strut, crow, fight and have their way with hens. Compare that to the [wonderful array](#) of dog behaviors. Dogs can read our emotions, can tell when we are lying, and can even detect cancer. Have you felt a special bond when you look a dog in the eyes? So did the dog. Both of you experienced an Oxytocin rush, accompanied by a sensation of bonding and connectedness. Dogs and humans are wired to love each other. Can you imagine an Oxytocin rush when you look into the eyes of a rooster? Or Donald Trump?

What of the Year of the Dog? [Ms. Venefica writes](#), “the year of the Dog is one of understanding, faith and devotion,” that has a “kind of advocate feel to it.” “Those who have no voice to speak are somehow able to get their point across in the year of the Dog,” she adds. “Those who cannot stand on their own, will somehow have the support they need. This year is all about acknowledging those we have forgotten, and paying mindful respect to the unspoken heroes who deserve it.” The dogs will lead us faithfully and bravely through the rooster tail of dust and debris spawned in the wake of the most dysfunctional individual ever to sit at the Resolute Desk. What a year it can be for victims of sexual assault and harassment, for the rural poor dealing with the opioid epidemic, for Forest Rangers striving to preserve our natural reserve, for minority individuals still battling red lines and inchoate racism, for Dreamers and their families, for victims of sex trafficking, for the disabled, for the land, air and sea. This is a year to roll up our sleeves, pull up our boots, and chase off the roosters.

Time to let the dogs out.

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