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Man on Wire: A Few Authentic Friends

On August 7th, 1974, a French acrobat and wire walker Philippe Petit, walked between the World Trade Center Twin Tower, on a wire, which was 400 meters above the streets of Manhattan. This was an extraordinary achievement, which has been described as "a beautiful gift" to the people in Manhattan. In 2008 James Marsh, in his film "Man on Wire" Annie described the image of Philippe Petit walking back and forth, kneeling, and saluting the audiences of the streets of Manhattan from a wire above. In the movie the director also includes interviews of Philippe Petit's friends who were behind the scene where they helped him and supported him to achieve this unbelievable feat. In fact, these friends inspired him and encouraged him, helped him plan the logistics, and executed the plan as a team. He never could have accomplished the coup without his close friend Jean Francois Heckel, his girlfriend Annie, and his best friend Jean-Louis.

First of all, Jean Francois Heckel, who was an adventurous and a very good friend of Petit, was very much involved in executing the acrobat's dream. The Twin Towers was not the only project where he helped Philippe, he and Jean-Louis also helped him to put cable in

Notre Dame Cathedral and at the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia. Nevertheless, he knew that the Twin Tower project would have been hardest; he had to face the consequences. If they had been caught there, they would have ended up in jail. He thought it as an adventure. On 6th August, 1974, according to the plan; Jean Francois drove the van with the other accomplices. To avoid security, they disguised themselves as construction workers. Ultimately, they managed to avoid the security people and both teams were able to arrive on the top of the towers at 4.30 AM. Both teams had to remain hidden until nightfall. On the 110th floor of the South tower, Philippe and Francois had to spend more than 5 hours, motionless, in freezing temperature, in August. Finally, they managed to contact the other team of North tower, and successfully, placed the wire between the towers. Without Jean Francois Philippe would have been all by himself on the North Tower. As a result, he might have failed to achieve his feat.

Another person who played a significant role in achieving Petit's dream was his very shy and passionate young girlfriend Annie, who was constantly encouraging him and inspiring him. In the movie, she mentioned, "Of course my role is to support and encourage him". The charismatic acrobat was a very arrogant and dominating character. He wanted Annie be with him and encourage him. She said "In fact, my

life was completely consumed by his and he never thought to ask me whether I had my own destiny to follow. It was quite clear I had to follow his." The interview with Annie shows her love for Petit as she worked with him during the practice time. One time Philippe said, "Annie, she knows me very well. Her green eyes always encourage me". She knew Philippe was building his dream walking 1350 feet high into the clouds, when he was 17 years old. She could not stop him from doing this kind of inhuman act. So she always encouraged him, which was a great tool Petit's success.

The third, very precious and longtime friend to Philippe was Jean-Louis, who helped him to achieve his coup from planning to the end. In the movie, Philippe said Jean-Louis was driven by "I want to help Philippe. I do not want to help him to kill himself. I do not want him to be caught there." The moment Jean-Louis learned about Philippe's dream, he took the responsibility to make it happen and keep Philippe safe. He highlights the obstacles they could have faced, and also figured out how they could overcome the hindrance. They were concerned about the security problems, and, also, the setting problem of a 500 LB wire between the Twine Towers. In addition, the high winds could have sway the wire and made Petit could fall from 450 meters up high. Finally they came up with a proper plan the logistics. After a long struggle with the security people, On August 7 at

4 am, they were successful in putting up a wire between Twin Towers. At 7 am, Philippe Petit walking back and forth, kneeling, and saluting the audiences of the streets of Manhattan from a wire above. Without Jean-Louis's dedication, Philippe never could have pursued his dream.

In conclusion, it is clear that Philippe never could have done his achievement without his friends' help. In the movie, the audience found that Pettit had a close bond with his friends when he was nobody. However, just after his triumph, he disappointed his friends. Jean-Louis said, "There was something broken in this relationship." Annie quoted very disappointedly, "I saw Philippe discover what it meant to be famous." If I could chance to interview Philippe, I would ask him how it was possible for him to damage his authentic friendships like that.