

PENTAGON ATTACK  
11 SEPTEMBER 2001

From: Jackie Janicki

Reported to work in regular office, Pentagon Room 4C729, which SECNAV Administrative Division had relocated to on 6 September 2001 from Room 4D680, at 0800 to pickup some papers and work telephone book. From there I reported to co-lateral assignment, SECNAV Administrative Aide office, Pentagon Room 4E689/4E687, where I reported to work on 11 September 2001 at approximately 0815. While sitting in for regular, Staff Assistant, Eddie Lou Boatwright, I called Petty Officer Verhasslet to release a naval message that had been signed and I continued to proofread packages that were delivered for SECNAV review/signature. At approximately 0858, the Eddie Lou Boatwright phoned in to the SECNAV Administrative Aide's office where I was answering phones to tell me to tell LCDR McBeth to turn on the TV set right away, that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. Immediately, LCDR McBeth turned on the TV and rushed to the Secretary's office to inform the staff of the situation. Various personnel walked through 4E687 to watch the events surrounding the plane crash. Everyone left which left Pris Matthews and myself in the adjoining office.

At this point, I took the opportunity to telephone: my husband, who works at Verizon (who was just beginning a 0900 daily office phone conference), an employee that sits near me in my regular office and the Congressional Lieutenant who has a TV, both in Room 4C729 and a former co-worker newly relocated to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor E-Ring, 7<sup>th</sup> Corridor. I knew these people would want to know what was happening outside the Pentagon.

While the desk I was working from was out of view of the TV, approximately eight minutes later Pris Matthews very calmly said another plane just crashed into the second World Trade Center tower. I walked into Pris' office to see a replay since this information was too difficult to comprehend. A few more personnel walked into the office to see this event replayed on TV. The Director, SECNAV Admin Division, my regular immediate Supervisor walked into 4E689. At this point the conversation began to turned from a tragic accident to perhaps terrorist activity.

Realizing this would be no regular work day, I returned to my substitute desk in 4E689, where I sat with my back to a window backing up to the D-Ring, to clear the in-box of incoming correspondence for review. As I was sitting there, I thought to myself, "What next?" Within five minutes the most intense and incredibly deepest rumbling of what sounded like deep thunder that felt like the entire Pentagon area intensely trembling and I immediately thought, "We're next?" I knew instinctively that the impact was significant and if the Pentagon had not been hit it was definitely in the immediate area and I instantly stood, I heard LCDR McBeth state we had been hit. He immediately dashed across the E-ring hallway to the Secretary of the Navy's office and within seconds returned telling us, which consisted of Pris Matthews, Wanda Rhea and myself to "leave the building now, evacuate immediately, leave NOW!" While there was initial confusion about what to do, we (Priscilla Matthews, Wanda Rhea, and myself) proceeded to follow LCDR McBeth's firm instruction and upon walking toward the door (4E689) thought, my computer is still on, walked back to my desk and thought, "It takes too long for the computer to shut down." Reached down and picked up my purse and joined Pris and Wanda and we walked with two SECNAV staff members down the large center staircase to the second floor. I thought to myself...we will be out of this building in less than a minute. Upon reaching the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Mall entrance of the Pentagon, the entrance guards would not let us out the doors and directed the dozens upon dozens of employees through the McArthur Corridor to the Center Court. While walking through McArthur's Corridor, which was very calm and fairly quiet, I kept thinking, not knowing if we had been hit by a bomb or an airplane, there were two planes in New York (since we had access to the TV info of what had happened in New York - probably most people in the Pentagon had no idea what was happening outside the building). I couldn't help but think, if it was a plane, and if there is another plane coming, like New York, are we walk into an oncoming plane or away from an incoming plane. I do not recall hearing any fire alarms or flashing lights or loud speaker announcements the entire way out of the Pentagon.

At the Hall of Heroes we turned left toward the 7<sup>th</sup> Corridor where we could see the huge, billowing black clouds of smoke being blown over the Pentagon (on our right through the A-ring windows) and into the Center Court and it looked like people were beginning to run across the court to get away from the smoke.

At 8<sup>th</sup> Corridor the guards would not let us head for the River Entrance and we had to continue down the A-Ring toward 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corridor, we continued to see the black smoke as we circled inside the A-Ring. Not wanting to go near the Metro on the Concourse, we were told to continue and circled the A-Ring towards Corridors 1 and 2. More and more black smoke is rising and filling the sky above the Pentagon...now we are heading toward the black smoke...inside the A-ring. Only a hand full of people appear to be in the Center Court but I could not take my eyes off the billowing blackness of the smoke. In the A-ring where the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> corridors join, our calm, but urgent walking stopped. Corridor 2 was totally packed with people and we could not enter at which time we headed down the 1<sup>st</sup> corridor ramp to the south end of the Concourse. A guard there told us to head down the escalator across from the drug store in the center of the Concourse. At this point I asked the guard why couldn't we exit out the doors right there behind him and beside the florist shop that was only yards away...he only said go down the escalators toward the Metro. We did not want to go anywhere near the Metro, but as we found out we could only take the second escalators outside on either side of the Metro station into the bus loading platform. We took the southern exit and headed to the concrete wall outside near Route 395 on the edge of South Parking - trying to clear ourselves from the black smoke that was being blown directly toward Reagan National Airport. We started hearing rumors that the State Department and White House had been hit. At this point we heard the second explosion. Because of the echo in the parking lot, to me it sounded like the explosion was coming from Washington, DC so it was easy to believe the rumors. After only about ten minutes we were told to leave the parking lot - there was another plane in the air. About 3 helicopters were in the air near the heliport area. When looking up into the sky we could see the F-16 planes like dots in the sky. We crossed another street and stood under one of the only trees in the area since the sun was intense when standing still.

Thinking about leaving the area led what had now become three of us deciding that we did not want to go near the inside of Pentagon City since it took us so long to get out of the Pentagon and we did not want to walk to Crystal City and take a subway south, to perhaps Springfield, too uncertain of safety on the Metro. There were people

everywhere, on the sidewalks, in the grass, walking everywhere to cross streets. Fire, ambulance rescue and police cars and sirens coming from all directions, it appeared people were in danger of being injured in such crowded highway areas and were hindering any rescue attempts that needed to be made to get access to Pentagon South Parking.

We decided to walk south on Army-Navy Drive toward the Army-Navy Country Club. As we passed the Pentagon visitor's parking lot people had their parked car radios on listening to the news in groups to try and learn what was happening. Cell phones were not working. The three of us were making more progress than the automobiles that were bumper to bumper on their way to Glebe Road. We stopped once to rest in front of a high-rise. Two men in an automobile stopped to ask where there was a gas station. There are none in that area familiar to us. We found the back entrance under 395 to the Army-Navy Club. The guard at the gate did not want to let us in the gate. Three women in work clothes and heels. We were told that we could not go in because we were not members. We tried to explain what had just happened within the past hour but the guard was reluctant and unable to comprehend the seriousness of the situation. I asked the guard, "You aren't seriously only going to just play golf here today area you?" Two members on golf carts agreed to give us a ride on golf-carts through the Country Club to Glebe Road so we could find transportation home and make phone calls somewhere on Glebe Road. We welcomed the rides. The two people were: Don on cart #121 and Pat Golenbriski driving Cart #113. After we were unbelievably whisked through the Country Club on the two golf carts, escaping all the confusion and destruction, at the exit to Glebe Road, our guardian angel of the day, Pat Golenbriski who had been playing golf at the time of the attack decided to invite us into the club dining facility as her guests since she is a member. Being ever so grateful, we were able to try the country club phone, which were not functioning either. We did meet a wonderful woman named, Lois Nealis who was able to reach only her husband, Neal Nealis, on their cell phone. When she reached her husband in the Chantilly area we gave him the phone numbers of family members we wanted called to let them know where we were.

While joining Pat and other friends we were able to watch on TV as the other events of the early afternoon unfolded.

In talking with Pat, she said she had been playing golf on the Army-Navy Country Club course when over one hole she looked up and saw the airliner just barely clear the tops of the trees and looked like it was going to hit the roof of a house or apartment building and then she heard the plane suddenly accelerate and then she saw the smoke. She had to get her bearings on the golf course to figure out what direction the plane was headed and then she knew the plane must have hit the Pentagon. We asked if she thought the acceleration sounded like the plane was trying to pull up out of the area and she said no from the sound of the engine she said you just know it was determined to crash.

After the traffic report indicated the traffic situation was clearing up, Pat Golenbriski drove one-man home to Burke, drove Pris Matthews to Springfield, and she drove me to my car at Tackett's Mill in Lake Ridge, VA. Wanda was picked up by her husband at the Country Club after he picked their son up from Gonzaga High School in Washington, DC.

We all feel very blessed and are deeply saddened about losing our Pentagon co-workers and fellow Americans on 11 September 2001.

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