

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT Mike McDaniel
CDR Karen Loftus

Interviewer's Organization:

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206

Interviewee:

CTAC Sheryl A. Alleger

Current Address:

██

Date of Interview:

18 December 2001

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex, Arlington VA

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; carnage; Navy Command Center; renovation

Abstract of Interview:

1. Born and raised in Ohio. Small country town. Joined the Navy in 1982. Husband a CTO; they have been stationed in Pensacola; Charleston; Hawaii; Rota, Spain. She works for Miss Livingston, an Under Secretary of the Navy, an Assistant for Special Programs and Intelligence office.
2. Her office is at 5E689 at the Pentagon. It was undamaged in the attack. Prior to September 11th some of the key issues were keeping track of bin Laden, any of the players in that region that have been active in terrorism. The region was followed closely since Desert Storm.
3. On September 11th she was running intelligence pouches to the various N codes in the Pentagon. She was watching the TV and saw the second plane hit the Pentagon. The Command Center called the office she was in (COL Ferguson, the Marine aide to Miss Livingston) and said a plane was incoming and to leave. Not thirty seconds later the plane hit the Pentagon. Felt like the entire building was picked up and moved. They had no doubt it was a plane.
4. They went into offices telling everyone to leave. At the 6th corridor the DPS were funneling people toward the A ring. At the second deck you could see the smoke. Many from the 7th to 10th corridors were unaware of what was happening. From the courtyard you couldn't tell where the plane hit because the smoke covered that whole section. Saw people coming out of the 5/6 and the 3/4 corridor doors; initially Army and civilians. Saw ceiling tile debris and water on them. People in shock. She was looking for her boss or any of the N89 folks that she knew from that section. She ran back inside. Training – it was instinct. She was in search and rescue for Escambia Search and Rescue down in Florida. It was a volunteer unit. She received the Volunteer Service Medal from her command. Land based searches. Trained dogs for canine searches. Boat missions.

- Commander of the unit had them do a lot of mass casualty exercises, so she felt more prepared for the Pentagon. She is First Responder certified, one level below EMT basic.
5. Pentagon built like a ship but not provided for like a ship. No equipment to fight fires. Saw Lt Col Birdwell lying on the second deck, inside the A ring, between the 5th and 6th corridors. She went to help him. Folks from the flight surgeons' office showed up and she was able to assist. Started triage; his arms were burned; the frontal portion of his body was burned. Started an IV through the foot. He left on a hospital cart.
 6. She asked herself what was next. Went up to the 5th deck and searched for people down the 5th and 6th corridors. Smoke getting thicker; went down the floors to the 1st deck. Back in the center courtyard they were helping others. Corpsmen were getting medical supplies for them. She does not know where they came from. Report of a second plane incoming.
 7. Several men lifted one of the cement pylons blocking one of the golf carts. North Parking side. Attitude of everyone was to jump in and do whatever was necessary. People were loading wounded individuals into their own SUV's and minivans. Most people were very calm. Teams were formed to go back in. Put t-shirts on and took uniform shirts off. Mix of services involved. Went out into center courtyard a second time. Thought about her children then and her other responsibilities. Had no time perspective until 1300 or 1400.
 8. Does not recall hearing alarms in building or sirens from the fire trucks. Heard rumble and falling of the fixtures and the building. It was a muted sound. One of the things they teach in First Responder school is not to follow up. Give rescue your best shot and let it go. For a critical all you can do is talk to them or hold their hand. Started to set up the morgue. Army officers were asking what their qualifications were.
 9. She has two dogs at home that are trained cadaver and live scent dogs. They are licensed. She offered to go home and get her cadaver dogs but was refused by the FBI. She went home about 1830-1900 that night.
 10. Chaplain's conference was scheduled that day at the Pentagon so there were many chaplains around. One helped her to contact her children at their high school. The school failed to give her daughter the message. Her eighteen year old, a senior in high school, watched the news coverage of the attack at the Pentagon. She (██████, nicknamed ██████) went to her younger brother's class, picked up the 7 year old at her school and went to the neighbor's house with her cell phone. When she finally reached her daughter she was told she was grounded for not having her cell phone with her. Her co-workers had an informal muster that evening by phone.
 11. She took her children to the Pentagon so that her older daughter could take photos for her photography class.
 12. Her office had smoke damage. Clean up of the spaces was accomplished by Service Master. Ceilings, walls, everything was cleaned top to bottom. Went to work with sponges and chemicals that cut through the smoke on the surfaces. Took apart light fixtures; cleaned venetian blinds.
 13. She had flashbacks for a while, but does not dream about it. Her vented with her husband and SPRINT was not necessary for her. She went through Crisis Intervention training in her Search and Rescue qualifications. It helped her to monitor both her immediate boss and Miss Livingston. Navy leadership could benefit from the Crisis Intervention Training.
 14. Professionally she is very busy now. Her office is now one of two for the Dept of the Navy in the building that can store certain classified material. Since September 11th her office was in the limelight. She is in the midst of a decision whether or not to reenlist.

15. POCs: Mr. Pick; Miss Livingston; CAPT Kern; Georgia; CDR Way; CDR Martin (N89, part of the security team for classified document retrieval); Laura Stanley (N20, another member of the security team).

Abstracted by:
CDR Loftus
02 January 02

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Transcript of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Born in ██████████ but raised in a small town in rural Ohio. Small country town with fields all around. She was the only girl in the neighborhood. Her father was in the Army, and an uncle in the Air Force. She originally wanted to go into the Navy in the medical field but the wait was over a year so she looked into other ratings in the Navy. The Navy offered her CTA so she joined the Navy in Nov1982. She went to Orlando, FL for bootcamp and to Pensacola for A school where she met her husband. Her husband a CTO; they have been stationed in Pensacola; Charleston; Hawaii; Rota, Spain. She works for Miss Livingston, an Under Secretary of the Navy, an Assistant for Special Programs and Intelligence office.

Topics Discuss:

Q. (08:40) Tell us where your office was located.

A. We're still in the same spot.

Q. (08:32) Still the same spot. OK.

A 5E689, we're about, if you walk it straight, E ring we're about two, two-fifty yards from the impact.

Q. OK, so go back to that, just prior to the 11 September. What were some of the key issues that you were working on, that you can remember being kind of the front burner issues?

A. We were keeping track of BIN LADEN. Watching intell on him, any of the players in that region that have been namesakes, we have files on all of them. What we would do, the Navy News Service, the Early Bird, all the electronic news, go in and pull, do keyboard searches to see who's doing what and who's saying what.

It wasn't so much him, it's just the whole general region, because its' always been such a hotspot ever since Desert Storm. So that really hadn't changed believe it or not, intell-wise, you know. We're always looking at everybody. Who's saying what, you know? Even before the 11th his name was being bounced around a few times.

Q. (09:51) More so than normal?

A. I don't think so. I think they all, I mean, if you had a "ten most wanted," I think they'll, all ten would be just about the same, you know. Some days you hear something about them, some days you don't. It's just, it depends on what the news is putting out and how reliable it is. So really not, I wouldn't say any more so than usual, before the 11th. After, Oh yeah. (chuckle)

Q. (10:25) Tell us about the day of the 11th. Tell us, tell us your, just recall that day for us.

A. Started out pretty typical. My boss, GEORGIA, had been out Monday so she came in a little earlier than normal. We were kind of doing a turnover. This is the stuff that was going on

Monday. We run Intell pouches and documents to different offices. VCNO, N89, the Under, GC, all the DASes, and we had some to go to N89, and I was going to take them. She was like, "No," she says, "I'll take it. I've got to talk to MR. PICK anyway."

I said, "OK." Their office was just to the right of what was left of the left side of the building when it collapsed. She was in MR. PICK's office when the plane actually hit.

Q. (11:21) She being?

A. MISS OSTERMAN, my boss.

Q. (11:26) So how close was she then, within up to fifty feet or something?

A. She was 5th floor E ring, where, when you look at the first couple of picture after the floors collapsed on the left-hand side, there's the office with the safes and the monitor.

Q. (11:44) Yes, yes.

A. Which was DICK O'HARE's office, and then CAROLINE's office, JIM MUSACKNIC's (phonetic) and then what would have been the next office, which is now gone, is MR.PICK's office, and they were in his office when it hit. She took off to drop pouches off and my girlfriend from Florida called me and she's in the Air Force there. She's like, "You need to go downstairs." "What's going on?"

"No, you need to go downstairs, now."

Q. (12:16) Downstairs where?

A. Down to the Under's office. She'd been through, I guess a couple of months ago, before this and I took her to the office, you know, "This is where I work. There's my hobble." She knew I didn't have a TV or radio. We're kind of isolated where we are, and so she had just seen the first tower get hit and she was calling me to tell me to go down and watch CNN.

So I went down to the Under's office. I was like, "Holy cow," you know, standing there watching the TV, we watched the second plane come in.

Q. (12:49) Did you see it live?

A. The second one. I was just amazed.

Q. (12:52) Did you think terrorism before, when you saw the first tower?

A. Oh, yes. Oh yes. There was no way that was an accident, and listening to BRIAN GUMBEL, the one commentator talk about, "Oh, what a catastrophic accident," you want, you know, you just want to reach through the TV, go, "You idiot!" (laugh) Like OK, now wait a minute. And then when the second plane hit and he was like you know, "Figure the odds, what a coincidence." I'm like –

Q. (13:19) He was still saying this?

A. Yes, I'm like "Wake up dude." (laugh) I mean it was just, it was unbelievable, you know, to be standing there and watching it, and time concept kind of goes out the window, I guess. I remember them talking about the second plane and watching the President come on from Florida and do his opening comments and saying that he was leaving. And COLONEL FERGUSON who's the Marine aid to MISS LIVINGSTON, answered the phone, and we're just you know,

watching TV. There was the Secretary, myself, CHIEF DAVIS, and the Colonel and the Colonel like turned around and hung up the phone and he just had this look on his face. You know, like “What?” And he goes like “That was the Command Center, a report of a plane headed in this direction. We need to move.” And it wasn’t thirty seconds after that that the plane hit, and we’re all just like, “Oh, shit!” you know.

No doubt, I mean that call and then it felt like the entire building just picked up and moved, and you know, there was no doubt to us that that was exactly what it was. It was a plane, there was no ex—you know, it wasn’t a bomb. It wasn’t an explosion. It was a plane.

So we just went out in the passageway and their offices are all in the E ring right above the mall entrance. CHIEF DAVIS went one way and I went the other way and we started going into all the offices, telling everybody to get out, “Get out!” I made it over to the 6th corridor and the DPS guys were funneling everybody down the stairwells and down toward the A ring.

I kept thinking, “No, this is stupid, why are they sending everybody in the courtyard.” You know if this is a terrorist act or there’s another plane, that’s the worst place to send everybody. I mean everybody’s going to be in there and they’re going to be trapped. We kinda had to go with the flow, ‘cause they were pretty persuasive about, “Just keep moving. Just keep moving.”

I got, got to the A ring and worked my way down to the second deck, where you can get out into the courtyard. Everybody’s just kind of hanging around looking. You could see the smoke. A lot of people from the 7th corridor around to the higher corridor numbers that were coming out. It was like they didn’t really know what was going on. Those that hadn’t been watching TV, you know, and being in the courtyard, you didn’t know where it hit. You could see the smoke, but the smoke was covering like that whole section, the long length of the E ring side. So it was hard to figure out, OK, it hit here, it hit here, you know, but then you started seeing people come out

from the 5th and 6th corridor side and the 3rd and 4th A ring side, and initially it was mostly, I think Army people. Some civilians, but the Army folks you could see where, the ceiling tile stuff on the back of their uniforms, water. It was really strange and people were just kind of, almost like in shock, you know. It's like, "Well, what happened?"

"Well, we don't know." And just talking back and forth. I was looking, you know, Georgia, or I was looking for any of the 89 folks. Like looking for anybody I knew from that section over there. Didn't see anybody. Had a couple of people come out. One lady came out holding her head and I was talking to her. You know there's like all these people around her, and nobody was like looking at her or nothing. You know everybody was kind of like looking off to the side, you know, or looking around. So I was talking to her, trying to see if she was OK, you know. Did she get hit? There wasn't any blood or anything. I think she got hit by, like, supports from the tiles, which they don't really hurt because they don't come very far. But she was pretty dazed.

They had somebody came out from the second deck entryway, saying that there was folks inside that needed help, so I got the guy next to her, like, "Take her and get her out of here," you know, "Go out A corridor, wherever, just get her out of here," and then ran in, back inside. Still can't believe I did that.

Q. (18:28) What would make you do that?

A. Training. It's crazy. Before we got here I did four years of Search and Rescue for, and it was mostly, nothing urban, the woods, the rivers, drownings, hunters missing, a lot of Alzheimer walkaways. My husband had started with the unit out there and I think I was jealous of all the time he spent away from us so I joined the unit, too. Kind of like "ehhh, get back at you."

Q. (19:09) As part of the Navy role?

A. No, we did it as civilians.

Q. (19:12) Is that right?

A. Completely volunteer.

Q. (19:13) Volunteer.

A. Matter of fact, I got the Volunteer Service Medal from the command group, the hours that we put in. But he started doing it. I started doing it, and did land base searches. He and I both got puppies. We started training dogs for canine searches. I did bike team for a while. If there was boat missions, I'd go out on the boat, because I grew up on Lake Erie, so boats were second nature.

I don't do the dives. I'm claustrophobic. I can't stand having my face in the water, so I don't do that one.

Q. (19:55) Does your husband do that?

A. Yes, oh yes, anything and everything. I think sometimes we spent more time away. Command was really good about it. We had, depending on what it was, you know missions come up in the middle of the day, and I'd get a phone call and if they'd let me go, I'd go. If not, "I'll be there as soon as I can get off work."

But the commander of our unit pushed us to do a lot of trainings. We did mass casualty trainings, but it was mostly train wrecks, hurricanes, typical things for Pensacola. You know, if this is going to happen then this is what we're going to need. You know, that kind of training.

Q. (20:40) As part of the group.

A. As part of Search and Rescue.

Q. (20:44) Search and Rescue, who was kind of the coordinating entity for that?

A. It's called the Escambia Search and Rescue.

Q. (20:53) So it's a county type thing.

A. It has a county name, but it's not funded by the county. We work through the Escambia County Sheriff's office, for missing kids, missing people. The Sheriff's office usually is the one that contacts us, and we, all of us get together. We –

Q. (21:11) And most of them were volunteer?

A. All volunteer.

Q. (21:13) Just like a volunteer fire department?

A. Very much, very much.

Q. (21:18) Wow!

A. A lot more training though. I did my first responder training through them. We figured that with hurricanes and whatnot, the chances of coming across a wounded individual that needs immediate first-aid or medical care, out in the middle of nowhere, the woods, you know, We need to know something more than basic first-aid. So he put a program together where we went

through the fire department and got first responder certified and did the ambulance runs, and I didn't mind that one. I don't like doing the actual—the first responders like a level below EMT basic. We can't give shots, we don't do drugs, you know, we can't give meds. Can't do interavenous, you know, no needles. But we can do O₂, and we can you know basically we call it “pack and wrap,” pack them up and off they go, you know.

So the training from that I think is –

Q. (22:30) Wow!

A. Is part of it, plus our naval training, you know. I've got just over nineteen years in now, and I grew up in the old Navy, and there's a very distinct difference between the way the kids are growing up in the Navy now, then when a lot of us did.

Q. (22:50) What is the difference? Expand on that for me.

A. The camaraderie, nothing against the kinder, gentler, Navy, but I remember the days of my Chief taking me out back and chewing my butt out, and I deserved it, and I didn't think anything of it, because he yelled at me and called me names or whatever. You know, you know, get your butt in gear or get your head out of your butt, or you know, there was nothing wrong with that. “OK. Thanks, Chief,” and back to work. You know, you can't do that now. It's too political I guess.

But that made me the way I am, you know. You're in a situation, I think between the Search and Rescue and the military training, you don't leave a shipmate behind. No matter what, you know. A lot of the folks at Search and Rescue were military. We always went in teams. You never left your partner. Going to the Chief's training, when I made Chief and that they—if you don't

already understand the fraternity or the brotherhood of chiefs, you learn it very quickly going through initiation. You realize that's why chiefs can get so much done, when you can't lower down, or you can't higher up, you know. There's a reason for that, and I, all of that plays, you know, when you're in a situation where somebody needs help or you know you're standing there and the building's smoking. There's smoke everywhere. There's people coming out that are hurt, in a shipboard situation, you have emergency gear lockers. You go to the emergency gear locker and you get what you need, you know. You grab the OT, or whatever you needed and you go, you do. You have your crisis stations and you know, you go where you're supposed to go and you do your thing.

The Pentagon's built like a ship, but not provided like a ship. I mean we had nothing. We went back into that building. The first person I came across, I don't know if he was, I think he was a Lieutenant Colonel. As a matter of fact I think he just got out of the hospital, just recently.

Q. (25:17) BIRDWELL?

A. Yes, I think that's his name. I didn't even know his name. I don't know any of them's names. A couple of them I remember because of facial features or whatever, but he was laying on the second deck right inside the A ring and there's nobody around. There's a couple of us, you know, other than the guy that came out and said "Hey, we've got," you know, "people that need help in here." And then he went back off down the 5th corridor. You couldn't see anything. It was like fog, and it's like OK, you know, here I am in a uniform with nothing. At least when I'm on a Search and Rescue mission I have my pack. I have a first-aid kit. I have emergency medical supplies, you know, I have stuff that I can use in that situation. In the building we had nothing.

But just about the same time I got to the Lieutenant Colonel, the folks from Flight Surgeon's office showed up and at least they had some emergency med kits, so, you know, it was like “OK,” and a couple of them were Colonels, and it was like “I’m a first responder. Tell me what you need,” because their medical training way overrides mine. Like, “Just tell me what you need,” you know, and it was just a matter of basically doing an essential started triage and you know, it’s obvious his arms were burned. Part of the side of him was burned. You couldn’t tell if his face was, or if it was ash or smoke. You couldn’t see his nametag. I mean he’s—obviously, he took a heat blast, because it was like his shirt was just melted.

So it was like, “OK, we need to do this. Well we need to put him on an IV,” and obviously we’re not going to do it to his arms. Put gauze on his arms, wetting down. The IV’s going through the foot. First time I’d done that, and just tried to do everything we could to get him stable and wait, not so much waiting, but we’re either going to stabilize him here. We had no litter, you know, we had minimal equipment to work with.

Q. (27:41) Were you doing this all inside the building?

A. Right inside the join of 5 and 6, right outside of the, what used to be the 4, 5, 6, right there. Because where he went down, that’s where we immediately started, because we didn’t know if we could get him up or not. We didn’t have a litter to carry him out.

Q. (28:00) What was the smoke like there?

A. Initially, it was kind of like a fog, a haze. I did, it was amazing that you don’t notice the other things going around you. You’re focused on, “OK, this is what we need to do for him.” When the hospital folks showed up with one of the mobile carts, and we got him on the gurney and got him

loaded up and they took off with him, I guess it's part of the training, you like, "Oh, all right, now what?" You know, "What's next?" And you could not see. I mean you could not see down 5, you couldn't see down 6. You couldn't even see the little 4-5-6, cafeteria which is like, you know, not even fifty feet from you.

Q. (28:45) What deck are you on?

A. We're on the second.

Q. (28:47) Second deck, OK.

Q. (another) I know where you're talking about.

A. Yes, right outside the -

Q. (28:52) Right below the old Command Center.

A. Yes, pretty much, right. Pretty much, down the hall from that. Directly down the hall from it used to be MASTER CHIEF LE CLAIR's office, the CNC's office in there.

So, you know, we picked up the needles. I guess it's training, you don't leave that stuff laying around you know. Not with HIV and everything going around. And the Colonel was like, "Ok, we need to see if we can find anybody else." So there was like five or six of us, all up to the 5th deck and started down the 6th corridor, down the 5th corridor, you know, yelling. Trying to see if you could hear anybody. No lights. Everything's dark. Not good for claustrophobics, OK?

When you go down the passageways and the smoke would just get thicker as you were going.

We did 5th floor. We went to 4th, 3rd, 2nd, down to the first, and we finally heard a couple of folks, back down the 5th corridor off of the first floor and they got them to come toward us out of

the smoke, and we took them out into the courtyard. The one guy came out, he must have been 6 - 6 feet, big guy, just huge and he just kind of collapsed right there where the benches are in the smoke area basically. So we grabbed the kits and started on him and while we were working on him, a lady came out from behind us. We started asking them, you know, "Where were you? What room number? How many people in your office? Did everybody get out? Is there anybody left?" You know, and they were from 3D area. I think by this time the floors had started to collapse. Like I said, I had no concept of time.

One of the Colonels had a radio and he was radioing back to, I guess DPS. You know, "Hey, this room number. This is the condition. There's probably four more people in there and the two that got out crawled out underneath the furniture," type deal trying to, you know, just—we were so isolated there in the courtyard and where we were that we didn't know what was going on on the outside. I had yet to see a fireman. I mean everybody that I had seen was either from one of the clinics, or people that were working in between those two areas. It was just, we were so, so isolated, and we had nothing. You know, they had corpsman running on the carts, flying by. "What do you need? What do you need?" We'd you know, "O₂, we need hose. We need this, we need this."

You know, and "I'll bring it right back," and I don't know where they were going to to get it, but then you know, you turn around the next second and there they were, and they're handing the O₂, the tube, and the mask, you know, whatever it was that you yelled out that you needed. It was like, "OK, where did that come from?"

We were working on them and, and I guess it was about that time that, one of the carts, - (brief break to answer phone)

Q. (32:35) Ready?

A. One of the hospital folks, corpsman or whatever came by in a cart saying we needed to go, there was a report of a second plane coming in and trying to get us out. Most of the other folks were already out of the courtyard by then. We had, the one lady that came out behind us, we got her up. She was ambulatory for the most part. She had a nice gash in the back of her head. One of the guys grabbed her and started walking with her. The big guy, got him up and loaded him onto the cart, and just had him lay on the back of one of the flatbeds. Got him IV, and we're flying through the remainder of the courtyard and went out the 8th corridor, trying to get out, go past the clinic, out the North Parking entrance. We got towards the doorway and that was like a bottleneck of you know, emergency vehicles, little carts, people walking, holding on to other people. There was a group, walking, carrying this one lady out and they had her on a piece of plywood, that you could tell, you know, they just reached up and ripped it off of one of the construction walls. OK, here you go, now we can get her out of here. I think she had a broken leg.

One of the guys on the cart grabbed the IV bottle so I jumped off and we started carrying the lady out until we got outside the doorways, at least. Then we loaded her on the cart. Well, the plywood was wider than the cart and the pylons, right outside of North Parking that keeps motor traffic from being able to go up the sidewalks and stuff, well we couldn't go between those and they had set up a triage in the grass area down at the bottom by the waterway. So we were like, the girl driving was cracking me up she was saying, "Somebody's just going to have to move one of those." If you ever looked at them, I mean, you know, they're at least a foot around and they're solid concrete. I'll be darned if four or five guys didn't get right in front of the cart and just grab that thing and start trying to pull it up out of the ground.

Q. (35:08) Really?

A. They did it.

Q. (35:10) They did do it?

A. It took them three tries and it took a couple of extra people jumping in, but just to watch them and I mean it was Marines, and it was Army and it was sailors. It didn't, nothing mattered, you know. We needed it moved. They jumped in and they pulled that thing out of the ground and moved it.

Q. (35:25) Wow.

A. And this big ol' cheer went up. It was like, "Yeah!" (chuckle) It was crazy. I don't even know if they were hurt or they were, you know, just people that were just leaving the building and they saw, "OK, this needs to be done." So they jumped in and did it. I mean that was just kind of the attitude of everybody, at least on the North Parking side, because we just had everybody lined up and I think I only saw one ambulance at that time, and all of the sudden you saw mini-vans and SUV's, you know, caravans, you know, whatever. People with large vehicles that had gone out into North Parking and gotten their vehicle and drove it up and around and we started loading people into you know, "Do you know where this hospital is?" "Do you know where this hospital is?" It's like, "Holy cow," you know. I mean we had them out of there relatively quick considering. Of course we took the most critical –

Q. (36:33) Chief, let me stop you for just one second. You said that when you went into the center courtyard you were thinking that wasn't very bright because you have a lot of people and

it's a target. Then did you feel that way when you got to the bottleneck coming out into North Parking? Because you knew at that point that another plane was coming in, right. Or at least that was what you expected, you'd heard. Could it move pretty easily through that passage?

A. It did when somebody popped the doors open, because the, I don't know if they knocked them off the hinges, but if you've ever been into the North Parking side, the doors are manual. There's no, except for the hospital doors. There's the one side next to the clinic, that's electronic doors for the carts and stuff. Somebody like pulled those off the track. So once the doors were not opening, closing, or you didn't have to manually open them, yes, everybody moved relatively quickly you know.

There was a lot of the dazed response, you know, words like, slow motion kind of, "Yes, I know I need to do this but," you know, there was a lot of that. But that's the shock of everything I think.

Q. (37:50) OK.

A. I don't even think we were thinking about the second plane or if there was a second plane. We just were, we needed to get these people out of here, you know. You kind of forgot about everything else and focused on what you were doing, and you know, need to get from here to here, and well, these are in my way. Get out of the way. (chuckle) That deal. You know. Everybody was calm for the most part, you know. I didn't see anybody in hysterics, or I mean, I think that surprises me now. You know, you would expect some, but everybody was pretty calm. Too much training, I guess I don't know.

Q. (38:37) Did you see a mix of services or at that point was it predominately Navy. We've heard different accounts of that.

A. It was hard to tell. I did see a lot of khakis, initially and when you got to the waterside area, there was eventually they got in some crash carts and supply carts and then we started seeing a lot of folks in scrubs and lab coat types, you know, setups. Along about that same time was when they started forming up teams to go back in and didn't matter what service you were. Your outside blouse came off and in most cases if you had a t-shirt on, you took it off and put the blouse back on or you left the t-shirt on and you know it was just common sense type of stuff so you really couldn't tell. After a while, everything was, you know, all the shirts were kind of white and you didn't look to see what kind of trousers, you know.

It didn't matter, you know it was, that side of the building's primarily Navy so it would make sense that a lot of Navy would be on that side, but by then I think it was, it was pretty well mixed.

The way everybody just jumped in, I think is, still amazes me. You know there were people that had no training whatsoever, and they were carrying stretchers or walking people out or you know, I probably would have stayed even if I wasn't – there's always something to be done.

(she's coughing, they get her water.)

Thanks, change of weather's killing me.

Q. (40:45) I want to go back to your initially running into the building. That's fascinating to me, plus your training.

A. You'd be really fascinated if I told you I was in skirt and heels at that point.

Q. (40:55) Is that right? Did the heels stay on?

A. No, the heels got, they got ditched. (laugh) I think about the fourth time I tried to run up and down the stairs or tried to squat down to work on somebody, like “Oh, no, these have got to go.” I don’t wear a skirt very often, that’s why it’s kind of ironic.

Q. (41:17) Did you think about your children?

A. Initially, matter of fact, while we were out, when we initially got out to North Parking and once the more critical of the victims were gone and we were pretty much down to ambulatory and minor stuff, there was folks out there with cell phones and I had borrowed someone’s and tried to call my husband. My kids were in school, so I was like, they’re not going to know anything until this afternoon, so I’ll just call my husband, because he’s going to be freaking. Of course, you couldn’t get out.

Q. (41:54) But when you made that decision to go back in, what were you thinking about?

A. Not my kids. No, at that point they were probably the furthest thing from my mind. The only thing I could think of was that somebody needed help and it didn’t seem like there was anybody moving, You know what I mean. Like everybody just was standing there. Like when you call fire and nobody thinks you’re serious. You know, don’t ever tell my kids I said that. Love them to death, they were not the first thought when I went back into the building.

I did think about them when we were going down the hallway and the smoke was getting bad and you couldn’t see, and you couldn’t breath, and there was a point where I actually stopped and was like, If I keep doing this, I’m not going to make it. I need to go. I need to be out of here. Luckily that was about the time, I think, the rest of them were at that point, too. That was when I

thought about my kids. I have more responsibility than just me, or who's on the other side of this smoke. Yes, that's when I went out in the courtyard, the second time.

You tend, I guess I get tunnel vision, you know, you have it projected in front of you and this is what we're doing. Damn the smoke, and damn the fumes and everything else, but if you can hear somebody and you can get to them then that's what we need to be doing. But you get to a point where, you know, I was coughing and the chest was thick and the eyes were watering and it was like, you know if you stay in here, you're going to die. You need to go." And we did, unfortunately.

Q. (43:56) Did things kind of go in slow motion during that time. We've heard some people describe it as such.

A. It seems like it. As I say, I have no time perspective until later that afternoon, I guess it was like one or two o'clock before I even realized what time it was. Yes, I mean, as you're doing stuff, we went from patient to patient to patient and it's just like, you're just, you're moving and it's continual.

Q. (44:27) What about the, what about the sound. What are you hearing? What do you recall hearing?

A. You know, I, not so much what I recall hearing. What I don't recall hearing. I don't remember hearing the alarms in the building at all, or the sirens for the fire trucks and you know the fire trucks had to be there, you know, but I don't remember hearing them.

Q. (44:52) What do you remember hearing?

A. When we were going down the corridors I remember hearing the rumble and the falling of the rocks, you know, the walls, the fixtures, whatever, and it's kind of, it's like muted. You don't hear it clear, you know what I mean. It's like you're under water and you're listening, you know. It's a really strange sensation. It was really hard to try to hear it. Ok, is that a person, you know is that somebody calling for help, or is that something moving down, you know? it's you can't distinguish what you're hearing. It's like somebody smacked you up the side of the head and you've got bells in your head at the same time you're trying to listen. You're trying to see and breath. Out in the North Parking it was a little clearer and you could hear, you know, we need this and we need this, or we need a doc over here, or you know, she's crashing. I remember hearing the Commander say that, because they were working on the one major. I remember that one because I had just loaded the lady I was with into, into a, into a van and I turned around and he's was like she's crashing. She's crashing.

Q. (46:18) Meaning?

A. She was going into respiratory arrest. You go over to like, OK we couldn't put her on oxygen. Like she took a full frontal heat wave. You could tell her nose was burnt, her mouth area was burnt. So we couldn't tube her, we couldn't put a nasal on, we couldn't put a mask on her. She was having a hard time breathing. I mean she was struggling and there was nothing you could do.

Q. (46:51) Do you know what happened to her?

A. She didn't make it.

Q. There's a few that I worked on that I can remember distinctly certain things about their face, or and you can pick it out in a picture, but for the most part I don't know and I don't want to know.

The Colonel, there was an article and it showed his picture, and damn he was the saddest thing, you know. One of the things they teach you in first responder school is not to do follow-up. You know, you do what you can at that point. You give it your best shot and you let it go.

Q. (47:29) In other words, you don't try to find out what happens to the person? With this Major, what do you do with someone who you can't tube or you can't, do you just try to relieve—was she declared a critical and you just –

A. Yes, she was definitely a critical. As a matter of fact I know she arrested when we loaded her into a vehicle to take her to the hospital because one of the, I don't know if one of the nurses, or whatever, she jumped in and went with her.

Q. (47:59) What do you do for a person like that?

A. Talk to them.

Q. (48:01) Do you just try to make them comfortable?

A. Talk to them.

Q. (48:12) So she was conscious.

A. She was conscious to a degree. We don't know how much she heard because there were times that we were saying something or asking her something and she was not responding whatsoever. And it was like she couldn't hear us, so we don't know. I mean, depending on how close she was

to the blast area, we don't know, how much, you know, ear damage, you know. If you can you hold her hand. When we were working in the A ring on the Colonel, one of the ladies from the clinic, I guess she's like an OBGYN or something. She was sitting holding the Colonel's head, saying the Lord's Prayer with him. I mean sometimes that's all you can do. Sucks, but it's all you can do.

The Major was the same way. And you know, and you do what you can for them. You try to give them as much comfort or support or just to let them know that they're not alone.

Q. (49:14) And that's part of the training, sort of.

A. Sort of, in most medical fields even and EMTs first responders are no different. You're always going to come across, or eventually you're going to come across a patient that you can't do anything for. The legalities, you know, if they have a "do not resuscitate" or you know, I find it's hardest with kids and older people.

Q. (49:45) Yes.

A. I have a husband who would do the kid cases. I'll go out and search for them. I don't have any problem with that, but God, don't let me find them, you know. And then it's terrible because I'm out there to find them but –

Q. (49:57) Right.

A. You know what I mean, I mean that was part of the reason that I switched from doing land command, land searches to canine. Because it's not me to find them, it's the dog that finds them.

And both the dogs, two dogs we have at the house are licensed. They're both certified for finding cadavers.

Q. (50:21) Cadaver dogs?

A. Cadavers, life scent.

Q. (50:24) I hate to take you off of what you're talking about, so don't lose that train of thought, but did the FBI tap you to use your dogs?

A. Probably didn't know about it.

Q. (50:35) What kind of dogs?

A. We have a lab-beagle and a ridge back bloodhound. The lab-beagle's my husband's and he's what's called an air scent dog. He can run off lead and he follows scent through the air on the ground. The beagle is strictly on the lead, unhooked is a bloodhound. A true bloodhound in that sense although she doesn't look like a bloodhound. She doesn't have all the folds and the red eyes. She's very sweet, but she's about that tall, and she runs me through the woods.

When everything calmed down and kind of getting ahead of myself I guess, when the Marshall service came in and the FBI came in, they kicked us out of the building from doing any recovery or any anything. We were basically in a lockdown in the courtyard, so we did what we could to fill the time, you know. We started setting up the morgue and, because we knew that there was going to be casualties, and you know. COMMANDER WAY went into the clinic and raided it for every sheet and blanket he could find, because we didn't have any body bags and we had all these stretchers, we had all this medical equipment and by then we knew if we got anybody out they weren't going to be in very good shape, you know. So we just kind of filled the time doing

that and they started to talk, I guess they were from, I don't even know, Bethesda, or, I don't even know where they were from. They were Army officers. Many were going around talking to everybody. Training, you know, what's your job description and I tried to stress to them, you know, I've done search and rescue. I've done recovery. Yes, fire is worse than a drowning. In whose perspective, you know. Charred body or a body where things are crawling out of it, you know. And at one point I remember telling, I guess he was a colonel, but "I have a licensed cadaver dog, I will go home and get him. I'm twenty-five minutes into Springfield. I'll go home and get him and come back." You know like, "No thank you" you know. I was pissed. That pissed me off. But in hindsight it was probably a good thing when they finally did say, you can go. You know, thanks very much but you can't do— it was probably good because that's when everything else kicked in, and OK, I need to go home and just hugs my kids.

Q. (53:24) When did you go home?

A. I got home 6:30, seven o'clock that night.

Q. (53:31) Did you talk to your husband about any of it.

A. Funny that you should ask that.

(everyone laughs)

Q. (53:46) You heard about it didn't you.

A. Yes, oh, not long before I left the building I did finally get a hold of him.

Q. (53:52) Tell us about that.

A. We I guess it was like one or two o'clock in the afternoon. We're in the courtyard and the Marshals have already taken over and we couldn't go back in the building anymore. Kind of all standing around with our fingers up our butts, and we were twiddling our thumbs going, "Ok, this is really stupid." And anybody and everybody with a cell phone was, you know, pretty much trying to call out. And I had tried I don't know a couple of times on somebody's cell phone. I had my pager on at one point. I lost it. Somebody picked it up, and couldn't, I got it back by the way, believe it or not.

There was a bunch of chaplains in the courtyard. I guess there was a chaplain's conference that was supposed to start that day in the Pentagon so we had all these chaplains from all over the place at the building. And a couple of them were talking and one of the guys that I know from the flight surgeon's office saw me and came up and give me a hug, and he was like, "Have you talked to any of your family yet?"

I went, "No, I can't get a hold of anybody."

He was like, "OK. Let me see if I can find a phone."

So he kind of canvassed around and found a phone and I thought, you know, my husband's cell phone's with him. It's a 703 number, it would be nice and easy. Just dial it. I'd been better off dialing something else, but I still couldn't get a line out so to speak. And I thought well, the kids are in school, I'll call the school.

Q. (55:32) How old are your kids, your children again.

A. One's eighteen, one's fifteen and one's seven. And I was going to call the school. Damn if I could remember the number. Wouldn't you know, everybody's phone number that I would need to know is on my cell phone, and where's my cell phone, it's in my office. So I thought well, you

know, to hell with it basically. I'll call 411. I called 411 and got somebody who finally answered it, explained to her, "Look, I'm at the Pentagon." I don't have my numbers with me, I need to get a hold of Lee High School," you know, "don't just give me the number because I probably won't get a line out, please connect me. Stay on the line until I'm connected whatever," and she did. I didn't even know who it was.

I talked to one of the office ladies, explained to her, you know, "this is SHERYL ALLEGER, my daughter's a senior, my son is a freshman. I'm at the Pentagon and I need to get a message to them. Tell them Mom is fine, pick your sister up and I'll be home when I get home."

Q. (56:42) The seven year old's a little girl?

A. Yes, and (chuckle) unbeknownst to me I find out later that she never got that message, but –

Q. (56:51) She never got the message.

A. No, when they showed the initial news flash that the building had been hit, she was sitting in class and watched it.

Q. (57:00) Your seven year old.

A. No.

Q. (57:04) Your freshman.

A. My eighteen year old.

Q. (57:05) Eighteen year old. Eighteen year old's your daughter?

A. Yes, daughter, son, daughter.

Q. (57:09) She saw, ahhh, wow.

A. She got up and walked out of class. Went and got her brother from class, went and picked her sister up from school, stopped at the house, grabbed the portable and went next door. Good kid!

Q. (57:22) Yes, she didn't need any direction.

A. So she's been through it enough. She rallied the troops, and went to where she knew she had support. So I could have called the house and I would have got a hold of them, but I didn't know that. I didn't find that out until much later.

Q. (57:39) Did she tell you, tell us her reaction to seeing you and what she went through and all that.

A. She's a tough little cookie. She –

Q. (57:53) What's her name?

A. [REDACTED]. I call her [REDACTED]. Definitely a military child and with dad going off and flying in airplanes that are older than us, and being on ships that are firing on areas, and she's seen a lot for her eighteen years. She did what she thought was right and I guess the teacher tried to stop her. You know, "Where are you going."

She's. "I'm leaving"

"You don't have a pass."

"You stop me. Just try." She just kept walking.

I told her when they went back to school, I said, first thing you do, is you go in and you apologize to him. I will not stand for you being rude.

She's like, "But Mom."

But no, very strong, she was fielding all the calls of course from family. Her father, God bless him, calling every fifteen minutes or thereabouts. "Have you heard from Mom? Have you heard from Mom?"

Friends, I didn't know how many friends we had up here until that day I guess. Her friends came over to where they were and relieved her of the phone for a period. When I finally got to the metro station and called and said, "OK, come and get me," she was at one of her friend's houses, taking a break, getting away, and her friend's dad handed her two ice cold bottles of Miller, and a half pack of cigarettes and a book of matches. Said, "Your Mom left in a hurry. She's going to need these." So she put them in her trunk. She was only seventeen at the time.

One of the neighbor girls came with her. They didn't want her driving up by herself. But I think she jumped out of the car before it stopped rolling at the metro station. It was, you know, ran up and hugged me, then told me how much I smelled like smoke, and stunk. She was funny.

I had talked to her before that. Before I left the building I called. Let's see the order of calls. I guess at about two o'clock or so, they opened a, underneath the stairwells in the A ring there's like an emergency room panel of phones and there's one that has an outside line. And when we were basically stood down, they told us we can't do anything until the FBI and the Marshals do their investigation. For those of you who have not called family or have not talked to someone, dial 99 and use this phone.

So of course, there was a line, you know. Damn if in stressful situations you can't remember anybody's phone number.

Q. (01:01:00) You forget your own home number?

A. Yes, well. I couldn't remember it. I did remember my husband's cell phone, but of course I still couldn't get through on it. I couldn't even remember my mom and dad's number and it's been the same for thirty-seven years. I couldn't remember them. I finally remembered my girlfriend's number in Florida. Well, they didn't say it had to be a local call so I called her and it took me about fifteen times of saying, "I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine," you know, convince her that I was fine. It's like, "You have the numbers. Make the notifications. Find [REDACTED], wherever he's at on base. Tell him I'm fine," you know, "call my mom," and she did the initial, but of course nobody believed her until they talked to me.

Then I guess there was, I guess it was like 5:00 or 5:30, I went to the De Lorenzo clinic and they had opened up one of the phones down there, so I called her back to make sure that she had gotten a hold of my husband, and she goes like, "Have you talked to Georgia?"

I'm like, "No, I haven't seen her I haven't heard anything, so I don't know." She was in that area, because by then I had been to the outside and I saw where it had hit, you know, so I knew a little better about, OK, because when you're inside, you couldn't tell. I was like, "Do me a favor, go on the Internet. Got to the white pages, I'll give you, you know OSTERMAN, GEORGIA, find her phone number for me. I had a little slip of paper and wrote her phone number down and called her and she gave me CAPT CURTIS, he's the EA for the SECNAV, she gave me his number up here at the Annex. Plus his cell phone because I was suppose to muster in, because I was unaccounted for at that point.

Q. (01:03:04) So you found out then that she was OK.

A. Yes, because I talked to her and she chewed me out for not having called the kids yet. She went “Have you talked to your kids. I’ve talk to them every hour.”

“They’re next on the list, GEORGIA.” Calm Down.

I talked to [REDACTED], then, finally. And I called [REDACTED] and one of her girlfriend’s answered the phone.

Q. (01:03:30) [REDACTED], you mean?

A. Yes, and her dad called her [REDACTED], even though she hates it. Somebody answered the phone, you know, “Hello.”

I said, “[REDACTED].”

“Who is this?”

“This is mom.”

“Oh, oh oh oh, “ and it wasn’t [REDACTED], it was [REDACTED], and she’s like, “[REDACTED], your mom, your mom, your mom!” You know she was freaking out.

[REDACTED] got on the phone and she was like, “Hello.”

I was like, “Hey,” like “I’m fine. You guys OK?”

“Yes. You’re grounded.”

I said, “What?”

“What is the number one rule in this house?”

I’m like, “What are you talking about?”

“If you’re going to go somewhere you take the cell phone with you.”

I’m like, “Hey, my cell phone’s in my office. I can’t get to it.”

She kind of grounded me. So by the time she picked me up at the Metro that night, she at least, you know, she knew. I don't think she was ready for the smell, you know. I don't think she was ready for that, but at least she knew that I'm coming home in one piece. She was good.

My son forbid me to go to work, Wednesday. "You are not going back there, never."

"Baby, you know, Mom's in the military, you know, although I appreciate your concern, I do have to go back."

The little one was pretty cool. I don't think she ever really then realized, I mean the kids hadn't said, and they weren't watching it on TV. As a matter of fact when I got to the neighbor's, she was downstairs, playing video games, so I don't even think she knew exactly. You know, she just knew mom was late getting home from work. Momma didn't drive, and when Mom got home she stunk.

Q. (01:05:28) Did you event—you eventually told her? How much have you told her?

A. Wednesday, the day after, I, [REDACTED] and one of her friends wanted to go, come up to the Annex and take pictures. [REDACTED]'s in a photography class, and they were going to come up on their own and I said, "No. You want to go up there and take pictures. I'll take you up, but, security going to be tight. You don't know your way around. I'll take you." So I loaded all the kids up, and we went down, down by where the memorial eventually got established and [REDACTED] and her friend walked down to the upper side of the road, above the gas station where press was and stuff, and they took their pictures and whatnot and with my son and the little one, it was like OK, they've all been in my office from the inside, and I take them you know to the cafeteria and they've been all over the building, so they didn't really know where Mom's office was, you know. So they were like, OK, so where's your office?

And I was like, “All right, you see where the fire is and,” you know, “the burned section of the building. You see the corner, go around the corner and that’s where I left it. It’s burned down.” Now my mom and other folks, you know, family, friends and whatnot they were all, “Where’s your office? Where’s your office?”

So you know when they came out with the aerial photo, they showed, really well, the 4th and 5th corridor where they’re burned and that, and I downloaded that picture and pulled it up in an art program, with a little star, and a little tag of my office. “This is where I was.” You know. It gave them a little better idea.

Of course, I heard it, you know.

Q. (01:09:29) When you went back to the photos had you seen the damage up to that point?

A. Once.

Q. (01:07:34) When was that, when did you see, actually see where it was at?

A. The second time we were evacuated out of the courtyard. For what ever reason COMMANDER WAY myself and a Coast Guard Captain reservist, we were trying to hide behind a bush and have a cigarette, like, you know, all these medical people around and we had all these barriers and stuff. It’s like, God I really want a cigarette, so we’re kind of hiding behind one of the trees and one of the ambulances came around and the guy in it was saying we needed to go, we needed to go, there was possibly another plane, and he was nice and snug, he was like “Jump in.” So we did, we climbed into the ambulance and ended up coming out into South Parking and I don’t even know where we came out. I know we went directly passed the impact. That was the first time I’d seen it. And he stopped over, I guess it’s around the second corridor

area, that there was fire trucks lined up there, and whatnot, and we got out of the ambulance and was kind of looking at it, and that was kind of shocking.

And when you knew something had happened, and you knew how bad it was on the inside, and really from the outside it looked better then it did from the inside.

Q. (01:09:00) Jeez, that's hard to believe. It looked horrible.

A. Well, because when we were going in, we were either going in 4th corridor or 5th corridor, depending on what side you were kind of, what group you were with. I mean you'd go in and you could get so far. You know, A ring was fine, B ring was fine. You get to C ring, you know, and light fixtures are hanging, and you know, some places you couldn't get through at all. It just depended on where you went. So to actually see it, and everything's dark too, so you're like doing the blindman feel, you know. To see it from the outside, it actually looked better. Because now you had a little better understanding of, OK, now I know why we didn't get past that point, you know, because it isn't there anymore. Good thing we didn't go that way.

Q. (01:09:52) I'm curious, because you said earlier, that you're still in the same spaces.

A. Yes.

Q. (01:09:54) So when they did the renovation, you didn't have any smoke or water damage.

A. We had smoke.

Q. (01:10:01) But they were able to –

A. We had the Service Master folks come through, oh yes, oh yes, ceiling walls, I didn't realize how dirty the office was.

Q. (01:10:07) Oh, OK.

A. I didn't realize how dirty the office was.

Q. Oh, Ok, so,

A. Probably hadn't been cleaned like that in fifteen years or so.

Q. (01:10:14) They pretty much gutted it and –

A. They came in with sponges and all kinds of chemical type, smoke cutting type stuff and literally wiped the ceilings down, wiped all the walls down. Took the fixtures apart and did all that. The only thing that they would have done, that I told them no, that I'll take care of it is the venetian blinds that we have in the one window. Because we're in the E ring and our office actually looks into the passage between E and D. We look at the D ring, but I did the venetians because we have security sensor wire that runs the entire window and I didn't want them to have to worry about it. That was kind of fun.

But yes, it was gross. I didn't realize. They shampooed the carpets, it was awesome. It was just like, here have a go at it. It was gross when we got back. I was, we actually faired a lot better then I thought we were going to.

Q. (01:11:20) Back when you were running around the building, knowing that some of the probably intelligence reports that you'd seen, knowing that the bio-chemical threat is real, did that ever enter your mind that that might be a scenario here?

A. No, no more than the smoke we were burning in is JP5, and the asbestos in the building, and you don't think of any of that. We were, like I said, tunnel visioned. You're looking for people, you know you're looking for anything, listening for sounds, you know.

My husband got on me afterwards, because anytime you go into smoke like that and you've got the blinds and the carpet that give off chemicals and whatnot in smoke, I didn't think about any of that, but I had chemiphers on my face, probably, but I didn't go nuts.

Q. (01:12:22) Do you re-live it? Do you dream about it?

A. I wouldn't say dream about it. I had flashbacks for a while, faces, especially when they started coming out with the missing list and I'm trying to place people that I knew, because I knew I knew people that were lost. I'm terrible with names. I'll be the first to admit it. Faces I'm great with, you know, I meet somebody and -

Q. (01:12:56) You're good with phone numbers too right?

A. (01:12:57) Yeah, right, that's why they're in my cell phone. Numbers is not my thing. But being that I'm a smoker and the courtyard is the smoking area, you meet folks all the time, you know. Younger sailors, you know. There's a group of us that met every morning between 9:15 and 9:30 and would have, you know, a couple of smokes, joke, talk about the weekend. You know, one of the guys, MR WOODS, was a retired chief. We listened to his stories of hunting or fishing or you know. So there was an aspect of looking for people that we knew. I mean, you,

you're going through there and especially once we found out that the Command Center had been hit, because I knew folks in there, and it was like "Oh, my God," and you know.

Every once in a while I'll catch myself walking out in the courtyard and it's like, I look around and it's like, OK, no they're not here, you know. Different when people transferred and you still expect them to be there, you know. Other than that, no.

My husband was really good about talking to me. He knew that I didn't want to talk to the kids about it, not that he could totally understand what I went through. He's probably seen worse, you know, he was over in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was up in the mountains with the refugees in the camps, so he has an idea.

When he'd call and start talking about something, and then "Oh, not talk about it." About an hour later, it's like, OK, I'll talk to you later, because I'd just go off on a tangent. So he let me vent. I think that helped. Otherwise, I just try not to think about it.

Q. (01:15:00) What about the SPRINT Team, was that something that people were encouraged to use? Were you aware of what their function was? Have you ever heard of them before?

A. (01:15:08) Of who?

Q. (01:15:09) SPRINT Team.

A. SPRINT Team, no we call them Casualty Assistance. That was one of the training I went to, too. Crisis intervention.

Q. (01:15:19) Is that right? Training for, was this for the –

A. To be a crisis intervent – just to recognize the signs.

Q. (01:15:27) Really, Was that for the Navy, or -?

A. No, Search and Rescue.

Q. (01:15:30) Search and Rescue. Was that helpful?

A. It was for me because it helped, I think it made me focus more on my boss, GEORGIA and MISS LIVINGSTON, and watching them and listening to them as far as OK they're dealing with this, they're not dealing with it, you know. Took the focus off of me and I guess I put it on them, you know watching them, making sure they were OK.

We had the team, the folks come through by the office you know, letting us know that they were down in the clinic and if we needed to talk to anybody. I did all mine with my husband. I probably could have gone down, but and even if you know, I wasn't worried about their putting my name down, or worried about [REDACTED], or you know, I didn't care about that but, no, I did all my debriefing with my husband I guess. More comfortable.

Q. (01:16:30) With that kind of training that you'd been through for the Search and Rescue would that be good for the general military training? We've heard a lot of people of how vital the SPRINT team was. I was part of the team that went down and did the crew of the *USS Cole*.

A. Then you know one of the kids in the Command Center, then.

Q. (01:16:51) What's that?

A. You knew one of the kids in the Commander Center then, because he'd just gotten there from the *COLE*

Q. (01:16:57) was he counseled?

A. Yes, he'd only been there two weeks.

Q. (01:17:00) Do you know which one it was?

A. I don't remember his name.

Q. (01:17:02) He was on the *Cole* when it was hit?

A. He was on the *Cole*? Yes. I don't know about for general across the board training for folks.

Q. (01:17:21) Maybe even leadership.

A. Leadership yes, oh definitely, Because it doesn't just play for crises like the 11th, you know it can play for anything.

Q. (01:17:34) Right.

A. Yes, and I think that's one of the things that we've gotten away from teaching, is that awareness and what to look for. We got through substance abuse class, you know, recognition training and all that kind of stuff, but yes I think they should probably add, at least for mid-level, you know, once you become a supervisor or a manager you know, you probably should, because there's other circumstances that can cause the same type of reactions.

Q. (01:18:04) How has life changed since the, professionally, personally and professional?

A. Professionally, I'm busy. (laugh) With the collapse of the building and the flooding of other areas, we lost two secure areas, so our office became one of two for the Department of the Navy

in the building. It's like all of a sudden nobody had any place to store anything. It was, that was crazy for a while. Plus all the folks that have moved out has made our job that much harder.

When you're trying to run actions and take care of things and they're in Crystal City, or they're here or they're there. The first couple of weeks was really crazy because you never knew where anybody was.

Other than that, professionally, I'm trying to decide whether I'm going to do another three or not. I don't know.

Q. (01:19:12) So this impacted that decision?

A. Initially I said, "That's it, I'm gone. Had enough fun, I'm going home. But now, it depends on what the detailer offers me. I'm kind of in between a rock and a hard spot, I mean I'm about at the same place I was when I came off the Joint Staff. Where do I go from here, you know? How do you go from working with the SECNAV and the Under SECNAV to you know, some low, Joe Schmoo, way down the echelon chain. I don't know. It will depend.

Q. (01:19:52) How has this changed the role of your office other than being one of the secure locations, as far as things that are front burner issues now?

A. It's made people that we deal with a little more aware of what we do and why we're there in the first place. We're kind of an ambiguous office where, you know, seldom seen, seldom heard. DONNER (phonetic) knows we're there, but it's like all of sudden the phone was ringing off the hook. People were coming by the office 24/7, you know and it's like, you know, "I didn't even realize this was a two-person office". You know, in that regard it was like all of a sudden our role jumped into the limelight and we've always tried not to be, you know.

It's starting, it's starting to settle back down. As other offices get back on line and as things get to some form of normalcy, it's calming back down which is nice.

Q. (01:20:00) Were you all involved in the discussions, Homeland Security, the Navy's role?

A. A little bit as far as how Navy programs will effect or can play in Homeland Security, in that regard we're involved in that, but other than that we're probably not really front runners. You know, I guess we're mostly an oversight office, so we make sure that programs are run and managed the way they're supposed to be. So as far as mostly GEORGIA's knowledge of this program or that program and what it does, it's capabilities, you know, she'll get tapped for that, but no, we're kind of going back into the closet so to speak. Kind of nice.

Q. (01:21:53) Who are some others we should talk with. Would GEORGIA be a good one?

A. GEORGIA would probably give you a very good perspective as far as being almost right there.

Q. (01:22:11) She was with MR. PICK at the time, or in his office?

A. She was with MR. PICK in his office and as a matter of fact, MISS LIVINGSTON was, picture the picture of the collapse and that, MR. PICK's office is on the backside of the E ring. MISS LIVINGSTON was on the front side of the E ring to the left of the impact. So both of them were like right there, and GEORGIA told me when I finally talked to her how they got out and whatnot.

I couldn't picture it until I talked to MISS LIVINGSTON and CAPTAIN KERN, and how they got out. And then the two started to, it took the two stories to kind of go, OK, now this makes

sense, because GEORGIA kept saying to me, well there was this step, and she's like, "Now I knew I was shaken up and I couldn't breath and I was starting to get scared, but I just knew we were going the wrong way, because that step was never there before."

Well that's where the floor had started to fall. I couldn't put that together by what she was saying until I had talked to the Captain, and it was like, "Oh, my God, you know, OK now I knew exactly where you were going."

Q. (01:23:26) Oh, my goodness, they were right there.

A. Oh yes.

Q. (01:23:29) Did their offices eventually collapse?

A. MR. PICK's is gone. He lost the entire length of it, yes. And MISS LIVINGSTON was in a conference room with a group of college students.

Q. (01:23:41) Which is now gone.

A. And the conference room is gone, yes. They did the title wave affect with the floor. Yes, so GEORGIA would probably be good. She was very emotional about it. It rattled her. It rattled her really well. I don't think she'd ever had anything like that in her life. She's, you know, She's been with the Navy and on the Hill forever, so you know, with the, she'd could probably give you a real good –

Q. (01:24:09) Would the timing be good to talk with her or should we wait a little while.

A. No, the timing would probably be really good. I mean she, I got her to finally go down and talk to the Counselors, you know. I'd let her vent on me, but I was dealing with it too, and I could only handle so much.

I think, she's still having a hard time talking about it, but it's getting better.

Q. (01:24:40) Well, put a good word in for us.

A. (laugh) I can do that. I'm trying to think.

Q. (01:24:48) Is your number a good number for her as well.

A. Yes.

Q. OK

A. I know you already talked to COMMANDER WAY he was a lifesaver that day. As a matter of fact he was the one who got me the scrubs, because I was in my skirt for so long and trying to go back into the building and they were fussing at me because I had panty hose on, and you know, so he snagged me a pair of scrubs and a pair of those little sneaker, cloth-like hospital shoes, you know.

I go, "OK, I'm ready to go."

He was awesome, plus I was mooching cigarettes off of him all day, because my cigarettes were in the office too, and of course the blind man closed.

Q. (1:25:29) That one hurt, didn't it?

(laughter)

A. OK.

Q. Anybody else?

A. GARY's gone. He got out of the Navy. I know there was like a group of us. It's amassing how you kind of pick out the people you know and you kind of stay with them you know. That's like why COMMANDER WAY and I ended up together. Oh, I know you. I smoke with you.

One of the guys is an Army Reserve, he got activated. He's gone down and he's doing homeland stuff. God, HAWKINS, I don't know if HAWKINS is a senior airman or a sergeant. He's Air Force. I know he works in the Flight Surgeon's office. He's got the Air Force perspective, I guess. I don't know have you talked to any of the N89 folks?

Q. (01:26:31) Yes, I had this big long list. I went and talked with them.

A. COMMANDER MARTIN

Q. (01:26:38) No.

A. COMMANDER MARTIN would be a really good one. Maybe not so much for the actual of the 11th days, the day of the 11th, but he, he was on the we called them scavengers, the security team for all the documents that were –

Q. Right.

A. Collected and sifted through and he did a lot of that.

Q. (01:27:06) Yes that would be a good part of it. We talked to some of the reserves that were a part of that as well. MARK PUGH who works over – right.

A. Yes, I know MARK, same programs, he'd give you a little better idea. Yes, COMMANDER MARTIN was, plus he was in and out of the spaces, once the fire was put out and they were trying to see how many safes they lost and of course their offices was completely gone.

Q. (01:27:35) Where can I get, can I reach him with your number, or – I guess you don't have that one memorized, maybe I can call you and get that one.

A. Call me and I'll give you that one. It's on my Pent – well they got moved, because they no longer have an office for like the third time in three months. I'm trying to think who else. LAURA STANLEY from the N2s office. I think she's actually in 20. You can call me and I'll give you her number too.

Q. (01:28:09) OK.

Q. She also was part of the, I guess like the security team going into the spaces when they were able to and getting what we could out of them.

Q. (01:28:27) Yes, that would be a good part of the story.

A. Because the N2 spaces were pretty bad. I'm trying to think.

Q. (01:28:47) Well think of anybody else and when I call you for those numbers you can give me those names, as well.

A. That's four.

Q. Or you know how to contact us.

A. Yes.

Q. Do that as well, if somebody else pops in-

A. Yes, for the most part I was with Air Force or Army or you know, we don't have I don't think we have any corpsman at the building, it's all other services. Kind of strange isn't it? When you think about it.

Q. (01:29:18) What would we need them for?

Laugh

A. Yes, No kidding, because Air Force is much better. When I passed the medical, matter of fact I was talking to afterwards, you'd talk to people. I mean I went back to work that Thursday. Didn't do a whole lot, because the 2nd corridor was closed off, and they weren't allowing anybody in yet. We had emergency strands of lights and stuff, but that was about it. But I wanted to get up to the office and see what kind of damage. That unknown, you know, I'm like OK, am I going to walk in and this is going to be gone. Or is it going to be fine. You know, was it going to be I wanted to know, because I wanted to get to it before GEORGIA did. I mean clean it up a little bit.

(laughter)

Because, you know, she called me, she was like

Q. (01:30:11) Protecting your shipmate, right?

A. Well, -

Q. (01:30:15) Yes you were.

A. CYA, she called me she was like, “we didn’t throw the bolt on the door.”

“I’m like, so? You know, Georgia if fireman had to break the door down because the fire got to that point, so be it, I’ll do a non-disclosure agreements, you know, Inadvertent disclosure on a, I’m sorry I left the safes open when I abandoned the building. You know, it’s just paper.

Otherwise when I get there, it’s going to be fine and you won’t have anything to worry about.” I didn’t even think about the alarms. Luckily the door was still there, it was intact. Everything was just like I left it. And it was really weird except for the ceiling, you could see it smoke and stuff. But that was weird because the hallway was black, just covered, the floor, the walls and in front of the doors, was like half moon whereas the air pressure was changing, we must have very good negative pressure in the offices, and it sucked the air out of the office. It kept the smoke pretty much from going in, so the floor was white, it was clean in front of the doors. It’s really weird.

Q. (01:31:27) WOW!

A. Real sight. OK, this is weird, you know, and of course the cipher was all sooted, and I had put a note in the cipher box when I left the office saying you know, if you need to contact me I’m in the Under’s office, and the phone number, and it was a pink sticky, that wasn’t pink anymore, it was kind of gray. But you could see the little lines from the Cipher keys on the sticky on the note. Hummmmm.

But it wasn’t bad. I mean the smell and you can tell every time they opened another office for, in the area that’s been closed off. I can smell it.

Q. (01:32:08) Yes, I bet.

A. I can smell it. As a matter of fact the other day they must have opened another section. I mean they've been very gradually, you know, opening it up and every once in a while, you get this whiff of that smoky smell and, Service Masters did an awesome job though. As quickly as they got that place turned around, within a week, you couldn't tell other than the smell, you know hallways were probably the cleanest they've been since the building was built. I don't remember anybody getting up and cleaning, you know, the conduits, and the light fixtures, you know. But, yes that, I will probably never will come back there without remembering. That will be something that stays with everybody for a long, long time.

You can rebuild it and it will look exactly like it did, but I don't want to be in that side of the building, I'm sorry. I'm glad I work where I work. I'm glad they hit the only reinforced side of the building, because if they'd of deviated any it would have been much worse.

Q. (01:33:21) Are they going to put, do you know if they are putting the same office back in-

A. Probably not. I –

Q. (01:33:33) I can't ima- I had thought they were, but the psychological impact of the people who weren't there, say they were TAD or whatever and then had to go back in there, I think that would be –

A. I think it would be worse for the folks that were –

Q. (01:33:44) Horrendous.

A. Because there's some that are having a really hard time, you know, like the VCNO's secretary and them, if they were to do that I think they'll probably, they'll ask to get moved or quit, or, I

think, if the building people are smart, and they try to be, I don't think that they'd even come close to putting the same folks –

Q. (01:34:10) Back like, yes.

A. No, No, unfortunately all those people that were in there, hadn't been there very long. They had just moved in within the last couple of months. So no, I don't see that. That would be, I couldn't do it. I know GEORGIA couldn't. You know there's probably, of the, especially the survivors from the Command Center and that, can you imagine. No. That wouldn't be very.

Q. (01:34:39) Anything you want to add for the historical record.

A. I can't think of anything. Unless to just to emphasize the frustration that we felt from not having any equipment, you know.

Q. (01:34:58) We've heard that a lot.

A. And that's the biggest thing. It's like we were crippled because you don't have what you need to do the job, and I don't know about the other services but Navy, and I've never been on a ship I mean I've only heard, but that's what we train. Here's your equipment, even your emergency boards and stuff. Here's your equipment. This is what you have to do and we didn't even have that. If you're going to build a building like a ship, then damn it give us what we need to do to do the job. I guess that's it.

Q. (01:35:31) I can't think of anything. Thank you so much.

A. I'm sorry I upset you.

Q. Oh, no, thank you.

Q. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us.

A. No problem.

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Ethel Geary
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