

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT Gary Hall
CAPT (S) Michael McDaniel
CDR Karen Loftus

Interviewer's Organization:

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
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Interviewee:

PN1 (AW) Prince Brown

Current Address:

Navy Annex

Date of Interview:

22 Oct 01

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex

Number of Cassettes:

One

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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. In the Navy 17 and a half years. Working on his bachelor's degree. Watching the World Trade Centers getting hit – thought it was the perfect time for a second strike at another location. Heard the jet come over the Annex. He was in same battle group as the USS COLE. Very aware of security.
2. Navy people were running to their cars to go home. That shocked him because of their shipmates that were down at the Pentagon in need of help. He made a decision to go down there. Marines were setting up a triage center at Henderson Hall. He helped in that effort. They stayed until 6:30 that night and only saw three casualties. A couple of people with third degree burns, one lady in shock. Not what they expected. No parts of remains. Went home, could sense the difference in people.
3. The next day he was hesitant to go to work. Of course he did. Got to work about 12 noon. Swarms of people wanting to take pictures – it was a beautiful day but a horrible one. People acting abnormally. He went over to the Sheraton that day over at Crystal City to help at the Family Assistance Center. Works for Bruce Sherman from Pers-6. He is the only military in his office. He was in charge of the hotline – the 1-800 number. He was in charge of 14 phones in there. Most of them were civilian volunteers, people coming out of the woodwork. He was there for two days. General Van Alstyn gave briefs twice a day. He was very honest with the family members. He was fair and laid his cards out on the table. He told a family member that the remains were charred, and it was not taken well. But he was honest and warned them ahead of time.

4. PN1 Brown was sent next to Dover with Master Chief Bond from Pers-6. They were there with CAPT O'Brien. None of the three had any experience in dealing with mortuaries or remains. CAPT Wagner was in charge of the Port mortuary – he comes from Rockville MD from the AFIP – Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. He was very graphic – very used to this routine.
5. Other key players were two morticians, HMC Timothy Nicholson and HM1 Tim Alonzo from Mortuary Affairs, Great Lakes. Also a Colonel Pemble who ran the Port Dover mortuary. HM1 Alonzo took him back into the mortuary for the first time. It was a good and logical setup consisting of about six stations. A receiving station, the body would first be X-rayed. Then they would be sorted to determine if this was a body part or a part of the building. Everything looked charred. You couldn't assume it was a body. Photos were taken from different angles. The personal effects stage hit him the hardest. Whatever was left over was what you had – wedding rings, bars, dollar bills that had bloodstains on them or were half burned. That had to be matched to a piece of a body part or whatever you had.
6. The identification process was slow. Without panorex, DNA samples or medical and dental records identification could take awhile. After the bodies come in you have to look at the records. You can't make identification from an ID card. This team was made up of FBI agents, DNA experts, and Dover's people. The Sheraton became a place where family members would bring DNA samples, medical or dental records, panoramic x-rays. The FBI brought these packages to Dover. The records would come in at 10-11 p.m. to a duty watch stander. Collecting records was a big hassle. There were a lot of retired or reserve people on the airline. They had trouble retrieving their records.
7. He put together a database that became the model. It was merged with one from Pers-6. It tracked name, status, social, next of kin, escort, CACO information, and personal effects. It was extensive. FBI, Port Dover, Rockville DNA – everyone had their own database. They shared an office with the Army. Which one was the real one? He took great pride in keeping his database up to date and it became the one that people used to get the most accurate information.
8. The most important date for him was to get the first body out. They tracked 55 people and only 2 were intact (a full complete body) and viewable. The Army had about 69 people that were viewable. AG1 Earhardt and AG2 Flocco. Both died of smoke inhalation. He was responsible for reviewing their uniforms. The Air Force personnel checked to make sure the ribbons were exactly in the right place. They were extremely courteous and professional. After that he became numb and wanted to complete the job. Their families began to get frustrated by the long hours.
9. The Navy team stayed at the Eagle's Nest. It smelled like the mortuary. He wasn't in any big hurry again at night. He had two research papers and two finals to do while he worked there. So on top of the long hours he kept busy.
10. After you make an ID of a person you notify Pers-6, the Navy Command Center, NDW, everyone. Next of kin needs to hear it from the CACO. You expect now it is time to ship the body out. But many times they would be held because there were just partial remains. The families have to sign a waiver both to allow for release of the partial remains and a

waiver that allows the service to work with the rest of the remains without permission from the family. The mortuary sends the letter to Pers-6 who passes it on to the CACOs. The CACO got the family to sign the letter. Some waited to get all of the body parts. Any body parts that showed up later would be cremated. There is talk that there may be a common burial plot in Arlington, but he didn't know what has been decided. Once the family says they are ready you prepare the remains for shipment to wherever they elect.

11. For one individual there were 19 different baggies of remains. They would combine them all and make just one baggie. You have to cover that so that at the funeral home they are not shocked when they open the casket. You had bodies that were blown apart; things fell on them, and burned. They could have been killed 4-5 times. Dover wrapped the body in layers of plastic and blankets. You could still smell it, but it was made in a shape that was covered. The uniform was placed on top of the wrapped remains. They used millions of safety pins to keep the remains tightly within the blanket. For civilians, they asked escorts to bring clothing with them.
12. The mortuary team set up escorts prior to making an ID. Command representatives were usually too emotional. They set up a pool of escorts out of New Brunswick that were completely detached. They were unattached to the event and could listen and pay attention to directions better.
13. The Navy personnel at Dover were not a team prior to getting there. They were selected due to availability and formed into a team after they arrived. They were happy when the morticians arrived because they didn't like dealing directly with the CACO's. He particularly did not like to discuss what was left over, what body parts were found. The morticians interfaced directly with the CACO, who ideally were the only ones in touch with family members.
14. Lessons learned: He wrote three pages of lessons learned (will provide us with a copy). Escorts need a place where they can sit around and relax and wait for you, not stand around and read privileged information about the deceased. Each service should have their own e-mail account and address set up prior to your arrival. Direct access to Dover's system vice BUPERS network.
15. Others – SITREPS were sent daily, but information was not always forthcoming back to them. For instance, a LCDR who had no personal awards. He pushed that issue, and as it turned out he was right, he did have awards. Or an AW1 without aircrew wings. He reviewed the ribbons and medals to ensure the uniforms were correct.
16. He was there for 30 days. Out of 55, at that point they had shipped 26 people. When he left they had identified all 12 people on the plane. They were missing four people. They identified the pilot, Charles Burlingame. His 214 was not correct. No one knew what he was wearing.
17. The families kept him going. His concern for them. Closure comes different for many people. It was important to keep the families happy.

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Transcript of Interview:

Q. (00:27) PN1, thanks for taking the time to meet with us, if you would just take a few minutes to tell us a little bit about your background. Where you were born, raised; kind of a little bit about your growing up and then your decision to come to the Navy including any military history you might have in your family. Those that may have affected your decision to come into the military, etc.

A. OK, sir, thank you for having me here. My name is Prince Brown. I have six sisters, no brothers. I don't know how my mother came about naming me Prince, but you just have to deal with it I guess. Growing up in elementary school I didn't like the name too much, because people would make fun of me, though by junior high school and high school everything was great.

I've been in the Navy seventeen and a half years. I retire 2004 April 30th and until September 11, I've just really been going to school working on my Associates and then trying to pick up my Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources. I've been almost, just preoccupied with just school. I didn't pick up Chief this last year so that really kind of spurred my energy toward more schooling and getting my things done and lined up so I can prepare to retire. And at the time of the 11th I had a fin- had a mid-term in Economics 10—141, and I was really worried about it. I woke up that morning thinking, "Oh God, the test is today. The test is today," and just like any other day when you have to study for an exam, you really feel like you're not ready.

About 9:30, we got the news that, I don't know if it was 9:30 exactly, but we got the news about the World Trade Center being hit and we cut over to CNN, and as we were watching it we watched the second plane go into the building. And right at that time I said to myself this would be the perfect time, if you're going to do something like this is to strike all over because people are not expecting it, you know. Your looking at the World Trade Center and everybody's already emotionally involved with that. They're not looking at what else can happen, and shortly after that you can hear the jet going over the roof of the Annex.

I'm located in Wing 6, and there was me and Tom Divorski (phonetic) and we were sitting there just looking at it and making comments back and forth. And that's when I said, "I think this is the best time for something like this to happen all over at another location, because everybody's glued to the TV, you know. We should be taking precautions."

The reason I had this mentality was because I just came off a boat and I was out there on the *USS George Washington* when the *USS Cole* was attacked. They were in our battle group, so my alarm has been up ever since. I mean, not saying I'm paranoid of Americans, but I'm just paranoid of people, you know. You never know what they expect. I mean, people will sell you

out for anything, whether it be cash or whether it be, whatever it is that attracts them, they will sell you out. So my alarm was already flaring from that, and that was October of 2000.

So after I heard the jet go over my head I instantly thought, “Man, am I back in NAS Oceana?” Because at Oceana is our fighter jet base and that’s all you hear all day is jets. I mean, you have to communicate on the phone to conduct your everyday business over the noise of the jets.

When I heard the jet go over, I mean I can tell a big jet, and then you hear this boom. That was it, I knew we were going to be evacuating the building and making our way back down to, away from the building, Navy Annex.

And at the time, the initial shock, I just couldn’t believe it was happening you know. When was the last time we had a conflict at home? I couldn’t remember, and I’m standing there with my notes in my hand. I got my gym bags in one hand and I’ve got my books in my other, and I’m thinking you know, I know we’re not going back into the building and I’m kind of confused and I’m looking at all the military running out of the building and there was some Navy people running toward their cars to go home, and I’m thinking, “Well, we’ve still got shipmates down at the Pentagon. You can’t just go home.”

So after standing there for a while and really in shock like everyone else, I made the decision that just drop my stuff off in my car and try to be of some assistance, because I seen the Marines over by Henderson Hall. They were setting up with the corpsmen, setting up like a triage center and I said, “Well that’s something I can do.” I mean, I’m not a blood and guts guy. I’m the last guy to even go to medical, but something like this here, you really have to do what you have to do.

Then we set the triage over at Henderson Hall. Oh, I’d say it was probably maybe like seventy-five people. Army, no it wasn’t Army, Marines and Navy, and it was a mixture of everybody, but everybody was willing to do whatever it took you know. But we stayed there ‘til about six-thirty

at night and all we seen was three casual—three bodies, no victims. I mean no casual casualty, but a couple of burns, third degree burned members. One lady was in shock, had a little blood coming off her forehead, but nothing, nothing that we expected. I mean we would expect parts and maim, but we didn't get that at all. One side I was a little disappointed because just felt like you didn't do enough, but the other side was, you know, as far as my side, I was kind of happy, because I'm not a, I'm not a blood and guts guy.

Going back a little bit, since I've been assigned to this job here, I mean I've fought like hell to—I can say this?

Q. (05:44) Yes, absolutely you did.

Q. (Another questioner) Sure.

A. Coming back off the boat, I fought like hell, wanted to go to DIA. I wanted to get in the Pentagon, because I wanted to network with a different type of peo—know people so when I transition over I can already have my top-secret clearance in line. I mean I was trying to line up my ducks when I left the ship. And I, me and the detailer, we went back and forth, back and forth, and he said, "Well, I've got these orders here for the Annex."

I was like, "I don't want to go to the Annex. I want to go to DIA. I want to go to the Pentagon." I'm just, I mean, if you could of paint a cartoon, you'd see a guy, it would be a tug-of-war. He's trying to send me here, and I'm trying to go there and I'm trying to go where I want to go. But after that day I said, "You know something, maybe it all worked out that I didn't go to the Pentagon. And better yet it worked I didn't go to DIA."

But, where was I? After the triage, I went home that day, even driving home on the road you can sense that we would never be what we had. We were never going to be the same. The roads was

all closed up so I had to take a detour home. So I took 395 going South and then picked up 495 to pick up 210 going towards Fort Washington to Waldorf area. And I'm looking at the expression on the people's faces in the cars as I was passing, because the roads was empty. I mean it was six thirty at night, seven o'clock at night best and there was no traffic. You know that's uncommon for DC. I mean we're so used to hitting our breaks and driving with the gas, is almost like we have a clutch. And the roads was empty, but the few cars that were out there you could see the expression on the people's faces. You didn't see a comfort, you know, you didn't see everything was taken, they was real confident. You didn't see that. You seen a lot of uncertainty.

And then listening to the radio, and I turned from a couple of stations just trying to get, you know, updated what was going on because being at the triage, we didn't—we had a TV back there, but really who's really looking. I mean you're looking, but the thing they kept on showing us the most was just the World Trade Center collapsing. Every time I went back there to look at the thing, the thing was collapsing all over again. I was like, "Now I'm catching the same part of the news over and over again," so.

But to listen to people talk about it over the radio gave me a different insight, and just listening to the Americans, you know no one really wanted to believe it. They all seemed like it was a "Die Hard" movie or judgement day episode, but it was life. That was real place, real impact, real explosion, real casualties. So it was real, it wasn't a dream.

The next day after I had a chance to think about it—didn't really sleep that well the night before, but I when I woke up, one side of me I didn't want to go back to work. You know, I just, I didn't know what to expect, you know. You're working in there at the Navy Annex and I'm going, "Who's going to go want to bomb the Annex. There's no one there." So I was going, "OK,

that's, that's a strike, I mean that's a plus in the right direction. But what about if this happens again, you know, you can't—they knocked out the phone lines. Remember the day before we couldn't make any phone calls, or cell phones, pagers, it was all, you know, taken out. So, I didn't want to go back to work. I was kind of scared. But I knew deep down inside you had to. You can't just run from it, you know, that's not what we're about, so I went to work.

I called my supervisor, told him I'd be there around 10:30. I ended up getting there about twelve. I find out that the news, the FBI had took up all the parking at the Annex, and there are just swarms of people everywhere. You know, wanting to take pictures. Traffic was being detoured. It was a beautiful day, but it was a horrible surrounding around that day. I mean it was like a dark cloud, but the sun was shining, the birds were still singing but you had the smell of burnt, you know, in the air. You had—people were just doing things that was totally unnormal, like driving on the grass and driving on Columbia Pike trying to park. I mean that was, you know, those were the things that were uncommon, and you're wondering what is going on? I mean everything just seemed like it was out of place. Only thing that really seemed the same was just the color you know. You had the same colors, the trees, you know, the uniforms, but the people amongst that was totally different.

And I went into work that next day, I said, "Well." I got a call from my instructor, they cancelled class. I was like, "That was a give me." I kind of knew they'd cancel class and I was relieved at the same time. My second class instructor called and I didn't really like her too much, but she called to say, "We're going to cancel class, too." I'm glad. I'm like (he claps) I didn't want to see her anyway.

(everyone chuckles)

But after I got a chance to catch up on some small things at work, they asked me did I want to go over to the Sheraton at Crystal City providing assistance to the families over there, and I was like “Great, sure, no problem.”

Going back a little bit, one of the things about my office, I’m the only military in my office, so I think I might have superb supervisors. They gave me any amount of freedom that I could possibly want and if I was a boot camp guy, I’d probably have too much freedom, but they know my schedule. They know I’m in school. I’m at work on time. I’m a responsible person, so it was just amazing you know, that they didn’t mind. If you want to go there and provide any help doing that, if that’s what you want to do, that’s what you want to do. That’s fine.

Q. (11:19) Who do you work for?

A. Bruce Sherman Pers-6. And at first when I got there, I was really feeling like, and coming from a squadron where I’m the Command Career Counsel and Personnelman First Class and I’m in charge of, you know, so many people and responsible for the records, and I come here and I’m the only military. I’m only responsible for me. I don’t know how Captains do it, you know. You leave the fleet and you come to DC and you’re just another guy in the –

Q. (11:49) You get to make coffee, right

A. I mean back in the fleet the Captain is pretty much—he’s going to always have a parking spot, and he’s always going to have people working and hopping through hoops for him. So to come here and give all that up, that’s humbling, even for a supervisor like myself, they just—so I was kind of bitter about being here, because the detailer actually won and got me to a place I didn’t

want to go, but it all worked out because I had a chance to be a part of something that's really, you know going to be in history.

So I went over to the Sheraton, Crystal City at the Sheraton, and I was in charge of the hotline phone line. The 1-800 number. And at first I didn't have a clue, you know, the last a person really wants to volunteer to do is take a phone call. You know, you're a go-for, you run and get this, but you don't want to tell the person the wrong thing over the line. But being in charge of, I think it was fourteen phones in there. Somehow they appointed me the supervisor so I was like, "Do you guys really know what you're getting yourselves into?"

But it worked out great. The people that I had working for me over at the Sheraton were, seemed more experienced at doing this than I was and I really piggybacked off their knowledge. I mean, they came in willing to take the phone conversations and that just made my job a lot easier. I didn't have to have any supervision, basically to set up schedules of when they can be available. They gave me their schedule. I contacted them if I needed a little, you know for extra hours or whatever. And it was great. I was only there for two days, though.

Q. (13:26) Were they military, or –

A. Civilians, people coming from out of the woodwork, just, "I'm available between these time frames, and I'll be more than glad to take phone calls for four hours."

Q. (13:37) How did you come to volunteer for this?

A. Well, when I walked into the office a couple of the other civilian guys in my office were already over there. So I came in asking where everybody was at, and they said, "Well, Tom and Bill, not Tom, but Pete Darby (phonetic) and Bill Coffrin (phonetic) are over at the Sheraton. I

was like, Man, OK great, you know, they've got something set up." And then they said, "Would you like to go over there?"

"Sure," and I went over there and it was nothing what you expect, it was ord—it really seemed like it was running organized, you know. There wasn't a lot of information available yet, and you had, the General, I want to say General –

Q. (14:15) From the Family Assistance Center?

A. Yes, I can't remember his name.

Q. (14:19) Van Alstyn (everyone says the name at once)

A. Van Alstyn, he was over there and he was my first contact what actually knew anything about the casualties. I mean you can already anticipate there was going to be casualties down there. You can already anticipate that the families are going to be devastated upon hearing the news that their loved one is missing or deceased, but between phone lines, you know, they were encouraging us to sit in General Van Alstyn's—because he gave little speeches, not speeches, but like-

Q. (14:48) Briefs.

A. Briefs, twice a day. One was at ten and another one would be at four o'clock. So Pete Darby, he took the first one at ten o'clock and I took the one at four o'clock and I couldn't even sit through the whole brief. He was, and he told them at the very beginning of his brief, you know, "I'm going to be really honest with you. I'm not going to pull any punches. I'm not going to—

because right now you need to know. If you're going to ask me any questions, be prepared for the answer."

I thought he was fair, you know, he laid all his cards out. He wasn't dishonest. And the first family member jumped up and said, "What are the condition of the remains?"

He took a deep breath and he said, "They are charred." You know this person stood up like we want, want to know something and the first bit of information, they couldn't handle it, you know. Just—the guy sat down quietly and I got up. I'm getting out of here. That was my first part of the casualty team. Not a bad reflection on the general. I think he was, like he said, he was honest. He said, "I can't pull any punches here." No, you want to know something, I'm going to have to tell you straight out and it, that way doesn't go well with me. I was like, that's what they wanted to hear. They didn't want to hear, but that's what they wanted to hear.

So that lasted two days and I got a phone call on my cell phone saying, I need you to come over, there's a good possibility you may be going to Dover with our Master Chief Bond from Pers-6. Now Master Chief Bond was on travel on another seminar. I guess travel started that Monday. He said the seminar was real boring and he was complaining about it on our way to Dover. But they couldn't just send Master Chief Bond down there by himself, they had to send someone to provide administrative support. However, once we got there we found out that between him, Captain O'Brien and myself, we had no clue, you know. We had no idea how to handle casualties and it sure as hell can't read that overnight. I mean this—you needed somebody that's going to really be consistent. I mean we were willing to do whatever we had to do, but you talk about being thrown into a job and expected to perform, that was, that was totally different. So the Captain walked in there and the Master Chief was there and I was there. We had this Captain Wagner come over from Port Mortuary. He was in charge of there. He's pretty much the

big guru over there, a Navy Captain. He works over at Rockville, Maryland over there where AFIP, A-F-I-P. I want to say Armed Forces—I can't remember what the I is, something with Pathology. Institute of Patho – (Editors Note: CAPT Wagner, Director, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology)

Q. (17:33) Institute of Pathology.

A. That's it, thank you. Now that Dr. Wagner, you've got to appreciate this guy. This guy he's around us everyday, so when he's talking to you, he's real graphic. He's not trying to be crude, he's just—I guess he talked to doctors all day and this how they talk back and forth, but to us, you know, he can ease back a little bit anytime you want. It'd be fine.

But he took –

Q. (18:02) Did you tell him that?

A. No, I sat, I just sat back and listened, because you know, I've found that in a situation like this here, the best thing you can do is really just listen, because everybody else is going to want to do all the talking. Everybody's going to want to do all the questions, but being that I was really unsure about being there, I wasn't going to speak out of turn. I wanted to make sure I listened and take in the information.

So Captain Wagner took Captain O'Brien and Master Chief Bond for their brief tour of the mortuary. And me and the Master Chief on the drive down there already said we really didn't want to be that directly involved with the bodies. So they were gone maybe an hour. Captain O'Brien didn't come directly back, but Master Chief came back in our office and his face told me everything that I didn't want to ask. I said, "I told you not to go in there." I just looked at

him. There was a rumor in it, but his face, I can just tell that it was a horrible sight and then when Captain came back in there, he sat down at his laptop and he just looked at the screen. Didn't say nothing at all, but I could tell by his body language and his face that—and I didn't go in there for the first three days. I was like, based on them two going in there, and they had to go in there like twice that morning, I was just, “not going to happen.”

But by—they gave me Friday off because I didn't get a chance to get any uniforms or anything, so they gave me Friday to go get my uniforms because I went down there in whites. You can't work in an environment like that with whites on. I mean, it isn't possible to even, isn't possible to keep them clean, just going back and forth to work, can you imagine being in the mortuary. So they gave me some time to get myself together and come back a little bit ready prepared that Sunday. I went back there Monday and I found out we had two morticians check in from Great Lakes, Mortuary Affairs. Now these guys are my heroes. I love these dudes. I mean they came in there—they were sort of equal to Dr. Wagner, but they were on a layman's terms. Does that make any sense?

I mean it wasn't so like they'd just been talking to doctors all their life. You can tell these guys talked to both sides of the fence.

Q. (20:21) Were they Navy?

A. They were Navy. One was HMC Chief Timothy Nicholson and HM1 Tim Alonzo.

Q. (20:380) The HMC's name again.

A. Nicholson, Tim Nicholson. Timothy Nicholson from Great Lakes, Mortuary Affairs.

Now what I liked about these guys, they came in and they gave the—of course they knew all the gory details, but they spared you the information you didn't really need to know, and gave you really just enough information to keep you, keep your manners if you talked to anyone else. You really gave the impression that you knew what you were talking about, but he—I appreciated them, because I learned a great deal from them. That's when I made my first trip back to the mortuary with HM1 Alonzo.

Chief was willing to take me back there, but Master Chief grabbed him right away, and I said well, "It must be a khaki thing" so I grabbed my fellow First Class and said, "Come on, take me back there."

I think Master Chief grabbed Chief just to do a dump, you know, just to let it all out and I grabbed Alonzo just so I could see. I wanted somebody, not just take me back there and let me see. I wanted, walk me through each station, and they had the stations set up and he seemed when he was walking back that he was really impressed at how Dover had set up each station. And he said, you know, it was a steady flow, it wasn't people just, it wasn't bodies just laying around, you know. I don't know what kind of thoughts you guys were having prior to even me telling you this, but there was no—everything was set up properly. I mean there was a flow. He was trying to make IDs, and do what you have to do, and, you know, get them ready for shipment.

Q. (22:13) What were the different stations?

A. I can't call them out by name, but I believe there was like six stations. I mean you had your receiver station, trust I'm rough on this ma'am so be patient.

Q. (22:22) That's fine.

A. You had the first station where they would come off and they'd go on to like a conveyor belt where they would get x-rayed, because you don't know, you never know whether people had explosives on them that didn't go off at the time. So you have to x-ray the bodies before you start messing with them because you just don't know what to expect. After they complete the x-ray then they go through a process where I guess you start pulling them, pulling them out, and you know, sorting them out and send them to where they got to be go—I mean where they have to go. You have to make a determination is this a body part or is this the building, because everything looked charred.

Q. (22:56) Oh, gee.

A. Am I going too far?

Q. (23:00) (Everyone chimes in) No, no no.

A. Go as far as I can?

Q. (23:03) Yes.

A. Because if everything is black and charred you can't assume, so you have to go through and then you have the guys taking photographs, you know. They stand on top of the ladder and they x-ray, they're taking photos from different angles. Things that are body parts and things that are not, and then they go through.

Now, I can't give you the step by step of the assembly line. That was just the beginning stages and you know I learned a lot with that stage there, but the stage that struck, kind of hit me the

hardest was the personal effects stage, because now you pull them off, you know. Badges, ribbons, whatever, bars, Ensign, Lieutenant bars and whatever is left over that's what you have. You know, a wedding band or a watch or you're pulling out dollar bills that have blood stains on them, or half dollars, you know, because they're burnt halfway. I mean the personal effects, because now you have to match the personal effects to a piece of torso or body part that you have, because you want to make sure you keep everything—the last thing you want to do is make a mistake and give somebody the wrong personal effects, when you have such a huge mass. So the organization behind how they had it set up, I was just—I was impressed and me being a novice and hear another corpsman say he was impressed, well I'm going to be impressed too. If you think this is great, you know, and you know, I got a chance to see it at a different level. I went in there with him, whereas if I'd gone in there by myself or with Master Chief I would never have got the ex-ray machine. I wouldn't have never got the process of the personal effects or the condition of the personal effects once they got it.

Now the DNA process, you have an area where you do DNA process. Now, the thing that really held everything up was you didn't have medical and dental records on a lot of people. You didn't have panorex, you didn't have DNA samples, so you'd be surprise how many people don't ever submit a DNA sample. And it's like, it's supposed to be mandatory.

Medical and dental records, you would be surprised how many people maintain their own medical and dental, because they think medical and dental's going to lose them so they keep them in the office or they keep them in their car, or they keep them at home.

So after you start getting your bodies in, the first thing you've got to do is you start looking for your records. People were charred. You can't just look at them and say this is so-and-so. I mean

they may have an ID badge on a uniform, or something but you can't assume. So you have to do the process of making identification.

Now this team was made up of FBI agents, DNA experts, Dover's people. I can't remember their titles. It's hard keeping all those titles, but Colonel Pemble and a Dr. Wagner ran over our thing, but Colonel Pemble, he's like the one that ran Dover. He ran Port Dover Mortuary and he made sure everybody had their rooms. He made sure everything was great. He would always come by and asked you, "Hey, is everything going OK there, PN1?" I don't know why he took a special interest in me, but I enjoyed it because it means he knew I was there. You know, whether I was talking or not.

He helped us up with tracking down some records. Keeping up with them, because over at Sheraton after I left, things started collecting DNA samples. Some family members were bringing in panorex records or dental, medical. Whatever they can possibly turn in and the FBI was bringing those packages down to Dover. But by the morning when we'd get in there, because we were working between twelve and fourteen hours—you didn't really think it was a long day until after two weeks went by, and you're like, "What the heck. You know, I'm tired." Those are long days. You don't really realize it until—I guess you've just got to slow down one minute to realize. You look back and you're just like man the 11th was so far—we had done so much since the 11th that, yeah I was tired. So we did slow down a little.

But going back, the records would come in that night. I guess ten, eleven o'clock after they got there, and they would drop them off to a duty personnel who was on there in the mortuary, because they would stay there all night too. They would close six o'clock and we would stay two hours after they left just to catch up. Want to paper shuffle or update our databases or whatever.

But that was the biggest hassle, was just trying to collect all the records. I mean, it sounds real simple, but it's not. I mean, you had Admiral Flagg's wife, Darlene Flagg, they said she'd never been sick a day in her life. How can somebody not be sick at all? She had kids. She had no medical and dental, not easily available.

Retired Admiral Flagg, we had a hard time trying to find his information. Actually another thing too, off the airlines, we find out that there was a lot of retired or reserve people on the airline.

Mari-Rae Sopper, she was on *Sports Illustrated* Magazine. She was on the airline, she got on.

We had trouble retrieving her records.

All right, where am I going now?

Q. (28:43) What kind of paperwork were you having to put together?

A. At first, the first two days I was there before I had time off, I think we got there Wednesday, because I know I worked two days and that Saturday I took off. I was trying to put together a database, and like I said earlier, not knowing what they're track, or what to look for, my database was real elementary. I mean it was almost a joke to even start, but you've got to start some place. By the time I came back Sunday, Master Chief had got a, I guess Pers-6 already was prepared for something like this. Casualty Assistance and Pers-6, they had an extensive database. I mean this database was—when I would run it off, everyday we were running four sheets, using landscape. Tracking 55 names. This database tracked everything from name, status, social, where they worked at, next of kin information, escort information, CACO information, personal effects, uniform items, remarks. I mean it was pretty good database. Something that you know, in my opinion, and it was something I included in my lessons learned, that all of us should have had. If not that database, we all should have had one database.

The FBI guys had their own database. Port Dover people had their own database. Rockville DNA people had their own database. We had this one office called PRIME RIB. That was the acronym, PRIME RIB, but I wrote it down. I got them to tell me what the acronym was in my lessons learned. They had their own database and then you had the Army right across from us. We shared an office with the Army. They had their own database.

With all these databases floating around, which one was the real database? Now, me, I took a lot of pride in mine so I said, this has got to be the gospel. And me and Captain O'Brien we bumped heads a couple of times and gave me a definite opinion of him, but it was all in a day's work. I mean, you know, the type situation, you know, we all felt a lot of pressure to get this done and we wanted to get it done right. You know, we're not there to botch the job, we were there to—it wasn't about awards. It wasn't about recognition you know. Let's just get in and let's give them the best effort and let's try to get these remains out. So we bumped heads about this database. And to be real honest with you I think we had the best database there.

(END OF TRACK ONE)

(INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON TRACK TWO)

Q. (00:01) A new track though. OK. Again the date is the 22nd of October 2001, the continuation of the interview with PN1 Prince Brown. OK

A. I think we were talking about the database. I guess we're past that one.

One of the most important thing of this whole event was when we got our first shipment, when we got a chance to get the first body out. Of all the people we were tracking there were fifty-five people. Only two of them were intact where they were actually viewable. Everybody else was

not intact and non-viewable. When I say in tack, there was actually a full complete body, you know, legs, arms, face. So out of all the bodies that we were tracking I believe the Army had, I want to say sixty-nine, maybe more, seventy-seven, something like that. But we only had two that we can actually say were viewable.

There was AG1 Earhart, the second was AG2 Flocco, and the one that gave us the most problem was Earhart, because the Captain had a chance to see Earhart. Well, he was one of the first ones they ID'd, and the Captain, I guess with his tour with Captain Wagner had a chance to see Earhart at his, the beginning stages. The Captain said they did a great job on him, because he couldn't even recognize him, you know. His face was covered with soot or black smoke. Both of them died of smoke inhalation, so there really wasn't no significant damage to them, but by the time I went back to go look at them and inspect the uniforms, I don't know what they looked like on their ID card, but they looked pretty good to me. I'm not a mortician or anything, but they seemed to be at peace. I mean they didn't look like they died violently or with a lot of trauma. Just, so, the make-up was great. The appearance was great. I mean they even had eyelashes, you know.

Just, it's so weird how these guys can be so sharp at what they do. A mortician takes pride in their work. I was never, I never experienced or even been around a mortician, that, that was my first time.

But the Air Force guys when we went back there to look at the uniform, the Air Force guys, you know, they were back there with a ruler making sure his ribbons were at the right level. His Purple Heart and his Navy Commendation Medal was properly in place, and there was no attitude, you know. It was more like, you know, are you guys happy with this, because we'll start all over, you know. It was more, it was almost like you go to a supermarket and you really hope

you get that same type of service, you know. People just going out of their way to provide you with service that is second to none. So they took a lot of pride in what they delivered and those two bodies were our first ones.

And then we had the opportunity to read the article, because Flocco was from the State of Delaware, so we seen his funeral in the local paper. Actually they showed it in the local news. We all missed that, because we worked those long hours, but we heard about it and then somebody brought in the paper. So we all took turns. We had turned the paper and we put like a route, or like a read list. So everybody read it and initialed it, but the article was superb. I mean, what I think I liked most about it, and I think, I can't speak for everybody, they didn't mention anything about us, but it gave all the credit to Flocco. It talked about his accomplishments and why he joined the Navy and what he was in his high school and how successful and how proud the people were. I mean that was, that was what we wanted and it was just—that was a good feeling. That was our first one.

After that it became a little, we were a little numb after that. Let's just get, let's get them going, get them going (his snapping his fingers), because the thing I noticed most was people were starting to trying to run the household from Dover. It was kind of hard to handle paycheck and bills and stuff like that. A couple of times the Master Chief's wife was calling, and Captain had to make some calls. I had to make some calls, and it's hard on the family, you know. So when you start calling after work, and all the family's like, "When you coming home?" You know, because you can't do this over the phone. You can't be in two places at once. You know, "When you coming home?" You know, and one night we were in there laughing, between the Army and the Navy. One wife had told her husband, "Everybody's gone back to normal. When you coming back home?"

You know, we kind of laughed like, normal, we're so far from normal, and it's an inside joke with us, because we were there. We were putting in the hours, but I can understand a wife's frustration, you know. "When you coming home?" You know schools are opening back up, people are going back to work. You know, it's got to be close to time, I mean, "You should be coming back home soon." So that was another thing that was getting rough, you know. It wasn't about us anymore. Now it was taking a toll on our families and you can only assure them but so much without them still getting frustrated about your not being there. And then giving them the answer you don't know. You can get that from a grade school, you know, "I don't know." Here it is you're a grown man and you can't even come out with an intelligent answer. "I don't know." But when you think two weeks, you honestly think it's going to be three, but you say two to provide a range, but you know, you're not going to reach, you're going to go over two weeks easily.

Q. (05:55) Were you all staying there in the barracks, or a few -?

A. Well, we stayed at the Eagle's Nest. Colonel Pemble, you know, took care of all of us. Unfortunately, I was the last one to get in there because when me and Master Chief got there they put us in these other barracks. Master Chief being the man, I guess he got bumped up some privileges and they squeezed him in there and they just told him, you know, we'll take care of you. I think that's was one of the reason the Colonel remembered who I was, because he was like, "You know, I haven't forgot you, son." I didn't mind, because when I would go to the Eagle's Nest, that's where everyone stayed there working mortuary, it smelt like the mortuary.

Q. (06:32) (Several say, “Hum.”)

A. So I wasn't in no big rush to get there. I'm working in this smell all day. Where I was at, it didn't smell like the mortuary. I'm going, “Hey, you know. My room was cramped. It was tiny, but it didn't have the smell when I left there, you know. I had my little air freshener there and it didn't have the smell of the mortuary. So I wasn't—any other time I probably would have been complaining, but, no. “Sure Colonel, no problem, take your time.”

Q. (07:00) Did you stay busy the whole time? I mean the sense of frustration with your family feeling like, well geez it's been a couple of weeks. You ought to be done by now. Were you busy the whole time or did it kind of drop off after a while?

A. It died down a little bit, Captain, but for the most part we were busy and the whole time, and then like I said earlier, I had taken two classes with Clark University. So outside of working those hours, I would take a nap just so I could get up and finish. I had two research papers and two finals to do. And the finals were easy. People would send me a fax on the final, this is going to be open book. I'm going to give you back what you want. But the research paper, you can't, you have to really put your thoughts on paper and hopefully they'll read well enough where you can get a good grade. I received two B's from that one, so I was happy.

But that was my activity. I guess everybody else, you know, I was the only one that wasn't a smoker, me and the Captain, we were non-smokers. But everybody else just, I don't know either they checked their email in the hotel, or whatever, but we had some downtime. There were some days you can—

Another, this is good to talk about. After you make an ID of a person, you notify Pers-6, Navy COMCEL, NDW. It's almost you notify everyone just so the proper channels, so that the next of

kin is notified via the CACO, vise hearing it on the news, you know, or somewhere else. And then you think shortly you're going to get the phone call, OK, we're going to be shipping this person out, and the family says hold. You know, that's going to hold you up. Now we had made, we had made about thirty-three IDs. The IDs started coming in quick (snaps fingers), after we got all the medical and dental. So we're like great, we've got all these IDs now. In the back of your mind, you're thinking, we're going to be really, really busy. Well, there was a lot of hold, hold, hold, hold, because they were all partials. So some of the family members were waiting until they got all the parts.

So you know, I told my loved-one if anything happens to me, collect what you can get and just move on. Don't hold. If you've got an arm, go, go. I mean it sounds gory, but don't—

So, yes, we were getting our IDs. They started coming in after we did our part. We were tracking all the records, and the DNA and the panorex, but you can't do anything until the family says, "We're ready." You know, "Look, I'm ready for closure."

And when the family says they're ready, that's when you start making preparation to ship the remains out to wherever they, they live.

One case, we—there was like almost eighteen bags of parts. I mean, just it's amazing, because she was on the plane.

Q. (09:57) For one set of remains?

A. One set of remains.

Q. (09:59) Eighteen bags?

Q. (another) Eighteen different bags?

A. So you figure, she could have parts coming on –

Q. (10:03) You mean, that little -?

A. Sandwich baggies.

Q. (10:04) Sandwich bags.

A. Those little zip-lock or, you flip them and—baggies, yes, eighteen baggies. This was on Admiral Flagg's wife.

Q. (10:18) Hum, and when, when it gets released then they, I mean, ship to the family, right?

A. Well, what we—not what—I was speaking like we, like I'm still there, but what we would do is they would combine all the bags and make just one baggie, and in her case they didn't provide us any clothes or anything, so, you know, you make sure you cover that at the funeral home, because you don't want them to be surprised when they open it. Like, "Hey, hey," you know. So he had to tell them, you know, and let me go back a little bit so you don't think it's really that gross.

Dover, I mean they did a great job like I said. They can only do but so much. You get a body that's been hit by a plane, building fell on it. I mean it didn't burn, I mean that's like, that's four or five different deaths, that can happen to any—just one of those alone can kill you, but to have all of them happen all at once. So what Dover would do, I mean, they wrapped the body so, so snug and so many layers of blankets and plastic and, you could smell it, but when you would open up the casket, it was just a part. You wouldn't tell, you couldn't tell how many parts there

were. They would just try to make it in the shape of something presentable, because you don't want to just put up anything.

Q. (11:40) Well, who would open the casket then? Do you –

A. Well, the funeral home. Sometimes some family members may say, you know -

Q. (11:47) I want to see.

A. I want to see.

Q. (11:47) Really? And would you just, would you, you would wrap everything up and then put the uniform on top of it?

A. Yes.

Q. (11:58) So everything went out in a casket.

A. Yes. Really sharp caskets, too, I mean brand new, right out of the boxes. These caskets are—I was really impressed. They cost a bit of money.

Q. (12:10) When you say put the uniform over it, over whatever you had wrapped together or was it just on top?

A. It would be on top of everything they –

Q. (12:15) Fold wrapped?

A. Yes, now the uniform wasn't folded.

Q. (12:18) But inside the casket?

A. The casket would be—OK, you have the uni—you have the body that they wrapped. It would be wrapped like several fol—like several times. Just wrapped, wrapped, wrapped. I mean and there would be safety pins, like a million safety pins to keep the blanket in place. I mean if you can look down there and count how many safety pins, you're doing great. You can, they can make that a carnival thing, because you would never figure it out. It's tons of safety pins keeping this thing tight. And it's snug. It's not coming out, and what they would do is lay the uniform, after it was all laid out, they would lay it right on top.

Now, for the case of civilians, you know, they don't get uniforms so, we were asking the escorts to provide us with clothing, You come up, you know, give us what you want or we'll let the funeral homes know you have to take care of this once you get on your end. But everybody left with a sharp casket and body parts taken care of.

Q. (13:14) Was there an escort with each casket?

A. Yes, we wouldn't have let a casket go without. One of the questions came up, we had these, on the case of YN3 Melissa Barnes, she had co-workers that was her escort, and they were pretty young. One was an E-3 and another was an E-5, but they were real junior. I say that like I'm over the hill, but they were real junior, and they were concerned about flying in the uniform. You know, "Can we, are we suppose to fly in our uniform?"

And you know, One side of me was like, you should have a little pride, you know, so I wanted to bash her right away, but then you know, you had to realize they didn't know. So we took them out to dinner that night, me, Chief Nicholson and Alonzo. We went to Friday's and we were in

there talking about our experiences and the one girl said she was just talking to Melissa and Melissa had put her on hold. No, she had put Melissa on hold to talk to her mother real quick, and when she went back the phone was dead. She kept on trying to call and there was no answer— so. And I guess it was good for all of us to talk, because, you know, they didn't, probably had no one to talk to and these corpsman—you know, I've been in the service seventeen and a half years. I have never ever met any corpsman that was as sharp, as knowledgeable as these two guys. They could have been chaplains; chaplain slash corpsman. They were really, I mean they were patient. They'd let you talk and then they'd provide you some assistance mentally, or, and physically. I enjoyed them. I mean I made sure I took their names and I would never forget them. These guys were, they were sort of my heroes. But after we got finished eating dinner and after we talked about the pride of the Navy and the pride of the uniform and this, that and the other, I watched one of the young girls answer her own question.

“I'm wearing my uniform tomorrow,” and she's telling her girlfriend, “I'm wearing my uniform tomorrow.”

“Yeah, I'm wearing mine, too.”

I was like, you know, we were in there for two hours just talking. Back and forth and back and forth, and by the time it was all over, she told her girlfriend, “I'm wearing my uniform,” and that was just, we all looked at each other like, “Yeah, that was worth it.”

That wasn't our intent. We just wanted to take them out, we knew what, I mean Dover's a real desert place. We were calling it Dover, Tennessee.

Q. (15:48) (everyone chuckles and laughs)

A. We knew, they checked in, they were going to want something to eat, so they might as well come and eat with us. So we took them out to dinner. I think we went to Friday's. But it was nice.

Q. (16:05) How much coordination was done prior to having the escorts show up in Dover, and I guess a related question is what sort of interface between Dover and where they were actually going? I mean and what they're, I guess there was a CACO at the other –

A. There was a CACO and the other and waiting on them. Maybe, I'll give you my example of the coordination, of what I believe the coordination was, and then the whole thing –

Q. (16:32) Try to help us understand the process.

A, OK, before we were even making an ID, we were trying to set up escorts. It first came up that they didn't want Command Reps, because we had one Command Rep show up as an escort and she just emotionally, I mean she was the wrong escort. But she came up with a Command Rep with her, so the Command Rep sort of kept her level.

And she, you know, she called us back and thanked us all, because that was her closure. I mean she boo hooed through the whole thing. I mean it was just like giving a kid a shot, you know, but she thanked us for the whole—She was a Lieutenant, LDO Lieutenant. I'll don't know what her background was, but she boo hooed the whole time. She came out of the car with shades, boo hooing. But she worked directly with some of the people and she wanted to be an escort so she volunteered.

But usually we'd try to work—We set up a pool out of Brunswick, New Brunswick, a pool of escorts that was totally unattached, because that was the best way to do it.

You, I mean people, they were attached because they were Americans and they were all military, but they were unattached to the event, which made it a lot easier so you can pass the information. Because it's kind of hard to tell an escort what their responsibilities are when they're not listening. Then you've just got to go over and over and over it again.

We had this one Captain, I mean he was strong arming us, because his calendar was full. By the time he got there, I guess his drive just all wilted over and the smell of the bodies, just (snaps fingers) you know, it's not about my damn calendar. He turned out to be a nice guy, but we were all like "Ah, Captain, we're going to need help with this guy," you know because on the phone he's, "How long is this going to take me? I have this going on."

Q. (18:26) It's real life?

A. Commander, I'm not making this up so you know –

Q. (18:27) No, I believe you. I believe you.

A. So we are like, ahhhhh, we didn't really want this guy to come, but you know, he's an escort. So were like, "Captain, if we think we're going to need a problem, " you know, "Need somebody to help us out, please." I guess he was coming from DC so he had two and half-hours, three hours drive, but by the time he got there, you know he was ughhh. So, "How's the Captain? Everything all right?" Man, the guy was pussy. That's what we called him, sorry.

Q. (18:57) Did he fall apart?

A. He didn't fall apart, but he was more humble, he was –

Q. (19:04) And you needed the drive at that time.

A. He gave us a lot of fight on that. I mean we talked to him three days and it was just like pulling teeth. “My schedules this. I’ve got a meeting over here. I’ve got to be here at this.” Surprise he didn’t come and have a laptop, you know a Palm Pilot, because, I mean, that’s how, he made it sound like it really didn’t fit his schedule and that he got assigned an escort and it wasn’t by choice. But by the time he got there, like I said, the smell was so strong, and then watching the hearse roll out. It’s more than you. It’s a lot more than you, and he was really a lot better after that.

We had the one, the Naval Academy Captain show up, the academic—I know he was a Captain. He works at the Naval Academy. He works over there with Admiral Ryan’s brother. I want to say the Academic—I don’t know why I’ve got that stuck in my head, but Captain O’Brien knew who he was. And he came up and this guy was the most squared away Captain. I mean he checked on us, like he’s here for escort, but he was “How you guys doing?” Oh, he’d taken us by shock here, because we weren’t ready for this. We were so use to a lot of resistance, especially from the higher up that—he was the only one that was really open to us. Well, the chaplains were too.

But escorts were set up in –

Q. (20:31) Who was he there to escort? Do you remember?

A. No, sorry. We usually set up the escort pool in Brunswick, Maine and we’d pull them as needed. So once we find out that the family wanted to take a partial remain, which means they had to sign a letter saying that they are aware that it is not a complete body, and that there’s a

possibility that body parts can show up, that, you know, the Port Mortuary would handle accordingly. Any body parts that showed up later would be cremated, of course. You wouldn't notify the next of kin to have them rehash that all out. 'cause once they sign the letter, they're saying "you have to do what you have to do and don't let me know. I don't want to know."

Q. (21:16) Would they send that letter from Dover? Where would that be done?

A. It was faxed down. We sent that letter out to Pers-6 to get out to all the CACOs.

Q. (21:25) The CACO had to take the responsibility?

A. Because, yes, they were the one that would interface with the family. Now the intention behind the letter is not so we can rush the process, because you don't want to, and this is what we were really afraid of, that we didn't want to give the people back in—we were calling it the real world—the impression that we were ready to come home. But we wanted to make sure that each family member knew they had another option other than just waiting, because maybe some family members wanted to wait, but some didn't. You know, some just, the whole time they have to wait, they just, it gets worse and worse for them. So we wanted to make sure that they knew that there was another option, and you didn't have to wait for them to actually say, "OK, the investigation is closed. There's no more remains."

Q. (22:10) There was a discussion that I heard from someone in the building that the partial remains, if there was a waiver signed by the family, that there would be a collective gravesite at Arlington. Do you know if they are planning to do that?

A. There was mention of something like that, Ma'am. As of when I left there Friday evening, there was really not a final. I mean it was still up in the air. Between you and I, I still they're probably going to go that route. I can't put a hundred percent thing on it, but I would think they will do an all-grave, one big huge gravesite or something like that, but like I said, that still hasn't been permanent yet. But that was something they were discussing.

Q. (22:51) Before you got assigned there, or even when you heard you were going to go there, what did you think you were going to be doing there, and how did that, how did what you ended up doing related to what you thought you might be doing?

A. Captain, to be real honest with you, I went in there with open, open mind, because seventeen years in, I think I've done every job. I've done every shit job. I've done every great job. I didn't really have any expectations at all, you know. Whatever I can do. If I'd have been, if I could have been the lowest guy on the pole and still got the job done, I would have done it, because that's just, I didn't know what to expect. I knew I wasn't no doctor. I knew I wasn't going to be handling any bodies, so if they'd just wanted me to run a McDonald's I'd have done it.

Once I got there though I could see there was a need for somebody to be administrative guru, and I'm not an expert at it, but I jumped in where I thought I fit in, and I provided my efforts that way.

Q. (23:51) Is that kind of how the team, the Navy team that was there fit together, as opposed to go in there with specific assignments, and they –

A. It's funny that you call it a team, because we weren't a team until, you know, it's like having, you've got a list of people who want to play softball and then you get everybody out there that day, you like, "Oh, this guy."

(everyone laughs. He's apparently making some kind of hand gestures)

You know, -

Q. (24:14) That paints a good picture.

A. You know, if it wasn't for that list, this guy wouldn't even have got picked, you know, like, you just -

(chuckling)

So I mean, you really can't say it was a team, but we, we, everybody was professionals and I really think once the mortician guy showed up that took a big monkey off, our—CAPT O'Brien, Master Chief Bond and myself. I mean, because we didn't want to be, because some of these CACOs they were saying the family members wanted to know, but they wanted to know graphic detail. What's left over? Well, you know there was left over. They wanted to know, "I want a copy of the autopsy report." So the morticians were able to provide them, you know, verbal details over the phone. And that's why I got that one example of the different deaths. You know, this person could have died four or five times if it was possible. I mean you're talking about a plane going two hundred miles an hour into a building. You're talking about an explosion. You're talking about fire. You're talking about fuel. You're talking about war. You're talking about destruction, and the building collapsing. I mean this -

Q. (25:26) All the interface was through the CACOs? The morticians didn't actually talk to family members, or -?

A. No, we wasn't, we wasn't allowed to talk to family, but however, this one case, it was on IT1 Johnnie Doctor, because we had, we started swapping out, because one mortician went home, because his wife had surgery coming up. And like I said, you couldn't do this over the phone. You have to be there to provide support for your wife, so he's like, "I gotta go."

And the Captain's like, "Yeah, we need to start rotating people out, because we've been here that long."

So he was the first one to go, so I was helping out Chief Nicholson, because I think I'd sat there long enough and I wasn't real comfortable doing it, but I knew, if he's not around I can answer some of the questions without being a medical expert.

So with this one case, the CACO called me, said, "PN1, I need a good fax number so I can fax you this partial letter, so we can get the remains released for IT1 Johnnie Doctor."

"No problem. When you send the fax put your phone number in and I'll call you right back off the fax." So he provided me a cell phone number and I called this number back and I ended up talking to Johnnie Doctor's, his wife.

(all questionnaires say hum, or wow)

Well, it really wasn't a conversation, you know. I'm—she's like, "Why you keep on calling here? Do you have a date? Is he coming home?"

I mean, she was, you could tell she was a religious lady, because she wasn't using profanity, but you could hear the anger in her voice. That was the conversation. I was trying to get out of this one as, "Sorry, ma'am, I won't—"

I knew I wasn't going to do it anymore and when I told her I wasn't going to ever call her again, I knew from my heart I wasn't going to call her, but apparently CACO must have wrote down her number on a fax cover sheet. Now this is a human error, you know and I called the CACO later and said, "Hey man, you put me out there." And he apologized a thousand and one times and I didn't put him on a cross, but I just basically, "I had a chance to call and I called that number and I spoke to his wife. You may want to call her back and let her know," you know.

Q (27:34) It wasn't us.

A. It wasn't something I wanted to do. I'm not trying to harass her. I just was confirming that I received the fax, like I would always do. But that conversation, Johnnie Doctor, so –

Q. (27:48) Was she not willing to accept that he was dead and –

A. No, no, she accepted it. It just hurt her. I mean, she waited all this time. Waited all this time. It just hurt. You know, and then when she sent his uniform, because she didn't like—She had the idea—families had the option of what uniform they wanted their loved one to be buried in. We were providing blues, you know, dress blues, they were providing dress blues. She sent us his whites, you know, and they had to be the worst whites that I could ever see in my life. I mean, it was dingy, I mean, I mean the worse set of whites. So we put that in the cleaners and we had that dry-cleaned a couple of times. We washed the hat personally. She included with the whites a picture of the family, so I'm sitting there looking at the picture, and I can see her, and I'm

looking at like, “Man,” just a pain. She was, she looked at the number and must have realized it was from Dover and said, “Why do you keep on calling me,” or—no matter of fact, I introduced myself as being PN1 Brown. “I’m over at the Navy,” and that’s when it hit the fan. I don’t even think she—she just heard Navy. “Why you keep on calling here? Is he coming home, yet? Do you have a date? Don’t call here anymore.” It was a short conversation.

But generally we like to keep the CACOs—the CACO’s establish a relationship with them and then they maintain them until the end.

Q. (29:18) Well, Dover does things like this all the time. Was there not an SOP, or some written procedures to kind of follow, or to kind of share with folks before you get there, to kind of know what things you might run into?

A. If there was an SOP, Sir, we didn’t see it.

Q. (29:35) You didn’t see it. Really?

A. When we left we all were required to put in our lessons learned. My lessons learned was three pages long. I asked the Captain, today, “Hey, Captain, did you get a chance to look at my lessons learned?”

He said, “I’m still going over it.” And it took me some time. I mean, I had a couple of drinks. I sat at my laptop in my room and I put it on paper, you know. This is the thing I think we need to look at. One thing I mentioned was that the Navy needed their own facility. How you going to throw us in there with Army. I mean, our space is really no bigger than your space. Can you imagine sharing that with the Army? We’ve got an escort standing around, you know. They need a place where they can sit down, relax, watch a little TV, have some coffee, whatever. When

we're ready for them then we let them, you know, finish their job. But you don't want escorts wandering around the building and your job. Looking at the notes on your desk. Or listening to the phone calls that come in, or reading your board with all the information. Because that's privileged information and you know, you respect them, the person that was deceased. You don't want to just farm it out there.

So in my lessons learned I included those particular things that troubled me, because as a PN you respect, even as a PN, that's a regular person, respect somebody else's space. So yes, they need to extend the facility out so they can cover all branches of the service.

Each service should have their own email account once they get there. I mean your laptop should plug right in there. You should be MLO Dover 1 if you the Captain or the Commander in charge, or the officer in charge, and you go down the line, one, two, three, four. Simple.

And you're email address should be Dover Air Force Base, instead of that you first dial in, and it's gone, because on that and it times you out then it kicks you off.

That's a frustrat—I mean you try to transmit information and it's something you want to get out right away (snaps fingers) and you've got to wait to dial a line. That's a hassle.

Q. (31:37) Is your lessons learned something that you could share with us? You could provide us a copy of that?

A. I can try to get you a copy, because I gave it to the Captain, and I actually asked him to email to me, because we did it, we were sharing our laptop in the office. I wouldn't bring my laptop in there, because I didn't want to put anything that would remind me of the situation on my laptop, so I kept it all, but the only thing I did put on there and I kind of should have saved it on disk, was the lessons learned.

That was, looking back on it, I think we could have done things different. Sure. Anybody looking in could have—it's easy to point fingers and say you could have done this.

The main thing, I think the most important would be communications. We sent out SITREPS everyday to Navy COMCEL, NDW, the Pentagon, N1, but information sometimes when you send it out don't always mean you're going to get what your looking for.

Now we're trying to find out just uniform items on a guy and they come back and said, "These are all the awards he got." But he's a Lieutenant Commander with no personal awards. Yes, right!

I'm a PN1, I'm like, "No Master Chief, this uniform is wrong." This is off my list and he's looking at his email, and "Man, Chief it's wrong. You mean to tell me this guy flew birds," I mean—I've been in an F-14 squadron, so I call them birds—"he has no personal awards?" Holy.

Q. (33:04) Huh, right, that would be a big mistake.

A. Is it, I mean it was, and I take pride in my uniform and I like looking at people's uniform. I like to get it on right. I catch ribbons all the time. "Hey man, your ribbon is wrong. The precedence is-." So I'm looking and I'm like, "Master Chief, these are missing. You've got an AW without his air crew wings. I know AWANs who got their air wings, and they, they live for them. How can a First Class not have any aircrew wings?

So it's flags that go up and it's things that you notice. Not saying that you, you're being picky, but you just know uniform items when you see them, and you sent out the request at Navy COMCEL, help us out with providing the updates on the uniforms and when they come back we're looking and this is our help. It's frustrating, because it's almost like pushing a bowling ball up the hill with your tongue. There's only so much you can do with limited resources and you

know, when you try to rely on other people outside of your normal support chute, it just, it's really frustrating, because no one knows what you're going through. They get to go home every night.

Q. (34:16) And you were getting all sorts of questions.

A. Exactly. I mean your cell phone is ringing with questions from the CACO. This is after hours, your cell phone is ringing. So when you say I want something, damn it, I want it, just –
(sound of maybe hand slapping)

(everyone laughs)

Q. (34:30) We need you on our team.

A. Don't give me a date and say figure out how many years of service this guy's got. Just tell me, has he got fourteen years so I can give him gold stripes or what. I mean, it, I'm not asking for a whole lot.

Q. (34:43) So you were preparing their ribbons, too.

A. Yes, well, Master Chief was doing it, but what I would do is go over it from time to time, because if you look at something so much you get tired of looking at it, and so I couldn't do what the morticians were doing the HMs, so I would assist Master Chief. We'd look at it, and Master Chief, he's a uniform expert, so we would really just cue in each other, but a lot of times, you know, like I said, Dover Airforce Base was super supportive. I mean I never seen guys out with their rulers, making sure things were just right. I mean, I don't know, I just have an eye to put it

on there right. You see it on there right, it looks good. That's it. It's right, but these guys, they were really in tune to us, so that was great.

But the uniform items, the Command FE pins, and we would have trouble with supply. They were giving us the miniature ones. So you know you got to be a little tight, you can't put that on a guy. That's not right.

Q. (35:44) But when you went, you were there thirty days? Is that right?

A. I was there thirty days, yes Sir.

Q. (35:49) Did you know you were going for thirty days, or was that, you just kind of went.

A. In the back of my mind I told my fiancée that I was going to be gone for three weeks, and at first I was telling her two weeks and I knew in the back of my mind it was going to be three weeks. But then we went over three weeks. That's a little bit long.

And you know, you don't want to leave when Captain and Master Chief said, "Well, you're going to leave. You're going to leave Friday."

And I was like, "Are you sure?" You know "because I can stay." One side of me wanted to get the hell out of there, but the other side was like, we'd only shipped twenty-six people. So out of fifty-five people we got a whole list of people ID'd. When I left we had ID'd everybody. There was twelve people on the plane. We ID'd every last one of them that was on the plane. I think we were missing four. There was Marsha Ratchford, a Hemenway, and there was two other civilians that were government employees. That was it.

Q. (36:43) Did you ID the pilot.

A. Yes, he was Charles Burlingame. He was in my squadron. Yes, he was in Fighter Squadron 103. He's a Jolly Roger. So he flew F-14s. I guess at the time he piloted, it was VF-84. So I contacted my old Command and asked them, you know, here's the information for his next of kin, you know, and "in a delicate way see if you can provide a fly-over or something." And the Captain was like, well, not the Captain, but the Chief was, "Ahhhhh, I'm going to get it to the Captain right away."

But Charles Burlingame and that was one of my other things, he didn't have—his uniform was all screwed up, but his 214 was screwed up— so. He had been out of the Navy so long that no one really knew what he was wearing. Actually now, he retired, he separated from VF-103 in Oceana. They usually give you End of Tour award. He didn't have a personal award. So that was my pet peeve when I got out of there.

Q. (37:42) Well, they should be able to get the photos right. I mean, I thought he was a Navy photo –

A. Well, if we could have had that, we could probably have put pieces together, but when he had.

Q. (37:50) Getting you the right information, I guess, which is the challenge.

A. Because he had had the 214 on file and then he had a 215 on file. Anytime you see a 215, you know the 214 is screwed up. I mean the 215 is correcting it, and what is the accuracy of that? So you know, like I said I noticed he didn't have any personal awards and that was Charles Burlingame, and he was the pilot of the airliner and what struck my interest was that he was a shipmate of mine from the same squadron, VF-103.

Q. (38:22) Did they replace you?

A. No, they didn't replace me at all, because it was almost at the end. So they brought in one replacement for the Corpsman, so there is only one corpsman there now. I talked to him today and told him if he needed any help, you know, please don't hesitate. And Master Chief and Captain O'Brien's going to take it on in.

Master Chief, I did a turnover with the database with him, and he would update if I wasn't around anyway. Not the same way. He's an FC—he know about databases. For my comeback I started calling him a virus. Like. "Man, what are you doing?"

(everyone laughs)

Why are you over here making—but he had I'm sure, he's already squared away. He can take care of it.

Captain O'Brien, just to kind of highlight the crew, Captain O'Brien he's a Reservist He was recalled during the time and at first I didn't have a lot of respect for him, because you know, I don't know why, but his thinking was a lot different than everybody else's. But he came in there. He had a whole other host of things going on in his mind, so I guess he had to, everybody had to make the swing to get things back on focus. He was thinking about his job. He was thinking about, I guess eval, Captain eval fitrep just got, been done, so he was, he had a lot of other things on his mind, but, and after we bumped heads a couple of times, like, "I don't want to work for this guy. No, no more, ever again," but he turned out to be a— what I took from him was just attention to detail, and be persistent. I mean, you ask for it, and you believe honestly you should have it then timing is everything.

Master Chief Bond, a real salty guy. Submariner. He's a FC community. He liked being CMC at Pers-6. He thrives on that. He loves that title. He wears his badge with pride, so, a great guy.

Chief Nicholson, I talked him into getting out of the Navy. So he's going to separate. He's a new chief, just put on—he got there that Monday, he just put on that Friday, but I talked to him. He has eleven years. I said, “Chief, you grossly underpaid here, and you've already excelled as far as your going to go as a—the Navy is not paying you enough to do what you do, in my opinion.” And he said, “Yeah, my wife tells me that all the time.”

So he got a couple of job offers from Dover, GS12 Division so he's kind of excited about that. So he's thinking those options over.

Alonzo, he had just made First Class. He is a frocked First Class, super talented. Very tactful in the way he explains things. I mean, regardless of the pay grade, as long as it was always professional. Maybe he was a youngster, but he was very, very professional. I give him credit for that. A lot of times, I'd talk and just let him know how to go and we just took it from there, but he was very, very professional. Very tactful.

Q. (41:33) Is it Lonzo, or Alonzo.

A. Alonzo, A-l-o-n-z-o. Timothy Alonzo, so he was a good guy.

Q. (41:42) Why do you think you were chosen for this. Was it just by being at a certain place at a certain time?

Q. Yes, I do, because I really, my job over in where I'm Congressional Liaison Per-6, that job is so, it's not a job. I'm, there. I've had time to do my own personal stuff and still get my military duties done. I think it was just my design, you know, that the detailer didn't send me where I

wanted to go. I always had challenging assignments, and I never think of myself to be on the way to retiring, big laid back cushy job, so I made my schedule full by taking classes, you know, CBT classes over at Anacostia, or taking two classes at Park University. I was just keeping so busy. But I think it was just timing. Right place, wrong time maybe.

Q. (42:39) What kept you going through this, all this?

A. The families, knowing that they wanted their loved one. The families. There was one time Master Chief said, "We'll need to start looking at awards," you know for the crew here. They didn't do—why? What is it going to benefit? The job is not done, let's look at the, let's get the families out of here. We're down to like three bodies, then let's look at maybe awards, but we still have a long way to go. It's not about the award, it's about—because closure comes different from many people. Some people, like the one Lieutenant, she grieved the whole time, but that was her closure. So you can't take that away from somebody. You have to allot them their closure. If somebody want to be cremated and just taken out to the burial at sea or somewhere, you just have to allow them whatever it is that they need. And I don't want to stand in the way of them. I appreciate life and I appreciate the people I work around.

Q. (43:39) What's the greatest thing you learned about yourself through all this?

A, That I have a huge heart and there's a lot of things beyond me. My Psychological, psychology class, she went around the room, nine people and said, "What's the most important thing to you right now?" And everybody's talking about their cars, their house. I said, "My heart," you know, I was doing a paper on reparation at the time. I'm sorry to keep on talking. My research paper was on reparations for Black African-Americans, or Black Americans, and at the time I was

doing the research I was getting so bitter. I was getting so angry, because the research was—I guess if you dig into something like that there, you find out things that you didn't know before. It kind of turns some screws on you, but after 9-11, it wasn't about color. It wasn't about where you come from. It was about America, you know. You paying taxes and you're American it's about us. It isn't going to amount to color at all, so in conclusion that was my research paper. I closed it out with, in all this stuff about reparation and you know this is due, this is that, and that due, and when we going to get it. It's way beyond that.

Q. (44:51) Where do you go from here?

A. Well I registered already for my next set of classes. Just taking, just really trying to prepare to retire. I'm really looking forward to it. I'm wrestling with taking the exam for Chief. A buddy of mine emailed me and told me, "Ah, this is it, boy. You may make Chief off of this."

I emailed him back, "Do I need a damn catastrophe to make Chief?" If that's the case I don't want it, you know. So I'd like to make Chief, but I don't want to go past twenty years. I think there's a lot more money on the other side of the fence. We just bought a new home. The mortgage is pretty high. It's going, I'm going to need an increase in my pay and I think retirement is going to be the best source of income for me in a human resource field.

She doesn't want me to go Government. I don't care, as long as they pay me. I don't mind.

Money is money.

Q. (45:44) What do you see yourself doing in a second career? And two, has this experienced affected that.

A. Well, it makes me appreciate and look at people for who they are. I mean I got a chance to see the expression on some of the faces that I can recognize that died, and there was terror on their faces. The eyes, some of the eyes were open. They looked liked they were in shock the whole time. Like they couldn't believe it.

I look at people now, and I look at them different. I look at them like, you know, you only get one life and what you do with that one life is, it really matters if it's you, but it also effects everyone because if you sit on your talent then no one else can benefit from it. But what you put into the pie is what everybody else can get out of it. I look at people differently.

You may laugh, but I gave myself a five-year plan after I retire and I'd like to open up a hair saloon, because one thing I noticed everything else is automated, but women always get their hair done.

(everyone laughs)

You can't automate that.

(more laughter)

I watch my finance, if we start talking about bills, she sets the money aside for nails and hair. I'm going –

(everyone laughs)

So that's automatic and I have six sisters and growing up watching them, I'm like, yes, why go into an office where you sit there all day. Just listen to them yak, yak, yak ,yak and just let them get their hair done. And they always have money.

(more laughter)

I'm right, ma'am.

Q. (47:21) (Laughing) You're right.

A. We go broke trying to keep them happy, but they all got money.

Q. (47:32) Have you all talked to the SPRINT Team folks. Are you familiar with the SPRINT Team?

A. No, sir. Now who's the SPRINT Team?

Q. (47:36) It's a Special Psychological Response Unit team and we met them, or heard a lot about them when we went to the *Cole* incident. You know, just, they go to the scene of an accident and deal with the people helping to let them process through what they're feeling. What they're seeing, what they're experiences, particularly medical, and recovery folks.

A. Well, you guys were my Sprint Team, because this was, this was therapeutic. I enjoyed it, I mean, at first I was nervous, I didn't even drink no water, but this was great.

Q. (48:14) And you really have a neat story to tell.

Q (Another) We really appreciate it and we appreciate your patriotism very much.

A. I just didn't know what to expect, and I didn't know who Captain Hall was. Usually, I've been here so long I kind of know –

Q. I'm a reservist, I just showed up in the building.

A. But I appreciate the complement Ma'am and I'm glad you guys were here.

Q. (48:34) You do have a huge heart.

Q. (Another) You do, that's definite.

A. Well, I value that. I value my heart, because for a long time, coming out of a divorce, I mean, everybody said, "Well, why didn't you focus on material things?" Well, you lose your houses, you lose your car and go through losing money. Can't take your heart, and it seems material things come and go, so don't be attached to that car, because you can get hit on 395 and lose your car and get it totaled.

Q. (49:04) That's what they don't understand about Americans. I don't care what Captain Gosler says, "We are different."

Well, this is the CO of our unit and he was just talking about the kind of brain washing effect that they have on Islamic children and childhood. The children have been taught, not only, just as we're taught about the United States, they're taught about Islam, but they're also taught to hate Americans. And I don't know I just would like to think that we couldn't be taught to hate that way. Probably would, but as a collective could we ever be taught that?

A. There's a lot of hatred still out there in Dover. And Dover is not predominantly black and it's real old fashioned, but you've still got a lot of bitterness out there in Dover, but the thing that makes you overlook it is just the fact that all of them had these America flags, dangling them off their car.

Q. (50:02) Yes.

A. You know, any other time, you see a rebel flag, or you see a little bitterness, that's marked facial expression, but this is Dover Tennessee here.

Q. (50:18) (everyone laughs) Great

A. There's nothing but American flags everywhere.

Q. (50:19) I know yes.

A. If Dover can change so can we.

Q. Well thanks so much for your time.

A. Thank you, Sir. I'm sorry to just –

Q. (Several say) No, that was. You did grand.

A. I should have skipped leave and just came here. Testaments good.

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