

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CDR Carol O'Hagan
CDR Robert Sawyer
YNCS(AW) Kathleen Wright

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Ms. Kathy Cordero

Current Address:

██████████
████████████████████
(w) DIA-OC-2

Date of Interview:

4 MAR 02

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex

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; Survivor; Medical Care; Pentagon Evacuation

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Ms. Cordero is originally from Shreveport, Louisiana. She attended Seaberg High School where she graduated in 1977. She met her husband in 1980 at Parksdale Air Force Base where he was stationed. During this time Ms. Cordero worked at Woolco department store as a retail clerk. Ms. Cordero holds an undergraduate degree in business management and a graduate degree in accounting. Her husband was transferred to Clarksdale Air Force Base in Fortworth, Texas. While in Fortworth her husband attended the University of Texas and was subsequently commissioned an officer in the U.S. Air Force. After completing his tour in Fortworth, Texas, her husband received orders to Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He completed his tour at Scott Air Force Base and was transferred to the Pentagon, Washington, DC. In 1994, Ms. Cordero entered the federal workforce at Clarksdale Air Force Base. Her first federal position was with the base commissary where she worked as a sales store checker. Although she and her husband went through several permanent changes of stations she was able to continue with her federal career. When her husband was transferred to the Pentagon she went to work for DISA Headquarters. She later accepted a Financial Resource Manager position with DIA in May 2000. As a financial resource manager she is responsible for the organization's budget execution process supporting information technology communication requirements. Her office was located at the Pentagon in 1C535. The office consists of two divisions, OC2 (Program and Budget) and OC5 (Manpower).

The office is complemented with a staff of 25 supporting both OC2 and OC5. The office space configuration consists of a typical office setting with individual modular system furniture workstations.

Topics Discussed:

On a normal workday she generally drives her car and parking in the north parking lot. However on September 11, she decided to ride the Metro. When she arrived to her office she logged on her computer and checked her emails scanning for short suspense emails. There were not suspense emails so she turned her attention to packing her office materials in support of a planned office move later in the week. Moments later Patty Meglee a co-worker who occupies the workstation immediately across from her came in and told her that she had just received word about the plane crash into the World Trade Center. She could not believe this was happening. Ms. Meglee stated that this similar thing could happen to us.

She and Ms. Meglee proceeded to the television area in an effort to find out what was going on. While she was watching the television she saw the second plane crash into the second twin tower. Confused and frightened by the event she went back to her workstation to call her husband to seek his advice on whether she should stay at work or go home. Unable to reach her husband directly she decided to leave him a voice message.

As she was completing her telephone call heard this big gush of wind come in to the office followed by a big red ball of fire. Realizing that she was on fire she started screaming for help. Her face, hair and my arms were on fire. Pieces of ceiling materials started falling on her and debris hitting her in the head causing a laceration. She was trying to extinguish the fires on her but found it difficult to do. Paul Gonzales, a co-worker came to her assistance and the fires on her were quickly put out. Paul looked directly at her and told her that they needed to get out of the area immediately. She and Paul were not sure which way to go. Most of the office lights had gone out and the office was filled with thick gray smoke. She remembers seeing what appeared to her as a big ball of fire. She and Paul started to move forward away from the fire but found that the severely crushed furniture and other debris blocked every possible exit they tried. Paul started to head back towards the fire. She cautioned Paul not to go in that direction because of the heat, fire and thickening smoke. She believes Paul heeded her warning and quickly turnaround moving away from the fire to find a way out of burning office.

The proliferation of building debris and severely damaged office furniture made finding an exit almost impossible. As she and Paul continued to search for a way out they found other co-workers, Patty Pague, Dave Lanagin and Chris Morrison. She heard one of them crying and saying we are going to die. The smoke continued to thicken and she rested on the floor keeping her head below the thick smoke level to make her breathing easier. She told those around her if they have never prayed they better pray now. She does not recall what prayer was said but she does recall that they all prayed. As she continued to move forward on her hands and knees she came across a puddle of water on the floor. She informed the others of the water and suggested they soak their clothes. She also suggested that they take their shirts off and soak the shirt and use it to cover their nose and mouth to make breathing easier. Everyone followed her advice

except for Paul. They could not see Paul nor could they hear him. She remembers that Paul could not be found.

The smoke continued to get thicker and it was getting lower and lower to the floor. She and the others continued their search for an exit while moving away from the fire. As she and the others moved forward they continued calling for Paul. Moments later Paul responded I am over here. Paul told her and the others that he had managed to climb over the debris and found light piercing through the thick smoke. They continued moving forward on their hands and knees in the direction of sound from Paul's voice. She and the others found an opening ("tunnel") in a pile of severely damaged office furniture and building debris. She recalls being at that same location earlier but does not remember seeing the opening. She looked through the opening and was able to see Paul on his hands and knees on the other side. They crawled through the opening and were able to get to the other side. Some her co-workers were extremely reluctant to transverse through the opening fearing the pile of rubble would collapse on them. Once on the other side they found more co-workers trying to make their way out. She recognized Lance, Larry Magen, and Aaron Cooper. They all proceeded down a hallway that eventually led them out into the center courtyard.

When she and the others reached the center courtyard they were immediately given emergency care by the awaiting Emergency Management Technicians (EMT). The EMTs provided her with fresh water to drink. They also poured water on her arms to cool down her severe burns. She recalls one particular EMT that was rendering first aid and comforting her. She wishes to personally thank the EMT but can not remember his name.

She recalls hearing someone say another plane is coming - we got to get out of here. The EMT tells her they need to get out of the area quickly. With one EMT in her right arm and other on her left arm they quickly moved through the A-ring towards the parking lot. She collapsed before they reaching the double doors. She was placed on a stretcher and carried to the parking lot.

The next thing she remembers is waking up 6-7 days later in the intensive care unit at Alexandria Hospital Center. Her face and ears were burned and she lost most of her hair. She sustained third degree burns on her arms. She spent 23 days in the hospital and underwent three separate operations to treat her burns. She spent 72 days at home convalescing with the assistance of home care nursing services.

While in the hospital she was visited by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Director of DIA, Army Joint-Chief-of-Staff, and other dignitaries that she cannot specifically remember. The First Lady did not visit her but she did receive flowers from her. She received a lot of support from her family and friends. The American Red Cross made the arrangements for her parent's visit. She received numerous sympathy and get well cards and posters from all over the United States.

Due to the severe damage to the Pentagon, her office has been temporary relocated to Bolling Air Force Base, Maryland. The office is scheduled to move back into the Pentagon sometime in May/June 2002. She is nervous about going back work in the Pentagon. She recently attended a meeting at the Pentagon. This was the first time since 9/11 that she visited the Pentagon. She

found herself nervous, sweating, and crying just thinking about her 9/11 experiences. The dramatic physical changes at the Pentagon and the numerous posters listing the names of those who died on 9/11 also had a profound impact on her during this visit. She is reluctant to go back to the Pentagon.

Abstracted by:
YN1 Arthur Quintana
15 March 2002

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Q. Let's go ahead and let's move to the day of 11 September. If you would just talk us through that day. Let's start with how do you come in in the morning and we'll move on from there.

A. OK, normally I would drive in and park in the North Parking lot, but this particular day, I caught the Metro in and then parked my car in Huntington Metro Station, caught the train in, got off at the Pentagon. Came in and went down to my office, 1C535.

Q. (7:15) OK. Go ahead and walk us through the day.

A. OK, and once I got inside I opened up my email, read my email to see is there emails that I need to respond to, either some tasks that needed to be taken care of. So I start to open, and there was none. I was in the verge, well we were in the verge of moving over to a new section that Thursday, and I was in the midst of packing my desk, because I had already packed everything else. So I just had to pack my personal stuff.

So that day, I was at my desk, and my co-worker sitting across from me PATTY MICKLEY she came in and she says, because she had just got through talking to her sister and her sister told her about the plane crash of the World Trade Center where the first plane went into the Trade Center. So –

Q. (08:16) Was that the first you'd heard about it?

A. That was the first time that I had heard about it and I was like, "What are you talking about?"

She said, “See, this could be us. This could be us”

So we both ran back to the TV to find out what was going on and then the second plane hit the Tower.

Q. (08:30) While you were watching the TV, that happened?

A. Yeah, we were watching that TV and everything and so she, I told her I said, “I’m going to go back and call my husband and find out what’s going on here, you know. Should I stay at work or should I leave?”

I left from the TV room, but I thought PATTY came with me, from (_____ inaudible). She did because she didn’t make it, but I thought- we both walked out at the same time. I know we did. So I came back to my cube. I called my husband. She called her husband. She called either her husband or her, or her sister. I don’t think she got in contact with her husband, but I didn’t get in contact with mine either, but I told my – I was leaving my husband a voice mail, asking him you know, “What should I do? What’s going on?”

While I was leaving the voice message, I turned around so that you know, I could have some privacy while I was leaving the message and then I was, everything just you know, happened. It was a you know, a real big gush of wind. You know, real forceful wind. A big ball of you know, red, orange fire, you know that came in and everything was just, was just pushed. Then I got, somehow when I was putting the receiver down on the phone, I caught on fire.

I started screaming, because I was on fire. My face, my hair, my arms was just, you know on fire and so –

Q. (10:12) Were you on the floor?

A. No, I wasn't on the floor. I was standing up and then PAUL, he came over and I had ceiling on my head, but I don't remember it, any ceiling falling on me, but I do have a cut in the back of my head. I thought I put the fire out on myself, but PAUL said he did, but I don't remember that because when I looked over I saw, PAUL coming out of PATTY's cube and the cube was wrapped around him, and he you know, he bust out of the cube and he looked at me and he says, "Kathy! Kathy!" he says, "We have to get, we have to get out of here. We have to find our way out of here!"

I said, "OK, Paul," you know, "which way we should go? Where's the front door?"

(During this conversation, the interviewee is getting tearful)

He was like, "OK, let's just go over here," because we needed to get away from the smoke and everything, because behind me it was just a big ball of fire and the smoke was so, you know heavy and, so it was real gray, thick smoke. So we had to go forward and everything was just pushed everywhere we went to try to get out. We couldn't get out. It was blocked.

So we, Paul started going back toward the fire and everything, I told him I said, I said, "PAUL you can't go back the other way, the fire is there," you know, and there was a lot of smoke there. "We got to keep out of it." He had to come back this way and find a way out. You know, this way, you know coming forward to the building and no matter how, what way we went, we couldn't get out. (She's becoming more tearful)

Then all of a sudden the smoke was getting lower and lower and so there was two or three other ones that was huddled and they was just crying and they was saying, "We're going to die! We're going to die!"

Q. (12:12) Were you down on the ground?

A. Yeah.

Q. (12:16) So that you could breathe?

A. Yeah, I was down on the ground and everything so I could breathe, and everyone was walking around on our hands, and we were trying to think, trying to stay low. So I told the people I said, "If you all haven't prayed before, you all better pray now." I don't know what prayer we said, but we said a prayer and everything, and then you know, as I was walking around, I had walked into a big puddle of water. There was a lot of water there.

Q. (12:39) You're still on your hands and knees.

A. Yeah, we was still on our hands and knees and everything. So I told everybody, I said, "Get down on the floor," I said, "There's some water down there." I said, "Wet your clothes and you know, take your shirt off and put it over your mouth," and everything. So everybody did it, except for PAUL, and then all of a sudden, PAUL had disappeared. We didn't hear Paul. We didn't see PAUL anymore. So the smoke kept getting thicker and thicker, and I mean it was getting lower and lower and so we got up, you know, and when further to the front, you know. Maybe to see what happened to Paul. We thought Paul had collapsed and everything. But he wasn't there and then all of a sudden, you know, I called out, "Paul, Paul, where you at? And then everybody's going to call, and he says, "I'm over here! I'm over here!" He says he went over the top and that's how he got out.

Q. (13:260) The top of -?

A. The top of, I guess all the debris and everything. He just climbed over it and when he climbed over, he saw the light on the outside and then he said, "I'm over here! I'm over here!" And there was a hole there that he said, you know, for us to come to. I guess he had made the hole for us, and so we crawled through the hole and that's how we got out.

Q. (13:49) So there was a hole in the debris?

A. Yeah, it was a hole. We went over there before, the hole wasn't there, and then all of a sudden we went back over there to that particular area, there was a hole there.

Q. (13:58) So you could hear him? Could you see him on the other side, or could you only hear him?

A. Yeah, we looked through the hole and we saw him laying on his hands and knees, you know could hardly breath and walk, and we all went through the hole and everything. One lady she was, I guess you know, very hysterical and she wasn't thinking and she didn't want to go through the hole. I told her, I said you know, "You'd better get, " I know PAUL probably told you what I said, but I'm not going to say that.

(everyone laughs)

But I told her you know she had to, to get through the hole and everything.

You know, once we got through the hole and everything and there was LANCE, I don't know how you say his last name. Can't even think of his last name, and LANCE was there LARRY MAGEN was there and AARON COOPER was there and they took us out to the center courtyard, and –

Q. (15:00) What was on the other side of the hole? Where were you when you got there, do you know?

A. It was right outside where our door was. I thought—PAUL said it was right outside our door because it was a dumpster there. I didn't see a dumpster when I came out. I thought we was out by the men's bathroom, right out you know in the – the hallway was right here, the double doors. You had a double door here, and a double door here, and I thought we were out in this area. He said it was down by the dumpster, but I didn't see a dumpster, but they took us through the double doors, through the, through the, it was like a little tunnel, through the tunnel out to the center courtyard.

Q. (15:39) So when you came out you were like in a hallway in the E ring?

A. Yeah, going through the hallway in the E ring down, takes you all the way down –

Q. (15:50) Here would be the E ring. Here was the door that went out. The helo pad would have been right about there, and that's the E ring. Think that's D.

A. OK, we were – and see where C is at. C is right here.

Q. (16:05) For the tape, we're looking at a diagram of the first floor of the Pentagon.

Q. (Another) I guess it's right around in here.

A. Right up in here, yeah. OK, where is the tunnel that goes to the A ring? Oh, this is A.

Q. (16:23) No, it's just the labeling on the chart.

Q. (another) for the chart.

A. OK, because when you go through the tunnel you go into the A ring.

Q. (16:29) OK. Then when you got out into the hall, were there people there to help? Did you see people?

A. Yeah, that was LANCE and AARON and LARRY MAGEN.

Q. (16:44) But they hadn't been with you?

A. They were, they were, no they were, AARON was in there, but AARON got out.

Q. (16:49) OK.

A. Because he said he went over the top and he got out, but LARRY MEGAN was not in there and LANCE was in there, but LANCE got out. He went down through the D and E ring and that's how he got out. But then WHO (phonetic) DAN WHO (phonetic), which is the Air Force, he's the Air Force –

Q. (17:10) So you got into this hallway and they were there. That correct?

A. Yeah, they were there and LANCE took CHRIS and myself out to the center courtyard and we got out to the center courtyard and that's when METs came out and this guy he grabbed me and he says, and he told them to come over, that I really need some help and everything and they came over with three big gallons of, liters of water and one was, both of them was, two of them was pouring bottles of water on my arm. Another one was pouring water on this arm and one was pouring water down my mouth, and this guy was taking care of me. I don't know who he is, or what his name was, but I wish I did, so I could thank him.

But, somebody says, “Another plane is coming! Another plane is coming! We got to get out of here! We got to get out of here!”

So the guy got me and he says, “Ma’am, we gotta go. We gotta go.” And somebody got me on this arm, somebody had me on this arm and we was running down through the, through the A ring going out to the North Parking lot, and I collapsed before we got down through the double doors and they took me out on a stretcher to the North parking lot and I woke up and I was in the hospital in ICU. I woke up six days later, six or seven days later in ICU.

Q. (18:31) You didn’t wake up for six days?

A. Uh huh, yeah. So I think the seventh day they moved me to a regular room, but I was in ICU for seven days.

Q. (18:45) Can I go back to your office when you’re trying to get out? Were all the lights out completely? Was there lights from the fire? How could you see?

A. There was lights from the fire. There were some lights from the cube, you know the light that’s on the cubes and they got crushed. I mean they got you know, crushed and everything. There was a few lights you know, light coming from the ones that was still I guess, plugged in.

Q. (19:13) Was this all jumbled –

A. All jumbled and rubble, it was rubble.

Q. (19:21) So all you had to do was by feel and what little light you had?

A. Feeling and hollow and walk on top of you know, the cubes that was crushed, and but basically we walked on the floor, on the cement, because there was carpet there, and I don't think, I think it was cement that we were walking on, we were crawling on.

Q. (19:51) Now you were with MR. GONZALES and how many other people were with you when you were trying to get out of there?

A. Three more, it was PATTY PAYNE (phonetic) DAVE MANAGAN (phonetic) And CHRIS MORRISON.

Q. (20:04) OK.

A. And PAUL

Q. (20:12) So you woke up on the sixth day of being in the hospital.

A. Uh huh.

Q. (20:10) And –

Q. (Another) Which hospital did they take you to?

A. They took me to Arlington Hospital, Arlington Hospital Center.

Q. (20:22) Do you know how many other people were in Arlington with you?

A. I'm not sure if it was, I'm not sure. No, one time they said there was eleven, but not all, they wasn't all from Comptroller they were from different areas –

Q. (20:38) Right, but from the Pentagon.

A. Uh huh. I'm not sure if they were.

Q. (20:50) Can you tell us about your experience in the hospital then, when you woke up?

A. All I had was tubes, I think about six or seven tubes in my throat, and while I was there they say that I aspirated and everything went down into my lungs so I developed pneumonia. So they finally got the pneumonia under control. I was swolled, my face was all swolled, burnt. My hair was burned off. My ears had third degree burns, on my hands and my arm all the way up to my elbow. My eyes was like a burgundy color all over where smoke had got in them. They just, they cleared up probably – I was in the hospital for twenty-five days so they cleared up probably around the twenty-third day. All the red was gone.

Q. (21:48) Your eyes?

A. Yeah.

Q. And so you were there for twenty-three days. I guess you had to have, did you have physical therapy and all?

A. Yeah, I had to have a skin graft also on my hand. They didn't want to do a skin graft on my arm, because they didn't want to leave me with such a large scar on my leg, so it healed up pretty well. You all don't want to see it, do you?

Q. (22:15) That's fine. No, it's fine.

Q. (another) Unless you want to show it.

A. If you all want to see it –

Q. (22:20) It won't come up on the tape.

Q. (another) It won't come up on the tape.

(everyone laughs)

A. Oh, oh, OK. You don't need to see it, then. OK, it won't come up on the tape (chuckles)

Q. (22:26) No video on here.

A. Yes, but then I had to go through physical therapy, OT while I was there. Went down to the whirlpool everyday, did my physical therapy while I was there. I had three, three surgeries, I think, yeah, three surgeries when they took the graft. They had to debris me, and then they went back in and put the skin graft on and cleaned it again. So I had three surgeries. I think it was three, yes.

Q. (23:09) When you were conscious in the hospital did any interesting visitors come by or did you miss all that?

A. I missed all that. I was in ICU. Nobody came to you.

Q. (23:20) Who came to Arlington Hospital?

A. From what my husband said, the Governor of Virginia came. He 's governor, not WARNER, but the previous one.

Q. (23:28) GILMORE?

A.GILMORE came. He said the regular DIA came, some Army Joint-Chief -of -Staff came by. The Army Joint-Chief-of-Staff. He's telling me who all came by. Got their coins and stuff they gave to him. I think that's about it. I don't know. I'd know a few. I'm sorry.

Q. (24:03) We've heard that (_____ inaudible)

A. But the First Lady didn't come to see me, like she saw PAUL.

Q. (24:06) She didn't?

A. No, she did not. Oh, but she sent me flowers.

Q. (24:12) You saved them and dried them, I hope.

A. No, I didn't. They was sunflowers. They were attracting a lot of bugs and flies in the hospital and they said, "Get rid of them." Yeah, but the First Lady sent me some flowers and everything. I got a lot of flowers from everybody.

Q. (23:34) While you were at the hospital, how was the support from your office and other people at the Pentagon, or from just your family, or Americans in general.

A. It was very good, and it was very good. My family, American Red Cross brought my family up, brought my mom and dad up to see me while I was there so they could see that I was OK, and everything. My sisters they call me all the time. My friends they came up you know, to see me all the time. Neighbors, co-workers, ex-coworkers, just, they all just came up to see me and it got to the point that they wouldn't allow, they didn't allow me to have anymore visitors, or phone

calls, because I wasn't getting well. So they took away my privileges I guess for about maybe two weeks.

Then, as far as, for the Americans I mean they were great. I mean kids were, the kids were very, very great. They sent me so many cards, and you know posters. I've got so many things at home that they sent to me from all over the United States. From California all the way up to Maine and down south, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, I think there's some more. There's some from Georgia. I have a lot of cards, a lot of cards and posters. Virginia, kids here, kids down in Richmond.

Q. (26:10) So you were in the hospital for twenty-three days.

A. I didn't get out until twenty-three days.

Q. (26:14) And then you went home.

A. Uh huh.

Q. (26:15) And how long were you at home, before –

A. Seventy-two days.

Q. (26:18) You were home for seventy-two days?

A. Right. I had, I had to have home care. The nurses came in. Took care of me. Took, you know, did my, dressed my wound, cleaned my wounds. Did my OT at home and everything until I went back to work in December 19, December the 19th.

Q. (26:42) So when you went back, where did you go back to? Where did you go?

A. I went to Bolling Air Force Base. They moved the office here, because they moved someone else in our new spaces that lost their spot, lost their area in the 9/11 attack.

Q. (26:57) And is that where you are right now?

A. Yeah, Bolling Air Force Base.

Q. (27:01) Are they talking about having you all go back into the Pentagon?

A. Yeah, we're supposed to be back over there, sometime, May/June timeframe. They're trying to relocate the other agency, other directory that's in our spot right now. So we're supposed to be back between June, maybe say June and August.

Q. (27:23) How do you feel about that?

A. I'm very nervous about it, because I, I had a meeting over at the Pentagon that my boss sent me to and he didn't tell me that I was going to the Pentagon, until 7:30 that next morning and I had to be there at ten o'clock for the meeting and when I went to the Pentagon, I was very nervous. I was panicking, I was sweating and I was crying, because every, I mean because everything had just totally changed. They had these, I mean, everything was cut off totally different. They had wood walls up where they closed off areas and it was, and everywhere I went I saw the big poster of all the people that got killed in the Pentagon. It was scary. It was very nerve racking. I was sweating. My hands were sweaty and my whole body was sweaty. I was soaked when I got to the meeting. I guess I looked so bad and everything, they delayed the meeting for ten minutes.

(everyone chuckles)

They said I could gather myself, I put myself together and so we went on with the meeting, but it was hard. It was very hard.

Q. (28:30) Did you go over there by yourself?

A. I went over there by myself.

Q. (28:37) Did you have any coworkers with you?

A. No, I went by myself.

Q. (28:38) What did you say to your boss when you came back? For doing that to you?

A. I was not, I was not a happy camper. Yeah, I went in there. I let him have it, but –

Q. (28:48) Can we have an exact quote for that?

A. No, no.

(Everyone laughs)

A. I won't give a quote for that, but he said he thought I had been over to the Pentagon before. You know, I went there on my own, but I didn't. I told him I just went outside, right in front of the Navy Annex and took pictures of the hole after I got you know, well enough to come outside, and took pictures of the hole this time.

Q. (29:14) But that was your first time back.

A. That was my first time actually inside the Pentagon.

Q. (29:16) Have you been back at all since then?

A. No.

Q. No, no.

Q. (Another) When do you remember becoming aware, or when the explosion happened did you assume it was a bomb or another plane?

A. I didn't know what it was. It was like, it was like, have you all seen the movie *Armageddon*?

Q. (29:41) Uh huh.

A. Bruce Willis, they're all up, they're in space and he has to pull the trigger to blow up the meteorite. Yeah, and before then when they was sitting up there digging a hole, trying to get the thing inside, the bomb inside, so they can blow it up, but all of a sudden you got an explosion and fire is just going, coming everywhere and the meteorite's just going all over the place. It was just like that. Big ball with red, orange fire. Smoke, you know, the fumes and everything just crushing, and all around you and stuff. It was a big force wind. I mean it just like pushed you real, real hard. I mean everything just got pushed so far to the front.

Q. (30:26) When you said you saw the fireball, where was the fireball that you saw? Was it in front of you? Did it go sideways?

A. No, it was behind me.

Q. (30:35) It was behind you.

A. It was behind me.

Q. (30:35) with –

A. And I told them that I thought it was the nose of the plane, and they said no, it wasn't the nose of the plane, it was the engine. I mean it was right behind me. Yeah, that's what I thought I saw.

Q. (30:43) Who told you it was the engine?

A. Oh, excuse me, that's what PAUL and CLAIRE (phonetic) said that the FBI and the I guess the, can't think of the guys that goes around, Corp of Engineers or, -

Q. (31:00) Like FEMA?

A. That's what they told them that you know, the big hole that was in the wall in our area is where the engine, they say came through. But –

Q. (31:14) The fireball and the air was just all together, pushing you forward and coming from behind you was the engine.

A. Yes. And everybody that was behind me, didn't make it.

Q. (31:30) How did you get through all of this? How have you managed to come through all this?

A. How am I coping with this? Am I seeing a shrink? Am I seeing a Psychiatrist? Yes, I see one at Walter Reed. I was going every week, now I just go when I need to go, and I haven't seen her since December, so I'm coping with it pretty well, and I have a very supportive husband that I

can talk to about what's going on and you know, he'll help me through it. He's been very, very good. Really, really, good neighbors, coworkers too, I mean this has brought coworkers you know, very close together and we sit down and we talk about what happened. Sometimes when someone is, you know down. We talk about it.

Q. (32:25) Did they ever get all of your coworkers together in a group to discuss it, you know, formally with maybe anyone now.

A. No.

Q. (32:34) They never did that?

A. I haven't, if they did, I wasn't present?

Q. (32:44) Anything else?

Q. (another) Have you heard of the SPRINT Team?

A. uh uh, what's that?

Q. (32:51) That's a kind of the psychologists and clergy and members just to help talk to people and -

Q. (Another) After a crisis, so they're not, they're to help.

A. I had some when I was in the hospital, at Walter Reed, and Army DeWitt Hospital, they're personnel was coming up, talking to me, but I didn't want to talk to them at the time, and a chaplain at the hospital, they came by and saw me everyday that I was there.

Q. (33:22) Was that helpful?

A. Sometimes it was. Sometimes I didn't talk to them. I wasn't in the mood.

Q. (33:30) Yeah, I can see why.

A. But I never heard of that team, but I know that, someone was telling me about another support group out there. She works at Walter Reed, that's over I think in the Arlington area.

Q. (33:53) Now do they have, is there a web site or anything to let the people that were injured in the Pentagon know about things that are available to them or -?

A. Well, her name is – she just notified us, well she notified me about it a couple of weeks ago. She wanted my email address at home. She wanted my telephone number, on a piece of paper like that, but it was by the Pentagon. Her name is – what's her name? I can't think of her name. She just told me about the Survivor Fund. That's all that she mentioned. Said something about Survivor Fund and American Red Cross and that's it.

Q. (34:38) So there is somebody trying to contact people that were injured and letting them know.

A. Well, she just she said she'd been trying to get in contact with me for the last couple of months, but they lost me in the system. So they couldn't find me, but they had been talking with a couple of people in my office. They just started talking to me a couple of weeks ago. Her names SANDY. SANDY, I can't think of her name, SANDY. She's a nurse at Walter Reed.

Q. (35:15) She's a nurse?

A. Uh huh.

Q. OK, so there is somebody trying to follow up with people and making sure that they know they're available.

A. She just, well I'm not sure if she knows about all the funds up there. She just told me about Survival Fund which is for long-term and American Red Cross.

Q. (35:43) Were you and MR. GONZALES the worst hurt in your group?

A. Yeah, I was the worst, I sustained the worst. MR. GONZALES, I don't know what he told you, he had burns as well as me. He had burns on his hands and he had a trach in his throat, you know, he had real bad smoke inhalation. So did I and I got, you know, burns all over my body and a gash in the back of my head. Burns all on my arms, here, and here. Skin grafts.

Q. (36:17) Were the other people in your office that came out, were they all hospitalized as well?

A. Yes, they were hospitalized. CHRIS I think was hospitalized for four days. DAVE was hospitalized just for a day, and I think PENNY was hospitalized for six days, but PAUL and I were in the hospital –

Q. (36:30) The longest term.

A. Uh huh. And this is not my regular voice here.

Q. (36:37) No.

A. No, this is not my voice. I'm working on trying to find out what's wrong with that.

Q. (36:42) Who's is it?

(everyone laughs)

A. It's a new person. They got a lot of smoke inhalation. That was in the 9/11 incident.

Q. (36:51) Maybe they switched it while you were unconscious for another one.

A. Here I am, now, having all those tubes in my throat changed my voice a little bit. Yeah, Paul and I were one of the worst ones.

Q. (37:07) How has this changed your life, your focus. I'm sure this is really, must have changed an awful lot in your life.

A. Oh yeah, makes me, it makes me say you know, I got to get on with my life. I need to go, at first I was very, very depressed. I was angry. I was, and I was saying, "Why me? Why did this guy you know attack me? Why did he hurt me? Why did he give me a scar for life," and everything. It was always me, me, me, me you know. Why me? Why me? And I'm blessed with just having this scar compared to the rest of the people out there. I mean the lady that got her fingers cut off, the guy that's burned all over his body and stuff. I'm glad, so you know, I've been telling me, I woke up and said, "Hey start living your life. You've got to go on. Don't let this guy control your life. You need to control your life." So I'm controlling my life, doing the things that I want to do. I'm living, I'm, you know, taking things a day at a time. Doing things I want to do. I wanted to take a trip. I'm taking trips. I'm planning to take trips.

We was in the process of adopting a baby, still going through that process. Nothing has changed as far as that. Makes me very cautious as far as you know noticing what is around me all the

time, and when I see someone of Afghan or complexion, I look at them like, “Are you getting ready to bomb?” It’s a lot of fear there.

Like when I was in the hospital, a lot of those people attended to me. I told the doctor I needed to get out, because I couldn’t handle it, because I felt that they might harm me while I was in there. Even those that were coming in and giving me my breathing treatments and everything, I had a problem with that. They finally let me go home. They didn’t want to let me go home, but once I got home I started feeling better. But I had all those different type things going on, but now I have control in my life.

Q. (39:21) How long did it take working through those emotion and get to the point where you said, you know, get over the anger.

A. It just happened in January. It took a while. It took a while. I was very angry, very angry, and I just kept saying, “What did I do?” I didn’t do anything. I just was, it came after a symbol and I worked in that symbol. I started dealing with the changes, and I’m getting stronger everyday. I’m dealing with it everyday. Laughing more. Everybody say, “Ok, you’re laughing a lot.”

Q. (40:10) How’s your husband coped with all this?

A. Oh, he’s coped. He’s been very strong. Very supportive of me. He took care of me. Got me back to where I’m at now. He was there by my side 24/7.

Q. (40:25) For the record, what’s his name?

A. [REDACTED] Yeah, very good. He supports me. He talks to me. I can talk to him about anything and he’ll you know, tell me his opinion and you know things, how I should look at it,

because he was the one that told me about you know, the other people. He knew some of the people like the lady that's fingers was cut off, but he didn't tell me until later on. He says, "You're blessed, you know. You could be her."

And I said, "You're right." And he just helped me through it, and you know helped me so I never, painted another picture for me, a positive picture.

Q. (41:13) Is he still on active duty?

A. Oh no, he's not. He's retired.

Q. He's retired.

A. Uh huh, yeah.

Q. (41:16) Does he work at the Pentagon?

A. Off and on, he works in RO. He works for the Department of Air Force.

Q. (41:32) So no chance of moving somewhere and not having to go back to the Pentagon.

A. No, no chances of moving anywhere, unless he says, let's go and retire and move down into Georgia or back to Texas. Yeah. We here. Like it here.

Q. (41:46) You do, even after everything.

A. But not the Pentagon.

Q. You still like it here.

A. I don't know. (chuckle) Yeah, we do.

Q. (41:56) Do you have anything you want to add that we haven't asked out about, that you'd like to have in the historical records?

A. I don't think so. Just PAUL GONZALES saved our lives. He's our hero.

Q. (42:22) Well thank you very much for tell us your story.

Transcribed by:
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