

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

Capt Gary Hall  
Capt Michael McDaniel

**Interviewee:**

Capt Dennis Kern USN (ret)

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Naval Historical Center  
Naval Historical Center

**Current Address:**

██████████  
██████████

Executive Assistant to the  
Undersecretary of the Navy

**Place of Interview:**

Reston, VA

**Security Classification:**

UNCLAS

**Date of Interview:**

24 Jan 02

**Number of Cassettes:**

N/A

**Name of Project:** Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Survivor, Lighting, Reconstitution, Award winner, Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned;; Navy Command Center; renovation

**Abstract of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:** Capt Kern was born and raised in and around ██████████, OH. His father was a Naval aviator who had just received his wings in Corpus Christi, TX when World War II ended. Capt Kern became his father's vicarious means of fulfilling the dream to be a combat pilot. Capt Kern went through ROTC at Miami University of Ohio and then flight training. He enjoyed the Navy and on 1 Jan 02 finished a 30 year 4 month career. He was a P-3 pilot all on the west coast. Was the commanding officer of VP-19 at NAS Moffett. He screened for aviation major command and had command of NAF Misawa, Japan and following that the Chief of Staff for Naval Forces Japan (1995-98). He finished his career as the Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary of the Navy. Highlights of his Naval career were four overseas PCS assignments, including Madrid, Spain and Japan. He enjoyed being the skipper of VP-19 and Chief of Staff as well as Installation Command.

**Topics Discussed:**

On 11 Sep he was the Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary for the Navy was the Honorable Susan B. Livingston. His office was located at 4E732. On 11 Sep they were not in their office. The immediate office staff included Capt Kern and Ms. Livingston, the Marine Corps military assistant, her confidential assistant, the office supervisor, and a Marine Corps staff sergeant.

On 11 Sep he commuted in from his home in Reston, VA. His day normally meant he escorted the Undersecretary to her meetings. That morning she was scheduled to address 30 government workers visiting from Naval Station Crane, Indiana. The conference room she was to address the group in was located around 5E490. This conference room was in the newly renovated section facing the heliport. Ms. Livingston had never been there before so Capt Kern escorted her.

It was approaching 0900 so he escorted Ms. Livingston to the conference room. They walked through wedge 2 past all these empty spaces because those people had just been moved out for renovation to begin. They commented on the empty spaces. The conference room was newly renovated. At 0900 the Crane, Indiana people had not shown up. They called down to their office to see where the people were and the person on the phone told them about the planes flying into the World Trade Center. They also got word that the Crane, Indiana people would be 10 minutes late.

When the people arrived Capt Kern briefed the people on what they had been told about the World Trade Center and that this was obviously a terrorist attack. She then launched into her presentation. About 0939 he looked at his watch and saw they were coming up on her time limit and signaled to her that it was time to wrap up. She took a few questions and then it was 0932 and the plane slammed into the Pentagon. Their geographic position was directly above and slightly to the left of where the airliner slammed in.

There was a muffled but loud explosion that rocked the room. It was the same feeling as the jolt you get from an earthquake along with a concussive sound. Some of the suspended ceiling tiles and light fixtures fell out. Ms. Livingston and Capt Kern immediately jumped up. She said the words, "Terrorist attack". Capt Kern motioned towards the door and she announced to the group that they would evacuate in a daisy chain line and we would lead them out of the building. This was important because none of these civilians had been to the Pentagon before. Everyone was very calm. Capt Kern was impressed with her calmness and presence of mind. Capt Kern was leading with Ms. Livingston behind him and the visitors lined up behind her. Their inclination was to leave the way they came up. They went to the stairwell they had come through and opened the door, but that stairwell had collapsed. The rubble from walls falling in and ceiling pieces coming down kept the door from being totally opened.

There is no natural light on the Fifth Deck of the Pentagon so it was very dark. This is because it was never originally intended for habitation, but because of the need for space was eventually used for work spaces. The power was still on so they still had lighting. Since this was the edge of the renovated wedge 1 there was a construction wall that was demarked wedge 1 from wedge 2. You couldn't turn toward Corridor Five to get out, you could only turn left to go down toward Corridor Four. They started down Corridor Four, lights were on and people were coming out of offices on the Fifth Deck E ring. Several people were very upset, some women crying. Ms. Livingston instructed them to get in line behind them, they were proceeding out. One lady was walking with the aid of a push-type walker.

They proceeded down the E ring toward Corridor Four. They came to the next stairwell going down from the E ring, pushed that door open and that stairwell was also collapsed and impassable. As they continued down towards Corridor Four they came to what appeared to be a two and a half to three foot step down in the floor. Both Capt Kern and Ms. Livingston were surprised to find it but didn't think anything of it. Capt Kern remembers thinking that was the renovated part of the wing, what a stupid place to put this big step. The line continued on unremarkably making the sure the woman with the walker was able to step down. In retrospect what had happened was that this was a building seam. At this point we were directly over the impact site. The plane was estimated to have been flown in to the Pentagon between floors one and two. As the record shows the plane penetrated the E, D and C rings with the nose cone actually going all the way into the B ring. The impact was that the floors 1,2 and 3 were immediately destroyed. Floors 4, and 5 remained intact due to it being the renovated portion of

the Pentagon. As a lesson learned from the Oklahoma City bombing part of the renovation design included the placement of a heavy iron grid in the outer wall put in place so that if the building had to withstand a huge explosion this grid would provide enough structural integrity to the building to allow those who were still alive to escape before the building collapsed. The design parameters for the grid were about 30 minutes. The step-down they encountered was the buckling of the floor due to the collapse of floors 1, 2 and 3 beneath them.

They came to Corridor Four at the intersection of the E Ring, Corridor Four, Fifth Deck. There was a stairwell there that was also impenetrable. Ahead of them was dark. Corridor Four to their left was also dark with smoke and fumes coming down it. There was thick, black smoke. The power was off. Ahead of them on the E Ring it was similarly black and full of smoke. They opted to turn down Corridor Four. At this point Capt Kern told everybody to get down on their hands and knees and hold on to the person behind them. They are now heading down Corridor Four toward the A ring on the right hand side. They were crawling toward the D Ring. They could feel the heat coming through the floor so he knew they were near a fire. Through the smoke they could see strobe lights type of flashing in a dull gray environment. On the floor were ceiling tiles and rubble.

They got to about the D Ring where there is another stairwell. Capt Kern pushed the stairwell door open and billows of black smoke come out and a huge furnace blast of heat. They could see flames licking up the stairwell. He quickly pulled the door closed. At that point they were all choking and Capt Kern thought "How much further can we proceed in this environment before we're overcome from smoke and fume inhalation?" Everything indicated they were proceeding further into the destruction but they knew there was no escape route behind them.

He then heard a voice yelling ahead of them through the smoke, "Keep coming ahead, there's a way out here." Capt Kern yelled back immediately, "Keep yelling, we can't see, we're heading toward your voice". Capt Kern and the man kept yelling back and forth so Capt Kern could lead the group toward his voice. It was completely black and the smoke stung from the burning fumes. He estimated they past the D ring and got to about the C ring when the smoke started lightening up a little bit and they were getting closer to the man's voice. As soon as the smoke started lightening up so they could see the floor again Capt Kern stood up. They could now see gray light ahead of them and they started walking. Capt Kern passed the guy who had been yelling at them and that man continues to encourage the people behind them. In the gray haze ahead of them Capt Kern saw a fire suppression screen unfolding across Corridor Four. This was a surprise to everybody, nobody knew these screens in the newly renovated area would automatically deploy. Capt Kern dropped Ms. Livingston's hand, ran ahead and smashed the screen back into the wall in its stored position. Capt Kern handed the door off the person behind Ms. Livingston and told them to pass the door off to the person behind them and to keep going. By now they were almost to the A Ring and in the clear. They hit the Fifth Floor, A Ring, Corridor Four and headed down the stairs. At that point there was a surge of people leaving the building and their daisy chain broke up. They were directed to exit out the Metro exit.

They exited out to South Parking and looked back at the building to see a huge smoke plume coming from the Pentagon. At that point Capt Kern finally realized it must have been a plane. He thought maybe it was a commercial Cessna, and no idea it was a commercial jet.

Since Capt Kern had only been escorting Ms. Livingston he had no

Abstracted by:  
CDR Carol O'Hagan

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

Capt Gary Hall  
Capt Michael McDaniel

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Naval Historical Center  
Naval Historical Center

**Interviewee:**

Capt Dennis Kern USN (ret)

**Current Address:**

[REDACTED]  
Executive Assistant to the  
Undersecretary of the Navy

**Date of Interview:**

24 Jan 2002

**Place of Interview:**

Reston, VA

**Number of Cassettes:**

One

**Security Classification:**

Unclassified

**Name of Project:** Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Survivor; Lighting; Reconstitution; Award winner; Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned; Navy Command Center; renovation

**Transcript of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:**

Capt Kern was born and raised in and around [REDACTED], OH. His father was a Naval aviator who had just received his wings in Corpus Christi, TX when World War II ended. Capt Kern became his father's vicarious means of fulfilling the dream to be a Navy pilot. Capt Kern went through ROTC at Miami University of Ohio and then flight training. He enjoyed the Navy and on 1 Jan 02 finished a 30 year 4 month career. He was a P-3 pilot, all on the west coast. He was the commanding officer of VP-19 at NAS Moffett. He screened for aviation major command and had command of NAF Misawa, Japan and following that was the Chief of Staff for Naval Forces Japan (1995-98). He finished his career as the Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary of the Navy. Highlights of his Naval career were four overseas PCS assignments, including Madrid, Spain and Japan. He enjoyed being the skipper of VP-19 and Chief of Staff as well as Installation Command.

**Topics Discussed:**

Q. (04:10) On 11 September, working up to that, what was your role in the Pentagon?

A. I was the Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary of the Navy, who still now, and on that day was the Honorable SUSAN MORRISEY LIVINGSTONE. So I had been her Executive—she was sworn into the position July 23, 25, something like that. She could give you the actual date. So I was her Executive Assistant for about you know, two, two and a half months prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Prior to that I'd been the—her predecessor in that job was the HONORABLE ROBIN PEERY (phonetic) who was the previous Undersecretary and acting SECNAV during the transition to the, CLINTON to the BUSH administration.

Q. (05:04) Where was your office physically located?

A. 4E-, how quickly you forget, 4E732 was where our office was located, but of course on 9 September at the time of the attack we were not in our office because our office basically got through unscathed.

Q. (05:30) Tell us who was in your office, just kind of the makeup of your office.

A. The office staff for the Under, the immediate office of the Undersecretary of the Navy on September 11<sup>th</sup>, like I say, MISS LIVINGSTONE is the Undersecretary. I was her Executive Assistant. The military Assistant in the Marine Corps was COLONEL FLETCHER FERGUSON. Her confidential assistant who does all the executive secretary functions was JANE TAUPEMAN (phonetic), the office supervisor YNC AL DAVIS and the other person in the office working for him was Marine Corps Staff Sergeant ALEDA (Phonetic) PAGAN (phonetic).

Q. (06:19) Tell us about, just give us your recollection of the day of 11 September. Just take us through your whole day, commuting and ending. Just walk us through it.

A. Well, it was a pretty normal day. I live in Reston, Virginia, so it's a twenty-one mile commute in and so that was a day, it started out as like any other one. The schedule for that day, as the Executive Assistant, you know, obviously I run the Undersecretary's schedule as she moves around the building, I or somebody I assign goes with her to escort her to various meeting places she may have outside of the immediate area of her office.

On that morning she was scheduled to address a group of thirty civilians, or thirty government workers who were visiting from Naval Weapons Station, Crane Indiana, and so we had, oh, thirty to forty minute conference room type presentation scheduled for them as they came into the Pentagon. It was scheduled to go down at nine o'clock on September 11<sup>th</sup>. So, you know, got in, did our morning staff functions and when it came time for her nine o'clock appointment the conference room she was to address this group in was located at some distance from our office. I believe the room number was 5E490. Five E four ninety. It was a fifth deck E ring conference room that belonged to the Secretary of the Navy for Financial and Management. So it was in the new section, the newly renovated section there on the E ring side facing the heliport.

MISS LIVINGSTONE had never been up there before and so that was, that's why I said, "I will go with you and escort you to this event." Then I go to the event, I sit in the back. I keep an eye on the time and signal for her when she needs to start wrapping up and then move her on to her next event. She had a follow-on appointment back in the office so I would be responsible for getting her back down to keep her on schedule.

So it was approaching nine o'clock, so got her together and she and I then proceeded from the office up to the conference room. It was interesting, we walked, you know, our office is on the

mall entrance side of the Pentagon, so we walked down the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor into the wedge that was next, wedge two which was next to be renovated and we had just been cleaning out her, evacuating, you know, people from those offices so that we could turn that wedge over to the building contractor who would then start that renovating piece. So as we walked through Wedge two, we go past the Vice-Chief's office to the old N3 N5 office and through the N3 N5 staff spaces which were all empty. I remember pointing out to her, you know, this place is a ghost town, because we have just moved everybody, you know, out of here so they can start renovation.

So as we walked through we commented, both of us, on the fact that there was nobody in the office space. Then went past corridor 5 down to a mid-wing stairwell between corridors 5 and 4 that then took us up to the 5<sup>th</sup> deck. As soon as you got off, you know, as soon as you came out of the stairwell the conference room was right there on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor E ring.

So we went into the conference room. It was a new conf- newly renovated so the furniture was new. All of the interior appointments were new, and it was just she and I there, because the Crane, Indiana people hadn't arrived yet. So we scoped out where she would sit, and then er would put them around the conference table and I pointed out where my seat would be in the back, so that she could keep an eye on me and I could keep an eye on the clock.

And nine o'clock came up and still no Crane, Indiana people arriving. So I called down to our office and got JANE TAUPEMAN (phonetic) on the phone, and to ask if she had heard anything from the Crane people, because we're up there. It's time to go and there's nobody there yet. I got JANE on the phone, and JANE, before I could ask about where the Crane people are, she said, "Oh, I'm so glad you called. You aren't going to believe what we just saw on TV."



I said, "What's that?" And she's the one described for us, and the first that we heard of the two planes crashing into the World Trade Center. And she described that they had heard that a plane had been flown into the World Trade, so they turned the TV on and then as they were watching TV the second plane was flown into the World Trade Center.

So we both knew, and I told MISS LIVINGSTONE that there was obviously, you know terrorist attacks underway. We opted to continue to wait, and then also we found out that the Crane people had called in saying that they were on their way. They'd be about ten minutes late. So we stayed in the conference room and waited for them to arrive which they did about ten minutes later and you know, once they sat down the first thing MISS LIVINGSTONE asked me to do was to brief the, tell these people about what we had just been told about the World Trade Center. Which I did, and you know she commented that this was obviously, you know, a coordinated terrorist attack of some sort, and that when she finished up there, then we'd be going down to monitor those events and see what happened following.

At that point she launched into her presentation which was basically a, you know, a strategic overview of what types of initiatives that she and the Secretary were working on. You know, her look ahead on what she saw upcoming for the Navy, both from the, you know, the business side, and the war fighting side. This type of thing. It was a comprehensive and fairly generic presentation to a visiting group.

It was supposed to be over at 9:30, but since we started late we agreed to let it ride, 'til 9:40. And so as we're coming, it's about 9:39 and I looked at my watch, and you know saw that we're coming up on, you know, her, you know, her time limit. So I started signaling to her that it's time to start wrapping up.

She said, "Well do I have time for a couple questions?"

I told her, “No ma’am, you don’t,” and she said, “Well, I’ll take a couple questions anyway.” So, and she, she was taking, I think she’d taken two and she was on her third question and it was 9:42 and that’s when the plane was slammed into the Pentagon.

As it turns out our geographic position was directly above and just a little to the left as you stand on the helopad and look at the side of the Pentagon. We would have been directly above and slightly to the left of where the airliner was slammed in.

We were sitting there and there was a somewhat muffled, but still very loud explosion and it rocked the room. I’ve been in several earthquakes in both California and Japan and the feeling was the same feeling that you would get from a jolt, if you had one of these, you know, tectonic plate type of shifts that would start an earthquake. It was a very sudden jolt, along with a, you know, explosive, concussive type of sound. Like I say, it rocked the room, the suspended ceiling, or the ceiling tiles, some of those fell out. Some of the florescent light fixtures and the little screens on the lights fell out from the impact of the explosion on the conference room.

MISS LIVINGSTONE and I both immediately jumped up and she said, you know, she basically uttered the words “terrorist attack,” and then I motioned to where the door was, and you know, got her—she announced to the group that we were going to evacuate and that they were to get in a daisy chain kind of line and we would lead them out of the conference room, or evacuate the building.

This was important because these thirty civilians, although they are government, you know GS employees, since they work and live in Indiana, none of them had been to the Pentagon before. Clearly none of them were conversant at all with the layout of the 5<sup>th</sup> deck of the Pentagon. So everybody was very calm. I want to note for the record MISS LIVINGSTONE was *very* calm. I

was, throughout this whole evolution I was very impressed with the calmness and presence of mind that she exhibited.

We went to the conference room door. I had MISS LIVINGSTONE right behind me. They were getting in line behind her. Our next inclination was to simply, you know, leave the way we had come up and so we went straight to the stairwell outside the conference room to go down from the 5<sup>th</sup> deck and opened the door and that stairwell had collapsed. The rubble from walls falling in, ceiling pieces coming down and the stairwell itself, you couldn't even open the door all the way because of the rubble, the collapsed concrete rubble which was blocking the door. So we saw that there was not a way out there.

Q. (17:01) At that time did you realize it was a plane?

A. No, we had no idea what it was. I had no idea what it was. I didn't know if this was a car bomb, a planted bomb. Quite honestly it did not, I did not immediately assume it was an airplane. I knew it was some type of you know bomb type explosive event, but I, the first thing in my mind was not airplane.

I am familiar with the 5<sup>th</sup> deck of the Pentagon and again for the record the 5<sup>th</sup> deck was never meant to be inhabited. It was the attic of the Pentagon, but over the years after it was constructed, they needed the office space so they built it out. The reason I mention it so that there's no natural light. There are no window that, you know, or skylights or anything to allow any natural light into a 5<sup>th</sup> deck E ring or corridor. I mention that because the, as you would assume, if power, you know, if electricity or power is off then the place is pitch black, which we'll come to that in a moment.

The power was still on, and so since we couldn't go down the mid-ring stairwell that we had come up, since this was the edge of the renovated wedge 1, there was a construction wall that was right there that was blocked or demarked wedge 1 from wedge 2, and so you could not turn toward corridor 5 to get out. You could only turn left and go down the E ring toward corridor 4. So we did that. We started down corridor 4. You know, the lights were on. There were people coming out of the offices on the 5<sup>th</sup> deck E ring. Several people were very upset. A couple of the women were crying. Not exactly hysterical, but they were very upset, and we, in particular MISS LIVINGSTONE simply instructed them to get in line behind us and we were proceeding out. Of note, there was one lady with a walker. So she was handicapped and was walking with the aid of a push type walker and she was very upset and crying and that sort of thing. But we put them in line with us and we proceeded down the E ring toward corridor 4. We got to the, I came to the next stairwell that went down from the E ring 5<sup>th</sup> deck and pushed that door open and that stairwell was also collapsed and it was impassable. Part of the stairs were gone. The walls had, some of the wall had fallen in and again it was not passable.

We, as we had continued down the stairwell, the E ring, you know, the –

Q. (20:29) Still heading toward corridor 4?

A. Still heading toward corridor 4. We came to what appeared to be about a two and a half to three foot step-down in the floor. And MISS LIVINGSTONE and I both, we were surprised to find it, but we didn't think anything of it. We simply just stepped down and continued to walk and I remember thinking to myself, "This is the renovated part of the wing. What a stupid place to put this big step." (laugh) You know, did they mean to put a ramp here or what, but it was about, about a two and a half foot, very clean break in the floor. There was this big step-down to



impenetrable. Ahead of us, the, it was dark, and corridor 4 to the left of us was also dark and there were smoke and fumes kind of roiling down corridor 4 and we were now into that area where there was this thick black smoke –

Q. (24:18) it was coming from -

A. Cor –

Q. Inner, from corridor toward –

A. It was coming, you know it was coming—we were at corridor 4, it was, corridor 4 was filled with smoke. The power was off in corridor 4. It was black. Ahead of us on the E ring, heading toward corridor 3 was similarly black and full of smoke. We opted to turn down corridor 4 and so at this point because of the smoke and the fumes, I told everybody to get down on the floor, to get down on our hands and knees and hold on to the person behind them. So what I did, we are now heading down corridor four toward the A ring, toward the center of the Pentagon and we're on the right, as you head down that corridor we're on the right hand side. So I was against the right hand wall with my right hand, on our hands and knees, my right hand on the wall, so I could continue to guide myself because you can't see anything at this point, and my left hand behind me holding on to MISS LIVINGSTONE. And then she's holding on to the person behind, you know grasping the hand of the person behind, then we're in a daisy chain type of formation like that.

So at this point we're crawling toward the D ring. We get, the, it's black smoke, fumes. You can feel the heat coming through the floor, so I know that we are near a fire. I don't know the nature of the fire, but I know we're near a fire, because you can feel the heat radiating on the floor. No

power. Through the smoke you can see like strobe lights type of flashing, in a dull gray type of environment which is the white strobe flashing through the black smoke, that's kind of making this pulsing gray light, but it's non-directional. It's of no help at all.

As we crawl on the floor, there's like ceiling tiles, rubble, that kind of thing we're kicking around as we crawl on our hands and knees. We get to what I estimate to be about the D ring. That's where I encounter, or just before the D ring I encounter another stairwell. So I push the stairwell door open, and just billows of black smoke come out and this huge furnace blast of heat and you can see flames licking up the stairwell there toward the 5<sup>th</sup> deck. So I quickly pulled that door closed again, because I didn't want to, you know, I wanted to stop any further smoke coming onto the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor, although there's plenty of it there already. So I know we can't go down that stairwell.

It was at this point, once I encountered the stairwell that was on fire and I could feel the heat coming through the floor, and it's nothing but black in front of me and we're all choking at this point. It was at this point that I remember thinking to myself, "How much further can we proceed in this environment before we're overcome by smoke and fume inhalation."

All of the external stimuli that we have indicate that we are proceeding further into the destruction, not out of it. But we also know that there's no escape route behind us.

Q. (27:52) What was behind you as you're going from corridor 5 toward corridor 4? And the step-down, what was behind you?

A. Well, let's see. There was the collapsed stairwell that we had come up, and there was a construction wall that blocked the rest of corridor –

Q. (28:08) You knew that there was no option that way?

A. That blocked the rest of the E ring, because that was the seam between wedge 1 and wedge 2, which had been you know, seamed off by the construction wall as they get ready to renovate the second wedge.

So there was no escape route behind us, but we're proceeding only into bigger areas of destruction. No sooner then that thought had passed through my brain, in that we heard, I heard a voice yelling ahead of us, you know, through the smoke, there's this man's voice yelling at us, you know, "Keep coming ahead. There's a way out here." I mean it was really fortunate that I heard, that he was yelling at that point, because that's the first time I'd actually hit upon, "Well, now where do we go?" You know, because all, like I say, all indications were that where we were headed was only going to get worse.

So I yelled back at him immediately, "Keep," you know, "Keep yelling. We can't see. We're heading toward your voice." So he and I just picked up this kind of sing-song litany back and forth to each other with him yelling at us, "Keep coming, " and me yelling back at him, "Keep talking." Him yelling, "Keep coming." Me yelling back, "Keep talking." So that we could orally orient toward his voice. I didn't want to end up turning down, you know, like a D ring or a C ring and if he was at a point where he could see a way out, I wanted to continue heading to wherever that was, because we had no idea. You could not see a thing. It was completely black, and we're--

Q. (29:53) How was your breathing.

A. It was, your throat stung, I mean the fumes of, it was, you know, the burning fumes, jet fuel kind of smell. All of that. Breathing, I mean, none of us were at the point of passing out yet, but



it was, it was extremely rough going in that, I just kept thinking, “How much more of this am I going to be able to stand before someone starts collapsing on you, or just being incapacitated.”

So we -

Q. (30:24) What was happening with the group behind you?

A. Well, I mean I can't see. I'm holding, I can feel MISS LIVINGSTONE's hand behind me, so I know she's behind me and of course, the last time I saw the daisy chain they were intact, so I can only assume that they're still there.

So we keep crawling on our hands and knees. Me with my right hand against the wall, left hand holding onto MISS LIVINGSTONE's. We each keep inching forward and again this is my strictly estimate. I estimate that we passed the D ring and got to about what I think was the C ring and that's when the smoke started disappearing. It started lightening up a little bit. Instead of pitch black it was sort of hazy gray and we're getting closer to this guy's voice. And as soon as it starts to lighten up a bit where you can see the floor again, that's when I stood up, you know, and this person who's been yelling at us, is pretty much right in front of us at this point, and so I stand up, you know, with MISS LIVINGSON. I pulled her up and we can now see enough that we can see, you know, gray light ahead of us. So that we know we're kind of coming out of it and so we start walking, you know, or maybe jogging, you know, trying to move, but still holding on to the person behind us. I pass the guy who's been yelling at us, you know. So I pass him on my right and he continues to encourage the people behind us, and so we're moving ahead and in the gray haze ahead of us, this is like I saw, about the C ring, I see ahead of us a fire suppression screen. You know, unfold, unfolding across the corridor 4. This was obvious, this was a surprise to everybody especially in the—after the event we analyzed it. No one knew that

these fire suppression screens were put into the new renovation that would automatically deploy based on, I don't know if it's heat sensed, smoke sensed, or fire alarm activated or whatever, but this folding metal screen is unfolding, is deploying across corridor 5, corridor 4, in front of us and I can see that, I mean I don't know what the, how you, how you, what happens when this thing fully deploys and so I dropped MISS LIVINGSTONE's hand, ran ahead and then smashed this thing back against the wall in its stored position. Then MISS LIVINGSTONE came up. I, you know, moved her beyond it and then the persons behind her, I handed the door off to him and told him to hold it and keep passing it off to keep it from deploying so that we could all get—I didn't know if this thing deployed if there was a way to push it back or not. So I handed it off to the guy behind MISS LIVINGSTONE and then caught up with here, and then by this time we're almost to the A ring and we're pretty much in the clear at this point and so we hit the 5<sup>th</sup> floor A ring, corridor 4, and then started down the stairs.

By the time we got to the 4<sup>th</sup> deck there was this surging sea of humanity, who's you know, we just join the flow and there's this human flood of people who are surging out of the building. At that point our daisy chain, of course, kind of broke up and everybody got lost in the surge of people who were leaving the building and we—I forget which route we took. We went down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and all around the A ring and eventually were directed, by the Defense Protective personnel who were stationed various places, we were directed to exit. We went out the Metro entrance, or the Metro exit. So we went through the concourse, down the Metro escalator, back up the Metro escalator out to the, I guess it was the bus stop at that time and basically, you know, with the whole crowd of people, surged out into the South Parking area. Once we got out in the South Parking, you could look back at the building and see, you know, the huge billowing smoke plume coming from the, that side of the Pentagon. Since you asked the

question about the plane, it was at that point that I finally had enough presence—I wasn't thinking about getting out of the building. I started thinking about what happened. That's my first thought, "it must have been a plane. "

Other people were saying, "It's a plane! It's a plane!" I thought it might be like some little commercial Cessna or something. I had no idea that it was, you know, Flight 77 that had been hijacked and flown into the building.

So we were out in the South Parking lot, and myself since I had only intended to escort MISS LIVINGSTONE to the conference room and come back to our office again, I had no cell phone, no wallet, no car keys, no cover, none of this stuff. It was just me and a notebook and my Mont Blanc pen, and glasses. And so we were out there in the parking lot and sort of at loose ends as to now what do we do?

I won't go into a whole great of detail on this. We did run into the Navy's General Counsel, MR. ALBERTO MORA, and he has a cell phone so MISS LIVINGSTONE was able to—actually, the cell phones weren't working so hot, but he did have a connection. He was talking to some lady, I believe in Florida someplace. And so MISS LIVINGSTONE got on the phone and talked to the lady in Florida and asked her to contact her husband in Washington, D.C., Which she eventually did, so she could get word to her husband.

For the next couple hours, I estimate that we were probably out of the building, you know, approaching ten o'clock. I don't know what time it actually was, and from ten o'clock until twelve o'clock, we basically were, along with, you know thousand of other Pentagon employees, were milling about South Parking, Pentagon City, Army/Navy Drive, you know. They kept pushing us further back away from the building, rightfully so, in case there was going to be

another terrorists attack, which there was, of course there was a rumor about that running through the crowd as well. We were –

Q. (37:16) Is that how you heard it? Was it a rumor, since there wasn't really any general, you know, "get back, there's another inbound plane," from some sort of

A. This was like, you know, mob hysteria. (chuckle)

Q. (37:27) Yes.

A. Yes. No, I mean there was nothing concrete. We were unsure as to what we were supposed to be doing, you know. How was the Navy staff going to collect itself and account for everybody? You know, direct rescue, follow on efforts and this type of thing.

We worked our, we eventually worked our way over to the Citgo station, off of Army/Navy Drive which is run by the Navy Exchange there on the way to the Navy Annex, there up the hill. And of course, payphone lines were a mile long. I did finally get a, myself I finally got to a payphone there and at 12:10 managed to get a call to my wife, who is a Fairfax County school teacher. So I called her cell phone and got her voice mail and at 12:10 left a message with her that I was out of the building. I was OK, and you know, I'll be back in touch. I have no idea what we're going to be doing next. We're going to try to find out where the Navy, you know, command structure was and how we would best help.

So I felt comfortable that I had at least gotten word to my wife at that point. We found out that the Navy leadership was reconvening up at the Navy Annex. They first got together at the Virginia Department of Transportation, VDOT office across the street from the Navy Annex, and then later moved that over to the Marine Corps Command Center in the Navy Annex. You know,

there in the Marine Corps headquarters section of the building, and then, you know, they had the Vice-Chief, Vice CNO was there. MISS LIVINGSTONE was there. I believe the Commandant was there. I know the ACMAC was there, and as many of the, you know, VICE ADMIRAL RYAN, N1, VICE ADMIRAL KEATING who was N3/N5. He was there and most of their staffs and they were sort of reconstituting a Navy Command Center type organization. The most pressing business was trying to get a detailed accounting of, was everybody accounted for out of the building. So for the next several hours I was calling all of the various EAs to the Secretariat, all the, you know, the ASNs, EAs and trying to have them execute a recall bill that would account for everybody within the Navy Secretariat just as the OPNAV staff was doing the same thing to account for everybody on the OPNAV staff.

Fortunately for us, on the SECNAV side we didn't lose anybody, which of course, was not the case on the OPNAV side, having lost the whole Navy Command Center and Intel plot.

I was at the Navy, I was at that Navy makeshift command center until about ten o'clock that night and then at that point turned it over to folks that were coming in and I bummed a ride to the Ballston metro stop. Because I didn't have any money, I borrowed two dollars to purchase a Metro ticket.

Q. (41:12) From who? Just anybody that - ?

A. No, the, the guys who were leaving the Command Center who gave me the ride and they gave me a couple of bucks and I—Oh, what, the other thing that happened is that earlier that afternoon at about four or five o'clock there was a kind of a, for me there was a lull in the activity. I had contacted all the right people, now waiting for them to call me back with their muster list. I said, "Well, let me try my wife again," since she was out of school at that point. So I called and got

through, and she seemed so relieved to hear from me. I said, “Yes, I’m fine. I’m here at Navy Command Center.” I was kind of blasé because you know, I’m kind of “catching up with you here at long last, and I’ll give you a call when I’ll be able to come home,” and again she was I mean, just beside herself so glad to hear from me. I said, “Well, this is the emotion of the moment.”

So I called her from Ballston to say I was on the train coming out to Vie—we live in Reston, obviously, and she said, “I’ll come down to pick you up.”

When she met me at the Vienna Metro Station and I got in the car, she said, “I just got your voice mail.” That voice mail I had left her at 12:10, had only been delivered as she was driving to pick me up at the Vienna Metro stop. So when I called her later that afternoon, that was the first she’d heard from me. I didn’t know that, and that explained why she was, you know, had been frantic all day and finally hears from me. So that’s how clogged up the circuits were that particular day.

Q. (43:01) How had she heard about the attack?

A. My wife teaches fifth grade at Buzz Aldron, and I’m a little murky on the details. I think somebody had come through the building and it kind of just circulated through the building that there—they knew about the World Trade Center attacks, and then later on it was sort of passed around the building that the Pentagon had been attacked as well, and that’s when she said, “My husband works at the Pentagon.” There was no further information and there was not much of an effort to provide any information by anybody at the schools. Well, in fact they didn’t want people to talk to the kids about it, or anything to get them all upset and so my wife was trying to

maintain a sense of normalcy among her fifth grade students. All the while wondering you know, the status of her husband in the building that had just been attacked by terrorists.

Q. (44:01) Do you have children?

A. Yes, I've got a daughter who's now 22 in San Francisco and a son who's now 18, at college in North Carolina. So even though she hadn't heard from me, my wife contacted both our kids to, you know let them know that she would call them as soon as she heard something.

My daughter was very upset in San Francisco. My son was a little more circumspect I guess in college.

What else can I tell you.

Q. (44:43) What happened after that. Well, you got home. The next day did you go back to work?

A. Well, we knew we had to be back in at work. I mean, the, since everybody was out of the, you know nobody was back in the Pentagon. The Navy Command Center organization was set up there at the Marine Corps Command Center in the Navy Annex and so as we left at ten that night, we all agreed that our follow-on meeting would be at seven o'clock that morning and so --

Q. (45:14) Back at the Annex.

A. Yes, and so again my car was isolated in the Pentagon Mall parking lot. I couldn't get to it, so that morning my wife drove me in and basically let me off in Pentagon City because it was all barricaded off. You couldn't get to the Navy Annex and so I hiked up to the Navy Annex and got there in time for the seven o'clock meeting. MISS LIVINGSTONE was there and of course we

knew we had everybody accounted for on the Secretary staff by then. We worked out of the Navy Annex for the next two days, I think it was. September 11<sup>th</sup> was a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon as I recall was the first time we were allowed back in our –

(tape is being changed)

Thursday afternoon I guess would be September 13<sup>th</sup>, was the first time we were allowed to have anybody go back into our office in the Pentagon. They were still cordoned off. We could send somebody in to retract, you know, collect my wallet and car keys for example, and other personal effects.

Still very smoky even in our section of the Pentagon. It was, the air was very foul with smoke and fumes type of odor.

Q. (46:50) What was that like smelling it again, being in that environment again?

A. You compartmentalize. I mean, especially Naval Aviators, that's what we do. Everything is put in a little box and put someplace. So we, it was the just getting on with business kind of approach that I think most people used as a coping mechanism. It was, it was very upsetting to see the names of the casualties as they became known. I lost a very good friend, CAPTAIN LARRY GETZFRED, who was a duty Captain in the Command Center that day. His was the first name that I know was, that was killed.

COMMANDER DAN SHANOWER, who was the head of the CNOs IP, Intel plot, he was MISS LIVINGSTONE's Intel briefer every morning. So I was very sorry to see him listed, and a couple of other folks in the Intel plot. JACK PUNCHES, another good friend who had recently retired and was hired back into his civilianized job, was killed.



Q. (48:17) How'd you see that list? Tell us about that. Did you realize who was in there at the time? Were you thinking about that or was it just -?

A. I didn't know who was in there at the time. I didn't even know that the Navy Command Center was, you know in the impact, so you know the plane literally flew through the ceiling of the Navy Command Center. I did not—I knew that they had moved to the first deck. I knew they moved to the helo side. I didn't know how close they were to the impact zone.

The later afternoon of September 11<sup>th</sup> is when I first, working with the N3/N5 guys, in OPNAV, that's when I first saw LARRY GETZFRED's name as unaccounted, of course they were listed first as unaccounted for.

A personal story on that is that I was manning the phones at the makeshift command center there, and it was about mid-afternoon and I took an incoming phone call and it was LARRY GETZFRED's wife, Pat, who I know very well. She didn't identify herself. I answered you know, "Captain Kern, Navy Command Center," and she said, "I'm trying to find my husband." I said, "Well, we're asking everybody to, we asking everybody to phone into Millington. We're mustering people through Millington."

She said, "I'm trying to find CAPTAIN GETZFRED."

I said, "Well," I said, not knowing who she was. Not piecing together that it was Pat, I said, "Well ma'am, I know CAPTAIN GETZFRED. He's a friend of mine and he's not here at this Command Center, but there are people scattered all over Pentagon City."

She said, "Who's this?"

I said, "This is DENNY KERN."

She said, "Oh, this is Pat."

I said, "Oh PAT, hi." I said, "PAT, let me, MISS LIVINGSTONE and I wandered around Pentagon City for over two hours trying to find this place." I said, "LARRY could be anywhere." I said, "He could still be out there. He could be in the parking lot, you know, he could be trying to find a way home. The phones are clogged. Cell phones don't work." I was very hopeful and optimistic and sincere with her, because I still didn't realize that the Navy Command Center was directly under the, or directly you know in the cross hairs of the terrorists.

So she said, "Well," she said, "That's good to hear." So she said, "I'll take that as good news," and you know, "I'll just kind of wait to hear from him."

I said, "Oh, Pat, I'm sure he's going to show up. Like I say, you know I haven't been able to talk with [REDACTED] yet and, you know there are people all over Northern Virginia trying to find, you know, you know, where they're supposed to be or go. I'm sure he'll turn up." So we ended on a very hopeful note, and of course then the following morning his name was still on the missing list and that's when I realized oh, my gosh, he must be one of the casualties.

So we talked with PAT by phone and I also went to LARRY's funeral and saw PAT there. She said that that was such a wonderful conversation. That gave her a few more hours of hope, and that she really cherished that. I thought that was remarkable, because I was so apologetic.

I said, "Pat, I want you to know, I did not know. I had no idea. I was not trying to, you know, lead you on or somehow hold you off from the truth. I literally did not know."

She said that she was so grateful that I was the one who answered the phone and that that gave her a few more hours before she really had to start worry about it."

So that was one of those stories.

Q. (52:13) What about the SPRINT team? Were you aware or had experienced any involvement with the SPRINT team, from a leadership standpoint?

A. Yes, I know what SPRINT teams are. We used them over in Japan. I'm trying to think what for. That's when I first ran across the SPRINT team concept, the naval hospital over there. They were our liaison to the SPRINT team. I forget how we used them or what it was for. Can't remember now. Yes. I was aware of them.

Q. (52:39) Did, were you aware of people using the SPRINT team during this post, post the event.

A. Only what I was briefed on. I knew that that was available. I didn't avail myself of it. I just knew that that was one of the capabilities that was used.

Q. (52:58) What happened in the days after 9-11 as things got reconstituted. You said you were out of the Pentagon. Did you get back in the Pentagon after Thursday?

A. Yes, we got in after Thursday and start setting our office back up again. You know, the smoke and fumes lingered for weeks. Gee, seems like months. We were very fortunate. Aside from the smell, our office was unaffected. It was the sorting out process you know of making sense of it all. The other part of this was that MISS LIVINGSTONE was determined to find out who that voice was, and we found out.

Q. (53:47) How'd you find out?

A. Well, we you know, she commissioned me, and my single purpose in life in the immediate weeks post 9-11 was to find the identity of that voice. I, every possible lead I would have, I



him. It was he and then there were two Navy Captains working with him as well. He was the voice, and these two other Navy Captains –

Q. (56:10) PHIL GRANDFIELD and FRANK RUSH.

A. PHIL GRANDFIELD and FRANK RUSH were there helping, you know standing there with them helping directing people toward the A ring, but DON BRASWELL was the guy who kept yelling back and forth to me. So he was dubbed as “The Voice.”

So we found him and he identified the other two Navy Captains and we, MISS LIVINGSTONE and I then went over to visit them in their temporary offices in Crystal City, in you know, N88, N880 section and met with them and then she brought them back over and hosted them to lunch in the Secretary’s dining room and they were put in for medals. Then in December the Navy’s 9-11 Award Ceremony, the seventy-five or so people who got awards for actions that day, you know, the three of them were there. Three of them and I, all of us got Navy Commendation Medals for the event. So we got together again that day as well.

The Crane, Indiana people are coming back to the Pentagon on February 28<sup>th</sup> and they’re hosting a lunch and MISS LIVINGSTONE’s coming, and I’m coming in and the three guys are coming over as well so that the —although MISS LIVINGSTONE and I have met them and talked with them, the Crane, Indiana people have not yet, and they are very anxious to, and so they’ll all get together for lunch that day.

Q. (57:52) Any others we should talk with. Any other aspects of the story that we need to take a look at and you feel is important.

A. As affected, MISS LIVINGSTONE'S and my experience, of course, I very much urge you to talk to MISS LIVINGSTONE. She will give you more details. It's interesting as I'm sure you're finding out, even in a shared experience different people remember different aspects of it.

She remembers us doubling back down to the E ring and climbing over that step-down break in the floor twice, or three times I guess it would be. I don't remember that, but she does. I'm not discounting her memory. She may have a more accurate recollection than I.

I remember more about the stairwells than she, because she never saw them. I mean I was in the lead. I would look and then I would close the door and keep looking for the next one. So even in a shared experience, different participants have different memory traces and so I definitely recommend you talk with her.

She was a remarkably strong lady. A wonderful leader. My focus was on getting her out of there. Her focus was on getting the rest of them out of there. You know, my job was to get the Undersecretary you know, safely out of the building and so she devoted her time and attention to, she was going to follow wherever I took her, and she was going to bring all the Crane, Indiana people with us and so my hat's off to her. She did remarkable work that day, and like I say, she was, she just had, she remained very calm. As we run up and as we you know walked up and down the hall there initially, and people coming out screaming and all upset, she was very much a calming influence, telling them "get in line behind us. We're getting out. Come with us." So she was terrific.

Q. (59:48) Was the lady with the walker that you had mentioned was she able to keep up? Do you know how that worked out?

A. I know she got out. I know everybody who was up there got out.

Q. (59:57) Was she Navy related at all?

A. She would have been a GS –

Q. (1:00:00) For Navy?

A. Yes, the people on the E ring there are mainly from the Intel, N2 section and so I believe that she was one of the N2 employees, I think. I don't know, because I never met her, but from the office I saw her leaving, I would guess her to be an N2 employee, and –

Q, (01:00:30) Any others you can think of we should talk with?

A. Again as relates to our experience I don't know of any. If you ever got in touch with the Crane people I know that they would *love* to talk to you. I mean, they published their story in newspapers, I had people calling me from across the country, "Hey I read about you." You know, from these people came in and published their story. You know tragic, tragic, and traumatic events like this, you know, create this indelible bond and so they are a cohesive unit. They really are.

Q. (01:01:06.) Anybody in particular at Crane we should talk with when they do come in?

A. I have not tracked them to the degree that MISS LIVINGSTONE has. I know that either she or JANE TAUPAMAN (phonetic), JANE I know has the name of who the, the more or less spokesman person is for the group.

Q. (01:01:26) Maybe while they're in we could get them as a group.

A. Oh, they would *love* to talk to you. (laugh).

Q. (01:01:34) Any other aspects of the story even for the follow-up that were lessons learned meetings, kind of research on what took place, etc, that you think would be good aspects to have as far as the overall story?

A. I will say, my understanding from the Pentagon engineers is that that iron grid network worked exactly as designed. The reason that we were able to get out is because that renovated grid network that was put in kept floors 4 and 5 in place for about twenty or thirty minutes while we were crawling through that, you know, through that space. After we were out, they collapsed and that's what then created the gaping hole that you've seen, you know, the day of the picture of the Pentagon. And the early pics- the first pictures you can see the iron girder network in the picture. If you look at it, as you look at the picture, on the lower right hand side of the picture there is this, it looks like red parallel slashes you know, laying in like a pile of rubble. Those are the, actually the iron network collapsed as a grid even. They even collapsed as a grid and those, those streaks of red, those parallel red streaks running up that slag heap there, next to the gaping hole in the Pentagon was that, where the metal grid, was the metal grid, and that is the sole reason that I am able to sit here today and describe that.

Q. (01:03:19) Wow!

A. Because if the, if floors 4 and 5 had collapsed immediately, we wouldn't have had a way out. The, there wasn't a way to, toward corridor 5 and the way to corridor 4 would have collapsed and we had no other way down. So the, that lesson learned from Oklahoma City I'm eternally grateful to the architects and to the engineer and to the contractor. (Chuckle)



Q. (01:04:00) What would you say is the biggest way this has changed you? Or has it changed you and if so, in what way?

A. Well, it has a very, it has a sobering effect on you. It's really jarring when you look at how close you came to, to not making it, especially in light of having friends who were killed. It really gives you pause, and you sort of reorder, you know, what's important in your life, and you know, what do you want to spend your time doing. It kind of gives you instant focus on what's the good use of your time and what things truly don't matter in the long scheme. So I guess I would offer that up.

Q. (01:04:51) Have you talked to your children about that, being that they're adults themselves? Has that been a topic of conversation at all?

A. Of course, we're empty nesters. Both of my children, you know, live outside the home. Although they do come home for, you know, they were home for Thanksgiving and they were home for Christmas. Quite honestly, I mean I gave them the details of what happened to me and we haven't devoted a whole lot of time of sorting through it all.

My daughter's very emotional about it and this might be something we'll come to in future years. It was a bit traumatic for them to register the full impact on. So, no we haven't really done a full bedding of this yet. My wife and I have though. Feel very blessed.

Q. (01:05:52) Excuse me for stepping out. Was there anything on good examples of leadership that flew your way?

A. Well, like I say, MISS LIVINGSTONE was a remarkable leader throughout the whole thing. In putting together, you know, the Navy Command Center, the Navy chain of command was right in place. Whoever the senior person was, I mean, you start at the three-star level, and then they become a four-star and as they put it all together, the chain of command worked very well, and seniority and that type of organization and organizational understanding made reconstituting a Navy organization good. The CNO I think was out, I know the Secretary was out of town. He was in Texas on the 11<sup>th</sup> and had to fly back the following day. I think he was the only plane in the air, that they would allow in the air that day.

(chuckle)

The CNO and the Secretary didn't join the Navy Command Center until the following morning so, the institu – the Navy as an Institution fell right back on the chain of command, continuity of command relationships and it served us virtually well. So.

Q. (01:07:21) I want to, to just a little bit deeper in one area, just from a description standpoint. When you were reaching, going down the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor and not knowing how much longer can we go, having not heard the voice yet, what were you hearing. What were some of the sounds you were hearing and also what was going through your mind at that moment?

A. I wasn't so much focused on sound as I was on sight, because I was looking desperately for clues to a way out of there and everything I was getting visually was bad news. In terms of sound, what I remember, there's an automated alarm announcement system that was going off about, you know, "There has been a fire, proceed to the..." You know, "proceed to your nearest exit," or something you know. I just kind of—it was going over and over again. There would be

like blaring horns, you know. Alarms kind of thing, which were a distraction but I kind of filtered them out.

A lesson learned was that the strobe exit lights or the strobe lights that would come on as an alarm were very poorly placed because they were up high on the walls and the smoke is up high so all you get is just this, you know, kind of flashing gray haze. Emergency egress signals that would have been helpful to us, would have had to of been on the baseboard or on the floor.

Really what helped me the most was that I could orient myself geographically on the 5<sup>th</sup> deck. I knew the layout of the building, otherwise it's very confusing up there. There are bends, there are corners and turns on the 5<sup>th</sup> deck that do not exist on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> decks. The 5<sup>th</sup> deck's a unique environment and so having been up there and being able to spatially orient myself was helpful.

The strobe lights, the alarms, that kind of stuff, was an irrit -(laugh) I can understand why the building code would require them to be there. But on the other hand those Crane, Indiana folks if they hadn't been with somebody who knew their way out of the 5<sup>th</sup> deck, they wouldn't have known where to go, which is one reason why you have to have an escort in the Pentagon. But the spatial orientation was very important.

Q. (01:10:19) Do things kind of go into slow motion?

A. They do. It—I—people have asked me how long I thought this whole process took. I mean it seemed like it was twenty minutes. It may have been less then five. It may have been two minutes. It doesn't seem like—I have no idea. I wish I could judge for you how long our escape took, and I've devoted a great deal of time trying to think about it. And I, especially once we got down on our hands and knees in the smoke and fumes, I don't know how long that took. I really

have lost, I'm venturing that we were on our hands and knees a couple minutes, but that's only a visceral, gut reaction. I don't know.

Q. (01:11:10) Do you relive it or do you dream about it?

A. No, I don't. I think I've compartmented it and I have had no, you know, flashbacks or nightmares or dreams or anything like this. It had, I've been back in the Pentagon since then. I guess I've moved on. I'm not going to say that's good. I'm not going to say that's bad. I'm just saying I guess I've moved on.

Q. (01:11:45) As you tell us, can you see it. Do you see it?

A. Oh, I can see it vividly. I can see it vividly. I know exactly what it looks like. I know what it feels like. I'm a little bit out of touch with the dimension of time, but other than that, I know exactly what it looks like.

Q. (01:12:04) What do you think that impact was of the focus of your mission, add on how you reacted to it?

A. I'm not quite sure I understand the questions.

Q.. (01:12:13) Well, you said that your focus was to get the Undersecretary out.

A. Yes.

Q. (01:12:19) How did that impact how you reacted? Do you think you would have been more, I don't know, less focused on it, or more – scared?

A. I felt a tremendous sense of duty as her Executive Assistant to her safety and her well being. In retrospect I wish I had had the more comprehensive, I mean, "All you people out of here," you know kind of the, I just either, emotionally or intellectually didn't have enough capacity for that. I knew I had to get the Undersecretary out. If I didn't get her out I would have failed in what I was supposed to be doing. I felt a deep professional and personal commitment to, you know, to her safety and well being, and am delighted that everybody else that came with us got out as well, but I want to be very honest that I do not want to portray myself as somebody who was, "I'm going to get everybody who's with me here on the 5<sup>th</sup> deck out of this building." I'm delighted that we found our way out and they all came out together, but I was single mindedly focused on getting MISS LIVINGSTONE out of there, and which is why once we got through it, I didn't stop everything to make sure that I had the daisy chain of people behind us. I wanted to get her out of that building before anything else happened. And so, I think about that from time to time, but I haven't gone to the degree of faulting me in that regard, because I still think that my charge was the Undersecretary.

Q. (01:14:02) Do you have any momentos from the day?

A. MISS LIVINGSTONE has given me, very kindly, something that is now a prize possession. She went, she went down into the rubble of the Pentagon and picked up a chunk of the limestone facade that has charring on it. This is charring from the fire and she had it mounted on a wooden plaque here, or a little wooden base and it's a, it's a chunk from the limestone facade, that has a black streak from the fire and otherwise it's kind of chiseled, you know around it. It's oh, it's about six inches by about four inches or so. It's an irregular shape, but she gave it to me and put

a little plaque on it with my name. It says, "With respect and gratitude, SUSAN LIVINGSTONE," and "9-11-01" So it now graces my office and I'll take it with me everywhere.

Q. (01:15:16) Anything else you want to add for the historical record.

A. No, I think that's pretty much it. The only thing I'll say is that there are other people who have far more inspiring, tragic, heroic tales than I. That's just my involvement right there, and it's just a moment that has, I think, a defining moment in our history. I think it revealed our national character and I think it's going to be a touchstone moment for this generation in American history.

Q. (01:15:52) Well put.

Q. (another) Thank you for taking time to talk to us today.

A. You're welcome.

Transcribed:  
Ethel Geary  
April 5, 2002