

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CDR Carol O'Hagan
CDR Karen Loftus
YNCS(AW) Kathleen Wright

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Ms. Barbara E. MacDonald

Current Address:

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██████████
██████████

Date of Interview:

22 JAN 02

Place of Interview:

Naval District Washington (NDW)

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; CACO

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information: Ms. McDonald was born in ██████████ and then moved to Virginia where she grew up. After high school she began to work for the Navy, who she has worked for during the past 31 years. The last thirteen years she has worked in Casualty Assistance. She is currently the Casualty Assistance Coordinator for Naval District Washington. Major incidents she has dealt with include the incidents in Panama (1989), fire on the Midway, USS Cole and 11 Sep. They have casualties everyday that are handled on an everyday basis.

Topics Discussed:

The chain of command for her includes her immediate supervisor, GS-11, Frank Klem, who reports to the head of Operations/Public Safe Department, Russ Duke, who reports to ADM Weaver (Commandant Naval District Washington).

There are three people in her office day-to-day, herself, a person who works the funerals, and her supervisor Mr. Klem.

During a mass casualty they gear up their Command Center which could include anywhere from 10-30 people on a 24 hour rotation. This is usually stood up for about 2-3 weeks depending on the amount of casualties. These people usually come from the Reserve units. During 11 Sep they had reservists from Anacostia, Adelphia and Baltimore helping them.

On 11 Sep she arrived at work about 0715 and was going through the message traffic. She heard some people talking about the World Trade Center and went out to the Emergency Reaction

Center to watch the TV. As she watched the second plane went into the World Trade Center. Her phone rang to tell her that a plane had gone into the Pentagon.

They were expecting about 100 casualties when they heard about the Pentagon. This includes injuries and deaths. They have three categories, the seriously ill or injured, those who went into the hospital for general treatment and then released, and then the deaths. She has a command coordinator at OPNAV who is a Lieutenant who gives her this information. His name is LT Will Parks.

They received the first news about casualties about 6 hours after the plane hit the Pentagon. She and Mr. Klem set up a Command Center to have one central place for information to flow into and out of. The building manager at NDW provided a large room with phones and equipment for them. They set up in the Civilian Personnel Training Center. The reservists were called in to help set up the center. They then began to make databases for the information that was coming in. They began to verify information before putting it in the database.

Once names started coming up they set up files on each person and assigned a casualty officer. She has a file that she keeps at NDW of all the casualty officers she trains. She conducts training once a month for casualty officers. They have had an outpouring of people who want to do CACO training since 11 Sep.

Casualty officers were issued cell phones and information about the next of kin, whether they were a primary or secondary next-of-kin. Transportation was also provided for the CACOs through the Anacostia motor pool. The ceremonial guard provided the drivers. A chaplain and command representative also escorted each CACO.

Initially everyone in the Pentagon was in a DUST-1 status meaning Duty Status Unknown because a person can stay in the category for up to 10 days and still receive pay. It wasn't until Dover Port Mortuary could put a name to a remains then they were declared deceased. The two people who never had remains found were finally also put in a deceased status.

The CACO's were updated via a web site. Each CACO had a password to access the site. All new information received was put on the web page. There were also meetings at the Sheraton at Crystal City where the Joint Family Assistance Center set up a Command Center. They also received information from Capt O'Brien at Dover Port Mortuary with a SITREP. She was in constant contact with LT Parks at N1 for information.

There was a flag officer assigned to each case to present the flag to the next-of-kin. LT Parks worked with them to assign flag officers to each next-of-kin.

There was also a data base link between her office and her headquarters at Naval Military Personnel Command in Millington, TN.

In this incident they dealt with military and civilians. It was hard to find the next-of-kin on civilians. They didn't even have DNA on the civilians. She hopes that some sort of legislature is made as a result of this to have some sort of file as to what the benefits are for government civilians and who to contact in an emergency. They provided CACO's for every Navy person whether contractor, active duty military, reservist, or civilian. ADM Ryan made this decision.

In the past if they have a Navy civilian casualty they would assign a CACO for a one-time visit. In this case the CACOs were there for the long term. DOD is drafting a policy about what to do about assigning CACO's for civilian deaths.

They are still dealing with personal effects issues. These are the personal effects that came from the offices of the Pentagon. Most of the personal effects on the person when they went to Dover were returned to the next-of-kin with the remains.

There have been major contributions made to the families. They have been helping the families with the claim forms to get the money that is still out there.

Some of the families need long term care so they have gotten Family Service Center at Anacostia involved to provide that long-term support.

As far as the reservists who helped man the Command Center, it was good to have them but confusing as they changed day to day. She would like to have a roster of reservists that would be available for a period of time to man the Command Center and who have been trained.

There are seven stateside area coordinators. Two have been through mass casualties situations, herself and the coordinator in Norfolk during the Cole incident. She recommends when there is a mass casualty, because each area has only one coordinator they should send another area coordinator to the affected area to assist. This was there are two experts to answer all the questions.

Her classes for Casualty Assistance Officers include a lesson on how to deal with the press. LCDR Logan the NDW PAO also came down and talked to the CACO's about special issues dealing with the press.

There were some Pentagon survivors who were command representatives. Some of the CACO's had lost family members at the World Trade Center. They all chose to continue serving as a CACO.

Abstracted by:
CDR Carol O'Hagan
1 Feb 02

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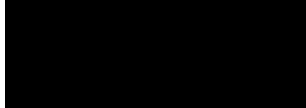
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Transcript of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Ms. McDonald was born in [REDACTED] and then moved to Virginia where she grew up. After high school she began to work for the Navy, who she has worked for during the past 31 years. The last thirteen years she has worked in Casualty Assistance. She is currently the Casualty Assistance Coordinator for Naval District Washington.

Major incidents she has dealt with include the incidents in Panama (1989), fire on the Midway, USS Cole and 11 Sep. They have casualties daily, which are handled on a routine basis.

Topics Discussed:

Q. (02:24) Your office is located in the Navy Yard. How does your chain of command work as far as who do you report to and how does that work? Who do you actually work under?

A. My immediate supervisor, MR.FRANK KLEM who is a DS 11, and then further up the chain, he reports to MR. RUSS DUKE, who is the head of the Operations/Public Safety Department, and he answers to ADMIRAL WEAVER. That's the chain of command.

Q. (02:57) OK, and ADMIRAL WEAVER is -?

A. ADMIRAL WEAVER is Commandant Naval District Washington, and he directed me as his Casualty Assistance Coordinator.

Q. (03:07) How many people worked in your office day-to-day? What is the staff?

A. On a day-to-day basis, there's three of us. Myself, MR. TONY CARTER who works the funeral honors part or all this and MR. FRANK KLEM.

Q. (03:21) And when a casualty happens, how does your office, obviously do more people come in and get involved? How does that work?

A. When we have a mass casualty such as September 11th, then we would gear up our Command Center, which could include anywhere from ten to twenty-five, thirty people within one room. We go on a twenty-four hour rotation, so the office is manned twenty-four hours a day. We stand that up usually for about two weeks to three weeks depending on the amount of casualties that we have from any given incident.

Q. (04:06) Where do those people come from?

A. Most of them are Reserve Units. September 11th was real challenging, but we did have a lot of Reserve supports. We had the Naval Reserve Center at Anacostia. We had Baltimore, and Adelphia. So we had enough reservists that we could call in to head up the center.

Q. (04:22) Are those, are those, is that an actual Reserve Unit then, that Command from the Center, or how does that work?

Q. Well, our Reserve Center at Anacostia, of course they're up and running all the time.

Q. (04:36) But besides that, your Command Center that you activate, is that an actual Reserve Unit that drills for that function, or -?

A. This is the first time we've ever used it. So we've learned a lot from September 11th and putting together the Command Center, things that we can do better. People we can pull, whether it be the Reservists or bringing you know, Reservists on active duty, those types of things. A lot of those issues will be looked at now that September 11th is, if you want to say, behind us as well as it can be. There's still many, many issues involved with September 11th as far as our casualty cases go, because of the amount of casualties that we had, the Navy alone.

Q. (05:19) Let's go to September 11th and start us with your day. What you were doing when you heard about the attacks? Then go from there and tell us what occurred in your office.

A. OK, I had gotten to work at about 7:15 that morning. I was at my desk going through the morning message traffic as far as a series of injuries and hospitalization reports and the ten cases of deaths that I was already working. As I was working those, I heard in the outer office some people talking about the World Trade Center. And someone had said, "A plane just flew into the

World Trade Center.” So I jumped up from my desk and I went out to the Emergency Reaction Center that we have there in the office and looked at the TV. As I was standing there watching the TV, the second plane was going into the World Trade Center. So I’m standing there, I’m just, can’t believe what I’m seeing. I’m just horrified, and all of a sudden my phone rang, and someone said, “A plane has just gone into the Pentagon.”

Well, of course, when you get a call like that, you immediately go into totally different mode, and you’re no longer in that, that serene type setting that you were in the morning, and all of a sudden just adrenaline takes over. You’re going here, you’re going there. You’ve got to figure out what you need to do. Do you need to get into the Center? How many people you’re going to need. How many casualties does it look like we have?

When we first got that initial call, we were, we were gearing up for at least, you know maybe a hundred casualties with the Pentagon being as big as it is and we weren’t sure exactly where the plane had entered into the Pentagon. So we were expecting the real worst. Not that it wasn’t bad all ready.

Q. (07:04) When you say casualties, you mean injuries and deaths, right?

A. Exactly.

Q. (07:08) OK.

A. Injuries, those hospitalized, those that just went into the hospital to get treatment that were released. You have to track everybody in those types of situations. So you basically have three categories that you’re working with. You working with the seriously ill and injured. You’re

dealing with the ones that went into the hospital just for general treatment to be released, and then of course you're dealing with all the deaths that were involved.

Q. (07:33) And who do you get all that information from?

A. I have a Command Coordinator at OPNAV. He's a Lieutenant and he is my point-of-contact for the Pentagon. Whenever I do anything at the Pentagon, whether it be training, site visits, or whatever, he's the person that I contact. So he is the one that I was in contact with on September 11th. He is the one that I got the names from of all of the deaths, the injuries.

Q. (07:59) And what was his name?

A. His name is LT WILL PARKS.

Q. (08:05) So all the information you got on each individual came from him?

A. Exactly.

Q. (08:08) And where did he, do you know where he got that information from?

A. I understand there was some of the Rosters there at OPNAV and the names that were, were being sent back to him from the people that were actually in there bringing people out, you know, always someone knows someone when they're coming out or whatever.

Q. (08:27) So how soon after you heard that the Pentagon was hit did you start receiving names?

A. We received the first names probably about, I would say, six hours later. The names started trickling in. Now, of course on September 11th when the incident just happened, I never went home for forty-eight hours. I was here in the office for forty-eight hours straight. My boss –

Q. (08:55) Tell us about that, tell us about that time, as best you can remember.

A. Oh, (sigh), it all seems like a fog now. I remember working with MR.KLEM. We determined what we needed to get brought up as far as a Command Center so that we could have one central place for all the information to flow into. Phones were up and down that day, so we were not able to rely on my phone in my office to get all the information that we needed. So we got a hold of the building manager here at NDW, asked him to get us a room that was large enough that we could have some amount of phones. Here's what we needed as far as Xerox machines, phones, computers, and anything else that we needed. So the area down here in Civilian Personnel and the Training Center was where they brought us to be set up.

We got the room up and ready. The reservists started being called in to help us out as far as setting up the center. Once that was up, we got the computers up and running. We were able to then start making databases for all information that was filtering in and verified each set of information as it came in so that we could eventually have the names right and whether they were deceased or injured. You want to make sure you get them into the right place within the database.

After we had that up and basically running, we sat and we waited for names. Once the names started coming in at that time we were able to start setting up the files on each person. Assigning the Casualty Officer that would go out and do the notification to the next of kin.

Q. (10:40) How'd you pick Casualty Officers? Did you have a list of people already who had been screened, or -?

A. I have a file that I keep here at NDW of all the Casualty Officers that I train. I conduct training here at NDW once a month for anyone E-7 or above or Lieutenant or above with at least two years active duty experience. Of this list, I can then go through and say, "OK, you've been assigned to the Casualty Officer." So I had a good list of names that I could use as Casualty Officers, you know within NDW.

Q. (11:12) You tried to match then up female to female, and designate or anything like that?

A. The only type of thing we do along those lines is making sure that if we have enlisted, we have an enlisted, and officer to an officer. With the officers we try to match the ranks as close as possible. If we have a Lieutenant Commander we'll get a Lieutenant Commander as a Casualty Officer. All of the time that's not feasible though. So you just have to, you know, weigh the information that you've got with who you've got to do a notification as to whether or not you think that will work or not. The hardest ones are when you get to be above Commander, because there just aren't that many Captains that take CACO training. They may get it in their training up in Newport or something, somewhere along the way, but here in NDW you see very few Commanders and up taking CACO training.

Q. (11:58) Do you ask people to volunteer or (Unintelligible 12:04)

A. Ask every command within Naval District Washington jurisdiction which is twenty-one commands under my jurisdiction. I ask all those commands to at least get two people. At least one officer, one enlisted. That way each command should have at least two CACOs.

Since September 11th we have had an outpouring of people that want to do the CACO training, to be able to become a CACO. So if anything, I think it opened a lot of people's eyes just how important that the Casualty Program is.

Q. (12:38) OK, you're starting to get the names and you're starting to match people.

A. With their Casualty Officer. Once the Casualty Officer was determined, we issued them all cell phones. We provided the information to them such as the next of kin's address. Who they would be speaking to. Whether it was primary next of kin, or secondary next of kin, and sent them on their way to do the notification. Transportation was also supplied here at Naval District for all the Casualty Officers. They did not have to use their own transportation, which they never would anyway, when doing a first notification visit to next of kin.

Q. (13:14) How was transportation - ?

A. I arranged transportation through the motor pool at Anacostia. During September 11th, because we had so many cases, what the motor pool did was they just set the office up here on base here at NDW, and we had the cars lined up out in front. Ceremonial Guard supplied the drivers and the CACO just went in the building here. Hopped into a car. Told the driver where he was going and they went to do the notification.

Q. (13:45) How long would you say was an average between the time you identified, or you received word to, of them were identified and you actually provided notification?

A. Well, when the CACOs first went out everyone that was at the Pentagon was in a DUST-1 status. DUST-1 meaning. Duty Status - Whereabouts Unknown. Everybody was put into that

category, because you can stay in that category for up to ten days and your pay continues while you're in a DUST-1 status. It wasn't until the Dover Port Mortuary could actually determine the name to the remains that was brought up there were the next of kin told that the death had occurred.

Q. (14:23) What happens if—I know there were—we talked with some people that knew it took longer than ten days in some cases to identify them so what happened to the status? Are they still, did they continue on DUST-1?

A. Right they were continued on DUST-1 until they were confirmed deceased.

Q. (14:40) What about the people, the five people who were never identified?

A. Well, the Navy only ended up with two that were positively never identified. There were no remains. Other than the two that no remains were ever recovered, everybody else was accounted for.

Q. (14:56) Do those people remain on DUST-1?

A. No, they are a deceased status now. The only thing is that they can't really have a burial at Arlington with no remains until a headstone has been ordered and is in the ground at Arlington. And there's only one family that's still waiting burial and it looks like it's going to be March.

Q. (15:23) So the first notification to the family was that their loved one was missing.

A. Death-1. Death-1 everybody wants to confuse Death-1 with missing. Once the person is in a missing status it takes a SECNAV board to bring them out of a missing status. That's why we

use the DUST – 1, Duty Status, Whereabouts Unknown, because they can stay in that category for ten days and their pay still continues.

Q. (15:43) Do the Chaplains go with the -?

A. A Chaplain went with every one of our CACOs to notify the families. We even had Reserve Chaplains brought in, as far away as New York for the 9-11 incident. So we did, we did very well with what we had during 9-11. I mean there wasn't a family that didn't have a Chaplain with the CACO. Also OPNAV had set up what they called a Command Rep. One person that would go out with the CACO and the Chaplain. So there was three people to this team that went out to see the family. There was a CACO, the Command Rep, and a Chaplain.

Q. (16:23) And that, you said that was OPNAV, so it could have been N3/N5, whatever that person's code was –

A. Exactly.

Q. OK.

A. Exactly. And we found that it really worked out quite well to the advantage of us here at NDW, because that Command Rep was able to give the next of kin, you know, insight for at least knowing the person. Whereas the Casualty Officers don't know these people. They're just going out to do a notification. They know nothing about the deceased at all. So it was good to have a Command Rep.

Q. (16:57) How did you update the case on them when you got new information in from Dover?

A. We had set up a web page for all of our CACOs, and they were all given a password. So at any time they could either come in and use these computers here or if they wanted to use a computer in their office or at home, all they had to do was enter their password and any new information that we received, everything was put onto the web page, so they were always kept apprised of all the up-to-date information.

Q. (17:22) OK.

A. As well as all of the meetings that went on over at Crystal City, over at the Sheraton. Because they had like a Command Center set up over there. It was called the Joint Family Assistance Center. That was very informative, too. So a lot of the CACOs were able to get information while they were over there as well. Matter of fact, some of the CACOs even brought back some information to us here that we were able to, to put into our database.

Q. (17:44) Who else did you receive informa—did you receive information directly from Dover?

A. Yes, CAPTAIN O'BRIEN was our main point-of-contact up there at Dover, so he kept us apprised on a daily basis, what they call a SITREP. He submitted a SITREP to our office everyday.

Q. (18:02) OK.

A. So we knew what was going on.

Q. (18:03) And that's what was put on the web.

A. Yes, exactly.

Q. (18:05) And then where else did you receive information from?

A. Oh, well, Dover was the only one that we were getting the mortuary part of the whole situation from. As I said, I was in constant contact with LT PARKS over at OPNAV. So a lot of my information came from him. When it got time for the funerals to take place on all these cases, there was a flag officer assigned to each case to present the flag to the next of kin. So LT PARKS was working with us also to assign all the flag officers to all the cases. He was feeding that information a lot to MR. TONY CARTER, who I said was our funeral person here. So other than LT PARKS at the Pentagon and Naval Personnel Command down in Millington, of course, they're our headquarters which we take all of our direction from, we were on a daily basis with them, too, and we had a database link, constantly, daily, going back to Millington.

Q. (19:08) What contact did you have, if any with the DM1 Command Center? Did they correspond with you at all, or request information?

A. They did request information, but all of their requests were going through Millington, and then Millington would task us to do it. So it was a domino effect. Since they were headquartered out of Millington, everything went to them.

Q. (18:27) Did you find that worked real well?

A. I thought it worked well. We also used that setup during *Cole* and we found that worked really well. That was, you alleviate a lot of people coming to you asking for certain information or certain reports. If you have it just coming from one central location, it's easier to answer that

one person then to answer five and six different people along the way, and that's not to say that we didn't get numerous requests from numerous people.

Q. (18:57) Senior officers-

A. Senior Officers, yes. (chuckle)

Q. (20:03) Who wanted information.

A. That's right, and that was our, I think that was our only major downfall, was that we had, we had so many senior ranking people involved that it was hard to keep up with what everybody wanted, and we went through the same thing with *Cole* too, so I don't know if there's a real answer out there for it. It just depends on the magnitude of the incident as to who's involved, and how many people are going to be involved in this whole things.

Q. (20:31) Were there anythings that didn't go well, that you think could have been done better?

A. I, the only thing that I would say is that in the 9-11 incident, we were not only dealing with military, but with civilians, and we all know that the military has Page 2s Dependency Emergency Application forms.

Q. (20:56) Whereas the civilian force doesn't.

A. And it was very, very hard trying to find next of kin or anything on a civilian. We didn't even have DNA on the civilians. So it was very, very hard. If anything would come out of this I would hope that it would be that some sort of legislation be made for civilians that work for United State government to have some sort of a form on file as to what their benefits are, whether it be

life insurance and who to contact in a situation like this. Because it's very, very confusing when you're going out to do a notification and in one of our cases we thought the daughter was the primary next of kin, because it looked like the deceased and her husband were divorced. Only to come and find out half way through, they were not divorced, and she was the primary next of kin. So we had to go back and switch the sequence on that. Tell the daughter that now she was the secondary and the Husband was the primary. So it's very embarrassing when you have to do that. Not only for the CACO, but I know for me, too, it's very embarrassing for me to have to tell my CACO, "You got to go back out. We've got the wrong set up here."

Q. (22:04) It's just that you didn't have the information in front of you.

A. That's right, exactly. I mean we were working with totally nothing on the civilian side of the house. And it took longer to get the information that we needed as far as next of kin on the civilian then on the military.

Q. (22:22) You also provided courtesy CACOs for some people that like, say retired admiral, flag.

A. Exactly.

Q. (22:27) And some people –

A. We even supplied Casualty Officers for all the civilians. Every Navy person whether they were civilian, contractor or active duty military, reservists, each and everyone, the family got a CACO. We felt that that was, you know, that's the least we could do.

Q. (22:48) Who made that decision, do you remember?

A. ADMIRAL RYAN. It had been, I mean even before 9-11, whenever we had a civilian death, we would assign a courtesy CACO to go out and do a notification to the next of kin, but it would just be a one-time visit. To offer condolences and let the family know that somebody from Civilian Personnel would be contacting them. As it was with 9-11, the CACOs are still engaged with the families, because we went more than just the first notification visit with these families. I understand that DOD is going to be drafting a policy as far as civilians go, on doing notifications. I don't know when we'll see it, but it's supposed to be giving us a guideline for what we do when we have a civilian death now. Whether it's going to still be the first and only notification visit, or whether it will be the full experience for them.

Q. (23:46) Did you say if the CACOs are still working with the families?

A. Uh huh.

Q. (23:49) What issues are they still doing then?

A. They're doing personal effects issues. We just got an email this morning indicating the personal effects were now ready to be released from Fort Meyer, which is where all the personal effects went into. So that they could categorize them, clean them, basically put a web page out there for the next of kin to take a look at, to see who's personal effects belong to who.

Q. (24:12) Were those from the offices in the Pentagon?

A. Exactly.

Q. (24:14) OK, not what was individually on the person?

A. Right, most of the personal effect that were on the person when it went into Dover was returned to the next of kin when the remains came back, but anything that was in the office spaces at the Pentagon is now ready to be released to the next of kin.

Q. (24:30) And so the CACOs tell them about this web site, or, I mean how -?

A. The CACO's relay the information to them about the web site. If the next of kin has specific questions, as far as how can they get on to Fort Meyer to view all this, the CACO will call Fort Meyer for the contact, find out the information for the next of kin, and pass it on to them. We're still dealing with issues of, as we all know, there's been major amounts of contributions made to these families. There's still money out there as far as groups that want to help, to give out to the families, so the CACOs are still sometimes engaged with helping them submit the claim forms to get the monies that are still out there. But basically, I mean, as far as everything that went on during 9-11, the CACOs are pretty much finished with all that. It's just a few lingering issues. Such as personal effects and any contributions.

Some of the families we've seen need long-term care, more than what the CACOs can provide.

So we have engaged those families with the Family Service Center in Anacostia. We've got them matched up with a social worker, so Family Services is taking them from here.

Q. (25:54) You had mentioned earlier when I asked about the Reservists that came in to, the unit into your command center, that you'd learned a couple of things that you were looking into changing. What are some of those areas that you are looking at changing, and any, some lessons you've learned from going through this experience?

A. I personally, as far as a lesson learned is, it was good to have all the reservists that we had come in, but it got very, very confusing when they were only here for like maybe a day. Then they were gone. Then they had somebody else come in and fill in, so it was a constant in and out of personnel. I think if we had to do this again, we would have, maybe there's some way that we can put together a roster of people at one specific Reserve Center that we could call in.

Q. (26:45) Sounds like you need a dedicated Reserve Unit.

A. Yes, we do, we really, really do, and I know Millington had said that same thing, down at headquarters. And they, they now have a dedicated Reserve Unit that's in their office space now, training and will come in every month for special training, actually work cases and stuff, so that, you know it's not a question of if this is going to happen again, it's just when. And when that does happen they will have the people that they can call in and not have a steady flow of people in and out and in and out.

That was one of the hardest things that I had to get used to, because I'd just get use to a face, and I'd go back to ask them a question, and, "Oh, well they're gone. They were only here for a day."

Q. (27:33) Well who was training that person and was there any continuity between the people?

A. Exactly, you know, a lot of them were really young kids. They had never dealt casualty before. They were very nervous about talking on the phone, especially with Casualty Officers. They didn't have the expertise to give to the CACOs, so everybody was constantly running to me saying, you know, "What about this? What do I tell this CACO? What do I tell this?" Well, it's very hard to be one person being pulled in fifty million directions. (chuckle)

Q. (27:57) Every single day, because once they've gotten through the learning process, you start again the next day.

A. Exactly. So we had, you know, I thanked everybody. I knew we couldn't have done it without everybody that did provide an hour or two in that room, but it was well worth the experience, not only for the young kids to see how this program really works, and if God forbid something happened to them, they would be, at least be able to tell their families, "Well, you know, I've worked Casualty Assistance, and here's how it works."

We have so many young kids out there, and I have done, taken classes where, even seaman, even though they can't be CACOs they will come in and sit in my class just to be able to say, "I know what the Casualty Program is, and I'm able to tell my family something about it."

I think that's good. I encourage every command, whether they have seamen, whether they're reservists, recruits or whatever to at least sit through one day of CACO, whether it be a seminar or an actual CACO class.

Q. (28:58) How long are the classes, to do CACO?

A. I do a class here at NDW, once a month and they run from nine o'clock to two-thirty.

Q. (29:06) What day do you do it?

A. I do it every Wednesday. They're always on Wednesday, the CACO classes and it's always the first Wednesday on every month.

Q. (29:21) Any other lessons learned in this experience? Things you'd do differently?

A. One of the things I would like to see is we have seven stateside area coordinators, with us being one of them. Two of us coordinators now have been through mass casualty situations, MISS LOTTIE HAZE down in Norfolk when the *Cole* happened last year. Actually it was the year before now, because we're in 2002. And of course, myself here at NDW. If anything and I've made this recommendation to Millington is that when we have a mass casualty like this, because there's only one person that's the knower of all things, such as myself, is to have one of the other area coordinators be able to come to wherever that mass casualty is, and assist the area coordinator. That way you have two people who know about the casualty program who can act as experts and answer all the questions. With 9-11 we had, we end up with 57 cases. It was very, very hard trying to keep sanity in any given day, to answer all the questions that everybody had. And when I wasn't available they were having to go to MR. KLEM. But if anything I would say if there were another area coordinator that could offer their assistance and head to the area where the casualty is.

Q. (31:03) There needs to be two people with the exact same balance right.

A. Exactly.

Q. (31:02) You couldn't take any time off. You couldn't get out of there and –

A. That's right from September 11th up until Christmas. I left here on the 13th of December and that was basically the first time I'd had off since September 11th. So it's just one of those times where you can't take off, you know, if you have appointments or whatever, you know. I've learned to cancel them real quick and say I'll reschedule and of course I have a fifteen-year-old at home. My brother passed away eight years ago so I'm raising his son, but thank God I have

my sister who lives in Stafford, because I was able to just pick up the phone on 9-11 and say, “I don’t know when I’m coming home. Can you take care of him until I get there?” So if you’re a single parent and doing this business here, you’ve really got to have some backup as far as friends or family go.

Q. (31:55) Has ADMIRAL WEAVER asked you for lessons learned and you told him about the one-day reservists that you had?

A. Yes, all the lessons learned were sent up the chain, so those are the things that we’re going through now to learn a lot of what we came up against on September 11th.

Q. (32:12) Did you have to deal at all with the news media and the publicity and the seeking of information from the news media?

A. I didn’t get involved with the news media at all. COMMANDER RACHAEL LOGAN who is our NDW PAO her and her staff took that on so we didn’t have to deal with the press at all.

Q. (32:33) Because we interviewed her and she said about providing information to the CACOs in regard to how to deal with the media, is that a standard set process or did that come in as a lessons learned that happened for this incident?

A. When I do my training classes here at NDW there is one page in my training booklet that goes over how to deal with the press. And with that we also had CDR LOGAN come down and we had all the CACOs in one room and she talked to all the CACOs, all at one time, and say, “This is what you need to know in dealing with the press.”

So it was good that we were able to bring her down too, we got all the CACOs and everybody knew right up front. But I myself did not have to talk with any of them.

Q. (33:19) Did you have any survivors, I think there were a couple of survivors that served as CACOs, weren't there? Or were they just Command Reps?

A. I believe, I think those were Command Reps.

Q. (33:31) LT MCKEOWN, was she a Command Rep?

Q. (another) She was a Command Rep.

A. Some of our CACOs had lost loved ones in the WORLD TRADE CENTER. So not only were they dealing with their CACO duty for a death case, but they were also handling their own family's tragedy at the same time. It was very hard for some of the CACOs out there to distinguish between their own personal grief and the support they were providing for the families.

Q. (34:03) But they cared to continue to be a -?

A. They cared to continue on. Not a one of them wanted to be taken off. And you know and that's one of the things about this business here. When a CACO goes out and introduces himself to the family and does the notification, and of course he's with them all the way up through the monetary benefits, well into the case. I mean it takes a good year or longer for a case to close out, and that's just on a normal basis, on an everyday basis. The family really gets to know that CACO and you would be surprised the ones that just sort of take them under their wings and they're friends for life. And they stay in contact for many, many years.

I know when I first started in Casualty, my very first notification that I had to do to the mother of a sailor who had been burned during the *USS Midway* fire. I had to call her and tell her that her son had been burned over ninety percent of his body, and I will never, ever forget, I had only been in casualty for two days, like I said because I started two days before Panama, so it is very, very hard telling the next of kin that. But I tell you what, the woman kept in contact with me. Sent me a Christmas card every year. Would call me just because she needed somebody to talk to.

Q. (35:19) Did he live? He died didn't he?

A. No, he lived. He is, last time I talked to her which has been about three years ago, all the letters and everything stopped so I'm wondering if something maybe happened to her, but at that point when I last talked to her, she said that he'd been through twenty-four skin grafts and that he still had a couple more to go, but he lived.

So, you know, my heart goes out to the Casualty Officers here and like I tell everyone of them in my class, they're the heart and soul of this whole program. I can stand up here and I can teach it. I can be there to answer their questions, but they're the ones that have the hard job. They actually have to go out and face-to-face, to the next of kin. So my heart goes out to them.

Of course with the magnitude of what we had September 11th, I mean that was hard for me too because I knew some of the people that were at the Pentagon that had been killed, and it was very hard for me to keep perspective on what was going on. If it hadn't been for CAPT (Unintelligible 36:24) here at NDW, I don't know, I think he was the one that held me together through all this. (chuckle) Everyday he'd come down and ask me how I was doing, and that's

one thing I found through mass casualty, you have to have somebody that you can talk to, because if you don't it will take its toll on you.

I mean there were many a nights that I just went home, I was so exhausted. I can remember going home at least one night, I was so exhausted and I was just laying on my bed and I just started crying and I kept saying, "How am I going to keep going?" Because there's no end in sight. You know it's a long, drawn out process and for one person to carry it on, it's a lot. Some heavy weights on your shoulders believe me. (chuckle). And, you know you do it, because you know you have so many people depending on you. And I had everybody here at NDW that, since I've come to NDW, I, I don't know, I guess I've just been blessed. I work for some of the greatest people there are here in NDW. ADMIRAL WEAVER, he is such a terrific man. MR. DUKE, and even MR. KLEM. I've known MR. KLEM for quite a few years, and without their support, I tell you it would have been hard to keep going. But I, you know I like doing what I do. I can go home at the end of the day saying, "Well, I've at least helped another person." Whether it be a CACO, a work associate, or someone out there on the telephone, just answering questions. I've helped somebody during the course of the day.

I wouldn't have it any other way. The Navy's been good to me. The Navy's my family. Has been for thirty-one years.

(all laugh)

Q. (38:11) Any thing you want to add that we haven't asked you about. Last comments for the archives?

A. No, I can't think of any. I just pray that we don't have to keep seeing these situations as we go along, as far as mass casualties go, but in today's world, you know, we're always going to

have these situations. We'll deal with each and everyone as they come around, and do the very best that we can do.

Q. (38:44) OK, thank you very much for your time.

A. Well, thank you.

Transcribed by:
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