

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

Capt Gary Hall
CDR Carol O'Hagan
CDR Karen Loftus
CDR Robert Sawyer
YNCS (AW) Kathleen Wright

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
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Interviewee:

Capt Eileen J. Roemer, USNR

Current Address:

██████████
████████████████████
(w) Critical Incident Response Group
Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU), FBI

Date of Interview:

11 FEB 02

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; Navy Command Center; Remains Recovery; Reserves

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information: Capt. Roemer was born in ██████████ in 1950. She was raised in Hicksville, NY on Long Island as well as in the Bronx and Savannah, GA. Her father was an FBI agent who was transferred around. Her father was a Naval Officer during World War II. He served in Okinawa and Normandy. Capt Roemer entered the Navy in 1976 attending Officer Candidate School. She was on active duty in the Navy for 6 years, after which she joined the FBI. Her first tour in the Navy was with the Naval Security Group Command on Nebraska Ave. in Washington, D.C. serving as the division officer for CTM branchers installing crypto gear worldwide. They started to let women on ships so she volunteered and went to the west coast aboard the *USS Norton Sound* in 1980 serving as the CIC Officer, EMO and the Deck Department Head. She resigned her commission to go into the FBI. Her plan had always been to go into the Navy to get the right experience to go into the FBI. She left the Navy because her understanding was that you couldn't be a drilling reservist and an FBI agent. It took two years for her to get into the FBI. During this time she spoke to a retired Navy Captain and retired FBI agent who told her she could be in the reserves in a USNR-S1 Standby position that has no pay and allowances but could drill once a month and as of 3 years ago do 2 weeks Annual Training. In 1985 she attended New Agents Training in Quantico, VA. Her father had already retired so he presented her with her badge and credentials. She has his original badge and credential number. Her first assignment was to the Louisville, KY division working white collar and reactive crime. She volunteered to go to the New York division working organized crime. She

worked on a temporary assignment on the Iran Contra investigation for 1-½ years. Another major case she worked on in New York was the Crown Heights investigation. She applied for her current position in the Profiling Unit at the FBI Academy. In this position she came into a Missing and Exploited Children's Task Force. During this assignment she recognized a need for cadaver dogs. She had a golden retriever puppy and trained her and a second dog to be cadaver dogs.

In the Reserves she is assigned to the VTU because of her S1 status. She cross-assigned to the Navy Command Center 106. She has been qualifying for the Navy Command Center watch.

Topics Discussed:

On 9 Sep she started her two weeks annual training. On 11 Sep she was working the 2300 to 0700 watch. On 11 Sep LCDR Ron Vauk relieved her at 0700. She had briefed Capt. Getzfred and Capt DeConto when they came in. She had seen several other personnel assigned to the Navy Command Center. Lt Lamana gave her new code for the space. Petty Officer Noath took her picture for her ID badge. As she was leaving Petty Officer Doctor joked with her at the door. She left around 0730 and went home.

When she got home she got a phone call from her boyfriend telling her to turn on the TV because the World Trade Center was on TV. She was watching TV when the first reports of the Pentagon came on. She tried to find out if there was anything she could do. She talked to the CO of the reserve unit, Capt Masso, and asked if anyone was doing anything about the families. That night about midnight she eventually went to one of the homes of a reserve officer (LCDR Bob Elseth) missing from the space. They had to wait to get clearance to go from the Main CACO office. When they (CAPT Roemer, the CACO and Chaplain) got there the wife and brother were there as well as some of the wife's sisters.

She was on active duty until Saturday. Sunday she was home and got a phone call from the FBI asking her to identify cadaver dog teams to bring to the Pentagon. She volunteers and trains with a group every Sunday morning and she started to call them. The FBI told her to gather them all at the Pentagon in South Parking to get ID badges. That evening they showed up and got ID badges and put together a watch team. She went back that night at 11 p.m. and started to work with her dog. She also got 3 FBI agents with cadaver dogs in various parts of the country to fly in. They had 3 shifts working around the clock in 8-hour shifts and they finished the job in 12 days.

Initially the FEMA teams brought dogs through to look for living people. At one point when they decided they wouldn't find any more living victims they requested the cadaver dogs. They would scoop out debris from the Pentagon and put it into a dump truck. They would drive the truck to North Parking to an area cordoned off with privacy fencing and lights. They had decontamination tents, the Red Cross and Salvation Army. They always had at least four piles going. The dump truck would dump out a pile and they would take the dogs through. The dogs would recover things. The evidence and morgue people would then come in with rakes and look for evidence, classified material, plane parts and human remains. They would pick things out and spread things out better. They would take the dogs through again and the dogs would almost always recover human remains. They found visible human body parts, but mostly they recovered very small pieces that would probably go unrecognized by human eye. They were wearing suits, gloves, goggles and breathing apparatus.

They had volunteer vet techs and veterinarians who worked around the clock as well. A lot of the people working with them were volunteers. One dog had a hip injury and a place in Springfield did the surgery for nothing that day.

In the beginning they would go in and stand there with the dogs in the rubble area for hours. After several days when they had more dogs they would have four or five dogs on a watch. They would take the dogs through decontamination and play with them and let them rest, and then go back in. The vet techs washed the dogs for them. They had two tents set up for decontamination, one for the dogs and dog handlers. They had a little pool to scrub the dog paws and underbellies. The dog handlers would take off their suits and scrub their boots. The breathing apparatus was hard for the dog handlers to wear all the time because it prevented them from talking to the dogs. With all the distractions they needed to be able to talk to the dogs.

In the beginning they had concerns about the overwhelming scent. The dogs instinctively knew there was an overwhelming scent, but they could find where it was coming from. They found human remains hidden inside of bent, crushed metal.

On 27 Sep they had gone through all the piles of debris.

She has gone back to visit with the Elseth family on several occasions, the last time was on 8 Nov when LCDR Elseth was buried. The Elseth family CACO Mike Faulkerson did a great job, in her opinion, of meeting all the family's needs and providing for them. Because the family wanted to speak to someone who had survived the Navy Command Center Capt Roemer found DM1 Gaston in her unit. He had escaped from the Navy Command Center. Capt Roemer spoke to him about how glad they were that he had survived and that the Elseth family wanted to speak to someone who escaped the ruin. After a slight hesitation he said he would do it. They went to a hotel to meet the Elseth family. DM1 Gaston told them as much as he could. The family was very appreciative.

Later on Mike Falkerson spoke to DM1 Gaston about his experience and about survivor guilt.

The FBI has a large EAP (Employee Assistance Program). They pulled people in from the FBI EAP from all over the country to help with the agents who worked on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. Capt Roemer never heard anything from the SPRINT team.

Lessons Learned:

She thinks the Navy should have had representatives at the family's homes much earlier in the day.

There has been no long term counseling available for the reserve personnel who are attached to the Navy Command Center. It's important that they have a way to get rid of some of the things they have had to deal with.

Abstracted by:
CDR Carol O'Hagan
13 Feb 02

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Transcript of Interview:

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Capt. Roemer was born in ██████████ in 1950. She was raised in Hicksville, NY on Long Island as well as in the Bronx and Savannah, GA. Her father was an FBI agent who was transferred around. Her father was a Naval Officer during World War II. He served in Okinawa and Normandy. Capt Roemer entered the Navy in 1976 attending Officer Candidate School. She was on active duty in the Navy for 6 years, after which she joined the FBI. Her first tour in the Navy was with the Naval Security Group Command on Nebraska Ave. in Washington, D.C. serving as the division officer for CTM branchers installing crypto gear worldwide. They started to let women on ships so she volunteered and went to the west coast aboard the *USS Norton Sound* in 1980 serving as the CIC Officer, EMO and the Deck Department Head. She resigned her commission to go into the FBI. Her plan had always been to go into the Navy to get the right experience to go into the FBI. She left the Navy because her understanding was that you couldn't be a drilling reservist and an FBI agent. It took two years for her to get into the FBI. During this time she spoke to a retired Navy Captain and retired FBI agent who told her she could be in the reserves in a USNR-S1 Standby position that has no pay and allowances but

could drill once a month, and as of 3 years ago, do 2 weeks Annual Training. In 1985 she attended New Agents Training in Quantico, VA. Her father had already retired so he presented her with her badge and credentials. She has his original badge and credential number. Her first assignment was to the Louisville, KY division working white collar and reactive crime. She volunteered to go to the New York division working organized crime. She worked on a temporary assignment on the Iran Contra investigation for 1-½ years. Another major case she worked on in New York was the Crown Heights investigation. She applied for her current position in the Profiling Unit at the FBI Academy. In this position she came into a Missing and Exploited Children's Task Force. During this assignment she recognized a need for cadaver dogs. She had a golden retriever puppy and trained her and a second dog to be cadaver dogs.

In the Reserves she is assigned to the VTU because of her S1 status. She sub-assigned to the Navy Command Center 106. She has been qualifying for the Navy Command Center watch.

Topics Discussed:

Q. (11:06) On 9 September 11th were you working that day?

A. I actually was working. I was on active duty that week. I started my active duty September 9th and I was working 11 PM, 2300 to 0700 watch. So on September 11th I was relieved by LCDR RON VAUK at 0700.

Q. (11:26) OK, and what did you do then?

A. Well, that morning I had briefed CAPT GETZFRED and CAPT DECONTO when they came in. I had seen several other of the personnel assigned to Navy Command Center. LT LAMANA, SCOTT LAMANA gave me my new code for the space. PETTY OFFICER NOETH took my picture for my ID badge, because he had made a mistake on the one that he gave me the previous day. So I spent a little bit of time with him. As I was leaving PETTY OFFICER DOCTOR was standing at the door. He was actually waiting for the Admiral to come down for briefing. So we joked about him being the doorman for the day. Then I left. I left the Pentagon at about 0730 and went home.

Q. (12:16) When did you first hear about the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

A. When I got home, I got ready you know, I had a cup of coffee or something and got ready to go to bed, and I got a phone call from my boyfriend telling me that I should turn the TV on, because the World Trade Center was on TV. We were both, we're both from New York so obviously we were very interested and concerned. My brother works down in lower Manhattan so I was certainly thinking about him. Got a brother-in-law who works down there.

So I was watching television when the first reports of the Pentagon being hit came on, as well, and actually thought that maybe it had not hit our area, the Navy Command Center. That maybe they were able to escape, because maybe they were on the fringe of where the worst impact was.

Q. (13:11) When did you find out that they were hit?

A. Later that day. Nobody actually ever really told me that they were hit or that there was a problem in that area until probably later. I kept calling, trying to find out you know, where I could go. Where I could be of assistance. You know, did they want me to wait and come in later. I knew I wouldn't be sleeping that day, so maybe there was something I could come in and do and help recreate. But there was, I know everybody was tied up with everything else and I eventually spoke to CAPTAIN MASSO and asked him. I told him who I had seen there that morning and I asked him if anybody was doing anything about the families of our Reservists, at least. Because I knew there were at least two officers there. I had seen them that morning, and that was CDR VAUK and CDR ELSETH.

Q. (14:17) Did he call you or did you call him?

A. I called him.

Q. (14:20) You called him.

A. Uh huh. And I called, actually, BARB SWERDOWSKI (phonetic) was doing a lot of the liaising that day and she kept getting me in touch and she actually was the one to finally resolve the issues of who would go where. I went eventually to BOB ELSETH's family that night at about midnight. There was a lot of confusion at that time, too, because you know I kept wanting to go, and the CACO's office had to get clearance to go, and I remember actually I put my uniform on, got in the car and left after I spoke to the main CACO, MIKE FULKERSON, LCDR. He was going to be the CACO for the ELSETH family and there was a Chaplain as well, CHAPLAIN KAHN, and then I would be the command liaison person.

I kept telling them you know, we've got to get over there. The family needs to be told something. They can't be you know, just left in the dark all day long. He should have gotten off at 1500. They both should have gotten off at 1500. So eventually, after I spoke to MIKE FULKERSON. I said, "Well, I'm getting dressed." You know we have to be in our whites, and I'm getting in the car and I'm starting up there, because I live down in Fredricksburg and I knew that you know, it was going to take me a while.

So I got about six miles from my house. I wasn't even on the interstate yet, and MIKE FULKERSON called back and said, "Well, we're put on hold," you know, "they want to make sure --" and I don't even know what they wanted to make sure, but I said, " Well, I'm sitting right here in my car. I'm going to wait for a call back from you." I said, "Because we have to get over there tonight." And so we eventually did get over there tonight.

Q. (16:07) Where is over there? Where did he live?

A. BOB ELSETH's house in Burke.

Q. (16:10) OK. About what time did you get there?

A. Close to midnight.

Q. (16:15) Can you tell us about that visit?

A. He was there. His wife was there, [REDACTED]. His brother was there, who was a Marine Corps Major Reservists, and some of [REDACTED] sisters were there. I don't believe—I think [REDACTED] father might have been there as well. I know her mother was not there yet. I think the next day is when BOB's father and sister arrived, because I then spent the next several days you know, just getting up in the morning, getting into my uniform and going up there. So I spent most of that week doing that.

Q. (16:59) Did you arrive together, or meet someplace?

A. We arrived, we met someplace and arrived together, yes.

Q. (17:06) Could you tell us a little bit, this is backing up a little bit, but how was that pulled together as far as how many people were going. Who was identified to go. I mean we talked to CAPT. MASSO and I know the, I believe the Reserve unit had a lot of input into that.

A. Yeah, I found out later that CAPT MASSO had actually been on the phone with [REDACTED] ELSETH that day. He was, I was on the phone. I mean he was on the phone a million different places and we were talking to each other on the phone a couple of times. Actually, I remember additionally when I pulled over at that point in my car, after I left the house and they told me

wait, I called, actually called CAPT FORSEN (phonetic) at the Navy, at the new Navy Command Center over here at the Annex, and had a conversation with him about how imperative it was that we get over to the house tonight and how strong I felt about it. I know that he made some, he probably made some phone calls or did something. I don't know what happened, but eventually we were cleared to go.

I might have been—CAPT MASSO had a lot of knowledge of my job and what I had done in the Spottsylvania task force. That may have been one of the reasons that he asked me to go to one of the families. I actually told BARB SWORDOWKI (phonetic) that I would rather go to the ELSETH home then to the VAUK home, and the reason for that was RON VAUK had relieved me and I felt that it was better for her to have somebody else then the person who didn't get killed, frankly. So CDR, what's his name who went over to the VAUK house.

Q. (18:55) MULROONEY (phonetic)

A. Thanks. JOHN MULROONEY (phonetic), and someone, BARB asked me about who else I would recommend and I told her I thought JOHN MULROONEY (phonetic) would be a good prospect.

Q. (19:07) Now was she in NCC?

A. BARB? Yes, and she was actually acting ACOS at the time. I think TOM GORMAN [CAPT] was out of town and so she did a lot of the work that he might have done had he been here. She's a stay at home mom and maybe that had something to do with CAPT MASSO knew that he would reach her, and so she was—plus she's very sharp, and very reliable and very detail oriented. So I'm sure that had something to do with why he relied on her that day.

But that was all going on away from me and I wasn't you know, aware really of how they did all that. I just know what my –

Q. (19:55) I guess the Command sponsor, that that kind of position on the team, I think is one that's, we're hearing is very critical and I'm wondering how that came about. Was that one that unit's thing? Do most of the other commands do that, do you know?

A. I don't know. I only know in our Unit and I had asked at the outset are we going to have someone go to their homes. We need to have someone go to their homes, you know, and I had been one of the last people to see both of them. So, and plus I had experience dealing with victim families and I felt that I might be a good person to go. So I told him that if he needed me to act in that capacity, I'd be happy to do it. So I did.

Q. (20:43) What kind of things did you do as the Command Rep?

A. I answered the phone. I talked to the media. Told them that the family (20:49 ____ Inaudible) I talked to the family. You know, I answered their questions about you know what I had seen of BOB that day. Actually JOHN MULROONEY called me at some stage during those days and asked me to speak to MRS. VAUK as well, because she wanted to know about RON. You know, the last person who had seen him, and evidently I was that person. You know, so I shared our conversation and what I saw them doing when I left and you know, the fact that they were both you know, in good spirits, and that sort of thing.

I also answered some questions about searching you know, and that type of thing. I think that they were—they knew that I was an FBI agent. Somehow they figured that out over the course of time and they wanted to know about you know, how the search would go, and that sort of thing.

So I, you know I provided them as much support as I could without being negative, basically. Which I was you know, I really didn't have much hope for anyone's survival after the first few hours, because of the fire.

Q. (22:04) So that position, that took a few days, and what did you do after that? I know you were involved in the recovery of remains with your dogs. How does that come about?

A. Well I was on active duty until Saturday and actually it really worked out because you know by Saturday they really, and that was another issue that kind of came up during the week. They're a very private family, the ELSETHS, and I think at some stages they were happy for us not to be there. We would call them and ask them you know, can we come over? Would you like us to be there? And after the first probably thirty-six to forty-eight hours, they really, I think appreciated us being there. In the beginning I think they were unsure about whether or not this was a good thing. Maybe they just wanted their privacy.

Q. (22:58) Excuse me for interrupting, but did you go with a group all the time?

A. No, we didn't. We went as a group the first couple of times and after that we went as we could be there, because obviously BOB ELSETH's mother was in Germany at the time this happened, tending to her mother who was ill, and so MIKE FULKERSON did an excellent job and spent a lot of time trying to deal with how to get her home and here. So he had to spend time at the office to do that, and he spent a lot of time outside on his cell phone doing that, and the Chaplain had other responsibilities as well. One of his, I'm not sure if it was just friends, but they are friends, but they could have been a family that were in his parish. Not parish. In his temple, they lost a son out of IP, a Lieutenant and so he spent some time with them as well. So he was

going back and forth, and I had a former neighbor, my next door neighbor from where I lived before right now – about two years ago I moved to Fredricksburg, but I lived in Aquia (phonetic) Harbor and on Wednesday night while I was at the ELSETH home, JIM called me. He was my next door neighbor and said that MARTHA (RESZKE) had never come home, and MARTHA was a budget analyst for the Army working in the Pentagon. So I left their house, when I finished at their house I went to his house every night as well, and he had had no CACO of any kind for Army civilians at that stage. So I went, actually in my, you know, I went in my whites and the family was there and they were very happy to actually have a military person there, and it was you know, icing on the cake that I was a good friend of JIM and MARTHA as well.

Q. (24:59) Did you do anything to correct that? Who did you talk to?

A. I made a number of phone calls.

Q. (25:02) And they got a CACO assigned?

A. Yes, and MIKE FULKERSON got involved in that as well. But, so anyway we went over there, not always together, but when we had important information to give to them, assigned information given, we all went together. We, we talked to each other ahead of time, and met in a school lot and went together. So when we told them that his remains had been identified, we were together.

Q. (25:30) When did that happen? About how long after?

A. I think that was actually after I was off active duty and I was actually back in my regular job and I got a phone call in the morning after I got home from work, and from MIKE, and we went

over together. I can't remember exactly. I might have a note about that, but I don't remember exactly. I know it was while I was doing the dog work.

Q. (25:59) How did that come about, when you started the dog work?

A. Well, so I finished up active duty then Saturday and Sunday I was home actually relaxing, my family had come over. I got a phone call about noon time from the FBI asking me if I could identify any cadaver dog teams to bring to the Pentagon, besides my own. So I got on the phone, I said, "When do you need them?"

He said, "We might need them by tomorrow." Now this was, the FBI command post calling me, because they knew that I had cadaver dogs.

I said, "Well, how -?"

He said, "Probably as early as tomorrow."

I said, "OK, well let me see what I can do," and I have a group that I volunteer with here in the Northern Virginia area and that I train with every Sunday morning. So I started calling them and in the process of starting to call them, I got a call back from the Command Post and said, "We might need them like right away."

I said, "OK, well what do we need to do?" They told me to get everybody to meet at the Pentagon, South Parking to get ID badges. So I brought teams, six teams with me that night and we were there at five o'clock.

Q. (27:13) It was Saturday night.

A. Sunday night.

Q. (27:14) Sunday night.

A. Sunday night. So we all showed up and got ID badges and then they put together a watch, starting putting a watch bill together and I ended up coming back that night at eleven o'clock with one of my dogs. So we started that night, Sunday night.

I also reached out for five FBI agents that I know around the country who have trained cadaver dogs and four of them were able to fly in. We talked to police officers in Maryland and Massachusetts and Rhode Island and they were all scheduled to come in, because initially they told us that they'd probably need us for about thirty days. We had actually twenty-nine teams working around the clock, three shifts, three eight-hour shifts. We finished the job in twelve days.

Q. (28:12) Can you tell us what that job entailed?

A. The, initially, when the initial plane hit, of course there was fire and then the FEMA teams came in, the Search and – Urban Search and Rescue Teams, and they brought dogs, and those dogs are trained to find living people. So they did everything they could do during that week, and then at a certain point they decided they weren't going to find anymore living victims and that must have been by Sunday, because Sunday that's when they wanted the dogs trained in human remains recovery. So what they did was, I think that someone made an initial run through part of the building not the whole building with a cadaver dog and they were able, and I believe it was Officer JIM LUGAILA of the Washington Metropolitan Police Department and he went in initially and showed them what dog teams could do. So then that's when they said, "We need to get more teams," and then somebody on the Evidence Response Team from the Washington field office knew that I had dogs because I had worked with them before and so they reached out for

me at the same time. So JIM and I were basically kind of team leaders if you will. He was there during the day. I was there at night and we both called resources in. But what would happen is, they would fill up, they would scoop out debris from the Pentagon and put it into a dump truck. They would drive the dump truck down to North Parking where they had an area cordoned off, fenced off with privacy fencing and lights so we could work all night and they had a whole you know, kind of mess area set up down there with decontamination tents, with food, with certain of the – Red Cross was there as well as Salvation Army and they always had at least four piles going.

So the dump trucks would come, dump out debris into a pile and then the dogs, we would take the dogs through. We decided you know, we kind of came to this over a number of days what the best way to do this was. And we decided the best way was to first put the pile down and leave it. Then we would take the dogs through then. The dogs were recovering things on every pile, and then the evidence and body morgue people would come in with rakes and they would look through the debris for evidence, classified material, plane parts, and human remains. They would pick things out that way, and also spread it out better and then we'd take the dogs through again, and the dogs would most always recover human remains.

You would find things that were visible, human body parts, you know a ring. A finger with a ring on it for instance, a shoe, a sneaker with a foot in it. That type of thing, larger pieces. Or for the most part what we were recovering were very small pieces that would probably go unrecognized by the human eye, and in fact the first few times my dogs picked things up I was a little concerned about what they were looking at because I couldn't recognize it. When I could pick, when I would pick it up, and we of course wore suits and gloves and goggles and breathing apparatus. When I felt it I could tell that it was probably human remains.

So that's what we did. We did that for twelve days, and I had the luxury of having two dogs, so I used one dog one day and the next dog the next day, and I alternated them for the whole twelve days.

Q. (31:58) How long are their noses good for?

A. Well, there was one particular night when, and it was early on and I had Riley with me. She's obviously the more trained, the longer trained dog, the more experienced dog. Where the other two dogs weren't really doing very well. One was having noise issues, because it was very noisy out there and it was very scary for the dogs and for us sometimes because they had trucks you know, dumping things out. They had loud you know, equipment noises. They had bobcats racing around scooping things, and the dogs were a little skittish in the beginning. They eventually over the days got use to the noise and it became just part of the environment, but I know that she worked almost a solid eight hours that first night. You know, maybe not quite that much, maybe a solid six, but you know she was very tired after that and I was glad that I could leave her home for a day.

But you know they have a lot of stamina, and it just depends. They are like people, you know, you have good days and bad days, and some days you've got better concentration than other days, and so you see that with dogs as well.

But they would get, we had volunteer vet techs and veterinarians who were on sight around the clock as well. A lot of the people who came and worked with us were volunteers. You know who left their jobs and their employers allowed them to come and do this work for you know, for two weeks, which is pretty amazing and pretty wonderful. I was being paid by the bureau to be there. So you know, I'm not in that category, but the vet techs and the veterinarians all donated their

time. We had one dog that had an injury, hip injury and there's a place in Springfield, they did the surgery for nothing that day, which would have been rather, probably a fifteen hundred dollar job, but they donated it.

But what did you ask me? Where was I going with that? Is that enough?

Q. (34:10) How long the dog was _____(everyone talks at once)

A. But you know, I did want to say something about the volunteers, because they really did a wonderful job and that's where I was going. The vet techs would meet us. We would go in, in the beginning we would go in and kind of stay there for a long time with the dogs standing in this rubble area. Over several days we realized it was probably better plus we got more you know, more resources came in. The agents all flew in and we got some more volunteers, and so we had more dogs. So we had more flexibility. For instance on the night shift we had like four or five dogs any given night. So we would take the dogs through decontamination and go out and play with them, and let them rest and then we'd bring them back in and each time, of course, you had to re-suit up. So we would go through and get decontaminated and the vet techs washed the dogs for us, which was really good, because you know that whole bending over, because you're bending over the whole time trying to look at everything that the dog is alerting on, and then you'd get out to the decontamination, you'd have to be bending over again. So it was nice when the vet techs came and actually washed the dogs, because it eased you know, it eased up things on us a little bit.

Q. (35:24) Can you tell us a about decontamination for you and the dogs?

A. Yeah, they had, actually two tents set up and the vet techs convinced somebody that one tent should belong to the dogs and so, and the dog handlers. So they got a little pool, like a little dog's pool square, and the dogs would get in there and it was all you know, foamy and warm water. They got the warm water going some how and they would scrub their paws and scrub their underbellies and scrub them everywhere, and for us we would take out suits off and obviously scrub our boots and things like that.

One of the difficulties was wearing the breathing apparatus. Most of us weren't able, most of us dog handlers weren't able to wear those the whole time because we couldn't talk to the dogs you know, and because of all the distractions you know they would see the people standing around, because the people who were going through the rubble would step back and wait on the fringes while we worked with the dogs. Somebody would come along behind us with a bag and be ready to pick something up if the dog alerted. So there were a lot of distractions for the dogs, so to get their attention a lot of times you had to you know, give them the command you know like yell at them to get over here you know, or their names because there were so many distractions.

But you know we had concerns in the beginning about the overwhelming scent and how that would impact the dogs. You know maybe they wouldn't be able to do this, but once they figured out you know, they instinctively know it seems, or they knew that yes, there's an overwhelming scent here, but I can find where it's coming from, and they would go to where the source of the scent was. I mean they found things that were, they found human remains that were hidden inside of metal, bent, crushed metal. You know and the dog would be alerting on this and it happened a number of times you know, and the people who were working with us would be like you know, "You know, there's nothing there."

We would say, “There something there, could you pry it open?” They would then pry it open and find something in there. But the dogs figured it out, which you know, one of the early things I learned was trust your dog, and I definitely trusted them every time in this, and I was very proud of the work that they did.

Q. (38:00) Do you know anything about New York and when a decision was made that they weren't going to use dogs?

A. No. I know that they had you know, and I've heard this. You know, rumor central in the dog world is huge and ever since we left the Pentagon all the dog teams that were there, not all of them, but they put together like one of those Yahoo groups and so people can still communicate with each other, and in fact we all kind of do still communicate with each other. So I've read on there that some of the dogs, you know, I've heard all kinds of different stories. One of the stories was you know, that the dogs were up there at the World Trade Center and that they were getting depressed because they weren't finding anything. Well you know, I think that's kind of media coverage or somebody you know, somebody interpreting what was said in a particular way. Dogs who look for live people need to find live people. That's their job. That's what they get rewarded for. So when those dogs were not able to find live people, the handlers would take them somewhere away and let somebody run somewhere and hide and then the dog would be able to find that live person. So that they could get rewarded, because that's what they're there for.

In the case of the cadaver dogs that were there I'm not sure. I think they used them a little bit in the area. I mean obviously it's more overwhelming there, but to try to find bodies that were not visible and maybe in another place that couldn't be seen. But in terms of Fresh Kills it's

someplace in New Jersey where they were taking the rubble, I think the New York City Police Department made the decision not to use dogs there, and I don't know why.

I don't know if they had dog teams there that weren't trained. I don't know who the dogs and handlers were that they used. Because one of the issues about dogs is a dog should be trained for one thing. It shouldn't be a multi-purpose dog and a lot of times police departments will use dogs for multi-purpose. They don't do that here in Washington. They have cadaver dogs and they have police canines.

You know, police canine is an overall term, but police canine really means a dog that will go after somebody who's running away. Cadaver dog looks for cadaver. Search and Rescue dogs look for live people. Search and Rescue dogs a lot of times are cross-trained in rescue and recovery. Recovery being cadaver side of it. But, I don't know why. The bottom line is I've heard varying reports that the dogs weren't finding things. That they weren't well trained dog and handler teams, and I've heard that the police department just decided that it was easier to run the conveyor belt and look for things by hand and eye. I don't know the answer.

Q. (41:10) OK.

A. Long non-answer. Sorry.

Q. (41:11) We know from talking to a few people that some non-medical military personnel were sent into the Pentagon the day after the attack to help recover human remains. Do you know what was done to preserve the crime scene –?

A. No.

Q. (41:30) - at that point?

A. I don't. I have no knowledge of any of that.

Q. (41:36) Down in North Parking when you were recovering remains, we've also heard that there was always Chaplains there for the remains. Were there Chaplains down in North Parking as you would be putting remains in the body bags and removing the bags?

A. I only saw Chaplains on probably two occasions down there.

Q. (41:57) OK.

A. And then I was, and this was one particular Army Colonel that I was very aware of, because you know he stood very close to where the pile was and he watched you know. And I was aware of him and I was glad he was there actually.

Q. (42:19) At the end of twelve days you said you stopped. They stopped the –

A. The seventh I think.

Q. (42:26) So all the piles were done or what?

A. Yes.

Q. (42:27) OK.

A. You know and like I said initially they said they were going to do this for about thirty days, because they had no clue, because no one had ever run this type of thing before. So they didn't know how long it was going to take. They didn't know how many dogs we were going to have.

So everybody was pretty surprised that we were able to go through as quickly as we did, I think. For the last couple of days, they were saying you know, "We're getting close to the end." So we never really knew when the end was going to be, but I knew during that night that the morning shift was going to be the last shift, because they had pretty much everything out of there, and actually they did ask me to come up. At the end of my shift I went up there and took the dog through part of the first deck and we actually recovered some more while we were there that last morning. And we had gone up a previous day, actually Riley and I had gone up, because they wanted us, it was probably the previous day. They wanted us to look for something in the area where they were bringing things out.

I know that one of the FBI dogs came up there at the very end and did the same thing. Looked for remains in the area where they were bringing the debris out. There was a lot of gravel there and they ran the dogs for a couple of hours through that area, and back through the building.

Q. (44:03) What happened after that, do you know? Did you stay involved then?

A. No, back to my regular job after that.

Q. (44:11) OK, and how about continuing with family support.

A. I have been back with them on several occasions. The last occasion was November 8th when BOB was buried. The families, I guess and you probably already know this had the option of signing a waiver and they could have the remains that were recovered to whatever stage that was, buried at that time, or they could wait until the end. The ELSETH family wanted to wait until they were sure that all his remains had been identified, recovered and identified. That's why they didn't have their funeral until the 8th of November.

I've spoken to [REDACTED] on the phone since then. In fact there was a newspaper article in Fredricksburg, my home town right now paper, and they wanted to, they asked me a lot of things about the Navy as well and I really told them that this article was suppose to be FBI dog oriented and not Navy oriented. So I refused to tell them who the family was and I called [REDACTED] the day of that interview to make sure that she knew that I had not you know, divulged them and to warn her that there would be an article in the newspaper you know. She probably wouldn't see it, but just in case. So she said she was probably going to go to the web page and look at it. Don't know if she did or not.

Q. (45:40) Again this is backing up a little bit, but could you tell us a little bit about your interface with the CACO. I mean you seem to work really well. I guess what I'm wondering is, from your perspective how well prepared was the CACO being assigned. Did he have training? You had some previous training in these sorts of things. What sort of -?

A. I thought he did a wonderful job. I don't know what his training was. I know that he had been designated a CACO. I don't know how long. We didn't really get into all that, but he was very, very focused on the family and their needs. What needed to be done for them you know. How to follow up on things, making sure that you know, they didn't hear things that he hadn't previously told them, you know. That's a very important issue with victim families, that I learned you know, dealing with murder victim families. If there's an article in the newspaper, or if there's something that effects them, even if it's not directly, they need to know about it ahead of time by somebody, you know, in law enforcement in that case and in the Navy, in my opinion. I think MIKE FULKERSON was on top of all that. He was very aware of all that. He was very sensitive

to them. I thought he did a wonderful job. I mean there wasn't one thing they asked for or needed or probably thought about that he didn't try to resolve for them.

He went with them for the family meetings, over at whatever the hotel was, the Sheraton, I think. He made them aware of all those things.

One of the things that we did, because the family really wanted to speak to somebody who had survived the Navy Command Center. MIKE asked me if I could put them in touch with somebody. So I looked around in our unit. PETTY OFFICER PAUL GASTON, First Class Petty Officer, I called him at home you know, and spoke to him first about, because I knew he escaped from the room, and first spoke to him about what had happened to him and how much we cared about him, and we're glad that he survived. We talked about his guilt a little bit. His feelings of guilt in having survived and then I asked him you know - I gave him all kinds of outs, but I asked him, I explained to him about the ELSETH family. What I had been doing and I told him that the family really wanted to speak to someone who had escaped the room. I said that I understood that he might not be able to do that and that would be fine, but I wanted to ask him because he was the only unit member who I knew, and after just a slight hesitation on the phone, he said he would be happy to do it.

So I went and picked him up and took him. We actually went to a hotel. Again you know, [REDACTED] ELSETH was very private and she really didn't want him coming to the house, because her daughter who's six, [REDACTED] was there and other children. Her sister's children were there, and they just thought that wouldn't be a very good environment and we agreed.

MIKE found a hotel. He actually tried to get one and they wouldn't do it. Then he got the Hilton down in Springfield. So we met there and they gave us a room, and you know, water and drinks and all kinds of things.

We went in and introduced everybody and BOB's brother, the Marine Corps Major, JIM, came, his father and his sister and one of [REDACTED] sisters. [REDACTED] did not come, Bob's wife.

We sat down and he told them as much as he could. He didn't tell them everything you know. He didn't tell them about the screaming that he heard and things like that, but he described the room to them and what he had experienced. They really appreciated that a lot you know. They told me that the reason, JIM in particular, the reason that he wanted to know as much as he could was because it made him feel closer to BOB. You know, closer to him at the end.

Q. (50:12) Was he the one, I think we had heard had went and waited?

A. For CAPTAIN DECONTO?

Q. (50:19) Was it for CAPTAIN DECONTO or for the, I thought it was for the remains filed to be identified?

A. Oh, yes, JIM, he went up to – You mean when, when –

Q. (50:31) Well, we had heard some family member I thought, that I thought it was a brother, just kind of went and was just waiting outside the Pentagon.

Q. (another) That was a MARINE.

Q (50:40) A Marine, well yes, you said he's a Marine. That's what made me think, you know.

A. Well, it could have been. He was up there the last several days, yeah. In fact, in the very beginning that first night you know, he confronted me with, "I want to be there. I want to help find my brother. I want to be searching for my brother."

Again, that was the night that I spoke to CAPTAIN THORSON, that night or the next day. I think it was the next day, and asked him if he had any senior Marines there who could get with JIM and talk to him, because I'd already talked to him from the standpoint of you know, crime scene, FBI you know, and JIM at one time wanted to be an FBI agency. So you know, we had a rapport built there, but he was adamant about wanting to go there, and even though you know, we talked to him the first night, the next day he was still adamant about wanting to go there, and be there helping to search. So I know he spoke to and met with some Marines. I don't know who they were, but that was as a result of CAPTAIN THORSON finding someone that night or the next day for him to talk to.

Q. (51:50) How did PETTY OFFICER GASTON do during that period where he's talking to the ELSETHs?

A. Oh, he did great. He did wonderfully. Then actually MIKE FULKERSON spoke to him afterwards privately and he told me later that he spoke to him about guilt, because he had been involved, MIKE had been involved in something on one of his ships where some people were injured and killed and the guilt that he felt afterwards. So he wanted to and they had that conversation. MIKE told me about it, not PETTY OFFICER GASTON.

Q. (52:29) With the FBI, at least they were for the airline passengers they were like in contact with the family members.

A. Could have been.

Q. (52:38) I didn't know if you could shed any light on the FBI's role with some of the airline passenger's families.

A. No.

Q. (52:41) Or the –

A. I really can't.

Q. (52:46) OK.

A. Other than to say that one of the agents that I work with has a husband who's a former agent who is a pilot for United. There was a lot of involvement there and with the Bureau, because he actually went up to see the director, JIM did, about you know, the airlines, but I think that's more about security afterwards than about the families.

Q. (53:08) OK.

A. No, I've never been involved in that aspect of a disaster you know, where the FBI deals with the families. I'm not aware of that.

Q. (53:20) OK.

A. But we do have a large EAP group and I know they pulled EAP people in from all over the country, from FBI EAP people.

Q. (53:29) And the – (Q is asking for definition of EAP)

A. Employee Assistance. They pulled them in to deal with us at the Pentagon as well as the airlines. And those are agents who are EAP people as well as clergy. I've actually been to an EAP session down at my office.

Q. (53:58) Did you have any interface with the SPRINT Team?

A. No. Never heard anything from them.

Q. (54:04) What do you think we did particularly well, and what lessons learned could be picked up from this from your perspective?

A. I think in my own personal area of dealing with the family, I think it was done very well. I think we really screwed up by not having people there earlier. I mean somebody should have been there around the time that he should have been getting off work, you know. Not nine hours later. You know, yes, phone calls are nice, but somebody should have been out there, especially given the magnitude of what happened. I think people early on knew that he probably wasn't going to be coming out.

Q. (54:48) Have you been able to, I mean is there, have you been able to give a report or that suggestion to that? I mean that's –

A. No, nobody's ever asked me for anything from the Navy in terms of any of this.

Q. Would that be handled by CACO, or –

Q. (Another) (55:10) Well, that's I think just in sharing, we've talked to the folks at Dover and the flow of information about CACOs and I think what we're hearing some of that and I think

there's a lot, I think, good information. One of the questions I think we have hearing this is how is it being flowed back to the folks who, or the decision makers, or so that we can influence you know, take some positive action in the lessons learned status.

A. I don't know that it's coming back in any way at all from the Reserves anyway. I think I mentioned this to one or two of you already. My impression from coming back and standing the watch here with the active duty enlisted personnel was that those you know, they may have spoken to somebody right off the bat from SPRINT, but they needed something a little more long-term that they haven't gotten. Because they lost, you know, they lost very important people to them. They lost other enlisted personnel and actually I've been, you know, they've talked about not being able to go to memorial services or to go with the bodies to where they were buried, of their other enlisted members. That maybe a chief went, but none of them went. None of them were approached to go.

Q. (56:43) They were not asked to go? (said somewhat incredulously)

A. No, that's what I'm told. You know I'm only repeating what they have said to me, and I've probably spoken to five different enlisted personnel. The most recent one is actually, I don't understand why, there was going to be some kind of a service held and I told her that she should go to the Chief and say she wanted to go. "Tell them you want to go," and she said she was going to do that. I don't know if she did it or not.

I said, "They probably don't know that you'd like to go. It's important for you to—" you know. So I think that's you know, that's a real problem area. I had another thought about that, that I can't bring back right now. In terms of, oh, I know, the Reservists, I had one phone call from a Lieutenant in our unit. He called me directly and said that you know, somebody in my chain of

command said, "Well, why don't you call Ilene Roemer, because she probably can tell you who to get in touch with?" He called me and said he was very bothered by, ever since BOB ELSETH's funeral, and he didn't know where to turn. He was angry and almost got fired, and he was fighting with his wife. He was telling me all this on the phone. This was right before Thanksgiving. So I put him in touch with a Chaplain that I knew down in Stafford, and I actually saw this young Lieutenant Saturday when I was over at the Pentagon, this Saturday. He was very happy and pleased and blah, blah, blah. But the bottom line is you know, why was he calling me? There should have been somebody somewhere besides me who could address that in our chain of command and who would stay on top of it until he got the help he needed. I mean I'm happy to do it. That's not the point. The point is there should be another, there should be something in place to deal with those types of things.

Q. (58:56) Do you know if that's going on now in your unit?

A. I have no idea. No, is someone in place. No, I'd say no, that would be no.

Q. (59:05) That's why I asked you about the SPRINT involvement because we've really heard some things I think, folks who have had the exposure to it and repeated exposure, the availability of the exposure, have had good things to say.

A. Well, good, I'm glad to hear that.

Q. (59:24) And but yet it's been a little spotty as to what, whether or not people have had that availability.

A. Has the Bureau said it?

Q. (59:30) I think that's – well, I don't know I think that we have had limited, really the involvement we have had with Reservists has been through the NC106 Unit. I mean that was the Reserve unit most directly involved. So I think your information is accurate there.

But to tie it back to leadership, that's kind of, I think, what we're hearing is that the understandings among the leadership, the availability, usefulness, rightness maybe, to, to avail yourself of that, there doesn't seem to be consistency in what we're hearing now.

A. Well, I think one of the problems with the active duty folks to you know, to give credit, or to not be so critical, these are watch standers you know. So they're working different shifts, different days and having X number of days off, so it's very possible that they're just not getting you know, they're not there when these people arrive or you know, it's too hard to go and speak to somebody because it interferes with you know, you're going to drive home to your family in Norfolk for those four days you're off? So you know, that could be part of it as well.

A lot of people frankly don't recognize the importance of going and talking about these things. You know I had somebody, I was involved in a critical incident in the Bureau back in New York and was sent to a SPRINT type thing down at the FBI academy and the guy who, actually he formulated the whole program and that's how EAP started in the Bureau. He said pay me now, or pay me later, because you know if you don't go and deal with it now, down the road it's going to get you. You know. whether it's post-traumatic stress disorder or something that affects your life, it's going to come back to bite you later.

These people need you know, even the COs, I don't know if you know, CAPTAIN MASSO spoke to anybody or anybody in that you know, group who were day in and day out dealing with the aftermath. Those people all need to be talking to someone. They probably don't know it.

Q. (01:01:46) When I was here, when I was stationed here with NMPC, we used to have to stand a CACO watch here for NMPC. I would imagine that BUPERS, now that it's in Millington still has some sort of CACO command type thing.

Q. (another) Yeah, in PERS 6, they've got –

Q. (01:02:04) Are they involved in any of this or has anybody contacted them to try to – I'm getting back to you know who takes the action on this type of stuff.

Q. (another) Yeah, I think that's one of the things we're listening and that's why we ask in the context of the lessons learned, is we're trying to, it's been a common theme that we've heard. Some plus, some minus and trying to, I think, synthesize what, what, what do we say about that, and I think that the flow back into the CACO process isn't working. I don't know, did you -?

A. My focus is actually Reservists.

Q. (01:02:41) Oh, really, Oh, OK.

A. Yeah, I don't know you know, what happens. I mean you know, he's another guy if he hasn't been EAPed you know, he needs to be EAPed.

Q. (01:02:51) So he's in NCC 106, there too?

A. No, I don't where he came from. He worked for ADMIRAL DREW at some stage, because he had contact with her a couple of times getting MRS. ELSETH back from Germany. But you know, some of those guys who had to deal with the families I mean, it's important that you have a way to get rid of some of that stuff.

Q. (01:03:23) Yeah, and when it's going to hit them is at a time when everybody else is already on the way back up.

A. And when there's another crisis in their life possible. You know, and that's when it's going to come and really be ugly.

Q. (01:03:38) Is there anything else you want to add to the record?

A. I don't think so. I don't think there's anything else I want to be critical of. Sorry about that.
(everyone chuckles)

Q. (01:03:47) Overall, how did the flow of communications go? That was one other thing I –

A. Between?

Q. (01:03:50) Information that was pertinent to the family getting to the family in a timely manner and correctly.

A. I think everything went well in my family. I think that was a direct result of LIEUTENANT COMMANDER MIKE FULKERSON. I don't know about the others. I know there were problems in the VAUK situation. I don't know anything else about that other than there were problems. You'd have to speak to JOHN MULROONEY about that. But MIKE FULKERSON did everything he could possibly do and as far as I know touched every base. And again you know, going back to SPRINT and EAP and all that, this is a relationship that he will have for the rest of his life with that family, because of his close contact with them. Same with JOHN MULROONEY and the VAUKs. I mean you know, MIKE more so than me. He was the direct guy, and MULROONEY was the direct guy in the VAUK family. This is something that you

don't ever, ever get away from. Not that it's not a positive thing. I'm not suggesting that, but those victim families that I have in Spottsylvania will be part of my life forever, and I recognize that. Of course you don't know that when you're going in to it. But, I think he did a wonderful job.

Q. (01:05:28) Any other -? Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us this morning.

A. Happy to be here.

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