

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

Capt Michael McDaniel

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Navy Historical Center

**Interviewee:**

CDR Jeffrey P. Stratton

**Current Address:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(w) OPNAV N512Q

**Date of Interview:**

12 Mar 02

**Place of Interview:**

Pentagon

**Number of Cassettes:**

One

**Security Classification:**

Unclassified

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

**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; Pentagon Evacuation; Joint Family Assistance Center; Reconstitution; SEALs

**Abstract of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:** CDR Stratton was born in [REDACTED], NJ and grew up in Berkley Heights, NJ. There were five children in his family and he knew finances were going to be tight when he went to college. His father served a three-year tour during the Korean War. His mother convinced him to try for a Naval Academy appointment or try for a NROTC scholarship. He received an NROTC scholarship to Penn State University. He majored in Biology. He had originally planned to take the first two years of the scholarship, which required no obligation, and then find another way to pay for the last two years of college. During summer training of his second year they did an overview of the communities in the Navy. During the surface week they were at the Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado. He decided after this that the Navy wasn't so bad and chose not to give up his scholarship. He decided to try to be a SEAL. He was awarded his Special Warfare designator in December 1979. Most of his tours have been at Little Creek, VA including UDT 21 (now SEAL TEAM FOUR), two tours at SEAL TEAM TWO and a tour on the Group Staff. He went west and was the first SEAL stationed at the Naval Strike Warfare Center in Fallon, NE. Next he went to Subic Bay, Phillipines as the Plans and Operations Officer for a Naval Special Warfare Unit. Back in Little Creek he returned to the Group staff and then a tour as the Commanding Officer Special Boat Unit 24. Returning to the Group staff after Special Boat Unit 24 was disestablished as part of the draw down he deployed on the *USS George Washington* as a Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Commander. He went to SEAL TEAM EIGHT as the Executive Officer for 8 months, made Commander and received orders to the Pentagon. He has served two consecutive tours in the same job and been at the Pentagon for over 6 years. He currently works in OPNAV N512 under the N3/N5 directorate (CNO's Deputy for Plans, Policy and Operations). He works for Capt O'Brien, N512, who does policy and doctrine. CDR Stratton does the special operations force issues.

### Topics Discussed:

CDR Stratton's office had moved in early August from 4E531 to 4D324. In their prior office there had just been N512 with about 20 people. The entire N3/N5 division was in the new spaces except for VADM Keating's office, which was on the outer ring of the Pentagon, as well as N513. Back in the middle of August N513 was to be moved to Crystal City until space could be found for them in the new wedge of the Pentagon. The Current Ops people, N312, were going to be in the Command Center, which was on the fourth corridor on the first deck. VADM Keating decided there was enough room in the Command Center for N513 to move there with N312.

On 11 Sep they were in their new spaces. Some things were not hooked up yet, such as the Admirals' televisions, phone connections, fax machines, etc. A little past 0830 CDR Stratton went with some others to get coffee a few wedges away. A petty officer mentioned something was going on at the World Trade Center. They went to look for a television and some people decided to go down to the Command Center. CDR Stratton and some others were going to follow them, but found out the Political Advisor's television was working and available. They watched the second airplane hit the World Trade Center as it happened. CDR Stratton was going to call a friend he played soccer with, CDR Bill Donovan, but the phone rang and it was CDR Stratton's brother who is in the Air Force stationed at the Pentagon. He wanted to let CDR Stratton know he had been put on a night watch and would be leaving for the day. CDR Stratton returned to watch the television and forgot to call CDR Donovan.

At 0938 there was a big boom. It wasn't hard enough to knock them off their feet, but they knew it was something big. Their windows looked toward the interior of the Pentagon, but they could see black smoke and pieces of debris falling. There was a worker on the roof who was running and made it into an open window. Some people yelled, "Hurry up, we only have 18 minutes". This referred to the eighteen-minute separation of the two planes that hit the World Trade Center. This got people moving. They calmly gathered their belongings and exited. CDR Stratton stayed in the hallway and waited until everyone was out of the building. The watch section locked the door and walked down, with CDR Stratton following down the hall towards the A ring.

The escalators were still functioning. Marines were by the escalators directing people down and telling them to exit to the parking area. CDR Stratton met up with CDR Mike Spence whose office was on the fourth corridor, which was filled with smoke. CDR Stratton saw VADM Keating and AMD McGinn walking down the fourth corridor. CDR Stratton told VADM Keating that everyone was out of the office and VADM Keating told him to evacuate. CDR Stratton and CDR Spence walked down the stairs and out to the center courtyard.

In the courtyard there were wounded people being tended to. CDR Stratton went down to the fifth and sixth corridors and to an outside driveway between the rings by the third and fourth corridor. It was a mess with debris. There were people there who asked for carts to move wounded. CDR Stratton went to the infirmary. He met up with some people dragging a medical cart and a maintenance cart so he helped them get to the fifth and sixth corridor where they could transport wounded. In the process of clearing debris out of the way of the maintenance cart he found a human foot. CDR Stratton went back and found another maintenance cart, bringing it back to the fifth and sixth corridor to help evacuate injured.

CDR Stratton ran into CDR Powell and LT Sell who had been helping people out of the building. Someone had a cell phone that could read email. This person kept reading the email, some of which turned out to be bogus. He read there had been a car bomb at the State Dept., a bomb at the Old Executive Bldg. and that there was another plane inbound. An Army or Marine Colonel directed them to go back in to the courtyard.

In the courtyard they were formed into stretcher teams. They felt there would be a lot of wounded people. They went back to the area where they had been before (between C and D rings) and firemen were there. It was now about 40-50 minutes after impact. They stood by with stretchers, rubber gloves and masks with charcoal filters. They went to the area between the C and D rings twice and were evacuated to the courtyard twice. The firemen kept coming out saying it was an inferno. The FBI showed up and they helped them search the interior courtyard for evidence. CDR Stratton located a dinner plate size of the fuselage.

They stayed in the center courtyard until about 1430. The few people who were rescued had been taken out by North Parking.

CDR Stratton found Lt Sell and CDR Powell. CDR Stratton's car was in North Parking. They had heard the Old Guard from Fort Meyer was going to take over at 1600. They felt they wanted to stay until then. When the Old Guard showed up at 1600 they decided it was okay to leave. It took about 25 minutes to get out of North Parking. CDR Stratton dropped CDR Powell and Lt Sell off in Arlington. It was bizarre because no one was on the roads because 395 and other roads had been shut down.

CDR Stratton stopped at a restaurant and had a beer and then went home. When he got home he started to think about the people he knew in the Command Center. He called CDR Hannes and asked if he knew of any unaccounted for personnel. He listed CDR Bill Donovan, Capt Bob Dolan, and a few others. The next few days they were told to stay home. Later, when they had identified the people who were missing they got assigned to a family. Capt Dossel was in charge of pairing N3/N5 people up with the missing's families. CDR Stratton had met CDR Donovan's family for the first time on 1 Sep when CDR Donovan pinned on Commander. The command representatives were more family support, while the CACO's had to do the official notification, visits and take care of documents. The CACO for the Donovan family was CDR Haukanes from NAVSEA.

On 12 Sep CDR Stratton and CDR Haukanes went to notify Mrs. Donovan that her husband was missing. The office moved to the Navy Annex and the command representatives were taking care of the family support on their own time. CDR Donovan's remains were identified in early October, but not released until the week before Thanksgiving. CDR Stratton went to Port Mortuary Dover to escort CDR Donovan's remains to the Naval Academy. At the funeral Mrs. Donovan changed her seat from the front left corner where she had initially been seated. After the honor guard folded the flag for presentation they mistakenly gave the flag to CDR Donovan's sister who had taken that seat.

Abstracted by:  
CDR Carol O'Hagan  
29 Mar 02

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**Transcript of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:**

CDR Stratton was born in ████████, NJ and grew up in Berkley Heights, NJ. There were five children in his family and he knew finances were going to be tight when he went to college. His father served a three-year tour during the Korean War. His mother convinced him to try for a Naval Academy appointment or try for a NROTC scholarship. He received an NROTC scholarship to Penn State University. He majored in Biology. He had originally planned to take the first two years of the scholarship, which required no obligation, and then find another way to pay for the last two years of college. During summer training of his second year they did an overview of the communities in the Navy. During the surface week they were at the Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado. He decided after this that the Navy wasn't so bad and chose not to give up his scholarship. He decided to try to be a SEAL. He was awarded his Special Warfare designator in December 1979. Most of his tours have been at Little Creek, VA including UDT 21 (now SEAL TEAM FOUR), two tours at SEAL TEAM TWO and a tour on the Group Staff. He went west and was the first SEAL stationed at the Naval Strike Warfare Center in Fallon, NE. Next he went to Subic Bay, Phillipines as the Plans and Operations Officer for a Naval Special Warfare Unit. Back in Little Creek he returned to the Group staff and then a tour as the Commanding Officer Special Boat Unit 24. Returning to the Group staff after Special Boat Unit 24 was disestablished as part of the draw down he deployed on the *USS George Washington* as a Naval Special Warfare Task Unit Commander. He went to SEAL TEAM EIGHT as the Executive Officer for 8 months, made Commander and received orders to

the Pentagon. He has served two consecutive tours in the same job and been at the Pentagon for over 6 years. He currently works in OPNAV N512 under the N3/N5 directorate (CNO's Deputy for Plans, Policy and Operations). He works for Capt O'Brien, N512, who does policy and doctrine. CDR Stratton does the special operations force issues.

Topics Discussed:

Q. (09:33) Where was, on September 11<sup>th</sup>, where was your office?

A. Ok, we had recently moved in early August from 4E531 and we had moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> corridor at 3D424, I believe. Or not that would be, yeah 4D324, excuse me. So we were on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, 3<sup>rd</sup> corridor in the D ring.

Q. 4D324, got ya.

A. Yeah, 3D324.

Q. OK.

A. And they had, that was the new wedge. They had refurbished wedge one. We had moved into the new wedge.

Q. (10:21) Now were you all, all together?

A. Yeah, it had taken some getting use to, because our prior office over in 4D531 had just been N512, you know had just been about twenty of us in that office. Action officers and a branch head, but the new digs over in wedge one was except for a few cats and dogs, it was the entire division. I mean it was you know it was the N51 guys. It was the N you know 31 guys. It was the entire N3/N5 division under ADMIRAL KEATING except for ADMIRAL KEATING's office

himself who was you know out on the E ring. On the outer ring of the Pentagon, which will come into play a little later as I recount the events.

So –

Q. (11:12) Where was 513?

A. Yes, and that was the other branch that wasn't with us, was N513, and you know as all decisions have their ultimate consequences, back in the middle of August, they had been tapped to move to Crystal City for a while until such space could be found for them you know over in the new wedge. Because in this new wedge everybody was there except for the people that were going to be in the Command Center, which was the current OPS side of the house. The N312 guys were going to be down in the Command Center which was down along the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor, down on the first deck.

So I, you know I don't know their office number per se, but it would be like 1D, you know 420 or something like that. All right. So basically they were one corridor over and three floors down. OK.

So, yeah we had our whole division in our office except for the Command Center guys and then 513 was going to go to Crystal City until they could figure out where they were going to go. Then ADMIRAL KEATING made the decision that there was enough room in the Command Center for one more branch and so he dictated that 513 would move into the Command Center with the 312 guys.

So on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, which was a beautiful day by the way, we were in our new, you know we had only been in our office less than a month, little over a month and you

know there were a lot of things that hadn't been hooked up yet, or didn't work yet, and we had all - a lot -

Q. (13:13) Name a few things. Such as what?

A. Such as you know all the Admirals had their own offices, and all the Admirals were suppose to have a TV in their office so they could leave it on CNN or you know, just be able to glance up and see you know that things were happening. There were some fax connection hook ups that weren't hooked up yet, phone connections. You know just mostly the electronics side things. Most mornings a couple of us, couple three, four of us would go down and get a cup of coffee and we had done so this morning also. Usually went down somewhere around 8:15 to 8:30, and because the snack bars hadn't been set up in the new wedge yet, it was a couple of wedges away, you know. So it was about a five minutes walk to go get a cup of coffee.

So we were on our way back from getting coffee and it was you know, a little past 8:30 and this female Petty Officer mentioned that something had happened up in New York City involving the World Trade Center. So we went back into our office and were trying to find a TV and ADMIRAL WALKINDORF (phonetic) was out of town. We went into his office. His TV hadn't been hooked up yet. We went around looking for a TV. A couple of the guys got impatient and they went down to the Command Center because they knew that you know all the TVs were hooked up down there. They had a big screen TV you know, everything was set up down there. We were about to follow them, but we found out that the Political Advisor was getting ready to go to a meeting and he mentioned to us that his TV worked, so we all, he said we could use his office. We all went into his office and turned on the news and learned what had happened up at the World Trade Center.

The first airplane had hit up there and while we were watching the second airplane hit.

Q. (15:13) So you saw it as it happened.

A. We saw the second airplane hit as it happened, and they had you know they had good footage of that since they were already focusing on the first tower.

Q. (15:24) Had you thought terrorist activity before you saw the second plane?

A. I had thought that it was possible, but I was you know, the benefit of the doubt was that you know an airplane had gone off course, had lost control and had, and had you know slammed into the building. So yeah, in you know, I was about fifty-fifty divided you know. There's no proof that was a terrorist activity, but being a Special Warfare guy you know you always think, you know when things start to happen like that.

We did see the second one hit and then you know, for me it was a hundred percent. You know, this was a direct action. You know this is something that somebody did on purpose.

So –

Q. (16:14) Describe the reaction in the room when that plane hit.

A. When the second plane hit, I mean everybody was you know, you know I mean, you know mentioned the kind of words, I don't want to put on the tape, or be censored. But I mean, they just, unbelievable, I mean, you know you're looking at skyscrapers that have stood for years and all of a sudden they're you know, they're, you know that there's people dead and dying in there with all the smoke and the second airplane, it just looked like it disappeared. I mean it didn't come out the other side. So you know all that fuel is burning in there and all the, you know, hot



metal, sharp metal, people up there trapped you know on the floors above, what happened. So I mean, just, just a sense of outrage, and sadness for what had happened up in New York City.

I fielded a telephone call, well let me back track a minute because you know and this is part of the painful part, but I had a good friend named BILL DONOVAN, that used to be in 512 with us, and because of personnel shifts and everything they had moved him to 513.

We used to sit together, next to each other over in 4E531 and we had played soccer together the day before and we, I play soccer a couple three times a week, during lunch time. And we have a just a loose group of people that you know we go out and play either adjacent to the Pentagon or a half mile down the road. You know we find a green spot and you know we just play soccer for you know forty-five minutes or so. And it's a nice release from the tensions of the office and everything.

BILL had had an ankle operation in the springtime and you know had been in a cast and finally was ready to test his ankle again and we had played soccer yesterday, the day before on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and it was the first time he had played since his operations.

I was going to call him up and ask him how his ankle was and see if he wanted to get, you know, what do you think about this whole thing going on and everything. The phone rang and it was my brother. My brother is in the Air Force and the second time in our careers that we've been stationed together. He's stationed on the Air Force staff.

Q. (18:39) Here at the Pentagon?

A. Here at the Pentagon. He reported in summer of 2000, so he had been there a little over a year. He worked Special Operations, Policy Issues on the Air Force staff, just coincidentally. But he called me up just to make sure I had seen what was on TV and to let me know that you know

the Air Force had stood up a crisis action team, and the Joint Staff had, and he was going to be one of the SOP (phonetic) on the Crisis Action Team at the National Military Command Center and as such he had been assigned the night watch. You know this was going to be a twenty-four hour deal, and he had been assigned the night watch, which was going to be nine o'clock, 2100 'til nine o'clock the following morning, twelve hour shift. So he had been told to go home and he being a bachelor has an apartment about a five-minute walk from the Pentagon, right over adjacent to Crystal City. So he just wanted to let me know that you know, he was going to be walking home. You know he wasn't going to be there if I was trying to reach him and everything.

So you know we talked for a few minutes and then he hung up and you know along about this time, it was about 9:35, and several minutes, you know I went back in to look at the TV a little more. Kind of forgot about calling BILL, and at 9:38 you know, was when we heard the big boom, and shook our office.

Q. (20:19) Describe it.

A. It's just, you're standing there. It wasn't hard enough to knock us off our feet, but it was enough for you to know that something big had hit the building. And you know at the time you know, it could have been a bomb. It could have been an airplane. It could have be a vehicle, you know, a semi-truck or something. You know you just didn't know.

In our office for whatever reason there were windows, but the only windows, because we were kind of in the middle of the wedge, pointed toward the C-ring. We were in the D ring. The windows looked out toward the C ring. So we were looking to the interior of the Pentagon, but

only as far as the next wall, the next ring. So we really didn't have a good view of anything to the outside of the building.

But we looked out that window and looked up and we saw black smoke. We saw pieces of debris you know, some you know pieces of cement, small pieces of rocks and stuff falling. There was actually, you know because they were still working on wedge one, finishing it up, there was actually a worker out on the roof you know between the D and C rings and he was out there and he looked up and started running, and he made it, you know, he made it to an open window and got in and everything. He was a floor below us, on a roof, looking down. But you know basically we went around and said, "OK," you know, "we don't know what happened, but you know we need to get out of here." You know you need to orderly, you know make an orderly egress out of this office.

Q. (22:19) Did you think airplane?

A. Yeah and some people actually yelled, "Hurry up we only have 18 minutes," because had made some type of light speed jump and thought that since the two airplanes in New York had hit 18 minutes apart, that 18 minutes later another airplane was going to hit the Pentagon.

Now you know he was correct in surmising that it was an airplane. Whether we had 18 minutes or not is up to you know, up to debate, but it served to energize people and get them out.

So I, I didn't run out of there, you know. The people that were in my little cubicle there we just calmly you know gathered some of our belongings. I had a black backpack that I grabbed and made sure I had my car keys and out we went.

I stayed in the hallway and waited until everybody was out of the building, because I was, I already had it in my mind that you know I was very upset, angry, you know that this building I'd

worked in for five years would be subject to some you know some sort of an attack like that. I didn't know the extent of the damage. I was hoping it was just a low order explosion on the outside of the building, you know that might have hit the part of the building that was, had been mostly evacuated you know and ready for refurbishing and everything. But again you know you're talking from ignorance. You're thinking from ignorance. You don't know where the plane hit. You don't know how much damage has been done.

I didn't think about where other offices were at the point, I just you know we were thinking about just vacating ours. So the last people out were the watch section. They locked up the door, 'cause you know, there is a lot of classified material in our office and you know they walked down and I followed them out down the hall toward the A ring which is the center hallway in the building.

At that point, and there were escalators there. The escalators were still functioning and there were Marines that were directing people either down stairways or down the escalators and telling them to go to North Parking, or South Parking, or whichever they were saying. I'm not sure.

I met up with a CDR MIKE SPENCE, who I knew from a prior assignment together, probably fourteen years ago at the Strike Work Force Center in Fallon and we had you know hooked up again you know because he was working here at the Pentagon, and we saw each other occasionally.

His office was, you know mine was down the 4<sup>th</sup>, sorry mine was down the 3<sup>rd</sup> corridor. His was down the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor, basically on the other side of ours. The 4<sup>th</sup> corridor was filled with smoke and this is on the 4<sup>th</sup> deck. I waited for him while he walked down the hallway and made sure that everybody was out of his office, because as I recall he might not have been in the office when the plane hit. He might have been coming back from somewhere else. So he went down

there and I went back down the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor thinking that he was going to do a, you know down to the E ring, take a left and come back down my corridor. You know it's kind of a triangle.

When I walked down back toward our office I saw ADMIRAL KEATING and ADMIRAL MC GINN, the N3/N5 and the N7 who I knew had had a meeting together in ADMIRAL MC GINN's office on the E ring. And they were walking down and you know I greeted ADMIRAL KEATING. He asked me if everybody was out of the office including the watch section. I replied in the affirmative and you know he basically told me to you know to beat feet out of there. I followed them down the hallway. They went down the escalators. I stayed up waiting for MIKE SPENCE.

MIKE SPENCE and I linked back up. We walked down the stairs instead of down the escalators. Instead of going to the parking lot, we went all the way down and out into the courtyard in the middle of the building.

I did look down the first floor, 4<sup>th</sup> corridor and it didn't even register then that the command center was down there, but it did register that there was a lot of smoke down that corridor. In fact it was hours before I even remembered that that's where the Command Center was. I'd only been down there once and again that pains me you know because you know I didn't even think of BILL DONOVAN and the other guys that were in there until hours later.

We went out in the corridor, we saw some people that had been wounded or possibly inhaled some smoke. They were all being tended to for the most part. There were some people that were you know trying to shout and you know be in charge and everything, but for the most part it was just you know people were down there taking care of who they could take care of and looking for things to do.

Because we couldn't go in through the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> corridor on the first floor, I ran down to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> corridor and was able to get outside because if you don't know the Pentagon, between the B and the C rings, there is an outside I guess you'd say you know a driveway, a roadway, so that vehicles can drive around and provide maintenance support to the Pentagon.

It was a mess in that area. There was a lot of debris. There was a lot of water because sprinklers had gone on in the building. There were people out there already. They said, you know that they needed carts. You know something to move wounded people, so I ran down to the infirmary and before I even got there I encountered two people, a male and a female. One was on an electric cart and one was trying to drag this medical cart which was not designed to be dragged more than, you know just be pushed along the hallway and they were trying to drag it, you know through this rubble strewn blacktop driveway.

So I got on and helped pull the cart and got out in front of the cart and was able to move you know debris around and everything and got them to the point, probably at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> corridor was about as far as we could go. And they were able to transport some wounded personnel.

None of these people were wounded real seriously. You know I mean I saw somebody that had like a head laceration and you know there were some other people you know that had some cuts and bruises, but you know I didn't see anything, you know real serious at that point.

In the process of cleaning debris and water out of the way, I encountered a human foot, you know, and it was just, I mean it registered, but it had to be pushed aside. You know, so if I destroyed some evidence or something, I apologize, but you know we had to make a path for the cart to get through.

I ran back down to the vicinity infirmary and grabbed another cart, drove it back as far as I could and left it there and then kept going to the left, you know, I guess you'd say counter-clockwise

around that place on foot to see if there was any help needed. I encountered a couple of SEAL buddies of mine which made me proud that you know, there's only like six or seven of us in the building and then three of us were right there. You know had not even thought twice about staying.

Q. (30:59) Who was that then LT SELL and CDR POWELL?

A. LT SELL and CDR POWELL, yes. It was at this point I think they had already helped some people out of the building. LT SELL had found, somehow found some black turtleneck to put on. He had soaked it with water, which worked a lot better than a khaki uniform shirt. I had left my khaki shirt in the courtyard and I was in a white t-shirt. You know, you felt kind of naked, and CDR POWELL was limping and I found out afterwards, because he had been catching people jumping from the second floor windows, him and some other people.

But at the time we were just, you know, milling around trying to help. Somebody had a cellular phone that had the capability of receiving email and he was looking around, you know, for information and he kept reading off the email. You know, which this stuff later turned out to be bogus, but at the time you know caused quite a bit of concern, and you know we were with other people that are out there trying to help. The firemen were just starting to arrive and he read off that there had been a car bomb at the State Department. That there had been a bomb that went off at the old executive building which is next to the White House and it's where the Vice President has his office, and then he read that there was another plane inbound. This is on email So we were directed to go back into the courtyard, OK.

Q. (32:49) Who was directing?

A. There was a, it was, you know Army or Marine Colonel, and actually there was an Army General, too. You know it's been a while now.

We were directed back into the courtyard and it turns out that there wasn't another airplane inbound. Once they made that decision, we kind of got a little bit more organized inside. There was some medical people, you know that were taking charge of some of the situation. We were formed into stretcher teams. Five to each stretcher so you could have four carrying the handles and one to help stabilize any wounded people. And at this point you know, the feeling was because now people had confirmed an airplane had hit on the outside of the building the feeling was that there were going to be a lot of wounded people, either from on board the aircraft or that had been working at the Pentagon. And so you know, we needed to you know set up triage stations and all kinds of things.

So you know, we moved some of the stretcher teams. We went back out to where we had been before and stood by and firemen were in there and you know apparently any of the people that had gotten out, which later you know I had learned about MR. HANSON, about some other people that had gotten taken out of the Command Center, had come out right away. I mean you know within twenty to thirty minutes of the impact and now it was, it was well past that. You know we're talking about forty to fifty minutes past the impact to where we are now after all this running around and everything.

So we stood by with stretchers and we had on rubber gloves, and we had on the portable masks with the charcoal filters. The masks were good because they helped screen out a lot of the smoke and chemicals that were in the air. The gloves were just, you know, just to have. They didn't provide much. You know they weren't very reassuring.



Q. (35:00) Where did you get those?

A. They, everything had been taken from the dispensary, you know a lot of the medical people had come out to the courtyard. Another triage area had been set up outside by the POAC, and the reason was, a lot of the medical people took that stuff out there because we kept hearing that there was another plan inbound. So it was like, some of the medical people set up you know a station in the courtyard inside the Pentagon, thinking that any airplane was going to strike the outside of the building vis you know come in the middle, because you know, they're trying to kill people, not you know, not put something in the middle you know where there's nothing. And then the other feeling that other planes inbound, let's take this away from the building near the athletic center and if need be we can go down into the athletic center which again is away from the building, probably not a target, OK.

And LT SELL and CDR POWELL actually ended up out there by the POAC at that triage station. I believe LT SELL put some of his paramedic experience to use out there giving IVs and everything.

So you know we were told again to go back to the courtyard and this time we waited in the courtyard, stayed in our stretcher teams. The little snack bar in the middle of the concourse was kind of raided you know for you know snack foods and it was pretty funny 'cause there were no cold cuts. There was just cheese and rolls, so people were eating, you know, I mean I wasn't hungry, but there were other people eating cheese sandwiches and pretzels you know. And then they broke into the you know soda machines and stuff, you know because we figured, you know a lot of people figured they were going to be there for the long haul. And again the initial feeling was that there was going to be lots of wounded. We're going to be kind of isolated here. You know we just need to be prepared for the worst.

So basically, you know after two trips, three trips for me, but two trips with the stretcher team out to the area between the C and D ring, and false alarms that airplanes were coming in, I mean you know we were doing our best, you know, but there just wasn't much to do at that point and the firemen coming back you know they kept going out there in shifts, coming back out you could just hear them saying you know, it's an inferno in there. You know and "I don't think there's anybody," you know, "if they're not out now, they're not getting out."

You know you hear these snatches of conversation and really again you know I was more angry than sorrowful at that point, you know.

Then the FBI showed up and we helped them search the interior courtyard for any evidence and I was able to locate about a dinner plate size of the fuselage. There were other pieces of the fuselage found and they tagged them you know for later examination. So that kept us busy for a while.

You know, it got to be - Oh, and then thoughts came to maybe alerting your loved ones that you were OK. You know, and I didn't have a cell phone. MIKE SPENCE got a hold of a cell phone and we were able to have somebody call somebody with our phone numbers and eventually leave a message at our houses that we were OK.

Q. (38:47) Is that how your family found out you -?

A. Well, they found out, my brother took an educated guess. Getting back to my brother who left the Pentagon, you know, to go home and sleep before his watch. He lived on Eads (phonetic) Street and you know when you left the Pentagon he goes under an underpass that goes under 395, you know walking and then gets to his apartment.

He was actually under the underpass when the plane hit, and it was around the other side of the building so he couldn't see the impact or anything, but he saw the smoke and he ran back out and

stayed outside the impact area you know trying to help and everything, but again there was not much he could do. But he waited until people were evacuating the building and he found some of my office mates and just asked you know, if I was OK. They said, Yeah, you know, we think he you know is still in the center of the building.

So he just acting on a hunch, an assumption you know that I was OK, he called my family and said that you know and let a message on our answering machine that he's OK, and I'm OK and that we'll you know that I'll call them when I could.

Q. (40:05) Now, where was your wife?

A. My wife was at school, at work. She works at a middle school in Vienna, and you know they stayed in school you know. They kept the kids in school watching, you know they watch TV every once in a while and she was, she was getting a little upset, but she was able to call home and get –

Q. (40:27) Off the answering machine.

A. Off, yeah, get the message, and so we stayed inside the center courtyard there until about, until about 2:30, 2:30 in the afternoon. We had done all we could to help the FBI you know. The few people that had got taken out had been taken right out to North Parking. So we were led in an orderly fashion out to South Parking. You know we assisted as we could out by the impact area, distributing water, helping comb the grounds again for debris, you know, directing traffic, you know whatever function we could do you know at that point.

It was about then that I was still trying to figure out who might have been in the impact area, but it still really didn't dawn on me, because you know I was still thinking Oh all my guys got out

you know in the office. So I hooked up with LT SELL and CDR POWELL again and I had my car in South Parking. I asked them if they needed a ride home.

You know, we were going to, we had heard that the Old Guard or whatever they're called, the Army guys from Fort Myers were going to come down and take over at four o'clock, so we were going to stay 'til four no matter what. You know because anything that needed help we wanted to help with. You know we felt an obligation to do you know, and I wasn't tired or anything.

You're kind of running on adrenaline and stuff and you know but, you know you've been sucking in smoke and chemicals all day and you're in your khakis, and you know you're in your leather black shoes that you've been tromping around in puddles with God knows what. So you know, it's kind of like, you know, you're kind of gammie. You know but other than that I mean it's not like you didn't want to stay or anything you know.

At four o'clock all these Army guys rolled in and kind of took over you know the area. So we felt that you know it was in good hands and so it took us about twenty-five minutes to get out of South Parking because you know nobody was letting any vehicles in or out. You know, we showed ID to everybody, everybody, everybody. We finally got out and then we got under that, the underpass to go up and around because you know they lived right in Arlington and we were going to bypass 395 and just go up one of the other streets when here came a huge convoy with flood lights, tents, you know everything. A lot had been set up already but they were setting up for night operations.

So we had to back out and wait about ten minutes and let this big convoy go by and set up all their stuff. You know I got an overview of what SELL and POWELL had done and they were you know CRAIG had strained his hamstring and his groin muscle from catching people. And

you know OLIN, you know he's a younger guy he just kind of seemed kind of a little bit dazed by the whole thing.

I dropped them off in Arlington and it was just, it was just really bizarre because nobody was on the roads, you know. 395 had been shut down, you know. Colombia Pike had been shut down you know. That other street by the gas station up there by the Pentagon had been all shut down. So I was like one of the only people on the road in the City of Arlington, you know. So I drove home and again didn't have a cell phone. I probably should have gone right home, but I stopped at this, just stopped at this Silverado Inn, or restaurant or whatever it is, you know and just sat at the bar, stinking of you know, smoke and fumes and stuff and had a beer. I had a beer and then I went home you know.

I just, you know I sat there and nobody said anything to me. Nobody really stared at me or anything. It was just business as usual, but it was like surreal to go from that environment and then just go to a normal civilian environment. People were talking and looking at the TV and everything, but it's just like, it was just something I felt I had to do, you know kind of reconnect a little bit.

So I drove home –

Q. (45:170) Nobody asked you -?

A. No, nobody asked –

Q. (45:17) Nobody asked if –

A. I don't know whether they were you know a little –

Q. (45:21) You were in uniform?

A. Yeah, I was in my khakis.

Q. OK.

A. So, you know my pants were a little trashed, but my shirt wasn't because I'd had it off all day. So you know, I went home and you know got a lot of hugs from the family and everything. It was at that point that I started thinking about people that might have been in the Command Center. I called up KEVIN ENNIS who works with us and asked him if he knew of any accounted for personnel and so he listed off, you know CDR BILL DONOVAN, CAPT BOB DOLAN, you know LT DAVE WILLIAMS. You know he just listed off these people, but he only listed three or four because you know he hadn't gotten the whole story either, and it's just you know, "well how you doing?" and all that. So it was kind of, it was kind of, you're kind of on autopilot and stuff.

Then we started, we were on call you know for hearing about people and I don't know the next couple of days we just, we were just told to stay home and we watched all on TV and everything. Subsequently, you know when they had identified the people that were missing, we got assigned to a family.

Q. (47:02) How did that assignment get made?

A. Well CAPT DOSSEL who had been ADMIRAL WALKINDORF's (phonetic) deputy, N51B, we found out that basically the, most of the N513 branch had been wiped out. So he became the de facto N512, and so he became responsible you know for these people. And there were other people N3/N5 you know from the Command Center that had been lost, also. But you know we

went about, they went about assigning people and they said, “Well who knows him? Who knows him?” you know.

Q. (47:45) Tried to pair up with people –

A. Right, now coincidentally, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, ten days before this happened, BILL DONOVAN had made Commander on September 1<sup>st</sup> for pay. AL GERVISHEFSKI (phonetic) had made COMMANDER for pay on September 1<sup>st</sup>. They had a ceremony in our new spaces there in the conference room, where they got pinned on. And BILL DONOVAN and I had always talked when we sat next to each other, “Oh, we’ve got to get our families together,” you know this, that and the other things, and we never did. You know I’d invited him to a party one time but he was taking his kids camping.

I go, “Hey that’s more important,” you know. So we’d never met each other’s families, and I met his family on September 1<sup>st</sup> because they came to his pinning ceremony. So I’d met his wife one time, ten days before. So I got assigned you know, fortunately and if I hadn’t been I would have asked for it anyway. I got assigned to the DONOVAN family and I worked with the CACO, who you know they assigned all these CACO officers. And a lot of the CACO officers had never done it before and they were getting on the job training.

And this was COMMANDER LARRY HAUKENES, who worked for NAVSEA and he had never done it before and he was a little nervous about the whole thing. And I think overall he did a good job. He was just a little, a little tentative at times and I think ELAINE DONOVAN didn’t need tentative some of the times when he was tentative. So I tried to help in that regard and assisted the CACO, but we were more family support visé CACO. The CACO has the unenviable job of you know “Well I need to let you know officially that your husband’s

classified as missing, “ and then documents to sign and visits to make and everything. So I tried to help him and it was just very, very disheartening and very hard you know to do that whole process.

Q. (50:01) Were you with, tells us about that, kind of describe the, they make the assignment, then you hooked up with the CACO.

A. Hooked up with the CACO and we went over to see Elaine. He had called her and she, once she found out her husband was missing and stuff –

Q. (50:18) Can you spell his last name?

A. Which?

Q. The CACO

A. I believe it's H-A-U-K-E-N-E-S Haukenes

Q. OK.

A. Some neighbors and some friends were helping the DONOVAN family. The neighbors you know from her neighborhood and then some friends that lived down in Richmond, came up and you know also her mom who lives in, gees, what's it, Crawfton, Maryland? Is that near Annapolis?

Q. (50:54) Uh huh.



A. Yeah, had come down and was staying with her. So we went and gave her the initial just indication that you know that he's classified as missing and –

Q. (51:07) What time, when was that? That was that evening?

A. I think it was the following day.

Q. (51:14) Now had you ever done anything like that before?

A. No, actually well no. I mean I had had to tell a Petty Officer in one of my SEAL platoons that his father had been killed in a car accident. But we were overseas at the time and I was just involved in coordinating, you know letting him you know, relieve himself emotionally and making the arrangements to get him back home so that he could you know attend the funeral and take care of his mom and all that. So I was kind of a little bit divorced from the situation you know. We were in Italy at the time. So yeah, I had to break that to him, but I didn't have to go through the whole process back in the United States.

So they had set up the support center at the Sheraton in Crystal City which I, I thought they did you know an outstanding job and, and the Army General that had the unenviable task of meeting with the missing, you know at that point classified as missing people's families and friends and everything and give them twice daily reports on the status of how many are missing. You know whether any remains have been identified. You know and then all the different stations they had set up there. You know USAA, Red Cross and Salvation Army and Navy Mutual Aide and you know all the other services. We just had to start going through that process as well.

So you know visits out to the house. Taking her where she needed to go. Letting her just you know vent a little bit, and she's a very strong woman and they have three children that were at the time, eleven, ten and eight.

So we had to plan a memorial and again you know, first you had to do memorials because people are classified as missing, but the remains have not been identified yet. So you know your husband is probably dead, but you're not sure, you know. And so you plan a memorial service knowing that subsequently you're going to have to plan a burial. You know it was a very tough situation so all the memorials were done throughout the month of December, starting from anywhere from ten days after the event up through the next couple of weeks. And there were four families especially you know within the 513 that we were dealing with, the DONOVANS, the WILLIAMS, the DUNNS and the DOLANS. OK.

BOB DOLAN left behind a wife, son and a daughter. SARAH WILLIAMS has two daughters and was pregnant. She's due next month. STEPHANIE DUNN had been married two years. It was PAT DUNN's second marriage and she was pregnant with his first child. She's due next month also, and you know then ELAINE DONOVAN with the three children. So you're talking about, you know seven kids and two on the way out of these four families.

So we were attending memorials. You know you're not only planning BILL DONOVAN's memorial, you're escorting ELAINE DONOVAN to the other memorials because you know you're trying to show support for the other wives and I think she attended two out of the other three memorials.

Then you know you're doing his memorial and the whole thing you know with the families and everything and a lot of you know receptions too. Because you know afterwards you have a little reception and so it's just a lot of rehashing for the families. And a lot of people want to pay their

respects, and it's just tough you know for the families. Now I will say that the kids you know just handled it well because they were surrounded with friends and the younger two kind of were distracted enough you know to be able to handle it. You know having friends there. The older girl MEGAN, you know was kind of off, she clung very closely to her mom.

So now you know we're into October and we're all up at the Annex, you know because we got displaced from our office, because our office got a lot of water and smoke damage. So we're up at the Annex you know, kind of sharing two computers for – and the people that were doing family support were kind of like on their own time, helping the families. The people that weren't on family support were kind of going on with Navy business and so it worked out pretty well that way.

And again CAPTAIN DOSSEL was kind of taking care of the family support side of things and CAPT O'BRIEN and some of the other branch heads were taking care of the Navy side of things. So you had that whole wave of memorials initially. And the other thing you have to worry about is all these dignitaries that are going to attend you know, the memorials and everything. DAVE WILLIAMS, LT DAVE WILLIAMS, he went to VMI, and apparently the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, I don't know his name, it's a General, went to VMI and called up the night before the memorial and asked if he could attend, but he didn't want to be recognized or anything. He just wanted to sit in the back. So you have a Navy Lieutenant having a four-star AIR FORCE General attending his memorial service. That was very impressive.

So we got through October and you know then they start identifying remains so now they're coordinating burials and again you know you want to show support for the other wives, so you know these wives have to go through attending funerals now, instead of just memorials.

So BILL DONOVAN's remains were identified in –

Q. (58:05) In October?

A. In early October. But the remains weren't released until the week before Thanksgiving. It took a long time because they wanted, you know I mean to be perfectly you know, I'm going to be a little crass here, but you know if you're looking for my remains and you find my finger, you can tell my wife that we've identified the remains as Commander Stratton, but she's not going to bury a finger, if she can hold out for them to find more of me. You know to put it in blunt terms. So they finally stopped identifying remains the week before Thanksgiving and so I volunteered even though we weren't supposed to do it. You know supposed to be the CACO or somebody not related you know to the business, but I volunteered and Elaine had asked me to escort BILL's remains from Dover Air Force Base –

Q. (59:13) So you went to Dover?

A. Yeah, and then I drove him to the Naval Academy, because that's where he was, he was going to be put into the – what do you call the –

Q. (59:21) Columbarium?

A. Columbarium at the Naval Academy. He was going to be cremated and he had been cremated and put him in the columbarium at the Naval Academy. So I did that and then we set up the burial service, you know for like the week following, I guess the week following Thanksgiving.

Q. (59:44) That must have been a real emotional time for you.

A. It was. I mean I drove by myself. You know picked him up and they were very professional up there. They pumped me for a lot of information up in Dover because these were for the most part Reservists that had come back on active duty, you know that had experience in mortuary affairs. Came up and you know they had the Navy side of it, the Army side and the Air Force side of it up there. And they wanted to know about you know September 11<sup>th</sup> at the Pentagon because you know they hadn't been there.

So you know, they rendered him honors and I escorted his remains down to the Naval Academy, you know kind of talked to BILL on the way down there, you know. And you know, handed him over to the Chaplain's office and then I think –

Q. (01:00:42) In transporting was there a military vehicle?

A. No, just in my POV.

Q. Is that right?

A. Yeah, just in my POV.

Q. (01:00:47) Wow.

A. And just a little bit of, I guess inject a little levity into the thing here, you know the Naval Academy, I had a sticker on my car. I had an ID and everything and they let me in, but they had blocked off a lot of the direct routes you know around the Naval Academy. So I got stuck, I'm not that familiar with the grounds anyway, I got stuck going all the way around by the Marina and I was trying to find this building. And these two "rent-a-cops" stopped me over by the

Marina and said, "We're checking everybody that drives past here." And you know I'm in my dress blues.

"We're checking everybody that drives past here and you know we're going to search your car."

I said, "Well," you know, "you know, I'd prefer you didn't because you know I'm on assignment here and I'm delivery something to the Chaplain's office." Hoping he'd get the hint, you know.

And he says, "Well sir, you know this is just random and you know we have to search you car."

I said, "OK, well search away, but it's just me and BILL in here."

And he looks in and he goes, "What?"

And I go, "Yeah, it's me and BILL. He's in the box." And so you'd think at that point they'd say

"Oh, OK," you know, "carry on," you know. "We didn't know you're doing that."

They searched the car anyway. So I mean, I mean credit, you know 9-11, extra security and everything, but you know that's. I tried to –

Q. (01:02:16) So he had already been cremated?

A. Yes.

Q. (01:02:18) Was that done in Dover?

A. It was done in Dover.

Q. OK.

A. Yes. The memorial service was very emotional, the burial because, because you know it was columbarium, it was a small affair and everything and his family, BILL's family comes from upstate New York. Apparently they had hit some traffic and it was suppose to start at one. It was

about 1:20 you know because of the honor guard had gotten delayed. So we were going to start about 1:10 and people were getting seated but we hadn't started yet. So the car drives up with BILL's father and mother and sister and brother and you know, and they thought they had missed it. The one sister, his younger sister is very emotional. They come running up and so we were able to, you know Elaine was able to get up and tell them you know that they hadn't missed anything, but you know they came out crying and everything.

So then to top it all off, I don't know you've been to the burials and they you know they fold the flag and the admiral presents the flag to the widow. Apparently one of the color guard or the honor guard guys got confused, because you know because those people had come in late, they had just taken some seats and Elaine had been sitting on the front left corner where the widow usually sits, but when she went out to greet the family and they were so intent on getting seating that one of the sisters sat in that corner. So after they folded the flag, the guardsman gave the flag to the sister instead of the widow, and she just had this horrified look on her face. And Elaine just took it all in stride. Saying you know that was Bill. You know Bill did that. He was looking down from above and you know he made sure there was a little bit of you know confusion at the ceremony you know.

And that guy was just, I mean he was devastated. So I talked to him afterwards, you know and told him look you know, you made a mistake but nobody's holding you accountable and it wasn't as big a deal as you're making it out to be, you know. And so hopefully you know he understood that and everything. But that went well and you know we've all tried to keep in touch with the family since then. We prepared shadow boxes for them and presented them about a month and a half ago at a little, at a little dinner party at somebody's house.

But it's like you have to be sensitive that you know your intent is good. You want to give them a shadow box, but you don't want to make this big dog and pony show and in Elaine's words, it's like, "Oh, another command performance," you know, and it's – so you want to try to make it informal as possible. We didn't present them, we just displayed them and then when they left they took them home you know.

I keep in contact with Elaine about once a week. Both her daughters are on my indoor soccer team that I coach.

Q. (01:05:50) Really?

A. Yeah, and the other thing was this group of guys that I play soccer with that BILL played with them when he was healthy, I let them know that one of ours had been lost, and they actually, they actually got together, you know the first day that they could get back on the field was like a week and a half after September 11<sup>th</sup>. And they all gathered together and said a prayer you know for BILL and then played a game in his honor. I wasn't there because I was with Elaine at the Sheraton and everything.

But one of the guys that plays soccer with us occasionally writes for *USA TODAY*. What he does mostly is an Internet column, but he makes the paper every once in a while in print. And he actually prepared a little tape of the memorial. Just a little you know, his viewpoint of the whole thing. That you know this happened September 11<sup>th</sup> and we play soccer. We're just a bunch of guys. We come from all services. We come from you know civilian life. Some used to be in the military. Some never were in the military, but we just play. You know and you know the fact, he compared it to you know, getting back to normalcy just like President Bush had said to do and part of that for everybody was getting back to playing soccer. And he pointed out that we had



lost you know a person in the 9-11 attack and he sent, he basically made an email and he sent it to a bunch of his friends and he mentioned BILL DONOVAN's name in the email.

Well, one of the guys that he sent it to, works for NPR, and so he asked them could you read your email and then just send me the tape and we'll put it on "All Things Considered," or you know, whatever, one of those shows. One of those NPR shows. So it actually made the radio and so I have the copy of that you know, on that I you know kept.

Q. (01:08:02) On tape.

A. On tape, not on tape, it's on my computer, and it's in the NPR archives and everything. It's just a little blurb you know. It's maybe a three minutes reading or something, but it's neat. Yeah.

Q. (01:08:16) Maybe I can get a copy of that too, one for the file. That would be good to have.

A. Sure, and we're, we're making jerseys you know for our Pentagon Soccer Club or whatever they call it and we're presenting some jerseys to the DONOVAN kids and to ELAINE, you know. And reaching across the pond, there's this guy TONY BOYLE (phonetic) that used to be on exchange here. He's a Scotsman, but he's in the Royal Air Force and he was on exchange with the US Air Force here. And you know those guys, they come over for a two-year tour, they always extend for one year, right?

So he was here three years and he keeps in touch because the year after he left he came back to a NATO course with a bunch of, with a bunch of Brits and we set up a friendly match at Fort Myers. You know played soccer with those guys and then went to Crystal City and you know, drank some beer and ate some food afterwards.

So he had heard about BILL DONOVAN and sent us a nice email and everything and I sent him back something because you know he's a big supporter of one of the Scottish soccer teams and so he's getting a Celtic jersey top for BRADY DONOVAN, you know.

And I mean people have really opened their arms. I mean BRADY DONOVON skateboards and somebody heard about it and they knew TONY HAWK, so TONY HAWK sent him an autographed skateboard.

And you know Washington Freedom autographed a couple of jerseys for me and I gave them to the girls and you know, so I mean it's like you do what you can, but you never can do enough.

Q. (01:09:51) And were you coaching soccer before, and this came –

A. I coached, I coached my daughter in, she doesn't play, she hasn't played outdoors for a couple of years, but she likes to play indoors, because it's easy. There's no practices, just show up every week. And even though [REDACTED] DONOVAN is a year younger than her, you know I asked ELAINE do you want me to put her on the team. And then that was the first session and then the second session we got her older sister to come onboard. So you know just to keep them occupied and stuff.

But you know I think back and I beat myself up initially for not realizing that all these people had been lost that I worked with. Initially when it first happened on 9-11, not realizing and maybe being able to run down that hallway and chances are I wouldn't have been able to do a damn thing, because you know people were buried. The people that got out of the Command Center the very few, were lucky enough to crawl through a hole into that space between the B and C rings, but you know I think back you know, if I'd made the call to BILL. "Hey, let's go

get a soda,” maybe he wouldn’t have been in there when it happened. But you know I can beat myself up forever about that.

It’s just that some of those guys that perished were more educated than me. Probably better naval officers than me. Just you know happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and I don’t know I still feel angry that they could, that they could get away with that on a building such as this you know because I’ve worked here a long time. Sometimes I love this place, sometimes I hate it but you know, that doesn’t mean somebody should be able to fly an airplane into it. You know.

I’m not sure what else you want from that.

Q (01:11:53) Anything else you want to add about September 11<sup>th</sup>?

A. Yeah, just that I mean I, I was kind of caught unaware they had that December 17<sup>th</sup> ceremony out in the courtyard and they awarded a bunch of people you know for their actions. I think I was the only person in my office that stuck around so I mean you know I’m, all for you know MIKE SPENCE got an award, and CRAIG POWELL and OWEN SELL and all those guys, you know kind of feel I might have gotten a little short shrift on that you know just because nobody knew what the heck happened. But again that’s, that’s the nature. I also see in the nature of our NSW business just try to be in the background you know and do what you can. You know you don’t get the headlines but you know, you know you do your job and go about your business. So.

That’s about it.

Q. (01:12:54) OK. Let me stop it there for the second part.

Transcribed by:  
Ethel Geary  
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