

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT (sel) Carol O'Hagan
CDR Rob Sawyer

Interviewer's Organization:

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206

Interviewee:

QM2 Christopher Suggs

Current Address:

██████████
██████████

Date of Interview:

06 March 2002

Place of Interview:

Navy Annex, Arlington VA

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Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; security; evacuation; rescue; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; Force Protection

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

QM2 Suggs was born in ██████████ and then raised in Prince Georges County, MD. He entered boot camp in September 1995 then to NTC Orlando for Quartermaster A-school. After A-school, he was assigned to the USS Stumpf (DD-978) in Norfolk, VA in February 1996. In April 1999, he transferred to the USS Portland (LST-37) in Little Creek, VA. In June 2001, he received orders to the Pentagon following the Security Force, NEC 9545 school at Lackland Air Force Base. He is currently one of ten personnel assigned to the CNO/OPNAV security force. The security force falls under VADM Tracey and is responsible for issuing security badges, validating secured door alarms, responding to duress calls from the CNO and other senior staff members and general security for Navy spaces in the Pentagon. His immediate department head is Mr. Al Moore. QM2 Suggs also acts as assistant Urinalysis Coordinator for Naval District Washington.

Topics Discussed:

On September 11th, he came in to work as usual and entered the building where the plane would hit a short time later. He was looking forward to the day as they were having a departmental picnic and he would be off duty in a couple of hours. He went upstairs to his office, finished up his paperwork and went down to the courtyard. While he was down there, a co-worker came out shaking his head. He asked him what was the matter and was told a plane had crashed into the WTC. He didn't believe him and thought he was just being fooled with.

About five minutes later he decided to head back upstairs to the security office 4A654. He was surprised to find that absolutely everyone was watching the WTC attack on TV. He watched the TV for about 15 minutes and then decided to call his Dad who works at the Library of Congress

to see if he had heard about what happened. His Dad said he did and asked if they were doing anything extra security-wise at the Pentagon. QM2 said no, not that he knew about. His Dad said okay and asked if he was still getting off early and he replied yes. His Dad then said okay and told him to have a good day. Christopher then went back across the hall to watch the TV and was standing by the gun vault when the plane hit. He saw the window shades move and felt the building shake. He looked up at the TV and then out in the hall. His first reaction was it must be a construction accident but when he saw people running and some debris in the hall, he and the others grabbed their weapons, ammo, flashlights and radios and ran out of the office. Mr. Moore called them back to the office and told them they had been hit by a plane. That's when his heart sank and he remembered what he had just told his Dad. He does not know how Mr. Moore knew it was a plane and at the time, he didn't care.

He saw OS2 Paz[sp?] run out with a CO2 extinguisher and lost him after that. They started running toward the 5th corridor and could see some smoke ahead. When they got to the 4th corridor by the escalators, they saw a lot of smoke coming out of the corridor. They couldn't go down the 5th corridor because of debris and the 4th seemed a better choice to get to where they needed to go. The 4th corridor filled very quickly with white smoke so QM2 got down on the floor where he could see people running and called to them to guide them to the A-Ring and told them to go to the courtyard. He asked people who were calm and ready to help to guide people down. Some more senior officers wanted to help but he felt they were not calm enough for the situation so he had to get a little loud with them. The situation required fewer helpers and more evacuation in his opinion. He sent them to the courtyard because it was part of an evacuation plan that had not been enforced as fully before 9/11. Once in the courtyard, he knew they would be able to fully exit the building through corridors on the opposite side of the emergency. It would also allow them to get fresh air, calm down and exit safely. He and PO Rakowski [sp?] teamed up and went outside to get some fresh air for a minute. They headed back in on the first floor and headed toward the Navy Command Center. When they saw the hole in the C-Ring, that's when it really hit home to him exactly how bad this was. He saw a pile of debris spread across the ally to the B-Ring. He did not realize at first that this was debris from inside the C-Ring. There were all ranks of military trying to fight the fire with CO2 extinguishers and rescue as many people as possible through the hole. He saw one female Petty Officer that he knew being helped out and noticed how completely stunned she looked. Total tunnel vision. They helped as many people as they could and although they heard some screaming there was not much they could do as they had no other fire fighting equipment. There was about a foot of water outside the hole which they were slogging through in their whites but it didn't matter. One rescuer was a volunteer firefighter who had his outfit in his truck so he went and put it on but there was not a lot he could do as he had no breathing apparatus with him. They continued to do what they could for about two hours. Then Defense Protective Service, DPS, told them to leave the building as there was another plane heading this way. Mr. Moore had stayed behind in the security office and kept in radio contact with all of them during this time as the smoke was not bad at all where their office was.

When they got outside, DPS, who is in charge of all of the Pentagon security forces, asked them to help move the crowds back as they were afraid of the second plane. So they got into the back of Mr. Moore's pickup truck and began patrolling the parking lots making sure people were staying back and not trying to remove their vehicles which were not only part of the FBI's crime scene but also would not be able to leave the lot anyway as the roads around the Pentagon were completely grid-locked. After a little while, DPS came around and told them to get away from the building as well as they thought the plane was coming. So they moved away. He now had a chance to look back at the building on the damaged side and was awed by the fact that one of the

most secure buildings in the world, one that he worked at everyday, now had a huge gaping, burning, hole in the side of it. He just couldn't believe it. He was amazed at the number of various emergency vehicles and personnel working together with so many military personnel and doing so well.

They then were tasked to start marking any bits of debris they could find with a small flag for further study by the FBI. They were later tasked to go around and collect as many Navy personnel names as they could, which they did for quite a while. They ended up over by the daycare center and there was a fighter jet that went by somewhere that they apparently couldn't identify so they were told to help get the children farther away from the building. He said the daycare personnel were very good with the children and kept them all calm. He felt terrible that he had to disrupt them and hurry them away.

By this time he was hot, tired, hungry and thirsty. He went over to where they had food and drinks set out for everyone and got something to eat and drink. Earlier he had been able to finally get a call through to his step-dad to let them know he was okay and asked him to spread the word. But he wasn't sure his father knew and was finally able to call him and his whole family was there and had been worried. His step-dad did not have all the phone numbers. He told them he did not know when he'd be home but that he was okay.

After getting something to eat, he was assigned to perimeter security out by the highways on I-395. The parking lots were still a mess with many ambulances and other emergency vehicles. While he was out there, a gentleman came up carrying a large log for some reason. They asked him what he was doing and he responded that his father had been working in the Pentagon. They could tell he was depressed and had been drinking so they carefully took the log away from him and told him he should leave the area. He left quietly and got to the Pentagon City exit, sat down and cried. QM2 felt very sad for the man.

He thought he'd be there all night but did not know. They were told that they could re-enter the Pentagon at their own risk to get personal items. He did not have any ID, keys or extra clothes so he tried to get in. Once inside, there was too much smoke, heat and steam so he decided not to bother. He called his Dad and asked him to bring him some clothes which he did and he felt much more comfortable. Around 9:30pm they were directed to go to the Navy Annex where they were trying to figure out who the casualties were and how many. There he was able to eat some pizza and rest. They were not assigned to do anything specific so he sat down in a chair, watched the news and then fell asleep. His Chief came over and gave them assignments for the next few days and he left around 3:00am to go home.

He was given a medal along with some of his peers. His Navy-Marine Corps Medal is special but he does not feel that he is a hero as he was just doing his job. He feels the people who lost their lives were bigger heroes. He was surprised that it was such a high award and although it stands for doing something special and even risking his life, he would still do it again. His reward is a sincere thank you and seeing someone go home to their family that might not have otherwise.

He says they are much stricter since the attack and that everyone is looked at more closely. He is more strict about securing spaces and handling burn bags, etc. He tries to make sure other people understand and adhere to the rules more closely than they did before. He feels good about the job the Army MPs are doing both at the entrances and around the perimeter of the building. They are now armed all of the time due to the heightened security level.

On a personal level, the incident showed him clearly that tomorrow is not promised to anyone and that everyone should live each day to the fullest. He no longer holds grudges against anyone because it only hurts himself and he wants to enjoy each day in a positive way. He is currently converting to the Master at Arms rating which should be easy as he already went to the school on his way to the Pentagon. He recently married another Navy member and is waiting to hear where they will both be stationed in the future. He hopes to stay in DC for a while and then perhaps Norfolk.

The main Lesson Learned was evacuation. Where do you go in an emergency and what are the primary and alternate routes to get there? He also thinks there should be some basic firefighting equipment easily available for emergencies. This might have saved more lives or reduced injuries. Also perhaps there could be a self-contained fire-fighting capability, either formally staffed or designated personnel as a collateral duty with basic equipment.

He thought there was not that much confusion over the emergency chain of command as most officials knew that DPS was in charge inside the building and on the grounds. Outside of the compound, then it was turned over to local authorities and everyone worked well together for the most part. There were, however, too many Chiefs and not enough Indians on the first day but they basically all did their jobs, knew their responsibilities and tried to stay out of the others way. Overall, considering the situation, things went fairly well.

Abstracted by
CDR Rob Sawyer
11 Mar 2002

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Topics Discussed:

Q. (05:19) Where were you located in the Pentagon on 11 September? Where were your offices?

A. I was actually in the office on four alpha six five four. I was standing by the gun safe and catty-corner from our office is a TV, and of course we were watching the towers that got hit and you know we were just standing there. We were all just sitting there and at the time I was not part of the security force, I was part of the security of getting people their badges and stuff like that. I was the paper pusher, so to speak. So I just came over from the other side just to watch the TV, and about 9:48, I think that's the time we were told, or we remember, but our blinds, just like those shook. The whole Pentagon of course shook where we were.

Q. (06:16) What were you thinking? I mean you'd been watching the World Trade Center. You know something was going on.

Q. (06:18) (another) And take us a little bit like your morning, you know coming in and what happened and –

A. Well that morning, that morning actually it was –

Q. (06:24) Everything going up to it.

A. It was going to be a short day for us. The reason being like I said I was up on a watch standing station and I was, basically had my, my hours were from eight to four, so that day was going to be a picnic for us. It was a department picnic from the, all the N09B, because we have personnel also working in Anacostia and the Navy Yard. So just like any other day, I - as a matter of fact the way I walk from my car to my office is right where the plane hit.

So it was just a normal day for me. Was happy 'cause I looked at my watch. I was getting off in less than two hours and had all my paperwork done so it was like, OK, I don't really have anything else to do. So walked around and talked with some people and you know, got, went

over and got some breakfast. It was, as far as before anything happened, it was just a normal day for me.

Q. (07:21) How did you find out about, how did you know to watch the TV?

A. Well, what happened was I was outside in the courtyard and I was sitting out there and a gentleman who works for the old command center comes out and he's shaking his head. I was looking at him, it was like OK. He was lighting a cigarette and he was, he was shaking his head and he said, "I can't believe it."

And the day before is when Michael Jordan announced that he was coming back to the Wizards, so I thought that's what he was talking about. (interviewer chuckles) I was like, "What are you shaking your head for?"

He said, "I can't believe it."

"Michael Jordan, coming back?"

He's like "No."

"What is it?"

He said, "A plane just went through one of the twin towers," and of course in my head I'm going this guy is really pulling my leg right now or someone is just starting so, -whatever, and so I sat out there for a little bit longer, about five minutes. Then I went back to my office and when I got up there every eye that was out there was in front of the TV, and I was, "He wasn't lying!"

And then, that's when, right when I walked in, about a minute later when the second plane hit the twin towers.

Q. (08:35) Did you see when the second plan actually hit?

A. I walked right into the office, right, it was, I had just turned around and was watching it, and was in disbelief of everything. I stayed in my, stayed on that side of the office for about fifteen more minutes watching what was going on, and then I decided to call my dad and ask him, because my dad works for the Library of Congress. So I decided to call him and see how he was doing and you know had he heard what was going on? He said, "Yeah," and I remember him asking me – Quote, "Have you guys beefed up security, or you guys going to do anything? Is anything going to happen over there?"

I nonchalantly replied, "No, we don't have, you know, we're not concerned with anything, you know, we don't think anything is going to happen."

He's like, "OK." He's like you know, "Have a good day," and he said, "I know you're getting off early." And he asked me was I still getting off early and I told him, "I believe I am." So I hung up with him and thought nothing of it. Of course I went back to the other side of the office and was standing by the gunboat like I said and that's when the plane hit.

My first initial reaction was not a plane. My first reaction was construction and the reason why I thought it was construction was the area that the plane hit had just been remodeled, so I was thinking, floor caved in, something felt., when I, within a matter of about sixty seconds I watched the blinds shake. I looked up at the TV and then I go look, I stick my head outside our door. We have jailer bars on that door, and I look and I see people running and I see debris on the ground. So, still my reaction is you know, construction.

Also during that sixty seconds at the time we were not manning 9mm guns. We all grabbed our gun belts which were locked, mine was locked in my locker. So I had to open my lock really quick. Pull it out; put it on; grab a gun and grab three clips, a radio, a flashlight, and we ran out of our office.

When we, Mr. Moore had called us back for like a second and said, “We’ve been hit by a plane.” That’s when my heart stopped. I could feel my heart like fall down, because I just remembered talking to my dad and him asking me that, and I’m going of course, “This would never happen,” I said then.

The reality is now I have a plane sitting inside you know the Pentagon where I work.

Q. (11:14) Do you know how he knew it was a plane at that point?

A. Do you know I never asked, and to be actually honest I really didn’t care. I just wanted to know what was going on.

Where our office sits on the 4th deck, we are about

Q. (11:41) This is from the outside, I don’t know what’s easier for you. This is from the inside courtyard. This is the outside. We’re looking at a schematic of 4th floor.

A. Well, as matter of fact we’re over here. No we’re in the sixth, we’re further over I believe, this way. Yeah ‘cause we are over here.

Q. (12:03) Yeah, here’s corridor 5.

A. Right. So we’re over here. Right, but when we ran out, I remember running down a passageway to the 4th, or to the 6th corridor. We looked out there in the E ring, was really nothing. Another guy who was in front of us by the name of OS2 PAZ, he runs out with a CO₂ bottle, and he is one of the guys who deals with parking, but he works in the same office with us. He ran out of the office with a CO₂ bottle and we lost him. We never saw him again for a second, ‘cause the smoke was starting to build up. He reported that the floor had collapsed. Going wild,

we ran around and that's when we ran by the 5th corridor and this is when we got on, I believe these are the escalators?

Q. Uh huh.

A. OK, those are the escalators. OK, well when we ran out, we ran around this area and it was pitch black. I couldn't see anything,

Q. (12:56) In that corridor?

A. Corridor 4.

Q. (12:59) Now are you still on the 4th floor at that point?

A. Yes, we're still, we haven't left, we have not left the deck. We couldn't run up the 5th floor 'cause it was, it had debris all over the place and to get where we had to go, we would have had to go through the 4th corridor. Right here, we ran right here and got out and like I said, we found out that it was pitch black. I myself spread eagle on the floor to find people's feet to try to direct them with the sound of my voice.

Q. (13:27) So you could, you could hear people, or you –?

A. We could hear people running and stuff like that but the space was filling so fast with white smoke that you know you couldn't see people unless they were right there in your face, so –

Q. (13:41) The smoke was white?

A. It was white at the time, right. This area was black. Somehow or reason, I still don't know, but, maybe it was the lighting, or maybe it was just debris that was just black, but it was darker smoke over here to –

Q. (13:51) To the right of corridor 4.

Q. (another) So it'd be corridor 5.

A. Corridor 5. We got to Corridor 4, we ran straight back.

Q. (14:01) Toward the E ring?

A. Toward the E ring. Over here in this area we met I can't remember half the people we met, but we met ranks from everything from E1s to Admirals, one-star Admirals, and they were getting people out.

One of the guys, our first initial thing is whenever we have a situation like this, we're supposed to check on the CNO, VCNO, Commandant Marine Corps, Assistant Commandant Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy. Well one guy did that with one sweep, and those personnel were being evacuated at the time. So it was nothing, they were all get- they were already out of the building. It was these people down here that our concern shifted to.

We were met by a DPS agent who had been there maybe, I think he said he had been there two weeks, and didn't know everything in the Pentagon and he's freaking out. So we assisted him as well.

We got personnel out. There were people that were in the office didn't even know we got hit, 'cause they couldn't, some people didn't even feel it. I don't know how. I can't question that.

Q. (15:14) So how did you get some of these people out when the hall was so smoky?

A. We just had to guide them out. If there was someone who was coherent and was responsive and was you know ready to do something, we just asked them, “Could you make sure this personnel can get guided out of the building,” you know.

Q. (15:31) OK, kind of pointed them toward the courtyard, or -?

A. We pointed them and told every, we told everybody, I asked everybody, “Please go to the courtyard.” Unfortunately you know, we had to get a little, a little loud with certain people. Some officers, captains that didn’t really, really didn’t know what to, how to respond to anything and it was more, I think it was being hysterical and the idea of what had just happened. They wanted to go help, but the situation required less people to help, and so –

Q. (16:05) Now why did you tell them to go to the courtyard? Is that a preplanned place that you, I mean was that previous planned? How did that occur?

A. What happens is, if there’s a situation in the Pentagon we have an evacuation route, that was enforced, but not as enforced as it should have been before September 11th. But the thing is basically to get everybody else out of the building and if the courtyard is closer to you, go to the courtyard and from there you can go to one of the other corridors and get out the building that way. Instead of trying to wind through a smoke-filled space, because as I said, I mean the plane hit and within a matter of ten minutes, I mean that whole area was filled with smoke. So rather than cause more damage and injuries to personnel get them out into the courtyard. Number one they can get fresh air, they can breath and everything, and if there’s nothing happening over there, instead of them having to run, we can at least quickly just walk them over there and get

them outside of the building. So that was the one reason why we were told to get them outside to the courtyard.

Also on the 4th floor the closest place to go is the courtyard from, if how you look at it when you're inside the Pentagon, the 4th floor is actually the closest thing to get to. So we just said, "Out to the courtyard."

Basically, as I said we had to ask people just to, just leave the building as fast as possible and I understood that a lot of people wanted to help, but if you were going to help at least help out there assisting victims that we bring out. Standing here is going to cause more danger to your health and you could get in someone's way and everything. So just, you know, we just, you know you had to get a little vocal and you know do your job and you know we are military police and you know just did what we had to do as far as telling them, "Hey, I know you want to help, but you have to go."

From there myself and PETTY OFFICER RIKOWSKI (Phonetic), who was my partner at the time of the, well when we got hit, we became partners and we've been partners ever since then. We both teamed up and just stayed together and just made sure we watched each others back. We both went outside, got some air, suggest you know, you know get some of that smoke out of our system. Basically the 4th floor was done. There was enough team members out there from us. There was a total of five of us, I'm sorry, there was a total of four of us, that were working together. Three of us were security force and as I said, PS2 PAZ was just a parking guy but you know, knew what we do for security and he went out there and helped.

The other guy was PETTY OFFICER JACKSON. They both teamed up OS2 PAZ and PETTY OFFICER JACKSON both teamed up and did separate things away from us and as far as trying

to help. I didn't really know how bad everything was until after we left the courtyard and we went by the Navy Command Center. Then that's when reality then really took hold.

People have asked me how big the hole was that was by the Command Center and I'm not good at guessing numbers, but you could at least drive a car through it. A mid-sized sedan could go through the hole.

Q. (19:46) Where was this hole that you're speaking about?

A. It was between the C, I'm sorry between the E and D ring. That does go right.

Q. (20:01) And this is on the first floor, the hole.

A. No, this is actually the sec – It's on the second deck. How's that look. But if I'm correct I think it's between the D and E rings. I can't remember exactly. At the time I really wasn't caring at all which one it was between.

Q. (20:25) (chuckle) Right.

A. But I know it's on the 2nd deck and it's between the – well maybe no, you might be right I think it is the first deck.

Q. (20:35) Yeah, I think it is the, was the 1st deck.

A. It is the 1st deck. I'm sorry. Now that I, yeah you're right. I believe this is –

Q. (20:42) Uh huh, that's it.

A. That's it, so maybe it's between the C and D.

Q. (20:46) C & D?

A. C & D, I never get these rings right. They throw me off sometimes. But it was, I know this was it and I believe the outside of it was right here. I believe this is it. I can't remember, but –

Q. OK.

A. But I remember that it was a big gigantic hole there. We, I sat there and saw that debris was everywhere. Windows were, had been shattered and the, I thought the thing that I think caught me as far as how hard the plane had hit, when we went outside, we saw the windows and we saw the hole. There was a row, they're rings, so of course there's a wall on each side and there's the open air and to the right of where the hole was, there was debris stacked literally across that side of the wall and I sat there and I thought maybe it was stuff that had just been left out there. Come to find out it was from inside the building. It was just put against the wall. It was on fire. I don't know how many CO₂ bottles we went through. When we got up there, there was Commanders, Captains, Lieutenants, Ensigns, LTjgs, Chief Petty Officers, E6s, it didn't matter. It was Navy and Marine personnel, civilian personnel and it was just an effort, just trying to get in the Command Center to get another person out of there.

At the time, it didn't matter what your rank was. It didn't matter who you were or what you were, it was basically what mattered was working as a team trying to evacuate as many people as we could get out.

I remember seeing one of the survivors who works in the Commander Center that we have back up on the 4th deck and I remember seeing her being brought out of the Pentagon and I saw her reaction and her look. She looked very distraught, which of course is to be expected. I said, she

just had tunnel vision. I mean her eyes were bearing straight ahead. She was being guided out and everything.

Q. (23:08) She came out from the Command, of the Command Center?

A. She worked in the Command Center, but I don't think she was actually in there. I don't, I know she works at the Command Center, but where she was during the time of the blast I didn't, I never asked her. I just thought that's something that I don't need to know and she probably doesn't want to talk about. But I know that she did work there, because she now works back at the, the one that we have reopened.

During that time, you know I'm in disbelief, but I have a lot of adrenaline. My heart is beating so fast. I couldn't probably catch it if I wanted to and we hear the personnel in the Command Center screaming, asking for help and I'm going (chuckle, like one of defeat) what can we do, because we didn't have fire fighting gear. CO₂ bottles only work for so much and only knocked out so much of the fire, but as soon as you knocked it right back out, it came right back.

I remember a gentleman walking into behind the Command Center, in where another part of a hole was and he walked out and when he was trying to go in, he was walking back out after spraying it down with CO₂ and he got hit with a live wire. It didn't shock him. I mean it shocked him, but it wasn't a jolting shock it was a startling shock, but the wire was so hot it burnt him right here on the top of his head, and I was like, "Wow!"

We started seeing personnel being evacuated. They were getting people out.

Q. (24:55) Of the Command Center?

A. Actually they were just personnel who were still in the building trying to help, who were hurt and stuff like that. When we were down there I don't ever recall getting one people from, that I physically helped out of the Command Center.

During the time that we're standing that area, we're of course in whites and there was about a foot to two feet, oh maybe a foot, foot and a half of water that was on the deck, or on the ground outside. We're in our whites and we're just walking through it. Didn't matter. I didn't care about my whites at the time. The one thing that we had to be cautious of is that we had 45 bullets on us, 45 rounds on us, and we could not get too close to the fire, but, cause we didn't want to set those off.

We went outside and got some fresh air and I was just seeing people of different races and different backgrounds and with families and who were just, one gentleman in particular was, he clothes were all messed up. They had to get him out of his clothes and when we looked at him he was just completely burned, and it's one of those things where you feel, it's an eerie feeling because you know this is just something that you don't want to see. At the same time I'm really, really mad, because we haven't, these persons, these people didn't do anything to anybody. You know, they come to work just like I do. Do what they have to do and you know some of this personnel are not going to make it. Come to find out later on, I found out the guy did not make it. He lived six more weeks I believe after we got hit, and I was told that by someone who had assisted him.

But you know it was so hard to just sit there and see this and not want to do something more because these people just were just like an average personnel. They do what they have to do. They come to work. They have families and friends, and you know to see this, it really got me really aggravated and really, really mad.

But we continued to go in and out breathing fresh air, go right back out. There was a gentleman who I'm not sure if he was military or if he was a civilian personnel but he was a volunteer firefighter and his car was parked really close where he could run out and go get, he had his fire suit in the car. He got on this fire suit and got on his boots and his helmet, but he didn't have mask or oxygen so he couldn't really go, there was nothing he could really do you know unless he was going to breath all the toxic gases that were flowing.

I remember that there was asbestos. You could smell some flesh because some personnel were already dead. Material around the building, wires, it was a smell that you can't really get out of your head. You could also smell that the CO₂ had been sprayed at certain things because that made a stronger chemical smell.

We for about two hours tried to do what we could do. We found out there was nothing else that we could do. We were asked to leave due to the fact that, we did not know until after that the windows in the Pentagon they were shattering and we thought, the hotter they got they were going to burst. Come to find out they're meant to just shatter and that's it. They won't blow out. We didn't know that and no one wanted to take a chance on that.

Q. (28:48) How was that decision made to you know to leave? What happened?

A. The Defense Protection System, or Service, the DPS, the Pentagon Police, came out and told everybody we had to leave the building. What was heard was there was another plane on its way, so that's why they escorted us out. During this whole time Mr. Moore was in our office and the ironic whole thing about the smoke being in the passageways was, our office, there really wasn't a lot of smoke and he sat there the whole time while we were in there and he was fine.

Q. (29:24) Was he talking to you guys on the radio?

A. He talked to us on the radio and stuff like that. We did, we did finally leave.

There's one more thing I did forget about during the whole time we were running in and out I had escorted a personnel from the third floor outside and I was, the escalator, was no power in that area. The escalators were down. So I was walking down the escalator and I remember I was walking from the, I was coming down to the first floor and the building shook again, and I thought we got hit by another plane, and this time I'm like, my heart, I am scared now, because I'm, afraid that I could die. Come to find out after we got outside that the fuselage had blown up and that's what caused the loud shake. To me and to a lot of other people it was louder than the plane just hitting along.

I talk to my – come to find out my dad, when I talked to him about a month later - we had lunch at the Library of Congress, and he was like you know I was talking to him and they, the Federal government was evacuated as well, and he told me he felt that second explosion. I was like, wait a minute.

He said Yeah, he said, people from all around that area could feel the fuselage when it blew up and I was like “Wow!” that's a lot of power.

So that was probably the point that had me scared the most. After-

Q. (31:05) How long after do you think that was? I mean how much time between when the plane hit and that --

A. It's funny that you ask about time. From the time that the plane hit until the time that we finally stepped out into South Parking, I had thought it was about thirty minutes. When we looked at our watches we had been in there for two and a half hours, and it didn't feel like it. So

if you ask me a time, to me it felt like maybe ten minutes later after the plane hit. It could have been forty-five minutes. I didn't know, but time at that, it was like time sped up or something, because like I said, we, it seemed like we were in there for a half an hour and we had been in there almost three hours and I was like "Wow!"

When we finally got outside the parking lot, of course we work for the Navy, but we work also under DPS, because they are overall in charge of you know police services there. But they knew who we were and everything and they wanted us to get personnel away from the Pentagon because that was a report of the plane that was brought by in Pennsylvania, was thought to be headed toward our way. So they wanted personnel clear, far, far away from the Pentagon.

Mr. Moore has a very big powerful truck and it's loud, too. Well he got his truck and we all hopped in the back of it. All, us, myself and the other three guys. We hopped in the back and we rode around the parking lot just making sure our personnel – because some people were trying to get their cars, but there was no way you were going to leave that day.

I mean there was, I mean you would have had to pay, I'd of had to see that, if you tried to leave out of here and go home, 'cause traffic was stopped on 395. It was stopped on the GW Parkway. It was stopped somewhere. It was stopped on Route one ten. I mean everything was at a standstill, so we get in our truck. We're telling people to go. Well, DPS tell us to get out and get away because they're running away too. "Planes about to hit. Get away! Get away! Get Away! Get Away!"

As I said, that of course was the plane that was taken down in Pennsylvania.

After that had happened we ran, we finally got a chance to go around to the crash site. I looked up and I'm watching a building that I work in, that I've seen a lot, 'cause I am from here. A building that is probably one of the most secured buildings has a huge gaping hole in it. I'm just

sitting there and I don't and I'm just in awe. I'm just like, I can't believe this. It was one of those things where I'm thinking I'm watching a movie that I'm in. I'm at home watching it, but I'm actually there.

When I finally got out there and I'm looking, like I said, I'm standing there in disbelief, to my left I have never seen in my life, people work together like they worked that day. There were more ambulances, fire trucks, rescue trucks, police officers than I've ever seen that was standing out there. Ambulances were lined up together, personnel had removed the stretchers, put them on the, had already had them lined up. They also had other personnel out there. We had military members, civilian members from the Pentagon who were given scrubs to help assist in pulling out bodies, getting this, getting that. I was just standing there and I'm watching this.

Well we got tasked to go help the FBI. "Find parts of the plane." Did not realize the plane could be found two and a half miles from a crash site, but it was. We're walking and we just kept walking and we see little pieces here and anything that we saw we were told to put a piece of tape on something and mark its location and not touch it. We did that for about an hour and came back. Our chief, our, we had a chief at the time, then came back. He wasn't at work that day and he came to work and we were tasked to go, from our superiors to go find every Navy person. I don't care who or where they are and write their name down, because the Navy was taking a tally of who was there and who wasn't there.

That lasted forever. During that time a report of another plane, I think, was on the rise, or something of that nature. I think what it was, was I think it was one of our fighter jets, I believe, had flown and I don't know if he was flying fast or what, but I guess personnel didn't recognize it on the radar, and it alarmed us and we were in the North Parking area by where the nursery is, the daycare is and all these little kids are out there. And I'm like these kids have no idea what's

going on. They're sitting there and the teachers are being very calm with them. I had to commend them on that you know. Holding their hands and talking and really not talking about what was going on, 'cause you know, some of their parents were probably involved somewhere along the line. You don't want to tell a kid, "Hey your dad might be --" you know, so they talked to them and you know, let them play and everything's - and then I felt so bad when we had to let them know a plane was coming 'cause I mean you got these kids who are one years to three years old probably or maybe six months to three, three and a half years old, out there. You've got to go, "Hey," you know, "let's get the kids and go." And I mean women are trying to run. They have cribs going across the street.

I'm just like, "Whoa." We came back. By this time I'm hot. I'm mad and I'm hungry and thirsty 'cause you know, the heat and those four combinations for me are just not something that's good to have. (interviewers chuckle) But, I don't like being all four of those at once, but when we got back, they I guess raided the Naval Exchange. They came back with more Gatorade bottles than I have seen in a store. There were Gatorade bottles literally a good seven feet, maybe longer, twelve feet down on the grass, all the way down. They had taken out chips. They had taken out candy bars, energy bars. They had other juices. They had soda. They had water. They were bringing gallon jug waters. I mean there was stuff, when we came back I couldn't believe it. I'm sitting here going "Where did all this come from?"

You would think that OK, somebody was nice enough, they came back with more stuff. For about an hour and a half they kept bringing out stuff. I'm going, "Where is this stuff coming from?"

Basically, we were told that the Naval Exchange and the Marine Corps Exchange had no choice but to open their doors and you know provide. So got some chips in my system, drank some

Gatorade. I was OK. I was now mad and hot, but I was there for the long haul. It didn't matter how long, you know, before I got home. I'm from here, you know, I'll see my family when I'm finished with work.

Q. (39:08) Were you able to call them, or let anybody know that you were OK, or -?

A. Yeah as a matter of fact, after we all got outside and we first saw the building, everybody had cell phones, but they had put a block. You couldn't call in. You weren't receiving a call. So I couldn't call anybody.

I'm going – my mother works at a high school, she's a teacher at a high school. So I know my mother is going ballistic. I have two little sisters and a little brother that is in school so everybody right now's probably like paranoid. My mom and my step dad I wanted to get a hold of them. Then you know of course I had to get a hold of my dad and my step mom, but I had to go "How am I going to do this? If I can only get a call of one person, how can I get one person who might know all these numbers to get a hold of my other family members?"

Luckily my step dad was at home, and my dad is a guy who is very calm and collected. So he didn't let me hear him scared, but I called him and I said, "I need you to call my dad's family, my dad's house or my dad's job or something and let mom know I'm OK."

Q. So that was about three and a half hours later?

A. Well, my step dad I guess didn't know my dad's number or couldn't find it. So my dad's family didn't know. My mom knew and my little sisters knew, but that was it.

About five hours later, after the Pentagon got hit, about two hours after I made that initial phone call, I called my dad's house. I finally got through and my whole family is there. They are all

nervous. You know, they're asking me if I'm OK, and frantic and everything and I told them I was OK. And told them I just didn't know when I was coming home. I didn't know, and I was like "I'm going to be here for quite a while. So I'll talk to you guys when I can," you know. "I'll try to call later on."

So hung up with them and went back to work and then after that it was providing perimeter security throughout, through the outside of the Pentagon, out by the highways and everything. The parking lot was frenzy 'cause they had Walter Reed hospital. They had hospitals from all the major bases here, all had their medical staffs out here. It was just people everywhere. I do remember a gentleman, I guess whose father had worked at the Pentagon or whatever and he was in the area of where the blast was and I don't know if he died or what. But there was a gentleman and he was carrying a, he got a two foot log about that big around. And he's, it's a huge log, and he's carrying it. I looked and I see this guy and I'm going "Why is there a guy on 395 with traffic walking with a log?"

I asked the gentleman what he's doing. He's like, "My father was in the Pentagon." So now I'm thinking, "OK, have a guy who's a little depressed." You know could be a little violent or something. Then he's talking more. Then I smell that he's been drinking. Now I'm a little bit more nervous than I was the first time, 'cause now this guy could be a whole combination of things. Start talking to the guy. What he was saying is true about as far as who he was and where he was from and everything. But we had to have the guy escorted off 395. They wanted no one up there that seemed to be up there.

Prior to meeting this guy we had told another guy he had to leave, who was in a car. An Alexandria police officer came over there and assisted us. Well, he came and assisted us in this situation and took the log from the guy and was told he just needs to leave from here. The guy

asked for his log back. We couldn't get it back. He went off on his way and when he got toward, by Pentagon City, right there where the exit off of 395 goes to Pentagon City, he broke and just cried. I felt so, so sad for the guy, because he doesn't know if his dad is dead or alive, you know, and you hope for the best but you know sometimes you expect. – I mean you hope for the best but you sometimes get the worse. I was going "I hope you know the best outcome comes out. Maybe he's just hurt and not dead."

But for the majority of that afternoon, into the middle of the evening, that's all we did. I was thinking we were going to be there until about the next morning sometime, but I had no way to get home. My car keys, my change of clothes, my boat bag, my IDs everything was inside the Pentagon. The Pentagon was open and we were told at your own risk, you can try to go to your office and get your stuff. I tried that, I got up to the 4th deck and turned right back around. There was so much smoke, fire, heat, steam and the smell was just, unbecoming, I just turned around and called my dad and said, "I need you to get my spare key on my dresser and a change of clothes for me and meet me at the Pentagon."

So he met me and I got to change out of the hot, sticky, dirty uniform that I was in and get into something more comfortable and that made me feel a little bit better and I was motivated to work a little bit more.

About 9:30, maybe a little later than that we were directed to go to the Navy Annex where they were doing calculations of who was alive and who was dead.

Q. (45:55) Was that from MR. MOORE, or -?

A. That I believe had come from, I know that the, I want to say the VCNO's personnel were doing, but our boss ADMIRAL TRACEY was involved with it as well, so she put the word

down to us to take care of that. It was just told to him and he told our Chief. So we went back to the Navy Annex and we were there for a little while. They had pizza, which was great. (everyone chuckles) got some food in the stomach. Wasn't much, but it was something.

Q. (46:32) What were you doing at the Navy Annex then?

A. At that time, nothing. I sat in the chair. I was watching the news for a couple hours. We watched the news all the time we were in there. Actually that's a lie, I fell asleep in the chair, 'cause I was tired by this point. I was exhausted. It had been a long day and I dozed off in the chair and after that our Chief came back in and said, "We're going to split it up like this. We're going to do it like that." And about I want to say 2:30, three o'clock I finally got in my car and drove, was driving home and I stopped on 395 right before the exit, to, or after the exit to Ronald Reagan Airport and I looked to the side, and I pulled over and I just got out of my car and I just you know looked outside and looked at the Pentagon on fire still and I cried. You know, I bawled really really hard because I knew there was probably some people that, in the Command Center that I had met, since I had been there, that probably didn't make it. And there were just a lot of, just not them but all the personnel that we knew had died, on the planes and in New York. You know it was something that really touched me, you know. And to be a part of what was going on you know, it was really harder. So I cried and then about five minutes later I got in my truck and got home and that's how my day ended.

Q. (48:16) In December they had an award ceremony. Would you like to talk a little bit about that?

A. Yes, Two weeks before Christmas, myself, PETTY OFFICER RYKOWSKI (phonetic), PETTY OFFICER JACKSON, PETTY OFFICER PAZ, and MR. AL MOORE were presented the Naval Marine Corps medal.

Q. (48:42) Did you know you were going to get that?

A. We did. We didn't know we were going to get one, but we knew we were put in for several awards. Myself and PETTY OFFICER RYKOWSKI (phonetic) used to sit and talk on watch and we used to joke and say, you know, "I don't know why we're getting an award. We didn't do anything spectacular."

I don't think, I think you know, people say we were heroes, and I saw, yeah, you could call me that but I don't really see myself as a hero. I see the people who lost their lives more as a hero than myself, but we did receive the award. Our families were allowed to attend, my mom and my dad and my step mom and step dad and my little brother and sisters were there, and my grandmother, too.

But before, we found out a couple of days prior to the ceremony what the award was. I just wanted to go see where the award was on the list of awards. It's just something I do. That's extra points for a test, you know, if it's worth something. Come to find out it's the highest award you can get for peacetime. And then I was like, "Wait a minute. You're going to give me an award or a medal that is the highest that I can get during peacetime?" I mean this is the 8th highest before Medal of Honor. I couldn't believe it I just sat there in disbelief going, (chuckle) OK.

So it was presented to us by the Secretary of the Navy and was put on and presented by the Secretary, no, by, yes Secretary of the Navy and the CNO and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps were there as well.

I'm happy you know that I, you know, it's, it lets people know that you know, you can always. I look at it as something to let people know, hey he did something that was very heroic and very life threatening, you know, detriment to his life and whatever. I look at this, and you know, you see it on my uniform. Yeah, I did receive it, but don't think that I wouldn't do it again or anything like that, and it's not to say that I have a big head, but I don't really care about the medal. I'm happy that I do have it and that I did receive something for doing what I did, but it hasn't changed my view if again something like this was to happen, I would do it again and wouldn't care, as I did the first time. I wouldn't care about a medal or an award or you know, just a thank you is good enough for me, you know. Just to see somebody go home and be with their family again, you know, meant something to me. That's how I feel and I will always continue to feel that way.

But yeah, that was it was a nice ceremony. It was, I was moved and touched by what was said by the Secretary of the Navy.

Q. (51:51) What changes have you seen in your, in your area of security since September 11th?

A. We're stricter on personnel. Before we use to be a little lenient about if you didn't lock your space up, or we might just go do it for you. We're in a rush or something like that. Now, excuse me, if you forget to lock your space up there will be a red piece of paper on your desk and you have to come see us the next day and we'll write up a violation on you. Everybody is, if you don't know who they are, or never seen them before, you have a tendency now to look at them a little harder.

Badges, need to have it, you know. As far as the paper side, where they give you your badges if your paperwork's not in order, you're not getting it. Come back with, you know the right

paperwork or you just won't get a badge. It's nice to have our brother police officers who are the Army out there. They are checking bags, checking the badges, you know doing patrols around the Pentagon and it's finally coming back to where we got the whole parking lot back to our, you know, because they had blocked it off for desorting (phonetic) and everything. The parking lot has been opened back to everybody except for where they have construction work, but it's nice to see that now. It's a sense of normalcy, but it's a heightened secure, eye of normalcy, you know. Everybody is very aware. Looks around, you know, walks a lot different, you know, than what they used to, but we've beefed up our security. We're now armed on watch. There is a armed OPNAV security personnel twenty-four hours, seven days a week. Until we go down in the threat condition, when they lower the threat condition then that's the next level, to the next one, we're allowed to put them up. Until them we're not doing it.

If you want something, if you need something, sure, suspicion, anything suspicious will be reported. We had a, you know we have incidences. Like we had one yesterday where personnel were leaving out secret documents. Just leaving them out. There is none of that. As soon as we get, as soon as it's told to our boss, he's already telling us, "Write a violation."

I don't care you know, because you know he looks at it as, when he told us at a meeting, he looks at it as if I see this piece of, if I see a document like this. Let's say some guy who works on you know the janitorial staff comes out there and he has this binder, and let's say you know, we all think he's a good guy, but actuality he's a terrorists and he has all these documents and he's reading stuff and just like, "Oh, Ok, well," and then he goes gives this stuff to somebody else and then – we had the same thing, we just had happened in September 11th, happen all over again.

So it's to the point that we are, we're nosey. I know I'm one of the ones out of the office that has been told is the nosiest. I'm the little guy, because I get along with everybody, I'm just saying hello, but during the same time, I check spaces and we run drills where burn bags, to make sure you put them up so they don't get snatched. I'm one of the few guys who goes in there you know, act like I'm just saying hello to people. Walk out and walk out with a burn bag, and then I'll go, I'll go "This belong to you?"

And then they're all in a shock and they're like, "How did - you -?"

And I'll go, "Just make sure you just put them up and out of sight," I say, you know, "cause if I can do it, what makes you think somebody else can't do it?"

But it's like I say, everything is back to normalcy and it's a good thing and I'm happy.

Q. (56:20) How about you personally. What's what's changed with you personally?

A. I figured you might ask me that. You know I was, I went out with some friends to a bar and we were sitting there. We were just drinking together and just talking about things and I told them I said, you know, September 11th brought a lot of things to my head and I said the one thing that it let me know, tomorrow's not promised to anybody. You know, you live life once and live it to the fullest you know. If you want something, go get it, you know. Might take you a little bit to get it. Might cost some sweat and some tears to get it, but if you want it go get it, because once you're gone, you're gone, you know. Only thing we have left of you is memories.

It let me know that, you know, I'm not a guy who holds grudges or gets mad at everybody, but you know if something has happened with someone that I might not have gotten along with, just squash it you know, don't let it bother you. You know, be a friendly person and help out, you know and look out after people and stuff like that. So it just taught me to just live life, you know

to the best that I can. Do you know, do for myself as I can and enjoy myself. That's about it.

That's probably the biggest thing I've taken out of this life, or out of this whole situation is just live life to the fullest and tomorrow's never promised to anybody.

Q. (58:05) Where do you go from here in the Navy or after this tour?

A. As of right now I'm in the process of conversion over to the Master-at-Arms. Which right now they need thirty thousand of us, so I wouldn't think it's going to be a hard thing since I've already gone to the same school that Master-at-Arms go to. I've already had that covered. From there, it's I don't know, because I just recently got married so, my wife is also Navy, but she's in California. So right now we're waiting for the Navy to tell us where we're both going to go, or when we're going to move together, but right now it looks like we'll probably stay here and then one of us has to go to sea and then we'll be back down to Norfolk, but looks like for right now, I'm here for two more years and I do want to stay here and it looks like I will be here for the next two years.

So, I like it here. I enjoy being a military police officer. It's fun. I just like to help people you know. And if like I said, if I get a thank you, that's all I care about. So that's about it.

Q. (59:18) What were some lessons learned that you thought you know, things that could have worked better or should have worked better or that you know and are being reviewed as far as trying to handle to this type of a situation should it occur again?

A. None of the things, I think the biggest thing, lesson learned from this whole situation for at least the Navy side of the house was evacuation. Where to go in an event that a situation like this

or a fire, or anything could force you to have to go another way. I think that was the biggest thing learned, or a thing that we learned that took out of this.

Something else that I just wish that, a lesson learned that we might want to keep you know abreast of is for us to have you know, almost like on a ship. You know on a ship you have your OVA and you have fire-fighting gear. You know, we don't have those things here. You have to wait for the fire department and if something like this was to happen again, it took them almost two, three hours just to get the fire truck into the courtyard. You know, if we got guys, you know, take them to a training course, or get them the equipment and just have a designated area for it. Just like on the ship, I think that would, it would go a long way, because that way you get them on this gear, you get them this and you know, if it's that OPNAV security has to be fire fighters as well, fine. You know, I'll do that, but to have to just rely on some – I mean who knows how many more people we could have got out of there you know had we had that equipment.

We could have got maybe one life, maybe ten lives. You never know, but it's just something I think that you know should be you know one day addressed. I don't really have the guts to go to anybody and, you know because I don't want to get my feelings hurt. (everyone chuckles) So I just keep comments to myself. But I think –

Q. (01:01:31) Other people have addressed that similar issue.

Q. (Another) Right, you're not alone in that opinion.

A. But I just think you know, we have, you know, it's funny because they call the Pentagon a little city, which it actually is. I mean you could shut the, you could keep us trapped into the Pentagon and we have cafeterias. We got a CBS. We got computer stores. They're putting new

restaurants in there, you know. And we have a police force. Why not have a fire fighting force, you know. You might not have fire trucks. That would be nice, but have personnel who are fire fighter qualified to just work in the Pentagon. That way like I say this will never have to happen again like it did.

Q. (01:02:19) Or even you know, allow shipboard personnel that have fire fighting experience, could have used you know some of the basic fire equipment had it been there, I know.

A. Had they been provided, yes, I mean, I you know, I wouldn't have minded throwing on some, a fire fighting assemble and gone in there.

One thing that I have learned also, is you know, be prepared. I now keep my ship boots and a pair of coveralls just at work in the event something like this is to happen. One, I don't have to worry about damaging up my uniform if I have it on. Now, if it gets caught in a fire, you know, after I leave there's nothing I can do about that, but it allows me to be a little bit more unrestricted in the uniform. In those CNTs, I did feel a little restricted. I couldn't move like I really wanted to. So I keep my boots there and I keep my coveralls there.

I'm not saying something's going to happen, but it's just something for me to go, "OK, now I can work a little bit free and a little, I'm loose now, I can," you know, "Work now."

Those are probably the biggest things of the lessons learned or things that I have saw that could be improved, but over all the rules and regulations have you know gotten a lot tighter and I think that, I think we learned a lot from this and the things that needed to be addressed have been addressed.

Q. (01:03:56) How was, what was your opinion of the, I guess the state of confusion as far as who is in charge of what? From what you saw, security wise, you know, how did you feel the, I guess the emergency chain of command or that type of situation was handled?

A. You know, we watched you know, the law officials from Alexandria cops to Arlington cops to the FBI, whoever was out there. It was it's just like the movie, what's it called, "Murder at 1600," and the reason why I say that is there's a part in there where there's a murder and a guy comes out from Secret Service and he says you know that this is you know his house. The White House is his and Wesley Snipes who's a DC Cop says this is my city and what happens in my city is my city. And basically it was the same thing with what was going on out there. It was more or less personnel saying, "This is mine."

"No, this is ours."

"No it's this," it's Federal, but actuality the DPS, the Defense Protection Services, that was their jurisdiction. It was their land. It was their house. It's theirs. You know, now once that somebody crosses into the street it's all yours, but until that time that is theirs. That is their little city. That is their house you know. Let them run it.

It was a nuisance because everyday you would go out there and it'd be something different as far as who got in and who didn't get in. If you carried a gun and they saw that, and that you had area you need to go into, you go in, but like I said everyday was different story every time.

Q. (01:06:05) How did that conflict with like what the FBI was trying to do versus (_____
Inaudible 01:06:12)?

A. You know I don't really know who was trying to do what. I just know that this, everyday I went to work for seventeen days in a row, I was told this is what I had to do, and that's what I

did. I didn't worry about anybody else, you know. We didn't, we didn't you know that wasn't our league. Nothing that they were doing bothered us, so there was no need for us to even concern ourselves with them. They stayed out of our hair. We stayed out of their hair.

We were there assisting when they brought bodies out to the morgue, but that was (makes a sound meaning it was nothing) but really we just, about three days after we got hit our basic job was we became military escorts for a couple, few of the Admirals, ADMIRAL KEATING, ADMIRAL MULLIN, VICE ADMIRAL TRACEY. We basically were their escorts. If they needed to go somewhere we took them. We waited, walked with them. Especially with ADMIRAL TRACEY because she's our admiral. You know you have a tendency to favor those who you work for, you know. Little (_____ Inaudible 01:07:16) (everyone laughs)

You have a tendency to favor those, but you know we made sure that you know things were done and everything, but we did perimeter sweeps of the Pentagon.

I'll tell you one thing walking in there after that crash and the smoke has cleared and looking at the walls that were, when you saw them about five minutes before the plane hit, they were nice and clean, and you look at them a couple of weeks after the Pentagon got hit, and they're nice and black. So it was weird, but as far as what they were trying to do our there, the FBI, secret service, it was as the saying goes, too many chiefs, not enough Indians and that's what it was.

Q. (01:08:10) Do you have anything else you want to add that we haven't asked you about?

A. No, I think that's about it. That covers everything that I can remember, that sticks out in my mind. That's basically it.

Q. (01:08:26) Thanks very much for coming in. Especially on your day off.

A. Oh that's not a problem

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