

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

Capt Gary Hall
Capt Michael McDaniel

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Capt Mary Jo Sweeney (M.J.)

Current Address:

████████████████████
████████████████████
(w) DIRNAVSTAFF OPNAV Exec Asst

Date of Interview:

13 Mar 02

Place of Interview:

Pentagon

Number of Cassettes:

N/A

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; lessons learned; Awards; Reconstitution; Muster; SPRINT

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Capt Sweeney was born in Virginia but grew up on Saint Simons Island off the coast of Georgia. Her father was in hotel management so she was used to traveling around to 5 star hotels around the South and the West coast to visit friends in the hotel management world. This made it easier for her to adapt to a military lifestyle. She attended private high school and then Wake Forest University. She planned to go to graduate school majoring in Chemistry and German. This was 1977 and the Navy was actively recruiting females with technical degrees to come into the Navy. She had been involved in equal rights activities on campus, and when the Navy recruiters offered her a job with equal pay for both men and women, full medical and dental, 30 days leave a year and the possibility of living overseas she signed up. No one in her family had ever served in the military as a career. Her father had served as a yeoman in the Pentagon during World War II. She attended Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI and was commissioned in January 1978. Her first duty station was in Rota, Spain. She has been in the Navy now for 24 years. Other duty stations include Naples, Italy; Naval Postgraduate School dual majored in Transportation Management and Material Logistics Management; a tour in San Diego; Long Beach; two tours in Hawaii; the Naval Academy; and Norfolk, VA. She has always served ashore but her field of expertise has been logistics and port and terminal operations. She had her change of command from Commander Military Sealift Command Atlantic in Norfolk the morning of 24 August and arrived on the OPNAV staff at 1700 on 24 August. ADM Tracey had been there for about one week.

Topics Discussed:

On 11 Sep her office was in 4E623 in the Pentagon. It was the beginning of her third week there, her first tour in the Washington, D.C. area. ADM Tracey had left for a meeting and Capt Sweeney was across the hall talking to the EA for VCNO. They noticed on the television that they were covering the events at the World Trade Center. She immediately thought terrorism. She went back to the office of the Director Navy Staff, 4E623 and they turned up the volume on the television. As she watched Bryant Gumbel reported that a second plane had flown into the second tower of the World Trade Center. Shortly after this she felt and then heard an impact to the building. The floor shook under her feet. People down the corridor began yelling. Some of their yeoman ran around the corner and saw smoke. She went back into the office with CDR Mike Hiessey, and a yeoman. She went to get ADM Tracey's cover, briefcase and cell phone. They started down the hall, ran into ADM Tracey and exited the building at the mall entrance. It was very confusing even though everyone was calm. A lot of people got split up at that point and it looked like they were going into the courtyard. Capt Sweeney did not want to go into the courtyard. She was next to a Marine Corps three or four star General. There were Defense Protective Service guards standing in front of the various exits. The General said, "We want to go out those doors". The DPS guard told him people were exiting to the courtyard and they weren't to let anyone out the other doors. This was probably per some scenario that was based on containing things. The General began to argue but someone further down the corridor told them they could get out another door so they all made a beeline to that door.

Capt Sweeney, ADM Tracey, and CDR Hiessey went out the building and towards a guard shack. ADM Tracey wanted an accurate muster of the people on OPNAV staff. CAPT Sweeney volunteered to stay there and take musters. CDR Hiessey and another person were to go around and look for N Code people to get musters and then send the musters back to Capt Sweeney via runners. ADM Tracey went back toward the building to try to find the VCNO and CNO.

Someone near the impact site started yelling there was another plane coming. It was probably DPS who said this. She was watching people covered in white dust or injured people coming out. They had put up yellow crime scene tape short of the guard shack. They started pushing this crime scene tape further out because there were big chunks of airplane parts everywhere. She was pushed away from the rendezvous point in a crowd a people. They could no longer walk around the Pentagon. All traffic coming into the Pentagon was stopped except for emergency vehicles. The flames and black clouds were still coming up.

She walked down a ramp and thought she would walk to Arlington. Her cell phone was jammed. She thought at Arlington she could make phone calls from their landlines, but Arlington was locked down. She continued on to Fort Meyer, which was also locked down. She walked to Rosslyn. She found a Quality Inn, which had a lot of refugees from the Pentagon there. Someone loaned her change and she started trying to make phone calls. She called her husband collect and he told her where ADM Tracey and CDR Hiessey had gone, which was the VDOT building across from the Navy Annex.

She walked from Rosslyn to the Navy Annex, hitchhiking a ride. When she got to the VDOT building she was told they had gone to the Navy Annex. She went to the Marine Command Center and found ADM Tracey and CDR Hiessey, it was about 1430. She was hot and dehydrated.

ADM Ryan, N1, gave them Fourth Deck Wing Five for workspaces. Capt Sweeney and a JAG Captain walked through the spaces allocating space for DNS and all the N Codes, except for N3/N5, which was settled with the Marine Corps. They brought in the computer people and programmed the computers so the people had Internet access. They brought in SIPRNET drops and cable drops for CNN. This went on through the night. DNS staff was all safe and sound. AMD Tracey spent most of her time at the Command Center watching the casualty count. Capt Sweeney had the yeoman go around and make phone listings for the newly displaced people.

They had postings on a blank wall to get the word out to people about lost items, classified material concerns, etc. Later on they posted this on a website as people got up on the computers.

ADM Nancy Brown, probably on the second night, walked through with a large Circuit City bag handing out cell phone chargers, Blackberry chargers, and cell phone batteries (everyone's cell phones were dead, and no one had brought a charger with them). The focus of the first week was to get people on email and communicating.

LT(jg) Will Parks, meanwhile, was the OPNAV CACO coordinator. He worked to find trained CACO's for the OPNAV staff.

The second week they worked on appropriate end of tour awards. She had special awards boards for five days straight to make sure that everyone who was declared dead and were going to have a funeral would have a Purple Heart. The hardest thing was reading the citations. The awards board, with the EA's from the representative codes, including from N2 and N3/N5, which took the hardest hits, were extremely emotional sessions.

The Purple Heart was easy if you were dead. They determined Captains would receive a Legion of Merit, Commanders – Meritorious Service Medal, Chiefs- Navy Commendation, E6 and below – Navy Achievement Medals. It was magic how fast they got done. The awards shop in the Navy Yard did an amazing job. Capt MaryAnne Lynch, a reservist, came on her two-week annual training the Monday after 11 Sep and Capt Sweeney just threw her at the awards. There were also civilian awards given to people who were killed. They also needed to watch the progress of the Civilian Defense of Freedom Award. Up until then there had not been an award equivalent to the Purple Heart for civilians killed in the line of duty.

The next phase was working on awards for those who were alive. If you were injured as a direct result of a terrorist attack (bricks falling on your head, cuts, burns) you definitely got the Purple Heart. If you were injured because you were rescuing people that was not a Purple Heart. To get all those write-ups from people who were not at their normal administrative posts was phenomenal. The awards board went for 6 ½ hours where they worked through every award and every person. For the Navy and Marine Corps medal the criteria was did you risk your life. Going into the burning people to rescue people was a risk as differentiated from those who stood outside the burning building and caught people as they fell.

She is very proud that they got the awards to the casualties' funeral services. They had a flag officer signed up to go to every funeral, regardless of whether they were military, civilian or contractor. This was generous of the Navy because by the CACO manual you only get a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer if you're on active duty or die. You don't rate one if retired or civilian. ADM Ryan and the CNO decided if you died you got a CACO. This was an incredible act of coordination. Because the Navy has a system in place to deal with casualties and

immediately bring in grief counseling they felt they were better off than the victims of the World Trade Center attack.

The focus of the Director of Navy Staff was to get the staff reconstituted and up and running. Getting the mail, email access, standard processes up and running was key. It was the end of October before they looked at normal correspondence issues again.

The regular OPNAV Awards Board process is that Director Navy Staff, ADM Tracey, is the official chair of that. ADM Sweeney actually runs the board with a set group of single digit EA's, post-command Captains from several designators. Capt Sweeney chairs the board. They look at anywhere from 10 to 20 award recommendations (Legion of Merit and above) a week for both staff members and fleet members. CNO holds the delegated authority for the Legion of Merit. This board would typically take about an hour. Capt Sweeney called on the same group to look at the post-11 Sep awards. This took them about 3 days. They determined what would the person normally have gotten at the end of their tour. They did away with the summary of action and only wrote citations. They used a template with a standard phrase to recognize the person gave their life for their country as well as three individualized sentences. As a funeral was set the CACO would come by and collect the Purple Heart, the citation, the end of tour award and citation. That was phase one for those who lost their lives.

It was a marathon session when they looked at those who did heroic acts. They put out a request to all the N Codes. By the awards manual SECNAV retains the authority for all awards caused by an act of terrorism. They had to get the word out that where normally a Navy Achievement Medal or Navy Commendation Medal could be awarded by any three star in the case of 11 Sep awards this was not true. They had a session to discuss the criteria for Navy Marine Corps medal because there are specific criteria. People were required to do detailed write-ups of what nominees actually did if they were justifying this medal. These were due by 19 October. The board met within a week after that and the recommendations were to SECNAV shortly after. There were four people who easily merited the Navy Marine Corps medal as they went into the burning building and pried a person out from under a desk. There was a Seaman who took off his own shirt to put out the flames on a burning Lieutenant amidst the burning building.

The next group was the Meritorious Service Medal awardees. This group was generally the people who stood outside to catch people who jumped out of the middle rings, opened doors and yelled down smoke-filled hallways to orient people, or took leadership roles organizing. The Navy Commendation people were the worker bees or did individual things. Many people who came down from the Navy Annex to help merited Navy Achievement medals. They also looked at whether people were first on the scene and how long they stayed. The awards fell out into very natural groups. They didn't even recommend Letters of Commendation. They forwarded all this to SECNAV and then SECNAV had an awards board. The SECNAV board also looked at awards from SECNAV and the Marine Corps staff. They pulled everything together. All of the Navy Marine Corps medal nominations went through. They downgraded one Meritorious Service Medal to a Navy Commendation. Two awards were upgraded from Navy Achievement to Navy Commendation Medal. No one from the Navy awards board participates in the SECNAV board. SECNAV has their own board chaired by VADM Holmes.

The staff was running non-stop with the yeoman in shifts. The officers and chiefs were put into early and late groups. They tried to take Sundays off that first month or two because of the exhaustion factor.

Lessons Learned:

Capt Sweeney is looking forward to the Navy going to a web based system. The Marine Corps has a system where a person in the field can pull up the award write-up from the web, fill in the blanks, select submission chain and submit. This would alleviate all the paper shuffling. They are evaluating the funding for that type of project.

They checked with other services on how they were awarding certain awards, such as the Purple Heart. But being consistent within the Navy was more important than consistency with other services. They also checked with how the awards were merited in the Cole incident. Navy does not award the Purple Heart for smoke inhalation if that is the only injury.

ADM Tracey has been talking to the SPRINT team people to come and do a follow-up now at the six-month period.

Abstracted by:
CDR Carol O'Hagan
14 Mar 02

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Transcript of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

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arrived on the OPNAV staff at 1700 on 24 August. VADM Tracey had been there for about one week.

Topics Discussed:

Q. (07:01) Where was your office on 11 September?

A. Right where we're sitting right now in 4E623 in the Pentagon.

Q. (7:10) Tell us about 11 September. Kind of walk us through your day.

A. This was the beginning of my third week at this tour and this is my first tour in the Washington area. I had been lucky enough to be called to be an E ring EA to a three-star and I'd never before had a tour at Joint Staff, OPNAV, OSD, SECNAV. Unlike many of my peers, I had always been in a leadership job in the field, which is great until you get to Washington and you realize it's a whole different set of rules here. So I was still in my third week of learning about the different kinds of pressures here.

The day started quite normally. ADMIRAL TRACEY went off to a meeting. She was not in the office. I had gone across the hall to chat with the Vice-Chief of Naval Operations' EA about something and we both looked at the television and we realized something had happened. The first plane had flown into the World Trade Center and we were watching that. My first thought was large planes do not fly into the World Trade Center that mistakenly. I immediately flashed on the thought that World Trade Center was where a previous terrorist incident had occurred. I immediately thought terrorist.

We were watching this. I came back into the office on this side of the hall into 4E623, the home of Director of Navy staff and we turned up the volume on the CNN in here and watched events unfold including the impact of the second plane. By this time we realized things were really –

Q. (08:41) You saw that happen, as it happened you saw it, or was it a replay?

A. No, I was watching - at the time we had Bryant Gumbel and I'm not sure what cable, or what channel he's with, but we were watching Bryant Gumbel and he was going on and on about the plane flying into the Trade Center. He said, "Wait a minute, I've just received reports," and he was holding his ear piece and he said, "I've just heard that there could be a second plane into the second tower."

The live view that he had the camera on behind him did not show that, but then you saw a plume of smoke and he said, "We're going to try to shift the camera angle."

The camera angle shifted and it showed where the second plane had just flown in. It didn't show the plane actually flying in as many of us saw in later footage, but it showed that that happened. I remember looking at this in disbelief and looking at the look on Bryant Gumbel's face who was just, looked like he'd been poleaxed to realize that something equally horrific had happened and that there were now hundreds if not thousands of people who were in desperate straights.

That's the last image on television I remember seeing, because we were talking about it in the office and I was think about, "Well, THREATCON's going to go up. I wonder what this will mean to various things here in the building. But Director of Navy Staff is administrative staff.

We're not operations. We're not ATF Team. We're not any of those things and then at that point I heard, felt and then heard, there was a large shutter. It's one of those things I really can't remember because it came so close. It's almost when you're right under a thunder cloud and you don't know whether you're seeing the lightening or hearing the thunder first, but an impact to the building. The floor shook under our feet so that it wasn't just, you knew that something had happened. Then a large boom and then you heard the noise level immediately pick up down the

corridor from where we were that people were yelling. We went out into the corridor. A few of the yeomen ran around the corner here and saw smoke down there and started yelling for people to move toward us, the smoke. I walked back to the office. At this time ADMIRAL TRACEY was not yet back with us. It was CDR MIKE HIESSEY, and me and one of the Yeoman were in here. I walked into the officer we're sitting in right now, ADMIRAL TRACEY's office and I picked up her cover and her, what I knew to be her personal briefcase that served as her handbag and grabbed her cell phone. I think her cell phone was in the bag. Then we walked out and as we walked down the hall we encountered ADMIRAL TRACEY and we all exited the building. Went down some flights of stairs and exited the building, and I think the Mall entrance there. They were, it was quite confusing. Everybody was very calm. Everybody knew to evacuate. I knew, we were sure this was not the regular fire drill. A lot of people got split up at that point and it looked like they were going into the inner, what was the, the inner part of the Pentagon, whatever we call that –

Q. (12:11) The Courtyard?

A. The courtyard. I did not want to go there. Actually I happened to be standing next to a Marine Corps General. He was either a three or four-star, but I hadn't been on the staff long enough to really realize who he was. There were DPS, Defense Protective Service guards standing in front of various entrances where we were and the General said, "We want to go out this door." The DPS guard said, "No, people are evacuating to the courtyard. We're not suppose to let anyone out."

No doubt that was per some scenarios that Ok you contain things. The General's about to get into an argument, at that point someone down on this same deck, I want to say we were on the second deck, yelled, "We can get out down here!"

People just made a beeline and went out that way and I went out that door with ADMIRAL TRACEY, CDR HIESSEY, who's the Deputy EA, and others.

We went out and around the building toward where the impact had occurred and there was a guard shack there. ADMIRAL TRACEY was most concerned with getting an accurate muster of the people on OPNAV staff. I volunteered to stay on that spot and take musters. MIKE HIESSEY was going to go one way and I forget who was going to go around the other way and as we say N code people tell them to send runners to me with musters.

ADMIRAL TRACEY went back toward the building to see if she could find the Vice-Chief and CNO and hook up with them. What was interesting here is that at that point someone started yelling down near the impact site, that there'd been a report that there was another plane coming. I think this probably came from the Pittsburgh flight that they realized had been hijacked, but it did not yet, been forced to the ground.

Q. (14:02) Do you remember who said that? Uniformed folks?

A. I want to say it was uniformed folks. It wasn't military. I'm thinking DPS. Meanwhile I was standing there watching people totally covered in white dust walk out. There were injured people coming out. You could see that there were a lot of people closer to the scene that were on the ground, and they had put up some yellow crime scene tape about, and stopping just short of the guard shack. There was me, there was the guard shack, there was the tape and then there was the building. At the point where someone yelled, "Move out! Move out! Evacuate further out!" they

started pushing that tape further out, because there were airplane parts littered everywhere. Big chunks of twisted metal, twisted in the path. I think they wanted to preserve evidence and to push people away from the building in case that, I'm presuming the plane from Pittsburgh was also headed this way.

So at this point I got pushed away from the rendezvous point in this crowd of people that was moved back, and I could no longer, we were no longer able to walk about the Pentagon. So I just kept walking and I thought, "OK, I've got to have a plan here."

Of course all traffic was stopped at this point. They had closed all traffic coming into the Pentagon area. There were police. There were fire trucks. Emergency folks coming in. Meanwhile the flames and the black clouds are still roaring up. So I walked down a ramp. I walked down an up ramp. It was one of the ones that if you were coming from Arlington Cemetery under the memorial bridge arch and then coming up to the Pentagon – I still to this day don't know what ramp I walked up, but I walked down an up ramp and figured I would walk to Arlington, because my cell phone of course completely jammed. Couldn't call out, even though I had tried and walked up to Arlington thinking I could at least go into the park service there. Get some water. Make phone calls. Try to find people. They completely locked Arlington down, so I continued on to Fort Myers. Completely locked down. You could not get into the base unless you were stationed in one of their security teams there. So then I walked to Rosslyn, crossed 50 and went into Rosslyn and found a Quality Inn where the front office staff was great. They had a lot of refuges in there. People who had just started walking from the Pentagon. Couldn't get to their cars, because the cars had been sequestered and were just told to get out. So at least there was shade, water, a bathroom and I was finally able to get through.

My credit card, my calling cards wouldn't work, because those lines were jammed. Somebody loaned me some change and I just kept feeding the phone until I could call nine and call my husband collect from a payphone. He was able to give me where CDR HIESSEY and ADMIRAL TRACEY ended up, because they ended up going around the other way.

VCNO said, "Let's go up to the Annex," or actually they went to VDOT (Virginia Department of Transportation) first, and then they went across into the Annex where ADMIRAL RYAN made space for them at the Marine Corps Command Center, which is where the Navy folks went.

But by the time I got through to the right phone number and found them at VDOT, and they said we're at the Annex. So then I started walking from Rosslyn to the Annex along 50 and of course the traffic was jammed, and I thumbed a ride and I hitchhiked along there 'til the Washington Boulevard exit, which they had blocked. I got out there, showed IDs and they let me trudge up the hill to VDOT and then we decamped, they said they had just gone over, the Navy staff had just gone over to the Annex.

We went up to the Marine Corps portion of the Annex where the Marine Command Center was. That's where I found ADM TRACEY and CDR HIESSEY and this must have been, I want to say 1430 in the afternoon by the time I had walked to Rosslyn and walked back to the Annex, because I couldn't cut through Fort Myer at all. I was hot and dehydrated.

Then we stayed there. The focus on what I did that night was - ADMIRAL TRACEY's Director of Navy Staff said, "We've got to find a place for the staff to settle in."

ADMIRAL RYAN who was N1 and CNP gave us one of the, I think it was 4th deck wing 5, but I'm not exactly sure on that. Said, "I'm moving my people out. You take what you need. I sent my people home, this Captain here's your point of contact."

So I snagged one of our lawyers, CAPT NAYER (phonetic) and made him my action officer and we walked through and I said. "We have to find space for DNS, for each of the N codes and a small group of staff to at least give the flag officer a desk that's his own, and then a couple cubicles that his personal staff can work out of," except for N3/5 which was settled in with the Marine Corps.

That's what I did all that night, all that afternoon into the evening was work space. Then I worked with our people within DNS to work - we brought in the ISF (Information Strike Force), the computer people, the it's called the Strike, the Strike Force, the ISF, the Strike Force people, they brought all their people in and those people set up. We didn't know whose desk we were at, but we set up the computer so we could access our email, that we could get SIPRNET drops. They brought in TV drops for CNN. They worked through the night nonstop by getting people up and running on computers and that's what I focused on, making sure that all of the DNS people were accounted for. Thankfully, we have very few people in this building. The rest of our people are in the Washington Navy Yard, Crystal City, Anacostia, so we didn't have a large concentration of people in the building much less in the new area. So we were all safe and sound and ADM TRACEY spent most of her time that first night down at the Command Center watching the casualty count as we confirmed people.

I spent my time running back and forth and she just left the space management to me and I got everybody - I came back with a space plan and posted that and said, "This is your space, this is your phone number." We set up a rotation. We made sure they were OK. Set up a rotation with them about coming in. You had to give people jobs, you know just to settle them down. We had the Yeoman going desk to desk. "What's your phone number? Who answers at this phone?"

And publishing phone numbers like N7 is working in this cubicle. We made signs, the Yeoman made signs of who was working here, listed by name, and you know if you needed parking passes, if you needed computers and points of contact. If you need to retrieve classified material from the wreckage. We worked all those issues having to do with continuity of the staff and support to the staff as we did those kinds of things.

Q. (21:52) How'd you get that worked out?

A. We did - first couple were hand lettered signs that we Xeroxed, and stuck around with duck tape. Then as people came up on email we did that, and then we had like a posting board central. I had chosen ADMIRAL TRACEY's office. If you're familiar with the Annex, it's one long big open corridor and I had chosen her office right in the center of the corridor, off to one side, but we had a blank wall there.

It was - did you lose personal things? Go to this web site for information on how to make a claim. We posted a lot of things on the web site which, because that was not effected, the servers were not effected by that. So we had email by the next morning in terms of people being able to talk.

But on the HQ web we posted "Click on this if you lost personal belongings and need to make a claim. Click on this if you have classified material concerns. This is how you submit your request to go in and retrieve classified material."

So we posted it on Internet and then put up signs because people would stop and we got asked the same questions so often, the Yeoman just started pointing. We'd make handouts and send that around and we'd make directories and date them "Today's Directory," and the Yeoman would walk them around.

So I would say the first, from Tuesday through Saturday that's what we did, 6:30 'till 10 or 11 at night. It's just all those support issues. I will never forget ADMIRAL NANCY BROWN walking through one of the nights, not the first night, but maybe the second night. By this time everybody's cell phone charges - no one walked out with the charge. No one walked out and said, "Ah, let me take my charger with me." But she walked through with cell phone charges, Blackberry charges, cell phone batteries with a big, who am I thinking of, who's the big - Circuit City bag and she was like Santa Claus walking through. She had sent someone with the N6 charge card and she was walking through handing out batteries and chargers. Because my cell phone was dead. I didn't have the charger, or even the portable charger. So that was a boom.

ADMIRAL: TRACEY and I decided that we have complimentary memory. Some things I remember absolutely clearly. There are some days I have no memory of. It was just feeling exhausted and being grateful that there was food available down stairs, and being amazed when I looked out the window at the Pentagon to see the smoke still occurring and then how the press had all gone to that one gas station and how people gathered down there with the flowers and the memorial. That was the focus of the, really the first week to get people up on email and get them communicating.

The other thing that we were doing is LTjg Will Parks who works for us is the CACO coordinator for OPNAV staff, and the work that he did to find trained CACOs for all the OPNAV casualties for here at the staff, whether or not their next of kin were elsewhere, but you have to have one that the command takes care of issues here, whether or not the next of kin is here. Then we were working frantically, as we got into that second week on the not just the Purple Heart for people but their appropriate End-of-tour Awards. If you were a captain and you were killed you would logically have gotten the Legion of Merit when you left your tour or

retired. So we'd prep Legions of Merit for all those folks and got them through. I had special awards boards about five days straight to make sure that for all the people who were dead and were going to have a funeral that they could have their Purple Heart (She starts to cry) (Still in tears) Sorry, the hardest thing was reading citations. (now she's composed) It's funny how these things get to you, but when it becomes very personalized, we were all working hard and that was a good thing, but when we had the awards board and the EAs from the representative codes all came including from N2, and N3/N5 which took the hardest hits they were (she starts to cry again) extremely emotional sessions. (she's composed again) The Purple Heart, that was easy. If you were dead because of the terrorist attack you got a Purple Heart, and then determining that pretty much Captains would receive a Legion of Merit. Commanders, Meritorious Service Medals; Chiefs, Navy Coms; E6 and below Navy Achievement Medals. It was magic how fast those things got done. The award shop over in the Navy Yard did a superb job. Meanwhile we were all –

Q. (26:46) That MARYANNE LYNCH or –

A. Bless her heart she came onboard active duty on the Monday following the attack for her regular AT and I just threw her at this because I was, I and seven other people were sharing one computer. ADMIRAL TRACEY had an office and a computer to herself, but it was just, there were so many things that I was trying to keep in the air, that I assigned CAPT LYNCH to that who worked with our regular people to honcho that. Then we also had civilian awards which were given to civilians who were killed and then to watch the progress of the civilian Defense of Freedom award, up to that there had not been an award equivalent to the Purple Heart for civilians killed in the line of duty so to speak.

Then our next phase was working on awards for those who were alive, but did they earn the Purple Heart? Because you can be, if you were injured as a direct result of a terrorist attack, brick falling on your head, cuts, burns, you definitely got it, but if you were injured because you were rescuing people that was not a Purple Heart.

It was interesting how much I got to learn about the Purple Heart. But to follow, to have awards boards, to get all those write-ups from people who were not at their normal administrative post. It was a phenomenal effort of the staff to get this through and to do the award write-ups for the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. We considered many, many awards. The awards board went for six and a half hours that I chaired, where we worked through every award and looked at this group of a people and that group of people in order to come up with a coherent recommendation.

Because for the Navy and Marine Corps Medal the criteria is did you risk your life? To go back into the burning building to rescue people, as differentiated from you stood outside the burning people and caught them when they fell. That was certainly a heroic thing to do, but it wasn't the same as going in and directly risking your life. So a fascinating experience that I'm very proud of. The fact that we got people, those who were casualties, their awards to their funerals and their memorial services and we got flag officers to go to everyone and it didn't matter whether they were military, civilian or contractor, a flag officer went to everyone.

Q. (29:14) That coordinated through here, or –

A. Yes, LTJg WILL PARKS had a matrix and we sent a flag officer to each and every memorial service. I think that was extraordinary generous of the Navy because by the CACO manual you only get a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer, a CACO, if you're on active duty and you die, or you have life threatening injuries. Typically you don't rate one if you are retired, or if you are a

civilian or other, much less a contractor. But ADMIRAL RYAN and the CNO decided that if you died, you got a CACO. There was no differentiation, an officer is assigned or Chief Petty Office and a chaplain went to the house, did all the advising on rights and benefits. It was more of a courtesy for the contractors because they would have their own things, but to provide them information on memorial services, on awards, to coordinate with the Admiral or their flag officer who would be attending memorial service and the funeral.

That was truly an incredible act of organization and whatever. Most of us felt that we the Navy and the Army were far better off than the victims of the World Trade Center attack, because the Navy expects to take casualties. We know how to deal with them and we have a system in place to immediately bring in grief counseling and to immediately bring in the psychological debrief teams, the SPRINT Team and to know that this is going to have an impact on people. We needed to address that and people accepted that this was a very difficult time, but we had to get through it and there were things to be done. There was that sense of purpose that really struck me. As I look back I think managing the awards plus all the logistics of getting people settled and working almost immediately, not everybody, but the key people were brought in.

A lot of civilians stayed home for quite some time. There was no place for them to come in and work and then almost immediately in the second week we were moving, moved people into leased space in Crystal city and got people up and running.

We, CAPT BILL CODY, we borrowed from the Vice-Chief to work space issues. He worked space issues in the Pentagon, you know the various plans that came through. What we're going to get back. What's the building schedule and plus where can we fit people in to bring the full workforce back. So I would say the focus of Director of Navy staff was to get the staff reconstituted and up and running. Just get us the tools we need to email, the access, getting the

mail started again. Getting standard processes started again in terms of correspondence and things like that.

I would say it was the end of October by the time we started looking at normal correspondence type things again.

Q. (32:13) In each aspect of the awards board you were doing right off the bat, can you give us some more of the details of that?

A. The regular OPNAV Awards Board process is that Director of Navy Staff, ADMIRAL TRACEY is the official chair of that. I actually ran the board with a set group of single digit EAs, post major command captains from a range of designators. I chair the board. We look at anywhere from ten to twenty award recommendations a week, both for staff members here and these would be for Legions of Merit and above, and for any Legions of Merit from around the fleet, because CNO holds the delegate authority for the Legion of Merit. The fleet commanders don't at this time. So typically we would do that, take about an hour. If you're a captain in a major command or if you're a captain who's retiring after twenty something years, you're going to get a Legion of Merit. So we would normally walk through those.

I called on this same group of EAs to look at the awards. We sat together and said, OK typically we look at O6s. Now we're looking at Petty officers, Chiefs, Commanders and Captains who've been killed in the line of duty. We knew that the Purple Heart would recognize the fact that their death occurred due to a terrorist act and a Purple Heart would recognize that. Now we had to look at what you would call their end of tour award. And we pretty much came up with our criteria and we decided to do - I said, "In the interest of time we're just going to do a citation." We looked at how we had and everybody went back and we provided the template for the

citation. I said all I need is three sentences from you and then we agreed on the standard phrase about "...tragically Captain so and so gave his life for his country, (She's starts to cry again) in the events of 9-11." Again it was very difficult with these boards.

(She's composed again) It took us about three days because they were all very busy. They were trying to support their seniors and especially for codes N2, and N3/N5. They had personally lost a lot. But these awards boards, we just determined what would we normally give them. It didn't matter whether they'd been onboard a month, two years, six months. What would they have gotten at then end of their tour? Did away with the summary of action. I ran a quick memo up to ADMIRAL TRACEY and I think she took it to VCNO and he said, "That's perfectly fine. That's great."

We agreed on the standard phrase to recognize that in the right - because we thought that would be important to the families - you just don't want to say, "...did a great job in his tour." You know how typical, you know "...during his tour at the OPNAV staff," we highlight two or three things that they had done during their tour. Noted the fact that they had lost their lives in the service of their country.

We said, "However you want to give that to us, diskette, handwritten, however," and we got the people over in the award shop, again, CAPT LYNCH was my action officer for them. I ran the Board and I just gave it to CAPT LYNCH and said run with this. She shepherded that through and racked and stacked and they got it beautifully written up and we get them auto-penned by the CNO and they were available so that as someone's funeral was set the CACO would come by, collect the Purple Heart and the citation, and the Meritorious Service Medal and the citation. So that was really phase one for those who had lost their lives. Then it was again a marathon session when we looked at those who did heroic acts. Specializing –

Q. (35:59) If you can explain to us, how'd you even go about collecting that stuff. Did you just go out with a general request for input?

A. We did. We put our request to all the N codes and said - by the awards manual SECNAV retains authority to award all awards that are caused be an act of terrorism, so normally Navy Achievement Medal or Navy Com could be awarded by any three-star on the staff. So we had to get that word out early. So to preclude any of them saying in an emotional moment, "I'm going to give my awards out."

So we had to immediate get the word out that "No, no, SECNAV Board will review all of these."

So we had to submit an OPNAV batch and for anything related to the events on 11 Sept. So we pretty much, we had a session with the EAs and I discussed the criteria. Everybody knows about NAM. NCM, but now we were talking about heroism and people had to be really clear about Navy and Marine Corps Medal. These were an experienced group of EAs. We usually once or twice every couple of months we would see an award for a Navy and Marine Corps Medal which is commonly called the life saving medal, in from the fleet. Where two sailors driving by, people trapped in a burning car, they risk their lives to get people out - Navy and Marine Corps Medal. But there are very specific criteria about that. Then you can also make a recommendation whether it's extraordinary heroism.

So we had everybody do detailed write-ups on those, and it could be narrative style. Didn't have to be fancy, but a narrative style of what people actually did. That took a little time to collect and I think we had that board, those award recommendations were due by October 19th, and we had the Board within a week after that, and we had our recommendations to SECNAV. I had to rack and stack them and submit them through ADMIRAL TRACEY to SECNAV.

But we generally, what we did was we did a lot of work in grouping those. I would say it was easiest, the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, there were four at the very top. These were the people who went back into the burning building and pried out the guy who was burning from underneath the desk. Then there was the Seaman who took his own shirt off (she's emotional) to put out the flames on a burning Lieutenant. Again it's the flames and the falling wreckage and the building that was shattering around them.

Again it was, it's amazing that this information is coming out. Not that I was numb at the time, but we were just so focused on getting the job done that you couldn't let yourself stop and think, but we read truly heroic accounts of how people pulled together to do this. There were several that were definitely, the criteria was did they go and could they have been killed by doing what they were doing? Yes, and they got the Navy and Marine Corps - our recommendation was, because SECNAV would be of course the final approving authority.

Then our next step down were the group of people Meritorious Service Medal winners, or awardees. Generally in this group were the people who stood outside, not directly in the fire, going back in the burning building, but stood outside to catch people who jumped out of the middle rings, or opened doors and yelled down smoke-filled hallways, "Come this way! Come this way! It's Clear!" we had a lot of people who did that kind, or they took leadership roles, organized stretcher parties, organized workers for the makeshift morgue, did a lot of organizing and leadership kind of things.

Navy Com folks were people who maybe a step down from that who were the worker bees in these groups, or who did some individual things. We had LTjg LAURA MALLORY who was stuck in an elevator with a civilian right as the explosion occurred. Their elevator door was jammed shut. They were in a very dangerous place. The civilian had had a head injury and was

half passed out. She forced the door open and dragged the civilian to safety. She got a Navy Com.

Now and the reason that's not a Navy and Marine Corps medal is because she didn't risk her own life, but still you wanted to recognize that. So, a Navy Com.

Many, many people - Navy Achievement Medals. People who came down from the Annex to help. Corpsman who were going about their jobs came down from the Annex, people who poured out of the building to be stretcher bearers, litter bearers. We also looked at were you first on the scene? Did you stay for twenty-four hours straight? We tried to look at what is it that you did? And we did, we racked and stacked and it finally fell out into some very natural groups. The people clearly met the Navy and Marine Corps.

The people who were, didn't make the Navy and Marine Corps Medal but clearly did some above and beyond, the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Com in there. We didn't even recommend Letters of Commendation. Just because of what happened.

We forwarded this to SEVNAV. They had an awards board and they were also looking at awards from SECNAV and from the Marine Corps staff. They pulled everything together for Navy. I'm proud to say that all of our Navy and Marine Corps Medal nominations went through. They downgraded one MSN to a Navy Com, and we were fine with that one, because we got an opportunity to replied to that and we said we were on the boarder line with that one. That's good. Two they upgraded from NAM to Navy Com. So they racked and stacked them on all theirs.

Then I think they –

Q (41:33) Nobody from you four thought that just made (____ Inaudible) Board?

A. No, no, SECNAV has it's own awards Board.

Q. (41:41) Who chairs that?

A. VICE ADMIRAL HOLMES, and then there's a CDR FLETCHER who is the Secretary or the recorder of that Board who's on the SECNAV staff. So it was, it's funny how I remember that much detail on that process, but among all the many other things that we did and just getting people supplies. The stuff they needed to do their business. In fact many people sat around. They couldn't do anything because meetings weren't being held. Tank sessions weren't being scheduled. Congressional inquiries weren't being held. There was no testimony going on. There were no budget sessions. But we were running non-stop. We did put the Yeoman into shifts, because we didn't need them staying there and killing themselves off. Then the officers and chiefs tried to go early/late. We tried to take Sunday's off that first month or two because of the exhaustion factor.

Q. (42:34) Anything else in the awards, lessons learned that would be good for someone to be able to look back on. Things that you would recommend.

A. (42:41) I can't wait until we go to a web based entry system. The Marine Corps has a system that if you're in the field and you want to write up your young Marine for a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, you go and pull up the award write-up on the screen. You fill in by the blanks and you select your chain of command or submission chain and off it goes. I think that that would be very helpful, where this was all stacks and stacks of paper and folders that we shuffled. I think if we were able to go to a web based system, sit in like a tank and show them up on the screen and just read them there rather than shuffling all the paper that we did. That would spit out the finish citation and do all those things. We're actually in the process of evaluating

funding for that kind of project. So there's one that's in the future for us. Anyway, but that would certainly to mechanize that process would be, would have been very helpful.

Q. (43:42) Did you get the inputs from other services?

A. We did do a little checking back and forth and we did do for example, I think it's Army Awards - please don't quote me on this, my recollection is Army awards Purple Hearts for smoke inhalation. Navy does not. We did look back at the historical precedents set by the *USS Cole* terrorist incident people injured, because we wanted to make sure we were consistent. The Purple Heart is a treasured and very emotional award you want to keep it safe, and even though we are, we checked with the other services, there are still – being consistent with Navy is the key.

For example Navy does not award for smoke inhalation if that is your only injury. So we had a couple of people who were treated for smoke inhalation, but we recommended no award of the Purple Heart.

I think Army does, but we were true to our own awarding philosophy and SECNAV approved that. They could certainly have decided they wanted to go another way on that but for the *Cole* incident which was the most recent and applicable incident, smoke inhalation was not sufficient, in and of itself, was not sufficient cause. You had to meet the criteria for that.

Q. (45:03) Any of that written down anywhere?

A. Yes, I relied greatly on Ms. Barbara Wilson of the Award shop over in the Navy Yard. She works, she's a couple layers down the chain of command from me, but she is the one who has all

of the historical precedent and can go into the archives and pull up Purple Hearts awarded to people.

Q. (45:26) She's the Jeannie whatever, the lady that was her predecessor, Curr (phonetic), Jeannie Curr (phonetic).

A. Right. She is the one who prepares the historical outlook and that's her normal duties when we do –

Q. (45:37) That automated now? It didn't use to be.

A. Some of it is. Some of it is, but you can't query very well. You can't say how many Purple Hearts were awarded to Navy Corpsman in World War II. It doesn't cut it like that. It would be nice if it did. If you could go through and cut the database like that. It'll bring up all the Purple Hearts for World War II. Probably in alphabetical order and that's about as far as you can get. Barbara Wilson is the civilian lady who we relied on to provide the Purple Heart background because we wanted to be consistent with that.

Q. (46:22) When the President, when President Bush addressed the nation a few days after, I don't remember exactly when that was, but they had various Navy guests, or guests from the people that were victims of the Pentagon. How were those people identified or looked at? Did you have any involvement in that at all?

A. I think I did. I think, I have to think back but I don't know whether it was for the same event. I got a call from CDR BRENTON (phonetic) who was the EA to CHINFO, and BECKY BRETON said – they developed a hero's list. People who had little vignettes of brave things and

pretty much matched those we had, were in the process of proposing the Navy and Marine Corps medal to. The big life saving award, and they had little paragraphs, because that was one of the first things as I recall, PAO asked all the N Codes, or CHINFO asked for a heroes list and it would be the person's name, what they did. So they could have a quick ready interview list. I remember seeing that list and the one I remember was a young man, I just remember his first name. He was a young Seaman, and it was "shawn" but it was C-E-A-N.

Q. (47:39) WHITMARSH.

A. CEAN WHITMARSH, exactly. Everybody loved his story, mostly because officers were expected to go and do the big thing, the heroic thing, because the upper leadership role, and this was the guy who took off his shirt, put it on the lieutenant and he commandeers the car. We loved this guy and I remember CAPT or CDR BRENTON calling me from CHINFO and saying, "Who do we want to go sit with the First Lady at this thing at the White House."

I really truly don't know whether it's the same as the addressing, and I say, "SEAMAN WHITMARSH, of course, and she said, "That's who we thought, too."

We just loved the idea of this Seaman came into the Navy for whatever reason and never in his life would he probably have a chance to go and it just meant a lot more that we were going to send some nineteen year old to the White House to go sit with the First Lady.

Now as far as the President's address, in which you were asking me, I don't think I did. I want to say that was probably CHINFO working with both, with SECNAV protocol and PAO to select that. I don't recollect who those people were, do you?

Q. (48:46) I have seen the list of some of the recommendations, but I don't remember who was actually, who actually went.

A. Right.

Q. (48:55) SPRINT TEAM.

A. Yes.

Q. (48:58) Have you every had any encounters with them before, the knowledge of them, of the SPRINT Team? How -?

A. I knew that they existed because during the Persian Gulf War one of my collateral duties was CACO coordinator for the Los Angeles, four-county area. As a Lieutenant Commander I was flag sec on the Service Group Long Beach staff during the Persian Gulf War. I was also the ACOS (phonetic) and one for personnel. So for the four counties in metropolitan Los Angeles I was the CACO coordinator. Meaning if anyone had a next of kin in the four-county area I made sure that the CACO was assigned and coordinated all the message sending and making sure everything was right. Then through that job and during my tour, following tour as XO of the Naval Station at Long Beach we had disaster preparedness plans that involved if we had a major catastrophe that occurred to one of the ships we had the grief intervention teams, which is probably the forerunner of SPRINT. So I always knew that there were psychologists, chaplains, teams that you would come over, you could get through the Family Assistant Center or through the hospital who could come over. I think it was Critical Incident Stress Debrief Teams at the time, and whether the name has changed or what, so I heard about the SPRINT Team almost immediately because they put their signs up, "Drop-in lounge" They had their signs everywhere.

They came by to make calls on people. We scheduled sessions. ADMIRAL TRACEY encouraged them to schedule sessions with other people. They even had a session with the senior officers, just them, which I never heard anything about. She just said, “We need to do this.”

Q. (50:36) That’s good.

A. Because typically of the senior officers they were going to not, they were going to go into that full leadership mode and burn themselves out. So she actually scheduled the SPRINT Team, a very senior team. I think just two people to come in and mediate a little discussion at that level at one of the morning meetings and then many of the N codes took advantage of having the SPRINT Teams come in and we had a session with them, DNS. ADMIRAL TRACEY has also had recent discussions with them to come and do a follow up. It’s appropriate the six month mark, so I think that’s something in the next month or two we’re going to offer that opportunity to come around and be with people. But almost immediate presence, I would say within, of course the Chief of Chaplains is right in that building. So they had signs up “Drop-in Center” and I think it was the next day I saw the SPRINT signs. Either the 12th or the 13th and they were just on scene immediately. Chaplains were walking around. It was great to see.

That’s why I really felt that we were much better off than the Trade Center people because we have an organized response. We know what’s needed.

I need to go for just a moment

(CAPT Sweeney was called away from the interview and not able to return. The Pentagon Team was not able to reschedule a follow-up interview)

Transcribed by:
Ethel Geary
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