

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT Gary Hall
CAPT Michael McDaniel

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Ms. Gail Elizabeth Wirick

Current Address:

work – ASN(FM&C) FMA Pentagon
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date of Interview:

27 June 2002

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; Crane; Pentagon Evacuation

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Ms. Wirick was born in [REDACTED], IL, raised by her grandparents. Her father was in World War II. He was a merchant mariner on Lake Erie and was killed in a ship collision when she was 4. Her grandparents retired to Mountain Home, Arkansas when she was a teenager. This is where she claims her hometown. She married, divorced and remarried there. Her new husband took her to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where he was struck by a car and lost his legs. They were medevaced to Washington, D.C., which is how she ended up here. She had never been in a city and thought she was going to die on the highways with the high speeds. She went to work at Military Sealift Command in their Plans department. She ended up working on defense plans becoming a Marine Transportation Assistant. She worked with the Joint Operations Planning System in WWMCSS and the Joint Deployment System and eventually NARDAC (Navy Regional Automation Center) hired her. She grew into a LAN Administrator for FMO, which she did for 12 years. She had just come to the Pentagon in August 2001 to work as a Budget Analyst in FMA.

Topics Discussed:

On 11 Sep she got to work around 0630 as usual. Her office was in 5E378 in the outer ring up from the helo pad. She heard some commotion and went out to see what was going on. Someone mentioned the World Trade Center so she brought out a television she had squirreled away and turned that on. She decided to pull up the web to check out the Internet and was sitting facing the window when she heard a terrible boom. Everything shook. The glass came out of

her window (facing the D ring) but went down not out. She saw red. She assumes this was the fireball. She had a cart in her office (she kept her walker by the front door and her good electric cart was in for repair). She knew it was bad and that she would have to leave. She heard their security person telling people to get out. She glanced at her keys and her purse on the cart but decided not to take that instant and chance being killed. Everybody was crowding towards the door (there was probably 15 people there). As she started to go through she saw her walker and knew she would need something so she grabbed it. They headed down the door towards the conference room. There were people heading towards them telling them they couldn't go that way. When they turned around and went the other way the floor where the seam was had dropped down about 18 inches. She had to use the walker and step way down. The walls were kind of in, there was stuff hanging down from the ceiling and the floors were cruddy but her walker still worked. There was gray smoke. When they made it to the main corridor from the E ring it must have caved a lot. It appeared there was only three or four of them side by side when walking down the E ring and the walls were close to them. Then they turned left into the main corridor. This is where they ran into the bad black smoke. Two of her staff, Laurie and Sam, were holding her by the arms. People started to pass them making them the last ones to come out. In the black smoke she kept thinking about how they needed to get down to the floor but the floor was covered with smoke. She threw the walker away trying to put it by the wall. One of the people helping her went to the door of a stairwell, opened the door, and black smoke poured out. After giving up her walker she hung on to the two people helping her. (Ms. Wirick has spina bifida and degradation of the spine). The one person who helped her, Laurie, just got through with therapy for her shoulder from where she supported Ms. Wirick out of the Pentagon.

There was one stage between the beginning of Corridor Four and the escalators when she couldn't see even the people helping her. She had the thought that people had left them. She wanted them to go on without her. The smoke hurt her eyes and she could feel it in her lungs. She thought she was going to die and wondered how long that would take. Laurie and Sam would not leave her.

Halfway down the corridor they tried to stay focused on going straight ahead. She remembers a deep voice. The three of them decided it was an angel. All of a sudden all they heard was a deep, calm, reassuring voice telling them "Keep holding hands, come straight ahead, it's clear over here." and then they said it again. They heard no other noise or people. When they came out of the smoke there was no one there. The escalators were still running so they went on the escalators and walked down them.

They went to second corridor and were going to go outside. Due to her handicap she has parking in the inner courtyard. She understood there were bodies there and they wouldn't let them out so they were directed down the A ring toward the concourse. Laurie and Sam told her that there were doors shutting on the second corridor and a man from their office kept it open until they passed it.

At the concourse some people went left and some right. She was frightened and wanted to go outside. They were in South Parking and went up to the underpass near the Residence Inn. They stopped on the hill. Even at this point she didn't really understand that a plane had hit the Pentagon. Laurie and Sam left and began to mill around taking muster. They had two people missing, one who was not in the office at the time. The two people were located safely.

One of the bad things was there was nothing for handicap people when they got out, no buses. There were military buses that were empty and they wouldn't let them on. Metro wouldn't let them on. Cabs wouldn't take them.

As people started dispersing some people grabbed their cars and raced away. There were two other people with her, Ms. Wirick and Sandy had no money, but Susan had money. They decided to stay with her. They went to the Residence Inn sitting in the lobby. They decided since they couldn't get out they would get a room, but none were available. A lady across from them heard them and told them she was on the seventeenth floor and they could stay in her room while they coordinated. Her room looked right over the Pentagon so they had a bird's eye view. They still couldn't see the plane, but the television was on so they heard the news reports.

She never realized how close she had been to the impact for a couple of days. It wasn't until she saw a picture of the part that fell (that fell about 20 minutes after they crossed it) that she understood how close they had been.

In the hotel they started calling people. They couldn't get through to the 800 number the news was asking survivors to call. No one was being allowed into the area so no one could come get them. They decided to head toward Metro, which was a couple of blocks away. Ms. Wirick was in a great deal of pain at this point as she had not had her usual supports since the A ring. As they walked along she spotted an old grocery cart which she grabbed to use as support all the way to Metro. They got Metro tickets to Gaithersburg where Susan's husband picked them up and took her home. It was about 6:30 p.m. when she got to Gaithersburg. She got a key from her neighbor who let her in her house. She had 60 different phone messages from people on her phone.

They were off work on Wednesday. Thursday they met with the branch heads and directors at the Pentagon.

Big loud noises scare her now. She had a bad experience in Hecht's where someone knocked over a display case. Loud noises bring the experience back to her.

They relocated to Crystal City on Friday morning. GSA, NMCI and Verizon came in and by Monday morning they had a whole office. She had a sticker on her desk that said Lorton Prison. Some people had old metal desks and old bent filing cabinets. They laughed because they didn't have anything to put in it anyway. Her branch is responsible for ordering supplies and money. Within the next two months they stood up 200 people from scratch.

It took two weeks for her to get her car back. At the car rental agent she didn't have credit card since her purse was in the Pentagon. She told them she had credit cards in a safe deposit box at a bank and she would come back with them later. She asked for the cheapest car and they gave her a Chrysler Sebring convertible at the cheapest price and took her word about coming back with the credit cards.

Staples and Office Depot gave a discount to the government after 9/11 to help the offices reconstitute.

She never heard about her walker. Later a construction worker told her he saw her cart and tried to save it for her but it had mold and they took it away.

The E ring beyond 4th corridor was blocked with construction horses which may have been enough of a psychological block to cause them not to continue down the E ring and instead to turn down the 4th corridor.

9/11 demolished our comfort zone. We have watched Israel over the years. The general public will not understand this because we have watched wars far away over the years. Now they are right next to you, sitting on Metro. Because of this people have become more suspect.

Abstracted by:
CAPT Carol O'Hagan
10 JUL 02

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Transcription**

Interviewers:

CAPT Gary Hall
CAPT Mike McDaniel

Interviewer's Organization:

Naval Historical Center
Naval Historical Center

Interviewee:

Gail Wirick

Current Address:

Date of Interview:

27 June 2002

Place of Interview:

Pentagon, 4C499

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon Evacuation; Crane Group; Pentagon; Terrorist Attack;
11 September 2001

Transcript of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

Born in ████████, IL, raised by grandparents. Father was in WWII in submarines. Father killed when she was four, in a ship collision on Lake Erie. He was a Merchant Mariner. Grandparents retired to Mt Home, Arkansas where she relocated and she now calls it her hometown. She married and divorced there. Remarried and moved to Guantanamo Bay, where she was secretary to Colonel Mark C. Phanasy (phonetic). A car hit her husband and they were medivaced to Washington, DC. She's been in Washington DC since. Employed initially in Military Sealift Command in Plans Department, then to Defense Plans. Worked with Joint Operations Planning System, Joint Deployment System and NRBAC (phonetic). Grew into LAN administrator for FMO, just came to Pentagon in August 2001 to work in FMA as budget analyst.

Topics Discussed:

Q. (048) Tell us about that day from the beginning. You got up and -

A. Well I get to work usually around 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning. Just a regular day, just came on in. Was doing my work and I heard a lot of commotion out in the central area.

Q. (050) Excuse me, could you tell me where your office was located?

A. OK, we were in 5E378, I believe it was. I've almost forgotten. On the outer ring and we were just up from the helopad.

Then was in the office, when I went out to see what was going on, people had said they – somebody had called or whatever and they heard about the World Trade Center, and no one had a TV. Well I had a TV tucked away (chuckle) for late hours. So I brought out my little TV and gave it to them. We were getting that up. Well there was so many gathered around, I just thought I'll just go in and check out the web, you know, pull it up for now and let them watch TV. I hadn't been in my office but, I feel like it was only a few minutes, and I was sitting typing, and the window, I face this a-way, I mean face - the window was in front of me.

The next thing I knew there was this terrible, it was like a boom. That's the only way I could do it, but it was like haroom, like that. Everything shook. The glass went out on my window, but it went down. Some of it must have come forward, because I had a cut on my elbow, but I never knew that until that night. It had sliced almost, sliced a chunk. You know how it does and it turns into a little flap, you know, but I never felt anything. I didn't feel anything during that night. But when it did that, I also saw red. I saw a whole bunch of red, and the only thing I can think of it was the fireball that went between us, because you know from my window I look into other windows across.

Q. (070) OK, so you look into toward the courtyard, you're – You were looking at the D ring out your window?

A. I suppose. I'm not real good at what I'm looking at. If there were windows here, then that's what I'd be looking at. I saw this red, but then I also turned around very quickly. Now I had my cart, and as I do this one, and I kept my walker by the front door, because I had the electric cart and my good cart, the one I have right now was in the shop for repair to this company in Falls Church, Area Access, and they had given me a loaner. It was like going from a Cadillac to an old

Edsel. It grinded down the hallways and it was out there, so from there I use the walker to get into there. Sometimes the walker's easier to use in tight spaces, too.

So when I jumped up, I knew this was very bad. It was just very frightening and my thought was I had to leave. I could hear one of the gentlemen here, WARREN MC CORMICK is our security man. I could hear him saying, "Get out! Get out right now. Don't do anything. Get out!"

Well, I glanced over at my keys on my cart and I knew my cart was right by it, but you know how they talk about you see everything, I've heard about how your life flashes before me, my life didn't go, but I know what a nanosecond is now in computers, because I thought, "Keys, purse. No, go." It was kind of just like that. One big thought and I thought - it sounds like a long thought, but I thought that one instance could be the difference between life and death and it wasn't worth that to me.

So I went out the door and all of this again was just in seconds from under 5 seconds. Everybody was crowding toward the door to go out.

Q. (081) How many folks were in the office?

A. We had a staff of eighteen and there was probably maybe three or four that were not there that day. So we're talking fifteen, sixteen people, and WARREN was shoving everybody through, you know, shuffling, making them go through. As I started to go through I saw my walker and I know I was going to need something, so I grabbed it because it's flexible you know. Popped it open outside the door and that's when we headed down, going out the door, headed to the right, to head down to the conference room.

Then we saw all these people coming at us, and said, "No, No, you can't go that way." Now there could be things that happened in here, that my mind, there was periods of time when I truly think my mind just went blank and all I could think of was to survive. When we turned around and went back the other way, the floor had dropped about, I guess 18 inches. We were on a

seam. Which I didn't know anything about at that time, but I guess a seam just was there, and it was just down maybe ten feet from our door so when we went pass that I had to step way down and use the walker to go down there, but the walls were kind of in, and there was stuff hanging out of the ceiling and the floor was crudy, because I could feel it with my walker, but my walker would still work.

There was gray smoke, a lot of gray smoke and of course people, everybody trying to get out as fast as they could. Once we made it down to the main corridor from the D ring which it must have caved, to me it must have caved a lot because it appeared to me there was only three or four of us, maybe three side by side and the walls were there. It may not have. It may have been my mind that thought that, but it seemed to be a very narrow passage. And then we came through the big area and we turned left to go toward the escalators. When we turned there particularly, we ran into the black smoke; real bad black smoke. The minute that that happened, let me say this, when I was walking with my walker, two of my staff, SAM CARDINAS (phonetic) and LAURIE BURROW (phonetic) were holding me by the arm also. I'm using that and they were with me. They never left me. They never left me the whole time.

At one stage when we rounded that corner, people passed us. They took us like Grant took Richmond. Actually we were the last ones in that area to come out, which I didn't know that at that time. I do know I saw them passing and I knew we were going very slow, because when we rounded into the smoke, I had, one time it seemed, it seemed like almost instant when we went around the corner.

Q. (122) And this would have been in the corridor? Off the ring and into the corridor.

A. The big corridor, yes in fact the E ring I guess went out here and then we went a little jog, and then we had to go like that, and then you're out to the big ring. There was some offices there. One office that had just moved in.

When we got out to the big one, that's where it was just absolutely totally black, I remembered - the thing that went through my mind was that you know the firemen saying when you have that you need to get down on the floor. I thought we could not do that, you know with the stuff that was everywhere. I mean I would never have been able to crawl out. Then again, LAURIE and SAM are trying to give me, - I had to throw the walker away. I just shoved it over. No, I tried to make sure it was up against the wall, thinking of other people, because I know they wouldn't be able to see it, and I don't know.

LAURIE went to the door when we did this, there was a side stairwell and her father is a fireman, all his life, you know. She said when she went back home she said, "Hey dad, it doesn't work, those stairwells." Because she opened that door and then it really came back, you know.

Q. (134) The smoke?

A. Yeah, the black smoke, yeah, it was just like open, shut.

Q. (136) (talking on top of each other, can't pick up the question)

A. I don't know that I noticed. I just knew that it was black smoke. LAURIE and I, she had not mentioned that.

Q. (137) And this was a doorway in the corridor?

A. Uh huh, yes, it was -

Q. Right after you got in the corridor?

A. Right. Just - that's right. I think it was in fact just before, I think there's a stairwell just before the restaurant was. I'm not sure.

So then they held on to me, they let me, or I held onto them, because I press more on the left. I have spina bifida, and I also have what's called spondylolisthesis, which is a deterioration of the

spine. So I was able to hang onto them and put my pressure on them to walk and to this day - LAURIE just came out of therapy now with her shoulder was - severely damaged where she supported me.

Q. Really?

A. Great, through all that. There was one stage between there and the escalators which again we couldn't see. We couldn't see anything. I couldn't see them. I just knew that they were there. I knew that, or I felt or I thought anyway that people had left us. That we were just left, and I really wanted them to go on without me, because you know they're both -LAURIE's young. She has a child. And I was getting slower and slower. The smoke hurts your eyes and it hurt their's too, I suppose. You could feel it burning in your lungs. Not tons like I guess, because I didn't go to the hospital once I got out.

But I thought well I'm going to die and the next thought in my mind was I wondered how long it took you to die from the smoke, because they say so many times, "Well they were dead, the smoke got them before the fire ever came." I'm, thinking well, how long does it take under this smoke.

They would not leave me. They said absolutely not and since then, talking to LAURIE, she just kind of felt too that we were going to die and she thought well if this happened, I'm not leaving her. And SAM wouldn't leave me either.

Again all of this is like seconds, this is like going through your mind. So I'm going to say like halfway through the corridor in the black smoke. We tried to stay focus, I'm sure they did as far as going straight ahead. I think I had kind of wiggled out by that time. You know I remember this very deep voice. The three of us had no doubt in our minds that it was an angel. Now I know there's been a lot of people you know who say it's (____ Inaudible 167), but you know angels come in all faces, and who knows, one of you could be an angel. The thing that was amazing was

all of a sudden all you could hear was this very deep voice, very calm, and very reassuring that just said, "Keep holding hands, come straight ahead. It's clear over here." Then they did it again, except it was such a deep voice and so calm, and you hear nothing else. I heard no noise, no people no footsteps, no nothing and that's what we did. We went through there, and when we came out, when we came out of the smoke for us to see, there was nobody there. That doesn't mean that they didn't see us coming and went on down, you know whoever, but there was no one.

So then we went, the escalators were still running. Thought that was so strange. They were still electrically running, but we got on the escalators and walked down, naturally we didn't just ride down, although I heard after that that other people said, there were some people that got on the escalator and just stayed there riding it as natural, instead of getting out. Others would say, "Get out of the way," and things like that.

Then we went down to, I'm going to say second corridor I guess it was, because when we got down to, we were going to go outside, to the courtyard. Due to my handicap, the medical facility that I went through here, I have parking in the inner courtyard. But I understood, and maybe wrong, but I understood that there were bodies there and they said later, because we all tried to go out to the courtyard, and they wouldn't let us out there. So they directed us down I guess, the A ring heading towards, or the second corridor heading toward the concourse.

Well I don't remember this part but LAURIE and SAM have said, and others have, WARREN was down there where this you know these doors that shut, they were shutting. WARREN was holding it open and he was hollering for us to hurry, hurry, because the door was trying to close. We went, I don't remember going through a door.

Q. (194) This was like on the second?

A. Second floor corridor, some door, I'm going to say it was on the second one. I don't know of anyone, you know it wouldn't be on the top because you couldn't see on the fifth floor. So we went through that. Then we went on down. I don't ever remember going down that slope, but I do remember all of a sudden I was on the concourse, but then the line split. Some people went to the left and some to the right. Well the ones that went to the right appeared to me that they were going back in. I'm kind of starting to dig in my heels. I didn't want to go. I didn't know where they were going, but it was going back in. Well, when in deed it goes down I guess there's a corridor that leads to the outside, and maybe there was another one I don't know, because some other people went off, a great deal of people. It was just like split, you know, you know went out a different way I guess.

I was frightened then to go, I didn't want to go with them. I did. When we got outside we went on up to the hill. We went out South Parking and we went out to the underpass that goes toward the Residence Inn that was up there.

We stopped on the hill and a lot of people gathering and you know I don't know that it ever really hit me even at that time that a plane had hit. I just know it was bad. I don't know that I even thought, if that makes sense. I just didn't you know I was so, probably a lot of us were probably in shock I guess that's what happens. I don't know.

LAURIE and SAM, they left. I mean everybody was milling around. We were counting noses trying to find, we had two people missing. We were most concerned on them. One was not in the office at the time, so we were afraid he was hit. He was one of the branch heads, DAVID WOODSON, and we found out later that he was I want to say on the other side of the Pentagon and he had gotten out. Another young lady with us, WILLIE SHENKO (phonetic), she went to get her sister. She has a twin sister that was here, so she did go out with us, but then she went off and of course we didn't know what had happened then.

I think one of the bad things that really happened on there, after the fact, and I presume that they're doing something on this with their new procedures you know, there was nothing for handicapped people. Once you got out there were no buses, and yet there were, you could see the military buses that were empty. A military bus went by, wouldn't let you on. Well they wouldn't let anybody on. They had missions to do. I realize that, but Metro would not let you on. We tried to get a cab. Now there's a little space before that, I mean things we were doing, but the cabs wouldn't take us. We only found two and they wouldn't have anything to do with us. Nobody's allowed to come in and yet nobody could get out and Metro had shut down.

So when we were on the hill as people started disbursing, some people grabbed their cars, the ones that set in South Parking, before they closed it off you know. If you were far enough out there, I guess they got in and then raced away.

So there were three of us, the Secretary here, SUSAN who brought you in, and another young lady - SUSAN ANDERSON - and another young lady SANDY RUSSELL from the Castle (phonetic) office. The three of us wound up together. Well Sandy and I had nothing. We had no money, we were paupers. SUSAN had money, so we go wait until SUSAN _____. So we went across and we went over to the Residence Inn and eventually I believe they used the Residence as a triage center, something they said where they were going to use it for triage. I don't know, but we were sitting in the lobby, and I thought well this is really bad, as we all knew this. I thought if we can't get out, then we can just get a room. So SUSAN had a credit card, so we said let's get a room.

Well everything was - there was a big convention going on and things. There was no room. So we were sitting on the little couches and there was a lady across from me. I don't know her name to this day. She heard us trying to get a room and she said, "Well, I'm on the," like "17th floor," if there's that many, or seventh floor. "If you want to come in there, you can stay at my place while you get coordinated." Which was a real blessing.

So off we went you know. Now we had a room. Well her room looked right out over the Pentagon and everything that was happening. We had a bird's eye view of it.

I still didn't see a plane. I don't know at that point, I guess her TV was on and that's when they were talking about a plane hitting, and that. Never did see a plane, but then there was so much smoke and fire and that type of stuff.

Q. (254) When did you realize how really close to the impact area you were?

A. Oh, I don't think that for like I want to say a couple of days. I didn't realize that we were over the helopad. You know our Boss RHONDA (phonetic) MEAD (phonetic) was not in that day and I understand she was just going ballistic at home, because she knew where we were, and they showed a picture and she thought we were all dead. She thought she lost her whole group. I didn't realize until later when somebody mentioned couple days later, you know by the helopad, and even then it wasn't until I saw a picture and really put two and two together of the piece that fell. Now, the piece fell about twenty minutes after we crossed over. Now this is what I've been told that when we went over that piece that there was nothing under one and two. That that was gone which would have put us out on the edge of a piece that was just placed, you know by God's angel no doubt, to get us out. So that was very frightening.

I stayed up all, well when we got in the hotel we started calling people. Well we saw in the news right away that there was an 800 number to call to say whether you were alive or who you knew was there. Well we couldn't get through and you know everybody's cell phones, a lot of cell phones did not work and of course the lines were jammed.

I was able to get through to my friend Maria Moore who use to - retired from working here and I gave her all the names of everybody that was there. She wrote them down, and then asked her if she could go ahead and keep trying, because we felt like on the outside.

She tried to come after us also, and they wouldn't let her in. She was a block away and had no way of contacting you know. We could have walked up to there see. I had waited outside and that's when I saw cabs and tried to get one there, and they wouldn't have anything to do with us. Then we tried another one later.

Well when we realized Marie - now were talking this is probably one or two in the afternoon. People had come back from Metro that had gone there, because Metro closed. Metro is over at Pentagon City. Now since then, since the hill, well even with LAURIE and them, you know it's a difference hanging on to somebody. I still haven't walked with any, I relaxed my supports since the middle of the A ring, with what I normally need. When I got out there, between the hill and going to the Re- from that point on I had no support whatsoever. But adrenaline does work I'll say that. It keeps you moving.

We came out, so we thought well we're going to have to make our way to Metro, because we're going nowhere. We went out and headed up for Metro. About a couple blocks up there, toward there, I'm thinking there is no way I'm going to make this walking. I was in a lot of pain by that time and all of a sudden here's this, if you think God doesn't work in wonderful ways, here's this old grocery cart which probably belongs to some homeless person. It had a few things in it. I don't know exactly what it was, but that was his luck. But I thought, "ah ha," and I grabbed that cart so I used it as support and pushed it all the way to Metro and then of course I've been outside and we went inside.

So SUSAN got us Metro tickets. SUSAN lives in Gaithersburg and that's where I lived at that time. I moved shortly thereafter, but so she got us to Gaithersburg and her husband who also worked, I think he was off that day, works here, and he picked us up at Metro and took me home and then SANDY, she gave her Metro fare to get - she said if she could get to New Carol something, I don't really know, she could go from there.

So it was about, I guess, it was close to 6:30 at night when we wound up in Gaithersburg (phonetic) and then he dropped me off at home. I went, fortunately I had neighbors who had keys and I got a key from my neighbor, who'd been trying to find out if I was alive. And I was up all night from that point on. The phone rang. I had over sixty different phone messages on my phone and I thought isn't it wonderful. You lose track of how many people really care for you because my world, you know I'm divorced and sometimes you think you know, I could croak in here you know. Nobody'd know 'til Monday or Tuesday if I didn't show up for work, but many, and plus family had called looking for me.

So that's, we were off Wednesday and then Thursday we met the branch heads and the directors and MISS COMMONS and all of those people met here.

Q. (318) At the Pentagon?

A. Uh huh.

Q. Was that hard?

A. Yeah, a little bit. I've had a lot of bad things in my life that happened and I don't want to say that I'm a super strong person because I was ready to hit the dirt you know with the smoke, but actual things that happened to me, I think I do fairly well. I'll probably go bonkers one of these days, but you know I'm able to take those things and I think suppress them some.

When I came in at, I had a knot in my stomach, but mine was probably mild, because there's a lot of people - I didn't like the smoke smell. I had more appreciation the day that we came back here to view out spaces before, the following week when we moved in. When we went around the corner, we were in the, I was in the wrong corridor, I guess. I peeked around and it was black and everything flooded back. Didn't want to go that way instantly, but then again I realized well we had to go over one more corridor and even then I didn't care, because this wall was here, but

it was up further. This outside wall and it was shut off and it was kind of dark. You know because they weren't ready for us right then, where you had to walk in there.

Two times I was in, actually it was this year, and somebody knocked over a display case. Let me tell you besides the regular thing where you have heart failure with a big noise like that, I was ready to hit the dirt. I just absolutely froze, just froze and my heart was just racing, and tears came to my eyes. I started to cry and I thought, people didn't, other people oh they're calm, and I'm thinking my world is coming to an end. I don't like big loud noises anymore. Sometimes they do things here with the construction you know, something that's really abrupt, because it brings back, I see the windows going out in my office and it frightens me, because we did almost die. But there were so many that were so hurt and so mine is nothing compared to what had happened.

I've paid the price of having to walk. I didn't claim on my workman's comp and things like that because I certainly have pre-existing conditions and I know that. But now when I come, like just like within that week, we went to Crystal City and moved us in. I'm kind of around.

Q. (356) You relocated then.

A. Yes, we were relocated. We spent two days back and forth here, where everyone in the Navy Yard and Annex, and boom I think by Friday morning they said we were going to Crystal City. So we also met at Crystal City and looked at our spaces, and then GSA came in and then NBI (Phonetic), I presume you know what that is, the Navy, Marine Corp Intranet (NMCI). It's amazing what they did, and Verizon. Monday morning all - when we came in we had these huge wooden desks, and I had a sticker on mine, from "Warden prison." I loved it. But you know I can remember in my younger days, way, way, way back there when you know we had a big wooden desk. That was a dream you know, someday I'll have that desk. Well this thing you know must have weighed 200 pounds, all gnarled and I couldn't even reach the other side of it. It was huge,

but some people had old metal desks, we had an old green filing cabinet, old army green that was kind of bent a little bit. But then we didn't have anything to put in it anyway. In fact we were laughing about it. They gave us a filing cabinet, we didn't even have a pencil.

So we just kind of sat aside and people came in and looked at our spaces, and my branch is responsible for ordering supplies and then that has to do with money that's out of here. So LAURIE that worked for me, I mean she didn't know things, you know, the next couple of months and being able to set up, to stand up. Easily 200 people, 6200 people. From pencils, it's amazing what you don't have, what you don't think like they weren't there. That you didn't have.

Now my car, I didn't get that back for almost two weeks and finally I got really testy about that because I couldn't claim that to the insurance unless it was damaged. Well I didn't know what the status of it was anyway and even if it was damaged, that period of time 'til I take it somewhere, you know is not covered. So it cost be about \$150 maybe \$160. But you know when I went to the Car agent, I went to Enterprise in Gaithersburg (phoentic), of course everybody's talking about this. It's the whole thing that you talk about everywhere, and I told him that, you know I was coming for, because I didn't have a credit card. That's what it was, when I got there, and –

Q. (388) Because your purse was here when you left.

A. Yes, so I told him that you know that if I could, I can't remember where I had to go for this, I want to say that it was the safe deposit box. I keep my spare stuff in a safe deposit box, and of course my safe deposit key, of course, well one of them was on my key ring. The other one's at home, but I still had to get to the bank. So I told him that I could, I had credit cards. You know that they trusted me for that to come back with my driver's license. They had me in their

database at one time, so they did have one there, but I didn't have any driver's license and they said that was fine.

So I asked him I said, "Give me the cheapest old clunker that you've got. I don't know how long this will take." And do you know that they gave me a Chrysler Sebring (phonetic) convertible. Is that what they were?

Q. Yeah, that's what I want.

A. Gave it to me at the cheap price. For the whole, I've never had a convertible. I thought I was big dog, and it was really great, except I had to pay for even the cheap price. Yeah, I thought and they were very nice, and you know Staples and Office depot, both of those companies, gave, anytime I went in to buy supplies, they know me, in Crystal City the Staples down there and certainly the two in Gaithersburg, they just know when I walk in where I'm coming from. You know I always loved office supply stores. I have to throw that in there. To me I always liked those better than dress stores or anything like that. If you could go into an office supply store, oh my dream. I got so sick of that, may I never have to go in one of those things. I thought, uhg, can't stand this because everyday it was going in there. But do you know that they gave a discount to the government? Which I find amazing. I could see them doing that maybe for an individual, but for the government? It was a pretty good discount. Unfortunately now I don't remember what it was, but all I had to do was say "this is for the Pentagon" and they automatically reduced all the prices, big time, because something that might, you know we're talking sometimes one to two hundred dollars off of a purchase, that's what we would get from them. I thought that was, as I said both companies did that. I thought that was very, very nice. Unfortunately, there's no way the government sends a thank you, you know, except that we thanked them profusely anytime we were there.

So then we moved into Crystal City.

Q. (428) How long were you there?

A. Well from that time we moved in May 6th here.

Q. Oh really, not 'til May?

A. A lot of people didn't want to come back. They had counselors in to see us and that was nice.

We had, some people didn't want to come back here, but they did really well. Some that we thought that the day that they came in, especially two in here, we thought might have problems with it, but they didn't. You know they don't like it, but they did and I have understood some people are just looking for another job. They want out of here. They don't want to be in it.

I don't know, you know part of me says it won't happen here again and the other part of me, the evil side of me says, well if I were a terrorists, I'd say, "Oh yeah?" So who knows. I don't say a word to anyone. I guess that's it. Can you think of anything else?

Q. (440) Do you dream about it?

A. I had one dream and that was like two days later, because I didn't sleep the first night at all. I slept the next night and it was the following night, the second night of sleep and I dreamt not a whole bunch. It was just enough to wake me up, because I was falling and even though I didn't experience that, but the floor was gone and I was falling, and I was at the Pentagon. So I know that's what it had to do with, and it really frightened me. You know how your heart's racing and things like that but so on? But I haven't had one since.

Q. (451) What happened to your electric walker?

A. Oh you know it was kind of comical, somebody said they saw it later, and they said it was like a little skeleton. There's a little bitty knob in the center where the seat used to be and I guess

it all burnt up and it got gnarled. They said yeah it looked like a little skeleton. And I never heard about my walker, what I call a granny walker, I never did see that one again.

Now there was a gentleman, just the other day, in fact this week says, you know, he called me in the hallway and he says, "I saw your cart. I tried," this had to be, I want to, he was a construction worker to me. He had a hard hat, but he was one of them that was clearing out the site. He said, "I tried to save it for you, but they wouldn't let me have it." He said, "I moved it twice and they took it away."

I guess it had mold on it or bad things, and like that. So you know I lost that. That was a goner.
(chuckles)

Q. (468) I was going to ask you, the hallway that you came out into, you said there were maybe about eighteen folks in your office. How heavily populated were the other offices around you? Do you know? I'm trying to get a sense for how many, how was that hallway, numbers of people and how were those other offices impacted?

A. We all just moved into there.

Q. Were they all filled, do you know?

A. The offices? No, when you came –

Q. (475) No, some of them were empty.

A. Right, when you came out –

Q. I should have brought a schematic –

A. Well that's OK, but when you come out like, I'm not very good at these, I probably have no concept what's happening, but this is the E ring and this was our office. I know that we jogged

here a little bit and then went this way and then turned because this was an office here, was an office of people that just moved in there. So this may have gone, oh this would go on down like that.

Q. (482) D ring, continuing.

A. Yeah.

Q. Now which corridor did you come out? Do you know? Was it 4, corridor 4?

Q. (Another) Corridor 2 probably, right?

A. It wasn't two.

Q. Wasn't?

A. Well we went in 5E so how do I get to 5E, right here?

Q. (487) Well, but, 5 is the floor, E is the ring and then it's the next number.

A. Be 4.

Q. 4, That's be, yeah.

A. Four then, and it was 478.

Q. (490) Because the folks that were in the conference room, the conference room was close, was between corridors 4 and 5, right and there was a construction wall here.

A. Then that's probably right.

Q. That's all right. There was a construction wall there. So what they were saying was they came across this E ring and that was where the step was someplace between the construction wall and corridor 4.

A. So right here would be probably, or here would have been the seam.

Q. (497) Yes.

A. And that's the piece I guess that dropped.

Q. Right and so you're office must have been, if you came across that –

A. Was over here.

Q. (499) Yeah, OK, well see you, and then the conference room was further down

A. Then here was the conference room. In fact I would take my cart down here and turn around.

Q. OK, right, OK.

A. Because this was a narrow hallway. It wasn't the big wide, yeah.

Q. (503) Yeah, and then looking at the, we've looked at the schematics. You're right there is a little jog around here. One of the questions we had and maybe well I didn't really get a chance, but about how many people were in the hallway? Do you know?

A. Well, there was sixteen of us.

Q. Right and there were, there's about -

A. Twenty

Q. (508) Twenty of them.

A. So there's that amount, 32 coming through and you know I see them as a wave of people in my mind, because they came out all of a sudden. All coming out and saying, "No, No, No." Ok, and off we go. But then I thought that was bad. When that happened in my mind, all I could hear was this is not good, not good. I don't think at this point when I went this a-way, I wasn't near as frightened, because I thought we'll just go out and down until people were saying you couldn't go that way and I thought ooh, and I thought the door was bent, tell you that. I didn't realize that things weren't there. Which was good for all of us, because had we known that, stepping down here, I knew that that was not good. And I didn't feel like we raised up. I got a feeling we went down, you know, and I think some of the fear started setting in, but if we'd have known about that, I don't know how well some of us would have done, like me. I mean I would hope that I wouldn't go bonkers in trying to get out of there, but –

Q. (528) Well it's interesting as I think I mentioned to you before we started, the Undersecretary and her EA had come off this ladder.

A. Yeah, because there was a little door there.

Q. Right, just come up this door. So they weren't familiar with this, because they didn't stop to think that there usually isn't a step in the E ring passageway. So they didn't think really anything of that and in fact even until I think the Undersecretary read our report did she realize that that was –

A. That was not a good thing.

Q. (537) That was you know an expansion joint. I mean she knew that they'd collapsed of course, but she said that when we met with her recently, that she was the one, she was telling the

rest of the folks behind her. "Watch your step. Watch you step," and then when we interviewed the Crane folks they said in hindsight they thought, "Well wait a minute, there wasn't a step," because they had come in this way.

A. They came up that a-way.

Q. (544) They said well wait there wasn't a step when they came in so what's going on?

A. Oh yeah, that was hard, and this was all of the, there was things hanging from the ceilings.

Q. (547) That was (___ Inaudible) -and the raised floor.

A. And there were from, I saw one, but LAURIE said it was on both that maybe these big beams that had gone right through the wall. I remember seeing one over here on the left as I was going out in here. It's either here or in this jogged area, I just probably imagine right around through here.

Q. (552) That's the other thing I was going to ask. When you jogged around here was there any consideration to continue? I mean the E ring continues down here by the schematic, which really was going to be away from the impact area.

A. Really no I don't –

Q. (558) Now when we talked to the Undersecretary she said, she just said this was the only way that she could go.

A. And it could have been. I don't know.

Q. (561) She didn't know whether there was a wall there, which doesn't make sense or whether maybe there was just so much.

A. There was another wall.

Q. That maybe you couldn't see beyond that or –

A. It may have been as well because there were offices here, which doesn't look like it's right when you draw it here.

Q. (566) Are we in the passageway now?

A. We're not in it, no, so something's wrong here, because I could see them.

Q. They were coming back?

A. No, not but before this I could see furniture being moved into this area and this was blocked now that I think about it.

Q. (571) It was blocked?

A. It wasn't open yet. It was horses I think.

Q. Oh OK, but again that would –

A. It wasn't completed yet.

Q. All right that would make, OK, that's the problem we didn't have before.

A. You couldn't go down, you couldn't go down that before this anyway. Because I would go there and I was watching who was moving in there, and I don't know –but we were always watching all kinds –

Q. (578) Neighbors, what the neighbors were doing –

A. Well more like what did they get. What's their pool of (___ Inaudible) look like. (laughing)
because I think the lady's room, I want to say was up here. Right around through in through here.
Probably in the next ring.

Q. (582) Did you notice - another question going down here was there any - you had mentioned
the fire suppression doors when you got down to the second deck. Did you notice any action of
the fire suppression when you were in the corridor?

A. No, it could have been and I wouldn't even have known it.

Q. (586) OK.

A. The one down there, I don't remember going through that door.

Q. OK.

Side one ends.

Side two begins

A. I know WARREN was there telling us to come on, but to me there was no door. I mean it
was an entrance way to the hallway. I was also new to the Pentagon. I mean I'd been in it over
the years on other projects, when I had my Limits (phonetic) project, but you know I didn't know
my way around or anything like that. I think most of us too were just focused on getting out and
when we saw those escalators still going, that never even dawned on me. You know if I stood
back and think about it now, I'd probably be a bit concerned being going down this, wondering
how come they're doing and where are these going to? But you just went you know like sheep
you know.

Q. (010) Of course by that point, the smoke had diminished, right?

A. The smoke diminished, right. If the escalators were here going down, this was all black. This was black as the ace of spades, but right here it started getting gray. It was gray here. It was really very, I mean it was very smoky but it was gray smoke and it started that here, and then when you came out of the black even though this was gray, this was like being clear based on having been in black. As I said we couldn't see anybody there, but you could see people. When we started down the escalator you could see people on that other floor, but I don't know at what floor that was. That may have been the second floor, because you had to go down and around.

Q. (017) (___ Inaudible)

A. Right, we had to keep going down those, and I just, this area here is a blur to me except that I know that per LAURIE we were the only ones going down at that phase. But I do remember people down here, and definitely here at the A ring entrance. I guess there are steps there I'm going to say that you would have to go out into the courtyard. I remember a couple of men here. I don't know who they were. I mean what they were, if they were firemen, or if I think, I want to say that they were strictly military or just personnel there that wouldn't let us go through there. And I guess there was a lot of debris. I never did figure out how. I guess maybe because the first, because the, I understand the plane only went as far as like the C ring. Was the C ring demolished?

It wasn't - OK. It was just E and D.

Q. (026) I think there was some damage. There was some damage but not complete.

A. Well how did debris wind up this area?

Q. (0280) Again as we talked about in the beginning, I think with the explosion, because the building is so solid, it looked for places to go and the corridors, the alleyways, and the debris would blow out –

A. So it shot out into the A, into the courtyard? OK. Because somebody had said that there were bodies there. I don't know. If we'd have seen bodies, I'd have probably – I don't know what. I don't know what would happen. You know sometimes I guess that's maybe part of God's protection. You don't see a lot you know, or if you do, you know you don't remember it. There's a lot, there's things that I don't remember that did happen. You know that LAURIE and SAM will talk about and "did you see this?"

"No, I didn't see that."

And even once we got outside from the side until all of a sudden we were on the hill, I don't remember that space, except that I was out there on the hill then, you know, with all the people and counting names, and crying. Everybody was crying and hugging each other. They made it out. Now today they're saying, "You see what he did." (everyone laughs)

But it was really something, absolutely really something and so many people some of the stories, I know you've heard miraculous things. I'd really be interested in that, because some of them that we've read, hear, or heard, LAURIE and SAM were given the opportunity to carry the torch. I really am glad, because for me they were my saviors. They got me, my butt out of there, so when the torch came through they, and the Pentagon has this little –

Q. (045) Torch for the Olympics?

A. Uh huh, right, yes. SAM and LAURIE got to go out and do that, right by me was that colonel that had been burnt so badly that was also in there in the very beginning, him and his son and then right after that was LAURIE and SAM.

I thought boy that was, poor thing, I know it's got to be, I understand burning is the most excruciating and going on for months and months like that. That's got to be so terrible.

Q. (050) Yeah, that colonel has incredible testimony, too.

A. Does he?

Q. Yeah, a lot of impact all over.

A. Wow. Well now did he, did he go back in or was he hurt, because I didn't talk to him in that respect? We didn't bother him with, for that colonel, was he taken out, did he come out on his own?

Q. (053) No, he was pulled out.

A. Was he? Boy, oh I heard where one woman was under a desk and heard somebody clapping – somebody went in clapping their hands, I guess –

Q. (055) I don't really know that much.

A. So that, trying to find her. No, or she was clapping. She clapped her hands. That's what it was so that he could find her and then he pulled her out. Well, it will be in history, isn't it? In history, and they're trying to demolish what we have, our comfort zone that we've had up until now. You know we sit back and watch Israel year after year, after year after year, and many of the other countries too, and now, and I do believe it's here. I don't, you know, I listen to the I know that the general public is not going to understand this in maybe even a few more months, because we're use to wars where we can say well we took this hill. We did that. We have so many of this, and this isn't for everything and I think the general public eventually will become quite

disheartened with it, and that's a shame because they're there. They're here and they're everywhere. The next (___ Inaudible) Metro.

And you know you become a little bit more suspect I think and that's unfortunate in some respect. As an example there was this person in Crystal City, now I understand too by the way when we moved in there that a man, and I got this from a reliable source, did come in to there, and wanted to know who was in charge of this move and he just wanted second or third floor, whatever it is, and then when they went to take him there, he ran down the stairwell and he ran out. Wanted to know who was moving in here. That's what he wanted to know.

So then they heightened security within, but I forgot the point, my train of thought. This person, well one of the guys that had the snack bar there, and then there was, you don't think about sometimes how something does effect you. The guy was very nice. He's from Jordan. Treated me very well in there, in fact I watched him cook there, but when we got ready to go, I didn't let him know. There was something about, I mean he was very, very nice to me so I have no reason for this, but I just didn't until I came back and I said goodbye. But you know, I'm sure he might have heard it from somebody else that we were going you know, and seeing this, I thought I didn't want to say that if that makes sense. That's kind of picking on somebody I guess.

Because I think who was it, I can't remember it was a female politician or a news reporter I think on "Meet the Nation," who said you know, they know that you now know what to look for. So that's not who you're going to see the next time. You'll see somebody regular. What we call regular.

When this book comes out, now it just comes to the book stores, or will we be allowed to purchase before the whole world gets it and there's none left?

Q. (089) I think it's going to be published by the government printing, so it will be available for purchase and then I think, I don't think they finalized the plans for how many or whether I guess

then it's possible for once that happens then a publisher can get it and do reprints. So I think there's a couple different options, but I'm sure it's going to be a great read. Everybody we talk to says, "Oh, I want a copy. I want a copy."

A. Yes, I know. I know everybody in here will.

Q. We've already sold several cases of books for him.

A. Yeah, I bet so. Well, it's so good to know you're doing this. We won't realize it but by golly just four hundred years from now, this will be working that day. And like you say that was a good comment too you know, if we had had comments from Pearl Harbor, wouldn't that have been something?

Q. Ok well we really appreciate you taking time to tell us your –

A. I appreciate your coming by

Q. Your story. You've added some clarification into the exit.

A. You know I was thinking another thing too, the problem was sheep, you know we followed whoever was in the front. That's why I was afraid to go back into the Pentagon, because I thought, they're just following. That person might be going into look, you know. I don't want to go back and look so we were, you just get to the point where I don't think there's any thought. The person up front had to have some thought.

Q. Ok. Best wishes to you and thanks for talking to us.

A. Enjoyed it thank you. Appreciate it.

Transcribed by:
Ethel Geary
March 30, 2003