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11 September 2001, Tuesday

Today the innocence of my generation ended. At 8:40am a hijacked jetliner crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Eighteen minutes later a second hijacked jetliner crashed into the other tower. I watched this on the news from the first floor of the Pentagon on the D ring of the fourth corridor, deep in the recesses of the Navy Command Center. I watched the CNN news of the event on the television set hanging from the ceiling next to my desk. President Bush had just finished making a statement calling it a “probable terrorist attack.” He had just finished asking everyone to observe a moment of silence. I did and afterward thought that being on the first floor deep in the Pentagon was probably a safe place. We had recently moved into these spaces from the fourth floor of the D ring at the juncture of the fifth and sixth corridors. I had complained that there were no windows.

I sat down at my desk and think I was looking at the new controls for some Counterdrug Budget work that was due Monday. There was a loud thud, and instantaneously a brief, but intense thrust of the building down and toward the center courtyard. The air pressure changed. The lights went out and water and debris started raining down on me. I was immersed in darkness and dust. I found myself crouched down on the floor on the left side of my chair. I don’t know how I ended up in this position. Dust was all around me. Small things that I believe were the pulverized pieces of the ceiling tiles were coming down. Time seemed to slow down. In the seconds following the blast, I recalled seeing the energy of a blast come into the room from my right and move across me and down. I wondered if a bomb had been placed in the empty spaces just above us on the second floor over the Navy Command Center. I had the thought to get under my desk, but couldn’t move my chair to gain access. I thought of covering my head, but found my hands to be feebly ineffective against the dust and small debris flying around. Something that felt light came down and struck my back and I sloughed it off with my right arm. I was surprised that my arm registered a much heavier weight than I realized.

I stayed put and considered staying put for a long time. I could feel the dust thick on my lips and in my nose. I was crouched down in a squatting position with my head tucked between my legs and my arms at my sides, hands behind me. My hands felt the glimmer of searing heat coming from a distance to my right side, toward the command center. I raised my head, opened my eyes and saw a dim light coming into the room from directly in front of me. The solid wall in front of my desk had collapsed. A dim light I recognized as daylight came through showing the dust and debris in the air. It was strangely beautiful with the light and the slow motion sparkle of the dust as it settled. I chose this as my time to get out.

I was struck with how profoundly quiet everything was. I stood and pulled my way through the opening and was surprised at how easily I was able to gain access. From where I was squatting I would have thought my computer monitor and the table abutting my desk that held another computer monitor would have impeded my exit. The step out was easy. I knew there was a machine room on the other side of the collapsed wall from blueprints I had seen of our new spaces and I entered a mid-sized room with a bank of industrial gray panels showing green

lights. As I passed through into the machine room I looked up to see a broken water pipe pouring water into what was now a surrealistic scene from a disaster movie. I looked to my left at the source of the light and saw the outside doors to this machine room were open. Against them were two toppled, green workmen's carts. I don't know if these wheeled 5x4x3 foot metal boxes broke the doors open or the force of the blast had done that. I stepped up on the box and was outside in the alleyway between the C and D rings.

Rick Sandelli from my office and CAPT Jeff Boroff were already outside. So were some other people. They started calling in the open doors and I ran back to the one I had come through. I stood at the precipice of the door and found myself saying or thinking, "I don't want to be a hero. I don't want to be a hero." Then I saw Paul Brady coming toward me from the hell I had just escaped. I rushed into the mechanical room and steadied him over the broken concrete and debris on the floor and helped him climb over the workmen's carts and exit the building.

I heard glass breaking above me and saw someone throwing himself against the window to break it, his hands outstretched, he was slamming again and again against the window. It finally broke and an Army Major climbed out. He hung from the frame and had a 12-14 foot drop. A newly formed group of people rushed over and cushioned his fall and then that of another. The later Army man was much heavier and had a profusely bleeding cut from his head. I had a curtain that I thought to offer to help break the falls and gave it to the man who was bleeding. He took it and went off in the direction of the fifth corridor.

I went toward a chain link gate that was erected between the fourth and fifth corridors and considered climbing as several before me had. A group of people was trying to force the gate open and squeeze through the gap made by bending the gate. Several Defense Protective Service (DPS) members were on the other side and managed to get the gate opened. I made sure Paul was in tow and we made our way to the fifth corridor. I met an Air Force Colonel coming toward us and asked him if this corridor was clear. He said yes and struck me as oblivious to what was happening. Paul and I made our way down a perfectly normal Corridor 5 to the Ground Zero Courtyard. My back right side was hurting just above my belt. I put my hand there and was relieved not to find blood. Paul looked and told me I just had a red mark.

When we arrived in the courtyard a large group of people were gathered. All of the ones I saw looked unscathed by the hell Paul and I just left. I asked one group of Army officers if any of them had a cell phone. I was told that cell phones weren't working. A DPS man was yelling and waving from just in front of the Ground Zero Café for people to get out of the Pentagon and motioned us toward the 1 and 2 corridor corner. I found Paul and we followed a very orderly crowd. We went through the vehicle tunnel at the 1 and 2 corner and continued on to the South Parking Lot. While going through the tunnel, I asked Paul if, by chance, he had his car keys. He said he did.

When I saw the end of the tunnel the first pang of fear gripped me. We were about 20 feet from the end and I needed to get out of the building. I was gripped with a fear that a second attack was coming. I thought that the worst place to hit would be where the people were coming out and for a few moments, I was sure that a second attack was imminent.

Paul and I broke into the light of day and were directed by a DPS officer to proceed to Army-Navy Drive. As we walked through the parking lot Paul asked me where the car was and I directed us to the car. Agreeing that getting the heck out of here was a good idea we got in and drove. HOV was blocked off and we entered normal traffic lanes south on 395. Traffic slowed and narrowed to two lanes. We found the police were diverting drivers off the Northbound HOV lanes on to South 395.

Paul and I exited on Little River Turnpike. Just as we passed through the first light I heard a dull thud and had immediate thoughts of a second attack. Paul and I determined that it might have been blasting from a construction site. We talked a little bit about what we should have done. On the drive home I started going through the classic symptoms. I regretted and wished I had stayed to help. I made the flat statement that we had done the right thing. My back right side kept hurting me and I kept rubbing it and checking for blood. There was none. As we drove, I looked at the drivers of the other cars around us and realized that they were utterly oblivious or apathetic to what we had just gone through. They were at peace in their ignorance. And I realized that had the events at the World Trade Center been the end of the day's events, I, too would have driven home with the same distancing apathy. I wanted to scream to the world, "Pay attention! Look what happened to me!"

When we reached the intersection for Hummer Road, Paul started slowing down at the bus stop and I opened the door. I stepped out of the car while it was still rolling. I ran home and never broke stride. As I crossed Hummer Road I had the image of surviving the Pentagon Blast only to be struck by a car while crossing the street. I ran through a parking lot, jumped the chain link fence into the Adam's Mews townhouses and ran straight for our house. I came through the door to be met by [REDACTED], our housekeeper, and told her I was Mr. Lloyd. She stared at me in what I thought was surprise at seeing this strange man. I later realized it was my appearance that brought on her reaction. I recognized that [REDACTED] was not in the living room and raced up the stairs toward our bedroom. The television set was broadcasting the events at the Pentagon. [REDACTED]'s back was to me and she was either making or just finishing up a telephone call.

I walked in the room and said, "I decided to take the rest of the day off." [REDACTED] screamed at seeing me and we merged at the corner of our bed near the window. [REDACTED] collapsed against me and started sobbing. I held her. [REDACTED] stared at us wondering what was wrong with Mommy and Daddy.

[REDACTED] suggested I take a shower and I found myself resisting the idea, wanting the world to see just what happened to me and not wanting to "take off my 'badges of courage'" and join the ranks of the ordinary world. I needed people to be able to look at me and say, "Oh my God, what happened to you?"

I showered and was amazed at how dusty my clothes were. The sweater I was wearing reeked with smoke and chemical smells. When I washed my hair, it felt like straw and rinsed dark gray. I had [REDACTED] check me over and my injuries appeared to be: goose-egg on inner right ankle, "V" shaped mark at base of spine with a cut at the apex of the "V", two red marks higher up on my spine, four inch scrape on outside of right arm just below the elbow, deep bruise on back of right arm just above the elbow with a horizontal line in the center, pain in lower right rib (possible

bruise/crack), stabbing pain on back right side just above belt line and discomfort just above right hip on front side. My eyes burned from the dust and my skin felt mildly burned. I realized after my shower that I had not looked at myself in the mirror for a before picture.

I went outside to see the sky and thank God. [REDACTED] drove up and stayed with us for about an hour talking with [REDACTED].

I applied a cold pack to the goose-egg on my ankle and that went down. I can't figure out how that got there. I remember something hitting my back and using my right arm to slough it off. That may explain the marks on my back and my right arm. The discomfort in my ribs and right side are a mystery.

[REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I went to the park. I felt strangely distant, separate. There were a group of Arab people playing tennis in the courts and I found myself experiencing an unreasonable anger toward them. I knew it was a normal reaction to the trauma, but it was real and it was strong.

I was able to contact [REDACTED]'s parents. I couldn't get a line to my parents in Florida. I finally called [REDACTED]'s folks and asked them to call. They got through. I left a message on my brother, [REDACTED]'s, answering machine. I called Lynette and Jon from the car pool. I called Don Riffle from Haynes & Associates. Vinnie Bellezza, my reserve unit CO. I tried to call [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (cousins) but couldn't get a line, "All circuits are currently busy."

Given the events of the day we ordered pizza for dinner. [REDACTED] went out and got the Special Late Edition of The Washington Post with the headline "Terror Hits Pentagon, World Trade Center".

I made a point of contacting my office mates: Paul, Rick, Jerry's family, Tom's wife and Jack's family. I found out that Jerry had been admitted to Arlington Hospital. Jack was still missing. About 9:00pm I got a telephone call from ITC Carney asking about my status and wanting to know if I knew about any other people. I shared the whereabouts of everyone I knew and told them about [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] being down in Jacksonville, FL. They didn't know about the last three. I told him that Jack Punches was our only unknown.

As I went to sleep the image of the blast kept playing in my mind, over and over again. It was like a video and included only the moment before and through the blast. In analyzing the images the blast came from above and to my right and slightly behind me. I think I have a faint memory of seeing an orange or yellow color a little more to my direct right. This may have been from the television going off or the glimmer of a fireball. I remember bending with the blast and not fighting it and I think that's how I ended up crouched on the floor. Before falling asleep it was as though my senses were ultra-high. I picked up the faintest variation of light. Any sound that I detected outside the norm of my comfortable, safe sounds disturbed me. Sirens, bangs, pops brought me up. I slept until about 2:00am and then spent an hour sitting up in bed.

12 September 2001, Wednesday

I awoke, knew I had slept, yet felt exhausted. I went through my morning as best I could. I read through the articles in The Washington Post and found tears that I choked back. A graphic of the Pentagon and the impact point showed that my office was right under the impact.

■■■■, ■■■■ and I went to the Pentagon, parking in visitor parking, but DPS wouldn't let us out of the tunnel. We drove south on 395 heading for Arlington to visit Jerry Henson in the Hospital. The view of the Pentagon as I looked out the side and rear windows of the car chilled me.

We spent about 30 minutes with Jerry and I nearly broke down there. He had been pinned to his desk by a bookcase and falling ceiling. A rescue worker managed to free him. He was being treated for lacerations and smoke inhalation.

Rick Sandelli and I spoke and he gave me a telephone number for the temporary Command Center and the LT Jim McDonner. Jim and I talked for a while and in a very sober and quiet voice, Jim said, "You're a very lucky man." RADM Hathaway and I talked and they told me they didn't have any place for us at this time. He told me to take care of myself and my family until I hear from them.