

**SUBJ: NARRATIVE OF 11SEP01 ATTACK ON THE PENTAGON**

I was in the office during the time of the attack on the WTC's. Room 5C455, 5<sup>th</sup> deck in the middle ring of the five rings (A through E) of the Pentagon and right on the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor. The corridors are like spokes on a wheel and go from the center out to the E-Ring. The plane impacted into the outer E-Ring at the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor I am told between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors. The plane penetrated 4 of the 5 rings going all the way up to the inner most A-Ring and therefore was directly below our office by about 3 floors when it went through our section.

There were six of us in a small office with no windows watching the news: CDR Craig Powell, a SEAL just checking on board, Mark Pugh, a civilian who had two others visiting and CDR Atkins, a visitor. We were informed of the attack on the WTC's by someone on the phone with Mark Pugh. I had just finished leaving a message for my parents in NYC and my girlfriend and was watching the news when the attack on the Pentagon occurred. My cell phone had rung twice when suddenly there was a very loud explosion and the room shook violently. Some of the tiles from the ceiling were shook loose. I grabbed the cell phone and quickly left the office with everyone. Mark Pugh was hesitating because of certain classified material left at his desk but promptly left when CDR Powell directed him and others to get out of the building. We exited by way of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor toward the center courtyard and then down. The halls were filled with people hurriedly leaving. Alarms were going off and sliding fire walls/curtains were closing off the hall ways. Every step I took I expected another explosion to rip through the walls and take us with it. Several marines were keeping folks from running. Many were helping others, many were crying, many didn't know what was going on. While going down the escalator I heard CDR Powell's voice behind me and continued down. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor I was still with the civilians from the office but could not see CDR Powell. I waited and looked for 30 seconds then proceeded outside to the courtyard from the second floor exit. Apparently CDR Powell had gone down to the ground level.

In the courtyard I turned and could see the black cloud of smoke billowing from our wedge of the Pentagon. There was a mixture of activity: groups of people leaving the area, groups standing around not knowing what happened or what to do and groups crying, screaming, shouting directions, trying to get head counts, etc. At the time I had thought it was a bomb. I don't remember when I found out it was a plane but the smell of burning jet fuel was very thick. I was looking around for anyone from my office to check in with and trying to find CDR Powell when I heard people shouting for medics from the area of the courtyard just outside the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor exit I had taken. I saw some men with EMT vests arrive and I ran up to two Petty Officers and told them to run through the crowds of people to find medics, corpsmen or doctors. I saw some people from my front office, checked in with them, told them that everyone in my office had gotten out but that I was looking for CDR Powell. I then ran back to the area outside corridor 4 which was now a triage site and offered my assistance to one of the men seemingly in charge stating my training and background. He pointed out four people who had been injured, to check and monitor them. I monitored their condition, bandaged

their wounds, talk to them, and helped them remain calm. Their clothes were ripped and torn in some places with minor cuts and abrasions, mostly crying or rocking back and forth. I lent one Army LCOL my cell phone but there was no service. I was with these four for only a few minutes when another female Army LCOL was laid on the grass screaming and a Navy Captain was shouting for an I.V. I jumped up, helped him find an IV and assisted with the female officer. The entire time she was screaming about more people stuck. We got the IV going in her when she lost consciousness. I was holding the IV bag and her arm. Another EMT couldn't find a pulse and started yelling that out. He massaged her chest and she came back crying again about the others. After a minute with her, she seemed more stable and I felt I needed to move on and find more things to do. I grabbed an on-looker and had him watch her and hold the IV bag. There was nothing more immediate outside. I saw an EMT with a stretcher running back into the 4<sup>th</sup> corridor A-Ring. There was someone there trying to keep people out except for EMT's and Medics. I grabbed the back end of this guy's stretcher and ran in with him. I don't think he knew I was there until I told him. No one stopped me. The A-Ring was dark and smoky. There was 6 inches of water on the ground and rubble, cables, bars coming from the walls and ceiling. When I entered the breezeway between the A and the B Ring I could see lots happening: there were three gaping holes (from 10' to 15' in diameter) with piles of rubble, ankle deep water, bricks, clothes, and twisted metal all over with the larger piles of it trailing from each hole in the wall. You couldn't see inside the holes very far.. the only light was the fire and everything else was dark and black with broken walls, hanging beams, and wreckage blocking everything. Black smoke was billowing from the windows all the way up that were broken and hissing out of the sides of the ones still intact. There were approximately 20 people back in this area between the rings spaced out at the different holes. I immediately saw CDR Powell at the entrance to the nearest hole as well as LCOL Giles Kyser, the Current Operations Officer at SOCEUR when I was there. I ran up to the nearest opening and got CDR Powell's attention. It seemed that they were going through the hole into the fire and yelling for people and trying to get people out. Some were brought out as I ran up to the entrance. I yelled to CDR Powell to ask what he needed me to do. Many folks were shouting. LCOL Kyser got people to back away from the entrance to provide more light and for air to breath. They were going to rotate guys going in and it seemed that I would be next in. I took off my CNT khaki top and rolled in the water. People were shouting for wet t-shirts to breath through. The smoke was getting very thick. I gave someone my t-shirt. There I was, feeling quite exposed, a bare-chested frogman about to run into this fire with no shirt on and debris falling from the floors above. Hmm. Go in the hole and get burned up or stay out and catch falling glass and brick. I saw a shirt floating in the water on the floor and put it on. I was at the opening looking through the smoke, trying to see an avenue through the flame and obstacles to somewhere where I might do some good. CDR Powell was there holding up something up over head that was hanging down, possibly mesh from the ceiling, and guys were coming out of the hole. I got a wet t-shirt and hard hat from one of the guys coming out and stepped into the hole looking for a way past obstacles and fire and for anyone trapped or for direction from CDR Powell who had been there and knew what had been tried already. Someone started pulling me and a few others back out yelling that the roof was caving in. We backed away and watched as things fell inside the hole and the fire got worse. We ran to the other holes but others

had already been pushed back by the fire. The piles of debris in the breezeway were also on fire. Some tried fire extinguishers on the piles but it wouldn't work. There were some body parts among the rubble as well as clothes, wallets, and a cellphone, etc. It was around this time that an EMT or one of the firemen who had just arrived with a radio informed everyone that there was another inbound plane with ETA of 5 minutes. With LCOL Kyser leading, CDR Powell and I helped everyone out of the courtyard to north parking. The call went out that the ETA was now less than 2 minutes. CDR Powell and I ran into the medical center in the Pentagon and grabbed a large cabinet of medical supplies and wheeled it out of the Pentagon and across the street to where everyone was gathered.

We found a woman from medical department who appeared to be in authority gave her and a 3-Star Air Force General (Gen Carlton) a SITREP on the courtyard and offered any assistance. After we realized no 2<sup>nd</sup> aircraft was coming LCOL Kyser began separating out all who considered themselves in excellent condition, formed them into teams of 20, divided up EMT's evenly among them and brought us back into the courtyard. CDR Powell and I stayed with LCOL Kyser and delegated tasks such as placing the teams, setting up triage sites, putting security on the doors to control those going in and out of the dangerous areas, getting a roster of everyone in the courtyard. One of the most helpful men in these tasks was MSGT Rose, who had been in the original group helping between the A and B Ring. The three of us spent the rest of the day back between the A and B ring interfacing with the Fire Chief explaining where suspected survivors might be, keeping people away from walls that were bowing out, keeping onlookers outside the area. Ultimately our goal was to be there with the firemen until they gave us the word that they had penetrated to some possible survivors then scramble the stretcher teams back in the courtyard to come and assist. The smoke was so thick at times we couldn't see more than 25 yards. The sides of the walls were cracking and smoke pouring out the cracks. As FBI or NCIS agents showed up on site we debriefed them on the scene, explained the holes and debris trails, pointing out items of interest, pieces of the plane and parts of victims, as well as possible danger to them from walls bowing or windows blowing out as they took pictures and made notes.

The fire department had their own difficulties. They couldn't get trucks into the courtyard. Then the hoses they had weren't long enough nor was the water pressure from the Pentagon enough. It was maybe 2 hours after impact that water was being poured onto the fire.

As the minutes passed and the fire grew we realized more and more our helplessness and the futility of our efforts to help out. The firemen couldn't penetrate to the second floor, even the ground of the first floor was giving way on them. The burning jet fuel was just too hot for them. They kept trying different avenues and at about 1530 stopped their efforts. To know that people were dying as we stood there was extremely maddening. To stand there closest to the flames and breathe the smoke, eyes stinging, talking to the firemen and Agents, and being there for whatever LCOL Kyser or CDR Powell needed was as much as I could do and it wasn't much at all. But I was very glad not to be sitting in the courtyard or on the street or at home not doing anything and not knowing what was going on.

I wish I had known and gone directly to the breezeway, but I spent those first critical moments outside helping in the courtyard. LCOL Kyser did an excellent job of

taking charge of the rescue efforts made by Pentagon personnel. CDR Powell apparently had the respect of several others that were in the breezeway and in the hole in the wall before I got there. They called him “Big John”, talking about him catching people and holding up the ceiling.

It goes without saying how horrifying this tragedy was. New York is absolutely overwhelming—I’m from Manhattan and visited family last weekend. This will be a very complex and unique conflict. I pray God’s hand on our leaders and this country and for my own wisdom and leadership as I transfer to Naval Special Warfare Unit THREE in Bahrain in January.

[Submitted by CDR Craig Powell]

This narrative is to documents the actions of LT Olin Sell following the terrorist attack on September 11,2001.

I am personally able to verify that LT Sell -

He decided to not evacuate but rather assist in helping the injured with his medical training and later assisted in rescue and recovery operations. Specifics:

He rendered medical assistance to a female LTC who had been rescued from a burning room on the second/third floor and was suffering from smoke inhalation and shock.

He assisted in entering the blown out passageway by helping to remove debris in order to rescue three people trapped in a burning office.

He stayed on scene after the arrival of the fire department and prior to the forced evacuation due to a possible second plane. He stayed to assisted in carrying out possible survivors yet unfound while there existed a real possibility of the building window exploding and the walls collapsing.

During the forced evacuations with warnings of "less than a minute before impact" he assisted in moving vital medical supplies out of the Pentagon Clinic by dragging a full medical cabinet all the way to North Parking. This is every significant because every one else was basically carrying a few supplies in their hands while he drug the whole trauma cabinet which proved to be needed to assist critically injured people.

He stayed and re-entered the Pentagon going back to the inner ring, between A&B) where the fire and fire increased as had the probability of building collapsing. He then stayed in the inner ring to serve as a critical messenger link since there were no radios available that worked with the Defense Protective Service, Fire Department and the Adhoc Rescue Team.

In summary LT. Sell placed himself in harms way repeatedly in order to assist in the rescue and recovery of those injured in the Pentagon Attack.