

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

CDR Mike McDaniel  
CDR Karen Loftus

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206  
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206

**Interviewee:**

Mr. Paul Brady

**Current Address:**

Navy Counter Drug Program - Pentagon

**Date of Interview:**

16 Oct 2001

**Place of Interview:**

Navy Annex

**Number of Cassettes:**

One

**Security Classification:**

Unclassified

**Name of Project:** Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; triage; evacuation; lessons learned; Defense Protective Service; FBI; carnage; Navy Command Center; renovation

**Abstract of Interview:**

**Interviewee Information:**

Mr. Brady was born and raised on a farm outside of Nashville TN. Attended a 3 room schoolhouse. High School in Nashville, TN, attended St. Vernon College in Alabama. Had uncles in Navy and Marines in World War II. Mr. Brady joined Navy after graduating from college. Attended OCS in Newport. Commissioned and Ensign. Mine sweep officer for 2 years, Heavy Cruiser in Newport News – Deck and Gunnery and Communications, was in Cuban Quarantine. In the Med when the Berlin Wall went up. Navy Postgraduate School in Engineering Science. Defense Communications Agency for 3 years coordinating communications with Strategic Air Command and other major commands. Pentagon Navy Staff in Submarine Communications. 11 years active duty. Came out of the Navy, no career path. COMNAVTELCOM for 5 years about same work as on active duty. 74-92 in Communications Plan and Policies. Billet disestablished and went to Navy Counter Drug Program as Program Analyst.

**Topics Discussed:**

On Sept 11 was in the right corner of the Navy Command Center (his working space). They were watching the news about the World Trade Center. He “Well I guess we’ll be next”, and returned to his working space. Picked up the phone to call a friend in Norfolk and there was a tremendous boom, sounding like an 8 inch shell going off. Felt shock wave. Sounded behind him. (12:45)

He immediately knew it was a terrorist attack, but thought it was a bomb.

Explosion forced him out of his seat and to the floor. Ribs got clobbered. Kept head down. Air filled with acrid, noxious smoke. No lights in the center, sprinkler came on. Alternative power source did not come on because the plane took the generator for it out when it came through.

Mr. Brady stood up and looked around to see if anyone else around. Heard no sound after the explosion. Complete blackness, choking smoke. Looked for his assistant on his right. Glimmer of light through the smoke and dust. Crawled on the floor to a four foot wide hole in the base of the wall between his office space and the alley way between C and D rings. Mr. Lloyd, his assistant, was already there. Climbed over a jumble of debris and made way out to alleyway. Fire breaking out down the alleyway. 10 or 15 people in alleyway. 4 or 5 got under window. Army major trying to break the window on the second deck above them to get himself and his people out. The people on the ground made a human safety net for them. Went down alleyway until they found the central corridor to the courtyard. Never saw parts of a plane or anything else that could have knocked the hole in the wall that he escaped from, may have been from a shock wave.

Drove home. Traffic heavy. Son called to check on him. At this time he learned that it was a plane hitting the Pentagon and not an explosion.

(25:53) He learned later that when the firemen entered the Command Center 15 minutes after he escaped the room was full of flames and they had to fight their way in with fire extinguishers.

(27:11) Describes what LCDR Tarentino reported seeing when he brought the rescue party into the Command Center including airplane tires. Describes rescue of Jerry Hinson from the Command Center by LCDR Tarentino and his rescue crew. He had to be pried out from bookcases and metal shelving with fire rapidly approaching in order to be rescued.

Discusses how if something like this would have happened during his time in the Navy during the Cuban Blockade or in the Med he wouldn't have been surprised. But, he never expected something like this to happen in the Pentagon. Can't let your guard down.

Comfort in the fact that this had brought Americans together.  
Children can sing God Bless America in schools

Lessons Learned – stay prepared spiritually and materially. Can't let this happen again

Provide good strong intelligence network

Be aware of what is going on in the country

Listen to see what is going on.

At least when we were in a confrontational role with the Soviet Union they were rational people, these people are not.

Thoughts about our going after military targets and hitting innocent Afghanistan civilians.

We are not trying to kill the innocents. We are doing what we have to do.

Discusses Rick Sandelli, another person in the Command Center, getting out via another exit.

Apparently he was able to get out a locked door because when the power went out the electronic locks were sprung.

The people in the main part of the Command Center, watch captains were all killed. People in the Meteorology department with the exception of the Lieutenant were all killed. The Intel plot lost a lot of people. One who got out alive was a Lieutenant who was badly burned and had smoke inhalation (LT Shaefer).

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**Interviewee Information:** Born and raised on a farm out side of Nashville, Tennessee. After college he joined the Navy. Went through OCS in Newport, RI. Left the Navy as a LCDR after 11 years. Worked for the Navy as a civilian as a communication specialist. Worked on OPNAV staff from 1974 to 1992 in Communications, Plans and Policies. From there went to Navy Counter Drug Office where he has been until the present. He was in the Navy Command Center at the Navy Counter Drug desk on 11 September 2001.

**Topics Discussed:**

Q. Take us through your whole morning on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

A. I came in and went in through the blast doors. Went to my desk and sat down. It was a usual routine morning. We had our morning staff meeting at 0730 at which we discussed what was going on for the program next year—chances of getting money out of OSD, etc. Then I went to my workstation, which was over next to the wall over there. My assistant, Mr. Lloyd, and I started working on some spreadsheets for the ODC Counter Drug Office. We had a small five-foot room divider between us and the Command Center. There was a big TV mounted on a platform in the Command Center, but visible to us.

The Second Class Petty Officer (who died in the attack) said, “My God! A plane just hit the World Trade Center!” This was when the first plane hit. We all thought it was maybe a civilian plane—that someone has misjudged his approach to the airport up there. We all started looking at it and as soon as I saw all the smoke coming out of there, I knew it wasn’t any twin-engine piper or anything of this nature. And you could see the big hole in the wall. The commentator was speculating on what it was. He mentioned the B-25 that crashed into the Empire State Building back in whenever it was. The word terrorism was not mentioned. They were really questioning that it wasn’t a private plane, that it was a large plane based on the size of the hole and the tremendous smoke and fire.

Then when the second plane crashed, we all knew it was a deliberate act of terrorism because we saw the plane coming in. It went full speed ahead into the side of the building as the fireball erupted out the other side.

Q. You were watching that live?

A. We were watching that live on TV and the President’s very brief speech while he was talking to the kids down in Florida.

Q. And that happened before the Pentagon?

A. Yes. Yes. It happened just maybe a minute or so before the plane hit the Pentagon. So, I had some papers to give to my boss, Mr. Hensen, for him to take a look at. I walked over around the corner. His office was built separate from the rest of us. The rest of us were in an open bay area and he had an enclosed office. He and Jack PUNCHES, his assistant, were watching the TV, and the rerun over and over again of the second plane hitting the North Tower, watching in horrified fascination. I dropped the papers on Jerry’s desk and said,

“Well, I guess we’ll be next on their list.” I turned around, went back to my workstation and sat down at my desk. I obviously didn’t have my mind on what I was doing. I picked up the phone and was going to call down to Norfolk to USGECOM.

There was this tremendous boom! It sounded like an 8-inch shell going off. That’s the closest I can describe it. You could feel the shock wave going through the building. It sounded like it was behind me, not a specific direction, but the blast came from the back. It was not a sharp blast, it was just a heavy boom. I knew that it was a terrorist attack. There was no doubt in my mind. I thought though, that it was a bomb that someone had but a bomb outside our partition area. The force of the explosion forced me out of my seat and down onto the floor between my chair and my desk, my workstation. In the process, my ribs got clobbered as I went down. I kept my head down—funny how all your training comes back to you. The air was filled with this noxious, acrid smoke. There were no lights in the Center. All the lights went out. The sprinklers came on. The alternate power source did not come on because, as we learned later, the generator for the alternate power was outside the building on a concrete pad right next to the heliport. So, when the plane came through, it took out the alternate power source before it hit the building.

As soon as the ceiling tiles quit falling and the room dividers quit flapping across the room, I stood up to see if there was anyone else around because I had heard no sound from anybody. I think I might have heard a yell or something at the time of the initial explosion from the back of the Command Center, but I couldn’t swear to that. Maybe I did, and maybe I didn’t. But I heard no sound whatsoever after the explosion. As I said, it was complete blackness, and the air was filled with choking smoke. I knew I had to get out of there. I was afraid of

fire. I was afraid of a second explosion because I figured if this was a terrorist attack, there could very easily be a second explosion. I said, “My God, please get me out of here.”

I turned in the direction of where my assistant was working, which was off to my right, to see if I was the only one alive in there. I was going to call out to Trip, “Let’s try to get out of here!” There was this glimmer of light through the smoke through the dust that looked like it was coming from—it was just a general illumination type light. It wasn’t direct sun light or anything, it was just light shining through. I immediately got on my hands and knees and crawled across the floor because I knew had to stay below the smoke line. There was this four-foot wide hole in this masonry wall between out office space and the alleyway between the C and the D Rings. Mr. Lloyd was already out there. I asked him later on, “Trip, was there anything that could have blown through and blasted that hole out?” He said, “No. I was sitting at my desk when the shock wave came through, and it turned my desk over. I hit the floor and look up and there was this big hole in the wall right where the desk had been.”

There was a lot of masonry rubble and big push-carts, like the contractors use when they are in the process of the renovation work, all piled in a jumbled heap out there. We climbed over that and made our way around down this alleyway. By this time there were fires breaking out on the second floor over this alleyway, which was on the Army section, which is why the Army lost so many people up there. But this time, there about 10-15 people out there, mostly guys. Four or five of them got underneath this window—this Army Major was trying to break so he and his people could get out of the space up there on the second deck—it was maybe 10-15 feet above the ground, I guess.

They managed to break the window. He eased himself out and dropped down. They caught him like a human safety net. Then a couple of other people jumped out the window the same way. They had these heavy metal-grate fences across there, a heavy gate with paddle locks on it, so one of the more agile enlisted guys that was smaller in stature climbed up and forced the gate open far enough that he could get through between the gate and the chain-link fence. He found somebody who had some keys for the gate. This was because in our efforts to protect ourselves from terrorism, the padlock fence was locked.

He found the keys, came back, unlocked the gate, and we all went streaming out down the corridor until we got to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> corridor that went to the central court yard, to Ground Zero out there. I looked back over my shoulder and I could see these tremendous columns of black oily smoke rising up from behind the Pentagon over my shoulder. When I was out in the alley, I admit, I was not holding materiel inspections to see what was out there, but I didn't see any parts of a plane that would have knocked this hole in the wall. I can only surmise that it was due to some shock wave or stress fracture in the wall something like that. Anyway, it blew this hole out. It was about four feet by four feet. I didn't even have to crawl out of it. I bent over, but it was not a matter of crawling through a small hole.

We started on our way out to Ground Zero area, and the rumor was that there was another plane coming in. So, I turned to Trip and said, "Trip, let's get the hell out of here." He said, "I'm with ya." We went out the passageway from the center courtyard out to South Parking and headed for my car. I reached into my pocket and there were my car keys. Normally, when I'm driving, I lock the car door (so someone doesn't steal my parking pass, like they did one time before) and drop the keys in my jacket pocket. This time I didn't. I'd put them in my trousers pocket. The Good Lord and Our Blessed Mother was looking out for me. My



billfold, ID's, money, everything I had in my jacket pocket were all gone. They were in the building. We'd both been in deep trouble if we hadn't had the car keys.

I drove on home down I-395. The traffic was already starting to be bumper-to-bumper at full stop going North toward Washington. It was real light coming out. People were already starting to gawk and look at the big black clouds of smoke coming up from the Pentagon. We drove out without any problem. When we got to Landmark Shopping Center, the traffic was starting to back up so we pulled off at 236. I dropped Trip off about a block and a half from his house on Little River Turnpike. I drove on home. I got home and pulled into the carport. My wife was down in Quantico with my daughter who delivered her baby about a week before. I was the only one at home. The phone was ringing off the hook. It was my son who is a naval civil engineer out in San Diego. He said, "Dad, what's going on?" I said I didn't know but that we had a major explosion at the Pentagon. It was a terrorist attack. He told me that an airliner just hit the Pentagon. I said well, that explains a lot of things. We chatted for a few minutes and I assured him that I was all right. I was on the phone the rest of the day, talking to people and telling them I was alive and well.

I didn't have time to think of what had happened until later on. The main thing was, was the complete terror of being in that complete blackened space with everything that was going on without being able to see you hand in front of your face. I could really identify with the people in the [USS] UTAH at Pearl Harbor who were trapped below decks. Secondly, I'm firmly convinced, and will be convinced until my dying day, that it was God's Providence that got me out of there.

Q. He made that hole in the wall, didn't He?

A. He made that hole in the wall. I learned later that about 15 minutes after we got out of there, the Arlington County Firemen who were trying to fight the fires in the Command Center, and so on, they came in though the same hole that we went out of in that alleyway. The room in there was completely full of flames from all the gas fumes that were in the air. They had to fight their way in with fire extinguishers before they could begin to fight the fire in the Command Center. We would have been dead if we hadn't found that way out.

Jerry Hensen, my boss, was talking to two Petty Officers in his office when the explosion came. Apparently, Jack Punches, the guy who had flown P-3's, and was a retired Navy Captain, had gone into the main part of the Command Center for some reason. I'm sure he was instantly killed. LCDR Tarantino was with the rescue party. I'm not sure how they got into the place, but I understand that there was another hole blown in the wall and they were able to get into the space.

Jerry was found pinned under a bookcase and some metal girders or supports that had fallen from the ceiling. There was an aircraft tire in the passageway and a portion of the aircraft shell hanging in the overhead, with cables and stuff like that hanging down from it. It looked like it was from the area around the cockpit because of the painting on the side of the plane: "American Airlines" insignia and strips. He has significant cuts on his face, which they did a great job on over at the hospital. There's no signs of them now--excellent plastic surgery. His main problem was smoke inhalation. He inhaled a lot of smoke.

He said he kept calling out to people. The Petty Officers that were with him were calling for help. Finally, Commander Tarantino and the people that were helping him rescued them and got them out of there. They had to really pry Jerry out from under all the stuff that had fallen

on him. The fire was getting closer to him all the time. Again, there was no light any place in the building, so he couldn't see anything that was going on. He was completely immobilized under all the wreckage in there and the fire was getting closer to him. He inhaled a lot of smoke. His lungs were in pretty bad shape for about a week and a half until he got his lungs cleaned out. So that essentially is the story.

Q. It sounds like your office is the only one that didn't have debris in it. You said you pretty much walked right out?

A. Well, I didn't see anything, and I didn't fall over anything. But I could sense that there was stuff on the floor—like the room dividers and crap like that that had fallen over and the tiles that had come down from the ceiling—but no, as far as any major items, like airplane parts or anything like that in the immediate area, there was none. I had minor cuts and scrapes. I had a puncture wound in my arm here. It looked like someone had jabbed me in the arm with a broad bladed screwdriver. Blood was pouring out profusely, but it wasn't arterial blood, it wasn't spurting, so I knew I didn't really have anything to worry about on that score. I tied a handkerchief around it before I got in the car, then I washed it out with water and liquid detergent and then poured peroxide in it, put antibiotic on it and then dressed it.

I went into the doctor the next day for a tetanus shot. I asked him to check my lungs, and he said they were okay. He checked the place on my arm. I asked if I would need a tetanus shot or anything, and he said no, that it was healing up. On the day it happened, while I was driving home, the hematoma on my arm was as big as a pigeon's egg. That all went down over night. I haven't had any problem with it. In fact, it's healed up now, and scarred over. The Good Lord was really with us. There is no question in my mind about that.

Q. When did your wife get home? When did you first see her after that?

A. That afternoon. She stayed with my daughter until her husband got home, then she drove home. It was one of situations that—well, if something like that had happened during the Cuban Blockade, or in the Med, or something like that, it wouldn't have surprised me. But the Pentagon is supposed to be the safest place in the world. You don't think of something

like that happening in the safety of your own capital city. I'll tell you, it's a lesson for all of us. You can't let your guard down.

Q. How many children do you have?

A. Seven.

Q. How many grandchildren?

A. Ten. I have three boys and four girls. All of my sons are either in the Navy or were in the Navy. My oldest son is a LCDR in the Reserves as an Intel Officer out at Suitland, [Maryland]. My second oldest is out of the Navy and is a production manager with a paper mill up in New Hampshire. My youngest son graduated from the Naval Academy. He's in the Civil Engineering Corps. He's station out at Gulfport but was on detachment to San Diego when the event happened.

Q. Have you had a chance to talk to them at all about your experience?

A. Yes. I have a daughter who was an Air Force Nurse. She's living in the Front Royal, Virginia, area. She came over that evening with her stethoscope and examined me to see if I had anything in my lungs. That was my concern. I knew the cuts were superficial. So, we've been a service family. I can't over emphasize my firm belief in Divine Providence.

Q. Have you always had a strong faith?

A. Yes. Yes. At times, I didn't practice it the way I should have, I had it. So, I think the lesson is there for any of us. We have to stay prepared. Both spiritually and materially. We can't let something like this happen again.

Q. Do you feel comforted by the fact that this seems to have brought Americans together?

A. Yes! Very definitely it has. When kids can sing “God Bless America” in the schools and certain individuals or groups are muzzled, which I won’t name, there is a spirit of revival in the spirit of faith in our Country and our society. God knows, it needed it.

Q. Can you think of any lessons learned from the incident?

A. Yes. Provide for a good strong intelligence network based upon human intelligence, as well as signal intelligence. Be aware of what’s going on in the country. These people were training and learning how to fly airliners, but not take off or landings. Somebody should have thought, “Dugh? What’s with these guys?” Listen to what’s going on. We had a warning with the [USS] COLE, which nobody took. When you are dealing with a mad dog, you have to treat it accordingly. I mean, those people hate us. You can’t sit and reason with them. When we were in a confrontational mode with the Soviet Union, at least they were rational people that you could deal with. These people are not.

Q. Because you have such a strong faith, what do you think about the media talking about incidents of civilian casualties from our bombing campaign?

A. Incidents from our bombing in Afghanistan? Things happen. We are not deliberately trying to kill Afghan civilians. God knows, their life is miserable enough as it is. But let’s face it. When you send in air strikes, some of those weapons are going to go off target. You’re going to get bad data input on the exact coordinates for targets and so on. It’s too bad that things like that happen. It is not the intent of our country to cause these deaths when we are going after military targets of the people who are trying to destroy us. Things happen.

Q. As a father and a grandfather, with all the experiences you've had in your lifetime, what are you sharing, particularly with your grandchildren, about the world they are going to growing up in? It's obviously going to be different than it's been before.

A. Stay close to God. Practice their faith. Don't be deceived by the propaganda and so on that's in our country. Keep our country strong. Don't take any crap off anybody.

Q. As you have processed through the last month, obviously you were spared for a reason. What kind of thoughts does that bring to you in your conversations with the Lord?

A. I am just very thankful. I thank the Good Lord and our Blessed Mother every day. I am more fervent in my prayer life and my spiritual life. I pray for those who don't know the Lord to come to their senses. I pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit upon our President and the decisions he's having to make. But mostly, it's deepened my faith in the Lord. I'm asking the Lord what he wants me to do because I agree with you. Obviously, I'm here for a reason. My life was spared for a reason. I'm like the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's Rime. I keep telling my story to anyone who will listen.

Q. What a privilege it's been to talk with you.

A. It's been my privilege to share this story with you. If anybody listens, and takes to heart what has happened. Last night, I was watching the NBC two-hour special on the firemen and policemen up in New York. You talk about serious heroism. These guys. That's the lesson for our Country.

Q. Is there anybody else that we should talk with?

A. If you can get a hold of Mr. Jerry Hensen, yes. Mr. Wallace Lloyd. He's also in the Naval Reserve. He was flying P-3's for several years on active duty and is now in the Naval Reserves.

This made quite an impression on him. Rick Sandelli. He's in our office. I'm not sure how he got out, but he climbed over a lot of debris and got out another door off to one side.

Q. Can you think of anything else you would like to add for the historical record?

A. Not that I haven't already shared. One of the fears I had was with the locks. Since all the locks are electronic, I wasn't sure whether we'd be able to get out. But apparently, when the current went off, the locks were freed. From what I understand from Rick, he was able to open the lock. It was near where one of the conference rooms was. There was a passageway there that went out. It was an emergency exit, as I understand it, and he was able to get out that way. He got out into the alley about the same time we came through the hole in the wall.

Q. Did you see him out there?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see Lieutenant Shaffer out there?

A. I don't know Lieutenant Shaffer. Maybe I'd recognize him if I saw him. There were about 35 people in the Command Center and only 9 of us got out alive.

Q. Nine?

A. Yes. Myself, Rick Sandelli, Jerry [Hensen], and Mr. [Wallace] Lloyd. There were five other people from other parts of the Command Center. There was a Navy LT McHuen, I think, she was from Meteorology. There were the two Petty Officers, Petty Officer Williams and Petty Officer Lewis.

Q. They were the ones in with Mr. Hensen?



A. Yes.

Q. Where was Petty Officer Gaston?

A. I don't remember Gaston. The people who were in the main part of the Command Center, the Watch Captains and people like that, were all killed. People in the PACOPS switch board and the people in the Meteorology Office, (with the exception of the Lieutenant and the Chief, who I think was on leave or travel something), and the two enlisted radio people, a First and Second Class, they were in there, and they were killed.

Q. How about the Intel Pod?

A. I think one of the only people to get out of the Intel Pod was a Lieutenant. He was pretty badly burned and had smoke inhalation.

Q. That might be LT Schaffer. Mr. Sandelli talked about him and apparently he's still in the hospital.

A. Yeah, yeah. I didn't know the people over there. My son, who a commander in the Naval Reserve, was sent over to the Pentagon to work for a year in the Intelligence Pod with the people in N2. However, because he's an intelligence specialist with for the government, they pulled him back to Suitland, [Maryland] and he's no longer working in the Pentagon, but the people he was working with were the ones in the Intel Pod, most of whom were killed. He'd been talking to them on a video-teleconference right before the plane hit. Someone turned to CNN to see what was going on in New York and when they turned back to the closed circuit television, it was no longer on the screen. So, during that time, the plane hit. Most of the people in that, there was a civilian lady named Angie, there was a Reserve Petty Officer, and several other people in there who died. It was a bad day for all of us.

Q. Thank you very much.

A. Thank you for giving me the time and the opportunity to tell my story.

Transcribed by:  
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