

**Naval Historical Center
Oral Interview Summary Form**

Interviewers:

CAPT Gary Hall
CAPT(sel) Carol O'Hagan
YNCS Kathleen Wright

Interviewer's Organization:

Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206
Navy Combat Documentation Det 206

Interviewee:

TSGT Louis Briscese USAF

Current Address:

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PHC Sean Doyle, USN

Date of Interview:

01 March 2002

Place of Interview:

Armed Forces Institute of Pathology
Washington, DC

Number of Cassettes:

One

Security Classification:

Unclassified

Name of Project: Pentagon Terrorist Attack Incident

Subject Terms/Key Words: Pentagon; Terrorist Attack; 11 September 2001; AFIP; evacuation; lessons learned; mortuary; DPS; FBI; medical examiner; autopsy; pathology

Abstract of Interview:

Interviewee Information:

TSGT Briscese was born in ██████████ but raised in Hagerstown, NJ. He came into the Air Force right out of high school and was guaranteed a photography billet under the delayed entry program. He became interested in the military after a photographer came to his school and told him if he was truly interested in pursuing his interest in photography, then the military would be a good start as you get to do all different aspects of the photography profession. After spending most of his career traveling as a photojournalist, he is currently a forensic photographer with the Armed Forces Medical Examiners Office.

PHC Doyle was born in Morocco, as his father was a Navy air traffic controller. He lived in various places on the east coast. He entered the Navy out of high school as he was interested in photography and had heard they offered very good photography training. He stayed in because they always offered him something that sounded interesting and has now been in for 22 years. Although he had occasionally supported the medical community in forensic tasks, this is his first assignment to forensics on a full time basis. Most of his forensic training has come on the job

under other photographers but there are schools offered by various law enforcement agencies that they can sometimes attend.

Topics Discussed:

On 9/11, TSGT Briscese started out at a dental appointment at Andrews, after which he was going to meet a co-worker at a photo exhibit and lunch. He did not have his cell phone but had heard about a plane hitting WTC. The dental clinic did not have a TV to watch. When he came out he heard about the other plane at the WTC and possibly at the Pentagon. He had still not seen any pictures or video. He called his office to check in and confirmed the hit at the Pentagon. He was escorted by Maryland State Police over to Bolling where he lives to get his equipment and head to the Pentagon. He arrived at the Pentagon around 1015 or so. He was able to get pretty close as he has a badge and started taking pictures, arriving on the crash side shortly after the collapse of the upper floor. He worked all day capturing as much as he could and finally caught up with the rest of his office around 1700 where they were setting up a temporary morgue although no bodies had yet been recovered. There was some discussion as to who would take possession of the bodies. The FBI wanted AFIP to take them but the Arlington Medical Examiner felt he had jurisdiction. It was finally decided around 1900 that AFIP had jurisdiction and would take them to their Dover facility when it was safe to remove them. After that he went back to take some more pictures. The FBI did not ask him for his film as they knew who he was from AFIP and knew he would be needed for forensic work later on. Although they controlled most media photographer access, they allowed him free access. He stayed until around 2300 and then drove home.

PHC Doyle received a call at work from his wife saying that a plane had crashed into the WTC and while they were on the phone she saw the second one hit. He ran upstairs to where a TV was being watched by a number of people. He watched for a few minutes and then went back downstairs and turned the radio on. The announcer was speaking to someone who reported that the Pentagon had just been hit as well. Now he knew it was going to be a military operation and they would be involved so he tried to call TSGT Briscese and found out he was at the Pentagon already. He was concerned as he didn't think that was a good place to be at the moment due to the possibility of another attack but also because he was concerned that TSGT would be commandeered and they only had three photographers to begin with. But he was able to speak with TSGT and found out he was basically freelancing and was fine. They were directed to stay in the AFIP building at Rockville until further notice because of security concerns. They were allowed to leave after CAPT Wagner notified them around 1800 so he went home.

On 9/12, TSGT went back for about 12 hours and took some more pictures and by the end of the day, they were beginning to assemble teams to bring some bodies out. He knew his whole office would be sent to Dover the next day to begin processing them. He saw the teams being briefed and all of those he saw were military, he believes they were the body-bag teams. By end of the day, he knew they had jurisdiction over the remains and would be headed for Dover the next day.

Meanwhile on 9/12, PHC had started coordinating the transition to Dover. They had to borrow several photographers for such a large event. They had three civilians on call and then borrowed five more from Bethesda. In addition, to the Pentagon tragic event, he also provided support in

photo-documenting the USS COLE, the KC-130, the mishap in Georgia involving 21 reservists, and the embassy bombings in Africa.

On 9/13, TGST and PHC reported to the port mortuary in Dover. Having been to Dover on numerous occasions and familiar with the protocol, they proceeded to the autopsy lab to set-up their equipment. TGST had the lead in taking the intake photos that consist of photographing all arriving remains during the receipt process.

From the night of 9/13 through the following 2 weeks they received remains in transfer cases two or three times a day on operated on a 12-hour workday. In addition, to the transfer cases they also received numerous FBI evidence boxes. Working in conjunction with the FBI they processed over 400 evidence boxes. In terms of managing the caseload, they processed the transfer cases first and then focused on the evidence boxes. Because of the magnitude of the sustained damage to the remains anthropologist were brought in to assist in the intake process. Both TGST and PHC describe in detail the intake process and their roles as forensic photographers.

Abstracted by
YN1 Arthur Quintana
15 March 2002

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under other photographers but there are schools offered by various law enforcement agencies that they can sometimes attend.

Topics Discussed:

Q. Let's go ahead and move to 11 September, TSGT Briscese why don't you go ahead and start.

Tell us about that day.

A. (Briscese) For me it started, I had a dentist appointment over at Andrews and after my appointment a buddy and I were going to go down to the museum and check out this photo exhibit and go have lunch. He had paged me on my way to Andrews and I did not have my cell phone. So when I got to Andrews he had mentioned throw on a TV and unfortunately the dental clinic didn't have a TV, and it was funny because people who didn't even have dentist appointments were coming in to see if you know, they had a TV so they could watch what was going on. I really had no idea you know, I had just heard that a plane had hit the building in New York, and didn't really know what was really going on.

Went to my exam and I came out and I heard that another building, the other tower had been hit and that there was possibly an attack at the Pentagon. And still at this time I had not seen any pictures or any video, things of that nature. I'd been checking into the office to see what our status was, and anyway when I did confirm that the Pentagon was hit, thinking that our office would be going to the Pentagon, I got from Andrews to Bolling where I live. I was escorted by the Maryland Police Department, which was kind of eerie in itself, because the beltway was pretty packed. As I was going into DC on 295, there were no cars. We were the only two cars going into the city, but on the other side of 295 it was like a parking lot. People - there were some people on our side going in, but they were all on the shoulder just looking at the smoke from the Pentagon. You could see the Pentagon from certain portions of 295.

They gave me an escort to my house where I picked up my photo equipment and drove from Bolling to the Pentagon and probably took me a good thirty minutes to do all that, to get to Andrews to my house, to the house to the Pentagon, took me about a half hour.

Q. (07:51) So what time do you think it was when you got to the Pentagon?

A. (Briscese) Probably 10:15 to 10:30 at least. And immediately, I had no problems. Our office, we had badges that looked like you know, regular police officer badges. So I had no problem getting into certain points. There was a lot of security obviously. Some of the 395 was blocked off, but I just flashed my badge and they would wave me through. Got to a certain point where I was able to park my vehicle, grab my photo equipment and head over to the main portion of where the aircraft had hit the Pentagon.

Just spent numerous hours just documenting different things. There were a lot of different things going on. There was the fire teams. There was medical teams. Soldiers were helping out.

Throughout the day you had distinguished visitors. The Secretary of Defense came. The Governor of Virginia came, and all those things were, you know, I just documented the different events going on and finally got with some of our people in our office about five or six o'clock that evening. You know, we started discussing who was going to be responsible for the autopsies, and who would get jurisdiction and things of that nature.

Q. (09:11) Now do you remember if the building had collapsed before you got there, or did that happen –?

A. (Briscese) The building was collapsed.

Q. (09:17) It was collapsed when you got there?

A. Correct.

Q. (09:19) Could you remember hearing, I mean how, for how long, and from the crowd, people around? How long it had been since -?

A. (Briscese) I know it wasn't that long, because even while I was there, twice while I was there the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania was still in the air and still unaccounted for, and twice while I was there all the fire rescues, everyone was told to evacuate, because they had heard that a plane was still in the air and they didn't know where it was coming to. So all of the firefighters had to get down and back away and –

Q. (09:55) Who was issuing that order, do you know?

A. (Briscese) It was different people, but it was mostly an FBI run you know, when the FBI said to do this, people did it. They were the ones who were allowing people in. If you look at the side of the Pentagon is, there's like a main road and that road was sort of like you know, no one got in front of that road unless you had a badge, or you know the FBI was letting them through.

You know, when - in fact I have a couple of images of all these people just rushing back to this corridor point when we were told to evacuate, and that happened twice probably within the first hour that I was there. But when I did come around, because I started at a different side of where the attack took place, and it took me maybe fifteen, twenty minutes to get around to that side, the building had been collapsed already when I got there.

Q. (10:56) So it's about five o'clock and you were getting together with these different groups of people?

A. (Briscese) Right, we had set up a makeshift mortuary. We hadn't recovered any bodies yet, because it was still burning, but we had gone down where the FBI had designated this area with us. There was still some talk about who was going to get jurisdiction of all the bodies. The FBI wanted us to do it, but the Arlington Medical Examiner was sort of questioning you know, who had jurisdiction, so, but it was decided that night maybe about seven o'clock that we would get jurisdiction, and our goal and our wishes were to take the bodies to Dover.

Q. (11:42) Chief Doyle, do you remember 11 September and where you were and how you heard about first the World Trade Center and then also the Pentagon?

A. (Doyle) Yes, I was actually sitting at my desk when my wife called me and she had been watching Regis and Kelly on TV, and said that they had flashed over to the World Trade Center and at that point she actually saw the second target hit, because they showed it, I guess, live on TV, and said you know, "Now they're talking about it being a terrorist attack," etc. etc.

I said, "Well, let me go upstairs and you know, see if we've got the TV on upstairs in the shop."

So in our building I went upstairs. We have a conference area that has a TV, and of course there must have been twenty, thirty people standing around watching it on TV. After a couple of minutes of watching it, I went back downstairs and at this point the radio station that we can get in our office was on and they were on the air and the announcer there was talking to somebody in Boston about where one of the planes had originated that had hit the World Trade Center. The guy in Boston said, "Well, we heard the Pentagon just got attacked."

He said, "Well, there's a Pentagon office in the World Trade Center."

He said, “No, I’m talking about the one in DC.”

So immediately I ran back upstairs, which somebody had switched over from CNN to a local channel where they were showing the Pentagon with smoke rising from it and everything. Of course by this time the logistics part of it from our point of view was you know, now it’s definitely a military operation. Yes, we’re probably going to get involved. Where is everybody? That’s when I tried to get a hold of SGT BRISCESE and was able to get him on his pager. Found out he was down at the Pentagon which we’re all like, “What are you doing there?” you know. “You need to get away from there.”

He told us what he was doing and our concern was twofold. One, we didn’t want to have a second attack and you know have him hurt or killed, worse, but the other thought was what if he gets absorbed by some agency down there and that’s one less person? We only have three photographers in the shop, and we were thinking you know, volumes of people at this point. But he told me you know, they were not, he was just kind of freelancing it with some guys, some people down there. It shouldn’t be a problem.

At that point then there was concern about security of the building. Watches were placed around the building and out on the street to monitor people coming in and out of our building and so forth. We actually were tasked to stay there until 18 or 1900 that evening before CAPT WAGNER finally called and said go ahead and release all non-essential personnel.

The rest of the day was just a matter of trying to get any information whether on the web sites or you know, I was calling my wife to see what she was seeing on TV versus what we have on TV upstairs, and just kind of get an idea of what was going on and how involved this really was.

Q. (14:20) OK, what happened the next day? What happened on September 12th? How did your involvement start to increase, either – ?

Q. (another) (14:32) Well how late did you stay on the first day?

A. (Briscese) On the first day I was there until about eleven o'clock, midnight or so.

Q. (14:37) Mainly from five to eleven with the mortuary, temporary mortuary stuff or were you?

A. (Briscese) No, only until about seven, seven-thirty and then I went back out to document some other stuff.

Q. (14:45) Nobody grabbed you and said, "Hey, you've got a camera, start taking pictures of this."

A. (Briscese) No, no, no, no.

Q. (14:52) Any of the FBI ask you for your film?

A. (Briscese) No.

Q. (14:54) Really?

A. (Briscese) I have worked with the FBI before, and you know, they know me by face and some of the missions that I've done with them. They had originally asked if there was you know, if they could utilize me as one of their own photographers and I said yeah, I'd be willing to help out. They understood what my situation was as far as if we were getting involved with the autopsies and so then obviously I wasn't going to be able to help them, but you know, no, I was never asked you know, for me to hand over my film. It was never an issue of anything I wanted

to do as far as photography-wise and stuff. They were strict on other people and they certainly you know, there were a couple of people who sort of got chastised and things like that. A couple of people I don't know if they were arrested or not, but they were detained and moved away.

Q. (155:51) With personal cameras, you mean, or just -?

A. (Briscese) Some of the news media and stuff like that. There was a certain area where they had to be. But I was never – I was allotted just about free access.

Q. (16:03) So they didn't try to put you on a team and talk about going inside that evening with you?

A. (Briscese) No, not that evening. The fire burned up until noon the next day so no one went in until the next day.

Q. (16:18) Were you there the next day, still?

A. (Briscese) Uh huh.

Q. (16:19) OK.

Q. (another) How'd you get home?

A. (Briscese) I drove to the Pentagon and drove home.

Q. (16:25) I guess by the time you left, they had pretty much, or -?

A. (Briscese) Well, there wasn't you know, there were, it's hard to explain and people aren't going to be able to see this, but you know on 395 there's that ramp down to the Pentagon and

that ramp was cordoned off by vehicles, but if like I said, I'd flash my badge and they would just wave me through, and then I was able to go underneath and go into the parking lot and just parked in the parking lot. You know by the next, by evening early –

Q. (16:51) And even getting out of there was OK? Because I had heard that they -

A. (Briscese) Oh, yeah, absolutely. Not a problem. There were check points I went through.

Q. (16:54) OK.

A. But you know it wasn't an issue because I had a badge and was working, but even as early as that night you could see a lot of the buildup coming and the porta-johnnies were brought in. Food was brought in. The Red Cross was outstanding. You know you never went without water. It was hot that day on September 11th and just being at the scene and stuff with all the fire and stuff it was even hotter. They had people walking around with water. Food, people came in and started distributing sandwiches and hot meals and everything. You needed gloves, t-shirts, hardhats, it was all there for you. That was you know, like I said within six o'clock that evening you could really start seeing this buildup.

The next morning I went to the office -

Q. (17:43) At the Arm – here, at the Armed Forces Institute?

A. (Briscese) What's that?

Q. At the Armed Forces Institute, pathology.

A. (Briscese) Our office is in Rockville, Maryland.

Q. (17:47) You went to Rockville, Maryland?

A. (Briscese) Uh huh.

Q. (17:49) OK.

A. (Briscese) And then went back to the Pentagon after our morning meeting and spent about another twelve, ten hours there that day before I knew – by the time I left there on the second day, on the twelfth, I knew that they had started extracting some bodies and that we were going to go to Dover the next day to start processing some of the remains. And that's what we did. We all left on the twelfth, on the thirteenth, up to Dover, the whole office.

Q. (18:18) What did you do at the Pentagon on the twelfth?

A. (Briscese) Same sort of documentation.

Q. (18:22) Just from the outside?

A. (Briscese) Uh huh. Did finally get to go into - some of the images. I don't know if you saw them or not, but into the original corridor. You know I put on some waders or something because there was a lot of water and there'd be, it was about three feet of water. In fact it was so much water that they would have to dig trenches and sandbags as the water was coming out of these hallways and stuff. So, but I never physically, I got into that hallway and that was about it.

Q. (18:56) The first hallway off the, on the E ring.

A. (Briscese) Uh huh

Q. (18:54) Do you, were you with a FBI team or were they just – ?

A. (Briscese) I was with some firefighters.

Q. (19:03) Firefighters.

A. With authorization from the FBI.

Q. (19:04) What time do you think that was that you -?

A. (Briscese) That was probably about two or three in the afternoon.

Q. OK. Was that – ?

Q. (another) On the second day?

A. Uh huh.

Q. (19:10) Do you remember what time people actually started to go in that day to do body recovery?

A. (Briscese) I know at probably four or five OK, they had started to gather teams of people who were going to go in and start extracting bodies. I don't know how late it took them to finally get everyone together and then pull out the first bodies and stuff, but I know as late as, and I have some images of you know these people getting briefed. Putting on their stuff that they were going to use to go in, and get in, but it was probably late afternoon the second day.

Q. (19:58) Were these Army people who were – ?

A. (Briscese) These were all military. There wasn't a specific unit or anything like that that I could ascertain, but I know that they were all military members. They were, had uniforms on, things like that and they were being briefed by officers and you know Senior NCOs.

Q. (20:18) Because we know that the FBI had their teams of photographers, two FBI, couple of FBI agents that did the photography inside and then I guess these military teams had helped assist with carrying the body bags itself.

A. (Briscese) Right.

Q. OK.

Q. (20:35) (Another) OK, so that, that evening you got the word that, is that correct, you got the word that they were going to start recovering bodies and -?

A. (Briscese) By the time I left that evening on the twelfth, I knew that our office was given full jurisdiction of the case and we would be doing the autopsies at Dover and we were to head up the next morning to Dover. We didn't receive our first bodies until that night.

Q. (21:03) The night of the twelfth or the thirteenth?

A. (Briscese) the night of the thirteenth.

Q. (21:05) The night of the thirteenth.

A. This was at Dover.

Q. (21:07) Did the three of you go? Three of you go, or you say you had three photographers.

A. (Briscese) All of our –

A. (Doyle) Actually we had more than that.

A. (Briscese) Yes, we had to borrow photographers.

Q. (21:16) Oh you did, OK. So how many? How many went?

A. (Doyle is counting to himself, one through nine) Ten.

Q. (21:24) And where'd you get the extra ones from?

A. (Doyle) Well, when we came in the following day, the twelfth, at that time we were getting a little bit better, clearer picture of where our involvement was going to be and at that point we said yeah, you know, he was asking to go back up to continue documentation and we said, "Sure, go ahead."

I forget if he (typist note: "he" is Briscese), I think at that time you had your cell phone, if I'm not mistaken.

A. (Briscese) Uh huh.

A. (Doyle) So he could call me intermittently and check in what was going on, because we weren't sure when we were going to go up. But at that point I called, we have three civilian photographers that are part of our building here that I called them up and says, "Standby to go." They're on blanket orders like we are. They have camera gear to shoot to and to be ready to go on mission.

Then I called PETTY OFFICER MOYER, HM1 JIM MOYER over at Naval, National Naval Medical Center Bethesda who has a photo lab there and said, “Hey, just a heads up, we may need you, “ etc. etc. and started working out the details of how we could get their orders written and so forth and where the funding was coming and so forth and he supported us with four people. Actually he supported us with five people. One came up a little bit later and at that time we started, we were able to start reducing people at Dover. But that’s how we ended up with ten photographers at any given time.

Q. (22:42) Had you ever done a mass casualty situation, either of you, up at Dover before?

A (Doyle) We’ve done nothing this big, but we’ve done the *USS Cole*. We just did the KC-130 here, recently. We did the SHIRPA (phonetic) mishap in Georgia with the reservists wasn’t it?

A. (Briscese) Twenty-one reservists. We did the OSPREY crash, which had nineteen.

A. (Doyle) Yes, the OSPREY, which had nineteen.

A. (Briscese) We did the embassy bombings in Tanzania. We had twelve for that. Done, you know, we had a lot of twelves and fourteens and you know, but nothing of this magnitude. The most prior to this was the twenty-one from the SHIRPA (phonetic) crash.

Q. (23:21) OK, so on the thirteenth then you all reported up to Dover? Is that correct?

A. (Doyle) Right and we’ve been there often enough that it’s kind of routine for us to know where to go. The Port Mortuary, we all know where it is, so our first thing as photographers is when you go into where the autopsy room is, there’s a table at the end for all our camera gear. So

it was like, show up there. Set up your camera gear in your little station, where we tape off the table so everybody can set their stuff up wherever they want in their little area, and however they want and then from there then it was working out the logistics of what hotels we were staying in and that sort of thing. That wasn't actually accomplished until later in the day. I don't think you and I, I think SGT BRISCESE and I checked into our hotel about 2000 that evening and again it was, in the morning it was just trying to get things together.

They get a lot of reserves to come up to help be body handlers, and so forth. So they have to go through a brief tour of where the bodies go through the scenario, because you've got intake, which DOD the first thing they do is go through full body, like the airport thing that you go through. Ex-ray for EOD to make sure they don't have, and this is for anybody that shows up here, so to make sure they don't have any kind of weapons or if they do that nothing's going to discharge while they're in the building.

Then they go to photography, which SGT BRISCESE, he did all the intake photos, which is where they open up the carrying caskets. He shoots a picture of the body bag and then we open up the body bag and shoot a picture of where the remains arrive at the mortuary. Then they go through fingerprinting, dental and ex-ray, full body ex-rays before they come to the autopsies room.

Q. (24:57) What time do you –

Q. (another) Well I was going to say, on this on the thirteenth, what arrived? You said the first remains arrived the thirteenth.

A. (Briscese) I'm not exactly sure how many it was, but starting from the night of the thirteenth up until about two weeks, maybe two and a half weeks, we got remains all the time. Sometimes

it was two or three times a day, at different intervals, and it would be a combination of body transport cases which contained, you know, some sort of torso or body, or –

Q. (25:33) So they really did have transport cases – that was my question?

A. (Doyle) Right, yes.

A. (Briscese) Before –

Q. (25:36) How many of those came as opposed to just body bags or whatever?

A. Every body comes in a transfer case.

Q. (25:42) It does come in it then?

A. (Doyle) Uh huh.

A. (Briscese) Except in this case we had a lot of boxes. A lot of evidence boxes that were, the FBI gathered. These boxes were maybe I don't know, three feet, four feet high. A good size box, and in each box there was a bag, an evidence bag and these boxes contained anywhere from one to fifty bags and each side, inside of these evidence bags was some sort of tissue, or hand or foot or you know, some sort of remains, that was disassociate.

What we wound up doing was, for the first, I think it was ten days or so, we would do all the transfer cases first, and we'd put all the boxes aside. So we you know, we'd always get a combination of transfer cases and boxes. So we'd run the transfer cases through and we'd put the boxes in a 'frigerator truck, and when we determine that all the transfer cases were run through then we started processing the big evidence boxes.

By the time we started processing the evidence boxes we were almost up to about four hundred boxes.

Q. (27:01) When you say we, who all was part of this group that was doing this?

A. (Briscese) Basically, like Chief Doyle said the intake group consisted of EOD, the—I was the intake photographer. FBI, they had their fingerprinting. Dental for dental identification; ex-ray. It's almost like an assembly line. You hate to say it, but that's what it's like. It's just, whatever it is, whether it's a torso, a body or a hand it all goes through this, this same process.

Q. (27:35) What organizations are made up? You said FBI, -

A (Doyle) We had some FBI people that worked hand-in-hand with the AFIP people right there at intake, especially with the boxes, because they also had somebody from the Port Mortuary from the US Air Force that were putting numbers on it, because everything was showing up with a number that the FBI people back at the Pentagon had assigned it. But we didn't have any clue where, so we had to put a different number so we had a way of tracking it through the building. So that was done right there and then the determination was made what to do with it or not, and then so the FBI, and I believe it was DR. RODRIGUEZ were right there, right after they came out of the transfer cases or out of the boxes to put the number on it and make some determination and notes. Because a clipboard gets assigned to every number and goes through the building so everybody can sign off they've done the work.

Air Force, Dover Air Force base they had a dental technician over there, along with a couple of people from our building working the dental with CAPTAIN ARENDT and CHIEF BUTLER, and fingerprinting was FBI. I think FBI only. I don't remember anybody else being there.

A. (Briscese) No.

A. (Doyle) and then the x-ray were – I think the x-ray is all Dover, isn't it?

A. (Briscese) I think it is all Dover.

A. (Doyle) I think we had a few radiologists there to help speed things up. Yeah, this is a good x-ray send it on, whatever, but –

Q. (28:55) What about, were there individual service representatives as part of that group or no? I mean was there an Army rep, a Navy rep, I mean did – ?

A. (Doyle) Gosh, you know, there was a Master Chief and a Chief that came up there to help do the outfitting of the bodies with the uniforms. I remember that portion, but as far as individual, there may have been and there was some higher ranking generals and admirals that came through there at any given time just to see what was going on and how that –

Q. (29:19) At any part of this first stage were the – ?

A. (Doyle) But –

Q. (29:21) were they, (_____ inaudible 29:23)?

A. (Briscese) No.

A. (Doyle) No, there was nobody, no.

Q. (29:27) Not part of the regular –

A. (Doyle) No, there never is.

A. (Briscese) We had a – because a lot of this was separated with heads and stuff, we had to bring in a couple of anthropologists. We brought in a couple from the Smithsonian. We brought in a couple from the Central Identification Lab, Hawaii, (CILHI) you know, we brought in all our regional medical examiners and stuff. I mean it was a big process, but as far as the intake process you know, whether there were people rotating in and out as far as the anthropologists and stuff it was pretty much always the same set of people that were running the intake.

Q. (30:00) Were your operations running twenty-four hours? Were you like on watch schedule or was there certain hours? How did that work?

A. (Doyle) No, it was more we showed up at 7:30 on the morning and worked, typically we worked just a twelve hour day. There was talk about doing it 24, doing two shifts twenty-four hours a day, but after the first day or two there was a realization that the bodys were all going to show up during the day. There was no sense having people there at night. You could do just as much during the day running ten or twelve tables as you could trying to do it 6 and 6 at night. So they decided just to have everybody show up at the same time, and that way they knew where everybody was and –

Q. (30:34) So you were using all ten of your photographers at once?

A. (Doyle) Right, right, it could have been anytime using all ten, I'm sure. I think SGT BRISCESE spent the majority of his time, which is twelve hours, sitting in intake you know,

with pieces or full bodies or whatever coming out of the transfer cases. And then actually the front room was running – well no, they were running five tables and five tables at one time. They kind of pared down to like four and four in each room , and then eventually as things just kind of came in and we were releasing people to go back to their commands or back to our command, we were just using the main autopsy room with four tables running. As it got near the end then it was just a lot of taking tissue and bone samples for DNA evidence to hopefully reassociate as much as you could back with the person, get back the remains to the families as much as you could.

Q. (31:25) Now where else were the photographers stationed besides intake? Could you tell us a little bit about the other stages?

A. (Doyle) The other area would be the autopsy room itself, and that portion, if you have a full set of remains there's certain shots we get to help identify the person. We get full body shots, face profiles. You know you might shoot the hands and feet in case it shows something later on. Then at that point it's anything the doctor wants us to photograph so we're basically working in hand to what the doctor wants.

Q. (31:59) Does the FBI get involved in – ?

A. (DOYLE) There was an FBI person in the room at every given time, because anything that was considered a piece of the plane they wanted to take later. We documented that for them in the afternoon for them to use, maybe use as evidence. So they always had to have an FBI agent where he was in intake and where we were in both autopsy areas.

Q. (32:20) In intake is there a certain set procedure like you just mentioned about a full body shot or this or this. What would be the standard set of photographs to be taken at intake?

A. (Briscese) What we do is after the body goes through the EOD process and gets weighed it comes into our area. They wheel it to us and we shot it as it arrives. Normally there's a seal on the body bag tag. Something like that. We'll take an overall and some halves and then we'll undo the seal, unzip the bag, peel the bag back as far as possible to show as much as we can, and then those are identifying photos. Those photos basically tell us this is how we received these particular remains, and we do the same thing. We take an overall and halves and then the clipboard comes to me. I sign up on the clipboard with the date and my initials, that I did take these photographs and then it goes on to the next stage. More extensive photography is done once they get to the autopsy room. This is just more identification saying this is how we received these remains.

Q. (33:25) OK.

A. (Doyle) And to kind of follow that up, there were, like when there were smaller bits, if it was maybe a hand or foot or something, he might have shot several angles on it, rather than just a straight shot of it. At that point it was taken out of the bag and placed on a cloth we had. He'd put the number either on a ruler, if it was real small or just put the numbers there and then document it. If in anything, like if a hand came with jewelry or anything, he took multiple amount of photos just to document the ring and so forth, because then it would be taken off later, hopefully to be returned to whoever.

Q. (33:54) How many days were all ten photographers needed?

A. (Doyle) I want to say at least the first ten days.

A. (Briscese) Yes, first ten.

A. (Doyle) Let's see we got there on a Friday. I think it was the following Sunday, Saturday or Sunday we finally started saying you know –

A. (Briscese) We got there on Thursday.

A. (Doyle) We got there on Thur -?

A.(Briscese) We got there on Thursday.

A. (Doyle) What was September 11th, Tuesday or Wednesday?

A. (Briscese) Tuesday.

A. (Doyle) Tuesday, OK, so we got there Thursday. So the following Friday we finally got the word, “OK, you can start breaking some people for, to take care of health and welfare needs,” like getting clothes washed, etc. Of course it's only anywhere from two, two and half hour or less drive to anybody's home, because we're all here in the DC area. So I picked two people and they said, “Well, we're going home,” because one, his wife had just had twins PETTY OFFICER RIDENBERG (Phonetic) , and the other gentlemen STEVE KERN (phonetic) and he was going home to do something that evening for his faith. Then later that day I got the word don't bother bringing them back, we've decided we're just going to start releasing people. So I got a hold of them and told them, “Hey, don't worry about coming back.” Then I think Saturday I let two more go and Sunday and I let two. It finally pared down to where it was just the four people that work in the office, the four photographers on, I think that Monday or Tuesday if I'm not mistaken.

Q. (35:15) How long did you end up remaining there?

A. (Doyle) We stayed I think through the remainder of the week and then SGT BRISCESE stayed an additional week. Dover Air Force Base photolab agreed to support us by giving us some processors they have, fully one-hour processes and we had been piecemealing our film over when we could, because we were shooting upwards at the beginning of a hundred rolls a day. So we started piecemealing. He (Transcriber note – He’s indicated Briscese) was taking stuff over on his way out maybe for a bite to eat at lunch or dinner and dropping it off, and I think it took another week for him to finally get it all processed, cut, sleeved.

A. (Briscese) Finally sort it, cut it in a particular order it goes in, and it wound up taking a week. It was over, I forget how many. I know it was over 500 rolls of film.

Q. (36:09) Afterwards, just from the emotional point of view, does this affect you or is this, from a professional this is your job. Was there any issues with people that had to come in there and work?

A. (Briscese) The only thing I knew of was one of the Smithsonian anthropologists, I think she came up one day and was gone the next day. I think she was having a hard time.

At Dover you know, understanding how this process works and there’s a lot of people. There’s also Chaplains to talk to, members from this other team, CSI, or something like C-C-

A. (Doyle) C-I-S-T, CIST (transcriber note: he pronounces it cyst). It’s an acronym.

A. (Briscese) They’re available if you want to talk to them. We go up there a lot. So it’s you know, something we deal with all the time. For me personally the, you know, even the day at the Pentagon, the first day and getting back so late and being tired I still never saw any footage

of the towers being hit or – I had no idea the towers had fallen when I got home that night. So when I got home you know, and I saw these planes hitting the towers, and so I couldn't believe what I was seeing you know. And as tired as I was, I couldn't go to bed, because I was just in awe of what happened you know. But I think the thing that helped was because we were so involved in the day, We didn't really have time to reflect as far as what was – you know the huge magnitude you know. Of course, when it was done and now even looking back on it you realize what a big event it is. You know, it's going to be something probably everyone will remember the rest of their lives. But at the time, you're working it and you know you have a job to do, you know. And you don't have time to reflect on really what's happening. It made it a lot easier.

A. (38:04) (Doyle) I think part of it is that not all of the remains had come through or some bodies you can look at, and say it's a human being because it's so torn up into bits and pieces and smaller. We only had, really only had a handful considering how many people died completely. We only had a handful that were really intact bodies. So most of the time you're just looking at basically what you would see at the, you know, at the meat market, or something, just tissue and bones. Sometimes I think that helps when people don't associate it as a human being in front of them. Most of our team, we would gather every morning and stuff and then I think, of course, the four from Bethesda are all Corpsman. They're working in the medical field to begin with and then of course our office we've done it and the people here at AFIP have done it to where, not to say it becomes routine, but you become use to it to where you can kind of flip that switch and, "OK, I'm behind the camera now shooting pictures. I've got to concentrate and be professional and make sure I'm getting this documented, right lighting, framing," etc., and do your job.

Unlike SGT BRISCESE I was seeing the TV throughout the day and so forth and of course getting home there was not, I don't think any channel's not covering it, and so you know, I was able to sit there and still to this day, it's still kind of disbelief it really happened. My wife and I in Easter about two years ago, her sister came over from England with her husband and one of the trips we made was to go to New York and we stayed with my aunt and uncle in New Jersey and they said, "Hey go to this park and you'll get a great skyline picture," and you know, we still remember it. "Oh, there's the Trade Center," you know, now we're looking to think of going back before we, before the year's out and go and see what it looks like now in comparison, and I can remember pulling out pictures I shot and she and I, my wife and I went to New York ten, fifteen years ago and I got pictures of the World Trade Center with the Statue of Liberty in front of it and so forth and I was kind of looking at that thing. It just doesn't look like that anymore. It's hard to fathom what it looks like, because I don't think until you're there in person, you know, TV just doesn't do it.

But I can still remember SGT BRISCESE, though. We would go out to like TGIF or wherever that, eat dinner at night and then of course it's all over the news and you are just like, "I can't get enough of this." I'm just, "I can't believe it happened."

(everyone laughs)

Yeah, everybody's sitting there watching the news you know. Every channel had it going, so.

Q. (40:24) Did you, while you were there, did you work the weekends. Is it a seven day –

A. (Doyle) Everyday, yes. Until the following Friday when we started breaking one person, or a couple of people a day to try and get some stuff done.

Q. (40:35) How do you, I know it's a job. I know you get geared up for that, but how do you sustain yourself for two and a half weeks, or you even stayed an extra week? I mean –

A. (Doyle) In this case I—most cases we go up there I don't think we're there longer than five days and usually it's a three, maybe four-day process. We've even done a thing when we did one of the larger ones of seventeen or twenty. We did it in a day. They just had that much, that many doctors to do the support and photographers. I think it's just a realization. You knew this was going to be a long job, and you had the mental aspect going up there, I could be here two weeks and twelve hours a day. That's not to say you're working continuously you know. A doctor stops. He has to go write, or she has to write their forms and so forth, so they get a break away from the room for an hour or so to sit down if they need something to eat or drink, or whatever they can do at the time. And the same was for us, you know, we kind of got to where we could see a pattern, where maybe there's only be eight tables at a certain day. Hey, take the opportunity. Go outside and get a cigarette if you smoke, you know, they had a smoking tent out back. Go get something to eat.

Again the Red Cross was great about supplying stuff for the food and so forth.

A. (41:43) (Briscese) The USO –

A. (Doyle) The USO.

A. (Briscese) We still have some of the little treats when we went up –

Q. (41:51) The goodies there –

A. (Doyle) Right, quite a few of the restaurants when they found out what we were doing after that first weekend up there and the volume of course, because of the amount of reservists they brought in, started bringing lunch everyday for free. Said, “How many do you need. Tell us how many people want, give us an idea. We’ll get a mixture.”

Q. (42:10) I mean there are hundreds of people, literally hundreds of people in that facility each day.

A. (Briscese) we had at least 200 people, and not only that you know, it was nice, we had some distinguished visitors come by. ELLIOTT SADDLER (phonetic) the NASCAR driver came by and signed autographs for us, brought his car. You know, we’d had generals and you know, things like that, but you know that made it more—Miss America came by one day. You know, just stuff like that. It just made it really nice.

A. (Doyle) Right, because one of the first, I think the second weekend we were there, was the first NASCAR race held at Dover. Was the first one held since it had happened, so we had quite a bit of NASCAR. In fact I forget what racer it was when he found out we were having problems with hotel rooms, said, “We’ve got our trailer. We’ll stay in the trailer and free up our rooms for the people at the base.”

Q. (42:52) Wow.

A. (Doyle) Do you remember who it was (said to Briscese). I forget who it was.

A. (Briscese) No.

Q. (42:55) Where did you meet the VIP people if they came in?

A. (Doyle) They brought them, there's an area, a breakroom is what we call it. There's a big area in the one area that has tables and chairs for people to sit at until you're needed so you knew where everybody was. So you know, you could walk "Hey, I need you guys now. Come inside."

Q. (43:12) Had the big American flag on the top?

A. (Doyle) Right, so they, they set up a table there for ELLIOTT SADDLER, so he could sign autographs and get pictures and –

Q. (43:20) You all take pictures of the VIPs and stuff, too.

A. (Briscese) I took GENERAL CARLTON, the Air Force Surgeon General came by and I documented his visit, because at the time I wasn't doing any intake or an autopsy. And then we had some other stuff. You know, a lot of our docs and photographers, we give briefings and lectures and stuff like that so it's always good to include some of that so we had, we tried to have someone walk around, you know, taking some documentation of what's going on at different stages and things like that, if anyone wants to use them.

A. (43:53) What happens with all the, the photographs you usually take?

A. (Doyle) They're kept on file. In my office, just in our office which is not bigger than this room, I've got twenty years worth of photographs of autopsies. Now the rest I believe are accessioned here within the building at the library.

Q. (44:09) Did you make multiple sets. I mean does a set stay with, I mean does a set stay with the package, or whatever?

A. (Briscese) We have, in our files we have the original negatives and copies of proof sheets. Now we'll send out sets of proof sheets to different, like the FBI obviously got a set you know, some other agencies may get sets. Other cases that we do, depending on who's involved, they all get sets, but the original negatives and you know, sets of proof sheets always stay in a file in our office.

A. (Doyle) Now in this case was one of the first that we had just recently got some additional digital equipment, and this was the first case that we took. It was kind of a large case to start doing this, but we digitized the whole case so we could download it to a CD and that's actually what we sent out to the regional pathologist that went back to Memphis, San Diego, Portsmouth, Fort Cambell, Kentucky, etc. That's what we sent to them so they had a CD that they could look at the bodies that they actually had worked. We broke down the cases by numbers that were assigned to each set of remains and in that doc, "OK, we did a photo for that doctor."

Q. (45:15) Will the FBI take digital, too?

A. (Briscese) No.

Q. (45:19) We had heard that they, they needed to have the –

Q. (45:21) (Another) That's for evidence.

Q. (45:23) (previous) Right.

A. (Doyle) Right. This was just, we scanned the negatives. We've still got the negatives in case something happens, but we were just, this was an easier way than setting it a stack of 200 photographs -

A. (BRISCESE) (_____ Inaudible 45:32)

A. (Doyle) or, yeah, two hundred proof sheets of you know, 500 rolls of film, we were just going to - yeah, so we digitized them so we could drop to a CD for each person.

Q. (45:40) Do you ever get requests from the families?

A. (Doyle) If they do, it has to go through the proper chain before and we'll be ordered OK, you know, for your information and to whatever to getting it released to - I believe there was one or two families that did want something and but that's something our PAO CHRIS KELLY handles that. That's not something, if I get a phone call it's not, I would direct it to him and just standard as anywhere else.

Q. (46:12) But the information you, or the photographs are foyable (phonetic).

A. (Doyle) As far as I understand, yes sir.

A. (Briscese) It's like we did some cases recently for the OSPREY crash.

A. (Doyle) Right, that's true.

A. (Briscese) That people wanted.

A. (Doyle) From two years ago, you know.

Q. (46:28) Do you have anything we haven't asked you about that you'd like to add for the historical record?

A. (Doyle) Not really, I don't think. That pretty much covers what we did for the couple of weeks we were up there.

Q. (46:40) When you chose to become a photographer did you have any idea that it might lead to something like this?

A. (Briscese) When I chose to change from a photo journalist to forensic photographer I had, you know, not thinking that 9/11 would ever happen, but you know just thinking, you know all the aircraft accidents that I've documented and things like that. You know I always knew there was a possibility of you know, maybe a C-130 going down with fifty aboard, or you know, 141, or C-5 you know with numerous people on board. But you know we did the embassy bombings and we did the *USS Cole* bombing and stuff like that, but you just never thought that something like this you know, at least I never did.

A. (Doyle) I never thought I do this sort of thing, This, something of this magnitude even when I was coming to the job. Back at the beginning of my career in 1980 I can remember being on leave back home, visiting some friends who just finished their first year of college and someone said, "Well what do you photograph?" and someone jokingly said, "Oh, he takes pictures of dead people," and I was just – you know, it was kind of a big joke and I said, "No, but come full circle," and here's what I do day in and day out if necessary, but at that time I was like, "I'll never get involved with that." But here twenty-years later, it's what I've been doing for three years. And for me this is my last duty station in the Navy.

Q. (48:13) And where are you going from here?

A. (Doyle) I retire Halloween this year and my wife's from Northern Ireland and we're moving back there.

A. (Briscese) I'm leaving in July. I've been doing this for five years. I've been here for five years.

Q. (48:26) And where will you go.

A. (Briscese) I'm going to the White House.

Q. (48:30) The White House?

A. Yes.

Q. (48:36) Great. Well thank you very much both of you.

A. You're very welcome.

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Ethel Geary
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