

**Naval Historical Center  
Oral Interview Summary Form**

**Interviewers:**

Dr. Randy Papadopoulos  
Ms. Julie Kowalski

**Interviewer's Organization:**

Naval Historical Center  
Navy Historical Center

**Interviewee:**

Capt Steve O'Brien, USNR

**Current Address:**

Pentagon Family Assistance  
Center

**Date of Interview:**

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Pentagon

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

**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Family Assistance Center, Pentagon, Terrorist Attack, 11 September 2001; Office of Secretary of Defense

**Abstract of Interview:**

Topics Discussed: In the middle of December 01 as he was shutting down the Navy Liaison Office at Port Mortuary Dover Air Force Base Capt O'Brien was contacted by Navy Personnel Command in Millington, TN because they were looking for a backfill for CDR Yvette BrownWahler who had been working as the primary point of contact for the families as an aftereffect of the Pentagon Family Assistance Center. She was due to rotate in December. There was no Navy billet for this job but it had been an outgrowth of 9/11. Capt O'Brien interviewed with the Director, Meg Faulk, in mid December. After shutting down the Navy Liaison office on 14 December he knew he had some things to wrap up with that job which would put him available at the end of January. He worked with his civilian employer and the Navy to transfer to his present position at the end of January. He was demobilized at the end of January and transferred to the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD).

There was no resistance in providing him with the orders to OSD. The paperwork went through OSD, but was not quick enough to give him his orders. CAPT O'Brien happened to be giving an outbrief to RADM Brown in Millington, TN. Since the Personnel Command is also located there he went by to see them and was able to get his orders by the next day. His orders were cut on 28 January and he reported on the second Monday in January. He actually came to work earlier than the order report date because CDR BrownWahler had left. He was able to do 4 partial days of turnover with her in mid January.

The sum total of 26 years in the military as well as civilian employment prepared him for his current position. There are certain things developed over time working with people. Between church and community involvement he has learned to accept the breadth of perspectives that every group has. The diversity training he has had heightens one's sensitivity to that. This is more of recognizing feelings, identify where a person is coming from and how to best assist them in that point in time, regardless of how you've dealt with them before.

Once in Singapore he had lost a flight engineer. He had to be the one to call his parents. CAPT O'Brien was very young at the time. Other than losing friends and talking to wives over the years those are his only experiences in dealing with grieving relatives.

There is no normal routine in his current position. Things have not settled down. When he thinks there will be a lull it picks up. What routine there is involves a group of family members with CAPT O'Brien there to provide information on the top level things the Casualty Officers may not be aware of. There are personal issues with the families including financial, mental health, etc. The Office of Family Policy is responsible for casualty and mortuary affairs. His office is responsible for coordination with Dover, autopsies, coordinating funerals and honors, etc. Because of the association his office has with the families they often come to him to ask questions. They are primarily there to support the families. One thing they learned is that for some of the people there may not be closure. The whole process of healing and recovery is very cyclic. They go through periods of uncertain length of good and bad. CAPT O'Brien never knows if it's a good or bad day for a particular person. The approach he has to take is be a good listener and help where he can, and be patient. He can be yelled at or told off and he has to accept the fact they are having a bad day and are somewhere in their grief recovery process and he has to accept it.

There are times when he has to say he can't do something. That is rare. Sometimes the family doesn't understand and sometimes they do. Typical routine is phone calls from next of kin or close relatives. The calls can be anywhere from why wasn't I invited to this, when am I going to get this to I feel I need help. Sometimes they want to talk or vent. He has had phone calls that have been hours long with him trying to be a good listener.

Sometimes he gets a call from an employer or close friend. In March a gentleman who had lost his wife in the Pentagon had gone back to work and over a period of time the coworkers had noticed his irritability was getting worse. He wasn't getting sleep and was stressed out. The coworkers called CAPT O'Brien and told him they were worried about him. Fortunately many of the grieving people have good friends who are looking for the signs of trouble. Eventually CAPT O'Brien got the man in touch with mental health professionals and was able to get this man help.

There is a private web site for the families where they post all the support services available to them. It's up to the families to reach out and avail themselves of the

services. In other circumstances coworkers, friends of family members have to reach out for the family members to get them help.

There is still a lot of outpouring of support from the American public. Every day he gets half a dozen calls from various groups wanting to provide support, sometimes money other times product. In each case they want to get the information out to the families. It might be put in a letter as an enclosure, email, phone call or put on the website. Regardless of the method used CAPT O'Brien may still not make contact with each family. Many of the families don't open the mail because they have been inundated or cannot handle replaying the events by reading the mail. He has to explain to the donors that he will do his best to get the information out but he can't guarantee any response. He is just the conduit of information. They also have events for the families when they hand information out to them. Some donors think he has a huge staff and don't understand he is a staff of one. If a donor wants to do something he does not have a staff to make it happen, the donor needs to make it happen.

There were 120 wounded at the Pentagon. When CAPT O'Brien gets offers of assistance he always includes them in the group of people who should get assistance. The group of wounded in many cases has been overlooked. In many ways the decedent families have been taken care of very well financially. The burn victims have had their whole lives changed and very little has happened to help them. Some donors do not want to do anything for the wounded because a board of directors has directed them to help decedent families. There are 152 children under the age of 21 for the 184 decedent victims and 94 children for the 120 wounded victims. What happens to the children of the wounded who now can't work due to their injuries sustained at the Pentagon on 9/11? He is trying to get donors to think about those children and the future for them in setting up scholarships, etc. None of the donors think about the injured until CAPT O'Brien brings it to their attention. Many organizations want to help the victims, and he brings it to their attention that not all the victims were killed, some were wounded.

They have to keep the paperwork simple because the families don't like to have to justify their need over and over again. The other part is having to describe the event over and over opens up more issues for them. CAPT O'Brien does not give out the families' personal information. Everything that goes out to the families comes to him first. He puts the mailing labels on the mailings, and blind copies the families on emails to protect their email addresses. Most of the donors understand this.

About 10% of the donors include the injured in their donations after CAPT O'Brien brings it to their attention. Most of this is because they are not prepared to help more than 300 families vice 184. He never selects a group for the donor to provide for. He leads them down the path of options and the donor always decides who to donate to.

#### **Working on the events and activities for the families:**

He participates in the memorials. This involves getting the information out, with typically less than a week's notice. The President has invited the families to the White House. CAPT O'Brien can give the names and addresses to another government

organization. Vice President Cheney sent a letter to every family. The initiations to the White House have never been formal. They called the families by phone the first time. The second time was to children and CAPT O'Brien's office sent the invitation out by email.

The first anniversary is coming up in September 2002. The DOD has two events going on as well as other groups who will have events.

There are some families who want to go to everything, other families are very selected. Most of the families who come to the events are in nearby states. Some won't go to an event unless they can bring children. Some events are not appropriate for very small children. There have been 8 babies born since 9/11 to the families.

If the families are given notice of 45-60 days there is usually a higher response rate.

### **Visits to the Pentagon/impact site:**

These started in February. They've taken a non-marketing approach. They don't want to presume that anyone wants to do this. They make them available when requested. They have brought several families in where they can see where each person's remains were located to the best of the FBI's knowledge. This is a very emotional event that they treat very importantly. They never have turned anyone down and allow them to come whenever they want to. These spaces are still under construction but people are due to move in the first week of August when some of these spaces will become closed and classified. CAPT O'Brien is trying to make those spaces available after the 11 Sep memorial for the families to view the area and see the memorial.

Everything that is donated is sent to CAPT O'Brien's home so it doesn't have to go through the huge process of working through the Pentagon mail system. He often saves a lot of the goodies donated to give to the families when they come to a major event.

Generally when someone in the community is trying to get an answer from DOD there is an office in Public Affairs called Community Relations. Everyone in Community Relations knows who CAPT O'Brien is. They relay the calls to him. He will not talk to media however, and turns those calls back to Public Affairs.

He gets inquiries from the families about legal affairs. Sean Pitman in Washington, D.C. put together the pro bono legal relief. They organized a group of lawyers in D.C. and Virginia who will provide legal services to any of the victims free of charge. This had made things very simple.

He is working on setting up closed circuit television for the trial so the families can visit it. He has to advise the people who are doing this to have mental health, ministers, food, etc. He has to make sure things are done right because if he tells the families something is available it puts a DOD label on it and he has to make sure it is done correctly.

The Department of Justice is responsible for victim's compensation and he stays away from that.

There are 5 permanent people in the Office of Family Policy, plus the director, Meg Faulk and CAPT O'Brien. CAPT O'Brien reports to Meg Faulk, the director. He works with all the casualty offices constantly, DIA and FBI. He holds a monthly family assistance coordination group meeting with anyone touching on the family to discuss all the concerns out there, upcoming events and assistance available. This is solely for 9/11 families.

Any day where there is a national following and a remembrance (Memorial Day, Independence Day, the 11<sup>th</sup> of each month) is a big event. He calls these accelerators that bring back the memories. There are a lot of other accelerators. These kind of cyclic things will continue. His biggest concern is the children. People say the children will get past this. He does not think the children have healed, they are hurting.

The importance of his work keeps him going. He could have demobilized and gone back to work in January to his civilian life. Everyone would have supported that. Something told him there were things out there that people needed. It would have been dumped on the Family Policy people who had other things to do. CAPT O'Brien was a freebie. It's a financial burden for him to be on active duty. He wonders what the reaction will be when he goes back to his civilian job. It will be an adjustment. There are all sorts of issues with being on active duty. His wife doesn't want to give up her doctor she has seen for 10 years because she can go to a military doctor. There are a lot of issues to be considered. He had learned something being at the mortuary. Even though he didn't know the families he knew the day would come when the autopsy reports would be available to the families. He never would have expected that type of carnage and conditions. He just had one of the ladies who has been very involved, who lost her husband, who can't understand why she got her husband's Naval Academy ring back and not the wedding ring. He knows why, but doesn't know what she is prepared to hear. CAPT O'Brien has been privy to a lot the families haven't. He asked her if she had requested the autopsy report, she hadn't, but requested it the next week. He told her not to be alone when she opens it. That is when she will understand why she got back what she did.

He gets 20-30 phone calls a day. Every one is a little different.

They already have a few families who are "Do not contact". He still mails them information that he thinks they should be aware of. These families just want to put everything behind them. He still sends them the compensations.

Abstracted by:  
CAPT Carol O'Hagan  
20 JUL 02

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Ms. Julie Kowalski

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**Interviewee:**

Capt Steve O'Brien, USNR

**Current Address:**

Pentagon Family Assistance Center

**Date of Interview:**

2 July 02

**Place of Interview:**

Pentagon

**Number of Cassettes:**

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**Subject Terms/Key Words:** Family Assistance Center, Pentagon, Terrorist Attack, 11 September 2001; Office of Secretary of Defense

**Transcript of Interview:**

Topics Discussed:

Q. (00:32) Good afternoon. I wonder if you could give us your name and spell it just to make sure everything works OK.

A. (00:38) STEPHEN O'BRIEN, spelled S-T-E-P-H-E-N O'-B-R-I-E-N.

Q. (00:44) You've spoken with the Naval Historical Center before about your activities mostly up at the Dover Port Mortuary so this is sort of a follow-on to that earlier meeting, but I'd like you to describe your activities then with the Family Assistance Center beginning with the time that you first found out you'd be coming here from Dover to work at this office.

A. OK. In the middle of December as we were shutting down the Port Mortuary, the Navy Liaison office at Port Mortuary, Dover I was contacted by Navy Personnel Command in

Millington, Tennessee, because RADM BROWN there had been requested to identify a backfill for CDR Yvete Brown-Whaler who had been working as the primary point of contact for the families as an aftermath of the Pentagon Family Assistance Center, and she was due to transfer in the end of January to assume command of a new Arleigh Burke destroyer, and they were looking for a replacement for her. Did not necessarily have to be a naval officer. There was no Navy billet here in the Office of Family Policy for, but this is an outgrowth of the activities and requirements that were the result of the 9/11 attack here at the Pentagon.

So I began to look into that position. I eventually interviewed with MRS. MEG FAULK who is the Director of the Office of Family Policy, interviewed with her I believe around the 18<sup>th</sup> of December. She decided that she wanted me here and then I went ahead and proceeded to work with my civilian employer and then also with the Navy to get orders to transfer here at the end of January, which was the time coincident with the Naval District Washington, where ADMIRAL WEAVER – Well, when, after shutting down the Port Mortuary, the Navy Liaison Office at Port Mortuary Dover, on 14 December, it was a given fact that there were certain lessons learned after-action reports, outbriefs and so forth and it was decided at that time that it would probably take me ‘til about the end of January to fulfill all those requirements. So Naval District Washington, where ADMIRAL WEAVER was, was willing to demobilize me and allow me to go back to my civilian employer at the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. So at that point went ahead and transferred to the Office of Secretary Defense.

Q. (03:13) Did you have any difficulty getting the orders to here from the Navy’s hierarchy?

Was there some, was there some resistance of any sort?

A. (03:19) No, there was no resistance. It's always a, I guess it's more so that nobody understands the real process and paperwork involved, so the paperwork was going up through OSD, but it didn't get up through the chain of command quick enough to get my orders and so I just happened to be doing an outbrief to RADM BROWN in Millington, Tennessee, which is where the Navy Personnel Command is, and so I went over to the mobilization person there, the Personnel Command and the next day I had orders.

Q. (03:58) Wow, very fast indeed.

A. So that was very, that was just coincidental because I was down there. So it worked out very well.

Q. (04:07Z) And this went through a more administrative side of the Department of Defense, OSD. It didn't go up to the Joint Staff at all?

A. No, absolutely not, no.

Q. (04:15) So no operational consideration involved in that?

A. No.

Q. So you received the order when you were down in Millington. When was that outbrief that you were – when did you actually get the orders then?

A. Well, I think I was doing the outbrief around the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> of January. The orders were cut, I think on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January.



Q. (04:31) And then you were to report here?

A. Whatever the second Monday in February was.

Q. (04:37) I think it was about the 8<sup>th</sup>, but I could be wrong.

A. Yeah, but I actually did come to work right away.

Q. (04:43) OK.

A. Because COMMANDER BROWN-WAHLER was gone.

Q. (04:45) She'd already left?

A. Yes, she had gone, we had – she, COMMANDER BROWN-WAHLER and I had conducted a, about three or four days, partial days of turnover before I went down to Millington, around the 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of January. Somewhere in that timeframe we had done about four days, partial days of turnover so, because by the time I get back from Millington, she was going to be gone, and she was.

Q. (05:08) So you had some contact with her before you assumed?

A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. (05:15) Apart from your time at the Dover Port Mortuary what other sort of preparation would you say you'd had for working in something as complicated and personal as the Office of Family Policy?

A. I probably have to say the, it's probably just a sum total of twenty-seven years in the, well at that time a little over twenty-six years in the military as well as civilian employment would probably have contributed significantly, but, you know, as I was reflecting on a question that came earlier before we started the interview, there's certain things that you know, you develop over a period of time working, just working with people, and I probably have to say that between church and community involvement that's probably where I have learned to accept the breadth of perspectives that every person has, and when you're dealing with a group of almost fifty-five Navy victims or 184 plus 120 wounded, you just have to expect a wide variety of perspectives, a wide variety of points in life, points of view, upbringing, cultural backgrounds and so forth, and just learn to appreciate that. I'd have to say that probably diversity training that I've had working in civilian employment as well as the Navy heightens your sensitivity to that.

Now that's, in most cases that's cultural, racial, religious type of diversities that you learn. This isn't quite that. This is more of basically recognizing the feelings, trying to identify where a person's coming from and how you can best assist them at that point in time regardless of how you've dealt with them before, because it could be a different point in their emotional state or psychological state at the time during you're dealing with them. So it's probably mostly through my diversity training, different leadership training, leadership opportunities, experiences, plus extensive church and community involvement in just being able to appreciate where people are coming from.

Q. (07:32) Had you ever had to counsel somebody when you were in the Navy, who had either lost a teammate, somebody in the unit or somebody who'd lost a family member? Had that ever happened to you personally before?

A. It did once. I lost a flight engineer. Fell off a balcony in Singapore when we were just doing an overnight there on the way out to the Indian Ocean, and I ended up having to be the one to call his parents. I was very young at the time, was just very sympathetic with the parents, but, and didn't really know about much what to expect. That was just one, one experience with it, but other than that, other than losing some friends and talking to their wives over the years, but not, not direct or extensive involvement with loss of life or with the next of kin or anything like that.

Q. (08:27) OK. Now let's move on then. So you received the orders, you come, you report here roughly, you say the second Monday in February, and what is the normal routine by this stage of things? This is now, if there is a routine, how are things working in the office from your particular perspective at that stage?

A. Keeping in mind that when you mention office, this responsibility addressing the issues, concerns and affairs of 184 decedent victims families, and 120 wounded, it's really one person that's doing that, and when necessary there are other people in the officer here, all of whom have other responsibilities, responsibilities that existed before September 11<sup>th</sup>. This entire Office of Family Policy are the ones that manned the Pentagon Family Assistance at the Sheraton on the afternoon of September 11<sup>th</sup> so they have all had opportunities to work with the families in one way or another. So they're immediately available to assist when necessary.

There is no normal routine and that's one thing which I probably didn't expect, and, although I am asked time and time again, week by week, month by month, have things settled down, and the answer to that is absolutely not.

If anything they continue. As soon as you think there's going to be a lull it just picks up right away. I probably, if I wanted to categorically describe what is the routine here is we have a group

of family members, and one of the things that I have to emphasize is I'm not here to sub-plant what the casualty offices are responsible for in the Army, Navy, the DIA and the FBI. I'm more here to provide information on the more top level things that the casualty offices may not even be aware of at a certain point in time.

There are personal issues with the families. Those personal issues could involve financial, mental health; also keep in mind that this Office of Family Policy is responsible for Casualty and Mortuary Affairs. So when it comes to direct coordination with the mortuary at Dover, this office is responsible for that. When it comes to autopsies, when it comes to policy regarding funerals and honors and so forth, this office would automatically get involved in those kinds of things, working mostly with the Casualty Offices, but because of the association that this office had with the families sometimes, once again we don't try and sub-plant what the Casualty Office should be doing, but sometimes they just come to us and ask questions.

The primary thing is we're here to support the families. We're going to do everything we possibly can, legally and reasonably to accommodate them. Each of the—one thing we've learned, and I've learned more and more from mental health clinicians that it could be, for some of these people they will never, we don't really use the word closure for them, because for most they may never be able to close on this, this tragic event in their life. So we don't use the word closure with them or around them at all, but one of the things I've been told to understand is that this whole process of healing and recovery from losing a husband, wife, mother, father you know, son, daughter and so forth is, is very cyclic. They have, they go through periods and you don't know how long the period of good days is going to be, or how long the period of bad days, or it could be one day or another.

And so when the phone rings and I pick up the phone, I don't know if it's a good day or a bad day for this person. I might get a sense of it after the discussion and so forth, but the approach I have to take and I have to cause myself to remember to this is, be a good listener. I'm here to listen, and I'm here to help you know where I can, and to be very, very patient. I can get yelled at. I can be told I'm the biggest you know what. That I'm doing a bad job, and in most cases I probably don't think I'm doing a poor job, but I have to accept the fact that they're having a bad day. They're somewhere in their grief recovery process and I have to appreciate it no matter what.

Sometimes that's difficult, but the whole key is listen, be patient, and try and get to the root of the issue that they have, that they're concerned about and try and provide assistance to resolve it. There are times when you, when you have, when I've had to say, "I cannot do that," and it's rare, but there are times and sometimes they don't understand, but other times they do accept that. So typical routine is predominantly by phone. We get phone calls from family, from next of kin, and/or daughters, husbands, mothers, fathers, who are not being the primary next of kin. The questions could be anything from, "Why wasn't I invited to this?" to "When are we going to get this," to "I feel I need some help," whether that's financial help, or mental health assistance. It just runs the whole gamut. Sometimes they want to talk to somebody. Sometimes they vent on everything in their life, and I've had phone calls that have been hours, you know, hours long, and just trying to be a good listener, because at that point in time it's what they needed.

Sometimes I'll get a phone call, I've gotten this a couple times, and it's been very fortuitous from an employer, or a close friend. Two cases, I won't use names or anything, but this was probably in the March timeframe, where this is now six months after the event. Where a gentleman was working, worked in the office. Had come back to work. He had lost his wife here

in the Pentagon and over a period of time the co-workers had noticed that his anxiety level, his irritability was getting worse, and worse and worse. They could just look at him and see that he was a mess, because he wasn't getting any sleep. Very nervous, very irritable, stressed out, quiet and so forth and so they finally gave me a call and said, "We're worried about," this person. "We don't think he's suicidal." This is just a co-worker, manager of him and co-worker. And so it's one of those situations where you, fortunately each one of these people have, not all, but many of them have good friend, good co-workers or whatever and are looking for the signs that are important in these kinds of situations.

Turns out that this gentleman, just -"I'm a man. I don't need assistance. I can handle this. I'll deal with it. I'll get it over with," and he just got worse, and worse and worse progressively. So you know you handle this situation by saying, OK, I can, I can get the right people in touch with him, but of course as we all know, it's much better if he wants that kind of assistance. So after I talked to the co-worker and the manager, we were convinced that they needed to go back to him and approach him on bringing him around to the point that where he recognized that he needed assistance, and sure enough two hours later I got a call from him.

So I talked to him. I said, "I can put you in touch with mental health professionals." This was now probably eight o'clock at night, and I called the emergency number and within hours he was contacted. He had an appointment the next morning. There's a success story where everybody that touched this person you know were concerned about him and got involved. So it's a - and I probably would never have expected a phone call like that, and although there's only been a few of those, it's one of those things that I wouldn't say it's all routine, but it's perhaps one of the most significant things that probably has been done for those families is getting them in touch with mental health professionals. Get them involved in stress management groups, which there

are many. There's a big one down here in Springfield where I think 20 or 25 of the next of kin get together every Monday evening, and it's probably been the key thing for that group of people to get through this whole process of losing their husbands and wives and so forth.

Q. (18:47) Can I just ask, did you let the gentleman know that you'd been contacted by his -?

A. He knew.

Q. (18:53) He knew?

A. Oh, yes he knew. Right, I didn't have to –

Q. (18:55) So that was, that difficulty was overcome that way?

A. Right, and I told them also, I said, "I recommend that you let him know that you called me, so that at least we're not trying to hide anything from him where he'd –" you know, and I think he finally realized this was just the, the care and attention that people who were close to him you know, cared about him you know.

Q. (19:18) Were you able to follow-up on him and know what the status is?

A. All I, all I did was make sure that the Director of Operation Solace, which is MAJOR TODD LEVIN, he's my point of contact with the, he's the Director of Operation Solace and I call him and I say, "Please tell me that you're in touch, " you know "let me know when you're in touch him and that you're providing services." At that point in time it's all I know. I've never heard anything more about the gentleman.

Q. (19:49) OK.

A. I'm trying to remember if I've met him at events since then and I don't know.

Q. (19:54) OK. Sure enough, so you're in a position really then to take the first call then, or the first two calls, or first three calls from people and –

A. It varies.

Q. (20:02) Oh, it does vary. OK.

A. You know, you know for some of the people they, you know we have this private website for the families and we post all the operation, all sorts of support services. Whether it be a stress management group, a bereavement camp for children, all these services are there for them, and it's up to them at that point to reach out, look and say, "I think I need this," or want to avail myself of it and make the contact. It's only in these other cases where there are other concerned individuals -

We had another gentleman who had taken to alcohol, to the point where the Casualty Officer was very concerned about him. So we got professional assistance for him. He was not local, so we have, that's where you have to reach out now to another provider out at you know, in another state and so forth, to get him the type of assistance that he needs. So, and hopefully that's been working. I've seen that gentleman a couple of times since. He seems to be doing well. It's just, got to be careful sometimes with how you, how you react and how far you can take the alcohol, alcohol issue.

There is still a lot of outpouring of support from the American public. Constantly get, every day, I can plan on a half a dozen calls from elementary schools, churches, corporations, private



citizens, foundation, scholarship societies, fraternal, civic, all of the world essentially. And I can have a half a dozen of those a day and they want to provide some support. Sometimes it's in terms of money, others product. Generally speaking in each case, we want to get the information out to the families and if it's coincidental with a letter that I'm sending out to the families, then we might include that as an enclosure. Otherwise we might email push it, or put it on the private website.

We're continually funneling information out to the families. The key thing I always have to remind all these donors is regardless of all three of those methods, or even four- phone calls, leaving messages on voice mail – four methods, I may still not make contact with a family.

I have literally, when I was working on a very significant item that needed response from every family in writing, under signature, I literally would call up a family after I made several tries to get a hold of them, explain to them why I was calling and ask them about the letter I sent them they'd say, "don't know anything about the letter," and then we'd get to the point where I'd say, "Well you see the box next to the kitchen table, " with all their mail in it, that they haven't opened, "would you please look for the largest manila envelope." They pull it out and they'd see it was from me. They'd open it up and then they'd see what's in there. So you'd actually go through that process. They don't, many, many families, do not open up the mail. They've been inundated with mail, or they wait until they think they're having a good day and they'll start opening up more mail, because it just keeps bringing back more and more memories to them.

Q. (23:36) Right, right.

A. (23:40) Some have email. Some pay attention to it everyday. Others don't. Some know how to get on the internet and get access to the website, and others don't. We even had, I remember

the one call from a lady that lost her husband here in the Pentagon, and this was one of those two or three hour phone calls and I've since met her, and it was very interesting.

I met her for the first time, just two weeks ago, and the phone call from her was, you know, "I lost my husband. He did everything for me." She doesn't drive. She has no idea how to even call for a taxi. She had never written a check in her life. Had barely handled money. She talked about the weeds in her yard. She talked about the lawn that was getting overgrown, a twelve-year-old son that she didn't know how to car – you know just everything, and I had this vision of this lady that never got out of bed.

You know in a caring way, not a critical way, but as sedition, and yet, and then I met this lady two weeks later, and I was just so, and I saw her. I mean everything was running through my mind that how did this lady ever get to this event after what, the phone conversation I had with her. I still don't know how she got to the event.

Q. (25:09) Yes.

A. Except there was another lady with her. Here's this petite you know four foot, eleven, probably eighty pound woman, you know, very dainty and everything else, but just, her husband had done everything for her, and it was just very interesting seeing you know, it was just wonderful that she had finally gotten out somehow. I don't know why I got off on that tangent. But going back to the donors, the thing I have to explain to the donors is that I'll do my best to get information out to them, but you may or may not get any. You may get some, you may not get any, you may get some, you may get a lot of response and I can't guarantee anything. I'm just the conduit at getting information out to them. And then we have certain events and that's probably a quicker way to get information out. When we have these major events, we bring in,

families come in, have all sorts of handouts for them and it's, so, it, then we rely on their own networks.

I mentioned the stress management group in Springfield. That group knows everything that's going on. If one of them knows then all twenty of them know it, and that's great. We've got the word of mouth.

But the donors, everybody I call, and this is the predominance of my calls on a daily basis, they want to do something for the families. Sometimes it's a question. "What can I do for them?"

Then we work through it. See if there's something that makes them happy and so forth. At the same token recognizing I'm a staff of one and I'm a facilitator in most cases and so I cannot do the work for all these individuals, groups or whatever, that sometimes have this notion that there's a staff here that will do anything. If they want to do something, we'll do it for them. Well, no, that's not the case. After we talk, it's rare, I'd say one percent of the time is there's not any further follow-on with this group in getting something to the families.

One of the things that I have felt as a group that I think have been overlooked, you know a lot of times there will be a comparison made between the victims up in New York, the Pentagon and Somerset County, Pennsylvania and where we too often are forgetting what took place up in Pennsylvania and similarly in the aftermath of New York City, quite often the Pentagon victims are getting forgotten. I might occasionally hear one of the Pentagon victims mention that, but it's very rare, because they kind of understand why. It's just that it's kind of, not human nature, but it's just the factor of numbers, the outcome of numbers. But, we also have a hundred and twenty wounded. They were wounded here at the Pentagon, and so when I have these offers of assistance, whether it be scholarships, money, and so forth, I start out, always start out with 304, and they're shocked. OK, why. I say, "Well, let me talk to you about the hundred and twenty

wounded.” You know, “Let me describe to you some of the very victims, and talk to you about the fact that now it’s one thing,” and I try and say this in a very positive way, where a family has lost their, their husband or wife has died, and I said, “Generally speaking there’s probably been some life insurance there and that could be anywhere from \$5,000 to a million dollars or whatever.” I said, “You know and with all the other outpours of assistance in some way,” I said, “In many, not in all, but in many ways, the decedent families have been taken care of fairly well financially.” Now you take this burn victim who’s now lost their fingers and their hands and been in wheelchair. They’re entire life has change. Their house has to be changed. They’re car has to be changed. They’re whole life, and yet what’s happening for them. And they have to wake up every morning and continue this, and what’s today, what’s going to be ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road as far as medical expense and everything else. So I try and do as much as I can to steer all the donors into the direction of the wounded. Some absolutely don’t want to. OK, fine, we’ll work with the descendant families, because they have a Board of Directors or whatever for this foundation organization. That’s what they’ve been told, is to get this to the decedent children or whatever it might be.

But one of the things I’ve been doing for months is trying to concentrate as much as possible on the wounded, ones that I’ve gotten to, that they get the same type of medical help and hopefully get some of the financial assistance I think they need.

There’s a hundred and fifty-two children and when I use the word children it’s under the age of 21. So a hundred and fifty-two children for the hundred-and eighty-four decedent victims and you have ninety plus children for the hundred and twenty wounded victims. They’re young children and sure, let’s say this wounded victim who’s been, the injury is lung damage from smoke inhalation and chemical, inhalation of chemicals. I’ll just use this as an example, whose

current livelihood may be stopped short from a disability standpoint, well who gets a hundred percent disability? Does that live up, does that continue with inflation? No, not in all these things. In the meantime what's going to happen to their daughters when he can't go out now and get the kind of job he probably could have gotten if was completely healthy, because of his experiences and skills that he learned in the military.

So it's these kinds of things that I'm trying to cause these families to be looking ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road for the kids.

Q. (31:32) Yeah.

A. You know, yes, you're important, but think more about the kids. So whether it's scholarships or money, it's kind of some of the things we really want to, I really want to try and do that if we possibly can.

Q. (31:45) Are the wounded thinking in terms of that sort of thing. I mean are some of them planning, OK, I'm not, I'm getting 80% disability and I need them to see what I can do you know?

A. I know very little about specific details about anyone really. I hear some things here and there and I, unfortunately I'm not the brightest person in the world and I forget things, and I like it that way because I don't want to remember a lot of personal details unless it's very important to do that.

The answer is yes. Some have you know, have hired lawyers and so they're out there fighting the battle with them, for them. They have the access to mental health, and medical assistance, of

what isn't, what wasn't readily coming forward was, "I'm a foundation and I would like to offer them our scholarship money to the victims of the wounded."

OK, some have, but very many, or "We've collected X millions of dollars and we would like to get this to the children of the descendant," but what about the children of the wounded. In some cases yes, others no. So it's, no generally speaking the wounded are, have identified, you know what might be available or at least are pursuing I think the right things.

Q. (33:15) What portion of the donors then are thinking of the wounded, if you were to make a guess, you know, the ratio?

A. Zero. I can guarantee every phone call without even thinking of them.

Q. (33:235) OK.

A. OK, now there are foundations and organizations that have said their monies are available to the victims of 9/11. Wounded are victims, OK, and that's good. OK, so I remember one organization and that's the way it was written, but they weren't thinking wounded. They were thinking victims are the ones that died. But most organization I, so when I have to go back, I say zero I have to probably caveat that by saying that there are those that have, because they've written in victims and they have taken into consideration that that includes the wounded. Each time some of these offers come in and I post things on the web site or everything, I have to review everything for so it's not solicitative and it's sensitive enough to the families and when I do that I really earmark the ones that say just victims in general, because then I know wounded are eligible for whatever assistance they are willing to provide.

One of the things when I'm working with donors and in the cases of money, offers of financial assistance or scholarship assistance is I always have to constant remind, well, it even goes to trips, the German government and everything, we have to keep the paperwork as simple as possible. Because, a couple of reasons. One, the families just don't like having to time, after time, after time again justify their need. And some of these forms can be very, very lengthy. The other part of it is having to describe the event and the everything else, just brings back more grief and opens up more issues for them and so they don't even want to deal with it. So we try and keep it as simple as possible.

Q. (35:34) Do you have permission then from the families to act as a mediator with their information?

A. No.

Q. (35:43) You don't.

A. No, the trust that's been given to me by the families is I will never give out their personal information. So what, and that's one of the things where I have to do some work for all these organizations, and that is, is that everything's going out to the families has to come into me first, and then we put the mailing labels on and we post it to the email or web sites. Even when I go out on an email, I have to be, I blind copy all the families so they don't see each other's email addresses, because then I've violated that trust, too, so.

You know, most of the donors are appreciative of that. Some are genuinely surprised when I say, "No, I can't give you that information." So we work a way to get the information -

Q. (36:32) To them.

A. To them. We've had you know, you know, I'm just going to blurt out you know, you know, the Church of God, you know a small, a relatively small congregation and the money they collected and when we worked through it, you know every, the next of kin of every child got a check you know, from the Church of God.

Independent Order of Odd Fellows, now there's a group I've never heard of before. The International Grand Sovereign Master, when I, he's fulltime, he came here. He came here with you know a hundred and eighty-four checks in hand. Very, very, significant check for each family. You know, who would have expected something like that, but it came from all the member of the Independent Order worldwide.

The Women of the Moose, I just go on and on. Just all these, and that's why I say you know, it's the whole fabric of the nation. The pennies collected by this elementary school to the Special Education students from Clarksville, Maryland that did a project that raised money and bought school supplies for the children of the descendants. The churches to all these civic and fraternal organization to major corporations, and that's what we've been, I've been working with and from money to product to quilts. Thousands of quilts, thousands of teddy bears, and the t-shirts and whatnot, other memorabilia. It's just wonderful to see it.

I'll get a phone call from a lady who happened to be surfing the web and saw these little bracelets that were made, remember the POW/MIA bracelets, well this was made for the victims of 9/11, and she just picked a name and put it on there, and then she come into the Department of Defense and they would track down me, and say, "I would like to write a letter to the husband or wife of this person. Just let them know what this has done for me and that this person's always in my prayers." So the letters would be sent to me. I would read the letter. I'd tell them, "I'm going



to read your letter and if I think it's appropriate I'll forward it on." In only one case and it was from a school, that I didn't forward the letters, but I would forward it on to that next of kin. Then that next of kin has that address and sometime there were relationships that are built as a result of that and there have been.

I can go on and on and just talk about the healing of a nation, because of an elementary school, or a church congregation or a group of employees at a corporation that have banded together to do things, to the healing of the individuals through medical assistance or mental health assistance, to and then I'll talk about the third part of my, well, probably two more parts I'll talk about.

Q. (39:44) One question about the donors. You say that they don't think about the injured initially, and the families of the injured initially. How many of them proportionately take the hint when you say, I mean would a third of them do it?

A. Ten percent.

Q. (39:55) Ten percent.

A. Probably because of limitations.

Q. (39:55) OK.

A. They weren't prepared for three hundred. Most weren't prepared for one hundred and eighty-four, but they forget that we're dealing with the 59 victims off the airliner. They think we're dealing with a little over a hundred. Most, many are, want just to assist the children, and so we start out with 152 children. Well, that's too many. So I've broken down it from under twenty-

one, eighteen and under, under 18, 16 under, you know all sorts of ways I'll break it down, because my goal is to do as much as possible to get things directly into the hands of the families, as opposed, and I'll be very up front about this, the classic phone call is OK, "We've collect \$10,000," or \$100,000 or whatever it might be.

"We would like to send it to the Pentagon."

Well, we can't accept any money and so earlier on back in September legal counsel here for the Department of Defense identified six organizations that we at the Department of Service "support," quote/unquote, or sanction as legitimate, that had legitimate Pentagon assistance funds. Navy, Marine Corps Relief Sighting, Air Force Aide, Army Relief, United Services Organization, Armed Forces YMCA and there's one other there.

So I said, "OK." So I asked the donor, "Are you interested in getting this money, or this into the direct hands of the victims, you interested in making a donation to some organization who will then determine if a family has a need for those funds."

OK, and that's they way I, you know, because I'm here to support the families. And so then we work through how much they have and then I give them some thoughts and ideas. What I don't do is I don't select any group or individuals. I just try and lead them down a path where they can come to a decision that something's going to be appropriate for them and that's how we work through the children quite often, many age groups and so forth, and I get them back on the road. You asked about the donor.

Q. (42:09) Yeah, donors, proportion, yeah.

A. So it's really, now when you hit them with three hundred or then, or two hundred and forty children of that group, it's usually in most cases way too large a scope of donation for them.

But we do have these six organizations that are quite so, in terms of when it's small amounts, I'll fax the, or email the list to them and then they make, they'll select one of them, because then they'll ask me, they'll say, "Well, which one do you recommend?"

I said, "I can't." You know, I just stay out of that business and they make the contact.

Another area of, broad area you know, we're talking about working with the families themselves, working with the donors, the next area is working on events and activities for the families that we're bringing them all in for. And there's been, been many of them. I work, I participate in the memorials and planning meetings for the memorials and so forth.

But it's just getting information out, you know, we typically get less than a week's notice that the President wants a, has invited a group of them to the White House. Ahhh, mayhem. Every time it happens, it's terrible but it's a good opportunity for the families and of course, we need to support the Command and Chief, too. So.

Q. (43:34) Now, when you say the President has invited them, has he gone into your, does he want you to send out, what not he, does the White House want you to send out invitations on the White House's behalf, or does the White House have the addresses and directly do it themselves.

A. (43:49) I can give them, to another federal, now it's Executive Branch, but to another governmental organization, I can give out the names and addresses and phone number, OK? So I do. The White House has them. Vice President Cheney sent out a letter to every family sometime ago, as an example.

None of these, the invitations to the White House have never been formal, OK? The two cases so far has not been formal. We have two more events coming up this summer, so it's – first time we

did it, we did it by phone. I had a whole group of people come in here and support me and we made phone calls for four or five days. It was very, very arduous.

This last event was for a smaller portion, was for children and so we did an email push and we got enough response to go ahead and fill up the quotas we had, and so that was successful.

So in the case of the White House, no, they can have a list and they can send out the invitations if it's something formal or some kind of letter.

But organizing the events and getting the information out to the families, of course, coming up is September 11, 2002. The DOD has two sponsored events surrounding that and we're working with the, a promotional group in Washington, DC that's putting on a huge event, and Mrs. Bush is putting on an event, and there's just all sorts of events going on and the whole idea is to be able to pull all this together so the families can make decisions on what they want to do and so forth. There's a lot, there's a lot of, lot of work involved in the 8<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> of September.

Q. (45:35) I'll bet. What portion of the families want to participate in those, typically, not just specifically single out any type of event, but I mean in some ways I can see it would be a good sign if they don't need to go to, if they feel they don't need to go some of this. On the other hand, maybe it's a good sign if they don't.

A. There are some families that want to go to everything. There are some that are very, very selective and very protective of their children. We have 184 decedent victims, forty-three of the next of kin of those decedent victims live in twenty-seven states no where near here, plus one foreign country, Australia. So in a lot of cases, when we're talking about events and activities with the exception of the big major ones, we're really talking about the folks that are in maybe

New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, DC, Virginia, North Carolina and West Virginia, OK? So we're now narrowed down to about 140 or thereabouts, families.

It just really, really varies of whether or not there's fifty percent or eighty or ninety percent that want to come to these where it's for children. Some will not go to an event unless they can bring their children and that includes infants, you know, and some events just aren't appropriate and you have to try to explain to them in a graceful way that it's not a good idea to bring your one-year old.

Just in percents, we've had eight babies born since 9/11 and these are mothers who also had probably one, two, three other children, you know. So now they've got, they're a single parent of three or four kids. Sometimes they're all under the age of ten. It's pretty sad.

If the families are given enough notice, and I'm talking 45, 60 days, the response is significantly higher than these week events, less than a week notice.

The last area working with this is visits to the Pentagon, and I kind of separate that out. It's visits to the construction site, the impact site. They started in February. We've always taken a non-marketing approach to this. We feel, and the reason is we don't want to presume that anybody wants to do this. There are those out there that don't absolutely want to do it. Some that are afraid to do it. We don't want to be the cause for emphasizing this is important in their healing, because who are we to determine that, but we make them available when we're tested. And so we've brought several families back in where we actually, to the best of the FBI and all the investigative personnel's efforts and beliefs, we know exactly where each person died, or at least where their remains, the predominance of their remains were located, so we take them to that location. Very, very emotional event for each one of them.

So we treat those very important, we've never turned anybody down, no matter when they want to come, because that's how important it is to them.

Q. (49:20) Some of those spaces would be, presumably be classified at this stage. Well, I guess not, no, it's still under construction so there's nothing, nothing –

A. No, as a matter of fact we're losing our window of opportunity. Scaffolding's gone up, not scaffolding, drywall's going in. There will be people moving into the offices the first week of August. They're ahead of schedule, so we're, that window of opportunity to actually go in and touch, because of that reason. Some people will become closed and classified. We're losing it here, pretty quickly. So.

Yeah, I'm working on trying to get the Pentagon as open as possible to the families after our event on September 11<sup>th</sup>, so you can come on over. See the last piece of limestone. See where the memorial's going to be. Go inside to the interior memorial that's going to be relocated down by the new chapel and to maybe even go see where the new areas are that are classified and where they can actually, because these forty-three plus families that don't live anywhere near here, haven't had that opportunity to do any of that.

Q. (50:27) Sure.

A. So, it's that's, generally the locals that have availed themselves of this, or at least have requested going in and see where their husband, or wife, mother, father died.

Cordono, you know, if you'd have been here yesterday, you would have seen, I had five hundred t-shirts back there. I got about a hundred small quilts. I got bears, everything gets sent to my home, because it takes six to eight weeks to get through here at the Pentagon. It's just, it just

doesn't meet our timeline sometimes, so it's been an interesting process of lugging everything up here in my car. Meeting somebody and lugging it in here, and everything else, but it's really the only way to you know, to get things out to the families and so everything comes to my home.

Q. (51:28) How do you distribute more than one bear to each child, or do they each get more than one bear, if that's what, if that's what happens?

A. Well, I've got, I think the families are beared and quilted out, because I mean immediately after the event, I wasn't here at the peak time, I was out at Dover, but there was just things being delivered, you know, bears and quilts and everything over to the Sheraton, Crystal City for the families. And so people, you know, got a lot of things and the kids got a lot of things there, But we have a major event, that's when I load up the car and get everything over to the major event at tables.

When we had the May 4<sup>th</sup> family preview for the interior memorial, I had about ten tables of quilts and toys and bears and books, and pillows, and it just goes on and on. And quite frankly the families have come to expect lots of goodies when they come to a major event.

Q. (52:33) OK.

A. So I quite often will save them, or as these smaller groups of families come and visit the construction site, I'll have a bag of goodies to give them or the kids or whoever else is with them. I've still got tons of stuff back there –

Q. (52:52) I'll bet.

A. For the next major event.

Q. Just a question on process. You mention that a telephone call will come to you sometimes after hours. Why would the telephone call come to you specifically, as an individual?

A. It's—generally speaking when somebody in the community is trying to get an answer on the Department of Defense, there's an office in Public Affairs called Community Relations. Everybody in Community Relations, Public Affairs knows who I am.

Q. (53:19) OK.

A. To the extent where I get phone calls from people who I think they should have probably taken care of.

(interviewer laughs)

A. Because let, when I got calls from the Opry Show, CNN, BBC, I can go on and on all the networks, the magazines and everything else, I have to turn them right back around.

Q. (53:38) Public Affairs. Sure.

A. Because I don't trust, I don't talk to any of them. You know, I'll say a couple of nice things, you know, a couple of things to them, but I told them I said, "I'm not allowed to talk to you until Public Affairs briefs me on what I'm supposed to do."

Q. (53:54) That's absolutely appropriate, of course.

A. Yeah, so it's those cases I can't understand why they sent the person on a wild goose chase after me. Not appropriate.



Q. (54:06) Do you get inquiries from the families regarding legal affairs? I'm thinking of two types of legal affairs, their own and also the progress of the various investigations, criminal investigations and the trial, of course, that's coming up.

A. Yes, to all of that. Personal, it's been very, very easy. SHAW PITMAN in Washington DC put together the Pro Bono Legal Relief, I think they call it. I'd have to go look at the formal name. It's on their website and everything else.

They organized a group of lawyers in DC, Maryland and Washington, or in Virginia, who will provide all, any legal services to any of the victims, free of charge. Makes life very simple. I'll give you an example.

One victim who lost her husband who was in the military, active duty, she's not a US citizen. Living with them was her mother from a foreign country whose visa was expiring. Whose visa could not be extended because she had to have a US citizen sponsor her. The daughter is not a US citizen. The daughter could not get US citizenship because her husband was never identified. There was not a death certificate. The State of Virginia will never issue a death certificate on him.

So we had you know, now you think about it.

Q. (55:37) Wow!

A. Wow what a situation. You know, she depended on her mother to help her, because she's got three small kids. Just lost her husband. The two of them are taking care of the kids. The mother's being told you've got to go home you know, or you're going to be deported. What a, you know, what a big issue.

Called up SHAW PITTMAN. "We'd love to take on this case."

You know, and worked it all the way through. Of course I don't follow-up. I don't know the resolution of all these things, but if I don't get another phone call from her then I have to suggest that hopefully things have been taken care of for her.

The personal legal, that's very easy, you know, I just steer them in the direction of them, because they're happy, they'll do anything. Everything from you know, life insurance to estates, and estate plannings to just everything out there.

But you know, you get all the phone calls. The person who's not getting the checks, you know, from, you just have to work through it.

The trail, you know, it's pretty easy to respond to that. I can't say anything. In most cases I know this much. I know very, very little, and the only parts that I know are what I'm requested to do to support the preparations for the trial. Right now we're working on setting up closed circuit television so that the families can visit it. We're, you know, if we get into the, you know, we don't sponsor that type of activity, but I have to advise, I say, we, I have to advise the people that are doing it that, "Have you considered the fact that you need mental health people there? You may need ministers there. You may, have you thought about food," and all these other resources. You know, you just don't go out and say OK we're going to make this hall available to the families and come on in. What about media? Keeping media out of there. The families aren't going to want them there. How do you make a secure environment, you know? All these types of things, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes." So even though as I say it's easy, it's still a lot of work to make sure that, because I'm here, once again, if I go out and say, "OK families, the following locations going to be made available to you." All of a sudden I've put a DOD label on it, because I'm saying this is a good thing for you, and so it's – got to be careful of what we do.

Q. (58:06) Of course.

A. The, I think you talked about the victims funds or something?

Q. (58:14) I asked about legal affairs and that was the last thing, I think.

A. There was a third area I think. Well you said, there's a third area in legal affairs. I think the victim's compensation.

Q. (58:21) Maybe that was it.

A. That's the Department of Justice that's responsible for that, and I stay as far away as I can from that, because it is so, I mean, the mas -, the special master MR. FEINBERG (phonetic) is, had several meetings and each time they learn, they - the Department of Justice- learns more about what they need to do to help clarify this for the families because it's a very touchy issue for them and I'll talk about economic and non-economic losses and so, offsets for the families and so I stay away from that. I don't get involved in providing advise or anything, I just try to encourage them to avail themselves of all the information they possibly can. Go to the meetings or whatever.

Q. (58:07) Sure. Do they call you on good days just to talk about the fact their having, essentially to tell you they're having a good day?

A. Yes, rare. Emails too. Yes, but not very often. It's mostly the issues, the concerns and so forth. Lots of you know, thank you notes, either through email and through the mail, and that's when you know it's all been worthwhile, you know.

You know I remember, I didn't know any of these people when I was out at Dover. I knew names. I knew their husband's and wife's names too, but I remember writing letters from Dover, you know, about, you know, just letting them know that we're taking good care of their loved one and so forth.

I went to the first meeting with the families, and there was this, yes, it was the Department of Justice, MR. FEINBERG's second meeting with them in January at the Sheraton, Crystal City. So it was the first time I was going to actually see any of these family members. Of course, all 184 potentially, not just the Navy ones that I worked with at Dover, and I had wives come up there and just hug me, you know. Remembering the letter I had written to them and in a couple of cases a couple of the next of kin who I've talked to from Dover. I never expected anything like that, you know. I didn't know what to expect that night, because I didn't know what state of grief, you know, this is still January. It's only four months later, and had no idea you know, how any of these people felt. But it's those kinds of things you know, and they'll write me a note and they'll thank me for this and that, and I say, "just the privilege of having spent a couple hours with you and your spirit and you know, that makes it all worthwhile." So that's what makes it all worthwhile.

Q. (01:01:12) How many other people in the office by the way. I meant to ask this much earlier, in the Office of Family Policy?

A. Well, in the Office of Family Policy, Meg's the Director. We have Ann, Chaz, Mark, Renee, Air Force intern and Jean Marie. So it's five perm – Meg plus five permanent. There's an Air Force, there's usually an Air Force intern and I'm a freebie for the time being. So that's it.

Q. (01:01:37) OK.

A. And they're the ones that manned, they became the Family Assistance center plus many, many others, but they're the ones, the backbones of it, I guess I should say, back then. And Renee is the one that is working the after-action report. Mark works all Mortuary Casualty Affairs for the Department of Defense.

Q. (01:02:05) And you report to Meg?

A. Yes.

Q. (01:02:06) Who else do you have to report to?

A. That's it. You know, you know I worked you know, I guess I should have, you know, added another normal route. I worked with all the Casualty Offices. The Army, the Navy constantly, *constantly*, DIA and the FBI, and I hold a monthly, what we call a Family Assistance Coordination Group meeting, where I bring all of these, all the casualty offices, anybody who's – Operation Solace, anybody that touches on the family, we bring them together. We discuss all the current events, activities, issues, concerns out there. So that we're all on an even keel on all the things that are available or the upcoming events and so forth.

Q. (01:02:48) Would this include on-going military operations like Enduring Freedom?

A. Nope.

Q. OK, that stays –

A. Strictly we're working with the 184 and the 120, the 9/11. Anybody who's died in Afghanistan, that is all separate with the Casualty Offices.

Q. (01:03:06) Has there been any spill over from, in the tempo or the types of work that you've been dealing with as a result of the timing. Have you noticed coincidences in timing between Enduring Freedom, and what's happening in Afghanistan? Has that had an impact on the Pentagon?

A. There's no question that certain key events, not so much what's going on in Afghanistan, but let's take for instance all of the media the last month about what the FBI knew, or didn't know.

Q. (01:03:31) Yes.

A. Big, Big effect on the families. Huge. You could have a family who was really healing well and now the wounds have just, just huge openings there. Lots of concerns, and you know, rightfully so.

Q. Sure, and that was the big accelerator that you've seen in the five months almost since you've done this.

A. No, no. Well, that's one significant accelerator. I would say every, the 11<sup>th</sup> of every month is a big event. OK? March 11<sup>th</sup> was a bigger event, Memorial Days a *big* event. Independence Days going to be a *big* event. Any of these things where there's a national following, an emphasis on remembering 9/11, The War on Terrorism, or whatever.

I'll see a wife you know, and the first thing out of her mouth will be, "It's our anniversary today." Whew, you know. You don't know what to say. You just you know, try to console, or hug, or whatever, but you know. You don't know what to say.

Q. (01:04:59) So who's giving you support for that sort of emotional impact that your getting?  
(everyone chuckles)

A. Hello? You know, I you know, we've got a good group and yes, sometimes Meg's there with me you know and we're all crying together or whatever, but there are a lot of you know there are, you know, you bring up what you call accelerators. You don't know what they are, you know, there's just so many things that bring back the memories for them. But we're you know, we're just told by the mental health professional that this kind of cyclic things are just going to continue and continue and they're not going to be healed on September 11, 2002, or next Christmas, you know. Who knows when?

I tell you my biggest, biggest concern is the children. You know, a lot of people say, Hey, you know, teenagers are one thing, you know, but the children hey they're going to, they'll get past this and I probably would have thought that, but if you don't, America's Heroes Memorial, interior memorial here, and just go back a week or so ago when the children of, who lost their father came in and wrote in the guest book. (Interviewee is getting emotional)

Q. (01:06:37) Father's Day.

A. Yeah, you know, "Daddy, why'd you have to die?" Things like that, children not healed. They are hurting big time. (He's choked up). Those were five and seven year olds. Teenagers probably very same effect.

Q. (01:07:08) Do you find, that one of the things Julie just asked you I think is an important one.

Do you find that the importance of your work sort of keeps you going?

A. Oh absolutely, there's no question that, I could have gone. I could have demobilized, had done a good job, demobilized, come back to work, where work was hoping I'd come back to work back in you know, the end of January, and that's where I came right now, and everybody would have supported that. But something was telling me that there were things out there these people needed, and it would have been dumped on this group of people in here who had all sorts of other things to do. I'm a freebie, so I'm, I just felt that there was that need. The fact that I'm, I've talked to Meg about this, you know, it's a financial burden for me to be on active duty. I earn more in the civilian work place. I wonder, I've never been on active duty this long before and I wonder when I get back to work what the general attitudes going to be. You know, "Gee you've been gone for a year." What positions are going to be offered to me and so forth, and you know I kind of worry a little bit about that. It's going to be an adjustment when I go back, but the earlier you do that the better off you are.

There's all sorts of you know, you might think well gee I'm on active duty all my family now has medical and dental protection. Well, my wife's not just going to give up her doctor that she's been with for ten years, because now medical's being provided by the military, but she can't go to that same doctor. So no, I'm still paying for all my, you know. –

Q. (01:08:57) Health Insurance.

A. Health insurance and all else, so there's just a lot of things you don't, the average person doesn't think of you know, but all, while you're making a decision of whether to go back to the



civilian life or stay on active duty, all these things have to be considered in the grand scheme of things, but the overarching point was that you know I had learned something being out at the mortuary and even though I didn't know these families, I knew you know, that the day was going to come, and oh, you talk about an accelerator, I didn't bring this up. The autopsy reports have been available the last month. OK?

Q. (01:09:44) To the families only?

A. Yes, and many of them have requested them, have received them and have opened them. Many of them requested them, received them, but haven't opened them. Don't know when they'll be able to open them. Very graphic and I use myself as the classic ignorant person you know, I would never, ever, ever had expected that type of carnage and conditions and I just had one of the, and I was very surprised because this is one of the ladies who, who just knows everything that's going on. She's been very involved and so forth. She lost her husband. I brought her into the impact site last Friday, last Friday, the Friday before. She can't understand, she was telling me, she says, "I just don't understand why I got my husband's Naval Academy class ring back, but I didn't get his wedding ring. The class ring was here and the wedding ring was right there."

She doesn't understand it, and I do. And I do, but I don't know what she's prepare to hear you know, and so and I offer her that I can explain some more things and she said, she says, "I think I probably understand but I just -, " you know. She came out and she doesn't understand that. She doesn't understand why she got one shoe back and not the other, and I would not have expected that after all, but I have been privy to a lot of things that they haven't and I told her I said, I said, "Have you requested the autopsy report?"

She says, “No.”

Well she later that next week sent me an email asking me how to take care of, Admiral got it to her. I said “Whatever you do, don’t be alone.” I said, “Have a medical professional, your minister, a closest sister, a relative or somebody there with you when you open it up,” because that’s when she’ll understand what was left of her husband and why she got what she did.

How we got on that tangent there, but –

Q. (01:12:12) The (in audible) of your work.

A. I just learned a lot and just knew that there was more work left to be done. I had no idea, you know, I look at it equivalently. Similarly to how I had no expectation or no understanding of what to expect out at the mortuary, I really didn’t know what to expect, you know, taking on the, being the contact point for the families. Every phone call is almost a new experience.

I come out of this meeting, it will probably be about 12. I get twenty to thirty phone calls a day and you know, I have probably about 12, twelve message there and this is my third book here, and it’s all my messages and everything, and then I’ll just start writing down and I start returning phone calls and everyone is going to be a little bit different.

Q. (01:13:04) (To the other Julie) You were about to ask?

Q. (Julie) Well, I was about to comment, it’s kind of a natural progression for you from what you did previously to come here and to move through these issues?

A. It wasn’t, I felt there was, yes, there was probably a connection there. Natural I don’t know, you know, it’s, you know I guess like I kind of put this in terms of a little bit like a social worker, like a care giver, but I’m not a professional in any of those categories, but then on the other side

of the coin, it's been interesting working with all these different levels of society out there, and you know I've been told time and time again it would probably settle down, but it doesn't. I still get as many phone calls as I used to. And as we get closer to September 11<sup>th</sup> there's going to be even more, so the people, the people have not forgotten. They haven't. They really haven't.

Q. (01:14:05) How are you going to be able to finish your job at the end of your mobilization?

A. I don't know. It's going to be interesting. You know, I've established relationships.

Q. (01:14:15) Of course.

A. You know, so it's just not going to stop there, but you know, I don't know. You know, I think, you know, for some of the families, things will be fairly hard for them by September 11<sup>th</sup> and we already have a couple of families that are "Do not contact." Yes, absolutely don't want to hear a thing, or you know, I will still mail things to them because I feel I'm, obligated to, because I just, I don't want them to ever not be contact about something that they regret not having been contacted about. So, but you know, they just they want to put everything behind them.

Q. (01:14:50) Do they get the compensation that comes from the donations.

A. Yes, I send them the checks.

Q. You send them the checks, OK.

A. Yes, I do, and I assume they open them up and cash them. I don't know. But whether or not they're, there's a couple I'm thinking of, don't live in the area. Live elsewhere in the, around the

country and so I don't know if they're availing themselves of the victim's Compensation Fund or mental health or anything else. I have no idea. We just don't know too much about them. So, hopefully they're doing well.

Q. (01:15:26) Another thing I want you to tell us if you liaisoning with your similar person within the Army community?

A. I am a Department of defense person. I'm not Navy.

Q. (01:15:36) Oh, right, sorry, that's my –

A. So I deal directly, equally with an Army rep, a Navy rep, Defense Intelligence Agency and FBI, because it was the four groups of decedent victims we have. The wounded are a whole new, a whole different group, because casualty is death, OK, it's not disability, which is disabled and wounded. So the wounded is, I don't work through the services with the wounded, I work directly with them, so it's kind of an interesting kind of mix, and they include firefighters, that don't even fit. They're in Arlington County, so.

Q. (01:16:22) I noticed that you include, when you talk about the four groups that you just mentioned, you mention FBI. Now FBI didn't lose anybody. I presume that means the people on the plane.

A. Right, the FBI is the Casualty Assistance point of contact for the passengers on the airplane that were not claimed by the Navy. There were twelve of them were claimed by the Navy.

Q. (01:16:40) Right, right, OK.

A. Forty-seven passengers.

Q. Right.

A. They're the conduit to American Airlines. I don't directly work with anybody on American Airlines.

Q. (01:16:55) I see.

A. I work with the FBI who when necessary contacts American Airlines. I shouldn't say that because I'm now working with American Airlines in conjunction with the September 11<sup>th</sup> event coming up.

Q. (01:17:11) I have no more questions. Do you have anything else you want to? Thank you very much for your time. Certainly appreciated it, and I have a deep appreciation for the work you're doing so thank you very much for your time.

A. I'm benefiting from them. Thanks.

Transcribed by:  
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