

Tuesday, September 11, 2001

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On Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup>, I started the day like any other day. I arrived at my office about 0830 and did turn over with my immediate supervisor, Georgia Osterman. Shortly after arriving, Georgia left to deliver documents to one of our supported offices, OPNAV N89 in 5E437. I then received a phone call from a friend who told me I needed to be downstairs watching CNN. I went down to 4E730 (The Under Sec's outer office). There was Col Ferguson, Ms. Totman, and YNC Davis watching the CNN broadcast of the first plane hitting the tower. All of us stood there watching as the second plane hit and then the President's opening comments from the school in Florida. About that time the phone rang and the Col answered it. He really didn't say much, hung up the phone and turned toward all of us. He said, "That was the command center and they are reporting an unconfirmed aircraft headed this direction." It couldn't have been thirty seconds after he said this that the entire building felt like it was lifted up and set back down. Chief Davis and myself were standing next to the windows overlooking the Mall Parking Area, we both looked out and down and saw a man standing next to his car looking off to our left (toward the corner by the helicopter pad).

We just knew what had happened. All of us ran out of the office and into the "E" ring, going into offices and telling people they needed to get out, and get out immediately. I headed for the Sixth Corridor from the Seventh Corridor. All I could think about was that Georgia had headed that direction and was she still there or somewhere in between. When I reached the Sixth Corridor, Defense Protective Service (DPS) was directing everyone down the corridor to the "A" ring and Courtyard. Smoke was already starting to fill the corridor and people were making their way out. Once I made it out into the Courtyard, I started heading toward the "A" ring entrance of the 3-4 Corridors. I could see smoke billowing up over the building and drifting into the Courtyard, people were streaming out of every doorway. Most were coming out and gazing about looking to see what happened. I noticed a few folks sitting on the benches right across from the 5-6 Corridor entrance. Some of the people there were covered in dust and debris. One lady was holding her head and just rocking back and forth. There were other people around her, but they were all looking up and around at everyone else. I went over and was talking to her, checking out the top of her head, where she said she'd been hit but something falling from the ceiling. She wasn't bleeding, she just kept saying her head hurt. I talked with her for a few more seconds, when someone came out on the second deck landing yelling for someone to call 911 or get some medical help in there, there were people who needed help. I looked up at the guy who was standing by me and asked him to take the lady out towards north parking where they should be setting up triage area, then ran up the steps and back into the "A" ring.

When I got inside, there was an Army Maj/LtCol (couldn't distinguish his shoulder boards), laying on the floor right at the bottom of the stairs. His arms were burned from his shirt sleeves down, looked like his shirt was melted to him, face was ashen, but I

couldn't tell if it was ash, ceiling dust or what. I knelt down and started talking to him, another guy was standing there saying we needed to get help, there were more people in the hall that couldn't find their way out. I stayed with the obvious victim, started doing the initial assessment, asking if he hurt anywhere else. About this time a group of Air Force people showed up (from Flight Medicine Clinic) and started opening aid packs. There was also a civilian lady who stayed up near his head and started reciting the Lord's prayer with him. As a couple of AF Colonels started working on him, I told them I was a first responder and to tell me what they needed. They told me to find the IV pack and prep him. I couldn't IV him through the arms so we started cutting away his trousers legs looking for a good vein and any wounds on his legs. I used one of his socks as a tourniquet to do a pedial IV. The med kit didn't have much in it, but we used what we had. About this time one of the hospital carts showed up, we IV'd him, back boarded him and loaded him up to be taken out. As the cart rushed off, we picked up what was left of the kits, and one of the Colonels said we should check the rest of the area for more people that might need help. The entire area was filling with smoke; I couldn't see the snack bar which was about 25 feet away. The Colonel, an Airman, myself and one other gentleman went up the stairs to the fifth floor and started into the 5 & 6 Corridors yelling to see if anyone answered. We waited a few seconds to see if we could hear anybody and then headed down to the next floor to do the same thing. The smoke was thick and everything was dark. No lights were showing anywhere, no sounds at all. We did this on all five floors, finally hearing some folks answering up on the first floor and coming towards us and the "A" ring area. Three people were coming out, which we took into the courtyard. One lady looked to have burns on her hand and arms, one guy laid down by the planters, he was having a hard time breathing, his nose, mouth and teeth were covered in black. Another lady came out and sat down behind us, an obvious head injury. We split up to take care of them best we could until more help got there. Folks were coming by asking what we needed, mostly it was O2 and water. They'd run off to try and find some close by. Hospital carts were flying back and forth trying to load up folks as quick as possible and return with needed supplies. The folks we were working on kept talking about people still in their office area. One of the Colonels had a hand radio and was passing information on to someone as fast as we could get it. Information like location of their office, number of people, condition of spaces, anything we could get to help get rescuers in there.

Right about this time, one of the carts came flying around saying there was another report of an incoming plane and we had to evacuate the courtyard. People were scrambling from all over the courtyard. We loaded up one of the carts and started out towards the 8<sup>th</sup> corridor and North parking exit. I jumped on one of the carts, holding the IV bag up to keep the flow going since we didn't have anything to hook it to. We went racing down the corridor and towards the exit. Near the exit doors was a bottle neck of people trying to get out. One of the other people on the cart relieved me of the IV bag, and I saw some other people carrying a lady out on a sheet of ripped plywood. I jumped off the cart and ran over to help them as they were trying to get a better grip on the board to make it out the doors. She was pretty lucid and just kept saying that she just wanted to get out of the building. Four or five other people jumped in to help relieve those that were carrying her and getting tired. I started talking to her just to keep her calm by asking her name and

where she worked, things like that. We finally got her out of the building and found an empty cart sitting inside of the pillions waiting to go through. We loaded her on the cart, but with the board it was too wide. All of a sudden 5 or 6 guys, Army, Marines, Navy and a couple of civilians grabbed one of the pillions around the base and up and started pulling it up out of the ground. It seemed like those things were in there probably a good three feet and made of solid concrete, but they finally got it up and out, and we moved the cart on out into the grass area next to the water. Somebody brought over a litter and we had to roll this lady onto it, off of the board she was on to make moving her easier. She appeared to have a possible broken leg but no other obvious injuries. When we got her off the cart and into the grass area, we assumed a more typical triage state. We obtained her info and passed it to someone who was walking around writing down victims' names and other pertinent information. Somebody came by and handed us gloves. A Pharmacist came by and handed me a Demerol Field Injector to give her. I started asking for a doc since I am not qualified to give injections. We got her stabilized and lined up for evacuation out of the area.

After that it is a blur of people who needed help and assistance being loaded into POVs to be taken out to hospitals. Some were minor injuries, some weren't. We just tried to do what we could for everyone. I saw a couple of other people I knew working out there and we tended to try and stick together with folks we recognized or knew. Everyone was asking about people that were known to each other, people from other offices, people we knew who had moved to the new wedge. Once most of the victims were evacuated out, somebody started forming up teams to go back in. Teams were a mixture of military, civilian, medical, and anybody that could go. We gathered up triage equipment, O2 tanks, gloves, anything we could lay our hands on and went back through the North Parking Entrance back into the Courtyard and the 3, 4, 5 & 6 Corridor areas. As the teams would get to the Courtyard, Fire Department personnel were directing them into areas to be searched for victims. Corridors 4 & 5 were thick with smoke. It made your eyes water and your nose and throat burn. The smoke was heavy with the odor of jet fuel, burnt carpet, and burnt paper. In some of the areas the ceiling tiles were down, light fixture hung from the ceilings, debris filled the hallways, and water from the fire fighters flooded the floors. The teams would go into the building, wearing T-shirts tied around our noses and mouths to cut the smoke. There were not enough re-breathers to go around. Most of the teams didn't stay in more than maybe 10-15 minutes at best. You just couldn't see anything when you did get in and breathing was getting harder.

In the courtyard, triage areas were being set up in teams to treat a vast array of casualties. There were crash carts loaded with equipment, stretchers, litters, O2 bottles. Several of us were running from the courtyard back out to North Parking ferrying additional equipment as it arrived. By this time though, it was pretty obvious we wouldn't be seeing many more walking victims. Those of us in the Courtyard were evacuated out several times, when word filtered in that another plan was inbound.

Also by this time the FBI and Federal Marshals had arrived. They essentially sealed off the building, nobody in or out. The teams were told to stand down and wait. We were also told it would be another three to four hours before we would be allowed back into

the building for any recovery attempts. There was a Alarm Panel room opened off the 5-6 Corridor Entrance that had a phone and we were told that anyone who had not been in contact with family members should take this time to do so. We were also told to get something to eat and drink or try and rest if we could. There was nothing more we could do at the time. During this whole time, ever chance I had that I wasn't actively working on a victim I'd try to call out on someone's cell phone. Everyone was trying the same thing and it was impossible to get through. The Marshals' Service escorted half the personnel from the Courtyard out to South Parking where a large triage area had been set up.

During this reprieve of activity, the decision was made to make ready for recovering remains. CDR Way went into the building and recovered any sheets and blankets he could find so we could cover the remains. There were not any body bags available yet. Discussions about where to set up the morgue were radioed between South Parking and the Courtyard. The morgue was initially set up in South Parking and then moved into the Courtyard. Those of us still in the courtyard started laying out the plan for setting up the morgue and how best to handle the remains and identification if possible.

Shortly after the morgue area was established and everyone was briefed on their role when recovery efforts started again, Individuals in Camouflage uniforms arrived and took over the operations in the Courtyard. Everyone was interviewed (so to speak) as to his or her qualifications and training. Shortly after that, most of us, who had initially remained after the attack, were told to leave. I had tried explaining to several individuals who seemed to have taken control of the Courtyard, that I was qualified as a First Responder, but had also been a member of Escambia Search and Rescue, in Florida for three years, prior to coming here. I was basically ignored and told to go home. So I headed home to Springfield and my children.