

September 11, 2001 Events that occurred during the terrorist attack, Room 5E476A,
The Pentagon.

Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Financial Management & Comptroller)
Administrative/Fiscal Division (Code FMA)

Prepared by Stafford C. Lang

0915 – 0920 Practically everyone in the office was looking at a small television to see the attack at the twin towers in New York. We saw the one twin tower on fire and then we saw another plane approach the other tower. At first it looked like a plane passing the tower until it flew right into the tower. After watching the TV for a while wondering what had happened, I went back to my desk. Before reaching my desk I looked at the clock, it was about 9:25. I thought to myself, I hope they don't hit the Pentagon. All of a sudden we heard a tremendous explosion and the whole building shook. My first reaction was to pull my head straight down and inward as though I was ducking. Then Ward McCormick yelled out, "Everybody get out!" The entire office walked real fast to the exit door and we proceeded to the left toward the Fourth Corridor. I was in front of everyone, and after walking about 20 feet, I stepped forward and the floor was not there, the floor had dropped about two feet. This surprised me and I fell forward wrenching my back and neck. I lost my balance but did not fall down. Then about 3 people came toward us and told us we could not go toward the fourth corridor. By this time smoke was coming above us on the ceiling. So we all turned around and headed back to the office down the hallway toward the fifth corridor. The hallway is only wide enough for two people walking side by side. When we got to the door leading into the hallway, which would have taken us to the fifth corridor, I think Lori Burroughs opened it and a lot of smoke and flames came through the door. The door was closed and we were told that we couldn't go that way. This hallway only has two ways to exit, the doorway with the fire and smoke and the way some people told us we couldn't go. My stress level had just gone off the chart. I felt trapped and claustrophobic, not sure if we were going to make it out. We headed back toward the Fourth corridor because we had no other choice. As we approached the drop in the floor Willie Schlegel and I both yelled out to the people behind us that the floor had dropped and watch out. We walked past the stairwell exit that would have taken us to an area right on top of the airplane and flames. The exit sign was not on and the fire alarm was not working. We walked through an area that was cluttered with ceiling tiles, hanging wires, and other things that had fallen to the floor. The smoke was getting thicker and visibility became very poor. After walking over and around the junk on the floor, we were just about at the entrance to the fourth corridor but we could not see a thing. The smoke was black and thick and the whole corridor was filled from the ceiling to the floor. We couldn't see our hand in front of our face. We were at the E-ring, fourth corridor, and fifth floor. We then heard a voice, a very clear voice, asking if there was anyone left. Only two offices were occupied on the fifth floor, fourth corridor. We yelled back yes, we are here. The voice said it was all clear but keep our heads down. We automatically held each other's hand and made a chain of people. Sheila White was in front of me and at the head of the chain. She was very scared as we all were. So I coached her by telling her that she was the leader and she was going to

lead us out of this. She put her head down and followed the voice. Clara Jefferson was behind me and she held onto the belt of my pants pulling all the way. As we went into the smoke filled corridor, we began coughing from breathing in the thick black smoke. The voice helped us because we didn't know what was in front of us; fire, a big hole or electric wires. We could have got lost in the smoke if it weren't for the voice constantly guiding us through the corridor. After walking the entire width of the Pentagon, we saw light at the A-ring. I looked around for the person who guided us but could not see anyone around. I wanted to thank him for saving us. Someone asked me were is the person who guided us through the smoke? I said he must have left. There was a chain type fence/divider that almost closed which would have trapped us. Ward held it open and we all made sure everybody got out. At this point, all I wanted to do was get out of the building. I headed down the steps toward the center court. We were not allowed to exit here, so we went toward the new exit at corridor 2. Again we were not allowed to go down corridor 2, so we went toward the concourse. The hallways were packed with people trying to get out. We got to the Metro exit but again were not allowed to exit. Next we headed to the outside stairs next to the bus terminal. This area was packed with people. We followed people past the Post Office to a stairwell that lead to the first floor then outside to South parking. As soon as we exited the building I heard a loud explosion, it sounded like it came from within the building. I walked across the parking lot that was filled with people and cars. I got to the area next to 395 and found my supervisor, Gail Wirick. She grabbed hold of me and hugged me real tight. She broke down and cried out of control. I complained to her and other co-workers that my neck and back were in extreme pain. I was told I better get some medical attention. I was wondering in the parking lot until I saw an ambulance. I sat down on the rear bumper and waited for someone to help me. I sat next to someone who had tubes in his nose and a doctor looked at me and asked if I was OK. I said no I hurt my neck and back. The doctor and helpers took me to a board and strapped to the board. I felt entirely helpless and out of control. I kept thinking about the other plane and became paranoid and started screaming "Get me off this board. I can't stand this."

Here I was strapped to a wooden board and not able to move or get free if I had to. I went into a panic. After being trapped in the hallway outside my office, I again felt trapped on this board. They did untie me and let me get free. I walked toward 395 and with the help of a golf-kart I went to the other side of 395 to another ambulance. I agreed to go into the ambulance only if I could sit on the bench. Next to me was the man with the tubes I had met earlier. In front of me was a large man that was lying on a stretcher. He was burnt from head to foot. His legs and arms were wrapped with gauze and his whole body was shaking. I could see the skin peeling off his shoulder and his clothes were burnt and lying in the corner of the ambulance. On the way to Fort Myers, I looked out the window of the ambulance and I could see the side of the Pentagon where the plane hit. There was a large hole, the walls were black, there was a lot of smoke rising above the roof and coming out the windows, the floors had not collapsed. The ambulance took us to a TRIAGE at the Ft Myer Gym. I stayed there about two hours and was visited by Chaplains, doctors and nurses. Then I was moved to the Ft Myers Clinic. They put me on a board, tied me down with plastic bags (thank goodness they couldn't find the straps), and six strong marines carried me to the Radar clinic about three blocks from the Gym. They took x-rays and the doctor examined me. They give me one pill for

my pain. The doctor requested more pain pills for me but the nurse insisted she was only authorized to give me one pill. I spent the rest of the day laying in bed and looking at the TV in the visitor's room. An Army major offered to give me a ride home because no one was allowed to pick me up and I had no way to get home. Finally at 1930 I arrived at my home.