

Interview with Steve Godfrey
November 7, 2001

Hunt: This interview was recorded on November 7 at the Navy Annex. The interviewer is Richard Hunt from the OSD Historical Office.

Would you please state your name and position for the record?

Godfrey: My name is Steven L. Godfrey, and I am assigned as an estimator at the Naval Annex Building.

Hunt: What were you doing just before the plane crashed into the Pentagon?

Godfrey: Just before that one of my co-workers, Mike Radford, came to my desk and said that a plane had just flown into the Trade Center. I didn't believe it. We went up front to the manager's office and turned on the TV. As we were watching, I heard a plane and thought it was very close. It got louder and louder, the building started to shake, and I said to Mike, "That's too close," and about that time it hit the Pentagon.

Hunt: So there was actually vibration in this building?

Godfrey: He was only about ten feet over this building. He goosed it just as he got right around the fifth wing. It made a shudder. From there, one of the private Security contractors came into the building manager's office and said that the plane had hit the Pentagon. One of our people pulled the fire alarm and I guess it was my service training but I just kind of took over. We have two-way radios that we carry and I had three or four guys from the office go to different spots on the compound. One of them was monitoring the building and we got the building cleared out in about seven minutes.

Hunt: Was that an orderly dispersal?

Godfrey: Yes, it turned out well. Major Revus and I were working the center at the front, and that's where we have our little command post. We were there, and everybody got out and the guys working outside from this office got everyone disbursed across the street and to certain areas. It went smoothly.

Hunt: People were aware that the Pentagon had been attacked?

Godfrey: No.

Hunt: They just knew that you were evacuating the building.

Godfrey: They just knew we were getting out of the building, but we were making it plain that they had to move and get out of the door, that it was no drill but the real thing. Once they got outside they could see what was going on.

Hunt: Did you have any people from your office in the Pentagon when the plane actually hit the building?

Godfrey: Not to my knowledge. I think there might have been one or two that were leaving. I think Craig was en route coming back.

Hunt: He mentioned that the plane was right over his van.

Godfrey: Once we got the building evacuated, I got one of the vans and went down to the bridge here at Route 27, and started working with the captains, majors, and commanders there setting up triage units. People were coming out of the building with clothes smoking, and there was no water down there. I knew that we had water up here, so I got on the radio and told the guys to bring our water down. They started coming down with water in the vans to the different staging areas.

Hunt: You were down by the Pentagon and contacted your people to bring the water down?

Godfrey: Right. When we started running low the guys went to the store and got several truckloads of water and brought it down. Ron Dixon and I were down at the bridge most of the time. We were helping people and materials move along. Then we got word that another plane was coming. I told Ron to stay there and I came back up here and started getting the people further away from the building.

Hunt: Was it hard driving up the hill?

Godfrey: No, not then, it was still wide open. If you put the van on the side of the bridge toward the Pentagon it was starting to get tough, but on the backside of it you could get up and down the hill.

Hunt: There weren't any security people stopping you?

Godfrey: Not within the first hour or so. After that, it got real tight. We helped the people move back further and told everyone to look out because we didn't know where it was coming from. I was with some men I know from DPS, and sometimes they let me know a bit about what's going on. All of DPS was down here, we felt kind of naked at the Annex, which was kind of scary. They told us to look around and if we saw something to holler. I was right in the middle of the FBI and DPS, and they said to look for anything weird. We helped out until late in the evening and came back the next day and helped some more. I pulled three days of roof security and we were working on the roof at the Pentagon.

Hunt: Was that simply being up on the roof?

Godfrey: Yes, where they were tearing out the burnt sections of the roof.

Hunt: Were the fires put out by this point?

Godfrey: Yes.

Hunt: When was the decision made to let people go home?

Godfrey: That was later in the afternoon, about 3:00.

Hunt: So the people were outside for a couple of hours.

Godfrey: They were outside for a long time. I took some water down there and we staged it all around the area, with cups and everything. It was warm that day.

Hunt: How did you pay for the water?

Godfrey: We used a government credit card.

Hunt: I was wondering about that, obviously you don't have time to do all the formalities in this type of situation.

Godfrey: All card transactions were handled with in Govt. regulations.

Godfrey: We look scattered, but everybody in here rocked and rolled that day. We were moving fast; and it was orderly, everyone did a great job.

Hunt: So it was a logical division of labor, people had assigned things to do?

Godfrey: No. It's a wonder I didn't get beat on. The bosses let me run with what was going on and what I was doing. I guess it came from my military training. I just took over and they let me loose.

Hunt: Were you wearing any distinctive clothing or ID?

Godfrey: Not a thing, the only things we had were the radios, Motorola two-ways.

Hunt: So those weren't affected by the cell phone jams?

Godfrey: No, but the range is not very good, so we had some problems hearing from up here to down there. But they worked. Now we are getting Nextel phones, in case something like this happens again, because then even if you lose the cell you still have the two-way.

Hunt: And it has a greater range?

Godfrey: Those have a lot of range, I think state to state. A friend of mine has a Nextel, and gets people in Virginia, though his base is in Maryland. I'm pretty sure we are getting new ones. In case something like this happens again, everyone will be right there on the horn.

Hunt: Were you involved with getting people to the helicopters?

Godfrey: Ron was helping the guys on the helos, taking patients out there. I helped some patients come from the Pentagon to the helos, but actually the Army or Marines were setting them down. It was a bad scene.

Hunt: What kind of lessons do you think your office has gotten from this? You mentioned better radios.

Godfrey: Two way radios. We haven't had meetings or anything on evacs, and I guarantee we had the smoothest evac up here going, and plus we had the chase man going through the building.

Hunt: What is the chase man?

Godfrey: Someone starts from the top floor and just runs and looks and yells, and he went through this building in a heartbeat.

Hunt: It's a pretty big building.

Godfrey: My boy Clay Whidden is pretty quick on his feet. He called me back when he reached the first floor and said he didn't see a thing and it looked clean. The Marine command center was still here. They didn't leave.

Hunt: When everyone had left, did you lock all the doors?

Godfrey: No, we didn't lock down because we didn't know who had come back in. The guys from this office were staged at all the entrances, looking for people coming back in. If anyone came in we sent them out, but we don't know if someone came in or out when the evacuation was going on.

Hunt: Were you able to get everyone outside the fence?

Godfrey: Everyone was outside the fence across the street.

Hunt: So there were only two places to come in?

Godfrey: There were four that day. Two were through the guard shacks, one was up the front steps and one was the vehicle entrance in the back. That entrance got blocked off and one of the guards stayed there. A truck pulled into one because we had a problem with one of the doors that wouldn't shut. I got someone to bring the truck up and he stayed there to watch the others, and the DPS and FBI started coming up. The guys from the office were at each post and one was at the stairs.

Hunt: Were any people relocated here when the offices were damaged or destroyed in the Pentagon?

Godfrey: Yes.

Hunt: Was your office involved with that relocation?

Godfrey: We rehabbed some rooms that were in need of up-dating. We put in new carpets and ceilings, lights, and electric power. At the command center we hung monitors, put in new systems furniture, brand new pads for additional computers. I ran that job, getting the command center all set up. I spent a lot of hours here.

Hunt: Has your schedule gotten back to normal yet?

Godfrey: Yes, we are back to basic normal, but little things crop up. We just did a room here for BMDO. They were supposed to move in. We are just about finished with it. They just lost it this morning; it is going to an NBC group. I think they are Army. I think they are moving the whole biochem section across the hall. BMDO just lost the space this morning, and we just got done rehabbing it.

Hunt: Do you have to redo it, or will it be suitable them?

Godfrey: They are going to take it the way it is, but it is all brand new. We had to set up spaces for stress relief. We had two or three of those here.

Hunt: In this building?

Godfrey: Is it also for people in the Pentagon?

Godfrey: I don't know what they have down there, but I know some came up here. After the attack I pulled roof security, and that was about it. Then things started to ease up and all the contractors got badges so they didn't need the roof security any more.

Hunt: What time did you actually leave on the 11th to go home?

Godfrey: I don't remember. I put in 80 hours, about 60 hours earlier that week, in four days. I really can't remember.

Hunt: What did you do about food? Was there a cafeteria?

Godfrey: If I'm not mistaken, I think the bosses here took us to lunch. I can't remember; we rocked and rolled so quick that night I wasn't even worried about it. There was so much going on. I just wanted to help.

Hunt: That seemed to be true of just about everybody. They wanted to help.

Godfrey: We did what we could up there and when things settled down a bit we started leaving one at a time. We had lost chilled water in this building, too, we didn't have any

air conditioning. We had to work with the contractors to try and get the air conditioning back up. We didn't know if we could be open the next day. At four or five o'clock in the morning we were all back in here.

Hunt: Did the command centers in the building ever lose their chilled water?

Godfrey: Yes. They are all tied into the central chilled water plant. They lost it but didn't complain. We got back up by about 4:00 that afternoon. Something happened down at the Pentagon, because where the plane went in was where our lines were. Exactly what happened down there we don't know, because we certainly couldn't get close to that spot. I'm not sure what the outcome was. I don't know whether the tunnel flooded, or just what happened. Doc Alexander might know.

Hunt: I talked with him a few days ago. Is there anything else you want to add?

Godfrey: I just want to thank the bosses here for letting me go on a lead and thank the guys. They didn't balk at a thing I said. We just went, and they did a real good job. I was impressed.

Hunt: Thank you very much.