

Interview with Timothy Breeden
December 5, 2001

Hunt: This interview is taking place on December 5, 2001 in the Pentagon's Remote Delivery Facility (RDF). The interviewer is Richard Hunt of the OSD Historical Office. Would you please state your name and your position for the tape?

Breeden: Timothy M. Breeden, maintenance mechanic supervisor for PSSP, part of the building manager's office.

Hunt: Where were you when the plane hit the Pentagon?

Breeden: I was home asleep. I received a call from my mother and she was glad I was home. She told me about the World Trade Center. I was shocked. She also told me about the Pentagon. I immediately got up and came in.

Hunt: Did you report to someone?

Breeden: I live in Fredericksburg, between Culpepper and Fredericksburg, about 18 miles up Route 3. I am part of the P-team, the Pentagon emergency action team. My instinct was to come in, that I would be needed to help out. I came down Interstate 95, high tailing it down the road. I got pulled over by a state trooper. He asked why I was in such a hurry, and I explained that I was part of the emergency team at the Pentagon and I needed to get there. So he escorted me all the way. I met up with some more troopers, who followed us. Once I got here, we had to wait up at the 395 exit to south parking, which was blocked off. We sat there for a while, and then the trooper escorted us. I met Charlie McCormick and Richard Marcy. They had a command post set up. We then proceeded with assignments.

Hunt: Did you communicate with anyone in the Pentagon by radio or phone on your way up?

Breeden: I had a phone. I made a few calls, and reached Marcy, but it broke up while I was talking to him. Once I got here I was issued a radio, and that's how we made contact.

Hunt: The radio was adequate for what you needed to do?

Breeden: It helped. They are working on another plan now, with Nextel phones, so we would have a better communication line. The old one tended to break up in some areas, especially here in the RDF. There are computers above our heads and a lot of concrete around us. It isolates the signals.

Hunt: About what time did you get here?

Breeden: I was at the south parking area by about 10:35. We were going 80-90 miles an hours in some spots. I would say it was about 11:00 to 11:30 before I could actually assist the building manager.

Hunt: Did they send you up the car pool lanes?

Breeden: No, that was either closed or something. We got to the Springfield area and it was very congested. They were diverting all the 395 traffic down 495.

Hunt: Toward the Wilson Bridge?

Breeden: Yes, going both directions. They didn't want any more traffic going through there. They had it blocked off by troopers, Fairfax County and Alexandria police, all of them. At that point, there was a straight line all the way down to the Pentagon, with no traffic at all.

Hunt: What did you see when you got here?

Breeden: When I first arrived, I saw the fire, smoke. The side of the building had collapsed. A lot of personnel were going in different directions, trying to get to the site, a lot of helicopters, cameramen, news people. Once I got down to south parking, on the bridge there, I got in touch with Charlie McCormick and Richard Marcy and we set up the phone communication line. We put trays out so the line would be protected, and caution barrels and anything else that was needed.

Hunt: Were these for phone lines within the building?

Breeden: The incident command post was in the south parking lot area. They had to run communications out there to them. So Verizon and some other people were working on getting the communications over there, and we were putting the trays that you can drive over to protect the lines. We put signs up to divert traffic, put up Jersey barriers. I also got a front-end loader and helped pull out a rig that got stuck over there.

Hunt: Where did it get stuck?

Breeden: It's one of the vehicles that comes through to refuel the equipment. There was so much water from the fire engines that he just sank into one area and we had to pull him out. I had my fire gear. Charlie McCormick and Dennis Smith had theirs. Dennis is an inspector, and part of the P-team as well.

Hunt: Did your duties take you into the building at any time on the 11th?

Breeden: We assisted where we could. We helped the Salvation Army get set up. We gave the rescue people our motorized carts until they could get some rental carts.

Hunt: You were operating from the Remote Delivery Facility?

Breeden: Pretty much here, yes, to get materials out. We supplied respirators, suits, booties, rags, all kinds of stuff. We put the Jersey barriers up to help divert traffic so people couldn't run up just to see what was going on.

Hunt: Did this part of the building lose power after the plane crash?

Breeden: No, I can't recall losing any power. This part of the building seemed not to be affected at all, except for the movement of people and trying to get things secure.

Hunt: Was there an order given to evacuate this facility?

Breeden: Initially, yes. I wasn't here then. When I arrived, my day crew was on site and being instructed to attend to different problems. I believe it was evacuated in the beginning.

Hunt: There were reports that another plane was supposedly heading toward the Pentagon and they told people outside to move farther back.

Breeden: A couple of times they were alerted and sent the people back out, but mainly on that end. I only remember one time on this end. After that, we just set up things. That day we were running around helping with backup generators, knocking holes in the walls to get temporary power to the NMCC area. We did a lot of escorting, to get people where they needed to go. That's basically what we were set up to do anyway.

Hunt: These were people who came in from the outside, Verizon people, and that sort of thing?

Breeden: Right. When they set up the temporary generators and took them where they were needed, we gave them directions to get in.

Hunt: Were you involved at all in getting injured people out of the area?

Breeden: Not personally. I saw things that had happened. We were diverting water, pumping it from one spot to another. A lot of water was running into the areas near the generators. We put dikes up within the building.

Hunt: This water was from the fire engines?

Breeden: Yes. During that time a couple of us saw remains, and it bothered some more than others. I've seen that before, I used to work at a hospital. It's a shame that it happened, but you just have to focus and get the job done.

Hunt: How long did you stay here on the 11th?

Breeden: My shift is from 1500 to 2330. I came in about 1130, and Dale Alexander, my immediate supervisor, and I were here all night, the next day. We took breaks, but we were here if anyone needed help. I think we worked three days straight. I can't remember exactly.

Hunt: How long did it take for your duties to get back to normal?

Breeden: A good while. We had so many things we had to do during that time. We cleaned all the weather-masters, the heating and air conditioning devices to circulate the air. There's a fan blower, and a coil that gets a lot of dust and dirt and, at that time, soot on it. We cleaned all the return grills. There was a lot of water and we used the super-suckers to get that up. The carpet tiles that were saturated had to come up. Any type of asbestos hazard we would take care of. It took a while to get back on a normal basis. Every time we would start a job something would come up. There would be an emergency, or we were needed for monitoring contractors or inspections. We did the best we could for the people still in the building, to take care of any problems they were having.

Hunt: What lessons were learned by your office during this time that would help if this ever happened again?

Breeden: I'm sure the guys in the building manager's office have thought about that. I think the biggest thing is communications. We did our best as a whole to communicate with one another, but I hope a better system works out, because there were a lot of people important to the function that were hard to reach without a radio. We need changes there.

Hunt: Did any of the radios fail?

Breeden: In certain areas in the building they don't work well, not because of the radio, but the thickness of the walls, the surroundings. There are a lot of scramblers in the building. The radios did fine when we could actually contact one another.

Hunt: Did you tend to operate out of this office after the first day?

Breeden: Yes. We were getting our instructions from PBMO, Richard Marcy, and we were on a 24-7 schedule at that time. We had rotating shifts with someone always here. We did most of our work from here. Our supplies are here, and we would go out and take care of whatever was needed.

Hunt: Is there anything else you want to add?

Breeden: No I don't think so.

Hunt: Was the facility functioning normally right after the attack? Were you getting deliveries in?

Breeden: We assisted in building a temporary morgue. We put up barrier walls. DSSW and Dockmasters and those guys worked as hard as they could. I'm not sure how the deliveries worked. It seemed like it snapped back in with the security in place

to get back to a normal function. A lot of people stayed late and worked hard to get back to that point. Everyone worked as a team. I think that we do that well here. On a normal basis, we do work well together anyway, but especially in an emergency situation.

Hunt: Did a lot of the normal procedures and red tape get tossed out of the way the first couple of days? When someone needed something did you just do it?

Breeden: We kept track of our materials and equipment, it wasn't just giving anything to anyone. Within the agencies we all worked together and cooperated with each other. We all knew one another and trusted one another. As far as security, none of that was weakened.

Hunt: When the Verizon people said they needed to put in lines or something, that was enough authorization to do it?

Breeden: Right. We all had our chain of command, and we checked things out. If it was an unusual request I would go through my chain to make sure it was OK, but it would take minutes instead of days to get an answer. Under normal circumstances, it is not a problem.

Hunt: I know you are busy.

Breeden: Between 3:00 and 5:00 it is busy. Then we settle down a bit. We try to make sure everyone in the building is taken care of. There is always a last minute emergency that we have to take care of.

Hunt: Thank you very much for your time.