

## Pentagon Attack

Interview with Craig Bryan  
November 7, 2001

Hunt: This interview is taking place at the Navy Annex. Dr. Richard Hunt is the interviewer for the OSD History office.

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

Bryan: My name is Craig Bryan. I am one of the Engineering Technicians/Facilities Managers here at Federal Office Building 2, Navy Annex. I work for Doc Alexander, under the Federal Facilities Division, Washington Headquarters Services.

Hunt: Where were you when the airplane crashed into the Pentagon?

Bryan: I was right there at the Pentagon in a government van. I saw the plane come over and impact the building.

Hunt: Would you describe what you saw?

Bryan: My reason for being at the Pentagon was to pick up resource managers for a meeting we were going to have up here at the annex. I left the Navy Annex building just after watching the impact on the World Trade Center and it never crossed my mind that something like that would happen here. I got into a government vehicle and went down to pick up the two individuals who were scheduled to be in the meeting here at FOB-2. As I was coming around the south side of the building, corridor three, I came to the newly built crosswalk. I was getting ready to go back around, and the plane came in right across the Washington Boulevard overpass. It took the street lights out, impacted the building, and exploded. Some of the jet fuel had sprayed on my van.

Hunt: So you were pretty close.

Bryan: I would say the plane crossed the road about 20 yards away from me and hit the building about 50 yards from me. It came in at an angle from the direction of where the Navy Annex sits up on the hill. I saw the mushroom cloud go up and people were falling to the ground everywhere, freaking out and crying. Immediately I returned to the Navy Annex. As soon as I came up to the Navy Annex I saw everyone was evacuating, and directly went into the emergency response mode. We started making sure everyone was leaving the building. We kept hearing that another aircraft was en route and they were rushing everyone off the compound into the Arlington Cemetery area. Steve Godfrey and I got in the van and went down to the site. The emergency personnel were asking for water. They had some people laid out there and they needed water for them. We went back to our building and started shuttling water and personnel back and forth. They needed volunteers.

Hunt: This trip that you made back, was this on your own initiative?

Bryan: Yes. For a short time, five or ten minutes, I was pretty traumatized. At first I thought the plane was making an emergency landing, it didn't cross my mind at that very second that it was a terrorist attack. It is normal for planes to fly over the Pentagon, as it is in the flight pattern of Reagan National Airport. This one just seemed a bit lower than normal. But after a few seconds I realized that people were trapped in there.

Hunt: The plane went in very fast.

Bryan: Yes, I can still hear the jet engine. The throttle was wide open; it was screaming. We spent a good portion of the day here; in fact, I didn't leave until 8:00 p.m. that night. The plane impacted the Pentagon at the point where our (FOB-2)

chilled water supply is tapped into the building. By this happening, it shutdown the chilled water flow to the vital areas of the Navy Annex Building. These areas require chilled water 24/7 to support the tenant agency's computer equipment; mostly data and communications equipment. We had to make sure that those areas were taken care of before anything.

Hunt: Were you able to get to the vault at the Pentagon where the air conditioning was regulated?

Bryan: No, Steve, Rab, and some other men handled that. That was more their technical expertise.

Hunt: You said there was jet fuel on your van?

Bryan: When the explosion and the black cloud went up, I assume whatever residual fuel was in that cloud rained on the van. It was just a fine mist.

Hunt: But you didn't feel that you were in any danger?

Bryan: No, my fear at the time was that there might be another plane coming in. You just don't know. I just came up the hill and started helping some of the people, the elderly women, get over the walls to get into the Arlington cemetery. The DPS came through saying there was another unidentified aircraft approaching at a high rate of speed. Everyone had to get far away from the building and into the cemetery area. So we were helping people get there.

Hunt: There was no gate?

Bryan: No, and people were trying to climb the walls, kind of freaking out. When we came down to Fort Myer, they came out again and told everyone to get into Fort Myer.

But when they went to the gate the guard at the gate wouldn't let anyone in because of the security aspect. So everyone just stayed in Arlington cemetery.

Hunt: Were people evacuating Henderson Hall also?

Bryan: Not that I could see. I didn't hang around for long. I jumped in the van with Steve and we immediately went down to the site where the overpass is. That's where the triage center was set up for emergency personnel. There were burn patients and people who were traumatized, and they needed water. We had water storage up here for emergencies and came up and got it. We started shuttling water back and forth. They then needed more so, we went to the Safeway and loaded up the vans with water and came back. That's about it. It's a short story.

Hunt: That's what happened in the morning, was there anything that you were involved with in the afternoon?

Bryan: No, we just sat down and were dealing with our issues here in the building. We had to make sure that the agencies, HQ Marine Corps, Navy, and Missile Defense organizations had functioning computer rooms, because they needed to set up COM centers where they could deal with the event. That's about it. Providing support for the building agencies was my primary duty. One of my responsibilities here in the building is the fire alarm system. That was going off. We had to shut that off, and after everyone was out we had to reset the entire building. There were 30 manual pull stations that were pulled. It took quite some time to get all that reprogrammed.

Hunt: So you weren't involved in the rescue effort?

Bryan: No. Just shuttling people back and forth.

Hunt: People who were not injured?

Bryan: They were uninjured, but they were people the medical personnel were asking us to bring down. They needed people who were CPR trained and emergency response trained, and we canvassed the military to find them. There were Air Force, Marine, Army, and Navy personnel there that we asked to help. We had the van packed with people. They also needed people also to guide the helicopters in.

Hunt: That would be someone with experience doing that?

Bryan: Yes, a bunch of people went down to do that. We were pretty much a shuttle service.

Hunt: Where were the helicopters?

Bryan: The helicopters were landing on the grassy area this side of the overpass, this side of Washington Boulevard. They were concerned about vehicles and people there in the path of the helicopters.

Hunt: When did your routine return to normal?

Bryan: I don't think I'm back to normal yet. In fact, a lot of things that were going on at the time were erased from my mind. That was a rough week.

Hunt: You had long hours?

Bryan: Not as long for me as for the contractors, because at the time my wife was down on active duty down at Fort Jackson so I had my son at home to take care of. I had to make sure I got home. I have two daughters in Virginia Beach of high school age and my son also was at high school that day. No one could get in touch by cell phone. I was sure as soon as my wife heard about the Pentagon she would be freaking out. I knew she was trying to get in touch with me, because I am at the Pentagon Building daily. I couldn't get in touch with ~~her~~ her on my cell phone. I did finally get through

to my ex-wife. My daughters live with her and I needed to let them know I was okay. I could never get through to my son's high school. I contacted one of my friends and they finally got hold of my son and let him know I was okay.

Hunt: You are talking about connecting by phones as opposed to email.

Bryan: Yes.

Hunt: When you left on the 11th, was it difficult to get home?

Bryan: By the time I left, around 8:00, the traffic had cleared out. I guess everyone left earlier that day. As I was shuttling people, I saw that Interstate 395 heading south was pretty backed up. My biggest concern was getting hold of my son. I live in Stafford. There was no traffic—everyone must have gotten home.

Hunt: Is there anything else you want to add?

Bryan: That's my story, and I have started a memoir for my children, so they can have a record of it, not that it's not already lodged in their brains. I was pretty close, but not as close as people walking by on the sidewalk when it came over. And, definitely not as close as the ones lost at the point of impact. My heart goes out to their families.

Hunt: Were people actually in the area?

Bryan: There were people just like a normal day, jogging, and walking. When the plane came over, the wings took out the light poles and the guardrail. I didn't see it hit the taxicab, but my feeling is that the belly of the plane hit the cab that was right there.

Hunt: Were the wings level?

Bryan: I see it now; as it came in, whoever was bringing it in knew what he was doing. He had a target. What really amazes me is that with all the films of the World Trade

Center, no one got any film of the Pentagon incident. I see all the VDOT cameras and I can't believe that none of them caught that.

Hunt: That's a good question.

Bryan: Those cameras are facing the Pentagon. There are always a lot of tourists around the Pentagon with cameras, too. Everyone kept asking me what the plane looked like, what make it was, what color. It was a commercial airliner; it looked like U.S. Air, with polished aluminum, red and blue markings, but it came in fast. It turned out it was American Airlines.

Hunt: So you only saw it for a few seconds.

Bryan: I keep thinking about what the people on the plane must have been thinking as it came down, and those poor children. It's so sad. My wife is getting ready to fly out to Alabama Friday morning. This will be her first flight since then. We are supposed to travel in January. I think everything will be OK on the security end. You see the security around the building here.

Hunt: I have had a couple of flights since September 11 and was a little apprehensive.

Bryan: Screening your co-passengers a bit more.

Hunt: Yes. You are much more conscious of your neighbors.

Bryan: Well, that's about it.

Hunt: Thank you very much.