

## Pentagon Attack

Interview with Ronald Dixon  
November 7, 2001

Hunt: This interview is taking place in the Navy Annex, and the interviewer is Dr. Richard Hunt of the OSD Historical Office.

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

Dixon: My name is Ronald Dixon. I work for the Office of Building Management and my position is maintenance work inspector. I basically inspect all of the contractors' work.

Hunt: Where were you before the plane crashed into the Pentagon?

Dixon: I was inside the Building with contractors at the time.

Hunt: Did you hear the airplane?

Dixon: Yes. I went out to take a look, and came back to grab a radio. That's when building management gets into the mode of securing the Building and seeing that people get out safely.

Hunt: What did you see when you looked outside?

Dixon: I saw the plane that had actually hit the Pentagon. The alarm sounded so we had to start the evacuation process in this building.

Hunt: Were you involved with the effort to bring water down to the Pentagon?

Dixon: We had a supply in back of our building which is used for water outages and we took that water down. We also tried to assist in getting some individuals medivaced out, I assisted in transporting one wounded over to the helicopter. We tried to extend our services as far as we could without becoming an interruption to the rescue effort.

Hunt: Where was the helicopter located?

Dixon: They made two areas for the helicopter landing right at the bridge before the Pentagon. It was a secured area. People were under the bridge because there was talks of another plane coming.

Hunt: Were you involved in taking people from the Pentagon over to the helicopter site?

Dixon: The people already at the site had come from the Pentagon and we were helping get them medivaced out.

Hunt: How long were you involved in this?

Dixon: It was an all-day process. We had to get aid areas set up and get people through different areas. We had six vehicles available to people that needed them at any given time.

Hunt: These were vans?

Dixon: These were vans at our disposal and we helped where we could. We went to the supermarket, and picked up more water, and distributed it.

Hunt: Were your vans used to bring injured people from the Pentagon to the helicopter site?

Dixon: They were going to do that, but things were in motion and people didn't know what was available. We were able to get the FBI spray paint cans so they could spray and mark the areas where the aircraft passed over and particles had fallen off. They needed to do that for their investigation. We assisted in any effort to get things taken care of. That's our basic job, now, and will continue to be.

Hunt: Have things gotten back to normal yet?

Dixon: I don't feel as if it has gotten back to normal. There was a recent funeral procession where planes flew by, a few days ago, where the jets swerved in the sky,

and people panicked. Almost half of the Building was clearing out. So it's not normal when you have to go to those extremes.

Hunt: Was the Building shaking?

Dixon: Yes, they flew over and soared up. It made so much noise. I panicked, myself. I grabbed my radio and keys; and the alarm also went off because of it.

Hunt: Did you hear the plane on September 11?

Dixon: Yes, it seemed to go right over our building and then continued into the Pentagon. That was a moment that I didn't really have time to think. You react and do the best you can and try to keep people calm. One of the problems is that when we did the drills the people couldn't get out fast enough. The gates weren't open like they were supposed to be. That had made people jumpy, so we resolved those problems so things would work more smoother the next time. We act as a buffer to resolve problems that shouldn't have come up in the first place involving security.

Hunt: Were you involved in the evacuation of this building on September 11? Did it proceed smoothly?

Dixon: Yes, I would say it did, but in some of the secure areas people seemed slightly reluctant because they were involved in other things. It took time for those in secure areas, because they were locking down before we could get them to leave. After that was resolved it became easier. We also have handicapped people. It's hard to anticipate problems before an incident like this occurs.

Hunt: Were there people on the upper floors in wheel chairs?

Dixon: It was brought to our attention that one individual had to get down and we tried to make a corrective action by installing an elevator at that end. At certain times you

can't access that elevator. We are in the process of correcting that now. We are writing up new evacuation plans because we have new tenants. Not all tenants are aware of their own evacuation plan. We are trying to make people more aware. It's not neglect, but it is the unexpected that brings the simplest things to mind involving one's safety in evacuating the Building.

Hunt: There are so many drills that they aren't taken seriously.

Dixon: That's another thing. But after that big boom people now know where to go and react a lot quicker. I think it puts us on guard. Things are not as they usually would be, and that is the biggest problem. You can't get back to normal, there is no normalcy at this time and there probably won't be for a long time.

Hunt: On the 11th, did you spend most of your time, then, outside of the building, down at the helipad?

Dixon: Yes. I spent most of my time outside. We basically did what we could. We'd see people, some we knew, and couldn't think of anything to say, we just concentrated on lending a hand. I think we need more of that at times, that day it all seemed to come together. I have had time to think about it, and it's affected everyone, and that makes a difference.

Hunt: Were there any people from your office in the Pentagon at the time the plane hit?

Dixon: One individual was coming from the site, Craig Bryan. Mr. Busak was in the center court at the time. He was our director at the time, he recently transferred. He mapped out the process of what we had to do.

We had people standing at Henderson Hall, also. We had to move them from there, because that's like an open target. We were involved with getting people moved

from one area to another and not have them all in one area, to try to get them out of harm's way.

Hunt: So people were outside on both sides of this building.

Dixon: They were talking about moving them to Henderson Hall, and that was not a good choice.

Hunt: Where would those people go?

Dixon: Right, that was the problem, so we moved them further away from Henderson Hall. We didn't have any idea what the terrorists would do so we wanted to get as far as possible from federal buildings. We had people leaving their vehicles who stood outside without food or water. So, we had to get water to those people and set up some way to access those portable restrooms. We worked on getting some portapotties down by the bridge near the Pentagon. It amazes me how things can come together. We had people out there for four hours, and we had to provide some kind of relief.

Hunt: So the portapotties were put down by the helicopter site?

Dixon: Yes, some ended up at that site before the bridge and they moved some outside of that site also. We had contractors donating lights, also. They left generators there and we had to find whose they were and return them eventually.

Hunt: The generators came the first day?

Dixon: They came the second day. Security made it hard to get down to the area. The water trucks were sent down, but a lot of things that came after we didn't know who was involved and had a hard time finding who should remove it off our property. We didn't want the items to be used for another terrorist action.

Hunt: How long was it before the military brought in water trucks?

Dixon: I would say it was the end of the day. We had private contractors actually bringing in water.

Hunt: This was September 11th?

Dixon: Yes, it was wild. People were undecided as to what was supposed to happen. We ended up at the supermarket loading up with water. A lot of people were scared, and as soon as they heard the announcement of another plane coming they started to gather under the bridge.

Hunt: What time did you actually get home on the 11th?

Dixon: My family couldn't get through to me on my cell phone, and they were worried. I got home about 7:30 p.m. We had been out there all day and everything looked like it was under control. We went back the next day and continued on. We made our vans available to the Pentagon. We also provided space for individuals to move from the damaged area. We worked basically around the clock. We're here when needed.

Hunt: Is there anything you want to add to this?

Dixon: It's nice that you are doing something like this.

Hunt: OSD historians are involved, and the Army historians are interviewing people from the Army side and the Navy historians are dealing with Navy personnel. And someone has to put it all together.

Dixon: That's good. It is a historical event, and to have been here makes you realize that life is short. Those individuals never had a clue that this would happen, and it makes me realize that life is precious and we should not take things for granted, yet we continue to do so, no matter what.

Hunt: Thank you very much.