

Interview with Randall Harper
July 14, 2006
Final

Putney: This is an oral history interview with Deputy Chief Randall Harper of the Pentagon Force Protection Agency. It is July 14, 2006, and we are in 1777 N. Kent St., the OSD Historical Office. The interviewer is Diane Putney.

Chief Harper, on September 11, 2001 what was your rank and what was your job with the Defense Protective Service (DPS)?

Harper: At that time I was a captain, and I was commander of the inspection section of DPS.

Putney: What did you do?

Harper: Our job basically was to inspect other divisions to ensure they were in compliance in managing their offices the way they are supposed to be managed according to regulations.

Putney: Are you part of the uniformed service, a sworn officer?

Harper: Yes, I am.

Putney: Part of that side of the house.

Harper: Yes.

Putney: Who was your supervisor, and who did you report to?

Harper: I reported directly to Deputy Chief Enoch Williams at that time. I was working for him.

Putney: Before September 11 were you involved with any DPS initiatives or training focusing on countering terrorists who might try to do something harmful against the Pentagon?

Harper: I have in the past taken a few courses on weapons of mass destruction and that type of thing. They were not as heavy as now, but we did touch on that a bit back then.

Putney: Even weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological, and radiological?

Harper: Exactly.

Putney: Before September 11 do you recall fire evacuation drills for the Pentagon building occupants?

Harper: They were held on occasion. Basically at that time it was considered impossible to dump the whole building, so evacuation drills were held in different areas of the Pentagon. We would take one section, and those people in that section were responsible for their own drills. We just assisted them with that.

Putney: Was there a point of contact in DPS for those drills?

Harper: Actually it was the Safety Office that was responsible for the evacuation drills, and we assisted them.

Putney: Would that be the Safety Office in the Building Management Office, or in DPS?

Harper: In the Building Manager's Office. Sometimes the security managers of different divisions—we used to work closely with the Army security office, helping them with evacuations for the different areas that they controlled.

Putney: That Safety Office you mentioned, where was it located?

Harper: That was located in the Building Manager's Office.

Putney: Michael Bryant?

Harper: Michael Bryant.

Putney: On the morning of September 11, before the plane hit the building, what were you doing before it happened?

Harper: My office was in FOB 2, and we had a television in there and were watching the event in New York, the Twin Towers. I had to take an officer downtown, about 9:25, and as we were getting ready to walk out all of a sudden we were asked, "Did you hear that noise?" I didn't hear

it because I was in the restroom. Then there was total chaos from that point on; people were scrambling. We immediately responded to the Pentagon itself.

Putney: That noise being?

Harper: When the plane hit and exploded. Then as you went outside you could see the smoke billowing up into the sky. From then on it was chaos, even for the people in FOB 2, they were frantic, getting out of there.

Putney: You didn't go downtown then?

Harper: No, I went to the Pentagon. There was total chaos. We assisted in crowd control and also assisted in setting up the triage for the medical situation. We tried to get the onlookers to move back, because it is a crime scene. There was debris everywhere. We were trying to preserve that, to get everything in order, bring order to disorder.

Putney: You were on the west side, you could see the impact site, you were not in Center Court?

Harper: I was not in Center Court.

Putney: You came down Columbia Pike, right where the plane went in. You mentioned the debris. Can you describe that debris? Some people said there was no clear evidence that there was a plane.

Harper: There was no evidence of the plane itself because the plane had gone all the way in. However, as the plane came over it clipped light poles. So you had light poles down, pieces of the plane everywhere, even way down Rte 27, the debris had gone every which way. I remember a couple of days later a young lady, whose father was an airline pilot, came by. She had been going down Rte 27 when the debris hit her car and shattered her front window. She was on the phone trying to find out whether her father was piloting that plane when the debris hit her car. You can imagine how traumatic that was for her. She came back a couple of days later to pick

up her car because her car had been towed to our impound lot. She just wanted to come back to see what she had survived.

Putney: That would be evidence.

Harper: Yes, the car and all that debris were evidence, which was collected and tagged by the FBI.

Putney: You were on the west side, did you meet up with FBI personnel early on?

Harper: I did. Things had become quite chaotic, and it dawned on me that we needed to set up a command post. I encountered Major Koerber and asked him if he was setting up a command post and if so, I would assist him. I tasked myself to determine what manpower was available for DPS. Traffic was becoming heavy, and officers were needed for traffic control and crowd control so I ordered officers to stay with Major Koerber to record the events as they unfolded. I learned that there was carnage inside, the Center Court, a much uglier scene from the inside than on the outside. I never entered the Center Courtyard that day; I was on the Heliport side where the plane had gone in.

Putney: Would Major Koerber then be the ranking DPS officer there on the west side by the Heliport?

Harper: At that time, he was.

Putney: Were you getting specific instructions, or were you both trying to figure out what to do?

Harper: It was so chaotic. Fortunately, a couple of months before I had taken a training course on incident command, so I had an idea of everything that needed to happen. We first needed to determine if any of our officers had been hurt. Fortunately, none had. While we were out there, after the FBI had arrived, Mr. Jester told me to be the liaison to the FBI agent, so we were both looking for an area to set up a command post, when we got the word that there might be another

incoming plane. Once again, we had to try to get people away. It was quite chaotic. We were just trying to bring order. Basically everyone was flying by the seat of their pants.

Putney: Was that Agent Combs?

Harper: I don't recall, a lot of things are cloudy. Things happened so fast that day. It was such a traumatic experience. A lot of things are just clouded in my mind.

Putney: That's not unusual, many people can't account for blocks of time, or it's just a blur, or time periods are shorter or longer than actually occurred. You mentioned Chief Jester. We talked to him, and he spent some time in the Center Court, back to the communications center and then to the impact point, which must have been when you encountered him. What did he ask you to do again?

Harper: He asked me to be liaison with the FBI agent. The FBI was taking over because it was a crime scene, and we needed to work closely with them. My job was to maintain security, crowd control, traffic control, and direct that effort. Basically, I stuck to the hip of the FBI agent so we could work in conjunction with each other.

Putney: So you stayed with him for the next couple of hours?

Harper: We stayed in touch. I was still directing things, and he was also directing his agents and we were saying what we needed to do.

Putney: The fire department arrived and followed the national fire incident command system. The incident command course you took—is that connected to the fire incident command system?

Harper: Yes, it is. Since there was a fire going on, Arlington County Fire was in charge of the scene. That fire blazed for over a day or so. They were in charge until all the fire was put out. It took a while because the fire kept flaring up. Once the fire was out, the FBI became the on-scene commander, because at that point it was a crime scene.

Putney: Did other DPS offices besides you take this incident command training?

Harper: It was a large course. There were about 15-20 people in the class.

Putney: Were you off-site?

Harper: No, this was DPS training, we had our own training section. Dr. Flannigan and Major Beech, who worked for Fairfax County Police taught the course.

Putney: How long was the course?

Harper: It was a week long. Dr. Flannigan gave his portion about how important it is and Major Beech came in with the practical exercises, doing the tabletop situations.

Putney: Who is Flannigan?

Harper: He is a contractor who comes in to do training courses for DPS.

Putney: I didn't know that any DPS had taken that kind of formal incident command training. I know the firefighters use incident command religiously and almost teach everyone else.

Harper: Their model is followed by everyone else.

Putney: Actually, I just took the formal courses, because WHS asked offices to have people trained in incident command. I took it on-line from FEMA.

Harper: Right. We've taken those too.

Putney: I had already educated myself just to learn about it because I can see that Chief Schwartz, who was the incident commander, follows it. Did you see him at that time?

Harper: Daily.

Putney: That morning, right away?

Harper: Not right away. We had different people doing different things. I became the on-scene commander for DPS on the outside of the crash site. We set up a fence line and a perimeter and had to guard that area. We had to be sure that people coming in were authorized to come in.

Captain Stanley was doing it first, but his job was to handle the leased outer buildings. Mr. Jester asked me to take that over so at that point I did that for about a month.

Putney: Is that when Lieutenant Stout was working for you?

Harper: Yes.

Putney: Your title was?

Harper: I wrote a sequence of events after this for myself. Around day 2 or 3 I was tasked with assisting Captain Stanley as the incident commander at the crash site. The building was still in flames, and the Arlington County Fire Department was still in charge of the scene. DPS's role, along with the 290th National Guard was to ensure security was maintained at the site. We offered assistance to the firefighters from all over the metropolitan area, the Red Cross, Salvation Army. It was a matter of assigning a staging area for all the equipment. There were people who were just volunteering to help, and after a time we had to get some kind of identification system going, a badging system. I remember that we had a tornado a day or so later, and we had to clear the site, after that we set up a badging system where no one went in unless there was a need to be there. A few days later, after the FBI took over and the fire was out, we had a hot zone and a cold zone; you had to have a special badge to get into the hot zone portion.

Putney: That would have been Rte. 27, where the fence was put up towards the building; then within that, closer to the building, you had the red zone there to get into the building. When you were there in the morning, you remember that most people were able to get out of the building without injury. I guess they were still near the building when word came through the FBI that there might be another aircraft coming. Were you there when that call came through?

Harper: Yes, I was.

Putney: Could you describe how you learned that another aircraft might be on its way?

Harper: At the time, I was with that FBI agent, and it came across his radio. At the time we were considering setting up a command post at the South Loading Dock. When we heard the call and were told to get away we both took off running. He being much younger than me, he kind of left me. We gathered up underneath I-395, under the bridge there, because all traffic was stopped.

Putney: Which street was that?

Harper: It was the South Parking Lot, at the underpass on South Rotary Road.

Putney: As you go to Pentagon City?

Harper: No, as you go to 395 North.

Putney: The fire incident commander was over there, too?

Harper: No, he was over at the fire site itself, where the old Heliport was. There was a triage set up over there because there were helicopters flying in and out. I was at both places. That's where Major Koerber was, but I was roaming around to help whenever I could, sending officers to certain places, getting people out of the way and making sure they didn't get hurt. Some wanted souvenirs so I made sure no one touched or took anything.

Putney: Did you see or help the FBI pick up the debris, doing the line walks?

Harper: That came a little later; life safety came first, making sure people were OK. I had officers who had seen things. It was so chaotic. I was looking at an officer I had worked with for a couple of years, and I couldn't even think of his name. He's not focusing on what I'm telling him; then all of a sudden he breaks out crying. The sergeant said to me that he had seen some pretty traumatic things. I had to collect myself. You had a chaotic situation going on but you still had to be concerned about people. It was that kind of day.

Putney: You couldn't have been prepared for that, unless you were in combat.

Harper: In combat you expect it. You never expect anything like this in America. Now people would probably have a different reaction if it happened again. I remember Mr. Jester looking at me when we were standing in South Parking, and he said, "I never thought this would happen." That stuck in my mind. We were both thinking the same thing. Not in America. We were watching the Pentagon burn. We had security prior to that, but nothing compared to what we have now. I think no one could ever dream we would be in the situation we are in now.

Putney: It was quite a day. Do you remember Secretary Rumsfeld being out there?

Harper: Yes, I do. I understand that he was advised not to go out there but he said he was going anyway. Our PSU, our Protective Security Unit, went with him, and he was right up in the mix, right near the flames with the security people tagging along right behind him. He rolled up his sleeves and got out there with everyone else. That sticks in my mind, too, the secretary of defense being right there on the scene, and he was out there quite a bit in the following days.

Putney: Did you actually see him helping people?

Harper: I didn't personally see him, but I was told that that happened.

Putney: With the Pentagon being surrounded by the Arlington County Police Department 4th District, they are first responders, too—did you coordinate with anybody in particular from them?

Harper: Certainly. At that time we coordinated not as heavily as we do now. 9/11 taught us we need to get to know our neighbors, the responders. Now I am very familiar with all their commanders, and their commanders are familiar with us. We didn't have that at the time. We didn't have it necessarily with the fire department and now we have it. We worked together, but not as close as we do now.

Putney: I read the Arlington County After-Action Report, and they give an account of one of their officers, Lt. Madeiros, and a DPS officer agreeing that Arlington would take Rte. 27 to close it, and the Pentagon police would take the Pentagon and grounds. I don't know who the DPS officer was, this was early on.

Harper: This could have been anyone; it was one of our traffic officers, and I don't know who the traffic sergeant was at the time, because I worked in inspections. Now I command the Pentagon Operations Division. If it happened now I could tell you who that was.

Putney: Can you give an estimate of how long it took to evacuate the building?

Harper: It's hard for me to know because I was on the outside, and people were filling the parking lot. I think there was no such thing as an evacuation it was "get your hat and go." I don't think anyone could have stopped those folks from getting out of there. I was told by people inside that they heard the noise, saw others running, and ran also. Some folks didn't even know why they were running. People were hollering, "Get out, get out. Run for your life." I was told by people in the Center Court that they saw people run out there on fire. I think when people saw that they knew to get out. An organized evacuation it was not—that's my own personal belief—people just went. One lady told me she was in a meeting, heard a noise, felt a big bump because she was close to the impact area, took off running and didn't stop until she reached the Safeway.

Putney: When the announcement came about another airplane, I imagine that was extra stress and anxiety.

Harper: I'm not sure everyone inside heard that; we heard it outside because it came across the radio, and people started hollering, "Run, another plane is coming." Folks just took off. If I see

you running with fear in your face I would go the way you are going. A lot of folks don't ask questions—if she's running, I'm running.

Putney: It turned out, then, that Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania. Although at the time it was reported that it went into Camp David.

Harper: I heard all kinds of things---that it was headed to the White House, headed to Camp David. I heard all kinds of things that day.

Putney: Did you see any evidence of the DPS Emergency Response Team, the SWAT team, in action?

Harper: I don't recall seeing them; I'm sure they were there. I don't recall where they were.

Putney: Some of them, described as black-clad Ninja Knights, were in the building near the secretary's office, but I think some of them might have been eventually out by the fire incident command post.

Harper: They could have been. I had nothing to do with operations, but you go where the problem is, so I'm sure they came running. We had the K-9 units; everyone just came to assist, even the guys in the RDF. Officers down there came up and helped get people out of the building.

Putney: Their facility had a strange mission—the conversion to a morgue. It became obvious that if you had had more DPS personnel there they could help, and you wanted to get them in from off-duty. How do you go about recalling people?

Harper: At the time we did have recall rosters. At that time we didn't have a lot of the personnel that we have now. We went to 12-hour shifts, 6 to 6, which increased our numbers.

Putney: From three 8-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts.

Harper: Yes, and those officers worked that shift without days off for almost a month. All leave was cancelled, training, everything.

Putney: When those officers reported to work was the armory where your weapons were stored very near the impact site? Was there a problem getting them?

Harper: There was a problem getting the weapons because the building was smoking up. They were able to do it, but it was chaotic. We learned a lesson that day, that if that room had been destroyed no one would have been able to collect the weapons. That was when it was decided that we should carry the weapons 24 hours a day. The weapon take-home program lets us come prepared.

Putney: So you were able to get them even though it was very smoky.

Harper: Yes. Very smoky.

Putney: Did it have electricity?

Harper: Some areas had no electricity, I don't recall. I collected my weapon from another area. I believe the electricity did go out but was restored. I'm not sure if it was turned out or just went out.

Putney: The building management people were turning off electricity so the firefighters and others would not get electrocuted. You were there, then, through the afternoon until early evening?

Harper: I was there until about 10:00 that night.

Putney: Non-stop, trying to organize things.

Harper: Trying to organize things and having meetings. I remember the last week we had an after-action brief in the conference room on the E Ring somewhere, close to the SecDef area, I

believe. Everyone was coughing from being in that smoke and jet fuel smell all day. We were there quite late, and back early the next morning.

Putney: Were the DPS officers issued some kind of masks on a regular basis?

Harper: Not at that time.

Putney: Perhaps it wouldn't have helped anyway, for smoke, tear gas.

Harper: It would help for tear gas, and if you were in thick smoke it probably would help you get out of the area, but after the fire department arrived, they were the ones who were in the most of it. Smoke was all over the building, so regardless of where you were, you were in smoke. I don't think a mask would have helped us at that point.

Putney: Did you see the collapse, when the floors pancaked down?

Harper: I didn't see it, but later I came back, and they told me of the collapse.

Putney: Fortunately no one was injured. I guess firefighters have certain equipment they put up and from the readings they know about imminent collapse.

Harper: Exactly. They knew that it needed to be shored, and later they did that to prevent other portions from collapsing.

Putney: After that after action meeting, I suppose there were a thousand things that needed to be done. You went home and came back the next day. What was that like—coming back the next day?

Harper: That's when we tried to get the area cordoned off, put up a perimeter, and they started tagging the debris and taking certain debris to certain areas. Out in North Parking they cordoned off an area to take all the stuff to. It was just basically getting organized, getting a grip on what was going to happen and what steps we needed to take to get things organized.

Putney: Was it Captain Stanley? He had reported to the Heliport area and was the DPS person there, with you taking over later?

Harper: Yes, around day two I was tasked with assisting him.

Putney: Would that have been the 12th or 13th?

Harper: It was probably Wednesday or Thursday that I was tasked with going over there.

Putney: The president showed up around 5:00 p.m. on the 12th.

Harper: I was there.

Putney: Did you already get the tasking?

Harper: I was just there, and I think that's why I got the tasking.

Putney: Was that the 24-hour shift then?

Harper: Yes, we went to the 12-hour shift; someone had to be there from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Putney: Did you have a day shift?

Harper: Yes. I was the day shift commander. I believe at the time it was Captain Myers; I was out on the crash site itself; we had Captain McGriff was the watch commander for the day shift. I'm not sure, it might have been Captain Slin. I wasn't a part of operations. I was stuck out there and usually didn't see those guys; the evening shift would come, sometimes Captain. Myers, sometimes a lieutenant. It was a matter of maintaining security. During the day there were so many people there it was like a city; Major Stout was like the mayor of that little city. Different people needed different things; it got so muddy we had to put in roads. We had the Red Cross there, the Salvation Army, the chaplain's tent. Everyone had a tent or a command bus parked there. It was like a tent city.

Putney: It grew up quickly. You turned your back and there it was.

Harper: We had a man come in from Arlington County with a generator system to light the place. Everyone could just plug into it. It's amazing what Americans can do when they set their minds to it.

Putney: What were your communication problems that day? Everybody said their cell phones didn't work because they couldn't get through. DPS had radios.

Harper: We could talk to each other, but not to the other agencies there. That was one reason for the liaison thing. That was set up early on over at the crash site. Chief Schwartz was the incident commander, so the FBI had someone there. Arlington, DPS, we all had to communicate our needs in person.

Putney: In person at his staff meetings, a few times a day with the unified commander.

Harper: Yes.

Putney: Did the radios run down? They operate off batteries and only run for a few hours.

Harper: That was an issue. Fortunately we brought out battery chargers and had a rack of batteries to issue out.

Putney: You circulated them.

Harper: Exactly.

Putney: Then the cell phone companies came and set up the tower?

Harper: Yes, Verizon and Cingular and others. A bunch of folks brought in cell phones to use.

Putney: Was there any special things you had to do because the president was going to come that second day?

Harper: Certainly.

Putney: What was that like?

Harper: We really had to tighten security to know who was in the area. His detail was thick around him, so we just made sure that only the necessary people were in the area. It was not only the president, it was the secretary of state, senators and congressmen, the secretary of defense, they were all there together. In fact there was a lady there helping to collect the confidential material. She was sitting by my tent and she said, "I sit on this corner, I've seen the president, Condoleezza Rice, and everyone; it's the most amazing thing." She was blown away. I told her she had a lot to write home and tell her mother about.

Putney: You mentioned the credentialing system and the badges. We are trying to figure out exactly when those were issued. Were they issued when the president arrived, or the next day? I read in the Arlington County log that they supplied those on the 13th.

Harper: I don't think they supplied that, but I'm not sure where they came from. We had different colors.

Putney: Do you remember them in an operation when the president was there, which meant they were issued on the 12th, or were they issued the next day?

Harper: I think it was the next day. I don't think we were that organized that fast.

Putney: To have the wristbands before the president came? That would have been another thing to do to get ready.

Harper: First of all, the next day the fence wasn't up, I believe. That didn't come for a couple of days. There was already a fence there, but we had to put fencing up and establish gates to get in and out. No, there was no fencing prior to that, because there was a sidewalk the joggers used. We didn't start putting the wrist bands on until the fence was put up. I think the fencing was ordered the next day, but was not totally up. I could be wrong, days run into each other, but I don't see that being practical.

Putney: We do have an interview with Chief Plaugher. His operations center ordered a fence. Was that the fence that was installed? I had PENREN people tell me they were the ones who ordered the fence.

Harper: I think it was PENREN that put the fence up around that area. I can't see Arlington County spending money putting up a fence around the Pentagon. I believe it was PENREN, probably in conjunction with the building manager's office. I'm not really sure.

Putney: I'll have to check that. There was another barrier fence, More tape or mesh, preventing people from getting into the red zone, into the building itself, until they had the red badges. Do you remember what that fence looked like?

Harper: It was just a regular chain link fence, just like it was on the outside; then on the outside after a few days a green cover was put up so you couldn't see through the fence. We had officers who guarded the entrance. Our officers determined who got in; they had to show their credentials.

Putney: Who in DPS would have been in charge of collecting classified documents? The building was open, and some documents even blew out into A-E Drive.

Harper: That was what we called SSD, Security Services Division. At the time I believe Mike Copeland was responsible for it. They had trucks out there and were bringing safes out. They worked on the inside, Center Court, and also on the outside.

Putney: You mentioned your tent; that command post DPS set up by the Heliport was a tent, but didn't start out that way.

Harper: It started out as a pop-up. Then we ended up with a big tent, with tables, the whole nine yards. The Army might have ordered it. A few days later someone offered us an RV to use as a command bus. I think we used it along with the tent.

Putney: At anytime would you have had an SUV out there, or even a police car?

Harper: Yes, we did. Early on that was out there. It progressed to different stages. We knew we were going to be there for a while.

Putney: Then the FBI set up the Joint Operations Center over at Fort Myer, the Community Center. Did you ever visit that? Who from DPS would have been there?

Harper: They had different people, but they were at a higher rank than myself. I know Mr. Pugrud was the first, I think, to go to that job. We would call over there sometimes for information, but I'm not sure who was manning it all the time for DPS. I know Mr. Pugrud early on.

Putney: Did you see any impact of the JOC? Mr. Pugrud would have learned things about what was going to go on and coordinated and then pass the word on.

Harper: A lot of times he was calling us for information that he could give to the JOC. They called us more than we called them, because what was happening was right there with us. They would call and advise us what would happen or ask us to make it happen.

Putney: Once you started the credentialing, the badges, you had to set up procedures of who would get them. Do you remember that process of issuing badges, how that happened?

Harper: I think it was the Secret Service that came in and helped us with the badging system until we could collect ourselves and get our own banding system going. They made little plastic badges, and after a while our badging office, Security Services, came in and assisted or worked in conjunction with that. They photographed everyone. A lot of people wanted to hold on to those badges as souvenirs. I'm not sure where mine is.

Putney: So even though you had a Pentagon badge and were in uniform you still needed a badge. Everyone needed a badge.

Harper: Yes. We were paranoid that people could steal uniforms, and we needed to know who everyone was.

Putney: Were bomb threats a problem? Some of the people in the community could take advantage of this type of event and call one in.

Harper: We had that kind of thing. We just had to determine whether it was credible.

Putney: Even though you might get a bomb threat, you would pay more attention to one than another.

Harper: First of all, you have to determine if it could happen. We had sealed the place, all highways were shut down. Nothing was going down Rte. 27. We knew who was coming into South Parking because we had check points. We would listen to it, but determine whether it was credible or if it was feasible for this to happen.

Putney: You were in Force Condition Delta. Was this the first time you have been that high?

Harper: You go into Delta when you've been hit.

Putney: That's as tight a security level you can impose, then.

Harper: That's the top of the line.

Putney: You are using everybody, 12-hour shifts, and people like yourself that aren't usually out there—you use everybody and take on different jobs. You did get help, because on the 12th the Maryland National Guard came.

Harper: The 290th National Guard, yes

Putney: Did you work with them? What kinds of things did you have them doing?

Harper: At the time, the reason for them coming was that we didn't have the numbers to control all the areas we needed to control at that point. That meant that we had to push out the perimeter

of our security. They were used in conjunction with our people at gates, and took over certain areas to free up officers to do certain things. We worked in conjunction with each other.

Putney: Lieutenant Colonel Liswell, does that ring a bell?

Harper: No, but that was probably who it was. We had units coming and going, and I can't remember all of them.

Putney: First there was the Maryland National Guard and then you had regular Army from Ft. Bragg about September 20th. Again, they were supporting and working with your people or at certain checkpoints. I remember taking the shuttle over there and seeing their Humvees and such. Do you recall having to detain anybody who shouldn't have been there, in the tent city or elsewhere?

Harper: We threw people out of the tent city. We had one gentleman with heavy equipment, and all of a sudden someone asked who he was and who he worked for, so we started doing background checks on people. One man was supposedly a chaplain, working for the D.C. Metropolitan Police, and we found out he wasn't affiliated with them. That's how we finally determined we had to clear and secure the site.

Putney: Do you recall who from DPS was escorting our own building occupants back to their damaged areas to reclaim their personal items?

Harper: We used officers for that and had a lot of officers who went into some risky areas helping people back to their offices. I don't know who they all were, that was inside and I was outside.

Putney: You would have had DPS people involved with that?

Harper: Yes, we did.

Putney: You did have Army people on post and PENREN people.

Harper: It may have been Army people helping, but since they didn't know the building it would have to have been one of our officers because we knew how to get into places and alternate routes.

Putney: Did DPS ever do a "lessons learned"?

Harper: That was done.

Putney: Did you do it as you went along, because even that first night there was a meeting, a periodic assessment of where you were and where you were going.

Harper: Mr. Jester started having meetings, and it got so he would have one every morning. That was after we shut down the site. On October 10th Deputy Chief Williams said I was to become the daytime watch commander, and he relieved Captain McGriff of the job and placed me in the job.

Putney: The 11th was that big memorial. I went over there and there were thousands of people.

Harper: It was a huge memorial. They put me in charge the day before. They didn't like the way it was being handled, so I came in and made sure that we had security in place along with the unit from Fort Bragg. They were here by now, so in conjunction with them we pulled that off. We had the president, and President Clinton, and all types of dignitaries there. It was the largest event to have taken place at that time.

Putney: It was televised, too.

Harper: Yes.

Putney: Is there anything else that stands out in your mind that you want to add? Anything about that day and your reactions?

Harper: No, not that I can think of. Probably when I leave here I will think of a million things.

Putney: That's fine. I'll give you the transcript. If you think of anything while you are reading it just feel free to add to it. We will re-edit it, and I'll give you a copy. Everyone has said that it's difficult to place things in time. It's a kind of blur, and day to day you lost track of time.

Harper: In my mind it seemed that we were on that crash site for two months. When I looked at my notes it was only September 26. October 11, one month from the date, there was a huge memorial, and I was doing something else.

Putney: There are a couple of key dates. On the 21st the fire department gave it over to the FBI; then the FBI on the 26th gave it over to General Jackson, from the Military District of Washington.

Harper: The FBI finished their investigation on September 26th and turned it over to the Military District of Washington, where it then became a construction site.

Putney: Were you out there to that point?

Harper: We were still out there at that time.

Putney: After the 26th you didn't have to be out there?

Harper: The security of the area was still maintained to prevent curiosity seekers and the press from entering the area. I was probably out there but it wasn't as intense as it was prior to that.

Putney: General Jackson got control, but it still had to come back to Doc Cooke and WHS. I haven't been able to get that date.

Harper: The person who would know that would be Mr. Jester, chief at that time.

Putney: I talked with him but didn't think to ask that.

Harper: It needed one more step to get back to WHS. Did you have any interaction with General Jackson and MDW folks?

Harper: The interaction was with the troops he sent, and he would sometimes come to talk to the troops. Mr. Jester interacted with him quite a bit.

Putney: Would you have attended those unified command meetings that Incident Commander Schwartz would have held?

Harper: No, because I was the incident commander for the site itself in a security capacity, for DPS, but Mr. Jester and others would go to those unified meetings, at a much higher level, because decisions were being made with engineers and all types of people. I didn't have a need to do that, I just had to maintain the security of the site.

Putney: Were there any follow-on attacks or incidents that you were prepared against—but nothing did happen.

Harper: Right.

Putney: You arrested some people who were misrepresenting themselves or who just showed up looking so realistic they blended in with everybody else.

Harper: Exactly. There were so many gawkers to the point where eventually they set up an area with bleacher seating to get people back out of the way. It got to a point where you could not deny people, they were very passionate about what had happened. At the memorial up on the side of the hill of FOB 2, people were up there, they left wreaths, and we had to guard against people trying to get in. Sometime we had to turn people away. We never knew who we were talking to and tried to be compassionate and not to offend someone. It was a balance.

Putney: Rte. 27 was closed, but did pedestrians, the curious, walk down Rte. 27? Could they even get onto 27?

Harper: We had folks stationed out on the end that would not let them get too close. We had a cutoff point where they had to turn around and go back and the same thing on the other end.

Putney: People had cameras, probably, and wanted to get as close as they could. I visited the FOB 2 memorial myself down the hill from the Navy Annex.

Harper: At the Citgo gas station was where all the press was. That's where they were getting their shots from. Everyone wanted to reach out and touch it one way or another.

Putney: And you tried to accommodate, within reason.

Harper: I used to tell the guys you never know who you're talking to and how it touched them so be compassionate, be nice to everyone and accommodate them the best we could. If they get pushy you have to do what you have to do but we tried to accommodate.

Putney: Thank you for your input.