

Interview with William Viner
and Jack Kelly
October 25, 2001

Cameron: This interview with William Rock Viner and Jack Kelly concerns the Pentagon attack on September 11. It is taking place in the construction trailer on site, on October 25, 2001. Interviewers are Drs. Ronald Landa and Rebecca Cameron of the OSD Historical Office.

First, Mr. Viner, please describe your job and key responsibilities. [Jack Kelly joined the interview later.]

Viner: I am a general chief estimator for the Pentagon renovation program. I aid the entire program on cost budgeting, change order review, cost analysis, "what if" proposals, trying to do the \$1.2 billion renovation for \$1.2 billion. Other than that, I am also a technical assistant to many people here. I've had almost thirty years of construction management, project management, and cost estimating experience. Basically that's what I do. Any problems that arise construction-wise, that need help in analyzing either for constructability or for costs, they call on me specifically for the costs but also input on the technical side.

Cameron: You are with the company, not with PenRen itself?

Viner: I'm with DMJM-3DI, it's a joint venture. We were hired by the WHS PenRen. We are integrated with all the PenRen people. We are at the point now where it's hard to define who is government and who isn't. That's something Lee [Evey, PenRen Program manager] has done, to try to integrate all of the teams. If a good person is needed we put one there, whether government or one of the contractors. I am with the contractors, the joint venture contractors DMJM-3DI.

Landa: In the hierarchy of the organization, where do you stand? Who's in line above you and below you?

Viner: Operations-wise, I report directly to the operations manager, Rich Fitzharris until just recently. Ken Katlow has taken his position because Rich has a temporary assignment for some other government agency. I report to Jack Kelly, general consultant under the program manager, and obviously I report to the Joint Venture hierarchy program manager, Les Hunkele. I work with too many other different projects to report to any one project manager or construction manager. I'm what they call here a shared resource.

Cameron: Was Mr. Hunkele working on site?

Viner: He works some of the site, but he was very instrumental in orchestrating who was doing what and where, even as construction of other parts of the renovation program kept going. He was working over at the MOC. He came over quite often the first couple of days to make sure things were going right and to touch base with us, a couple of times a day. He had other duties to make sure that the rest of the renovation kept going.

Cameron: Is the MOC your planning outfit?

Viner: The MOC is our Modular Office Complex, located on the north side of North parking. It's the only place they could make offices big enough for some of us. We are on site here and in some other satellite offices around the Pentagon. It's a very large area. They move us around as necessary.

Cameron: It's just where you could find space, not different segments of the organization?

Viner: It's basically where we are assigned. They have it broken down into teams. Where we are is the Wedge 1 team. We were assigned a lot of the work around the Wedge 1 area. The South Terrace bridges are part of Wedge 1. We started out in 2B340 doing the barrier walls, separating Wedges 5, 1, and Wedges 1 and 2. We started there for about two years doing the separation of electrical, mechanical, and everything else and physically separating the Wedges so that work could go on in one area while people in the other side could carry on with their business.

Landa: In the period before September 11, as far as you know, was there any anticipation of this kind of attack on the building?

Viner: The blast wall came in. It wasn't in the original design. It was a change order that we worked through and put in.

Landa: When, approximately, did that come in?

Viner: We started negotiating it about two years ago, May-June 1999. We started receiving materials for it in December and started constructing it as we were coming through the outer and inner shell.

Landa: Do you know the reason why that was added to the planning?

Viner: Oklahoma City.

Cameron: Are you seeing more changes of this sort after September 11?

Viner: We are reviewing that. Jack and Fitz can tell you more about that. We are reviewing what happened, the reaction of the building, what it withstood and what it didn't, and whether we could reasonably and prudently have beefed something up more heavily. We designed it around a bomb sitting out 500 feet away going off, not a couple of tons of aircraft coming in at 350 miles an hour.

Cameron: What about destruction from the air straight down, like a bomb from above.

Was that ever considered?

Viner: To retrofit and harden the building would be astronomical cost-wise. We were more worried about perimeter access, as the bombings in Oklahoma and other places have shown around the world. Those are the whackos that drive up in a U-haul, van, or something loaded with explosives and do it that way. Most terrorist attacks don't come out of the sky with bombs. I don't know if it was ever thought of, but it would be very difficult to do.

[Jack Kelly arrives]

Cameron: We can make this a joint interview, if you like. We were asking Rock about what designs or structural aspects were in place for possible attacks. He was mentioning the blast wall as an add-on, and whether there are changes underway now as a result of the September 11 attack.

Kelly: The blast wall in Wedge 1 was designed to match up as closely as possible with the strength of the windows and what they could withhold. Consequently, now when we build back, the design will be of concrete as opposed to steel. Again, we will design it to meet the maximum strength that the windows themselves can resist in the way of a blast load. We have a system that we put into Wedge 1 that was a steel backup system with kevlar fabric and in the case of the reconstruction of the damaged areas we will have a concrete blast reinforced system. It could have some modifications based on a study that is being done jointly with the Corps of Engineers. We don't have the feedback, but in a few weeks we will know exactly what the add-ons will be.

Cameron: What is the Corps' role in this? I thought that initially they were part of the project.

Kelly: The Corps was here but left at least two years ago. They did come back and they have a computer that can do a study of a lot of variables.

Cameron: A simulation?

Kelly: Yes, feeding in hundreds of variables about the design. It was developed primarily after the blast at Oklahoma. They have made that computer available to us with some of the studies they have done since that period of time. That's their total involvement.

Cameron: We see the jersey barriers all over town. Are they thinking about extending the safe perimeter outside the original area?

Kelly: There are a number of things being looked at, on different levels. They are talking about moving Rte 110. Right now you can drive a truck up to the heating-refrigeration plant and do a good deal of damage right there. As an interim step they were thinking about placing guards there to stop traffic of certain-sized trucks or whatever from using it for a period of time, or possibly only pushing it out to get it away from the plant. On the Rte 27 side they are looking at putting in some type of berm to resist some shock. We are looking at steel poles, lights that might be filled with concrete, so if a plane came in it couldn't get much past that. Even in the lay-down area right now we are putting up a double perimeter barbed wire with eight-foot high fences as an interim step. Consideration is being given to moving command centers underground, with thought being given to moving the Joint Chiefs of Staff and possibly the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense into the A-ring as opposed to the E-ring;

bringing people in through AE drive for various ceremonies as opposed to being out on the River Terrace, where a truck could be driven under, causing damage. There is a whole series of things being looked at and studied.

Cameron: How much coordination occurs between you and the civil defense people and the DPS in making these kinds of decisions?

Kelly: Rummy and I sit down and kick it around. No, we put together the ideas and review them in various committees and groups that are studying these various alternatives. Rock recently priced up and put together, with another fellow here, a schedule for five different alternatives for command centers. What if we put them between the RDF and the Mall, on that side; what if we put them underneath the heliport. Our role is to provide recommendations from an engineering and construction standpoint and give alternatives and the time and estimated cost necessary for any of these alternatives. That's really our role.

Landa: Was there any inkling prior to September 11 of specific threats of attacks on the building?

Kelly: Not to my knowledge.

Landa: So you weren't given any special instructions as to preparation and design for particular kinds of threats, other than the Oklahoma City type?

Kelly: We were told to design for a threat comparable to Oklahoma City, a truck coming in with a certain amount of TNT explosive that would probably get X number of feet away from the building. That's what the design was based on. We never thought, designed, nor figured for what occurred.

Cameron: It was, I suppose, almost fortunate in the way plane came in.

Kelly: It was extremely fortunate in that we had not yet occupied the first floor in that area of the renovated Wedge 1, so no one had moved in there yet. We had vacated everyone out of the Wedge 2 area where the plane ultimately went in. It went in on an angle. There was no one on the first floor there.

Cameron: Was there a basement?

Kelly: Not under that area, and that is another very fortunate thing. So there was minimal occupancy or just people walking through the corridor in Wedge1 and no one in Wedge 2 on any of the floors. So, thank God, as bad as it is, the steel that had been put in to support the blast-proof windows, the wall, and kevlar, stayed in place on floors 3, 4, and 5, for thirty-five minutes. To my knowledge, some people were injured and overcome by smoke and whatever, but no one was killed on those floors. They were all able to get out before the collapse.

Cameron: Would you tell us what your position is, for the record?

Kelly: I am an advisor to the program manager.

Cameron: You are with the government?

Kelly: No, I am under a personal services contract, reporting directly to the program manager, Lee Evey, providing him program management consulting advice.

Cameron: You are part of the Joint Venture?

Kelly: No, a personal services contract.

Cameron: So you are a solo act.

Kelly: There's none other like me, believe me. I've got a 14-year contract with the program to provide program management consulting services. My background primarily has been in design and construction of large structures.

Landa: Was either of you aware of any crisis action plans prior to September 11, in the event something like this could happen in the construction area?

Viner: I know those building circulars that come out regularly from DPS about incidents and what-ifs, and all that. The biggest worry that we have is injuries and accidents. We have a crisis management plan for the Pentagon renovation for accidents and personal injuries on the construction site, in case of fire and that type of thing. What DPS office to call, who to notify first—that is pretty well covered.

Kelly: Leave by the stairwells, don't use the elevator—all of that is in place. There is no plan for "duck, the plane just came in." Nothing anticipated this.

Cameron: Where were you on September 11 and what was your immediate response?

Viner: I ran like hell.

Kelly: I had just left the building and gone to North parking where our office is. I had just gotten out of my car and heard a boom. I looked over and saw the black smoke that was generated primarily by the diesel tank that had been hit when the plane came in. Diesel fuel gives off a heavy black smoke. I thought perhaps something "inappropriate" had happened. I ran inside and called my wife and told her no matter what she heard I was fine. She didn't understand, at first thought I was talking about New York. I said no, it's the Pentagon, we've been hit. We were told a few minutes later that there was a second plane coming in and to get up to the Parkway.

Landa: Who told you that, do you recall?

Kelly: Someone in the building, I don't recall. It might have been Mike Sullivan, Lee Evey, or Les Hunkele, one of those, I'm sure. Everyone calmly walked outside. There was a cyclone fence there, so we couldn't get out. I called some Air Force guys and

about ten of them took hold of the fence and ripped it up and we all, like rats, scampered out of there and walked up the road.

Cameron: Did you go to the Navy Annex?

Kelly: No, we were in the back. Behind the MOC, the road goes out on the north side.

Cameron: So DPS told everyone to gather there?

Kelly: There is a compound there, we all walked about a mile down the road.

Viner: I was on the other side of the wall, here. I was about 400 feet from where he came in.

Kelly: I looked out and thought I had lost all the facility guys, and I had hired ninety percent of them.

Landa: Rock, what was your first reaction?

Viner: We have flyovers here, and when it was coming in I thought, "Damn, those SOBs are low." I thought they were doing a funeral. I could hear it spool up and started getting out of my seat, and then he hit and knocked me back in my seat. I grabbed my hard hat and went out the back door with my hard hat. My wallet and keys were in my desk drawer. I immediately thought it was the generator and fuel tank that had gone up, because I could see the smoke. I came around the side of the building and the guards had the gate wide open and were yelling for everyone to get out. I looked back and thought about my wallet, but I decided to leave. We ran up into South parking and saw an IPT leader Dave Gable. We shouted at him that we needed to get a head count to make sure we had everyone. About that time we heard there was another plane coming in, so I started looking for jersey barriers to hide behind. About that time I did see a twin engine commuter plane coming in right at us. He apparently finally got the

word and went back around. They kept pushing us to the backside of South parking, on up to just below the Navy Annex. Everyone was trying to get through to their wives and families, and someone finally got through and read off a list. Somebody finally got through to my wife and left her a message that everybody was OK. They wouldn't let us back anywhere near there. They closed the mall down about 12:30, later. We were walking around, by FOB 2, with a couple of fellows. The people by Harris Teeter were walking around and asked us if we needed anything, like water or sandwiches. When I got home on the Metro (thank God it kept running), my wife picked me up, and that was the end of our day. It really started the next day.

Cameron: So you did see the plane when you walked out?

Viner: I saw what was left of it, a little aluminum. There was so much smoke we really couldn't see.

Landa: So at first you thought it was a fuel tank, but later found out it was a plane.

Viner: Yes, we went around the building and looked.

Kelly: At first we were told it was a private plane, then a commuter jet, and finally someone said it was a full-size 757. They are big.

Cameron: So you all went home. How did you decide when it was safe to come back and how did you then arrange the team?

Kelly: I didn't worry about it, I just came back to work.

Viner: When the traffic died down my wife drove me in.

Kelly: I didn't leave until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. I was back here by 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. I just went home, got cleaned up and came back.

Cameron: The fire marshals had it cordoned off until it was safe enough to let others like the FBI come in?

Kelly: The whole world was in charge that first day. FEMA said it was their site; the Arlington County fire department said it was theirs. The Fairfax fire chief said he was bigger than anyone so he was going to take over. The Army said they were in charge. Everyone was in charge. In fact, nobody was. It very quickly sorted itself out. By the end of the day FEMA was in charge, they all got together and it worked extremely well. For the most insight and input from a knowledgeable standpoint of occurrences like this you need to talk to Allyn Kilshiemer, the structural engineer. He was involved in the Oklahoma bombing, and the World Trade Center the first time it was hit. He's been in Beirut during the bombing over there, and the bombing in Africa.

Cameron: What does he do?

Kelly: He's a structural engineer. He was on the scene within an hour. He's under contract now to PenRen. His responsibilities now are to design and oversee from a structural needs standpoint as well as being the primary lead of a team of mechanical, electrical, architectural—engineers and architects who are putting this thing back together.

Landa: How much contact did you have after the first day with other OSD elements, such as RE&F, Doc Cooke, or others?

Kelly: Me personally, none to speak of. They were out there, and we talked to them.

Cameron: But they weren't asking you to do anything?

Viner: No, we were pretty much taking our orders on site from whoever was the top dog at the time, whether it was the Arlington County fire marshals, the MDW, FBI, whatever. They came to us and said they needed something, and we got it.

Cameron: Your first job, then, was to clear the damage?

Kelly: Yes, to get the fire out and stabilized, so we could begin to do an assessment of the damage. Then develop a plan including cost and schedules to put it back the way it was prior to the plane coming in.

Landa: What particularly stands out in your mind about those first few days?

Kelly: The people being carried out of here. I hate white trucks, I can't stand to look at them. Thinking about those kids, it is bad.

Landa: Did you have any friends in the area?

Kelly: I knew a lot of people in the Navy Ops area, I had worked very closely with them for a number of months. I was worried sick about these guys. I called my wife, and then got on the phone to check on everyone. I called Nick Holland. He said everyone was fine. I felt good about that.

Cameron: The plane took out the new fire truck, didn't it?

Kelly: That fire truck had been sitting there, and the way it was sitting protected everybody in the heliport. It took the fireball, so the fire truck gave up its life for a good cause. To look at the heliport, it was hardly touched. There is a light hanging by one chain, and the overhead metal door was skewed, but we just took it off and put a wall up.

Cameron: When the Pentagon was built during World War II, they tried not to use scarce war materiel. Now it is in the National Register of Historic Places, which means

we should try to restore it to its original condition as much as possible. How much are you trying to balance those historic building elements with the new design?

Kelly: In the case of the façade itself, you should go down to North parking and see where we are salvaging some of the limestone for re-use on the building. You will see limestone blocks we used along the cornice where there is a column every twenty feet. Those pieces of cornice have concrete bells carved into them about every four to six inches on center. And some of the dental work, we are saving all that. We were doing the demo to get some of that stone out of the way. We worked where the damage was more severe and were staging that out there. We are trying to replicate as much as possible by using salvage and matching the façade itself. For the building we won't use steel for a lot of reasons, the best being that with a flat plate concrete structure we can pour thinner slabs. We don't have to put concrete beams in to support them because we can now construct concrete structures, so the structure that's going back will be easier to work with. It will be a lighter weight structure, which doesn't really matter because the footings would support almost anything, they were so over-designed back in the 1940s. There won't be a significant difference, you won't see a steel building with a metal back and things like that. It will be relatively close but constructed in a modern way. The way we support the roof will be a little different, we will not use a lot of wood like they did back then, we will use some steel up there.

Cameron: Apparently you are going to work from the outside back in, from the E-ring back toward the C-ring. Why are you doing that?

Kelly: Because we are going to put people in those chairs in those offices on that E-ring on September 11th of next year.

Landa: That's the target?

Kelly: Targets you can miss. We can't miss this, it's going to happen.

Cameron: Is it partly psychological, that you don't want holes to show? Wouldn't you have easier access to the building if you started with the C-ring?

Kelly: We are going to go completely in starting at the southernmost point of corridor 4 and work north and east. The slab itself on grade is in pretty good condition. We will be able to reuse that. We might have to pour a topping slab on it at some time, but we will reuse that slab. The utilities under there in the tunnels seem to be in relatively good shape. We will pour the second floor, frame it up, and pour that all the way across, all the way back. We will come up to the third floor and pour that all the way over and back. Then we will pour just the thirty-foot section on floor 5 and the roof—that's the E-ring outside. Then immediately we will start pouring shell work and subsequently tenant work in those areas going up floors 1, 2, 3, and 4. The fifth floor doesn't have any windows in it, we will not worry about that. It is our intent to have that entire E-ring occupied for some type of ceremony by September 11.

Cameron: You are going to close up the E-ring without having the other floors poured?

Kelly: Once we have that concrete structure up we will go and pump the concrete behind it to finish off the floors of the C- and B-ring.

Cameron: How will you organize your team? Are you going to manage the rebuilding and renovation aspects of Wedge 2 simultaneously, or with different teams?

Kelly: There are two contractors here working on this project, AMEC, who did the renovation of Wedge 1, and Hensel Phelps, who won an award to renovate Wedges 2, 3, 4, and 5. If they do a good job on Wedge 2, they go on from there. From corridor 5

going north to the apex, Hansel Phelps will be able to begin their renovation work on all floors. The balance of Wedge 2 has been reoccupied by the Navy, Marines, and others.

Cameron: It's unrenovated space?

Kelly: Yes, but some renovation is going on in there for them so they will be able to function. We will be able to put the structure back. The AMEC group will then do core and shell work and fitout work over to what was the old Wedge 1-Wedge 2. We had finished the renovation up to that point, basically halfway between the two corridors. They will finish that and bring it back to its condition before September 11 and leave a concrete structure for the Hensel Phelps people to go ahead with the renovation work of that area, giving them ample time to get their work done on the E-ring.

Cameron: Are there many more people to be involved now than with the original plan?

Kelly: Yes, more laborers, carpenters, whatever, probably twice as many. Where we would work 12-hour shifts, six days a week, in finishing Wedge 1, we are looking at 20-hour days, seven-day weeks, or 24-hour, seven-day weeks, depending on the trade, to complete this in a timely manner. Certainly in this demolition abatement phase it will be that way to get this down and give us the ability to start back up.

Cameron: Was there a big negotiation over how this would be refigured and paid for?

Kelly: Frankly, Rock and I sat down and talked with Lee Evey and put some numbers together, based on what the extent of damage might be. We were finally able to get in and look at the areas to get an assessment and we came very close in our estimates.

Viner: We are good at looking at it and giving a ballpark estimate of costs, knowing the costs from the original work. When you came over today, I was standing on the porch trying to read the proposal language for the first definitized contracts coming through,

and they are pretty decent. We just have to make sure we have all our scopes together and we aren't missing anything.

Landa: So it's pretty much what you anticipated, then?

Kelly: Actually, the contractor for the renovation came in at a better cost than we thought. Most of them are not way off.

Landa: Have there been any suggestions or recommendations that have come down from senior officials about rebuilding or security issues?

Kelly: Lee Evey has briefed the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Joint Chiefs, and the AAs on our approach and we hold daily meetings at 8:00 to give an incident status update. The AAs and a number of tenants—some admirals, Les Blaine from the Army, J.B. Hudson—have attended. We were meeting daily until about a week ago. We would continue to meet internally every day but they felt they had sufficient information and would only come once a week. They were informed and had their input and were given an opportunity to go back in and get classified material and personal effects.

Landa: So far as you know no one has said they think you should do something different?

Viner: We don't tell them how to drive ships, they don't tell us how to build buildings.

Kelly: Everybody has been very cooperative. The contracts were in place. We did what was necessary to reenergize them, almost in a matter of hours. We have two of the biggest contractors in the world here. Between us, I've got about forty, you've got about thirty years of experience. In my case I did the Dirksen-Hart Senate Office building, the J.W. Marriott Flagship downtown, Children's Hospital in Philadelphia and was president of Children's Hospital after I built it, and on and on.

Cameron: Are you both going to stay through the whole thing?

Kelly: I have a fourteen-year contract.

Viner: I'm not looking for another job.

Cameron: What was your original schedule?

Kelly: That it would take roughly twelve years. Now it will possibly take an additional two, depending on how things go with the war, what decisions are made relative to security, moving roads, where we locate command centers, etc.

Viner: One of the biggest decisions is when people move where. That can hold us up more than construction decisions as to what to put where or how to build something. When can the people be moved.

Landa: Was that a problem with Wedge 1, moving people out?

Kelly: It was a significant problem. From a construction standpoint, it added to the time and the cost.

Cameron: Why, then, are some of these Navy folks coming back into Wedge 2?

Kelly: They don't have anywhere else to go right now in order to do their mission. Their command center is there, intact, and that's the easiest and fastest place to get them up and running.

Cameron: You just work around them?

Kelly: We are not going to do anything there until we complete the work over here and then we can move them over. We have made arrangements to move them into an area in Wedge 1. We are rebuilding the Navy command center in a different section of Wedge1 right now.

Landa: Is there anything else you want to add, that we didn't cover?

Cameron: Anybody else we should talk to?

Kelly: Kilsheimer has such a knowledge of how these things evolve from the point that the incident occurs on. You might talk to one of the fellows from the FBI, like Garrett McKenzie. He can give you some insight as to what normally happens and what occurred here.

Cameron: We are going to concentrate on OSD, the services are going to take care of their own and other organizations.

Viner: Garrett McKenzie did say something very interesting, he said he was used to dealing with a crime scene that's about half the size of a tent, 10 X 20 feet, not a couple of acres.

Kelly: The other thing he said was that normally, as in Mexico, or wherever he's been, there was no place to put anything and people are not cooperative. It takes months to deal with a situation. But they came in here thinking they would be here for three to four months and were out of here in three and one-half weeks. Usually they could not get equipment or support. Here they asked us for bobcats, for cranes, for shoring. We went out and rented it or Home Depot and other organizations around here brought truckloads of stuff and never charged us for it. They said to call if we needed anything at all.

Cameron: We hear about the huge piles of debris in New York; what about our debris?

Viner: We would take dump trucks and containers down to North parking and lay it out and FBI people would go through and sift it out with little rakes and brooms. Body parts, the Army was here. If the FBI found an individual or a body part, they would call the Army guys who would go in and recover it and bring it out. We still have three steel

boxes over in the heliport—one for body parts, one for plane parts, and one for classified information.

Cameron: The cleanup is not quite finished? How long before you start re-building?

Kelly: Until we get over to the other side, knocking everything down, we are still doing demo and abatement and getting the friables. We will be approximately another four weeks knocking down the building. We're working in areas now where we're putting drywall up.

Viner: We are rebuilding some of the areas now to get people back into the space. We have people living in the C area now.

Kelly: It will be completely down in about four weeks and we will start putting up columns in about two weeks, putting on the second floor. It will happen quickly.

Landa: We sure hope you meet that September 11 date.

Kelly: Don't you worry about it for a minute. Anyone who wants to bet on it, be my guest. Bet the farm.

Cameron: Thank you very much.