

9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Robert Gray

My name is Bob Gray. I'm currently serving as a battalion chief. I'm at Arlington County Fire Department. On September 11th, I was serving as a captain on the technical rescue station. I don't remember exactly what time it was, but we heard there was a plane that went down, you know, in the area of Crystal City. You know, that's our jurisdiction. That's just beside the Pentagon. By the time we reached Arlington, we were very clear that there had been a plane had gone into the Pentagon. We were thinking, "If this was intentional, what else could be going on? We got our stuff, took a fire truck over to Station 1, rolled up, and there was already several armed guards covering that fire station. Shortly after they deployed my group into the Pentagon. I still remember we got off the bus with our gear and walked up to the front of the building after we had received our assignment. It was just unbelievable, and my thought was just, "This is just feels so evil" you know "that somebody has done this, and they did it with a loaded plane." I was like, "You gotta be kidding me."

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It was just, you know, overwhelming. Our job was to find survivors, and it was obvious on the first floor, once we got all the way to where the plane had hit, that there weren't any survivors in that general area. It was really remarkable because you'd be on the second floor and you'd find a room that was absolutely pristine, more on the third floor than the second, but a room that hadn't been touched that's surrounded by complete destruction. The duct work down on the floors, the file cabinets completely ripped apart, and then one room when there's not even but a light layer of smoke on the walls, a flag's hanging, a magazine's sitting on the desk. I guess it was how the gas vented through the buildings under pressure, and then blew some areas up and preserved others. So, you know, you just knew—I think we knew intuitively that within the first half hour that we weren't going to find anybody alive, but you know, you wanna be as diligent as you can and just keep searching. I didn't leave the scene until about 12:30 that night. The first couple days, we might only shore a couple of the three columns a shift because debris had to all be processed. We had a pile of debris that was airplane parts. You know, there was a lot of things that had some green primer on them, and then all the honeycomb type stuff

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that's inside the structural sections in the wings. You knew that was an airplane. When it was all said and done, I think there was like six tractor trailer loads of just airplane parts. And then we had building parts. They went into a different pile. The goal was to get the building completely shored up, and at the same time, an equal goal and parallel goal was to get the bodies. And to get the remains and to get the personal possessions of the people from the building. And we were able to do all that at the same time because, you know, the debris was in some places seven feet high up against the columns that we had to shore. At the very end, we set up a closing ceremony for the Technical Rescue Team. We got a flag from our uniform section, nailed it up on a 4x8 piece of plywood, put the name of the team, called everybody back that was with TRT. I know there was over forty for Arlington and I don't know how many from Alexandria, probably another twenty. And everybody got together, I said a couple words, we had request one of the clergy from the NDW [Naval District Washington?] to come over, and he said a prayer, and then we all went over and paid our respects. And that kinda closed the incident out for us.

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