

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
September 11, 2001 Oral History Project, 2001-2004



Neal Lauro
May 7, 2002

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell
Transcribed by Unknown
Digitized by Katy R. Kukulich

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Information in [] added for clarity. Interview content has not been altered. The original typed transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SEPTEMBER 11th ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
CAPTAIN NEAL LAURO, U.S. PARK POLICE
District Commander, New York Field Office

Conducted by
Janet McDonnell, Ph.D.
May 7, 2002

Fort Wadsworth, New York

START OF TAPE

- Janet McDonnell: It's May 7. I'm Janet McDonnell and I'm here with Captain Neal Lauro to talk about the Park Police response to the September 11th attack. And maybe just to start if you would tell me what your position is here. Describe it a little bit for me.
- Neal Lauro: Okay. I'm the district commander for the U.S. Park Police and I have command of the Staten Island Station and the Statue of Liberty Ellis Island Station for the Park Police.
- Janet McDonnell: Just to start right in with September 11th, when did you first learn of the attacks on the World Trade Center?
- Neal Lauro: I received a telephone call telling me that the north tower of the Trade Center had been struck by a plane. That call came from my son, who was on an express bus heading into Manhattan where he works. Like I guess everyone else, we just assumed it was an accident. And I grabbed Lieutenant Dave Buckley and Sergeant Frank and we drove up to the overlook at Fort Wadsworth. It has a clear view of lower Manhattan.
- Neal Lauro: And a few minutes after that, we saw the second plane coming across the harbor. And at that point, I knew what was happening, but we kind of hoped it was just a plane that had been diverted because of the first incident. You know it was a very helpless feeling because you knew what was happening and there was nothing you could do to stop it. And then we watched the plane strike the south tower.
- Neal Lauro: And then from that point on, we were kind of busy just, I contacted the Statue commander and told him to evacuate. Luckily, visitors had not arrived yet for the day. And I ordered Fort Wadsworth shut down. And then I jumped in the car and went to Ellis Island.
- Janet McDonnell: How many officers do you have on Ellis Island? What does the organization there look like?
- Neal Lauro: At the time, working that day there were about 8-9 people total for the two islands, Ellis and Liberty.
- Janet McDonnell: Okay. So, after you saw that second plane hit, it sounds like [you] concluded that it was something other than pilot error. What were some of the things going on in your mind that had to be done?
- Neal Lauro: Well, initially, my thoughts were to prevent any further attacks, if possible. There was a report of a third plane coming in. And that report also went through New York City. They were advised of the same thing.

Luckily, it turned out not to be true. I felt that if we were able, we evacuated the Statue of Liberty. And we kind of put a cordon of boats around it. I pulled all of my people off of the Statue, after the residents were evacuated, because I knew if a plane came there was nothing we could do about it anyway. But if something came by water, we had a chance to defend the place.

Janet McDonnell: Was there an existing plan for evacuating the Statue of Liberty?

Neal Lauro: Well, not really, but we've done it before. But like I said, luckily it happened early enough that no visitors had gone to the island yet. So, it was just a matter of getting staff off.

Janet McDonnell: Okay.

Neal Lauro: And once that was accomplished, then we set up Ellis Island as a triage center. Throughout the day, I would say, about 400 either evacuees or injured were taken to Ellis Island and treated and - I forget the exact number that was transported to local hospitals, but it wasn't as many as anybody thought because there weren't that many survivors.

Janet McDonnell: Did it occur to you very early on that Ellis Island could be used in that way? I mean were you thinking about this at the same time you were thinking about the need to evacuate the Statue of Liberty? Thinking about well, how can, that we can make use of Ellis Island?

Neal Lauro: Well, we've done it before. The Secret Service has used Ellis Island as a possible evacuation point when there are big events having to do with the United Nations and stuff. And its proximity to Lower Manhattan and the fact that it has a bridge that you can drive over makes it a viable site.

Janet McDonnell: Did you augment your force?

Neal Lauro: Right. We were augmented by officers that work out of the Brooklyn or Jamaica Bay unit. Most of them came by boat. We had one sergeant, who was fishing with a couple of friends in New Jersey, and he had his friends take him by boat to our marine unit location in Rockaway, New York. And he took command of one of our vessels that came up. That's the kind of response we got from people. And we also received a call from Federal Hall asking for assistance. So, we were able to get a sergeant and a couple of officers from Brooklyn to Federal Hall.

Janet McDonnell: I believe I read somewhere that this event and that assistance, particularly to Federal Hall, was the first time that the U.S. Park Police had been in or supported the Manhattan Sites. Is that correct?

Neal Lauro: Well, we're there now, and it appears to be permanently. But we've gone there on occasion at the request of the superintendent of the Manhattan sites for different things, some special events. A couple of investigations where we've - but it's only been for a day or two at a time, and it's, although there was one other time during Desert Storm, we had people at Federal Hall 24-hours a day. And that was the last time that we've been there on a regular basis.

Janet McDonnell: How does the coordination occur between the Park Police and the superintendents, or the Park Police and the Park Rangers?

Neal Lauro: Well, we know the superintendent of Manhattan sites because he worked in Gateway for years, so that makes things a little bit easier. But the coordination on that date and subsequent dates was smooth. I mean people just had it in their mind that they weren't going to let any obstacles get in the way of what had to be done. And I saw that from everybody I dealt with, Park Police, National Park Service. It was a real nice thing to see where something needed to be done and it just got done. Usual stuff that goes on, you know, minor impediments were just overcome.

Janet McDonnell: What challenges did you face that first day and in the days after, I guess, as well, in terms of communication systems? I would imagine that landlines were down. Were you relying heavily on radios or NEXTEL systems?

Neal Lauro: Well, one of the problems we had and we're solving it as of today, the Park Police at Statue and Ellis are on a different radio system than the rest of the New York contingent. Today is the first day we're all on the same system. And it was something that we had planned to do, but it always got pushed aside because of whatever, money, or politics, or whatever. So that was an impediment. It was almost impossible to get a signal on your cell phone because everybody was on their cell phone. We do have phones that have a direct connect feature, kind of work like a radio. Without those, we would have been in serious trouble, so we were able to communicate; at least the commanders were able to communicate effectively, using that.

Janet McDonnell: So, is that how you worked around that radio problem, by using those phones?

Neal Lauro: Yes, for the most part, for the most part. And a lot of places lost landline systems. Fort Wadsworth had no phones for a couple of weeks. But we worked around it using the cell phones and whatever else was available.

Janet McDonnell: And who were you communicating with? With the Park Police headquarters at Floyd Bennett Field? Were you communicating from here

directly to the chief's command post in Washington? How did that all work?

Neal Lauro: Well, what happened, my boss, Major Wilkins, responded directly from here to the New York City command post at One Police Plaza, so I was able to speak to him directly using that NEXTEL phone. I also communicated with my counterpart, the captain in Brooklyn, as he was sending reinforcements up to us, and the lieutenants that were working. I really didn't have any contact with D.C. because we had our hands full dealing with our own things.

Neal Lauro: And one of the big problems was with rumors because the rumors that were going across Ellis Island were that not only had New York been attacked, but that the Pentagon, which was true. We heard Lincoln Memorial, the Capital Building, the State Department, the Supreme Court, a building in Chicago, and a plane crash outside of Pittsburgh. And, luckily, just the Pentagon and the one outside of Pittsburgh were true. I mean those were the rumors that were flying around the island and we couldn't confirm them.

Janet McDonnell: How did you get good intelligence information? Did that come from Major Wilkins, what he would hear in the command center, the NYPD center that you just described?

Neal Lauro: Yes, and a lot of it came from a TV that was on in the superintendent's office. Myself, a Lieutenant Pappas, who's the commander of the Statue Station, along with Superintendent Diane Dayson and her assistant, Cynthia Garrett, we were within two feet of each other I think the entire day, trying to work out different things. Like I said, a lot of the information we got came from CNN.

Janet McDonnell: You mentioned that you quickly got in your car and went to Ellis Island and you set up shop there. I mean is that where, you used that site as your command center?

Neal Lauro: Right.

Janet McDonnell: Okay.

Neal Lauro: I mean, like I said I ordered Fort Wadsworth closed because there were facilities here that could have been targets. The Coast Guard has a large facility here. The Army has a Reserve center here. Defense Logistics Agency has a facility here, plus the Verrazano Narrows Bridge I think would be high on any target list. And at Floyd Bennett Field, over in the Jamaica Bay unit, the New York City Police Department has their headquarters for their emergency services units. So that's a possible target.

However, I think the Statue kind of stands alone. And that's the way we kind of played our hand. If anything was going to happen, it would happen at the Statue.

Janet McDonnell: Well, tell me some more about some of the other missions, going back to that first day. You mentioned briefly the marine units. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Neal Lauro: Well, we have one boat that's assigned to the Statue, but it's not always in use. It's kind of, the officers that man it were on kind of collateral duty boat operators. But we have a marine unit that's usually assigned to Gateway. And we put, I believe it was five boats we were able to put into service pretty quickly. And they not only transported reinforcements up to Ellis Island, but they were used to form a perimeter around Liberty and to evacuate, assist in the evacuation. And one of the groups that they evacuated was the Secret Service New York Field Office. One of their members was a Park Policemen at one time. When their offices were destroyed in the Trade Center, he made a phone call, because his people needed to get moved to New Jersey and we were able to connect and get them out of the city.

Janet McDonnell: Tell me a little bit more just about the evacuation process and how efficiently that worked? I'm looking for some sort of assessment. Did it work out smoothly?

Neal Lauro: The evacuation of Manhattan?

Janet McDonnell: Well, both, actually both. But right now, I was just thinking of the evacuation of staff from the Statue.

Neal Lauro: Well, that was pretty simple due to the fact like I said there were no visitors. So, the small number of people that live on the island and the staff that was there, that was pretty orderly. And then we eventually, with the superintendent's concurrence, we moved all non-essential employees from Ellis Island. They were put on a staff boat. I think they were taken to Brooklyn and dropped off. But I'm not positive where they ended up.

Janet McDonnell: Okay. Now the other much more dramatic evacuation story. I mean that was clearly something that you and your staff had never done before. Just tell me the process of how that worked and what some of the challenges were?

Neal Lauro: Well, it seemed like boats kind of appeared from out of the blue. And I couldn't remember the list of types of boats, and agencies, and companies that they belonged to that pulled into the dock at Ellis Island with evacuees. But then I also heard that at one point some boats would not

come to Ellis Island because it's a non-union site. This was after the fact, and they took them instead to other places in New Jersey. Whether that was true or not, I haven't attempted to confirm. It just seems to me at a time like that that would be something that you would ignore, but I don't know. The people that came overlooked like, I mean they were covered with ash, the same pictures that you see on TV. Some were pretty beat up. Others were just shaken up. And what we did is we set up a database with all of the information of the people that were brought over.

Janet McDonnell: Actually, that sounds like a very daunting task, to get that information and key it in, from people who had just been through a trauma?

Neal Lauro: Well, I think part of the triage process is just getting information out, personal information, name, address, telephone number of someone we can contact. And then from those lists we compiled this database, which we eventually turned over to New York City Police because some of their people that were injured were evacuated, as were some fire fighters. And that was done for the simple fact that information was tough to come by, so we figured if we had this database and let's print it out and let people know where their friends and relatives were. It would make things easier and it kind of worked pretty well.

Janet McDonnell: Well, how long did this process go on, the evacuation, and then how long were people actually being taken care of there on the island?

Neal Lauro: It went on into the afternoon and then we received word that, because we had set up a temporary morgue at the request of New York City on the island. And we received word that we were going to shut down and any other EMS or medical personnel were to go to the Javit's Center. And we passed that information along. And we had, someone said that the number was about 100 doctors that showed up at Ellis Island because I guess they couldn't get into the city, so they were directed there. And they were standing by, and unfortunately, there wasn't much for them to do because the number of injured just wasn't there. And that's the same. I mean I've seen documentaries on TV and other sites had the same experience.

Janet McDonnell: I need you to clarify something for me. The morgue, was it just set up for that function, or was it actually used for a brief period?

Neal Lauro: No, it was never used. It was set up, a temporary morgue.

Janet McDonnell: That's what I thought.

Neal Lauro: And we even had one set up here on Staten Island at one of the parks on Staten Island that they ended up never using. That was just precautionary, and they never did get used.

- Janet McDonnell: So, were you also coordinating with the New York Police? Were they also supporting this effort at Ellis Island?
- Neal Lauro: No, actually more with, we had some support from the New Jersey State Police and Jersey City Police Department, because Ellis Island is connected to New Jersey. Only a small portion of it is, according to the Supreme Court now, part of New York. The rest is part of New Jersey. So that was, they're the people we work with at Ellis Island more often.
- Janet McDonnell: So, there was already established—
- Neal Lauro: A relationship.
- Janet McDonnell: Relationship there that I would imagine made things much easier.
- Neal Lauro: And I don't one to leave out the State Rangers that work at Liberty State Park. And we worked with them before, we worked with them during, and continue to work with them.
- Janet McDonnell: Do you and your officers ever train for responses like this with some of those other police elements?
- Neal Lauro: We have with the Jersey City Fire Department, we've done some exercises, but with the police departments, no, we haven't. And the problem with those two sites is they never close. So, it's difficult to come up with a training
- Janet McDonnell: That's right, where you can actually use the facilities themselves. So, I'm just trying to get a picture of, I've been to Ellis Island, but I'm trying to imagine it filled with 400 or however many, I've seen different figures on how many people were actually brought there. Was it a chaotic scene? I mean just describe it.
- Neal Lauro: No, not at all. In fact, if you've been there when the place is open, that day it was like a ghost town, because when it's open, it's crowded, a lot of people around. And it was kind of deserted, even though we had these people coming in. It wasn't chaotic at all. I mean everybody, the EMS people that worked there and others that came in, everybody knew their job and did their job. Like I said, there was none of the BS that usually accompanies things such as this. People just did what had to be done. That's the biggest thing I take away from that day, the cooperation.
- Janet McDonnell: Well, what were the challenges in organizing that effort and providing some structure to it? I can't imagine that these different police elements that came there and participated or the doctors who showed up and

participated—I mean there must have been some structure in place to give it organization so that those people could be used to the best advantage. How did that work?

Neal Lauro: We didn't allow anyone on to the island unless they had proper identification. We could make sure they were a doctor or an EMS personnel and that bridge, that small bridge that connects Ellis Island to New Jersey, comes in handy for that. There were a couple little bumps in the road between different police agencies, but kind of one-on-one things that were what we easily overcome. And as I said, we were geared up to do a lot more which became unnecessary.

Neal Lauro: It wasn't that challenging. I guess everyone was doing what was expected of them, so that made it just so much easier. The superintendent and I, and the lieutenant, and the assistant superintendent were right there, and we worked together the entire day, not only planning for what needed to be done that day, but what do we do tomorrow and the next day? What do we do about the residents that need to go back to the island? And when does the island reopen?

Janet McDonnell: I'd be interested in hearing about how all of those decisions were made.

Neal Lauro: Well, the island reopening became a decision that the Secretary of Interior handled. And as far as letting the people go back to their homes, they wanted to go back, so we let them go back. And that was the superintendent's decision, ultimately. She's responsible for it, but that's kind of the way it worked. We didn't have anything in our hands that said that there was still a threat to the Statue at that point, and people wanted to go home.

Janet McDonnell: It sounds like your telling me is that the people who came to help, they knew what needed to be done, had the professional skills, so you didn't need some sort of structure, say regular staff meetings or reporting. You didn't need a reporting system for them to report to you or to the superintendent about what they were doing.

Neal Lauro: No, well, what happened, they reported, and we had an area set up where we were going to treat the victims. And the concessionaires were bringing them out cookies. I mean everybody pitched in and we let the EMS people do their thing and we did our thing, and it worked out. Like I said, that was the one day, I mean we always look to cooperate with each other, but that was the one day that the cooperation was amazing, at least from my point of view.

Janet McDonnell: There was obviously an awful lot going on that first day. I'd be interested in hearing you talk about how you set your priorities, just in a general

sense, the process that you used. I know it's kind of a vague question, [but] you were in a unique position and I'd like to hear you tell me how you sorted through it all.

Neal Lauro: Well, the initial priorities were (A) to prevent any further attack if possible, and (B) to mitigate the damage from any further attack. And once we shut Fort Wadsworth down, and once we had Liberty evacuated, that kind of took care of 90 percent of that. Like I said, if a plane came and hit the Statue, there wasn't anything we were going to do about it. But if it came by boat, we had a chance.

Neal Lauro: And once we saw the F-16s up, that was a very welcome sight. So, you kind of, I think most of the people were operating with one eye up in the sky until the F-16s showed up. And then you knew they were there, and we had faith in what they could do, because as you know there were so many other planes unaccounted for. And we didn't have actual information about that, but we had no knowledge one way or the other, so we had to assume.

Neal Lauro: And then kind of later in the day, it became apparent this was going to be something long term and we stopped calling people in early because we knew we needed people later. Once we had sufficient staff to do what we needed to do, we knew we couldn't bring people in and have them work until the next morning. So, we started calling people in for the afternoon, and they ended up staying over until the next morning.

Janet McDonnell: I wanted to ask you about calling in your officers and the kind of shifts you went into, 12-hour shifts?

Neal Lauro: Well, a minimum of 12-hours, some 13, 14. Some continued to work 13 and 14 hours. Twelve hours as a rule. Right now, the officers are on a two-week schedule that consists of 6 days one week, 5 days the next. And some of the days are 12 hours, some are 10 hours. We're eight months later.

Janet McDonnell: Did you feel at any point that the Force was stretched thin?

Neal Lauro: Oh, it still is. And the fact that the air marshal program is dipping into our strength.

Janet McDonnell: What program?

Neal Lauro: The federal air marshals. We've lost about 10 percent of our people in New York to the air marshal program so far. And we started out behind the 8 ball, and I hear from the rangers they were in the same boat. We were down about 20 percent to begin with, and then we have all of this

extra responsibility that we haven't had in the past, and the 10 percent lost to the air marshals. We're still trying to dig out.

Janet McDonnell: It sounds like your telling me you're still not back on, what I call a normal schedule.

Neal Lauro: Not even close.

Janet McDonnell: But on the schedules you had before September 11th.

Neal Lauro: Not even close.

Janet McDonnell: Well, what's the impact of that?

Neal Lauro: Well, I think you start to see burnout.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Janet McDonnell: Tell me about the resiliency of your officers.

Neal Lauro: They continued to do their job. As a boss, I know what's happening to them, what we're asking of them. There's not much right now I can do about it, but there's light at the end of the tunnel. We do get some new people the end of this month. It should take some of the burden off. My goal is to get back to some normalcy, not only at the Statue and Manhattan, but these other parks, to get back to doing the police work we've done in the past.

Janet McDonnell: How has it affected some of that other police work, those other missions?

Neal Lauro: Well, it stretched the entire Force thin. And we've been able to accomplish our mission, but it's been close. We haven't had an instant where we weren't able to respond to it effectively, but it's May. The busy season is upon us and it's going to be difficult. I have no doubt we'll do what needs to be done, but I'd like to be able to tell an officer every now and then that he can have a day off. Absolutely go away for a weekend. That's the toughest thing is to just deny leave slip after leave slip.

Janet McDonnell: Did you have the same, I can't remember the exact terminology, but the work-to-home program, where people could take cars home with them?

Neal Lauro: Some people do.

Janet McDonnell: Did you find, on September 11th, was that helpful at least to have had that program?

Neal Lauro: Oh, yes, it was. It was helpful and we've expanded it since. But it was difficult to get in and out of the city unless you had a car with emergency equipment. And that helped quite a bit.

Janet McDonnell: Well, we've talked about the Force being stretched. What about other resources? I mean did you have the equipment that you needed? Budget issues, I mean how, there is no emergency funding for this.

Neal Lauro: Well, from September 11th until the end of the fiscal year, we're at a meeting, my boss and I, Major Wilkins, and we got a phone call and they wanted to know what we needed to get through the rest of the fiscal year. And we knew about what it was costing us on a daily basis, so we just multiplied that out and it came. And then we sat down, and we figured out what we'd need for 2002 and we put in a request for personnel, and equipment, and whatever, and it came. And that's never happened before. So that was a good part.

Janet McDonnell: Gratifying, I would imagine.

Neal Lauro: Money is not the issue right now. It's personnel.

Janet McDonnell: That sort of leads to another question. Do you think that the event and the way the Park Police responded to it has changed or has affected the way, first of all, the way the Park Service as an agency views Park Police? I'm talking about maybe greater visibility within the service for the Park Police. Or the second part of the question would be, has it changed the way the public views the Park Police and the role of the Park Police?

Neal Lauro: I'll answer the part two first. I think as with all other police and fire fighters, we're held in a lot better esteem. I mean New York City. I read something recently that the New York City Police Department had a 74 percent approval rating across the city. That's totally unheard of. And we kind of like ride those coat tails. They're the big brother. They're 40,000 strong. We're at 100 and change here.

Neal Lauro: As far as the Park Service, you know, that's something I think you'd have to ask them how they view us. But I will say that they were damn glad to see us that day and they told me so. So, you know, take whatever you want from that, but that's...

Janet McDonnell: Well, I guess part of what raised the question in me was certainly getting the budget that you just described certainly seems like some statement of the importance that the agency places on you.

Neal Lauro: Hopefully. I know Director Mainella has been up here a few times.

Janet McDonnell: Has she?

Neal Lauro: And she's great. And she's given us anything, the support that we've needed. She's been here a number of times.

Janet McDonnell: What kind of, has she provided any guidance, direction? I mean what message did you feel like you were getting from her?

Neal Lauro: Well, the first time she came up, the message just by her being there let everyone know that she cared about the workforce up here. I mean the attacks were not on Park Service property, so some people were under the impression that, well, what does it have to do with NPS sites? They were ignorant of the fact that they were kind of all interrelated here. And Director Mainella came up, and she toured the place, she talked to people. She spoke to the employees. And it was appreciated from top to bottom. Just her presence here was a major factor for a lot of people. I know it was for me.

Janet McDonnell: She came for the reopening of the Statue?

Neal Lauro: Yes, but she was here.

Janet McDonnell: She was here before that.

Neal Lauro: She was here in September. She was here in. She came for the reopening. And she also came to present us with the unit citation from the Secretary, at least those three times. She's probably here more than that. But in all of her visits, I don't know if you've ever met her. She's amazing. She's amazing.

Janet McDonnell: That's great. That's great. Well, has September 11th changed the way you view your job at all?

Neal Lauro: Yes, I mean right now, my, outside of the personnel issues and trying to deal with those, I mean it's kind of like everything is geared to making sure the Statue remains standing in my mind. I've gotten some comments from other parks, or people from other parks saying, "Yes, we know we're second class right now." And that's the just the way it is. Sorry. Nothing I can do about that. And the importance that on the national level that is placed upon that Statue, and rightly so. I mean when the Secretary says, "You won't open that monument until I say so." Well, when has that ever happened? That's the way it has to be. The Statue is the number one priority.

Janet McDonnell: That's certainly a change since September 11th. Well, looking back at, and it sounds like you and your officers are still really in a response mode to some extent.

Neal Lauro: I would think so.

Janet McDonnell: But just looking back at the past months, what do you think worked particularly well? I mean what do you look back and say, gee, I'm really proud of this. This couldn't have gone better. We couldn't have done this better. What do you look back at?

Neal Lauro: The way the members of this organization stepped up. The people that were assigned downtown, people that were assigned to the Statue, and Ellis, and to other sites, the way everyone stepped up. I mean to give you an example. A sergeant who's on a vacation in Florida on the day of the attacks and can't get a flight, he rents a van and drives back just because he had to be here. People, officers just, everybody wanted to be one of the contributors, and they did, and they stepped up. That's not always the case. Sometimes you have to drag people kicking and screaming. Like I said, the way everybody stepped up and did what had to be done, that's the most gratifying thing that I keep with me.

Janet McDonnell: Is there anything you would have done differently?

Neal Lauro: I don't think so. We protected our sites and so to me that was successful. I would have liked to have started out not behind the 8 ball where the personnel was. I mean if we had started out at or near our level of personnel that there should have been, it would have made things easy that day and subsequently. But there wasn't anything any of us could do about that then and there's nothing you can do about it now.

Janet McDonnell: And is there anything that you would do differently in terms of coordinating with some of those other, local agencies? You know, the local and state, State Police. I don't know who else you might have been dealing with.

Neal Lauro: I guess on the whole there weren't any problems. I mean everybody was just, people wanted to do something. You know, I'd get calls from San Francisco. Can you get us there? They're 3,000 miles away and they feel kind of helpless because they can't get there. Some of our officers would work a 12-14-hour shift and they'd go to Ground Zero and dig after. And many of us went down there. That was good because it was, while you were busy, you didn't think about what was happening or what had happened. So that helped, I think, keep a lot of people sane.

Janet McDonnell: Did you think you and your officers' bond with the Manhattan Sites is stronger as a result of September 11th?

Neal Lauro: We knew a lot of the people and when we needed to be there, we worked well with them. There hasn't been any friction that I know of.

Janet McDonnell: Well, is there anything that I haven't asked about? I have this feeling that there is probably more about the marine units. I've heard stories of them plucking people out of the water and that kind of thing that.

Neal Lauro: Like I said, I wasn't on any of the boats. But I did speak to them and they did pull people out of the water that day and days afterward when there were secondary collapses. But I think you need to speak to them because they were right up close and personal. We were on Ellis Island and it's close, but it wasn't as close as they were.

Neal Lauro: I think you need the people who were on Ellis Island and the plane flew over their head, those are some of the people that I think would have something important to say. The officers and we have three rangers assigned there, the three rangers. I'm sure you're planning on speaking to them. But I think you should speak to them.

Janet McDonnell: And you do sound very proud.

Neal Lauro: I am. I was never as proud to wear this uniform as that day. Never as proud.

Janet McDonnell: That's great. And it seems like a good place to stop.

END OF TAPE