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Malcolm Willoughby
July 9, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
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September 11, 2001

Oral History Documentation Project

Northeast Region, National Park Service

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Arlington House
(Interview No. Unlisted)

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INTERVIEW DATE: July 9, 2002

PLACE: Arlington House

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START OF TAPE

- Mark Schoepfle: July the 9th, 2002. All right, Malcolm, my first question to you is going to be from the first time you were aware of something going on. What happened?
- Malcolm Willoughby: The first time I was actually aware of something going on, it was a little odd. I have a little pocket radio and I don't normally wear it, but for that morning, I was out planing doors and I was working by myself and it wasn't a noisy work I was doing. So, I was wearing a pocket radio and I was listening to the pocket radio. I remember that it was a really, really a beautiful, crystal clear day. And then I remember them coming over on the radio and saying that somebody crashed a plane into the, tower, and they said that the plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers, and they said they didn't know if it was by accident or if it was an act of terrorism. But the first thing I thought was well, it was an act of terrorism because it was an absolutely beautiful day and it was clear in New York, and there just wasn't any they were going to accidentally fly a plane into the, one of the Twin Towers. So, that's when I originally was aware of something going on, and I can't — I think I was still over on the site side when, the second plane hit the Twin Tower.
- Malcolm Willoughby: And I came over here, and I have a little TV in my office. And I came over here around nine o'clock. I usually come over and take a break. I turned the, the TV on and, of course all the television stations were covering it. And they were showing what films they had of it at the, at the time.
- Malcolm Willoughby: So, I was actually in here when, we heard the crash into the Pentagon. And it was loud enough up here that it actually shook the building, and it was obviously something that we weren't used to. You know, we're used to having cannons go off for the burials, and that sort of thing during the day, but this is obviously way out of the ordinary. And it was kind of funny because I guess the way the hills are it sounded like it was coming over from Fort Meyer, not from the Pentagon.
- Malcolm Willoughby: And a bunch of us went out the back and stuck our heads out the back door here, and there were some contractors working in Jack Metzler's yard, I guess. And they came out the gate and were sticking their heads out the gate, and the cemetery guards were sticking their heads out of their buildings.

- Malcolm Willoughby: We were all sticking our heads all out of the buildings, all looking at each other going and what was that [laughter]?
- Malcolm Willoughby: And I guess it was shortly after that that somebody noticed that the smoke was rising over from near the Pentagon. And we went over there just to look and it was kind of funny because — again since I'd been wearing the radio, I mostly left it on and the amount of rumors running around the town was just crazy, because I remember the people saying there was a car bomb at the State Department, there was a fire outside the White House. And like I said, you could go out, when all these rumors started coming in and also when we went over to look at what was going on at the Pentagon, of course, all the fire trucks came through from Fort Meyer and all that. You could look out over DC and you could see there was not a dag-gone thing going on. I mean, there was all the black smoke coming out of the Pentagon, but there wasn't any smoke coming from anywhere else in sight. So, you knew all the rest of it was just rumor. But you really — with all the rumors flying and everything — you really did have a feeling like we were under attack. It was really kind of scary.
- Mark Schoepfle: Then what?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Well, we were kind of — yeah, we weren't sure what we were supposed to do, if we were closing the site and what was going to go on. We were waiting — communications were really — they're not very good here over the radio anyway and most of the cell phones were all down. And we couldn't get any instructions from Headquarters.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Now, there's another thing. I never heard anybody else say anything about this, but shortly after the plane hit the Pentagon, maybe half hour or so, there was a military transport plane, prop plane came flying up like between the ravine, yeah, between here and the, Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers. And he was really low. I know what was going on then. And then the other thing that scared us for a while is that we heard a boom which, in retrospect, must have been a sonic boom from one of the planes that had scrambled. But we heard another boom. We were wondering what that was, so— But I'm trying to think what else went on. [Laughter]. Mostly, we just tried to get a hold of Headquarters, find out what to do. We found out we were closing down the site, and it was kind of interesting the way some different people reacted. One of the guys working for me was working in the garden. He just left all his tools out in the garden and had to leave [laughter].

Malcolm Willoughby: And the other guy was all upset that the one hadn't put his stuff away because he wanted to make sure everything was put up right and put away before he left out of here because it's, you know— So, it's kind of funny because I guess the younger guy was just, — I guess he was really in shock and upset and just had to get out of here. You know, he was all worried I guess about his family and all and—

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: But some people were just like, well, you know. It — tomorrow's going to come. We have to make sure we keep doing things we're supposed to be doing, so I guess Frank was in charge that day, and he'd decided that once he got the, notice from Headquarters that we could close down the site that he decided who to let go. And I told him I'd stay around for a while. I — you know — wasn't in any huge hurry to get anywhere and, so I decided I would hang around at least until the night guards came and relieved us.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: Then after that we'd leave. And so most everybody pulled out of here pretty fast. You know, they were all in a hurry to hit the road, and I guess they — afterwards, I found out they were all in just a huge traffic jam. But I had a completely different experience leaving here — around 2:30 I guess is when the night guard came in — it really was like a ghost town. There was hardly anybody on the road when I left at 2:30. It was very strange.

Malcolm Willoughby: The other thing that was weird, during the day while we were staying here, just watching the site, we had the FBI agents come in and — I haven't covered that part yet — and they were looking — when they heard the second plane was in the air, they were afraid it was coming for the Pentagon, too. So, I guess they evacuated everybody from the Pentagon area, including the emergency workers. And the FBI came up here and used the front of the House as a command post. And there was only two of them at the time, and they were just scanning the sky, looking for the fourth plane. But it was kind of funny because we realized then that the FBI's communications weren't really great, either. I think actually, three of them in total came up to the site. Two of them were in front, and one of them was somewhere else. I don't know if he was back over this way or where he was.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

- Malcolm Willoughby: But, suddenly, they were pulling out of here and so we asked them what was going on. And they told us that the fourth plane had hit Camp David. So — [laughter] — so obviously all their communications weren't so great, and they weren't getting all the best information either.
- Malcolm Willoughby: It was kind of funny because I live in Frederick County. We live up on a hill, just east of the city and I called — we got a pretty good view from up there — I called my wife, and she goes no, there's nothing going on up here. She said if a plane had hit Camp David, we would have been able to see the smoke from where we were. So, again, it was just bad information.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Then a little later it was kind of funny because there was a car came up just — must have been seven or eight FBI agents [laughter] in this one car. They were just all crammed into this car and they came up and they were looking for the other three that had been up here. And we said no, no, they pulled out about — I guess they came up about, 15 or 20 minutes after they left, looking for them. So, we told them they'd left.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: And then a little later during the day and then all through the day, it was really weird. Just saw a lot of people walking through here, usually in uniform, sometimes not. But I guess they were just all from the Pentagon and just walking home because, you know, all through the day, you were just having, you know — And usually, they were by themselves. They weren't even walking with anyone else.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Walking through the cemetery up towards Fort Meyer. I don't know if they had other places they had to report to or if they were just walking through to get towards home or, or how it worked out but...
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: So that was a little strange, too.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you stayed around longer than most of rest.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. Frank and Keith and I, I guess, were. I left — I think I pulled out of here about 2:30, two or 2:30, and then Frank and Keith might have been around a little bit longer. Most of the staff, I would say, probably pulled out by about ten or 10:30 so.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: So—

Mark Schoepfle: Well, let me backtrack here for a moment just to see if I've got things down. You had been listening to a pocket radio that you —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — normally just normally don't take to work.

Malcolm Willoughby: Well, they usually have it here, but I normally don't wear it because I'm usually running around doing different things. I have to be on and off the phone. But that morning, I knew I wanted — it was a really, like I said, it was a beautiful day. I had about three or four doors on the site that I was just going to hand plane down. And I figured it was a really nice, clear, dry day. I was going to prime them. So, I figured I was going to be working by myself and doing something that wasn't noisy. So, I went ahead and was listening to the radio.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you had a lot of work to do and you figured because it was a nice day, and so you figured you might not be back in touch with the office that —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right. Right, exactly.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Then what happened was that, you were listening to it and, somebody announced that one of the planes had crashed into the Towers.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And you knew right off the bat that this was a terrorist act —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — because it was a good day and they never could have made any other mistake like that.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right. Yeah, it just is the first thing that popped in my mind. It was kind of funny because that is the first thing that popped into my mind is that they're saying well, we don't know if it's an accident or not, and I just thought, no way, there's no way it could be an accident, you can't accidentally fly into the, something like the Twin Towers on a day like today.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: But the other thing was — I gotta say — is it never occurred to me that something was going to happen here. It had just never occurred to me. You know? I didn't start thinking — I wonder if they're going to hit the Pentagon or if they're going to come down and hit the Capitol — until it actually happened. I just thought all this was happening in New York, and it never occurred to me that it might happen here.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: So—

Mark Schoepfle: That's interesting. Because, I mean, some people sort of had a lot of disbelief when the first plane hit and oh, this can't be —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — you know, until the second plane hit that they —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — ooh, something's wrong here.

Malcolm Willoughby: Well, you know? I have an uncle that had a plane. I used to fly around with him a lot. And so, I've had families in aviation and I just like — I know a fair amount about history. I knew about, I guess, it was a B-25 had hit the Empire State Building, I guess, in the '40s, during World War II and that was in heavy clouds. So, I mean, you know things like that can happen but just from flying, on a clear day like — those are the kind of days you really wish for when you're up in the air. They're just beautiful days. You can see forever. So, I knew there's just no way.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. So, you were basically, as this was going on, you heard that somebody crashed a plane into the Twin Towers, that this was the first plane, and when the second plane hit, you said you were, you had what? Gotten back here or were onsite?

Malcolm Willoughby: I think I was still onsite. I was still working when the second plane hit. And you know? Even when the explosion happened, I guess maybe that is the first time I really thought that — it occurred to me that something could be going on down here, too, because after the second plane hit, I guess, to tell you the truth, in a lot of ways, I just had — I guess — not a very high respect for terrorists. I thought generally they were kind of inept [laughter]. And you know, I guess, probably, I just didn't realize that they were going to be so organized that they could pull off what they pulled off.

Mark Schoepfle: So that by the time, the second plane had hit, you figured these guys are good.

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah, but it — yeah. But it still didn't even occur to me. You know, to me, it was still, well, something happened in New York. It still didn't occur to me that it might — here would be next, so—

Mark Schoepfle: Then what happened was you got back up to the building here?

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: And it was just as soon as you got up here, that the plane hit the Pentagon.

Malcolm Willoughby: I was probably in the building, probably five or ten minutes when the plane hit the Pentagon.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. About what time did you figure that was?

Malcolm Willoughby: Geez. The first plane hit before nine, I know. It was ten of nine, probably, must have been, I probably got back up here around 9:30, 9:35. I guess the plane hit the Pentagon — what — 20 of ten? Quarter of ten? Something like that? I can't remember.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Yeah, and what it did, it shook the building.

Malcolm Willoughby: It did. It was a very loud explosion that shook the building. Again, I remember the windows rattling a little bit. It was a big boom. And like I say, I mean, it gets noisy up here because of the airport. We have all planes flying over and with all the — when they set the cannons off for funerals and those sort of things and they also sometimes usually, seemed like, it happened more often before but not as much as late, but they used to have fly-overs also for whenever they were burying pilots.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: So, you know, you'd have F-15s or 16s or F-14s or something flying over low. You know? So, it used to be — it's usually pretty noisy. That was the other thing is after it all happened and they shut down the airport and it was really quiet in the air, and you're just not used to it being that quiet. I think that just added to the kind of surrealistic feel of — with all people straggling through in their uniform and then it being so quiet in here. It was just very different.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. You bet. And — but at first, you figured that sound had come from Fort Meyers, so it was kind of difficult to really locate that sound.

- Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right. Right. And I can't remember who, but somebody noticed that there's — like I think you could see even the smoke from here pouring out over that way, and we realized — well, no, it must have — I realized then it must have just reverberated out the hills or something. It just sounded like it was coming over from Fort Meyer area, so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. And you went over to look. Is that — I'm tracking right?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Well when I went over to watch the Pentagon?
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Well, we walked right over — no, the other side of our flower garden, you could have a pretty good view of the Pentagon. And, and you know, to tell you the truth, I don't know if I really even looked at it from there ever before [laughter], but you could see all the smoke come pouring out of there and you kind of just went over and could see where you had a good vantage point to see what was going on.
- Mark Schoepfle: What else did you see besides smoke? Did you see the plane, the fuselage or anything like that?
- Malcolm Willoughby: No. I don't remember seeing the plane fuselage or being able to tell what exactly had happened there. I just remember all the emergency vehicles and then — I can't really say — what was it? I can't remember. The Cemetery Historian came by at one point, and he said he was over at the Tomb of the Unknowns when the plane flew over and he actually saw the plane as it was coming towards the Pentagon. And he said and his first thought was well, he's too low, he'll never make the airport. [Laughter.] So— Besides the fact that it was a really weird flight pattern coming into the airport anyway. They're mostly coming in on, on this side and over this way — from the southeast, or whatever.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sort of from the Northeast?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Generally, they're flying out when they leave the airport, over, like, the Northwest side. And he saw it coming in almost like from the Southeast or somewhere so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And then, at that point, you had a definite feeling you were under attack.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

- Mark Schoepfle: And at that point, nobody was quite sure what to do, and you were waiting for some kind of orders as to whether to clear the area?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right. Right, exactly. Well, we closed down the House. I remember that. I think even before we got any instruction from headquarters. We decided we could go ahead and close down the House, and we were going to have to clear people out of the area.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. And then by that point, it was you, Frank, Pete — you were pretty much the ones that were sticking around after about ten o'clock.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right. It's probably ten to 10:30 I think most people pulled out.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. And you stayed there until the night guard relieved you at about what? Two o'clock you were saying.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right. I left out about two. I don't know if the night guard had actually made it there yet. I think Frank and Keith were still waiting for him.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. What was it you were doing during this time? What, what tasks were you engaged in?
- Malcolm Willoughby: You know? We really didn't do [laughter] that much. Mostly Frank would kind of position us so, at first, so we could keep an eye on the road, see if anybody was coming up the road, and then we were just kind of keeping an eye on the area. Mostly, spent a lot of time hanging around with each other a little bit and just talking. So...
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: It was kind of funny because I remember Frank decided to keep Keith because he's — he used to be a Law Enforcement Ranger, and so he decided he would be a good one to have around — so just using — keeping Keith since he didn't have a gun. I mean what was he going to do? Throw rocks if they came up here? [Laughter]. So.
- Mark Schoepfle: [Laughter]. Good point. [Laughter]. So, at that point things were pretty much over with at 2:30. And on your way home, things were pretty much a ghost town. You, you had no trouble getting back up
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- Malcolm Willoughby: No. It was no problem whatsoever. Yeah. It was probably the least amount of traffic I have ever seen on the road. I just — nobody was on the road. There's a clear shot at — and the next day, I heard from everybody how, what a terrible nightmare they had getting home and how clogged up the roads were — as I said, geez, I left around two, 2:30 and it was just — I sailed right through. And I'd see a few vehicles and, and that was it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. What did you do after 2:30 then? You got home. Then what?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Geez, that's a good question. You know, it's kind of funny. I know some people's [laughter] — some people are wondering if my wife was worrying about me or whatever. It's just like no, my wife was [laughter] — wasn't worried about me in the least bit. And I wasn't really worried about the kids. I heard that a lot of people had come to school, pick up their kids, and then a lot of people were upset and all. My big concern was I knew people that — it wasn't good friends — but we knew some people worked at the Pentagon and, knew some people — because their businesses they were in — would have to go down to the Pentagon for certain things, and I was just wondering, hoping, that everybody we knew was all right. So— Geez. That's a good question. I don't really remember much when I got home. You know?
- Mark Schoepfle: Did you have an emotional reaction at all? You sound like you were pretty —
- Malcolm Willoughby: You know, that was funny because I was mostly okay until I called my parents. I called my parents I guess around 11 or so just to let them know that I was still at work and I was all right. And of course, they weren't worried about me either [laughter]. So, it was funny. The other thing is, my wife's father, my father-in-law — he remembers very distinctly.
- Malcolm Willoughby: He was at a Redskins game when they attacked Pearl Harbor, and he always used to tell a story about how they were sitting there and the Redskins were playing and how all these — General So-and-So, report to your office, Admiral So-and-So, report to your office — that they kept on making these announcements over the loudspeaker. They kind of knew something was up, but they didn't know what it was. And then the other thing is that he said they found out the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was just — most people's reaction's like, "where's Pearl Harbor?" Nobody had any idea where it was.

Malcolm Willoughby: They didn't even know if it was part of the United States or not. Well — and then to think of it here is just like well everybody knows where New York was, and it really did feel like it was more of a personal attack on the country I think, than even Pearl Harbor was.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: So—

Mark Schoepfle: So, when you finally called your parents, that's when you remembered there was some emotion to that?

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. Yeah, I remember kind of breaking up on the phone and my Mom — I just — So— Well, like I say, you know? And I figure they lived through World War II, they— [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: They — they all seem to be taking it pretty well and weren't too shocked. So— So, I guess it felt much more personal to me.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Well, on the day after, what happened then? What were things like?

Malcolm Willoughby: You know —

Mark Schoepfle: On the days immediately after.

Malcolm Willoughby: You know, I think a lot of people spent a lot more time just talking with each other. I don't know how much work really got done [laughter]. You know? We were just — you know, I guess the people were still in shock that that something like that could happen here. Spent a lot of time just going over what different people experienced on that day. That's, like I said, when we found out what a traffic jam everybody else had been in. And I said well, geez I didn't have any problem whatsoever. And I remember mentioning to people about all the people in uniform just walking through the cemetery. You know?

Mark Schoepfle: You said that was kind of a surrealistic situation. What, all this, all these people walking through here in uniforms, what, going home, doing what?

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. I don't know if they were reporting or —

Mark Schoepfle: Did they say anything to you or —?

Malcolm Willoughby: No.

- Mark Schoepfle: — it was, it was kind of going home—
- Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. Yeah, everybody was just, just seemed really introspective, just kind of walked — that was the other thing is that there was a fair amount of people who were walking through the cemetery but it didn't seem like there was very many that walked in, like, either in pairs or in, in groups. They almost always — just walking by themselves, so— And like I say, it was just very quiet and just, just so different than what was normally around here.
- Mark Schoepfle: So that in the days afterwards, were, did things go back the noise pick up? Things kind of pick up or —
- Malcolm Willoughby: Well, it was, it was quite a while before they opened the airport again so that— It was really quiet before that — visitation was way down, but we still had people come in to visit. But of course, the big thing they wanted to see was the Pentagon. You know, everybody was asking can you see the Pentagon from here, where is it? So probably, you did more — I bet you we still get some of those, but for the longest time, we got — all everybody wanted to know if there was someplace they could go to, to see the Pentagon from here, so—
- Mark Schoepfle: I mean, were people asking you that as well?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah, and there, some people would ask us “Where were you? Were you here when that happened? What was it like?” Those sort of things.
- Mark Schoepfle: And what did you tend to answer? Just go over your responses. How did you, what was your feeling when you, when you, when they asked you those questions?
- Malcolm Willoughby: I think I didn't mind being asked. I didn't mind answering. I just told them I was over in my office, in the [inaudible] Building. I could see the smoke. You know, if they were really interested, I'd tell them other things like that — the fact that the sonic boom scared us, that we thought it was another explosion. And that I still, still wonder what in the heck that cargo plane was doing [laughter]. That was such a weird thing [laughter]. So I had no idea what that one was doing.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, what happened then in the weeks later on? In the ensuing weeks?

Malcolm Willoughby: Like I said, the airport was closed. It was very quiet. It was kind of funny. On the good days, I guess you could see up high, maybe like cloud trails from the fighter jets — were still in the sky.

Malcolm Willoughby: No more sonic booms from there, I noticed — at least around here. Things started to get back to normal, but it wasn't right, right away. It just seemed like, and even now, it just seems like we still don't have the visitation we used to. It doesn't seem, I guess a lot of people are much more afraid to travel or something, so—

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. When you're saying things are back to normal — and this is kind of digging at things, but what gave you the impression things were back to normal? If I could dig into that a little bit.

Malcolm Willoughby: Probably just the big thing here is we just have a lot of work we have to do and just it's never ending. And it wasn't too long before we just had to get back into flowing and make sure we're getting — now, a lot of — of what we do here is, on the maintenance side, is custodial — just from the visitation — and things dropped off a lot because the visitation dropped off. It we didn't have as much cleaning to do, but we kind of tried to take advantage of that and tried to get a lot more of the — there's just the maintenance type things that we don't, often get a chance to do, to go ahead and start more projects and try to get little things done, so—

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Hold on just a minute.

Malcolm Willoughby: Okay.

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START OF SIDE 2

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So basically, you had shifted a lot of your work from the custodial to the maintenance?

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah, and certainly in the weeks right after. We were trying to get a lot of just little projects around here, trying to get them accomplished and out of the way. So—

Mark Schoepfle: Examples.

Malcolm Willoughby: Ah, geez. That is a really good question—

Mark Schoepfle: Planing?

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah, I guess — finish up the doors, doing some painting, doing things like that. You know, things that you'd be a lot more concerned when it usually is normally really crowded, that you

don't want to be interfering with the visitors too much, and you don't want the visitors being able to mess up what you were [laughter] doing. So—

Mark Schoepfle:

Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby:

Just that sort of thing, so—Should check my log. But I remember that was one of the big things — I wanted to try to get some stuff done. I guess I was actually getting ready to hire somebody. I had a lot of just paperwork and all do, also.

Mark Schoepfle:

And these are things ordinarily you would have put off for a little later or—

Malcolm Willoughby:

Yeah, probably. Yeah. You know, normally you're putting some things off and doing others. It depends on who's screaming the loudest, or what needs to be done but—

Mark Schoepfle:

So as far as you're concerned, things have been pretty back, pretty much back to normal by now, except that even now the visitor's visitation's a little bit down?

Malcolm Willoughby:

Right. It sure, yeah. Sure, seems that way to me, so—

Mark Schoepfle:

What are the indicators that it's down? I mean just from your standpoint.

Malcolm Willoughby:

— just from my standpoint. Sometimes, we get around here — it was hard just to get around, either in a vehicle or just even walking. You'd be constantly stopped and asked questions. You still are stopped and asked questions to a certain amount, but just the physical presence of everybody would make it difficult just to get around the site easily, so—

Mark Schoepfle:

Mmhmm. And now that's a little bit easier?

Malcolm Willoughby:

Yeah, it is. There's a lot more gaps, a lot more ways to get through, it seems.

Mark Schoepfle:

Anything else like that?

Malcolm Willoughby:

No, I can't think of anything else.

Mark Schoepfle:

I was always curious for those sorts of things just to get at because a lot of times that might help somebody look at some kind of indicator for if they want to track visitors —

Malcolm Willoughby:

Right.

Mark Schoepfle:

But somebody may actually have data on that.

- Malcolm Willoughby: Right, they — actually, we do. They would keep data on that. They do a count on who comes through the House, too. But you know, even before, and I know our percentage — what are we down like 15%, 20% or something like that on House visitation, I guess. But it even seems that it's even less than that on the site, and it seemed like before we might probably have more people from the site that wouldn't go through the House or—
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah—
- Malcolm Willoughby: It just seems a lot less crowded.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, that's what I was wondering, because in a lot of cases, the parks — they would be able to get data on visitation if they went past a certain point. But if we asked other people who were out, say, on the campgrounds or out on the grounds or something like that —
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: — picked up information — they picked up on visitors who may have slipped through.
- Malcolm Willoughby: Right. Right, right. And actually, in a lot of ways, they could kind of like — a lot of times — we get like a cattle call. People just line up and go through the House. You'd look at them and figure well, geez, you know? What percentage of these people are actually taking something out of here, or are they just lining up and going through because everybody else is lining up and going through.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: So, that's probably down on that a little bit, I'd hope. Also, we've got a ticket system in the summer, so that makes a difference, too, but— But like I say, it just seems like there's a lot less people around the site.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Well, looking back on all this, what are some of the things that have impressed you the most, oh, let's say maybe lessons learned or just experiences that stick out in your mind?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Geez. I don't know. I guess everybody takes a little more seriously — just try and keep an eye out for things and not, you know. Oh, [laughter] I remember one. I didn't tell you this either, but I forget how long ago this was. It's probably only — it was only a couple months ago. I came in, in the morning, and my maintenance guy tells me, he says there's a box in the Ladies' Room. I said, really?

- Malcolm Willoughby: I said, what kind of box? He goes, I don't know. He says, I can't see anything on it. He says, do you want to call Park Police?
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: And I said yeah. I said stay out of there — I'll call the Park Police and we'll have them take care of it. We have no idea what it is. And I went over there and poked by head inside the Women's Rest Room to see it and I said there was a pretty big box in there. So, I hung around for a few minutes, and I guess two Park Police cruisers came up and one officer came out and he was talking to me. Oh, he said, you've got a box in the Women's Room. I said, yeah. He goes, what would you think? I said, it's probably got old clothes in it or is empty I said, but I said I figure this is your [laughter] territory, so this is the, and I remember very distinctly, this is the last time I go in a Rest Room with a Park Policeman, [laughter] because he goes walking in there and he just kind of moves the thing with his toe [laughter] and decides it's empty and takes the top off of it. And it was — but once he — you could get close to it and — look around and you could see it was it was from some floral shop or something. It was a big floral wreath, but like I say normally, I would have thought nothing about going in there and picking up the box, even though I know for years they've been telling you you've got to watch out for these things. But normally, I never would have. But probably, my maintenance man never would have come up to tell me there was something in there. We just, he would have taken it out himself. So—
- Mark Schoepfle: That's a good point. Well, if you're looking back just from your experiences with friends and talking about what went on in the days after and in weeks and the months after, what kind of a memorial might we want to be thinking about? And you know, if we're going to memorialize this or if there's going to be any kind of plaque for the memory of what went on, well, I shouldn't say plaque, but any kind of memory of what went on, on that day—
- Malcolm Willoughby: I don't know. That's a good question. I know this is kind of funny. My father was a DC firefighter, retired from there, and so it was kind of amazing to see all these people talking so much about all the heroes and all the firefighters and stuff. I think I have a tendency to see firefighters more as individuals [laughter], and you know, I've always had these old stories from my father. So, I know there's a lot of different types of firefighters.

Malcolm Willoughby: And some of them weren't so hot and it's kind of funny that [laughter] they're all being put up on this pedestal just like, oh, yeah, some of these guys are really [laughter] pretty bad. And you know, a lot of them my father worked with wouldn't go into burning buildings [laughter]. So— So, like I say, he always had a lot of good stories about — I forget. He said he was in a big warehouse fire once [laughter], and he was working with this guy. And he said the guy looked over the top and, apparently, the whole thing was just flaming over and coming towards him like a wall and it's like next thing you know, this guy drops down white as a sheet, goes "we've got to get out of here," and my father's like, "well, what about the pipe?" He goes, "the hell with the pipes, we've got to get out of here," and he goes running out. And got out there, and he asked my father, "well, weren't you scared before?" He's like "well, no." [Laughter]. He said he hadn't seen the wall of flames. He didn't know what's going on, so— But I just thought it was funny that — and a lot of them, I mean, certainly deserve to be heroes. I mean, and they lay their lives on the line a lot, so—But you know, he'd always tell stories about ones that would never really go into buildings or they'd be hanging around the trucks the whole time, too, so— [Laughter]. So, I don't know. It's just funny. I think the one thing that was really interesting, that really struck me is that the people — the plane crashed in Pennsylvania once they found out what was happening with the planes, and still knowing that they probably weren't going to make it they went in there and tried to take control back over. So—

Mark Schoepfle: That does stick out in your mind.

Malcolm Willoughby: Oh, yeah. So, you'd like to think you'd do the same thing in the same situation.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Are — this has been very interesting and, very informative on — on what you've been describing. Is there anything that you'd like to mention that I didn't think of asking?

Malcolm Willoughby: No. You asked a lot more than [laughter] I really thought about. Just like what was I doing the day that, like I say, I just remember being home with my wife and kids. I don't remember much after I drove up the road. And so, I must not have been that much — I'm sure we watched the TV a lot and watched what had happened in New York. My wife has a brother that lives in New York, is married, and we were wondering — I guess his wife was within a couple blocks of the World Trade Center, so—

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Malcolm Willoughby: And I don't think it was until later that night or maybe the next day that we found out that they were all right, because we just hadn't heard from them, so— I mean, there's certainly other concerns going on, but I just don't remember that being that much different once we got home [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Malcolm Willoughby: So—

Mark Schoepfle: I think that was true for a lot of us really.

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, we'll always remember where we were, but we weren't doing much wherever it was we were at.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right, right. So—

Mark Schoepfle: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to know about us?

Malcolm Willoughby: Were you guys Downtown? What were your experiences? [Laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: Actually, much less than yours. We didn't hear a thing.

Malcolm Willoughby: Really.

Mark Schoepfle: I didn't even know what was going on until my daughter called me up at ten o'clock and said that all three areas had been hit.

Mark Schoepfle: We didn't know anything about the Pennsylvania thing at that point. And then about 15 minutes later, we got the order to evacuate the building.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Which, to us, was kind of strange because normally, in snow, you have the stages for evacuation.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right, right.

Mark Schoepfle: So, I figured, boy, it's going to be a scream getting home. So, I just wandered around for a while because there were rumors that the Metro was shut.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: And so, when the time came to finally — I was going “well, this is going nowhere” and, and I was beginning to question the need to walk 25 miles home.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: So, I said well, let’s check the Metro out. Turned out the Metro was open the whole time, so I jumped on.

Malcolm Willoughby: Wow.

Mark Schoepfle: Spent the rest of the day at home and then tried to solve through all the conflicting directives. One, on the TV said get back to work.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right.

Mark Schoepfle: Then my supervisor went no, no, no, stay home.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: So, several of us showed up figuring well, you’d better trust what’s on TV because you’re not sure that your supervisors had for information. Then, you show up there and they go, “go home.”

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: That was it for the time being. I didn’t hear anything, nothing really directly happened—

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — and I think that was probably true for most of us.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right. But you know, it’s funny now that you’re talking. One of the things that I really had to — looking back on it — kind of a sense that since I was listening to the radio, I knew about this stuff and it felt like, you know in retrospect, it was almost like I’m not — I don’t like talking too much about real gossip or anything [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Malcolm Willoughby: I almost felt like I was going around and informing certain people and I just like, I was wondering, “Who should I inform, who’s going to get too upset and I shouldn’t inform?” You know. And what to find out or whatever. But it was kind of funny because I know I let my gardener and maintenance men know right away what was going on. And I think I might have told Karen.

Malcolm Willoughby: I remember Karen being in my office watching the TV aghast at everything going on, but it was kind of funny because it's like I had the information and I didn't know what I should do with it exactly, if I should tell everybody I guess, guess, did we have a — we didn't have morning meetings then. Did we?

Karen Byrne: [Inaudible].

Malcolm Willoughby: I think I came in and might have told Frank, told you [Karen] and told a few people what, what I'd heard and because I guess right before then, I mean, nobody really knew what was going on so.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Well, that went for a lot of us, and we didn't have any radios on or TVs on which —

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: We were stuck in our offices. We didn't know what was going on.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: If my daughter hadn't of called me, I don't know when I would have found out.

Gary Scott: That wasn't my experience.

Malcolm Willoughby: Really.

Gary Scott: I was at NCR, and every morning at my break I take a walk down the Potomac.

Malcolm Willoughby: Oh, okay.

Gary Scott: And as I walked out of the building, the guard said, they've hit the World Trade Center, and I didn't want to deal with that. I just wanted to take my walk.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right.

Gary Scott: I said I'll deal with that on the way back from my walk. So, I got about halfway down, looking down the Potomac River, and the Pentagon comes into view.

Malcolm Willoughby: Oh, sure.

Gary Scott: And then I thought, oh, my God, what about the Pentagon?

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Gary Scott: And I turned, and I saw the fireball go up.

Malcolm Willoughby: Oh, did you really? Geez.

Gary Scott: I thought about it.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Gary Scott: What was interesting in your testimony, you said that you didn't even think about this. But for some reason, I thought about it.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Gary Scott: And I looked there, and there was the fireball. So, I saw it.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right. Like I said, it was just so weird because it it's just like, "well, the attack's going on in New York," and it never occurred to me that it might happen here. So—

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Malcolm Willoughby: That's weird. And you would have thought, because, like I said, I knew the first plane and right away I knew that, oh, it's just no way it was anything but terrorists. And then the second plane, you would have thought well maybe I was sort of thinking well, it's, maybe something's going to happen down here. I don't know. Just in disbelief I guess for it all.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. I know a lot of people had, I mean, that's one thing I've been finding very interesting is just the disbelief people had when they first saw it, that — even more so than yours — that, "oh no, this can't be a terrorist, had to be somebody didn't know what he was doing, got lost, wasn't watching what he was doing" or something.

Malcolm Willoughby: [Laughter]. Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh, and it wasn't till the second one hit the second tower that people up in New York — people went uh-oh, there's more to this.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right. Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Then some went well, what's going to happen next, and others were oh, they're going to get us.

Malcolm Willoughby: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: And then the rumors started and so on. And then, there was no communication because nobody could use their cell phones or anything. Then a lot of people mentioned things like — you know — and the reactions were interesting like that.

- Malcolm Willoughby: Right, right. You know, it's very funny. Like I said, I still had the radio on for a lot of that, and that just all these people calling in: Oh, there's a bomb at the State Department. There's a fire outside the White House. And they're just like — they ought to stick somebody out here in front of this House [laughter]. You can see a whole city on a day like this and say, "no, that isn't true." You know? There's nothing going on in the State Department, nothing going on in Commerce, nothing going at the White House. You know? All you see coming out of there is the steam venting from the same buildings that you always see it coming out, but it's just, like I say, that was the big thing. It was just an incredibly beautiful day. Just really crystal clear so. So anyway—
- Mark Schoepfle: Any other questions, folks?
- Karen Byrne: Some of the other men have said in their interviews that after the attacks they really wanted to do something, to help out. Did you experience anything like that?
- Malcolm Willoughby: I guess it would be nice to think I could do something, but no, I don't. Normally, I give blood sporadically. I didn't run out to give blood. I didn't — that's very true because everybody was running out to give blood and all this stuff. And I was just like, no. I'd say probably more of my concern was I've got a son who's 18 and a son who's 16, I'm just wondering are they going to end up having to go at that point. I was more worried than I am now, but I wonder: if you end up having to lose kids or something over this. So—
- Mark Schoepfle: What were you worrying about? Service?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. I'm sure my older son probably, it won't be really an option for him. But my second son's probably seriously thinking of it as an option so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, so, so your older son isn't in the Service?
- Malcolm Willoughby: No, no, no. No.
- Mark Schoepfle: Your youngest one's thinking about it?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah. And also, you got people that are out there so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, how long have you, how long have you been here?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Up here is, just about a year now. Just over a year.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Where were you before?

- Malcolm Willoughby: I was over at Rock Creek for five years, and then was over at Central for about six. And I was [here] now for [laughter] about four, so—But I tell everybody I’ve been kicked out of every decent park in the region so far. I just — no — I don’t have any problems moving around. I’d like to move closer to home but, you know? There’s a decent job somewhere [Crosstalk].
- Mark Schoepfle: Where is —?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Monrovia, Maryland. It’s just right out right next to New Market, Maryland, just west of Mount Airy— up there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Did you join the Park Service out of there, or what were you in, in between?
- Malcolm Willoughby: Actually, yeah. I think I moved up there in December of ‘85, and I started in the Park Service April of ‘86, so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Malcolm Willoughby: We moved up there, and I was building houses and doing additions at the time when mostly it was, started, most of the business, I was working for someone else, was Tacoma Park’s Lower Spring Area, and then they started doing more work down towards Annapolis and Prince Frederick and that’s when I said well, this is getting too, too long a drive. So, I have a brother-in-law who’s, works down at region and had been bugging me for years and, to put in for jobs. And I guess I came in on ‘85 flood money at the C&O Canal. They need carpenters at the Canal. I always ask him, “Have you been doing this for years?” I’ll say “Well, how much do they pay?” and they always tell me, it would always be less than what I was making. I was just like no, I don’t think so [laughter]. But you know, it’s kind of funny because as a little kid, I always wanted to grow up to be a Park Ranger when I was probably about — I remember camping up at Shenandoah when I was probably ten, eight or ten, thinking like oh, geez, what a great job doing the Camp Fire Program and all that. So, I thought it would be a great job but— He’s funny because he was after me for years: “Oh, they got this over here, why don’t you put in for it?” And I’d say how much do they make? And he’d tell me, and I’d say nah, I don’t think so [laughter]. So. So, at that point, I guess the stability became more and more important to what actually I was making and maybe a little less travel time once I started having kids, and so—
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Malcolm Willoughby: So anyway—

Mark Schoepfle: Well, really great talking to you.

Malcolm Willoughby: Yeah, it was, it was fun.

END OF TAPE