

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

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



Peter O'Dougherty
February 1, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
Transcribed by Lesa K. Hagel
Edited by Lesa K. Hagel
Digitized by Madison T. Duran

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

The National Park Service does not have a release form for this interview. Access is provided for research and accessibility via assistive technology purposes only. Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their use complies with copyright laws.

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

September 11, 2001
Oral History Documentation Project
Northeast Region, National Park Service

INTERVIEWEE: Peter O'Dougherty
Chief, Maintenance Division
Statue of Liberty National Monument
(Interview No. 34)

INTERVIEWED BY: Mark Schoepfle, Ph.D.
Ethnographer
Archaeology and Ethnography Program
Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW DATE: February 1, 2002

PLACE: Ellis Island
Statue of Liberty National Monument

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Chuck Smythe, Ph.D.
Senior Cultural Anthropologist
Boston Support Office
National Park Service
15 State Street
Boston, MA 02109

START OF TAPE

- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. My name is Mark Schoepfle and I'm conducting an interview with Peter O'Dougherty on February 1, 2002. Peter, my first question is this, from the moment you were aware that something happened, what went on?
- Peter O'Dougherty: From the first moment when I heard that a plane had crashed into the first tower and we — nobody was really aware and I wasn't aware of exactly what was happening — what I did was I grabbed the camera, my personal camera, and went outside to the Ellis Island fuel dock to take a look. Because my first thought was this is something that never happened and shouldn't have happened but let me take some pictures of it.
- Peter O'Dougherty: So, I went out there. I went out there with my secretary and we stood on the Ellis Island fuel dock. And the first building, it was burning. There was a hole on the inside of the building that you could see on our side. We had a great view. There was about, oh, I guess about 20, 30 people there with us. And we were all standing there and watching. And then I guess about five minutes, ten minutes later — actually, I don't even know the time span — I took some pictures and I took my camera and I was putting my camera down and then I heard another plane coming. Okay?
- Peter O'Dougherty: And we were standing there watching and the plane flew right over our heads. And I looked down and I tried getting my camera on and then as I looked up, I saw the plane impact the second building. At that point, I knew instantly that this was an attack, that this was an intentional act that was occurring — okay — and basically got very angry over the whole situation. And then turned around to my secretary and she was upset. I looked at my grounds foreman and she was on her knees, praying. It was a very emotional instant at that point.
- Peter O'Dougherty: We all stood there for — I took, then I got my camera going and I took a lot of pictures from that point on of what was going on with the building burning and debris falling. Then we started mobilizing and started mobilizing my division. I'm the chief of maintenance.
- Peter O'Dougherty: So, we got all the people — got all the staff together. We brought them to the front of the island to try to organize and see what we needed to get done. We went to the front of the island, had everybody empty Ellis Island into by the flagpole. We were standing at the front of the island. I was standing with Doug Porter.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, was this by the flagpole?

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. We were standing by the flagpole. The first — the first point was the fuel dock and the next point was in the front of the island by the flagpole.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, we were standing by the flagpole and basically everyone was standing in the sun at that point. And I went over, and I told the superintendent that we should get everybody out of the sun. So, we moved everybody back off the tip of the island, back around where the ferries land. And again, I was standing there. I was standing there with Doug Porter. He's the engineer from Denver Service Center. And we were standing there talking about the situation. I was taking pictures and at that time the first building dropped. Okay. And it looked — when the building dropped — it looked like it was being — it dropped from the bottom. Okay. And it looked like the building just collapsed right out from the bottom.

Peter O'Dougherty: Again, people's reactions, people crying and screaming. That point was also — it was never expected. Nobody ever expected the building to fall. I don't know if it was before that or right after that there was a speedboat that came at the island. It was a 40-foot or a 45-foot speedboat that came right at the back of the island towards my staff boat. Full speed. Looked like it was attacking us. At that point also there was probably 200 people, 150 people standing on the seawall at that point. Everybody screamed and started running down the front of the island. So that was a terrifying moment too for everybody, because we thought we were under attack also.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yes. That was before the building fell. I remember now. The staff boat was loading. We were bringing staff off the island and bringing them over to the city. Okay. Right. Then the staff boat — the staff boat departed and went to the city after that occurred.

Mark Schoepfle: The staff boat was already bringing people over from, say, Manhattan?

Peter O'Dougherty: No. The staff boat was bringing people — staff from Ellis Island and trying to get them off this island and trying to get them back to their homes, to the city. Okay. And that was before the first building fell. Then the staff boat was on its way over there and that's when the first building dropped. I don't know if the boat unloaded at that time and dropped those passengers off before the first building dropped.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, then we started setting up. We started organizing a little bit. Seeing what the park could do as far as assisting any of the victims, because everybody knew at that point there was going to be a lot of death in the city. Then we started to get calls from the city.

Peter O'Dougherty: And I don't know the timeframe on how soon this started happening, of when boats started arriving with victims and how many victims arrived.

Peter O'Dougherty: They brought — we set up a triage in the front of the island. Okay. Some of my staff was assisting with that. My staff brought chairs down. We brought — set up tables. The concession — I'll tell you, everybody that worked on this island, they were all heroes that day. Everybody was working great. They really were. It was a team effort from everybody. And that's one thing I failed to take pictures of is how the island was set up and how everybody was organized.

Peter O'Dougherty: We set up port-a-pots, you know. We set up a morgue in the back of the island by the fuel dock within one of my structures back there. The fire department was here. What was funny was when I was in the back of the fuel dock, and I don't — again, the time it just seems like it was flying by. Everything was happening so fast. I remember talking to some rescue people, EMT people. They were from — so it must have been hours that went by. They were from Connecticut or Massachusetts. And they were — they had a — I guess there was about 50 or 60 of these people that were on the back of the island, that came in from off the island that came to assist, assist with —

Mark Schoepfle: Came off the island from —

Peter O'Dougherty: They came from outside the park.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay.

Peter O'Dougherty: That actually came in to assist with the morgue and triage. Then some NYPD boats started bringing some victims over. They landed on the Ellis Island slip. They were taken off. I remember seeing one guy had — it looked like a piece of steel went through his shoulder, came out his elbow. Firemen, there were some firemen that they were carrying off and bringing onto the island. This was just in glancing as we were trying to set up some equipment and items.

Peter O'Dougherty: But everybody, I tell you, everybody was working. I remember Don Fiorino. He was carrying water, helping people get water. A lot of people that were coming on the island when they were very disorientated. They still were — everybody was in disbelief of what occurred. Basically, people were — the staff was just trying to get the people to where they had to go. Making phone calls. I remember one gentleman that came over from the city had a suit and tie on, and you know, he just kept wanting to know when he could go back to his office in the city. So, you know, there was just no reality with anybody of the magnitude of the incident.

Peter O'Dougherty: So that we set up — basically, I myself — we stayed here. I stayed through the night. Nobody could get home that lived on Staten Island. I couldn't get home. I was here with my deputy chief of maintenance through the night. I guess it was about midnight we went to Manhattan sites. We got a call that there was a flood in Manhattan sites. So, we went over to the city and checked that out. We went on top of the building actually. The cooling tower was overflowing. We took care of that problem. We shut down the gas and utilities in the Federal Hall, took care of that.

Peter O'Dougherty: What else? Oh, yeah. During — right after the incident when they were bringing the people over, when they were bringing victims over during the daytime, they were using small vessels to bring them on. So, what I did was I spoke to the superintendent and we put our 65-foot work vessel online and went over to the city with that. I went over with two EMTs and a captain and a deck hand.

Mark Schoepfle: Work vessels?

Peter O'Dougherty: It was my — it's a work vessel. It's a Park Service vessel. It's a 65-foot work boat called Liberty II.

Peter O'Dougherty: And we went over there but there were so many boats in the area. There was just so many people that were already assisting and working. I made the decision to just come back and do what we can do and continue doing what we were doing over here.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. Basically, that's it.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, let me backtrack. It's very interesting. Let me backtrack for a moment. When you had first heard the sound and you grabbed your camera, went out to see what was going on —

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — and you weren't quite — I think like a lot of people — weren't quite figuring out what had actually happened.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Nobody knew in the beginning. At least I didn't personally know.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: And I know my secretary didn't know what had happened originally. We had thought that a small plane had crashed into the tower accidentally.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

- Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. And that's what was announced over the park radio that a plane had crashed into the tower. Nobody had a clue that it was an intentional act. Nobody did.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Peter O'Dougherty: So, when the second plane crashed, you know, I personally knew instantly that it was an intentional act.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Okay.
- Mark Schoepfle: And when you were out there, you were out there with your staff and then just a little bit before the second plane hit there were about 20, maybe 30 people out there.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: This was not by the flagpole, but by the —
- Peter O'Dougherty: The fuel dock.
- Mark Schoepfle: — the fuel dock.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: I just want to make sure of that.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. And that's on the backside of the island, which has probably the best view of the Trade Center.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. And then once the second one hit, it was sort of like you knew what had happened —
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: — people were screaming and praying.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: It dawned on people, I guess.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Yeah. Everybody — I believe everybody at that point knew that it was an intentional act.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

- Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. I remember — it's funny, I remember my grounds foreman telling me that she had told my supervisory captain that it was an intentional act. And he didn't — actually when the second plane hit, he was walking away— with his back to the tower saying, no, you're full of baloney. And that's when the second plane flew over his head too.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, at that point you all decided just to start mobilizing the division, particularly the maintenance people.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And then you moved to the front of the island by the flagpole to start organizing.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Correct. The superintendent called everybody. Everybody moved to the front of the island.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Then you made the decision to get everybody out of the sun, so you moved over. I think you meant — I didn't get what you said.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. We moved to the ferry slip to the south side of the island, which is basically in front of the canopy. So, the whole park staff, concessionaires, contractors, everybody was in the front side of the island.
- Mark Schoepfle: Got it. Okay. And this had been — actually about the time then at this point as everybody was moving over there — the first building dropped?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Well, actually at that point, that's when the speedboat came in.
- Mark Schoepfle: Ah. Okay.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Okay?
- Mark Schoepfle: Go ahead.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. And then after the speedboat, then the building dropped. And you're right, after the speedboat, the staff boat went to the city to drop off the staff and then that's when the first building dropped.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right. And I know, yeah, and did that staff boat come back or did it make its trip?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Actually, it dropped the people off and then came back, but you know, it was probably a mistake that we did drop all those people off because — but who would have ever thought that the building was going to drop?
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Nobody thought that the building was going to drop.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Peter O'Dougherty: You know, that was another shock. It was like watching a movie through the whole thing. It really was.

Mark Schoepfle: I'll bet.

Peter O'Dougherty: You know? I mean, when the second building dropped, the building — it looked like it twisted — every piece of glass in the structure became a piece of cellophane. And you figure it's a 117-story structure, it was like the whole structure just twisted and then it just dropped. It wasn't like — I'm sure you've seen shows where they implode the building one floor at a time, and it falls on top of each other.

Mark Schoepfle: It didn't pancake. Yeah.

Peter O'Dougherty: No. It just like was the whole building just dropped out. It was amazing, the second building. Wow.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, at that point you all were more toward the south end of the island. You began organizing what could people do. You began getting out the tables, the chairs, setting things off for the triage to begin?

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Did you — did you — and you actually saw some of the wounded, but I gather you —

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — all weren't taking care of them directly?

Peter O'Dougherty: No. No. There was — you know, the professionals were taking care of them. There were doctors there. There were people that came over from Jersey City Medical Center. There were people that get paid the big bucks to do that.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: What we were doing is basically assisting as far as setting up light towers. We brought two light towers over. We set them up for lighting. We brought down all the tables and chairs from this building from the third floor and set up areas for people to sit.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. And get them out of the sun, make sure, you know —

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Then as you were talking, then at that point there were probably how many people were — I mean, you were bringing over people from elsewhere, right?

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. There was a lot of assistance coming over the bridge from all over the county, I guess.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: From all over the eastern coast from talking to the people. The people were from all over, different states, Pennsylvania, Maine.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: By the time, after two days, I was here for two straight days, at the end of it there was people from, jeez, coming to assist from all over the place.

Mark Schoepfle: Right. How many people do you figure — just if you could get an estimate — were you taking care of or were coming onto the island to be taken care of?

Peter O'Dougherty: I guess the average boat was carrying about 10 to 15, you know. From what I've heard there was about 150 total. That's what I was told.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. There were a lot though. There were.

Mark Schoepfle: And how many staff did you have here on the island?

Peter O'Dougherty: At that point we probably had about 80.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, another thing that you were mentioning here was that the day went on and you went into the afternoon, I mean, some of this seemed to have happened — what people were describing happened pretty fast.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah, it did.

Mark Schoepfle: The mobilization and everything.

Peter O'Dougherty: It did. It really did.

Mark Schoepfle: And so that by the time the afternoon came on, you know, things were slowing down. And a lot of people reported they were gone from anywhere from 4 to 6 o'clock. They were on their way home.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Right.

Mark Schoepfle: You didn't.

Peter O'Dougherty: No.

Mark Schoepfle: And this is kind of unique. Could you tell me in some more detail what happened after — in the evening as people were leaving and you weren't?

Peter O'Dougherty: Sure. Okay. Well, basically at that point probably the primary reason that I didn't leave is because all the bridges were closed and there was no way for me to get home. And I really wasn't even thinking about leaving. I felt that I had more of a responsibility as the facility manager to stay here on site and make sure that all the operations with all the equipment and everything else was operating okay, so that if there was any other situations that needed to be addressed as far as the park operations.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: Just if we can think back for a moment, what were the things you did? I mean, was there a point where things just kind of quieted down? I know you mentioned you went over — let's see, you mentioned you had gone over to Manhattan, I think, for a while.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. That was at midnight.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Tell me —

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, we set up — during the daytime, like I said, we set up a morgue within my — one of my structures, which is the grounds building — storage building. What we did was we had to remove every piece of equipment out of that structure. We set up lighting in the structure. We set up tarpaulins. We set up mats as a morgue. And we were being instructed by the incident commander who was — I guess, you know, there was doctors — and instructing us on what to do. They had brought over cases upon cases of Tyvek suits and gloves and boots, in case, I guess the EMT staff was going to be dealing with bodies. So, we set that up.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Then what?

Peter O'Dougherty: Basically, it was nonstop through the whole time even up through midnight.

Mark Schoepfle: Keep going. This is good.

Peter O'Dougherty: It goes blank.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, really?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, it's like you're just constantly moving and helping and making sure everybody was, you know, if anybody needed anything. We were moving. They would want the light towers moved to the front of the island. So, we would move the light tower to the front of the island. Then we had to set up different lights on another area.

Mark Schoepfle: This is as it got dark and everything?

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. Once it got dark then we had to make sure that all the areas, the triage area, is lit up right. We had lights set up on the backside of the island for all the vehicles that were parked on the backside of the island.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow. Keep going. This is interesting. I mean this is not a description I get from people. They weren't there, needless to say.

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, maintenance was, again, assisting in setting up all the equipment and everything that everybody else was using —

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: — to do what they had to do. I just wish I would have taken a picture because it would have been a great picture of along the seawall, and it was just about getting dark — no, actually it probably was dark. There had to have been 50 rescuers, rescue workers, EMT people just sitting along the ferry slip in the back of the island, just waiting and diving in. They were all sitting there looking at the World Trade Center as it's burning.

Peter O'Dougherty: And it was a helpless feeling that every one of them had, and that's all that they kept saying is that what are we doing here, you know, we should be over there helping. But they were all basically just standing by and waiting for direction from whoever it was giving them direction.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Okay. So, you were moving lights over, setting things up, just pretty much all throughout the night non-stop.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: You didn't have any rest or anything like that.

Peter O'Dougherty: No, actually, you're right, we didn't. I remember, I was going to — that's right — I was going to leave at 11 o'clock and I had called home and I had said everything seems to be good. My deputy is here, and I'm going to see if I could go home. So, I started driving out the gate. I remember now. I drove out the gate and I met a New Jersey State Trooper. Oh, this comes back. And at that point nobody had eaten and there was a Red Cross truck. A guy — actually it was a pickup truck and the guy was from Red Cross, and he gave me a box of McDonald's hamburgers. So, I grabbed the box of McDonald's hamburgers, and the State Trooper basically said that all the highways were closed and don't even think about trying to get out of the park.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, I grabbed the food. I came back with the food and I gave everybody the hamburgers, and they started eating the hamburgers. The concessionaire was here all night too, and he was cooking, you know. People were grabbing food and grabbing different things from the concessionaire. They did an outstanding job also; I have to say.

Peter O'Dougherty: In fact, some of the staff was in the kitchen because there was only one concessionaire that was left here, and I don't remember his name. But I remember Caval Ordde and Don Farino, they were in the kitchen cooking and helping him set up food, bringing them out to the visitors — the visitors, the victims out in the triage area or the people that weren't injured. Because a lot of people — what was happening is they were getting on the boats. The NYPD and the fireboats and the boats that were bringing people here just to get off of the city, just to get out of there.

Mark Schoepfle: So, this happened about 11 o'clock when you decided to go back, spread around the hamburgers, and then meanwhile, the concessionaire had been, with Caval and Don, were both cooking throughout the night?

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. And that was actually doing — going throughout the whole time, I guess, starting shortly after the whole incident. Then they started mobilizing. They did that for most of the day.

Mark Schoepfle: So, they did that most of the day. Did they quit at any point during the night?

Peter O'Dougherty: I don't see — again, I was doing other things, so I don't know exactly what they did.

Mark Schoepfle: That's okay. Sure. No, I understand. I'm — and I know that some of these questions sound like I'm getting kind of picky. I'm just getting a handle on when things occurred and stopped. And if you don't know, you don't know. And that's the way it is. So, at about midnight— about 11 o'clock, you all were still there. You made your mind up you were going to stay.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Because there was no point in getting back anyway.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: What else happened during that night and into the morning?

Peter O'Dougherty: Got a call — actually I believe it was Lieutenant Pappas — came over and stated that Federal Hall called, and they needed assistance. There was a flood over in Federal Hall.

Mark Schoepfle: That's right. You mentioned that.

Peter O'Dougherty: And myself and my deputy — my deputy used to be the facility manager for Federal Hall. So, we both took the staff boat over. We went over to — actually we took a park police vessel, and we went over to Manhattan and we took the park police vehicle to Federal Hall. Okay. Parked in front of the building, went in, and what we found — we went up on the roof. The cooling tower was overflowing.

- Peter O'Dougherty: And then while we were there, we started securing all the utilities and everything in case of any, you know, if there was any gas leaks or anything else that could occur.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, securing the facility was like shutting off the gas, shutting off the water?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. We were shutting off utilities just in case, right.
- Mark Schoepfle: What was going on over there? Did you see?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Well, it was like, it was dust. It was dust just floating in the air. What amazed me, the streets were empty. There were cops standing on corners. What amazed me is nobody had masks on. Okay. So basically, all the people, anybody that we did see should have had a mask on because it was difficult breathing with this. When we went into the building, there was a thick layer of dust even inside the building. Even walking on the streets and on the ground, there was an inch of dust on the ground. When we went on the roof, okay, there was an inch or inch and a half of dust on the roof of the Federal Hall. And that's what caused the cooling tower to overflow was all the dust that went into the cooling tower basically blocked the drains up and overflowed the cooling tower.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, you were over there for a while, then what?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Then we came back. I guess we must have gotten back 1:30, 2 o'clock. At that point, everything was calming down. I don't know exactly what time the rescue workers left the island. They — oh, yeah, they started clearing off the island. Yeah, the rescue workers left.
- Mark Schoepfle: They had left by then?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. They were going. They determined that they weren't doing any good here with all the victims. You know, what the sad thing is for the amount of people that came over — you know, everybody had assumed that there would be hundreds and hundreds —
- Mark Schoepfle: Of wounded.
- Peter O'Dougherty: — of wounded of people that were injured that needed assistance, but it was so horrific and so large there were no survivors, you know. It was either you survived and walked away from it or you were dead. It was one or the other. And that reality didn't come on until later on in the night. And I think everybody realized that was basically you weren't going to have victims. You were going to have bodies.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Okay. So, at about 1 or 1:30 the rescue — the rescue people were clearing out. What went on then?

Peter O'Dougherty: At that point I think we just stopped for the night. Okay? We figured we'd get together again at daybreak. Yeah, I remember, the next day everything was gone. And now the island was covered with debris from the rescue work.

Mark Schoepfle: So, the next day —

Peter O'Dougherty: The next day the island was filled with gloves and debris. At daybreak, I still had myself, Walter Fleming, Wayne Henry, and a couple of other staff here. Mike Cashin —

Mark Schoepfle: So, Walter, Wayne —

Peter O'Dougherty: Mike Cashin.

Mark Schoepfle: Mike.

Peter O'Dougherty: And what we did, we cleaned the entire island. We cleaned up. It looked like after we were done — I guess that took us till about noontime the next day on the 12th and it looked like nobody was ever here.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

Peter O'Dougherty: Put everything away. Put all the chairs away. There was nothing left down in the front. And the only thing we kept was we kept the light towers out in case they needed them. And we consolidated all of the rescue equipment that they had left. They left all of the Tyvek suits. We consolidated them back into the building and cleaned up back by the fuel dock where everybody was back there. And we got the island back in shape ready to open.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

Peter O'Dougherty: We were ready.

Mark Schoepfle: So that went up until about noon. Then what did you do?

Peter O'Dougherty: I don't think I — I don't remember what I was doing for the rest of the day. I think I got out of here about 4 o'clock, 4 or 5 o'clock. Well, actually I don't remember what time I left.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: So how did you get home?

Peter O'Dougherty: Drove home. And there was no problem. I drove home. They finally opened everything — that's right. I was listening to the radio. Finally, they opened up the bridges and I was able to get out of here.

Mark Schoepfle: And what happened when you got home?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, when I got home then, you know, again you start hearing all the stories of all of the people that you knew and who was it affecting. I had two people on my block that were lost. And then I started thinking about all the people that I knew that worked in the area. My sister-in-law's sister, she worked on the 67th floor of the second tower.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

Peter O'Dougherty: She got out okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Good.

Peter O'Dougherty: She was — you know, they told her to stay in the building. This was in the second tower before the plane hit. So, the first plane had hit — right, she was on the 76th floor where the plane hit, and they were sent — telling the people to go back up. And she told me that she was telling everybody no way, and they just kept going down. So, everybody did get down. They came down the staircases before the second plane hit. So, you know, and that was a mistake that people were telling them to go back up, don't worry about it. And she told me she actually — they all walked over the Brooklyn Bridge. So, then the building dropped out as they were walking. They jumped into the back of a pickup truck. That was her story.

Peter O'Dougherty: The guy — know the picture of the guy, the three firemen with the flagpole?

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. That's been in the Post. It's on T-shirts. Okay? The fireman that's on the right, okay, his name is Billy Eisengrein. He worked for me. When I was in private business, he worked for me for three years. Now I knew he worked for Rescue One. Okay. And that was the company that was lost.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, I thought he was gone. Okay. So that was upsetting to me. And then, I found out — somebody said no, he's on the front page of the Post, you know.

Peter O'Dougherty: And a relative of mine, his wife, she was on the 86th floor, and she was lost. She was talking to her husband for about 20 minutes before, you know, before they were cut off. So, she was lost, you know.

Peter O'Dougherty: You find out about all the people that were affected. It affected everybody. I don't think there's one individual that I know where I live that they didn't know somebody or, you know, was an acquaintance to somebody that was lost.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: It's really something.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. So, what happened in the day — in the ensuing days? I mean, what was going on?

Peter O'Dougherty: In the ensuing days, I was here. I came here every day. I didn't have a day off for — for weeks. Came here, we had — we set up operations. We had daily roll calls. I had skeleton crews coming in. The maintenance division basically didn't shut down. Since 9-11, that day, all the way through, we have not shut down. We did a lot of projects that couldn't be done while visitation was here. We continued working. It was actually good, you know. Everybody stuck together. We really did.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. What kind of stuff were you doing that you couldn't do while the crowds were here?

Peter O'Dougherty: Painting in visitor areas. We painted a lot of areas on Ellis Island where visitors are — you know, visitor areas. The statue also. We're working in the statue even now putting fire partitions up, putting fire doors up. You know, just normal maintenance that you would love to do all the time, but you can't do it because the structures are open.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Peter O'Dougherty: So being that the park's open 364, 7 days a week —

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: — it makes it real difficult for maintenance.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. I mean, this is just as usual or is this the way it is now as a result of this happening?

Peter O'Dougherty: No. It's — you know, this has been like this forever, since this park's been open, that you really couldn't do the work during visitor hours.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, this was a positive thing — that we could actually go in and do things that we normally couldn't do.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. Sure. So, what else were you doing? What else was going on?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, I tell you, we had a lot of training, a lot of rethinking on how we were doing business, as far as in-house in my own division and as far as the park operated —

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: — you know whether we were focusing and doing the right things. And we did. We changed quite a few things; you know — roll calls. We're doing daily roll calls every day where we knew where everything was. We've had a fire drill since then. Something that this park had never had, because of visitation it was very difficult to do. So, we had the opportunity to start looking at these plans and start doing what we had always wanted to do but never really had the time to do.

Mark Schoepfle: You mean like fire evacuation plans and things?

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, we've always had the plans, but it was very difficult to implement them because you're always worried about the visitors and getting the site on-line and making sure the work is being done.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, it gave us the opportunity to actually implement the plans and see whether or not they worked.

Mark Schoepfle: What else?

Peter O'Dougherty: Basically, that's about it, I mean.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, that's pretty good. No, I'm just sort of automatically asking this to see how much more I get. So, this was going on for how long?

Peter O'Dougherty: To me, it's still going on. Okay. Did I take — I think I've had maybe two, three days off since 9-11. There's a lot going on in this park. It's never ending, a lot of issues, a lot of projects, a lot of work, never ending. And it will never end. I have a game plan, a seven-year plan, and that's when I hopefully retire in seven years.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. You sort of have a seven-year plan of what you intend to accomplish?

Peter O'Dougherty: Right. No. It has to last for seven years. It's just a personal joke.

Mark Schoepfle: And from what you're describing, you won't have any problem with that?

Peter O'Dougherty: No, none whatsoever.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, from what you're describing here, what are some of the changes that have come over the park as a result — from the standpoint of your work and just your own experience — what are some of the changes that have come over the park?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, I tell you, I think a lot of peoples' attitudes have changed. I think that people have more of a reality — a reality check that something catastrophic can happen and we're not as safe as we always thought we were.

Peter O'Dougherty: I think people have a different outlook of how they're approaching their daily lives, and I can see it in people. It took a lot of people, to really get over the shock of this whole thing. It took them months to get over the shock of it. So, I don't know whether you really ever get over this, you know. I mean, you still think about it. You can still see the planes crashing and the buildings coming down.

Peter O'Dougherty: And as far as the park goes as operations, I think that people are — I mean, we were all here, the staff that was here has a greater understanding of each other and what we could accomplish. Because as far as I'm concerned, they accomplished a lot that day and through the time period after that. And everybody did an outstanding job. And everybody that was here and did what they had to do — they did it without question. There was no thought. There was absolutely no thought in what anybody did.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Others are describing that too.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: When you say people just did stuff without thought, this is all related to the fact that they just have a very great understanding of what's going on? How does that work?

Peter O'Dougherty: I just think that they knew that everybody — there was a mission —

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: — that they had to do it and there was no thought. That they were going to do it no matter — whether it was grabbing a chair or helping somebody or just everybody did what they had to do.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. And it just went so smooth. It was like, hey, we've been drilling for this for years and it just — everything came together so quick, okay, that it was set up so quick that it was done. It was like it was always there. So, it really went well.

Mark Schoepfle: So as time went on, I gather for quite a while, the park was closed probably till December, right?

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: What else went on before the — before the park was open? Any sort of — anything that just sticks out in your mind?

Peter O'Dougherty: No. Well, as far as my division's operation, okay, and the way we operated is every morning we would have a roll call, okay, and work assignments for the whole, entire division. Okay.

Peter O'Dougherty: And that we usually never did, because again we were, prior to this, in an operation mode. Now instead of being in an operation mode dealing with visitors coming every day and collecting solid waste and just maintaining the park, we were now in another mode of trying to get things fixed that were offline for a long time that we couldn't fix because we had that time period to do it now.

Mark Schoepfle: I see.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, people were assigned. My grounds division was assigned some with B and U, with building and utilities.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, they were doing specific projects with the mechanics where, you know, this normally doesn't happen. Okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Could you go into a little more detail on just what the normal activities are like? I mean, let's remember I don't have a clue.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay.

Mark Schoepfle: I take them for granted.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. The normal activities prior to September 11th is 4.5 million visitors hitting this resource and hitting these islands like a bunch of gangbusters. And the way I look at it is my division makes sure that this island is clean, priority one. All the garbage and solid waste is off the islands. We transport this solid waste between the islands. We haul it off this island. We maintain all the facilities, the utilities. You could picture this. These are two little cities, Ellis and Liberty Islands. I mean, basically they are. We have all the utilities and facilities that the city has. We have to make sure they're operating and maintained, that they can operate, that we're protecting the resource.

Peter O'Dougherty: With that visitation that we normally have of 20,000 to 15,000 a day, it was a never ending, every day. You're just marching along and just following and picking up after the visitors. That's basically what it is. It's repairing the broken items that the visitors have broken and it's very difficult to keep up with. It's — it's a great impact on this site.

Peter O'Dougherty: After 9-11 it gave us a great opportunity, like I said, to really catch up with those things that were down and that we couldn't get up — catch up to. And even now with the slower visitation, it's really — personally, it's great for my division. It's helping us to keep up with the tremendous workload that we do have.

- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. From what you're describing here, priority one is just keeping the solid waste picked up, cleaned, picking up after the visitors for every little thing they do.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: Could you give me some examples of these kinds of things? I'm just a visitor. I wouldn't even know.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. I mean, just gum cleaning up, and everybody's chewing gum and throwing it on the ground. And solid waste is the garbage, the food they're eating, tons. We — God, during high visitation, I guess we're averaging four to five tons a day of garbage —
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.
- Peter O'Dougherty: — solid waste. So yeah, it's tremendous. And then maintaining the facilities, you know, the broken doors, the broken toilets, the clogged toilets, the sewer lines blocked, the sewage ejector system is failing, the cooling tower's not working right. The entire infrastructure, I mean, it's all part of our daily routine, trying to keep it glued together and bubble-gummed, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure. Sure. And you have — you say you have all your own utilities here. Like you could produce your own electricity or something?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Liberty Island, we have a generator. If we lose shore power, I can keep that island going 100 percent. I have a high voltage generator that powers the entire island.
- Mark Schoepfle: Does that — and you normally use that or it's just like a stand-by or something?
- Peter O'Dougherty: That's a stand-by in case I lose shore power.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, the rest of the time you're off the grid like everybody else?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: I see. So that must have been kind of an important consideration when they were picking your area for — as an area that you actually had all of these facilities, right?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Absolutely.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Absolutely. Plus, it's easy access with the piers already set up and everything for vessel landing.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Peter O'Dougherty: So, we're prepared for that, you know, for vessels landing on the island.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Well, now I guess around December sometime, the visitation resumed. How have things gone since then?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, the visitation is very, very light. The visitation is five percent, ten percent of what it used to be. Like I said —

Mark Schoepfle: For this time of the year, you mean?

Peter O'Dougherty: Oh, it's — yeah, it's super light. This time of year, Ellis Island is impacted with all the schools in the area. And from what I've heard is that, basically all the schools, most of them stopped their school trips for this year. So, we don't have the visitation.

Mark Schoepfle: See a lot fewer students.

Peter O'Dougherty: And they're a big impact. The students are a big impact on this resource.

Mark Schoepfle: Just listening to them and the general noise that you hear when they come in, I would imagine that if you're talking things like gum, broken toilets, or anything else that would happen with normal visitation, it will happen even more with them if anything like that's going to happen?

Peter O'Dougherty: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The students are — they're a big impact on the site.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. What are some of the things they do usually that are different? I'm just curious.

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, they're here to have a good time. I don't think the students really, most of the students — I'm sure some of them are here for the interest of the site, but most of them are here for a school trip to have fun.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. It's a field day.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. It's a field day. Have fun. So, some of them are here to get in trouble. Some of them are here to have, you know, be with their friends or whatever. It's a day away from school.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Any examples of things that have happened that stand out?

Peter O'Dougherty: You know, it's just — as far as what?

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, I'm just curious. Of things that they might do that one wouldn't expect. I mean, again, remember I have almost no knowledge of the things that you do. And so that's the reason I ask these things.

- Peter O'Dougherty: The kids, they'll — they'll rip phones off the wall. They'll damage anything. They take their diamond rings; they scratch the mirrors. They'll damage anything.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.
- Peter O'Dougherty: They put graffiti all over the marble, toilet partitions, you know. It's tough keeping up with kids.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. I see what you mean. So once things opened, the visitation has been very light.
- Peter O'Dougherty: Uh-huh.
- Mark Schoepfle: So how has that affected what you do?
- Peter O'Dougherty: It's actually increased our production of, again, keeping, you know, doing the larger projects where we're not repairing as much as we're moving forward on doing specific projects. So, before this when our visitation was really high, we're more or less geared to just trying to keep up with repairing items that are breaking on a daily instance.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. What are some of your projects?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Some of the projects. Okay. Some of the ongoing projects for my division itself is right now we're working on — we call it the fire protection and stabilization of the statue, which is there was a fire report for the Statue of Liberty and we're installing fire partitions, fire break doors, fire alarm systems. We're upgrading, installing additional smoke and fire heads, and reviewing the entire system. That's one of the main projects going on. We're also working with the Ellis Island bridge stabilization. That's another project that's being contracted and we're working on, you know. Other projects.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Well, looking ahead a little bit, what do you see in the future? What do you see down the road as a result of 9-11?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Well, the positive thing that I see with 9-11, okay, and the — moving the security off the islands and putting them on the mainland I thought — I've always thought that it should be on the mainland anyway. I think it's a great positive thing. I'm personally hoping that they don't do as much security as they want to do on this island or on Liberty Island with putting X-ray machines and mags in the statue, but I hear that's probably going to happen. I just hate to really hinder the visitor experience. I think that's really important. That's what we're about.

Peter O'Dougherty: Unfortunately, I could — as a facility manager, as far as the Trade Center goes and ecology-wise, it's a good thing that the buildings are gone for the fact being that the Trade Center by 10 o'clock in the morning would dump their solid waste into the New York Harbor because their sewage system couldn't handle the solid — the sanitary waste from the buildings. So, they actually discharged all the sanitary waste into the harbor. So that's going to clean up the bay a little bit, you know. So, there is a little positive on that.

Mark Schoepfle: I hadn't realized that.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. It's a different way of doing business, a different way of operating. I think the staff is — and I can't say that everybody is more leery of visitors and they're looking over their shoulder at the visitors. I myself am not, you know, not really paying too much attention to the visitors.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. But others are reporting that they are more cautious and eye the visitors differently?

Peter O'Dougherty: I think there was, prior to the park open, there was high anxieties regarding what type of visitors are going to be coming here? And do they have to watch the visitors for terrorism? We've had terrorism training. Everybody went to a seminar regarding that. It's more of an awareness of the surroundings that the staff has and they're looking close — more closely probably at the visitors, the ones that are dealing with the visitors.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Well, if you had a chance — if we're looking down the road a year from now and commemorating this event, what would be some of the important things we should think about in commemorating?

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, the one thing that really annoyed me with the event, okay, was that with the news media, they were pushing the emergency services, which was the fire department and the police department. And you know, with being here and seeing how everybody — there was a lot of civilians. There was a lot of civilians that were digging in and helping, and everybody was a hero, you know. It just wasn't the 300 or 400 people at NYPD and the New York Fire Department. There was — everybody was pitching in no matter what their job was. It didn't make a difference what hat you were wearing that day. It was — yeah, these guys get paid to do this. Okay? But again, on that day, it didn't make a difference who you were. If you were standing there, you were digging in and you were helping.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. So, to commemorate, to me it's the lost ones. That's the sad point. It's the 3,000 people that are lost, you know, not just the 300 to 400 law enforcement and the fire department. So, I'd like to see the 4,000 be commemorated. That's what I'd like to see.

- Mark Schoepfle: No. That's a good point — that's an important point. What else, in that line, for the commemoration? Just those main two points to appreciate what everybody did rather than just the few policemen and firemen?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And also commemorate those who were lost in the Trade Center itself?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right. Yeah.
- Mark Schoepfle: Do you have any idea on what sort of monument or something — what physical structure we might have for this?
- Peter O'Dougherty: Well, it's funny. I tell you. You look at the site now, and I mean, anyone that's going there that lost somebody there, I mean, that's their cemetery.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.
- Peter O'Dougherty: I mean, the Trade Center is their cemetery right now, and I don't know what do you do with that, you know?
- Mark Schoepfle: Think they should build over it or something?
- Peter O'Dougherty: I don't know. I mean, they didn't recover 10 percent of the victims. So, what do you do with that? I mean, everybody thought that they were going to be bringing bodies out of there. They didn't bring — there's nothing coming out of there. You know, I know a lot of firemen that worked the site and everything and they're just pulverized. They tell me stories like the muscles and flesh, you can't tell the difference from the stuff that's laying on the ground. So, I don't know. That's going to be a tough decision, whoever has to make that one.
- Mark Schoepfle: And I understand you're not in a position at this point where you could figure out what kind of recommendation that you would want to make, it's too tough a call, or —
- Peter O'Dougherty: Well, I really don't have an opinion on it to be honest with you.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Well, those pretty much exhaust my questions. All I really needed to do was to get what was happening, again, because I said I was going to focus on what you were doing —
- Peter O'Dougherty: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: — and what happened from your standpoint, and what immediately happened afterwards, what happened in the days, weeks, and months down the line from it, getting some idea of a return to normalcy. And if I'm understanding right, when we're talking normalcy, it really hasn't quite gotten back there yet? You're — things are still a little light and —

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. I don't think normalcy is there. You know, I can still see, even myself when an airplane goes overhead, I feel the hair stand up on the back of my head, on the back of my neck. And everybody I talk to — they've got the same thing. Everybody — anytime an airplane goes over and for the people that were standing outside when that second plane went over, I could see we're all looking up. Everybody is still looking up.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. You all look up.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. We were looking up at that plane. So, you know, it was — the sound was phenomenal, even the sound of the building when the building came down. It's something that I'll never forget.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Peter O'Dougherty: You know, it's just a sound that you can't describe. It's incredible.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, those have been my questions. And — and when I was always asking what else, what then, these kinds of things just one thing after another, just logically build it up around what you knew.

Peter O'Dougherty: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: And you've been really helpful. It's been a really great interview.

Peter O'Dougherty: Well, I've forgotten a lot. So, I mean, there's things —

Mark Schoepfle: Well, sorry.

Peter O'Dougherty: — that come back.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, sorry, you're a human being.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah, it was some experience. Boy, it's something I —

Mark Schoepfle: I bet.

Peter O'Dougherty: — wouldn't wish on anybody. The pictures that I've taken I've given to the park, so you know, I took a total of 48 pictures.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow. Is there a way that we can get a copy of them? Or do we know where those pictures are?

Peter O'Dougherty: Sure. Absolutely. I gave — actually I already gave — they're on the CDs. They're digital pictures.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: And I've already copied 100 of them. I paid for them, and I've given them to anybody that wanted a copy with the understanding that they are not for sale. That you take a copy, enjoy it, do whatever you want to do with it, but don't sell it.

Mark Schoepfle: Any way I can get them?

Peter O'Dougherty: Absolutely.

Mark Schoepfle: Can I call you for them or —

Peter O'Dougherty: You can come down. I have them downstairs. You can get a copy.

Mark Schoepfle: That's great. You mean, I can just get a CD?

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, I'd much appreciate that.

Peter O'Dougherty: Yeah. It would probably be advantageous to you to see what everybody saw.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Peter O'Dougherty: Because the pictures actually, I took — started taking the pictures and I started taking the pictures right after the first plane hit.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Peter O'Dougherty: And the only pictures that I didn't get were of the plane overhead and the plane hitting. But the fellow that was standing next to me, Gene Kuziw, okay, actually he was about 25 yards away from me, he took the pictures of the plane before it hit and on impact. Okay. And what I've done is I've taken those two pictures and I've incorporated them in my pictures. Okay. And so, when you watch them, you see the whole sequence of the whole thing with the buildings dropping, and it's really — puts you into perspective of what everybody saw. And again, I think they should be part of this and part of the documentation of this whole thing.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. I would very much appreciate being able to get those.

Peter O'Dougherty: Absolutely.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Is there anything that I should have asked but didn't ask about?

Peter O'Dougherty: Not that I can think of.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Anything else you'd like to know about what we're up to?

Peter O'Dougherty: No. Nope. I think this is a great thing. I think it's really necessary.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, thank you.

Peter O'Dougherty: I think it needs to be documented, you know. This is going to — we're all going to be gone a long, long time, but this is history. This is something that needs to have an accounting of and what people did. So, it's really — I think it's great. I think it's great that you're doing it.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, thank you. Thank you very much. We'll definitely keep you in touch —

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay.

Mark Schoepfle: — on what's going on. And that's why I wanted to make sure I definitely got your phone number.

Peter O'Dougherty: Great.

Mark Schoepfle: And I've really enjoyed talking to you. Really thank you very much for your time.

Peter O'Dougherty: Okay. No problem.

END OF TAPE