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September 11, 2001 Oral History Project, 2001-2004



Jan Sucholdowski
July 12, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
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September 11, 2001
Oral History Documentation Project
Northeast Region, National Park Service

INTERVIEWEE: Jan Sucholdowski
Maintenance
Arlington House
(Interview No. Unlisted)

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INTERVIEW DATE: July 12, 2002

PLACE: Arlington House

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START OF TAPE

- Mark Schoepfle: This is an interview with Jan Sucholdowski on — July 12th, 2002. Well, Jan, the first question I have got is, from the moment you were aware of something happening, what went on.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I was working in the flower garden at Arlington House. I believe I was trimming at the time. It was a beautiful day. It was really nice, and I was kind of into my work. The skies were blue. There was nothing going on. It was pretty quiet, and it was around break time. It was, I am not sure exactly what time it was, about maybe twenty-five after nine, or so. And I got my truck and was going over to the break room to meet my friend when I heard on the radio that a plane had hit one of the towers in New York City.
- Jan Sucholdowski: So, I got out of the truck, went to the men's room first to wash up, and there was a gentleman coming out. I asked him if he had heard anything about it. I didn't know if it was a hoax, or what, and he stated that he was a cop in New York City, and he would call in right now and find out if they heard anything.
- Jan Sucholdowski: So, he called. I went into the men's room, came out, and I wanted to ask him, like I was curious is anything happened, and his wife was standing there, and she was pointing two, two, and I was like really confused. And he just stopped the phone, he got off the phone for a second, and just looked at me. He says, two planes hit the towers. Right! And I was really like kind of now baffled at the time.
- Jan Sucholdowski: So, and he was speaking to the gentleman, so I went downstairs to tell my friend, Dave, that now, that two planes have just hit the Twin Towers in New York, and while I was taking my lunch down, and I was telling him what was going on, I believe it was Malcolm who came in down there and says "come on out, and come to the end of the garden. Another plane has just [hit] the Pentagon."
- Jan Sucholdowski: And I went out there, and walked to the end of the garden, and the smoke was pouring out of there. You could hardly see flames. It was just completely covered with smoke and they said, they got us again. That's three that hit us.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And it wasn't too much longer after that, that they now had us leave the mountain here, and just head down, and then it was mass confusion with cars, and trying to get over bridges because they were closing the bridges one after another.

Jan Sucholdowski: So, I did kind of get out of work early, but I didn't get home from work until like after five because I just could not get through the traffic. And then I just continued watching things on TV. And that's about it for me.

Mark Schoepfle: Let's backtrack a little bit.

Jan Sucholdowski: Sure.

Mark Schoepfle: Now you said you were — you started out; you were just working in the flower garden. Okay. That's part of your —

Jan Sucholdowski: Normal job.

Mark Schoepfle: Normal activities going on?

Jan Sucholdowski: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: And it was a — yes, I can remember, too — it was a really beautiful day.

Jan Sucholdowski: Real nice day.

Mark Schoepfle: And you were basically into your work, and this was about 9:25, right?

Jan Sucholdowski: Something like that. It was after nine. I wasn't sure exactly what it was, but I know I go on break — about 9:30 I would be on break — so I was leaving to wash up and get ready for break. So, it was around that time, I was pretty sure. I am not sure what time it actually hit the Pentagon. Do you remember what time it hit because I talked to the gentleman for a while and it wasn't too much longer after that. It couldn't have been more than fifteen minutes, or so, when Malcolm was saying that the Pentagon was hit.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, you were on your way to the break room at that point.

Jan Sucholdowski: Correct, and that's underground.

Mark Schoepfle: That's when Malcolm came out and said —

Jan Sucholdowski: When Malcolm came down there and told us.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. You had heard the plane hit the building and you had been talking to somebody who said he was a New York cop. Was this here?

Jan Sucholdowski: Correct. Yes. He was here at the Arlington House, visiting with his family.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, he was just standing around.

Jan Sucholdowski: He was coming out of the men's room when I was going in the men's room. So that's how we got to talk. We kind of passed on the steps, and I just wanted to say something.

- Jan Sucholdowski: He was the first person that I had seen when I heard that on the radio, and I was just confused about it, was I imagining things, or what? And so, I just figured I would ask what the first person had seen, did they hear anything like that? And that's when he said he was a cop, and he had his radio and his telephone with him, and he called right up there, and told them, asked what was going on in New York City.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And so, on your way out, his wife was out there, too, and now going, two?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. She was pointing, because I was trying to ask — I was asking her, was it true, or whatever, and she pointed [gestured] two. I didn't really know what she meant, and then she kind of turned, came over to me and said, two planes hit out there in New York. So, then I was really — I knew it was no kind of joke, or anything, anymore — and I kind of was a little upset about it then. Then I thought the end of the world was here, to tell you the truth, that they were just going to keep hitting us, and we were going to be all gone.
- Mark Schoepfle: At this point, you knew something was really wrong.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Definitely. Like I said to my friend, David — this was confusing because I had my lunch out, and I was taking a bite and everything — started to eat. And then, when Malcolm said that, like it just hit the Pentagon, I threw it in the garbage. So, I went up there, to the Pentagon, looked down at it, and came back, and my friend was still eating, and I just looked at him, and I said, how could you eat right now? Like, how could you eat at a time like this, and everything like that, and he just looked up at me, and he answered the question pretty unique, too. He goes, what do you want me to do? You know? You know?
- Jan Sucholdowski: So, at least he figured, if he was going to be a goner, or whatever, at least he was going to go on a full stomach. I was the one who was going to be hungry, you know, because I just threw mine away. But it was pretty unique, and just hopefully it doesn't happen again anywhere.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, at that point you — and this is your friend, Dave, right?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. I'm sure he wouldn't want me to mention his name.
- Mark Schoepfle: That's okay.
- Jan Sucholdowski: His first name.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Okay. But, at that point, the area was just in smoke. It was all smoke.

- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes, right, a lot, a lot of smoke, an awful lot. It must have only — like probably five minutes, not even — from when the plane did hit it. So, it was like right in — well, it was flames, but you couldn't see flames because there was just so much smoke pouring out of it. And I guess, if I did stay in the garden, I probably would have seen that plane coming in, but I am glad I didn't because I was like right there towards the back, and that is where it came down and hit, and I am sure I would have looked. It would have caught my attention if I had seen a plane going that low, you know? I would have to look because you are used to just looking up in the sky whenever you hear anything with the planes, and whatever, you know? The motor sounds a little different. They are going right over you. This would have been way different, you know? So, I am glad I missed that part anyway. I probably would have been pretty upset about it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, at that point, you said that they had you leave.
- Jan Sucholdowski: They told — yes, they were evacuating the whole mountain. Like they — I don't know who said it, but it wasn't too long after that everybody had to leave — tourists, everybody that worked there, that they had to leave. Was it the truth that the FBI was coming up there, or something, to overlook the city, and things like that? That's what I heard, that they were now setting up a command station from up here to see the city, and we all had to leave.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh. Okay. At that point, you were just on your way home, right?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Tell me more about what it was like getting home.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Okay. When I leave here, when you get to the bottom of the hill, and stuff, I would just like shoot right over Memorial Bridge, and it would put me right into D.C., but they were coming up, and they just kept closing the bridges. So, they closed that one.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And then, when you went up further, the next bridge, I don't know if it was the Key Bridge, or whatever, but they were now starting to close those, that bridge, and you had to just keep following the river, going further up, and it was people like everywhere. They were just like, you couldn't actually drive at any kind of speed with the traffic because people were just walking out in front of you. People had the radio on. They were shouting, what's going on, that the Towers collapsed, and everything.

- Jan Sucholdowski: And you were really getting more and more tense as you were going on. You just really wanted to get out of the traffic, get home and possibly leave D.C. entirely, and people would just walk out in front of you. Girls, with dresses on and everything like that, climbing over like iron fences and things. It was just like mass confusion that nobody actually knew what direction they were actually going in. They were all just trying to get out of the city. The people, there was, over here was trying to get over to D.C. and then the people that was over in D.C. and everything like that, was trying to get over to this area.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Plus, they, I think they evacuated, well, the Pentagon was being evacuated, too, and they didn't take their cars or anything with them. So, you were putting all those people out into the streets, too. So, it was really a challenge just to try to make it home, and eventually I just left the truck and started walking myself, because I wasn't getting anyplace.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you left the truck.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. I had seen a parking spot on the side of the road, and just parked in it, and started walking. Traffic was just bumper to bumper, and everybody just kept walking out in front of you. So, you really weren't going anywhere too fast. So, I figured, the heck with it, you know? Might not need it anymore anyway, so why worry about it too much.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you parked your truck, and then what did you do?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Walked.
- Mark Schoepfle: Walked?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Just walked.
- Mark Schoepfle: You walked where?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, I just kept walking. See, I don't live too far from here. I only live on 16th Street, and stuff, and once I got over the bridge, and got into D.C., I drove for about a mile or so. It was a couple of mile walk home, but you know, that way it was, you were just happy to be just walking and getting away from everything and thinking.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you say you were thinking. What did you think about?
- Jan Sucholdowski: I was thinking if the world was ending, and praying, you know, that it just might, just might be the end, you know, and where I am going from here. So, I mean, the walk was wonderful. It gave you a way to relieve your frustrations.
- Mark Schoepfle: Relieve frustration.

- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes, really tense, you know, the whole thing. I mean, you are looking down at the Pentagon, and you have looked at it a thousand times before, and it's burning. I mean, that's like our main source of everything, you know. That's where everybody that is running the country, and things, are there, and if that is going up, you know, a plane did get there, you don't have too much faith in anything else, of what could be happening.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Okay. So, you got home eventually, right? But you said, what time is it, about five?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Around five, or so; turned the TV on, of course, and just watched it, and watched it, for hours and hours, and hours on end, you know, waiting for them to tell you to evacuate the area, or whatever was going to be said next, and just like seeing it a million and one times, the Towers collapsing, and just continuous glued to the TV. I figured that we weren't going to be coming back to work for a while, either. So I could just stay up real late and watch it. But there was work the next day.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you stayed up late to watch what was going on?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: How late did you stay up?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Probably around twelve or so, until I started finding out that I did have work the next day.
- Mark Schoepfle: How did you find out?
- Jan Sucholdowski: A friend called down to the White House and asked them — they worked there — and asked if the Park Service was going to be working, and they said, yes, everything is going to be back tomorrow. You know? Get to work. Make sure you are there on time.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, what did happen the next day? When did you get to work and what happened?
- Jan Sucholdowski: I stood in the back for a while and watched. The Pentagon was still burning. It was burning for a while. I believe it burned for a couple of days, or so. And I just like stared at it, and so, and I don't know, somebody said something like, you know, you still have your work to do.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And it seemed, to tell you the truth, you know, it seemed like I couldn't really get into it because the flower garden just wasn't so important to me anymore. I just figured, why would I even want to waste my time, like working on this flower garden when people were dying and things. The fire is blazing down there. Like, shouldn't I be somewhere else?

- Jan Sucholdowski: I thought that the Park Service was going to start asking for volunteers to help out, to send us down to the Pentagon because taking care of the flower garden was just not on the top of my list anymore.
- Jan Sucholdowski: But then they did say that everything had to return to normal, and just do what you did before, and that was my job. So, I pulled a couple of weeds, looked down at the fire again, pulled a couple more, and just kept constantly looking back because it was right there. You had a clear view.
- Mark Schoepfle: So if you can look back on that first day back at work. You basically were —
- Jan Sucholdowski: I thought it was senseless to be there. One word, I guess, it was senseless to have people back into a flower garden when there was an emergency going on. Nothing against the Park Service, or anything, you know. In that sense, I was just —
- Mark Schoepfle: It wasn't one of their better judgment calls.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I just didn't see — I didn't see — there was no reason why the house should be open, and stuff, right there. I mean, you know, this is — a war is going to go on, and things — and I just didn't think it was proper to be bringing all the tourists up there.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I mean, I thought it should have stayed as a command station since you could see everything that is going on. If you go out and look in front of the Arlington House, you were looking all over D.C. You were looking down at the Pentagon. I thought that it should have been set up more like it was before when an army was here. It should have been used for something like that, rather than have me out there and tilling the soil, and clipping dead flowers, and everything else I am supposed to do.
- Jan Sucholdowski: But, of course, I did want to keep my job. So, I thought all these things. I certainly didn't say them.
- Mark Schoepfle: I sure can understand. So, that first day, you just spent pretty much the rest of the day kind of halfheartedly getting into your gardening.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Uh-huh, didn't do too much, but I was there; you know, pray — pray for the people that died, and things, and stuff. I still say a prayer every morning when I have my truck, and drive by there, and say a prayer for them now. They did give their lives for us, and all.
- Mark Schoepfle: Did you say, when you had your truck?

- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. The Park Service kind of took it off me now for a while. I don't know if I am getting it back. But, see, I drive in that way, every day, drive past. You know, you look right down at the Pentagon and you come the back way into the flower garden. So, I would stop there and look down at the thing and say a prayer every morning. But now, as I said, I don't have my truck, so I have to walk, and I am coming in a different way.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, how do you get to work?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, that's their truck here. You pick it up out here in the parking lot.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, so you –
- Jan Sucholdowski: So here and switched to theirs and used theirs.
- Mark Schoepfle: Was that a new development after September 11th?
- Jan Sucholdowski: No, I wouldn't say — no, they just took it off me a couple of days ago. Somebody else needed it, or whatever. They shouldn't have, but somehow it came out. That had nothing to do with September 11th.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, okay. I was just curious because there were changes like that, that were reported elsewhere, so I was just checking that out. So, that was the end of that day. What happened in the days following?
- Jan Sucholdowski: You watched it. You watched it. We were constantly looking down. I think everybody was. They were waiting for the fire to get out, for them to put it out.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And then, one time after that, I remember, I was headed down to the main office down there on the George Washington Parkway and this was, well, it was unusual for me anyway, and this was like weeks after this happened, and there was a lot of traffic. At 8:30 in the morning, you can't take the main road and stuff.
- Jan Sucholdowski: So, I was taking the back way through, like, I guess it was 395 up that way, or whatever. I was heading that way anyway, and I didn't know where I was going because I never took it before, and I took some of these wrong turns, and I ended up right in front of — right in back of the Pentagon, and I looked out the window, and I almost died because I can see from up here, but this was the building, all the floors up, looking right into the offices with everything gone.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I went, whoa, I know I don't belong here, and I was really like, I would love to have had a picture of it, but there were just guards around there, and it just like schizzed me right out, and I knew there would be trouble, and I had a government truck, and I just got the heck out of there as soon as possible.

- Jan Sucholdowski: But it was like the first time that I had actually seen what it looked close up, and I was looking right in at it, and I am not that far away, and I just, oh, how the heck did I ever end up here? It was beyond me, but I know I better get out of here real quick before they haul me in, or something, and I could get into some kind of problems.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And now it is starting to subside a bit, but you still think about it. Every time I drive past it, I always think about it, and say a prayer, and stuff. But —
- Mark Schoepfle: So, as the weeks went on, what else went on like that?
- Jan Sucholdowski: You listened to what was happening. If we were going — you know — are we going to war? Well, I really thought that we were going to be going to war, like very soon, and stuff, and are they going to be recruiting people, and things. It would be right to fight for your country and stuff right now because you might not have a country soon. Well, you didn't know what was going to happen. Was it over, or were things like this going to still keep happening?
- Jan Sucholdowski: You were just like kind of confused, and in wonder, I guess, but everything was calm, back to normal, like you said, and the tourists were still coming and you just — you did a lot of talking to the tourists about it, and of course everybody wanted to see where it happened, and since you could look right down from the garden and see it, there were a lot of tourists there, but nobody was saying anything about they couldn't look there, or whatever, so you just kind of — my job is the flower garden, not what everybody does outside of it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Did any of the tourists talk to you?
- Jan Sucholdowski: All the time. All the time, to just —
- Mark Schoepfle: What did they say to you?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, everybody wanted to know, did you see it? Did you see it from here? And I just—No, I just left right before it happened, and they would just ask about it, questions and things. Did you hear an explosion and stuff? I said, no, because I was underground, but I did see the fire when it first happened. And then we had to leave. Shortly after, they evacuated the mountain here, like it must have been fifteen minutes after it happened, or whatever.

- Jan Sucholdowski: But you had a little chat with them, and everything. Everybody exchanged how they felt, the heartbreaks and things like that. Everybody was just like really schizzed — not knowing, is it over? Is things going to keep happening or not, or is it going to be — or is that the end of it? And then, of course you know, we did not go to war for quite some time later.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Everybody had viewpoints about that, too. Why? I can't believe we are not just going over there and wiping them off the face of the earth, too, but I am sure our President knows what he was doing and made the right decisions.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. When people were mentioning and exchanging how they feel, the heartbreaks and those kinds of things, what were some of the things that you remember people saying, just as examples?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Basically, how did they get here to do that? Where was — where were we at the time? I mean, our White House is right here and so they, that could have blown up, too. And how could they just slip into our country like that, without anybody actually knowing. That was basically the thing. How did that ever really happen, you know?
- Jan Sucholdowski: It was just like me, I just felt that we were just so strong that, if anybody ever tried to come over and do anything, we would just blow them right out of the sky, you know? Especially so close, like the Pentagon; the way I thought, I thought that the roof opened up, and we had all missiles and everything in there, and if anything ever came near, tried to come near it, the missiles would have went off and blown them out of the sky. But, of course, we don't. So now everybody knows that, I guess.
- Jan Sucholdowski: The same thing with The White House. I always pictured, just the way I pictured it, though, that the roof just opens up and something comes out, and nobody is ever going to get nowhere near it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Some high tech –
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes, just like you would see, you know, on television, but I was sure of it, though. I didn't just think it. I was sure of it. We had ourselves backed up like really well. But that's nobody fault. It's just something that really happened, and we will just hope it doesn't happen again, and prepare for it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure. When — you also mentioned that things kind of got back to normal, I guess, when you had mentioned that the visitors came back. When did things get back to normal, and what was that like? What would you say is normal?

- Jan Sucholdowski: I would say the tram, and everything like that, started to run, the shuttle bus, or whatever, and people started coming up here like, I would say like the next day, so — because people still had their vacations planned here, and I don't know if someone was telling them down below, or whatever, but a lot of the people wanted to get a picture of the Pentagon, and especially get a picture of the Pentagon when it was still burning. And I think that was bringing a lot of people up here, because there was always a large group, always in the back there, photographing.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And they did finish their tour. Well, I don't know. I didn't really ask them too much, you know, if they were here just to take a picture, or they came to see the house, and it didn't really matter too much. I was still having a hard time why I was working in the garden. Why did they just want me here? Didn't they want me to direct traffic or anything, you know?
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. When you were mentioning, a couple of times you were saying that there were certain other things that they could have been assigning you do, or you kind of figured they might assign you —
- Jan Sucholdowski: That they would, yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. What are some of those things that they would have assigned?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, I was thinking that they would send us, since we all have clearances, and everything like that, and we do work for the Park Service, that they would send us down to the Pentagon and aid in any way with anything that they removed, and everything like that, to handle things, to carry things, to serve water, to serve lunch, to give the guys that are actually doing it anything, or have us go through the rubbish ourselves because, a lot of times when there is a disaster and everything like that, they would ask for like volunteers. So, I just figured that they would have the Park Service utilized in that way.
- Jan Sucholdowski: That was just me, though. I don't really know, like I mean, you know, but we do, we have all these parks around here, and a lot of our people do work in keeping them nice, but I just didn't think that that was important at the time. We could have — I am going to get into trouble, probably, you know?
- Mark Schoepfle: No.

- Jan Sucholdowski: No? We could have been utilized in some other way. I mean, they were bringing people in from like all over the world, down to the Pentagon, and I just like, I mean, the girls, the guys, everybody, all the rangers and stuff like, have a group of us just go down there and say, assist in any way that you possibly can. We would hear that from the top office, that rather than doing your normal job, you would come here and go down there and work, or stay as long as you want, since we were right next to it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I mean, their headquarters are right down the road and stuff, but nothing like that was asked of us, so we didn't head down there. It was kind of hard to just go down there and say, hey, want my help? They didn't want anybody to get near it. The roads were all blocked off and stuff, you know? So that was just my own feelings, though.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, did some of the management basically tell you, no, there is no need for it or —
- Jan Sucholdowski: It was never discussed. It was never brought up. We were told, just go back to what you were doing, and continue doing it, like — basically like nothing happened.
- Mark Schoepfle: To tell you the truth, the same question came across to me. You know as soon as we — we didn't even get to hear about it. I mean, we didn't even get the same — we finally had to be told about it because we were sitting up in an office building and we — I have wondered ever since, was there stuff we could have done?
- Jan Sucholdowski: I'm sure there had to be, you know? I mean, there's some little thing, I mean, as meaningless as it possibly could be. There was an awful lot going down there. Everybody has to eat and stuff, and it gives somebody else a break, you know. If one person was going and bringing out — there was an awful lot of rubble and stuff, the rocks and things from the building, that you could give them a little break and have somebody else carry some stuff for a while; I mean, once the fire was put out anyway.
- Jan Sucholdowski: But maybe it was just, they wanted it kind of secretive of what they might be finding, too, and they didn't want everybody involved in it, and it could have turned into mass confusion, too. So, I am sure what they did was right.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes, secrecy; it could have secrecy, just flat-out mass confusion.
- Jan Sucholdowski: You never know.

- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, normal was — just let me run this by you again. The shuttle buses were running again. Visitors were coming up. Even during the — when the Pentagon was still burning, I mean, you still had visitors. You were out doing the gardening and doing what you had to do.
- Jan Sucholdowski: The rangers were in the house, and stuff, and they were giving tours.
- Mark Schoepfle: Giving tours just like always.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Just like normal.
- Mark Schoepfle: The only thing out of the ordinary was, people would come over there to that one viewpoint.
- Jan Sucholdowski: There was a lot of black smoke still in the sky. They couldn't miss it. They couldn't miss it, no. As soon as you arrived up here at the hill, you could see the smoke in the air. So, I mean, just head to where the smoke is, and you would see where it's — what's going on. You should take a walk back there. I'll show you exactly where.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure. I would be glad to. Yes. I should have brought a camera, too, to tell you the truth. So, in the days afterwards, things got back to normal. Once the smoke went away, I imagine the visitors more went back to normal.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Visitors still kept — the visitors kept going for months later, just to get a picture of the Pentagon. The only way they started to stop now is when the Pentagon is basically rebuilt because, for months, there was that big hole, the big black hole in the building, that you just look straight down the mountain, and you see right in there. You could see where the plane went it. So, it was still something that everyone wanted to see.
- Jan Sucholdowski: And then, once they put the front on, and now the windows are in, and now it is kind of closed up, it kind of stopped. But sometimes people will still ask, where is the Pentagon, and stuff? Where did the plane hit? I point to the back there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well then, in the months afterwards, as things are still — well, once — I guess you are mentioning, once they sort of began rebuilding the Pentagon, things got back even further to normal then, right?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well now, looking back on this, let's just say, you noted for example that there were other things we could have been doing, that we didn't do — and I have had the same thought, — to tell you the truth — that things only slowly got back to normal, and getting back to normal seemed to matter a lot by what was going on at the Pentagon.

Jan Sucholdowski: Of course. They didn't find the bodies, and everything. Are they going to bring more out? There was always, in the back of your head, are they going to find some survivors? Was there somebody in there, kind of like hidden in some spot, or whatever, where they made it, you know. And, of course, nothing like that ever happened, you know. The fire was too intense and there were no survivors.

Mark Schoepfle: Right. Well, with that in mind, what are some lessons learned from this, do you think?

Jan Sucholdowski: For me? I guess, being a pretty good Christian because you never know when it is going to be the end. I don't think there is really too much that you could have did, well, as just us to prevent it. I mean, there could have been some — okay. You want a lesson? Here is one that gets me.

Jan Sucholdowski: I just flew to Montana, and everybody is bringing all this carry-on luggage back on the plane, all the big suitcases, anything and everything. I could not, to this day, and probably never will, could not understand why they didn't stop carry-ons completely. You either check your stuff in at the bottom of the plane and you walk on with nothing, or you don't fly at all, and I don't care if it is your million-dollar computer. Don't bring it with you. You are either going to check it in — here everybody is coming right on there and stuff like that and bringing all this luggage. They could get past the checkpoints again, but if you never —

END OF SIDE 1

START OF SIDE 2

Jan Sucholdowski: You know, you could take your buckle or your strap that you just carried that carry on with, and you could turn it into a weapon. That's what I was just thinking and saying to people. I just don't believe, why do they allow you to have it, you know?

Jan Sucholdowski: And I didn't take nothing on. I figured, you know, there is nothing really that important, that I couldn't just check in. But the plane was full with stuff, and underneath, and that's something you should ask the airlines, I guess, why do they allow it?

Jan Sucholdowski: Why, after this, would there be any reason for anyone to have to take a carry-on? If it is your clothes, you will get them when you get off? Nobody is changing clothes in the plane. There could be anything in there. And if it is your personal work, or whatever, well, too bad. You do your work when you get off the plane, then. You are not supposed to be running the computers, or anything, when the plane is taking off and stuff.

- Jan Sucholdowski: So, that's personal. What I would change: never, ever again does anybody carry anything. And, as a matter of fact, not even a purse. If you want to take your money, you take your little money in your little wallet, or whatever, and you can put your purse into your suitcase and check it in. That would be for everybody. That's what I would do to try to correct things more.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I guess I look like one of those guys because they pulled me to the side and made me take my shoes off, and everything, and they gave me the double search and everything. Maybe because I was — that I wasn't carrying anything, that maybe that looked unusual, too, like everybody else has a carry on. Why isn't this person — maybe I just had a one-way ticket, or something, and that might have drawn a flag. But those are just things that I think about sometimes, what I would say to correct it, you know?
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, looking back on these things, also, there's a lot of talk about memorials to these events, and what are your thoughts on that, both from your own standpoint and about the Park Service or something.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, I have got to watch what I say about this one and stuff like that. It was like even —
- Mark Schoepfle: I know, but I am asking for ideas here.
- Jan Sucholdowski: You know, like even the burials, and things like that, I think that, if somebody lost their life working at the Pentagon, if you are male, female, or whatever, if you are in the service or you weren't in the service and stuff, I think that you should have had the right to be buried over here, overlooking the Pentagon, where the family could come up to and pray, and spend some of their time, and everything like that, and look down on where the accident happened, and I thought that they should have had it right here, which I know that cannot be done, or they didn't allow that because you had to be in the service and stuff, in order to be buried.
- Jan Sucholdowski: But, I mean, we also don't plan on putting stuff going to the Pentagon every day, either, and I do think that something should be put downtown — and I know everyone would disagree — on the mall, some kind of tribute to everyone who did lose their lives there, and the names of all the people there that tried to get them out, all the fire fighters and everything, the rescue people and things, and maybe something that — a part of a fire engine, or whatever, or put part of plane — but, hey, I am getting real crazy now.

- Jan Sucholdowski: But there should be some kind of a memorial for them, or then put it somewhere in the parking there at the Pentagon, maybe not in the mall, maybe not in D.C., or so, or something. Or another suggestion, if there is so much controversy about it, how about out in the road here, where all the rest of monuments are, on Memorial Highway here, put something on the side there. That is very near to the Pentagon, where the tourists would all be able to see, but I just feel that there should be something. Maybe cancel World War II and change it into this. Boy would that cause a problem!
- Mark Schoepfle: I'm not touching that one.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. Me, either. I have a friend that is doing it over there, and he is an engineer, and they are still getting controversy as it goes up. People are very, very displeased with it. But, to tell you the truth, I don't think people — well, you never know people, but I don't think too many people would be displeased if we were putting some memorial to the people that lost their lives and the people who fought to try to save their lives, too, and the ones that were saved. I'm sure there were a lot of those, that were saved.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, another question along this line; actually, you were mentioning that you were praying a lot. Which church do you go to? Do you go to church here in D.C.?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Well, most of the time. If I am here, I go to church, but a lot of times I go back to where I am from — Northeastern Pennsylvania, and stuff — and St. Matthew's Cathedral over in D.C., I usually go to, the same one that President Kennedy was buried from.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh.
- Jan Sucholdowski: Or is it Mark's, Mark's Cathedral. Most of the time I am in Pennsylvania on the weekends.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, I see. Are you from there originally?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Uh-huh.
- Mark Schoepfle: What part?
- Jan Sucholdowski: Northeastern; I am from the Poconos, the mountainous, scenic view. Oh, this is recording everything.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Having gone through there, that's a nice area. I don't know it very well. I was just curious which town or some of the areas up there.
- Jan Sucholdowski: I'm from Pittsdon, small town in the valley. That's where I was headed to that night after I left here. I figured; I don't think anybody would be up in

that area. No, they are going to go at the big cities and things, you know? And that's where I finally got headed around, until I heard you have work. You better not go traveling anywhere, you know? Come back to reality here, and stuff.

Mark Schoepfle: What did — how long have you been in the Park Service?

Jan Sucholdowski: About five years.

Mark Schoepfle: So, five years mostly around here or —

Jan Sucholdowski: Here.

Mark Schoepfle: And you live in D.C.?

Jan Sucholdowski: Yes, the White House greenhouse for a year or so, growing the things for the White House. So, I got to go to the White House a lot of different times, and their parties. What am I saying this for?

Mark Schoepfle: I was curious what's in the background. So, you grew up in Northeast, Pennsylvania.

Jan Sucholdowski: Yes, in the mountains.

Mark Schoepfle: And did other — it sounds like you did a few things between that and the Park Service.

Jan Sucholdowski: Yes. I have my own business. I own apartment buildings there. That's another reason why I go back. I design, build, and manage, to this day. It is getting to be too much, though. I am starting to need a break already, you know? I spent most of my life there, but it was, there was nothing around. It was a beautiful area, but I just needed a different life. I needed people. I had to see what it was like to live someplace else, in a major city. I had a lot of good times and friends, and things, but I still wanted to see what it was like in the city, so I am here.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jan Sucholdowski: It's not bad. It's all right, you know?

Mark Schoepfle: Are you going to go back later on?

Jan Sucholdowski: No. I am always going to keep a home there. I never intend to get rid of everything, but I don't know what this has to do with the interview, but I would like to have is a home, say, in Florida, too, by the time I retire, and maybe one in Montana. So, then I would have four different places to go to.

Jan Sucholdowski: They don't have to be million-dollar ones, just something decent because, if I am tired of D.C., I can say, I think this next couple of weeks, I will go

to Montana and see what it is like up there — of course in the summer. And then, when it is real cold, I'll say I guess I will head to Florida and I'll head down there, and stay warm there, and then in between I will be in Pennsylvania

Jan Sucholdowski: Well, that's my dreams. That's why I have to make a lot more money with the Park Service, if I am going to fulfill these dreams, though. That is something to work on anyway.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, this is pretty much — those are pretty much my questions, and I just wanted to really thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

Jan Sucholdowski: You're welcome.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there anything you would like to mention that I forgot to ask about?

Jan Sucholdowski: No, but if I did, I have your number here, and I would give you a call.

Mark Schoepfle: That was going to be my next statement.

Jan Sucholdowski: Hey, I am one ahead of you.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there anything else you would like to know about us?

Jan Sucholdowski: Come on. Tell me where you are from.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Actually, I'm from — well, I am from St. Louis, originally, the south side, and went to college out in Berkeley, and then went in the army, and then got — that was in the days when they sent those greetings, letters, and so you went — and then I got out and finished up school up in Chicago, Northwestern, spent fourteen years on the Navajo reservation.

Jan Sucholdowski: Whoa. That's different.

Mark Schoepfle: That is what I did as an anthropologist, and worked for the tribe there, so I could actually go to my first job in — well, I left there in '88 — so I could go to my first job at — what was it — Oak Ridge National Laboratory and say, "guess what? You are the first white people I ever worked for."

Jan Sucholdowski: Whoa.

Mark Schoepfle: Not many have that experience. And worked there for a couple of years, came up here and was in GAO for about three years, at BIA for about five years, working out of their Acknowledgement branch. And then, in '98, came over to the Park Service.

Jan Sucholdowski: And you stayed there ever since.

Mark Schoepfle: So far, so good. I'm still here. So, we will see if they can make me settle down.

Jan Sucholdowski: You have got to stay here about ten more or twenty more, or whatever.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. That's my reasoning. I am not —

Jan Sucholdowski: So, you are going to live here. You are going to stay here. You don't plan on moving.

Mark Schoepfle: I am not planning to move because my wife really, she likes it here. She has got a good job and enjoys the people and the neighbors that we are with. So, we like it here quite a bit.

Jan Sucholdowski: I have no complaints most of the time.

Mark Schoepfle: We are out here in Reston, about twenty —

Jan Sucholdowski: Oh, come on into the city for a while. You have got to live in the city, see what it is like, spend a year there, or whatever, you know? It's nice to walk around and just — really, to walk around — I hope it is not recording this stuff. Just walking — a lot of times what I like to do is walk around. I look at the buildings up at the top. You see all the architectural designs and everything, which you never usually look at unless you are walking, and especially by yourself, and you will notice, you look us, and see like, wow, look at the carvings. Somebody really did a lot of work to make it look like that. Usually, you are just, vroom, vroom down the street. Yes, you are just zipping down the street as fast as you can to get to where you are going. Well, I do thank you, too.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, I thank you very much.

END OF TAPE