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**Paula Castro**  
**January 30, 2002**

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

INTERVIEWEE: Paula Castro  
Receptionist  
Statue of Liberty National Monument  
(Interview No. 27)

INTERVIEWED BY: Mark Schoepfle, Ph.D.  
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Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW DATE: January 30, 2002

PLACE: Ellis Island  
Statue of Liberty National Monument

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Chuck Smythe, Ph.D.  
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## START OF TAPE

- Mark Schoepfle: This interview is with Paula Castro on January 30, 2002. The interviewer is Mark Schoepfle. Now Paula, the first question I have to ask is, as soon as you were aware of what happened — that something had occurred, what happened, and what did you do and these kinds of things? Basically, what happened?
- Paula Castro: Well, I was on the phone in the morning taking school reservations over the phone with a teacher, and that's what I do. And the secretary of interpretation, her name is Joan Kelly, was trying to get my attention on the phone — trying to get my attention like flag me down that she wanted to say something. So, I saw her that she ran out of the office and ran back in.
- Paula Castro: And I saw that she sat down and after I got off the phone, I asked her what was going on. And she said that there was a fire in the World Trade. And I asked — she said something about a plane hit the top of the tower. And I said, well, we can see the view from the fuel dock — we call the fuel dock on the back side of the island — that's where we get our fuel from and that's why we call it the fuel dock. And I asked her if she would accompany me because I wanted to see it. I wanted to see what had happened. And she said, oh, I just came from there but okay. She walked me out there. I didn't want to go by myself.
- Paula Castro: And I was looking at the tower, at the fire being from the first tower that hit. And right as we were out there in the fuel dock we heard — we heard the noise of — of an engine. It was the second plane — was coming toward our direction. And at that point I was confused. I didn't know if it was coming to help the fire, rescue people that were on top of the fire. I was confused because it was coming at full speed ahead and it was right below our heads.
- Paula Castro: And then I saw as the plane went around the tower and it looked like it just exploded inside the second tower. And that's when it hit — I think everyone — that something was wrong and that what had just happened was not an accident, it was something that was deliberately attacking us.
- Paula Castro: So, at that point everyone was running back and forth. They didn't know where to run. And it was chaos because we never had — like, we didn't know what to do. We didn't have — in the island there was no island evacuation system or anything — what else we can do was just listen to the radio. And listen to the directions that we had to do. So, at that point everyone was calling their loved ones on cell phones if they can reach them, or phones.

- Paula Castro: And we heard on the radio that we needed to meet at the wall of honor, which was on the other side of the island. And we all ran to that side.
- Mark Schoepfle: You ran from where?
- Paula Castro: From our office, meaning leaving the building, because at that point everyone felt funny about being inside closed — being inside a building. Especially Ellis Island, which was close to the attack, and we never knew what was going on. And so, we just wanted to try to be safe as possible.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Paula Castro: So, we went to the — to the wall of honor on the other side of the island and all the whole staff was just there waiting to see what was next. And then from there we just waited, and we waited, and then we saw a steamboat coming towards us and that's when we thought, oh no, it's our turn. So, we all ran to the other side of the — the island, but it was — then we was told from us that it was NYPD trying to — I think it was harbor, I don't know. It was some — all we knew was it was an okay boat. But when we saw it coming towards us, we thought it was, you know, it was our turn. So, it was kind of frightening that day which I — since I don't want to think about because, you know, it brings back nightmares and things. And having to be in the island was, you know, scary enough.
- Paula Castro: And then also trying to leave the island was also chaotic because we didn't have no — no ways of going home. I mean, there was a boat full of people from Liberty Island trying to get us to New York and I saw New York was just like a cloud full of smoke. Nobody wanted to go to New York.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay, well, you were saying that you had been waiting on the — on the — over by the wall.
- Paula Castro: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And then this boat came charging toward you and you all got over to the other side of the island, where on the other side of the island?
- Paula Castro: From Ellis Island all the way to — I guess towards the parking lot.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, okay.
- Paula Castro: So, it was the opposite side.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay, then you later learned that it was an NYPD boat. When did you learn that?
- Paula Castro: Yes. One of our colleagues, his name is Vinny, he was there, and I think he had mentioned that it was an okay boat — it was NYPD.
- Mark Schoepfle: I see.

Paula Castro: Because they didn't have any — usually they have a sign. It was just a boat, you know, a steamboat.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, then you were mentioning a boat full of people. Tell me —

Paula Castro: Yeah, right after that they evacuated Liberty Island, meaning everyone that was there were taken to Ellis — well, not taken, they just went to Ellis to pick up more staff. They couldn't pick up — they couldn't take us — as many people that wanted to go to New York, but it was sad because there was so many people on Liberty Four. And I'm pretty sure they over went their maximum — the amount of people they are supposed to have the boat. And they were going to take other people to New York. And that's when I think — I just thought that was like, there's no way I'm going to get on that little boat, all those people. And I'm going to go to Battery Park knowing that there's an attack and there's probably people running all over the place and the smoke. And then right after the boat left —

Mark Schoepfle: With you on it or you not — definitely not on it?

Paula Castro: No, I didn't go on the boat.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, so after the boat left, then what?

Paula Castro: And I think after a couple of minutes I heard screaming. I wasn't on the wall of honor side where you can see the towers. I was on the other side because that's where we had ran because of the steamboat. I heard a lot of screaming and that's when they were saying that the second tower had fallen down. And I didn't want to see that. And a lot of people were screaming and yelling and looking and running. And I went to the other side of the island and then I — I didn't want to see that.

Mark Schoepfle: Back toward the parking lot you mean?

Paula Castro: Yes, back toward the parking lot. And then there were — then they wanted to move vehicles from one side to the other. So, I went with a friend of mine so she can move — help move the vehicles. And that's when I saw the second tower fall. That's when I actually saw the second one collapse. I didn't want to see it, but it was just there. I was at the fuel dock moving the cars from Post Three to the B and D building which was right next to the fuel dock where you have the best view of New York City from that side. And that's when I witnessed the other tower fall. And it was just — it was just too emotional. It was sad. It was — you had a lot of feelings going, you know, running through your mind and having people talking about the Pentagon had just gotten hit. And we were like, what are we doing here? We want to — you know, everyone wanted to go home, but all the bridges and tunnels were closed by then. And no one wanted to go to Manhattan. And you were basically stuck on Ellis Island.

Mark Schoepfle: All right, so you had gone over to move the vehicles, which you did do?

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: I mean, you got them — and you moved them to the other side of the island.

Paula Castro: Yes, well, we moved them from the parking lot to the B and D building — in front of the B and D — so that's not really the other side. That's just like giving people more access to when they come off the bridge — just giving them an empty space.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And you didn't want to see it, but you couldn't avoid seeing that part of it.

Paula Castro: Yeah, I couldn't, no.

Mark Schoepfle: And then at the same time you were getting news that the Pentagon had been hit.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: And the idea was being sunk in that you were stuck on this island and you certainly didn't want to go over to Battery Park.

Paula Castro: No.

Mark Schoepfle: It wasn't going to be any better there.

Paula Castro: No.

Mark Schoepfle: And so, you figured you were stuck on the island. About what time was this?

Paula Castro: Well, I don't remember. I mean, time —

Mark Schoepfle: Well, that's okay.

Paula Castro: — that day you couldn't really much look at your watch.

Mark Schoepfle: I understand. I understand.

Paula Castro: But I don't remember exactly. I mean it was —

Mark Schoepfle: Everybody is in the same situation.

Paula Castro: — in the afternoon.

Mark Schoepfle: The reason I simply ask is that some people remember one time, some remember another, and I just sort of piece the puzzles together that way.

Paula Castro: Yeah. I don't remember that time.

Mark Schoepfle: And it was you were still — and this was a still highly emotional time, right?

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: What happened then?

Paula Castro: Well, then they were bringing in everybody from — I guess from the New Jersey troopers and emergency service were conducting a triage — they were trying to get a triage here at Ellis Island. So that's when I guess most of my colleagues felt that if we can't do anything and we're stuck here we might as well try to help out what we can.

Paula Castro: So, we decided — everyone was putting on gloves and getting medical equipment because they said they were going to try to bring people from the other side here to help like build a triage. So, we all tried to put on gloves and to put on medical equipment, but then our superintendent advised us that she just wanted us — if we didn't have proper training to do first response, we might as well just go home. She didn't — she felt that we should have just — you know, we should just go home. So certain people that had that training were allowed to stay, but then the others were told that they had to go home.

Paula Castro: But we — like, me, I didn't want to go home — like, there was no way for me to go home, I mean.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you stayed anyhow?

Paula Castro: Yeah, I stayed because she was saying that you had to go, but there was — then I heard that there was a boat that took you to Brooklyn, but I've never — I guess I was late, I got the information late. I didn't get on that boat either. But I heard some other people got off the island via that boat that took you from Ellis Island, I do believe to Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. I heard about that, but I was in — I guess I didn't — I wasn't told about it, or I was told later. But I was still stuck on the island and I had no way of going home.

Mark Schoepfle: What happened then?

Paula Castro: Then I — although they were bringing people in — some of them were hurt, others were okay. And that's when I was given the job of taking people's — well, they were giving me a pad and I was putting information about the people coming in. A lot of people were very emotional, crying, upset. And I was told that I was supposed to get their names, their social security, their date of birth, their next kin. And I was doing that, but then they wanted me to do other things.

- Paula Castro: So, I put — I helped put up a database and I inputted mostly everybody's name that came through Ellis Island from New York that were hurt or near the towers.
- Paula Castro: I did this database and that took me a while. It took me like an hour or so — an hour or two to type up all the names and their social security and their next kin. And then I heard the NYPD wanted the — the stats on that, and so did New York park police — I mean United States Park Police wanted that information. And I did that — I believe for the remaining of the afternoon.
- Paula Castro: I think they also gave us lunch. And by the time I think I left the island it was like 6 o'clock. And I had a ride to a friend's house. And I stayed there until it was okay to go home, I guess. I think on Staten Island, Verrazano was opening up and we were able to go back to Brooklyn from Jersey City.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you left about 6 o'clock —
- Paula Castro: Yeah.
- Mark Schoepfle: — went to a friend's house and then managed to get home to Brooklyn you said?
- Paula Castro: Yes, from Brooklyn.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, backing up for just a minute on the database. How did you put it together?
- Paula Castro: Well, I got help from the computer specialist here at Ellis Island. Her name is Jane and she was the one that programmed it with her knowledge. And I got all the sheets from everyone that was outside getting the information. I mean, it was lots of sheets. It was —
- Mark Schoepfle: About how many records do you think by chance?
- Paula Castro: I don't remember, but there — it was a lot.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Because some people are estimating there was as many as 2,000 people there that day. Do you figure that there was that many?
- Paula Castro: Yeah, I am. But I think that's how many names I put in the computer. I mean, I'm pretty sure there were that amount and if I didn't get that information was because we started it late. We started getting information from the people not as soon as they got — it was something that was — it was really something that we weren't prepared for and people just thought of things and did it as it went.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.



- Paula Castro: So, I'm pretty sure I didn't get all of the 2,000, but I did get a lot.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. All right. So, did you finish getting the data put in, or did you just have to end at 6?
- Paula Castro: Yeah, we did. I did it. I did every — all the sheets that were given to me, I got into the computer. And then I had to give the stats to the sergeant, and they gave it to the NYPD and what have you not. Yeah, but all the sheets were inputted in the computer.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, then you got home to Brooklyn, about when?
- Paula Castro: 11.
- Mark Schoepfle: What happened then?
- Paula Castro: Well, as soon as I went home the first thing I saw was my mother, which was happy. I was happy — she was happy to see me; I was happy to see her. And then I have two children — a three-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son. And that's — I mean, by the time I got home they were sleeping, but it was comfortable seeing them sleeping and being at peace. And being home was also — after such a hectic day it was nice to actually get home. Because at one point I thought I had to spend the night in Jersey City or at Ellis Island, I didn't know. And it was like, upsetting not being able to go home. But, then as soon as I got home, I didn't care what time it was I was at ease being home.
- Paula Castro: But even though it was so far from Ellis Island I still felt like I was in Ellis Island because of the smoke was still all around Brooklyn I guess because I live in Park Slope and it's near to Manhattan. You could still smell the tragedy from home. So even though I felt peace and at ease, I still felt funny. I still didn't feel comfortable.
- Mark Schoepfle: Could you explain to me what you're meaning when you say, smell the tragedy — smelled tragedy?
- Paula Castro: Smell the smoke.
- Mark Schoepfle: What did it smell like?
- Paula Castro: Like burn. Like when you burn toast really — like when it gets really burned. Really, like it's a bad odor. And you can also see from some of the cars also had debris in Brooklyn. It went all the way over — you know, I couldn't believe it, but there was actually little bits of that dark, grayish debris.
- Mark Schoepfle: Kind of like ash?
- Paula Castro: In some of the cars. Yeah, like ash in some of the cars in Brooklyn.

Mark Schoepfle: It just fell on the cars.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: So, it was really still with you even when you were there.

Paula Castro: Yes, it was, even though I felt good of being away, but it still like seeing my surroundings and the smell it still felt close.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, the next question. What then?

Paula Castro: Well, after then, I mean, I was just clueless. I didn't know — that happened on a Tuesday I remember because that was my second day back from vacation.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, boy.

Paula Castro: Yes, it was. And it was kind of funny. But then I had that week off. I had a call from my supervisor saying that they would call us when they're ready for us to come back to work. And you had to — I think it was — yeah, he was calling me every day telling me that we're still closed, that he'll let me know when we're able to come back to work.

Paula Castro: So, and it was like my vacation was extended. And it was, it was sad because, I mean, I was glued to the set. I guess I just wanted to know all the information and why did this happen? Why did it come about? And how come we let this happen? And all those days I was just glued to the news and I just wanted to know everything. You just want to be informed of whatever was going to happen, or whatever happened. And after that, I think the next week on a Tuesday we were told we were supposed to come to work and we did.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, how were things back at work when you got there?

Paula Castro: It was kind of nice because, I mean, I got off the boat and you see all the supervisors lined up greeting you like if you're having a VIP tour. You're, you know, everyone was probably concerned about everyone else and that was nice, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Paula Castro: It was warm heart — something warm that the superintendent was greeting you as you got off the boat. And I didn't expect — I expected to come to work and I don't know, I guess work, because that's what you come to do. And it was all a day full of meetings and I think they also gave us lunch.

Paula Castro: And after then, I mean, it hasn't been the same, but we've been coming to Ellis Island ever since, until just recently when we opened up. Now it feels like we are actually working, but it's still not the same as when we were working because we don't have as much visitations or as much phone calls as we did before.

Mark Schoepfle: All right. So, when you got back — I mean, the first day was almost sort of unreal.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you were treated like a VIP you were saying.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: And people fed you lunch.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: And you went to a lot of meetings.

Paula Castro: Uh-huh.

Mark Schoepfle: What — what else was going on?

Paula Castro: What do you mean, like, what else?

Mark Schoepfle: Like for example — I mean, some people had certainly mentioned that there was counseling going on and these kinds of things.

Paula Castro: Yes, counseling. We had peer counselors and they were asking for, if we needed — if we wanted to come talk to them, they were just giving us their support. And I guess, telling us if we wanted to talk to them, they were there for us.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Paula Castro: And, you know, that was nice I thought.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Paula Castro: But at certain times — sometimes I don't know, when things like that happen and you visualize it at some point you just don't want to think about it and you just don't want to talk about it and —

Mark Schoepfle: So, you basically just said it was at the point, no, I just don't want to talk about it right now.

- Paula Castro: Yes. And after being in those meetings and having to talk about it and meetings on top of meetings, on top of meetings, and listening to everyone's stories you get to the point where you just don't want to hear it. You'd rather talk about sports or anything else, so —
- Mark Schoepfle: So, what kind of meetings were these? Were these, these counseling meetings? Or were they sort of like that?
- Paula Castro: They were counseling meetings. They were meetings about what was going to happen — what their plans were which weren't really quite set. And it was just a lot of security meetings also. But it was a lot of meetings and a lot of people didn't know what was going to happen.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Paula Castro: So, it was just like — just talk.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, something you said earlier which I didn't follow up on was that when this disaster had first occurred, I mean, you purposely didn't go and look at the buildings and see what was going on. You particularly after — you couldn't avoid it when the second one was hit, but — and when the second one fell as I remember, right?
- Paula Castro: Uh-huh.
- Mark Schoepfle: But for the most part you didn't want to go to the —
- Paula Castro: No.
- Mark Schoepfle: — you just didn't want to see it. Others have said the same thing. What were the reasons for you that you just didn't want to look at it?
- Paula Castro: Well, I think after watching the second tower get hit by the plane, I think I saw enough. I mean, I saw the first tower when it was already in flames and they were saying that it was an accident that a plane would hit. But the second one was just unreal. When I saw that I think I saw enough for that day. And I just wanted to spare myself any more emotional pain. And I just felt bad for the people that were in there. So, I just didn't — and then having to see — I just didn't want to visualize any more tragedy. And I think I saw enough.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, the reason I ask is that some people had mentioned that they did the same thing. I mean, they just shut it off. Didn't want to look at it and just didn't think about it. The reason being that it would just — that if they did, they would cease to function and would just be overwhelmed with the thoughts of what was happening.
- Paula Castro: Yeah, it's awful wondering.

- Mark Schoepfle: And I was just wondering what your thinking was on that.
- Paula Castro: Yeah, I mean, it was overwhelming. And I knew that — I mean, to this day I can't take that vision off my head of — of that plane being — it was more of an explosion and more of the tower swallowing the plane. And it was just so horrible just seeing it and hurtful because I couldn't believe what had just happened. And it was just too much emotions and too much fear and it was just so much for, you know, for one person to see in one day, I think
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Paula Castro: And having to see that other second — the first tower fall I was just like, well, I don't want to see that. I don't want to see that site. And then having to see the second one without — I mean, it was right in my face. And I guess —
- Mark Schoepfle: You couldn't avoid that one.
- Paula Castro: No, because it was face to face and it just like collapsed like — like paper. Like when you burn paper and it just like falls and disappears to the ground.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, so in the weeks ensuing you kind of — you were going to a lot of these meetings. A lot of them were planning meetings, just like briefing meetings —
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: — just to find out what the heck was going on.
- Paula Castro: Yes. Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Where management was basically going to be telling you as much as they could tell you about what was going on. And you were sort of getting back into the work that you normally do. Am I correct on that?
- Paula Castro: We never got into the work that we usually do because we do interpretations. So, we work with the visitors. So, we haven't had visitors since December. So ever since then — we were never doing the works because I do — I am an information receptionist and I take reservations over the phone and obviously I wasn't going to do that anymore. And I help out at the front desk with the visitors and with the rangers and none of my work was — I was not going to do what I do when I come to work so —
- Mark Schoepfle: What did you do instead?

Paula Castro: We had meetings and briefings and meetings on top of meetings. And we helped out at the library. We were told we were supposed to come here to the library. I'm a team worker so whatever my supervisor said that was on the detail I did. I raked leaves. I cleaned exhibits. I folded books. I did files. I also helped — because I have a lot of computer knowledge, I helped the computer specialist in a lot of her work because she was by herself and she needed a computer system, and so for a month I was detailed to help her.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, what kinds of things did you do?

Paula Castro: In the computer?

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Paula Castro: I helped her install software. For instance, everyone has had CC Mail and now we're converting to Lotus Notes. So, I helped her install a lot of the computers, people that were supposed to be converted from CC Mail to Lotus Notes. She taught me how to do it and I did it.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, good, so I'll know somebody to call.

Paula Castro: I did a lot of installing computer work and helping people out with computers. So, I did that for a whole month which was good. You know, it was an experience and it was better than being briefed — you know, going to meetings every day and not knowing what's going to happen. But it was a change of pace and I did that just before we opened up. I don't remember what day — I think it was the 15th, 16th that we opened up and then I went back to interpretation.

END OF TAPE 1

START OF TAPE 2

Mark Schoepfle: In interpretation — okay, so by December — oh I'm not sure what the date is either to tell you truth, but —

Paula Castro: I think it was the 16th or the 14th I'm not —

Mark Schoepfle: What was it like being back in interpretation then?

Paula Castro: What was it like being back in interpretation? Well, I'm always ready for anything that they give me. And when I went back to interpretation, I was told that the secretary of interpretation had to go on sick leave or medical leave, so I was supposed to do her job. So, I was answering phone calls I think for a couple of weeks. I was taking reservations, answering phone calls. Basically, attending to certain — to Danny Brown, being his secretary.

- Paula Castro: So, I did — well, I'm used to doing that job anyway because she's been out a couple of times on sick leave or vacation so I did that, which was, you know, it's like being back to your office. And it was kind of nice.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Paula Castro: You know, even though I wasn't out in the field yet and I didn't know what the visitation was like because once you're in the office you don't know what's out there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Not out in the field — the field being?
- Paula Castro: Being out on post where the visitors are.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh.
- Paula Castro: Being in the information desk, at the theater, at the dock.
- Mark Schoepfle: I see. So, you were sort of all-purpose secretary as well as — soon as things opened.
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: And have you remained that way since? Or then when did things change?
- Paula Castro: No, I do that — how can I say — I do that like part-time.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Paula Castro: So, I usually help her out in the mornings and in the afternoon, I go out in the field.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. What goes out on to the field?
- Paula Castro: Well, for instance on Monday I was told that I had to go to Battery Park for the remaining of the day because they were short-staffed. And it was — I've never been at the other side. That's Battery Park where the security goes. People go through security to get on the boat and it's very different from how it was before 9-11. I mean, people would just buy their ticket and go straight online. Now they have to go on this long line, be told they need to take off their jackets and take off their belts and if they have any change in their pockets take it out. And I saw a big difference. I was like, you know, it's a big operation that they have to go through now in order to get on the boat.
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you served for a while in Battery Park?

Paula Castro: I'm there when they're short staffed. I've done it twice.

Mark Schoepfle: What else?

Paula Castro: Have I done?

Mark Schoepfle: Well, yeah, what else was going on back by then?

Paula Castro: You know, this is recent that I've been in Battery Park going through.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay.

Paula Castro: No, this is basically it. I mean, today everyone went to training so I'm in the office by myself all day going crazy answering the phone. Not being told I was going to be by myself also.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Paula Castro: It's like you come in the morning and you just work — this place works as it goes. I mean, it's a place that works itself obviously. I mean, we have a lot off team players and so we get the schedule ready and then we do what we're told, and it just goes.

Mark Schoepfle: Fill in for each other as you go along.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: So, there isn't a lot of predicting what's going to be happening down the road anyway?

Paula Castro: No. No.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, other people have mentioned the same thing. That's an interesting — it's an interesting pattern, and —

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: — you know, one that needs to be well understood and is often not well understood.

Paula Castro: Uh-huh.

Mark Schoepfle: Where do you — what do you see going on in the future?

Paula Castro: Meaning in the Park Service here?

Mark Schoepfle: Well, let me back up a little a minute. Have things gotten kind of back to normal? Or do you see that? Or, if yes, how? If no, how?



- Paula Castro: No. I mean, I don't see things back to normal because back to normal people weren't looking up in the sky when they heard a plane being — as — I mean, I do that a lot even when I'm driving. If I see a plane, I have to like look at it two or three times before I see that it's going, because usually a plane goes at normal pace. You don't see it speeding, speeding. And I can also recall the way that 747 was coming to the tower. So, I kind of — I can visualize what's normal and what's abnormal. So, I can never see a plane — every time I'm driving or I'm outside and I see a plane or a helicopter I always like, look at, I mean, look at it. Look at it and just like think, is this okay? I mean, before a plane would go over my head, I wouldn't think twice of it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Paula Castro: But now I do, you know. You know, I'm more attentive to what's going on. And that's something that won't go back to normal. You know, I don't think I'll ever, all right there's a plane so what. You know, regardless of where I'm at, I mean, I'll always be cautious about that.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, you were mentioning — what other things?
- Paula Castro: That won't be back to normal?
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Paula Castro: I mean, there's also an issue about — I hate to say this, but when you see people from — I don't want to — when you see certain people that you might try to like, look at them differently if they're from another country. Meaning any Palestinians or just from that country — you look at them and you don't quite see them the same, and it's sad because they might not have nothing to do with it. And you just probably won't feel — it's just the same way when you see a plane — you feel cautious and you want to re-look them over.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sort of like you do — I'm sorry, go ahead.
- Paula Castro: And see if they're out to harm you, what are they doing here? Why is that person near me, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: This is both here with visitors and just anywhere else really?
- Paula Castro: Yeah, exactly, anywhere else. So, I don't think that will change.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Paula Castro: You'll always be cautious of them. It's kind of sad to say because not all of them are that way.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

- Paula Castro: But that's something that I don't think will change. Your surroundings — you know, you're always concerned about your surroundings. Who's near you? What are you doing? What does this person want?
- Mark Schoepfle: What else?
- Paula Castro: Well, I travel — I tend to travel at least once a year with my children. And we always take vacations. And ever since this, I mean, I know — you know, in the summer we'll take a vacation. And I don't know how I'll feel when I'm able to get on that plane with my children. So, I think that's another — you know, I'll be cautious about that. I mean, if I want to get — I mean, I can think about going — I can be planning a trip from now to August that's still a long time from now, but I'm still thinking am I able to get on a plane? You know, even put my children on a plane. You know, that's one thing that I'll always think of.
- Mark Schoepfle: Be a little uneasy and —
- Paula Castro: Yeah.
- Mark Schoepfle: — think about it from many different ways or something?
- Paula Castro: Yeah, that's something that will never — you know, traveling.
- Mark Schoepfle: Where do you generally go for vacation
- Paula Castro: I generally go to Florida. And before 9-11 I was — a week before that I was in Puerto Rico.
- Mark Schoepfle: So generally, Florida and Puerto Rico and places like that.
- Paula Castro: And the Dominican Republic, basically, yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Great. Having never been to any of those I'd like to see them one of these days myself. So, if I'm summing up, things are just flat not normal. I mean, they've changed forever.
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Or at least for a good long time.
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: You don't trust planes for darned sure. You definitely look up in the sky when you see them.
- Paula Castro: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: I shouldn't say, don't trust planes — but you definitely give them a very careful look.

Paula Castro: Right, I do.

Mark Schoepfle: You're much more cautious toward them, right?

Paula Castro: Yes, I am.

Mark Schoepfle: Another one is that when you see people that are very clearly — and if I can paraphrase this, from the Near East.

Paula Castro: Yes. Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: You tend to look them over a lot more carefully.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: You acknowledge, as I think do we all, that they could be —

Paula Castro: Yes, right.

Mark Schoepfle: — perfectly harmless, but you tend to look them over much more carefully.

Paula Castro: Yes, I do.

Mark Schoepfle: And then also that when you're traveling for summer vacations with your children you just — you're still wondering what you're going to do it.

Paula Castro: If I'm able to?

Mark Schoepfle: If you're able to?

Paula Castro: Because I did before 9-11 and ever since then — I mean obviously I don't have vacation now, but I'm thinking am I able to?

Mark Schoepfle: What would you do instead?

Paula Castro: Probably take a road trip.

Mark Schoepfle: Take a road trip. Just drive to Florida, right?

Paula Castro: No, not that far. I don't like driving for long periods of time. I mean, I do drive, but I don't like — I would prefer to either take a bus, maybe that would be an option, or a train. But still it's traveling so you never know. But usually my trips are long, you know, to — like I said, either to the islands or to Florida so I wouldn't have to.

Mark Schoepfle: Take just shorter road trips.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: Just around the state or neighboring states.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: Gotcha. What do you see happening in the months ahead? Let's just say a year from now what do you expect things to — what do you expect to have happened?

Paula Castro: I don't know. I mean, I've heard the President's address yesterday and I really don't know. I mean, I don't think he knows what's going to happen.

Mark Schoepfle: I didn't — I should have caught that, but I didn't. So, in other words, nobody else knows either.

Paula Castro: No.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, this is another question, and it's come up by some people but not all — and it was a question put to me rather than me thinking of it myself. There's certainly a move for some kind of memorialization. Have you considered what would be a fitting memorial, or how a fitting memorial should be?

Paula Castro: At Ground Zero? At —

Mark Schoepfle: Wherever. For something related to the Park Service.

Paula Castro: Oh, here?

Mark Schoepfle: Possibly. Anywhere else — wherever. I mean, this is a really open-ended question.

Paula Castro: I honestly feel they shouldn't build the towers again. They should just lay out and build a memorial where all those people lost their lives. That's what I feel. There should be a memorial at Manhattan where it all happened. I feel they shouldn't just build buildings or try to restore it again.

Mark Schoepfle: Just have a monument there.

Paula Castro: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: Any idea what this monument should be like?

Paula Castro: No.

Mark Schoepfle: Any thought on that?

Paula Castro: No. I mean, it could be something like what we have here, the wall of honor by — where there's people name inscribed.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, these are pretty much all the questions I have to ask, and I really appreciate your time on this.

Paula Castro: You're welcome.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there anything that I have failed to ask or should have thought of to ask?

Paula Castro: Of that date?

Mark Schoepfle: Well, of the whole period of time from these events up until the present.

Paula Castro: No. Basically, you know, sometimes it's hard — I mean, when George said you were going to interview me it's hard to talk about it, to me. Sometimes I can't — I mean, sometimes the vision of — just the vision of that plane going into the tower is something I can't get off my head.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Paula Castro: You know, even if I don't think about it and everything. I mean, it's something that's still there, and even when the towers fell and everything. But, no, I guess not. I think you covered all the bases.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, well, you mentioned that this was very disturbing to you.

Paula Castro: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: So, I can't bring myself or see the point of burrowing into that if it's a painful issue.

Paula Castro: It is. I mean, it's more hurtful and upsetting, you know. But if you guys want to put it in the oral history format or maybe it's stored in the National Park Service, you know, I guess it's okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, it's up to you — entirely up to you. And like I said those are the ground rules.

Paula Castro: Yeah, it's okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, that it's okay as it is then.

Paula Castro: Uh-huh.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, that's fine. Is there anything else you'd like to know about what we're doing that I didn't mention?

Paula Castro: No, I think you covered it clearly.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Well, again I thank you very much for your time on this.

Paula Castro: Okay.

END OF TAPE