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Dennis McGinnis
December 5, 2001

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 11TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

DENNIS MCGINNIS

Chief of Maintenance

Shenandoah National Park

Conducted by

Janet A. McDonnell, Ph.D.

December 5, 2001

Washington, D.C.

START OF TAPE

- Janet McDonnell: This is Janet McDonnell and I am here today, December 5, 2001, with Dennis McGinnis to talk about the September 11th attack, and the response to that attack. And maybe just to begin, if you would, tell me a little bit about yourself, your current responsibilities with the Park Service.
- Dennis McGinnis: Okay, I'm the chief of maintenance at Shenandoah National Park, and as a collateral duty I'm also the Operations Section Chief for the National Park Service Incident Management Team.
- Janet McDonnell: Would you tell me how you became involved with the team?
- Dennis McGinnis: A number of years ago, probably 15 or so years ago now, I was doing special events at Independence National Historical Park, and it kind of segued into the incident management or incident command structure. I've gotten a lot of experience dealing with heads of states, Presidential visits, and that kind of thing. And that kind of segued into the National Park Service developing national incident management teams that were using the fire model, where there's a command and control structure. About 1990 the Park Service committed to going with a national incident management team, and at that time I was one of a group of folks that were selected for subordinate positions on the team. And I started my career in logistics, and spent a number of years in logistics, and transitioned to operations in 1994. I'm one of the few team members that have gone out on every incident since Pearl Harbor's commemorative event in 1991.
- Janet McDonnell: So, the structure has been around for over ten years.
- Dennis McGinnis: And in a fire it's been around almost 20 years. And there's very little difference in the structure.
- Janet McDonnell: That's interesting. Actually, it would help me a lot if you would spend a few minutes just explaining how this structure - how it is composed and how it operates.
- Dennis McGinnis: Okay, it's kind of based on a military model. There is an incident commander who is kind of the General, and then there is staff that answer directly to him, and that would be the information officer, the safety officer. And then it goes into divisions and divisional responsibilities, and there's operations. Whatever is going on, those are the folks that apply their skills to correct whatever is going on.

- Dennis McGinnis: There's logistics, and the logistics section supports the operations and makes sure that you get them fed, and you've got lodging, and you get them to wherever they're going. There's a finance section that pays the bills and keeps everyone out of jail. And then there's a planning section that works very closely with the operations section to develop not only the next operational period plan, but looking at the strategic planning, and identifying the goals and objectives so that, if your objective is to put out the fire.
- Dennis McGinnis: You've got goals to meet that objective, and then you've got strategies to meet the objectives, and then you've got tactics. Tactics are the day to day or operational period tasks that the operations folks perform to find out what your end result is going to be.
- Janet McDonnell: And I imagine there are operational plans that are occasionally revised.
- Dennis McGinnis: They're revised. For the 9/11 incident, we were doing a 24-hour operational period, so we had a new plan every 24 hours. Part of that responsibility, as the section chiefs, and all of the section chiefs are like park division chiefs, I guess is probably the best analogy, and they meet - we meet typically late afternoon, after you've had a chance to see if your tactics work for that particular day, and confirm the objectives, revise the strategies, and change your tactics if you need to change your tactics.
- Janet McDonnell: And how are the objectives set?
- Dennis McGinnis: The management team working in conjunction with the advisor agency administrator, and for 9/11 we were working for the office of the secretary [of the Interior]. So, someone from the Secretary's office was working with us, and early on, what do you want, what are our responsibilities, and from that you look at your objectives, or you develop your objectives. But also, the first document that we developed in partnership with whomever calls us in is the delegation of authority, and that simply states what the expectations are from the director of the National Park Service in this instance, to the team. What does she want done? What responsibilities is she passing on to us?
- Janet McDonnell: And in this instance, what did that delegation of authority say? What was the language in that delegation?
- Dennis McGinnis: It was pretty straightforward. They were looking at getting their arms around what was going on nationally, and the key element of

that delegation letter was the coordination from a national perspective. So, we knew there were things going on in Philadelphia, and there were things going on in New York and Boston, and a number of other sites in the West, specifically dam security.

Dennis McGinnis: What we were tasked to do was make sure that somebody was looking at everything that was going on in the National Park Service, so you're looking at it holistically, and making determinations as to what resources are needed where, and more specifically, to prioritize resources.

Dennis McGinnis: You know, if you're sitting in Lake Mead, and you've got a dam at your headwaters, then, that's your focus and you want to apply all of your resources to that specific area. And as a national team, we're looking at a finite number of resources and prioritizing.

Dennis McGinnis: Well, maybe we can't have 100 rangers assigned to a dam if we've got to protect the Statue of Liberty, and we've got to protect Independence Hall, and Old Ironsides, and wherever we had. So, it was really a matter of making sure that you're looking at the whole incident from a national perspective.

Janet McDonnell: Right, but were you looking at just National Park Service resources, or were you occasionally looking at resources of other Interior agencies?

Dennis McGinnis: We were managing Park Service resources, and the Park Service has more resources that lend themselves to this kind of incident, with law enforcement personnel, with emergency medical personnel, with maintenance personnel, folks that can operate heavy pieces of equipment, parks that have heavy pieces of equipment.

Dennis McGinnis: One of the major accomplishments that this team did was for a snapshot in time, which was the end of September, for the director. We were able to identify all of the resources that she had at her disposal. And she was tasked to report that back up to the Secretary's office, who was looking at it, not bureau by bureau, but as a department.

Dennis McGinnis: We went out and got the resources coming in here to contact each park, all 385 parks, talk to the chief ranger, talk to the chief of maintenance, and have their resources identified, if they had 10 law enforcement rangers, or they've got six EMTs, or they've got five equipment operators. And part of that was trying to make sure

that we gathered that information in a logical, sequential method so that we could import that information into the facility management software system, which is the software that has the ability to track all of the resources.

Dennis McGinnis: We work very closely with the facility management folks here and some of their folks on staff to develop the templates so that when we were asking the questions, we were getting information in a logical way, so that it would easily import into this database so that once you get a database, then you can manage it, and that was one of the key tasks, and we were able to turn that around in about five days.

Janet McDonnell: Can you help me out with a chronology of those first couple of days? For example, when you were actually called in, how did you get the word and what kind of guidance were you given?

Dennis McGinnis: I've been doing this for better than a decade, so I'm pretty attuned to current events. My father was having some medical difficulties, and I was in North Carolina, the Outer Banks of North Carolina checking on my folks. I was supposed to take my dad to the doctors, and I went out and said well, shoot, this is early Tuesday morning, and well, I'm here, I might as well get a haircut. And I walked into the local barber shop, and they happened to have the news on. The first plane had just flown into the World Trade Center, and I got to watch the second one fly in as I got my hair cut, and at that point I knew that there was a very strong likelihood that we would get called.

Dennis McGinnis: I immediately went back to my folks. I was carrying a travel bag with me that has kind of - it's a "go-bag" where on short notice I can go, and the key thing that I had with me was my three ring binder that has the GETS card, which is the Government Emergency Telephone System card. And I immediately called the Shenandoah Dispatch, which is the national dispatch, and was able to confirm that they were activating the team. I gave them my location, my timeline when I would be able to report to Shenandoah.

Dennis McGinnis: I immediately called the incident commander, Skip Brooks, and we discussed where we wanted to meet, and how we would proceed to Shenandoah Dispatch, and what were the - This was as they were moving the secretary, the assistant secretaries, and the director out of town.

Janet McDonnell: To West Virginia?

- Dennis McGinnis: Yes, moving them into the bunker, and that was probably—I was in the pipeline and I was officially resourced, ordered at probably 11:00. So, they were having things going before even the Pentagon incident.
- Janet McDonnell: So, it happened really fast.
- Dennis McGinnis: Very, very quickly, because I'm at Shenandoah, I'm the division chief there, because the emergency dispatch center is at Shenandoah, things happened quickly, and I was tied in much more closely than you would typically have in an incident. Typically, it takes 24 hours to get us on the ground, and we were on the ground - we were at Shenandoah by 10:00 p.m. Tuesday night, and pulled together some plans.
- Dennis McGinnis: At that point, it was just reporting, trying to chase down rumors. Shenandoah had a Type-3 Incident Management Team in place.
- Janet McDonnell: What is a Type-3 Team?
- Dennis McGinnis: Type-3 is a local team made up of just Shenandoah National Park employees, and we kind of came in at 7:00 the next morning, Wednesday morning, took over for that Type-3 Team.
- Janet McDonnell: Actually, maybe this would be a good point for you to explain the other team, the Type-2, and the Type-1 that you are a part of.
- Dennis McGinnis: There is a hierarchy, and a Type-3 Team, which is the most informal, is specific to a park, and many parks don't have Type-3 Teams. Shenandoah is a very good-sized park for east of Mississippi and has a very competent Type-3 Incident Management Team.
- Dennis McGinnis: A Type-2 Incident Management Team is a regional team. So, the Northeast Region has a Type-2 Incident Management Team, and in the Incident Management System, it's broken down more into very large geographic areas, and there's an Eastern Type-2 Incident Management Team that is three-deep. Two of those three spots are from Southeast Region, where they have Southeast folks, and then one of them is from the Northeast Region. So, there are three Incident Commanders, and there are three operation section chiefs.
- Janet McDonnell: So, the make-up is similar.

- Dennis McGinnis: It's exactly the same. And they're on call, and Northeast Team was immediately requested and dispatched to Philadelphia to coordinate for the Regional Director. The Regional Director called on the Type-2 Team, the Regional Incident Management Team. They were on the ground by the 12th, and they were dealing with specifically New York and what was going on there, and managing the resources from a regional level, and then they were rolling information up to us.
- Janet McDonnell: How is that done? How is that coordination done?
- Dennis McGinnis: Most of it is done by phone or by fax.
- Janet McDonnell: But I mean, do they coordinate with their counterparts in the Type-1 Team, the national team?
- Dennis McGinnis: What we do is we're talking to that Incident Commander, so that's the hierarchy.
- Janet McDonnell: So, it's sort of Incident Commander—
- Dennis McGinnis: Reporting to Incident Commander and then—I mean, there's a lot of communication, operation section chief to operation section chief, but all of the formal communication is Incident Commander to Incident Commander. And the Western Team was activated. There was a fair number of resources on the ground by the 12th.
- Dennis McGinnis: One of the early tasks that we were given was the gathering of information and the collating of that information, and the movement of information from the field through Shenandoah Dispatch, to the director, and making sure that it was clear, concise, accurate information, so that she could report to the secretary, and answer the secretary's questions.
- Dennis McGinnis: The National Park Service kind of moved to the forefront for all of the bureaus because we've got a national incident management team, and we really have the resources—
- Janet McDonnell: Is that something that other Interior agencies don't have?
- Dennis McGinnis: They do not. They do not. Forest Service, [Department of] Agriculture, has probably eight or nine Type-1 Incident Management Teams, and they are specific to fire, and that's where the real distinction is. I don't do fire. I've done fire in the past, and we don't do that. We do everything else, and it could be from terrorist attacks, to presidential visits, to—this is was a pretty

unusual year in that in March we were here in Washington for three weeks developing the Facilities Management Software System, and the condition assessment for the director to report to OMB and to Congress about deferred maintenance. So, we kind of developed the protocols and the templates for the Facilities Management Software System.

Dennis McGinnis: Then in very late April and the first two weeks of May, our team was dispatched to Fort Collins, Colorado, for almost three weeks to develop a response and prevention plan for Foot and Mouth Disease. It was kind of the precursor to this. Then 9/11 happened and we were kind of pulled in. Really, the first thing was managing information, and really getting clear and accurate information to the director so that she can make informed decisions. We were meeting with her a couple of times a day.

Janet McDonnell: So, at a certain point that first night, where we left off, you were out at Shenandoah, but at some point, early on, did the team set up operations there?

Dennis McGinnis: Yes, we set up at Shenandoah because they wanted to keep us in a place where we were—

Janet McDonnell: Outside of the action.

Dennis McGinnis: Outside of the action. We spent the 12th in Shenandoah, and by 3:00 in the afternoon on the 12th, we realized that more attacks probably weren't coming, and to be better able to report to the line authority in the National Park Service, we needed to be a whole lot closer than Shenandoah.

Dennis McGinnis: So we were in here on the 13th and we kept the dispatch function at Shenandoah, so that there was a separation, and they were reporting up through operations, and developing the report and the information for the director, and that was coming in twice a day.

Janet McDonnell: Those are the situation reports?

Dennis McGinnis: Status reports, you bet. And then we moved in here, moved down to Ranger Activities, spent a couple of days in Ranger Activities before we moved across the street—

Janet McDonnell: Into the South.

Dennis McGinnis: The South Interior Building. And we have been at that location a number of times for Facilities Management Software, you know,

comprehensive condition assessment, and then for Y2K, that was our command post. We were in here for that.

Janet McDonnell: So, you have the infrastructure in place. You've got the phone lines in there, and the computers and everything.

Dennis McGinnis: Right. And a lot of it is technology driven now. It's how we do business. And the computers are all networked, and all the files are electronic, and the information you pass back and forth. A lot of the reporting is coming through in electronic formats.

Janet McDonnell: In the meantime, you mentioned at the beginning that there is a management team that determines the objectives. Has this already been done by that point?

Dennis McGinnis: Yes. We had done objectives. We did objectives on the 12th, and then when we got in here on the 13th and had more conversations, we revised the objectives. Then the objectives are reviewed at every operational period.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Janet McDonnell: I had just asked you about mission as opposed to objectives.

Dennis McGinnis: And mission is not typically in the nomenclature. The mission is the National Park Service mission. The objectives are closer to the task at hand, you know. What do we want to do in this specific period of time? What does the director want from this Incident Management Team today, tomorrow, next week, next month? And it's kind of laid out in that sequence.

Janet McDonnell: And it's fluid, as you said. The objectives could change as you say, sometimes on a daily basis.

Dennis McGinnis: And what typically changes on a daily basis are the tactics. How do you meet your objectives? And we're doing an Incident Action Plan, and I apologize, I forgot to bring one with me, that kind of lays out—it's a notebook that you take with you that day, and it lays out what Operations is going to do, and how Logistics is going to support that. It has lots of key information. It has the delegation of authority, so everybody understands that. It has the objectives, the incident objectives. It has the command and control structure laid out in graph form, you know, who does what to whom, key phone numbers, maps if they're needed, photos if they're needed,

the weather report, specific status updates. For us it was all of the parks reporting back on specific elements going on in their purview. So that kind of information comes in and is captured.

Janet McDonnell:

The September 11th attacks were such a unique event, something that no one could have possibly envisioned. It sounds like what you're saying is that your existing framework and guidebook, for want of a better term, had enough flexibility in it that it really could meet incidents of this type.

Dennis McGinnis:

That's absolutely true. That's absolutely true, and that's the real key to the Incident Command structure is that there is a great deal of flexibility. We started this incident, and there were seven of us on the ground. Actually, there were four of us on the ground by midnight on the 11th, and over the next three or four days - actually four days, we probably had—in Washington, we probably had 40 people working in Washington, and then, you know, we were reaching out and touching a couple hundred throughout the country.

Dennis McGinnis:

One of the things that made this incident extremely challenging was that the normal methods of communication were not there, the normal modes of transportation were not there. This is a National Incident Management Team. We've got folks that are in Alaska, the West Coast, the Midwest, and I'm here to tell you, it's difficult when the planes aren't flying to get them in here and looking at alternatives. You've got to have players on the ground to accomplish your objectives, and it was real challenging the first few days where we didn't have a finance person, and we didn't have a plans person. The plans person, planning section chief that is typically on our team, the [Skip] Brooks team, was in a bunker somewhere west of Washington working with another incident management team at a much higher level than where we are. But that created problems for us because then we're trying to fill in behind for our planning section chief. The first alternate on our team is in Zion National Park, and it took him two and a half days to get here.

Dennis McGinnis:

Our finance section chief drove for three days, and finally drove from Arizona to Chicago, and caught a plane in Chicago to come in. So, there were some very unique challenges to this event. By day six we had the team in place. The first 48 hours there was not a lot of sleep, and you're running on coffee and adrenaline because you don't have all of the elements in place to do it, and you're dealing with not enough information, and that's the key is

gathering that level of information so you can make informed decisions.

Janet McDonnell: And why was that difficult, and where were you trying to gather the information from?

Dennis McGinnis: Well, the first 30 hours or so you couldn't use normal telephone lines. We were able to circumvent that using the Government Emergency Telephone System. But it's pretty cumbersome, and you're tapping in a lot of digits before you get a secure line.

Janet McDonnell: Actually, I had planned to ask you how effective that system was.

Dennis McGinnis: It worked great. I mean, it's cumbersome.

Janet McDonnell: It just was a little cumbersome.

Dennis McGinnis: A little cumbersome, but you can get along. And kind of retracing steps here a little bit, I was on the phone by 20 minutes of 10 on the 11th, and for the first 40 minutes or so I was able to use landline, I was able to use cell phone, and I was using both. I always have a cell with me, and I was using my folks' landline.

Dennis McGinnis: And by 10:30 I was in the tank. And without going through the GETS system, you can't find your resources, you can't touch base, you can't get good, clear, accurate information, and that was difficult early on. And it was even more difficult trying to tap in all those numbers while you're driving a car, holding it. But that was one of the unique challenges for this one.

Janet McDonnell: Besides transportation, and it sounds like some communication problems, were there some other difficulties in deploying team members, activating and deploying team members?

Dennis McGinnis: Yes, because there was a fairly high level of concern at individual parks. I understand why superintendents were very reluctant to release their resources, you know. Their responsibility is to that park. So, it was challenging to get resources into the system so that they could be redeployed to other areas, to higher priorities, and it took some coaxing from the director to re-establish the priorities. And that kind of happens. I mean, that's fairly typical in these kinds of events.

Janet McDonnell: Give me a general sense of the kinds of information you were getting from parks in those first couple of days.

Dennis McGinnis: Well, what the status was, what's closed, what's open, what resources do you have assigned to that closure. That was the real key is, you know, what's going on in our back yard. Then as conditions changed, and that was the real key element, when you're not closed anymore, but you're only getting that clear, concise information up to the director, and making sure that we're current with that information because conditions change. You're open one day, something happens, you're closed again, and making sure that the director has the opportunity to report up the chain of command there, and that the information is clear and accurate.

Janet McDonnell: Were there daily briefings for the director?

Dennis McGinnis: Yes.

Janet McDonnell: There were, okay. By the team?

Dennis McGinnis: By the incident commander.

Janet McDonnell: By the incident commander, right. What sense of support for the team's efforts did you get? [Did you get] a great sense of cooperation from the parks, both support from the parks for accomplishing the team's objectives, as well as support within Interior here, within the Main Interior building and South Building. I mean, I had read accounts that not everyone understood what the role of the incident team was.

Dennis McGinnis: I'd say that's very accurate.

Janet McDonnell: Why is it here? What's it doing?

Dennis McGinnis: And, there's a huge education element when you come in, whether it's coming into Main Interior, or Yosemite, or Yellowstone, or Grand Tetons. The teams have been to each one of those locations also where you've got to educate your partner as to what your responsibilities are, and that's why you have the delegation letter, and it clearly states that we're like another division assigned to whatever task the director assigns us. And that's your total function.

Dennis McGinnis: You're trying to relieve the burden for normal operations and whether it's main Interior folks, or park folks, where they can get back to the normal function, and the Incident Management Team is dealing with the chaos associated with the 9/11 in this particular incident.

- Dennis McGinnis: Some people grasp it much faster than others. Some people hold their area of responsibility much closer to their chest than others. There are always power struggles, you know. You try to minimize that. You make sure that whatever decisions and directions you take, that it's in coordination with the Director's wishes, and you make sure that if you're going to roll somebody, that the whole chain of command knows that and is authorizing that before you roll them.
- Janet McDonnell: When you say, "roll them," what do you mean?
- Dennis McGinnis: You work around them. You work over them. You know, somebody is holding some function near and dear, and you've tried lots of ways to work with them and it's not working. You raise your hand and say, "Here's what I understand the objective to be, and this person or this function is an impediment to that. How do you want me to proceed?" If you can get around him, you go around him. If you've got to go over him, then go over him. And you don't go over many people, because it's hugely counter-productive. And it's only in an extreme emergency that you do that because you're going to pay a price, and typically the price exceeds what you gained. And I don't think we rolled anybody. These aren't people you roll. You figure out a way to work with them, and that's what we did.
- Dennis McGinnis: In my particular area of responsibility, 80 percent of my day is in meetings. It's communicating. And 100 percent of the incident commander's day is communicating. And probably 70 percent of the planning section chief, and that's kind of the triad. The interface is most often with the folks you work with and work for, whether it's the secretary of Interior, the director of the National Park Service, the chief of operations and education.
- Janet McDonnell: So, it's that function of channeling information.
- Dennis McGinnis: Yes. And being able to clearly state what the goals and expectations are, and more importantly, hear what their concerns are and address the concerns so that you're developing that level of teamwork.
- Dennis McGinnis: Once you get on the ground and one of the toughest absolutely the toughest thing about this specific incident was the expectation that we can do everything for everyone. And once folks see some successes—

- Janet McDonnell: Can you give me an example of what you mean by that? What were some of the things that, you know, either superintendents or some—
- Dennis McGinnis: A great example—this was kind of an unusual situation where the National Incident Management Team had been activated prior to 9/11 to work with the Department and with Park Service to facilitate the security for the World Bank meetings that were scheduled to take place at the end of September. And part and parcel of that was looking at security because the Park Service had moved some of its staff and was in the process of moving the central office staff to 1800 G Street.
- Dennis McGinnis: So, we were kind of already on the ground there, and when 9/11 happened, we kind of folded in more responsibility from security. And we had already established good lines of communication with Park Police, and with D.C. Police, so some relationships had been established already that typically wouldn't have been there going into an incident cold.
- Dennis McGinnis: So one of the first things that happened was the security evaluations for not only this building, but for 1800 G, and 800 North Capitol, and AOC, and part of that was coming to the realization that we had significant concerns at 1800 G Street, building concerns.
- Dennis McGinnis: About a week into the incident, a decision was made to move those folks back out of that building, and to get them back into here. And one of the tasks that we were given was to get them back here, get them furniture, get them phones, and do it very quickly. We're more accustomed to those kinds of tasks than, say, the admin folks on the third floor here, because we do it. And that was a fairly successful thing where we were able to do it without huge consequences, and that kind of played on it, so that there was a higher level of comfort. And as people get more comfortable, then, you know—the Department wanted us to order resources, so we ended up working with the Department and ordering resources through our Incident Management Team, because we were more efficient at getting resources, whether it's law enforcement resources, or coffee and tables.
- Dennis McGinnis: They don't have the command and control structure to be as efficient as we are, because it's just experience. We've done this stuff more than other folks.

Janet McDonnell: I did read a recommendation in a lesson learned report that Interior adopt an incident command system. Is that something you concur with?

Dennis McGinnis: Absolutely. Absolutely, particularly on the law enforcement side. They had some folks in there that, in my opinion and it's only my opinion, were fairly myopic and were not willing to relinquish control and were not supportive of the overall incident goals. And it was personalities more than anything else. They were trying to order resources, and to accomplish security, without the mechanisms in place to be really efficient. And there were some rubs there.

Dennis McGinnis: When there was interaction, it was fairly condescending, and it's just things you live with. Okay, you know. It's not the first time I've been talked down to. But it doesn't foster good relationships, and that was the only real area where there were some significant bumps in the road. And there are still bumps in that particular road with the security side of it, at the Department level.

Janet McDonnell: Are there are some other areas [where] the team provided support to Interior, other than security. Obviously, you mentioned logistical support, but you also mentioned providing information about Park Service resources, that database.

END OF TAPE ONE

START OF TAPE TWO

Dennis McGinnis: The logistical support, you know, it was information going up through the chain in the Secretary's office. But the security evaluations, and we're probably the biggest because the first question on this building, looking at it and then, the outbuildings that were specific to the Park Service is where we really had the biggest interface.

Janet McDonnell: What aspects of the team's operations went most smoothly?

Dennis McGinnis: Wow. Most smoothly.

Janet McDonnell: Were the smoothest. And the flip side, of course, would be what aspects of the operations were the most challenging.

Dennis McGinnis: Absolutely the most challenging was getting good information and park status, to the director, and feeling confident about the information that was coming forward. That took a lot of effort

from a lot of folks to make sure that that function, because it was very important, was good.

Janet McDonnell: Was that particularly challenging because of the fact that there are 385 units, or because of the—

Dennis McGinnis: Well, I think there was a couple of things. I think there was a drastic change in culture from - culture and management style from Bob Stanton to Fran Mainella. Bob wanted just the big, big picture, and didn't want the detail. And Fran wants much more of the detail, and questions the detail, and that's her management style, and I think it serves her well. But, getting that bit of information back through the regional offices out to the superintendents, and out to those rangers or those maintenance folks that are actually saying well, jeez, I guess we're closed, or they just found a bomb or whatever it is, the different urgency.

Dennis McGinnis: And then there were some challenges with the staffing levels at the dispatch center in Shenandoah and there wasn't—early on there wasn't one specific person that was assigned to that function. Well, you know, it's a 24-hour dispatch operation, and someone can't be there 24 hours a day. So, we had to work some things through there and it straightened itself out after a little bit. But making sure that everybody in that food chain understood that Fran really, really, really wants good, current information, because it was so different from Bob Stanton's way of doing business.

Dennis McGinnis: So, there was an educational element there also, making sure that when we say the park is closed, the park is closed. If we say the park is open, the park is open.

Janet McDonnell: And all that information had to come through that dispatch center.

Dennis McGinnis: Yes. And early on, the regional directors or the deputy regional directors were the points of contact and that's not typically what they do either. So, it was educational. We got it straightened out.

Janet McDonnell: And I guess when you're dealing with some parks that have really small staffs to begin with.

Dennis McGinnis: Absolutely. Yes.

Janet McDonnell: Well, we've still got to come up with something that worked really well.

- Dennis McGinnis: Well, I think meeting the director's needs, and I think it was very frustrating from our side of the table. But, you know, I think there was a satisfaction from the folks here in this building that when they asked to have something done, it got done very quickly and very efficiently. And I've worked in the Washington office enough during my career to know that sometimes this isn't the most efficient place to get things done. So, we were able to do the, moving the folks back from 1800 G Street was done probably much more efficiently than moving them out of the building was done. We've got some experience doing that kind of stuff.
- Janet McDonnell: Well, I did want to ask you to talk a little bit more about some aspects of communication and coordination. For example, communications between—and maybe this isn't appropriate—maybe your team didn't communicate directly with the Interior communications center, or did it? Or command center, I guess it was called.
- Dennis McGinnis: We had someone in there. We weren't part of that command and control structure, you know. We worked really hard at making sure that they had our most current information and—
- Janet McDonnell: And that person would bring back to you word about what was going on department wide.
- Dennis McGinnis: Exactly.
- Janet McDonnell: Okay, and what about communications between your team and the Type-2 Team that you talked about earlier?
- Dennis McGinnis: Those went really well. I mean, incident management is a very small community. We all have personal relationships, between the Type-2 Teams and the Type-1 Team. So, you know the folks that are out there, and you pick up the phone and you talk, and there's a level of trust, and that's really what - and I think that went real well. And I think keeping the regional directors in the loop was really key, and the two key regional directors were National Capital and Northeast, because it was in their back yards. So, I think that went real well, making sure that we were meeting their needs.
- Janet McDonnell: Were there any other communication centers that you had to either have a representative in or provide your status reports to?
- Dennis McGinnis: Well, we were providing information up through the director, and then it was disseminated out at her discretion. We were meeting

with Dick Ring and Rick Gale every morning, and Gillian Bowser from the Director's office. And then there was the noon conference call with all of the national leadership folks, you know, the regional directors, and all the third-floor folks, and we were part of that conference call. The incident commander was part of that.

Janet McDonnell: Meaning associate directors and—

Dennis McGinnis: Yes. And then briefing the Director when she wanted to be briefed on specific things, and that was more on what her schedule allowed. It could have been once a day or once every other day, or just when things came up. But every day it was the big conference call for the first ten days, where everybody talked, and then those daily briefings in the morning, to kind of get—if there were things that, significant status changes overnight. That was the heads up that we needed to update the latest briefing.

Janet McDonnell: When you talk about the morning report specifically, how effective a tool was that for getting information out there? I think I read that someone from the team maybe met with the person who puts out the morning report.

Dennis McGinnis: The morning report was working for operations. Bill Halainen was working with us here, so he was getting firsthand information. He was a key part of the management team for the week and a half that he was here.

Janet McDonnell: Is that typical?

Dennis McGinnis: No. It's not typical at all. I've worked with Bill many, many, many years, and it's not typical. But it was so important to get information out, and a decision was made very early on. So, Bill was down - he was here working with the team as part of the team, probably that Friday. So that would have been the 15th or 16th.

Janet McDonnell: It sounds like that's one of those things that worked really well.

Dennis McGinnis: It did. That went great. And he sat in on the planning meetings. He and I did a briefing together one-on-one, so that he had the big picture. He knew what was going on, and he's a fabulous writer, he's an excellent editor, so he was wearing a lot of different hats. His primary function was making sure that we were getting the information out to the field through the morning report. But that only took up so much of his day, and then he was tasked with other things.

- Janet McDonnell: With other things. Okay. Do you see any areas where either communications or coordination could have been improved?
- Dennis McGinnis: Oh, yeah. I mean, from the field right up to the Director. At every level we could always do a better job, and it goes back to making sure that everyone understands what the expectations are. If the Director's expectation is that the bar is up here, then it was our job to make sure that everybody in the field right on through that line authority had that same level of knowledge that good, clear information on park status is very important to Fran Mainella.
- Janet McDonnell: Did the team coordinate at all with the U.S. Park Police? Was there any connection there?
- Dennis McGinnis: Yes. You bet. You bet. We were meeting with Gary [Van Horn?], and then we had somebody at their command center, one of our uniforms, somebody working for operations was there, and, you know, we were feeding information and they were feeding information. It's all intelligence, so we're not really at liberty to go much beyond that.
- Janet McDonnell: Oh, sure. Okay.
- Dennis McGinnis: There was good communication.
- Janet McDonnell: And is that something that was unique to this event, or in previous—Well, I guess given some of the events you mentioned that you've worked on before, I suppose that you had coordinated with U.S. Park Police.
- Dennis McGinnis: You bet, but I think everybody stepped up to the plate on this specific event, and it wasn't so much my turf, your turf. It was more let's get the job done. And really, we're past history, there's always an undercurrent. But I didn't have that sense at all on this event. Everybody was just very, very professional.
- Janet McDonnell: I wanted to ask just a few questions about the team's role with security. You've touched on it a little bit, so I don't want to duplicate too much. But if you would maybe discuss a little bit more, the team's role in providing advice about security issues to the Director.
- Dennis McGinnis: Sure. And what we did, one of the specific tasks in that delegation of authority was to do a risk management and security evaluation for this building, which we kind of bowed out pretty early because

all that work had been done and was being reviewed at the department level.

Dennis McGinnis: So basically, where we concentrated our efforts was 1800 G Street. We did a full-blown evaluation there. 800 North Capital we did the same thing, and then AOC [Accounting Operations Center]. And then we provided the Director with documentation with the continuity of operation, an upgraded continuity of operations plan, that addressed the new security concerns, and also, you know, the risk management concerns with the lighting and egress. Not just the security.

Dennis McGinnis: We brought in a team of law enforcement folks, facility management folks, and safety folks to kind of pull together and to do an evaluation.

Janet McDonnell: Are these Park Service—

Dennis McGinnis: Yes, Park Service.

Janet McDonnell: Not contractors.

Dennis McGinnis: Not contractors. Yes, they were Park Service.

Janet McDonnell: So, did you address at all security issues in the parks themselves, or risk assessment in the parks?

Dennis McGinnis: Not specifically. You know, we were asking the question, and either through the Type-2 Incident Management Teams that were out, or the parks themselves were doing that evaluation and feeding the information back. We were more of the facilitator of the overview, or for the service in gathering that information and asking those questions.

Janet McDonnell: What about evacuation? Did you have anything to do with evacuation plans for this building? Was there an evacuation plan in existence for the Main Interior building?

Dennis McGinnis: Yes, and it's revised.

Janet McDonnell: Fine. I'll just get to some sort of final reflections here. First, would you talk just a few minutes comparing this particular event to ones that you've worked on in the past?

Dennis McGinnis: Sure. This was probably by far the most challenging, just because of the unknown. And some of the things I've touched on in the

past—being able to get resources, being able to communicate, those kinds of challenges. Once you ramp up and you've got the resources here and you can tap the resources, the biggest challenge for this event as we got into it was making sure that we were meeting everyone's needs, everyone's expectations, and that was growing geometrically day by day. Success breeds success, and when you're able to provide whatever service you provide, other folks want you—I need you. Can you do this? Can you do this?

Dennis McGinnis: This was real challenging. The Yosemite flood was challenging for other reasons—the duration, the impact to folks, and just the sheer magnitude. Where really, I only had 50 people that I was directly supervising on a day-to-day basis here. In the Yosemite flood operation, I was dealing with 600. Where here we probably spent \$300,000 bucks for the entire event, and we were turning a million dollars a day at Yosemite. But it's kind of different. You're dealing with infrastructure there and not—

Dennis McGinnis: Probably there, from a security standpoint, the most challenging was a Type-3 event I did in Philadelphia in July 1987 where on July 4th we had a presidential visit, and then we had both houses of Congress meeting in Philadelphia, and a state dinner, and it was all backed up. And that was probably the most challenging from just a workload perspective on my part, and my experience at that time was significantly less than it is now. So, it was much more of a learning curve.

Dennis McGinnis: So hopefully, you learn something with every one of these incidents. Each one of them [is] unique. The Park Service is very fortunate. We've got just a huge cadre of very dedicated folks, not only at the national level, but at the regional levels and at the park level. The folks that are in the incident management arena, there is a fairly strong sense of community.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Janet McDonnell: What are some of the things that the team learned out of this event?

Dennis McGinnis: I think probably we need to ensure that we've got mechanisms in place to get to wherever we are quickly, and we've developed some plans for that.

Janet McDonnell: You're talking about more transportation emphasis.

- Dennis McGinnis: Yes, and being able to get around those hurdles. You can't function as a team if you don't have your team there for three or four days. So that was a challenge.
- Dennis McGinnis: One of the other things is making sure that we've got some redundancy in the positions so that there is a backup and we've got more flexibility than we had in the past. We're working towards that, and we made some recommendations that are now - that were presented to the NLC, and we're waiting to hear back from Mr. Ring on where those recommendations are going, and if the recommendations are going to move forward. But that's another area where we can make some improvement.
- Dennis McGinnis: Working through team dynamics—we've got some new folks on the team, and every time you go out, you learn a little more, and you develop that sense of teamwork and community.
- Janet McDonnell: It sounds like those personal relationships are very important in this kind of operation.
- Dennis McGinnis: Absolutely. In this kind of situation, where you're doing very stressful things over very long periods of time, you need to be able to be very candid with folks, and not destroy the relationship. It's kind of that family relationship where you can say lots of things to your siblings, and you move on.
- Janet McDonnell: And I suppose you have to be able to trust the information they are providing you with, or trust that they are going to go get that information.
- Dennis McGinnis: And that's probably the key element. If there's not trust, you don't have anything, and that's why the dynamic of the team is so critical. You try to be fairly selective with who comes into that group because you can change radically with kind of the wrong elements. But there is a whole feeder system from the Type-3 to the Type-2, so the people that are moving up are establishing themselves and exceeding everyone's expectations at every level. So, by the time they are ready to move into a national arena, you've got a pretty proven commodity there.
- Janet McDonnell: Seasoned professionals.
- Dennis McGinnis: Absolutely. You pay your dues and you make your mistakes, and hopefully, you're doing it at a level where it's not amplified, or the consequences aren't as significant.

- Janet McDonnell: Is funding ever an issue, or is there emergency funding that kicks in, or how does that work?
- Dennis McGinnis: Funding is always an issue. You pick up the phone and it's going in the tank, and they want someone there now, and it's always trying to catch up, but how do we fund this. And yes, there are specific funding pots that have very rigid—So, with fire, or emergency law and order, or other security funding pots, you can cover some expenses but not others.
- Dennis McGinnis: The original delegation, there was a \$25,000 cap on this one, and that took about 20 minutes to go back and say well, "We've already spent that." So, we got to a more realistic level. If you're on a national arena and the incident is significant enough that you're calling in a national incident management team, it's going to be expensive. And just getting the team together is expensive.
- Janet McDonnell: Is the team still in operation, or at what point did it stand down or demobilize?
- Dennis McGinnis: We demobilized October 4th
- Janet McDonnell: And how was that determination made?
- Dennis McGinnis: In concert with the directorate. We're given her projections, and there was a transition from the national incident management team on October 3rd to kind of an ad hoc team for another couple of weeks. They were providing logistical support, which is what was needed at the time, and kind of financial support, tracking the dollars, and then on a liaison function, which is kind of the incident commander function between the Department and the Park Service because it was mostly to support Department needs.
- Dennis McGinnis: But yes, funding is an issue every time we go out. I was a division sup [supervisor] in operations at [Hurricane] Andrew working for Rick Gale, and Rick had the green light from the director, had unlimited authority, and he exceeded—I mean, we went through probably 58 million. But that was a huge show. There were probably a thousand people working on that event.
- Janet McDonnell: Well, is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think would be important to get into the historical record?
- Dennis McGinnis: I don't think so. I think you had good questions, and you were well versed.

Janet McDonnell:

Thank you.

END OF TAPE