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Officer David Moen
May 7, 2002

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell
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INTERVIEW WITH OFFICER DAVID MOEN

CONDUCTED BY

DR. JANET MCDONNELL

MAY 7, 2002

START OF TAPE

Janet McDonnell:

I'd like to hear about September 11th. How did you first learn about the attacks on the World Trade Center?

David Moen:

I was working an evening shift, scheduled to work an evening shift that day. So, my day started with me taking my daughter to school, and I had my youngest daughter with me. This is about 8:00 in the morning. We were planning to go to the beach that day, because the weather was nice, so I had stopped in to get a coffee before going to the beach. And once I got inside the store, I noticed on the TV that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. They had a news conference going at that time. So, I watched for a few minutes and I figured it was a small plane had hit and eventually they would put the fire out.

David Moen:

A few minutes later, I had heard that a second plane hit the Trade Center, and a little bit after a plane had hit the Pentagon, and a plane had crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. So, I kind of really didn't know what was going on. It didn't seem to be too good, so with all of those planes going down I figured maybe I'll go back home and make a phone call to the office and see if they needed me to come in for any reason.

David Moen:

So, I made it back to the house with my daughter. We're about an hour away from work and tried to call in numerous times. The phone lines were dead into New York City. I then decided that I was going to take my daughter to the babysitter's a few hours early and try to make my way up to work.

David Moen:

On my way into work I heard all of the bridges into New York City were closed so I was expecting not to be able to get over the outer bridge crossing into Staten Island, which is my route into work. Once I got on the Garden State Parkway, I noticed several state police cruisers with their emergency equipment heading on up the Parkway to help out in Jersey City and Bayonne. I got off of the Parkway and once I got into route 440 heading into Staten Island, the traffic was just bumper to bumper. So, I utilized my badge I was able to flag the vehicles that were in my way off to the side and I was able to travel down the left-hand shoulder of the road. Once I got to the checkpoint of the bridge, I figured they weren't going to let anybody cross the bridge. I

identified myself as a police officer, showed my credentials, and I was allowed to go over the bridge.

David Moen: Once over the bridge I made it into work with no problem. I passed the 122 Precinct here in Staten Island and I noticed they had numerous police officers out the road, New York City officers getting their people rallied together to help out. I don't think I knew at that point that the towers actually collapsed. Made it into work. I was told.

Janet McDonnell: You came in here?

David Moen: Yes, I came into Staten Island.

Janet McDonnell: Fort Wadsworth?

David Moen: Correct. I was told to get dressed and just stand by. So, I did that. I was waiting in the office here to be assigned a detail. Then I was told to go down to the Coast Guard Station in Rosebank, which is just down the street from here, and wait for a boat to pick me up. Within a few minutes of waiting down at Rosebank one of our patrol boats being captained by Sergeant Dorino (?) arrived, we jumped on the boat and we were going to head over to Ellis Island to assist with anybody that was sick or injured from the collapse. They were using that as a staging point to bring, they were going to use that as a staging point to bring the injured.

David Moen: Once on the boat we headed over there. We dropped off personnel. And I think because of my experience in the Coast Guard with running different boats in the Coast Guard, boat coxswain, I was asked to stay on the boat crew. After we dropped off the personnel, throughout the course of that morning, I think we got up there about 11:00, the morning of September 11. We went over to Manhattan quite a few times to drop off supplies and personnel. We did a check of the huge air duct for the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, which is located on Governors Island, for any explosives just to be on the safe side. We were assigned to do that by the NYPD command post. So, we did that, and we didn't find anything over there.

David Moen: I can remember the soot and the smoke in the lower harbor there still pretty thick. There were a number of boats from just about every agency in the tri-state area in the harbor

assisting with rescue efforts. It was nice to see the maritime community assisting with tugboats and party boats. Everybody that had a boat was helping out. That was nice to see. I spent 10 years in the Coast Guard. There's just that bond in the marine community that, you know, people can help, they help each other.

David Moen:

I can remember some of the feelings of the crew members of the Park Police that were on the boat as being that of, there was a lot of anger about what had happened. And how something like that could happen. It just didn't sink in; the initial impact didn't set in right away. I guess my personal feeling was how could something like this happen here in the United States, such for two prominent buildings? And I would say for the first few days it was just mind boggling.

Janet McDonnell:

Was your boat carrying people off of lower Manhattan? Were you helping people evacuate, too?

David Moen:

By the time we had gotten up there a majority of the people that were being evacuated from Manhattan had already been evacuated. We were in, probably a 23-footer, with 3-4 crew members and it wasn't an overly large boat. And at the point that we had gotten up there a majority of the people were evacuated, so we pretty much dealt with taking supplies, and doctors and nurses from Ellis Island over to Manhattan.

Janet McDonnell:

It also sounded like some sort of security missions, too. I mean—

David Moen:

Correct.

Janet McDonnell:

Okay. And I know that some Park Police boats were providing security for Ellis Island and Liberty Island.

David Moen:

We were one of those boats. That was one of our tasks. We were kind of multi-tasked that day with a bunch of different.

Janet McDonnell:

How did the directions come to you out on the boat? I mean who was telling you what the missions were? Somebody, I mean Captain Lauro, somebody on Ellis Island?

David Moen:

Well we were receiving directions from our dispatcher.

Janet McDonnell:

Okay.

David Moen:

And we have a number of boats here in the field office and we were also receiving directions from some of the other marine units as far as help and things of that nature. I guess to go back, so much went on that day. I guess we did end up taking, I remember we were moving some of the agents from the Secret Service who were over Chelsea Pier when we went over there and picked them up, and moved quite a few agents, and took them over to Ellis Island that day. There was so much going on.

Janet McDonnell:

So how long was that day?

David Moen:

Oh, I don't know. I think it started on my way up there. I guess, you know my day started at 7:00 in the morning with getting my kids ready and I don't think I went to bed until the wee hours of the morning the next day. And I didn't go home for the first four days.

Janet McDonnell:

Is that right?

David Moen:

They were long days.

Janet McDonnell:

So, were you back on the boat again the next day? Did you do this for days on?

David Moen:

For the next three weeks.

Janet McDonnell:

Oh, for three weeks.

David Moen:

And we did multi-operations on the boat. I think it was either the 14th or 15th of September, we were in the area of South Cove assisting with operations and all of a sudden, we heard collapse, a building collapse. And we were in the marina area, and we just noticed thousands of rescue workers that were partaking in the digging at Ground Zero running towards the water. I notice all of the boats, the rest of the boats that were in the harbor area there. They untied and they were getting out of there. That's a pretty small area and a lot of boats in there, so it was tight quarters as far as boat handling is concerned. I was at the helm of the boat.

David Moen:

We had noticed some U.S. Marshals running towards the water looking for an escape route from the pending

building collapse. So, we motioned for them to come over to our boat. I believe it was eight marshals and one contractor, a construction worker, ran over. Sergeant Gullino (?) was able to hold a line around the dock. With everybody jumping on the boat all at one time the boat nearly capsized. I thought we were going over. And one of the marshals ended up, as everybody jumped onto the boat, the boat kind of pushed itself away from the dock, and one of the marshals fell into the water and was completely submerged. We pulled him up, got him on the boat, got the remaining marshals and the contractor that were on the dock off of the dock onto the boat, and then we went out into the harbor. And right after that we took them over to Ellis Island to see if they were okay and to feed them.

Janet McDonnell:

So how smoothly did the operations go those few weeks on the boat?

David Moen:

I think all things considered, I mean hindsight being 20/20, I'm sure there could have been some things done differently, although on my level I thought we did the best we could with the resources that we had. It was nice to get an opportunity to send officers over to Ground Zero to assist with the recovery effort. I was fortunate enough to be one of the officers to go over and do that. And that was a very humbling experience, just going over there seeing the destruction. I mean everybody wanted to help. Just the number of volunteers and the people that were donating materials, goods, and things of that nature, it was just unbelievable. And it was just, just to know that you went over there I mean, we were filling 5-gallon buckets with debris. And I said, "You know, this is going to take years." And I mean even though we didn't move mountains with our efforts, it was just nice to say we went in there and did as much as we could. I would like to think that somebody would do that for me if I had been in that situation.

Janet McDonnell:

Do you look at your job any differently now as a result of September 11?

David Moen:

I think law enforcement in general now is looked upon a little bit different. I can remember the first couple of months after September 11th, just the general attitude of people was a little kinder. The way people drive on the streets. New York doesn't have the reputation for having some of the kinder and gentler drivers. And people on the

streets were a little bit more forgiving. They were a little bit more apt to let somebody cut in and get into traffic, merge into traffic, than prior to September 11th.

David Moen:

Since then everything has gotten back to normal and, but I think for law enforcement, I think that was a big shot in the arm for law enforcement. It really showed the American people that no matter where the danger is, we're going to be there.

Janet McDonnell:

Do you feel like you had the resources you needed to do your job well? I guess resources and training, I guess I should say?

David Moen:

I think the training that the Park Police give is very good, and I think by having the boats here in the field office played a major role and what we could accomplish. I think without the boats, we would have just felt like we were helpless. But because we had the boats, we were able to travel back and forth from Manhattan to Jersey and from Staten Island, and I think the boats played a vital role.

Janet McDonnell:

It's sure a testament to the importance of the marine program.

David Moen:

I think so. I think that was a shot in the arm, too, for our marine unit, because without those traveling into Manhattan would have been next to impossible. And with having that link to the water by having the boats, a more direct link, and one that got us where we needed to go much quicker. So, I think that's, to the managers that put the money into the marine unit, I think that was very wise. I think they had visions and it ended up being a positive thing.

Janet McDonnell:

Well, how, would you talk to me a little bit about coordination with the Coast Guard? What's that connection like? What's that relationship like?

David Moen:

My personal or just the operations that were going on that day?

Janet McDonnell:

In those operations, how smooth was that coordination?

David Moen:

I think the Coast Guard did a good job as far as setting up command posts. You asked earlier about who we took

directions from. The Coast Guard was one of the agencies that we provided assistance to. We had radio communications with them, and we made ourselves available to the needs that they had by providing escorts, by providing personnel, safety zones, and transporting personnel back and forth from Ellis Island to Manhattan. They were planning on mass casualties coming into Ellis Island and we were communicating with the Coast Guard about when those casualties might be coming over and preparing EMS workers that were waiting for them, to when their arrival might be. I think that was one of the important things to know. We didn't get the casualties that we expected, but we were prepared. And I think that we did as much as we could, and we were prepared for the worst.

Janet McDonnell:

Well, is there anything, there's probably a lot that stands out in your mind not only from that day but the ones following it. But if there were one or two things that, you know, one of the things that you were really proud of or things that you thought worked really well, I appreciate you sharing those thoughts.

David Moen:

I think everybody kind of put their personal differences aside and the teamwork really showed. And it showed that under a great deal of stress and pressure that we were able to pull through and accomplish the mission.

Janet McDonnell:

Anything you would have done differently?

David Moen:

No, I don't think so. I think we did as much as we could with the equipment and the capability that we had. I don't think there's much more we could have done. So, you know, in hindsight I have no reservations about what we did.

Janet McDonnell:

Well I don't have any more questions. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

David Moen:

Okay.

END OF TAPE