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Einar S. Olsen
December 13, 2001

Interview conducted by Janet McDonnell and Gary Scott
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 11TH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview With

EINAR S. OLSEN

Chief Ranger

National Capital Region

Conducted by

Janet McDonnell, Ph.D., and Gary Scott

December 13, 2001 Headquarters, National Capital Region

Washington, D.C.

START OF TAPE

Gary Scott: This is Einar Olsen on December 13, 2001. And Einar, he's the chief ranger here at the National Capital Region of the National Park Service. And on the day of September 11th, 2001, tell us what you heard, what you saw, and what you did.

Einar Olsen: Okay, well, thank you for the opportunity, Gary. That day, September 11th, to the days prior to that we'd been having beautiful, late summer weather. It was very quiet, very sunny, temperatures in the mid-70s. It was just one of these days that we savor after having those miserable dog days, humid, hot, and hazy, the summer days here in Washington.

Einar Olsen: That morning, about 9:10 in the morning, I was on my way, leaving the regional office, going to the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia Environmental Crime Task Force meeting, which was being held at the Anacostia Naval Station. And on my way out in the parking lot, the first I learned of this was another employee in the regional office just told me in passing, "A plane just hit the World Trade Center building." I go, "Boy, that's unusual." So, I was very sort of curious. So, when I got in the car, I turned the radio on to WTOP 1500, the all-news station here, and at that time learned that a second plane had in fact hit the second Trade Center building in New York City.

Einar Olsen: So I proceeded to our meeting and when I got there, at the Naval Station, we were in a conference room and there were representatives from the FBI, Environmental Protection Agency, Defense Department, the various state environmental organizations and the Park Service. The mood was a little tense because everybody knew what happened. They knew at that point that, and this was about 9:30 in the morning, that there had been a terrorist attack in New York, because the odds of two planes hitting by mistake are just nonexistent in terms of it being an accident. So, we knew there had been a terrorist attack. So, things were a little on edge and we were having a hard time focusing.

Einar Olsen: And just five minutes into the meeting, about 9:35 I believe it was, a number of pagers started going off in the meeting room. And one of the individuals from the Defense Department, Defense Criminal Investigator Service, left the meeting to make a call and he ran back in. He interrupted the meeting and he said, his words were, "They just hit the Pentagon."

- Einar Olsen: And at that time we stopped the meeting and we went out and looked out a big bay window of the Naval Station and we could see all of the way over into Virginia and we could see this huge mass of black smoke rising from the Pentagon. You couldn't see the Pentagon, but you could see the smoke. And right there and then we canceled the meeting and all of the agencies picked up their belongings, got in the cars, and we all raced, emergency response, back to our respective offices. And it was a line of vehicles racing back into downtown Washington. At that point, I immediately—
- Janet McDonnell: How difficult was it to get back?
- Einar Olsen: Well, we ran lights and sirens the whole way, so it didn't take very long. And I think the public at that point realized that things were happening, and people were clearing out of the way.
- Gary Scott: Could you give us more specific information on the location of the Naval Station from which you saw the Pentagon?
- Einar Olsen: Yes. It's located pretty much, it's right on the Anacostia River, right near, I think, it's the 11th Street Bridge. It's immediately south of National Capital Parks East. And the profile, the land profile in this part of D.C., is very flat so you couldn't really make out a top of a building in Virginia unless it was fairly high. You could not see the Pentagon, itself, but the amount of black smoke coming from the fuel from the plane which had exploded and was on fire was incredible. Not just a column of smoke, but it was spreading out like a mushroom, also.
- Gary Scott: Were you able to get back to the office rather quickly or was there traffic buildup already?
- Einar Olsen: Not at that point. We were going inbound to central city, so it didn't take more than 5-10 minutes at the most. And that's interesting because the issue of traffic would become a major issue within two hours after that. But when I returned to the regional director's office, we were meeting in the regional director's office sort of figuring what we should do. And at that point, we heard a large explosion. And the gossip at that time was that they hit the back of the Lincoln Memorial, which turned out not to be true. In fact, it was a sonic boom from one of the Air Force fighter planes, which had scrambled from Langley Air Force Base down in the very southeastern part of Virginia, which happened to get there too late.

- Einar Olsen: Not knowing that immediately though, the Regional Director decided to close the Regional Office and send everybody home. So a number of people in my office, the Ranger Services Division, were cleared out the regional office building, went back in, and that time, I advised the regional director we need to put all of our law enforcement rangers on alert to be available to help out. The Park Police had already started scrambling since they had the primary responsibility security of the monuments for downtown.
- Janet McDonnell: Was there a plan for evacuating this building and how smoothly did that work?
- Einar Olsen: Well, that's not a very big deal. You know, we've had fire drills over the years. But pretty much, there was a little misunderstanding as to how people would get home. A lot of people ended up walking because the traffic would become so bad. But we weren't so concerned about the security. We wanted to get them away from the sensitive facilities. We're not that far from the Pentagon. We're not that far from the monuments. I think that the regional director, Terry Carlstrom, just didn't want them hanging around. So, they were sent home.
- Einar Olsen: At that time, I asked the regional director to basically regionalize the law enforcement rangers, which basically puts them under my direct command. And so, we did that and at that point, I went to the U.S. Park Police headquarters next door to their command center and offered up the assistance of our rangers if they needed them.
- Gary Scott: How were you in contact with all of the law enforcement rangers?
- Einar Olsen: At that point, I had had no contact with them. And that would once again become a very major issue because what happened was, the Park Police, they said, "Yes, we do want your assistance. Would you stage some and then once you have them ready, we'll give you an assignment." So, our goal was to get about 15 rangers together.
- Einar Olsen: Meanwhile, around that same time, because most of the government buildings downtown had been closed, and people were sent home, that sort of heightened the state of tension, anxiety in the city. People were calling their friends, their relatives, a large number of calls coming into Washington. Now, what happened was both the land line and the mobile phone system became inoperable, because they were just overwhelmed. Therefore, we cannot communicate by phones at all. So, what I had to do then was basically go through a radio system based out of a vehicle.

And what I did then was go to a vehicle, in the parking lot here, one of our emergency vehicles, contact our regional communication center which oversees all of the ranger operations in the region. And it had only become a 24-hour operation about six months before that.

Janet McDonnell: And where was that set up?

Einar Olsen: That's located in Maryland. We don't really advertise the location, but it's out in the western part of Maryland. And we basically put out, saying this is a regional emergency and that all of the rangers are now regionalized, and we requested the communication center to call all of the parks in the outlying areas where the rangers work. And basically, I set up a staging area at the George Washington Parkway headquarters in Northern Virginia, which happens to be not more than half a mile from the CIA headquarters. But it's a convenient location. It's outside the downtown area and it's easy to get to. It's near major roads. And that was going to be our staging area.

Gary Scott: They were going to come in.

Einar Olsen: They would come in. And it was supposed to be an emergency response. And I got that process underway and I also advised the communication center to call the George Washington Parkway, tell them they were going to be the staging area, and then be prepared to set up one.

Einar Olsen: At that point, I told the regional director what was going on and I left the regional office, got in an emergency vehicle, and started fighting my way through traffic in Washington, D.C. It was horrendous. In hindsight, it probably wasn't a very good idea that all of the government offices and other offices which followed government policy, it wasn't a good idea to close them, because emergency vehicles could not get through the city. Because to get into Virginia you have to cross a bridge to get across the Potomac River and all of the major arteries were clogged.

Einar Olsen: I, basically, worked my way, lights and siren, up through Northwest Washington, through Georgetown, took all of the back roads through Georgetown and worked my way over to the very northwest part of Washington, D.C., and into Maryland, and ended up crossing the American Legion Bridge on the 495 Beltway into Virginia and taking the George Washington Parkway south down to their headquarters. It took probably a good 45 minutes to do that and only taking the back roads made that possible.

Einar Olsen: So, we set up the command, not a command center, it was a staging for all of the people, rangers to report to. The George Washington Parkway under Superintendent Audrey Calhoun's direction did a great job. They provided three individuals to help me there. They set up all of the maps that we would need. They put on the TV so we could find out what was going on, too, because we didn't have the full picture at that time. So, we set up the staging area. At that point, it was the first time I got to check in with my family and just see how things were. And told them I'm okay, but I don't know when I'll be in touch with you.

Gary Scott: How many rangers did you get coming in?

Einar Olsen: Well, we got 15 rangers. Within two hours, we had the 15 rangers. And they did an excellent job getting there. And once we had squads of 6 or 7 at a time, we basically went back to the vehicle to contact the communication center in western Maryland and had them call into the city. At that point, they could call from western Maryland into the Park Police command center and get an assignment and then relay back the same way. And we got an assignment.

Einar Olsen: Our very first assignment was to report to the Columbia Island area of the George Washington Parkway. And the assignment was to check on the status of all of the children from the Pentagon daycare facility. When the attack had occurred, they evacuated the Pentagon daycare center, which luckily happened to be on the opposite side of the Pentagon from where the attack occurred at the Pentagon facility. They crossed the bridge under Columbia Island Marina, which is under Park Service jurisdiction, and basically, they basically just sat down in a grass field and waited there.

Gary Scott: Kids?

Einar Olsen: There were kids and there were the adult leaders. There were about 50 people altogether.

Gary Scott: Was this in the LBJ Grove?

Einar Olsen: Yes.

Gary Scott: So, the kids had been moved to the LBJ Grove.

Einar Olsen: Right.

- Janet McDonnell: You said that was the first assignment. And maybe I didn't follow closely enough. Where did that assignment come from?
- Einar Olsen: That came from the Park Police.
- Janet McDonnell: Okay.
- Einar Olsen: They had, apparently, somehow had gotten word that all of the Pentagon daycare kids and some of the adult leaders were there and we needed to do something. We couldn't just leave them there.
- Einar Olsen: It was interesting that none of the Park Service facilities had been attacked. It was just the Pentagon, but there was great concern that there may be additional attacks on some of these icon facilities, such as the monuments and the White House, which the Park Police had responsibility for. They were overstretched and were very tapped out for law enforcement resources, so they needed our assistance for these various assignments that were coming up. So that was our first assignment.
- Gary Scott: So how many rangers did you get down at the LBJ grove?
- Einar Olsen: Well, we had seven at that time. And because they were not familiar with the geography of Washington, D.C., I led them down in a convoy. And at that point, the George Washington Parkway had been closed for security reasons because I guess it's close to the CIA. It was a very eerie feeling leaving the parkway headquarters, going in a convoy down the George Washington Parkway, passing various checkpoints along the way. So, it was very quiet. That's the sense I had. It was very quiet. Not any traffic.
- Gary Scott: Nobody is on the parkway.
- Janet McDonnell: Where there any Park Police checkpoints?
- Einar Olsen: They had a couple of points, yes.
- Gary Scott: To backtrack, where were the rangers from?
- Einar Olsen: The rangers were from the outlying parts of the region, pretty much Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, C&O Canal National Historic Park, Manassas National Battlefield Park, and Prince William Forest Park.
- Gary Scott: So, they got to the LBJ Grove, then what did they do?

Einar Olsen: What happened was there was one supervisor ranger. I put him in charge of that crew, and they were able to establish contact, I guess with the Military District of Washington, arranged bus transportation for them, and they were taken to a Virginia Department of Transportation facility on Columbia Road, where they could be inside, they could provide snacks, probably some TV. And basically, they stayed there all afternoon until they were picked up by their parents. And I do not know how the parents found out about that, that facility, but I guess the Military District of Washington coordinated that.

Gary Scott: On Columbia Road in?

Einar Olsen: Columbia Pike in Northern Virginia.

Gary Scott: Oh, Columbia Pike.

Einar Olsen: A couple of miles from the Pentagon.

Janet McDonnell: You said you led that squad down there?

Einar Olsen: Well, what happened, I led the squad to Columbia Island Marina, turned over the assignment to the supervisor ranger, and then they provided a convoy escort for the bus to the facility.

Janet McDonnell: Is there anything you can tell us about just what your thoughts were arriving there, I mean what the, what's the word I'm looking for? Sort of the—

Einar Olsen: The mood.

Janet McDonnell: Yes, the mood.

Einar Olsen: It was just very quiet, because there wasn't much traffic around. Everybody knew what was going on. It's amazing. Even when I had to fight through traffic to get from the regional office to the staging area, the George Washington Parkway area, people moved out of the way much more so than normal. Everybody knew there was a real emergency going on. People on the side of the street, if there was heavy traffic area, people who might have been on the side of the street, they were directing cars to move one direction or the other to make room for me to pass through. So, you sensed that people were, they knew this was for real. They were out there trying to help in any way possible.

- Einar Olsen: But back to the kids, I really didn't have any thoughts at the time. I was so caught up in just the duties. I really didn't have any time to share any of my, or even to have any emotions. It was purely, I was in that task-oriented mode at that time.
- Gary Scott: So, all you did was take the squad of rangers down to the grove and then you turned around and went right back. And what did you find and see when you got back?
- Einar Olsen: When I got back to the George Washington Parkway headquarters, shortly after I got back, we had enough for the second squad. And then we went through the process again. The rangers checked in. We checked their time of arrival so we could keep track of them to make sure they all get back safe. Then we got our second assignment for the Park Police. That assignment was to report to a mobile command post on the national mall near the Smithsonian Castle. So once again, a lot of the rangers not knowing the geography, I led that convoy downtown. We entered Washington via the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge and once again, it was just a very eerie sensation. There was no traffic. All of the roads had been closed. The bridges had been closed. We entered downtown Washington on Constitution Avenue.
- Gary Scott: Were people still trying to get home?
- Einar Olsen: No, it was fairly clear at that time. We ended up having to take a little detour. We had to go right by the Department of the Interior building and came back to Constitution Avenue. It was very eerie. Just extremely quiet because there was no traffic in that area.
- Janet McDonnell: Would this be midafternoon roughly?
- Einar Olsen: It was the mid, you know, 2:00. What we did, we reported to the mobile command post, received a briefing, and basically turned over the rangers to the Park Police and they provide security and enforced closures along the national mall, and also closures at the Jefferson Memorial.
- Gary Scott: What were the duties of these rangers on the mall?
- Einar Olsen: They were basically to enforce closures, you know, make sure traffic didn't pass through certain areas and just be on surveillance just looking for suspicious activity because we didn't know if there were going to be any more attacks.

- Gary Scott: And how long were their duties, the rest of the day and into the night?
- Einar Olsen: Those two squads, they pretty much worked just that day, because after that point, the assignment with the daycare children, that of course ended, and later that night, the Park Police had obtained sufficient numbers of their own people that they were released. Now in addition to those two squads, at the other end of the region at Catoctin Mountain Park, where Camp David is located, they had their own assignment. Basically, the President was evacuated. After a certain period of time, he was evacuated from Washington, D.C., so we had to gear up for Camp David. So, we also sent a number of rangers up to Camp David to enforce various security perimeter zones around that area. And that started a long-term assignment. Since that day, we provided over 56 days of 24-hour closures at various areas of the park, and that is ongoing, and we expect it to be ongoing for possibly over a year.
- Janet McDonnell: What effect has that had on the parks? And what effect did it have that day and the day after? I mean pulling some of these rangers.
- Einar Olsen: That's a good question. As a result of all of these demands, most of the parks in the outlying region, they closed, where they could actually physically close the gate and closed buildings, they closed down, because we had basically stripped those outlying parks of most of their protection rangers.
- Gary Scott: That day or in the ensuing days?
- Einar Olsen: That day. It was pretty much that day, maybe a day or two after. But things settled down for a day or two after that, but then we started getting new assignments. The assignment with Camp David closures, they started to become very intense, because the President, the Vice President, the cabinet, and other senior level government officials started having a lot of their high level security meetings at Camp David and that required high levels of security. And that require all of the rangers from Catoctin Mountain Park, plus rangers from other parks in the region as well as numbers of rangers from the northeast region, including Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Battlefield. We had rangers from the Delaware Water Gap and Valley Forge who helped out. So that was an ongoing assignment.
- Einar Olsen: After that, though, the Secretary of the Interior got very concerned about security at a number of Department of the Interior facilities, nationwide. And as a result of that, the Park Service started getting

a number of requests to provide protection rangers to guard sites at Boston National Historic Park, where there is a naval ship, I think it's the U.S. Constellation. The Charlestown Navy Yard is part of the Park Service responsibility. Also, Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia with the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, a large number of visitors, they had security concerns there, also. The Department of the Interior building, itself, and in all of the Department of the Interior dams in the western part of the United States.

Einar Olsen: So as a result of that, my counterparts, all of the regional chief rangers, working with other high level personnel from the Washington office, we developed a national emergency response plan to organize and coordinate all of our law enforcement resources to handle this security emergency, as well as others that may happen in the future. So based on this plan, all of the parks around the country were required to prepare draw down plans to basically keep the minimum amount of staffing they needed for their own basic needs in the park, and then release the other rangers for security assignments around the country.

Einar Olsen: So, these, all of the regional chief rangers, we formed a group called the Multi-Regional Coordinating Group. And we started determining where the assignments were and matched them with the rangers available, and we started sending rangers all over the country. That is now ongoing. And we anticipate that's going to be a challenge with us for at least a year.

Gary Scott: Are these rangers—let's go back to Catoctin. The rangers up at Catoctin, did they work overtime?

Einar Olsen: Oh, yes. There's been a lot of overtime throughout the region.

Gary Scott: And did they work through the night at Catoctin?

Einar Olsen: Yes, through the night.

Gary Scott: So, you had to provide the 24-hour coverage of rangers.

Einar Olsen: We covered for 56 days now.

Gary Scott: And approximately how many rangers does that take to cover Catoctin?

Einar Olsen: We don't discuss that, but it's a fair number.

- Gary Scott: A fair number of rangers. And the rangers then that are sent to these parks to guard the parks and the Interior facilities and the dams, is the travel money and lodging available for them?
- Einar Olsen: Right. At first there was a lot of confusion about how this was administratively going to be handled. But since that time, the unit that receives the support, they end up funding it, as well as some emergency law and order funding that has come from the Washington Office. But we're still hoping that Congress will appropriate funds to the Park Service to pay for our past expenses and the expenses we know we're going to incur just with this response effort, and to help us prepare and put in place better security measures at these high profile parks and other facilities across the country.
- Gary Scott: But there hasn't been a block of money? The parks had to eat it then?
- Einar Olsen: Well, the Park Service is basically reprogramming money which comes out of other programs.
- Janet McDonnell: Right there is no emergency funding authority.
- Einar Olsen: No. But in addition to this, we have another challenge. And that was a previous commitment we made to the Winter Olympics that are going to be happening during the month of February in the Salt Lake City area. Due to the very unique skills which Park Rangers have, the U.S. Secret Service which has the responsibility for security at the Olympics requested rangers to work at a lot of the venues, particularly the skiing venues. So we have 105 rangers from around the Park Service who are going to be working at the Olympics at the Alpine events, cross country events, probably biathlon, who have skills in snowshoeing, alpine skiing, cross country skiing, and other Nordic skills, emergency medical skills, in addition to law enforcement skills, they going to be providing some technical law enforcement security for that effort. And we're going to have to deal with that in addition to the work we're doing for the Interior Department during the month of February.
- Einar Olsen: And it just points out the challenges that the ranger workforce is facing across the country. We're often asked to provide a lot of support for these special assignments, but we're in dire straits. We're over 600 rangers short, nationwide. And we're just hoping that someone will pay attention to that and start, you know, help us to provide some funds to make up the shortfall.

Gary Scott: And for this Winter Olympics, you'll be working outside the Park Service.

Einar Olsen: Right and in a situation like that, they're provided deputy U.S. Marshal status where they can work anywhere. When we do that, we have to get that type of authorization at a number of dam facilities, where they're not on Interior Department lands, per se.

Gary Scott: None of the rangers here that work in the Washington area were called up to New York then?

Einar Olsen: We had rangers. After things calmed down here after September 11, we had a number of rangers who went to Boston to provide security at the Navy Yard. We've had rangers work there and at the Interior Department, as well as Catocin Mountain Park for security at Camp David. So, we've helped out the northeast region and the Interior Department, also.

Janet McDonnell: You've indicated that one of the effects of having ranger resources stretched fairly thin was that at least for a brief period a few parks actually had to be closed. Are there some other effects that you'd want to address?

Einar Olsen: Well, because of all of these security assignments we've received, and they're long term, the parks are being asked to basically reduce their staffing, substantially, from what they would normally have. And as a result of that, we're providing just the very basic public safety needs in the parks and things such as resource protection are really taking a back seat now.

END OF SIDE A

START OF SIDE B

Janet McDonnell: Actually I would be interested in hearing you talk about how you set priorities with these, you know you have these, I mean one part of it was requests coming in from the Park Police, requests for support. But then you had other requirements that had to be met, and some of that day-to-day, keeping some of the day-to-day ranger missions going. How did you sort through those priorities? Was there some sort of process for that?

Einar Olsen: Well, on September 11, the Park Police knew that we had about 15-16 rangers available, so we advised that we had two squads. And basically, they made up the assignments knowing that that's the numbers we had available. So that wasn't that much of a

challenge. I think the challenge has been these long-term security needs, particularly for the Bureau of Reclamation dams. Other than Hoover Dam, they have no law enforcement or security personnel of their own. And historically, they have not had much security at those dam sites. So that's been the biggest challenge.

Einar Olsen: Basically, this Multi-Region Coordinating Group, we learn about what their requests are for security and we talk to the incident commanders at each site to learn what the, we basically do a risk assessment, particularly with dam sites in the west. These dams, such as Hoover Dam, they provide electricity. They provide water supply. Some dams provide flood control for communities downstream. And so, we were sort of balancing the various risks of a catastrophic failure or attack on these facilities.

Einar Olsen: Also, we'd been given a number of priorities from the Interior Department. Security for the Interior Department and the high-level Interior officials became the number one priority. And then also.

Janet McDonnell: How was that coordination done with WASO and with the Department?

Einar Olsen: When we met, we would have telephone conferences, they would usually have a representative participating in those phone conferences.

Janet McDonnell: But did you deal, I understand the region has an incident team, is that correct? I guess I—

Einar Olsen: Well, we basically put together a coordinating group. We didn't use, to sort of sort out the assignments and the personnel, we didn't use incident management teams. They would actually go to a site and manage the incident on the ground. And we often sent out one of those special events teams. These are teams of 11 rangers, who have trained together, and they would go as a unit to a site. But they were just a resource.

Einar Olsen: In terms of coordinating, it was the regional chief rangers. It was the acting chief ranger in the Washington office. And we also had a liaison with the Department of the Interior, and then also we had personnel from the national interagency fire center personnel, who are experts at coordinating large numbers of resources and assignments based on their experience with wildland fire. So, they provided a lot of expertise in guiding us through this process.

- Gary Scott: You have sent rangers out in the past for firefighting?
- Einar Olsen: Yes.
- Gary Scott: Did the types of emergency techniques that you used for fighting these fires in the past have any help in treating this catastrophe? In other words, were the networks already in place?
- Einar Olsen: Right. I think rangers as a whole, as well as other people involved in wildland firefighting, we operate under something called the incident command system. It's a system for organizing events and emergencies. And we applied a lot of the aspects of that to both the initial response on September 11th and for coordinating our efforts since then. We've introduced things such as planning levels. We have planning levels on wildland fires going from 1 to 5, 5 being the highest level of an emergency where at that point we basically start shutting down park facilities, provide personnel resources for wild land fires or for law enforcement emergencies. Presently, we're at planning level 4, that is a high level of preparedness and making people available, but we're not actually closing down park facilities. In the event of an actual emergency, regional or national emergency related to terrorism, we would go to a level 5 right away.
- Janet McDonnell: So, do you think that incident command system worked effectively for this particular response?
- Einar Olsen: For our region, I think so, because we're not that large and most of our rangers are well-versed in it because they're also wildland fire fighters. In terms of coordinating rangers and assignments nationwide, there's been some confusion, and there have been a number of people [who] have questioned the viability of using this national resource ordering system like we use for wildland fire, how well it's been working for this law enforcement type of emergency. I personally have not seen that because I'm not actually at the National Incident Command Center, known as NICC, where they're actually marrying up the assignments with the personnel available. So, I have not seen that firsthand.
- Gary Scott: But it sounds like there was a drill. There were already established procedures and you fell back on them very usefully during this event.
- Einar Olsen: Yes. Personally, particularly the day of the emergency, determining that this is a real emergency. The idea of staging people, having a squad leader, the administrative aspect, having

people check in, check out, assigning account numbers, those types of things which we had a lot of experience in, in terms of dealing with the wildland fires and other special events. So, a lot of those skills come in very handy. And they're going to be used, a lot of this administrative apparatus to support the big incident events, we're using it right now for the security work. We're going to be using it for the Olympics, also.

Janet McDonnell: Do your rangers report any changes in their interactions with the public at some of the parks in your region?

Einar Olsen: Well, I think generally the public was initially was just more on guard. Following the terrorist attack, we also had some other terrorist incidents associated with anthrax. And we had a number of reports of substances that looked like anthrax show up in the parks and, of course, we end up closing the facilities and then calling on local expertise to conduct tests on the material to determine whether or not it's been anthrax. We've had no such cases, though.

Einar Olsen: I know other local public safety agencies have had lots and lots of calls related to anthrax, because of the actual real cases that occurred and got lots of attention.

Gary Scott: Can you think of anything else that you haven't told us that were in your notes that you'd like to sort of?

Einar Olsen: Well, in a way I've been so involved in the response to this, I really haven't had time to sit down and let a lot of this register, because also about two months after the attack, on November 19th we had a child. And prior to that, we had a lot of healthcare issues to take care of and then after that, so it's just been, the second half of the year has just been totally hectic. And I really haven't had too much of a chance to reflect on what has happened.

Einar Olsen: I think the only opportunity that we have is that each year, my wife and I sit down, and we talk about things that have happened during the year. In addition to cards, we write sort of a Christmas letter which provides sort of a summary of the key things that have happened in our life this year. And I think that was the first chance I really had to reflect on what has happened. It's been one of my toughest years, in addition to the terrorist attacks and initial response, I spent half of my time on working with this coordinating group and following up on the little assignments from that. So, it definitely has changed our work in our office.

Gary Scott: So, has the pace of work gotten a more hectic now?

Einar Olsen: Well, it was for a couple of months, but now what we've done is we decided there are certain things we're just not going to do this year, because we realize the national security issues are on the top of the list right now. But still, it hasn't really sunk in a lot. In addition to that, because we haven't had a time to think about it so much, we bought a lot of newspapers following those initial days, too, and we've stored those away in a little box that we're keeping for our daughter of all of the things that have happened around the time that she was born. So that's probably the way that we're going to remember it and we're going to sometime down the road have a chance to read through those newspapers.

Janet McDonnell: Does anything stand out as being the most challenging about responding to this event? Was it the shortage of resources? What comes to mind?

Einar Olsen: I think it's the long-term requests that are being made of rangers to provide security. And the fact is that we're often asked to do this, yet we don't see much assistance for getting us more rangers. In the last six years in the National Capital Region alone, we've lost 20 percent of our rangers through attrition. And that's mostly a funding issue. And other regions have lost rangers, in not quite the same numbers. We've had numerous studies done of the law enforcement program in the Park Service and one of the most recent one said that we're short about 600 positions, nationwide.

Einar Olsen: The challenge is that we're a very versatile workforce, the rangers, and we're called upon to provide a lot of the support. But we're part of the Interior Department and the Interior Department is not looked upon as being a law enforcement agency. So, when it comes time for Congress to distribute funds for terrorism, security, and law enforcement, we don't rank high on the priority list. And it's usually the Treasury Department and Justice that receive most of those funds, so it's very frustrating for us. And the workforce is getting tired and it's getting older, too. So, I think the program is in dire needs of being refreshed, of being rejuvenated.

Janet McDonnell: How easy was it to shift resources among parks, or between parks in the region? I mean is there flexibility in your regional operations and enough flexibility to be able to do that?

Einar Olsen: That's a good question, because as you know, the organization culture of the Park Service these days is of that we're very decentralized and the superintendents have ultimate control over

all of their personnel. And that's why on September 11th, when the terrorist attacks occurred, I recommended to the regional director, because we don't want to have to get clearances from all of the superintendents and finding them, basically regionalize, he created an emergency delegation of authority to me to put them under regional control and we can just order them to move around for this immediate emergency.

Gary Scott: Are they still regionalized?

Einar Olsen: Well, no, they weren't after the event, but as a result of the draw down plans, all personnel that had been determined to be in excess of their very basic levels are considered to be available for me to move around as need be. And the parks are doing what they can. I can honestly say that when they developed their draw-down plans, when they're all completely done, every park, I think, has made available a reasonable amount of resources considering what they have available in the park. It's just that there are just not that many of them. So even now at the planning level 4, which is the second highest level, we only have 4 or 5 rangers available for out of park assignments. At planning level 5, we only had 10-15 available.

Janet McDonnell: Particularly for a region that includes the Nation's Capital.

Einar Olsen: Right. And most likely if there is another terrorist incident, it's going to be associated with the downtown area where the Park Police have the primary law enforcement jurisdiction. And our role would be to provide first response, extra law enforcement personnel to meet their immediate needs, and also provide extra support for Catoctin Mountain Park and Camp David. We've actually put in anti-terrorism packages to support our ability to provide these functions and so far, we have not had any luck in getting that support.

Janet McDonnell: From a strictly personal perspective, do you see September 11th as a transforming event for either the Park Service as an agency or for your region?

Einar Olsen: We've always had a lot of concerns around terrorism in the Washington, D.C. area. The Park Police have commissioned a number of studies, and I've been involved in one of them. And we know that there's a lot of security concerns and, hopefully, this will make a difference in terms of long-term support for security and related programs. I'm hoping for that.

Einar Olsen: In terms of the Park Service as a whole, based on what I've seen from the Park Service leaders in our national office, I don't see any change. They do not think the agency has been stressed at all in terms of providing extra support for the rangers. There's been a lot of concern for individual employees and getting counseling for employees, particularly at the sites in New York City, but in terms of shifting resources and priorities in the agency, I've seen no difference at all.

Einar Olsen: Personally, I've lived overseas for five years. The U.S. has always struck me as a very isolated country in a way because we have oceans on both sides. Most Americans know very little about the rest of the world, and I think we've always had a sense of being very innocent because these attacks are things that, other than the attack on Oklahoma City, which was domestic terrorism, these terrorism attacks, these are things that happen in other parts of the world. They don't happen here. I think we've lost a lot of that innocence since September 11th.

Janet McDonnell: Is there something about either the region's response or your rangers' response that you find particularly gratifying, I mean something that worked particularly well?

Einar Olsen: I think September 11th, the response that we had and the fact that we were able to adjust so well to the challenges that we faced with the traffic, being able to move through traffic to stage and move our personnel, to communicate when all of the phone lines were down, both mobile and land lines. Basically, they weren't down, they were just overwhelmed. And we had never had resources to plan a region wide communications network. And we were able to work through what we had to communicate. We were able to get the people together and we were able to get them to their assignments and they did the job. I was very proud of that.

Gary Scott: Do you think this is an infrastructure that will continue?

Einar Olsen: An infrastructure?

Gary Scott: That you built now?

Einar Olsen: We haven't built anything. We just basically worked through what we had in place. We have identified many needs to help us do this better, but it's going to be up to the leadership of the Park Service, Interior Department, and Congress to what extent they want to support us. And I think rangers, as a whole, have been very frustrated with the leadership of the Park Service over the years

because we've identified a number of needs and it's just, the protection programs, visitor protection, resource protection, it's just not our turn right now. And we just do not have the support.

Einar Olsen: I can say at the regional office level we've had some support. Regional Director Terry Carlstrom had provided funding support to develop a regional communication center, which is operational 24-hours a day, which was critical in terms of organizing, communicating with and organizing our personnel on September 11th. That center is a model for other regions of the country now. We've had numerous inquiries.

Einar Olsen: So, I've got to say the regional director has been very good about supporting that center, but at his level there's only so much he can do. And I think we all recognize that.

Janet McDonnell: So, the new heightened security measures, new security measures, are broadening the role, expanding the role, of Park Rangers without the resources to support that?

Einar Olsen: That is correct. And what that means is it pulls money away from other functions. And if this is a long term, it looks like it will be a long-term assignment in terms of security at these icon parks and dam facilities, and [if] there's no new money, it's basically being reprogrammed out of other program areas. And also, the rangers would like to be able to do some of the work that they were hired for, also.

Gary Scott: Sure. Have you had any interface with the President's new homeland security agency?

Einar Olsen: No, but I'm sure that various individuals, high level officials in the Interior Department have.

Gary Scott: Is there anything else?

Einar Olsen: I believe that's all.

Gary Scott: Well, I think your interview is worthy of preserving in the archives of the National Park Service.

Einar Olsen: Thank you.

END OF TAPE