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September 11, 2001 Oral History Project, 2001-2004



Frank W. Mills  
January 31, 2002

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

INTERVIEWEE: Frank W. Mills  
Assistant Superintendent  
Statue of Liberty National Monument  
(Interview No. 30)

INTERVIEWED BY: Mark Schoepfle, Ph.D.  
Ethnographer  
Archaeology and Ethnography Program  
Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW DATE: January 31, 2002

PLACE: Ellis Island  
Statue of Liberty National Monument

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

Mark Schoepfle: This is an interview with Frank Mills, interviewer Mark Schoepfle, on January 31, 2002 for the World Trade Center memorial tapes.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, Frank, the first question, as I mentioned to you before is: from the moment you were aware that something had happened, what went on?

Frank Mills: Well, basically, I was standing at our work dock outside on the north side of Ellis Island. I was talking to the supervisory boat captain, and we were just standing out there talking about the boat and operations when I was facing north and Mike was facing south, and I saw an airplane come across from the west and it was low and it was loud. Mike turned and we saw it, and we saw that it was low and loud and really didn't think very much of it.

Frank Mills: And I watched it, both Mike and I watched it go straight into one of the trade towers. Then there was about a 10-second, 15-second delay, and all of a sudden there was an explosion, you know, two-thirds of the way up, three-fourths of the way up, an explosion at the building. Both Mike and I looked at each other and it was like we weren't sure what happened. It was like we couldn't understand if that — it was like disbelief, you know. Did a plane really go in there, or was there an explosion, a fire, or something that happened to the building? It was very difficult to connect the fact that the plane did go into the building — did you really see that happen — and then this explosion.

Frank Mills: Mike stayed with the boat where he was, and I started to go inside of Ellis Island to — just to start to find out with our protection division what was going to go on or what was going to transpire. Word was out that — from people in the building — that a plane had hit, and I met with the deputy superintendent that said a plane had hit. The park police were saying that our Circle Line boats should be held with passengers. Should we hold that boat or not? And I said to just kind of stand by for a few minutes.

Frank Mills: And then I went back outside again to see — because a lot of the employees went outside to see things from that work dock area or that part of the island. And then the second plane hit. I didn't see that. You could hear it. And I immediately — in the back there was just a lot of people running around, employees and some contractors. And I met with — again the Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Garrett came outside with the news of the second plane, and I said go inside and be with the lieutenant. It was pretty clear at that point that something strange was happening to our environment at that stage of the game — that we were under attack.

- Frank Mills: My first reaction was to stop all traffic coming across the bridge. For some reason it just seemed imperative to me to protect our rear guard, our flank, whatever you want to call it. As officers were trying to be dispatched to different areas and a lot of radio traffic, I didn't want to interfere with any of the radio traffic. So, I just informed the chief of protection that I had our flank. I had the bridge. And basically, what I did was stood at the bridge area, unsnapped the keeper of my weapon, and wasn't going to let anything come across that bridge until I was relieved, until we could get officers out there. In other words, we — the protection division, the operation at that time was to stabilize and secure our island, get people outside rather than inside at that stage of the game because of, you know, things are falling out of the sky. I have a better chance being outside at that stage of the game than inside.
- Frank Mills: Within maybe five minutes I was relieved by the park police who had — we threw the gate across at what we call post four. And officers went out there in a car with shotguns or what have you. Went back inside and just was a combination of Cynthia, the Chief of Protection Chris Pappas, and myself, just directing operations and making decisions as to getting the staff, all staff, everyone off of Liberty Island. That's residents, etcetera, and all staff, all employees, interpreters, everybody. We did that.
- Frank Mills: My wife and my oldest son came over on the boat with the staff. The staff was advised to not stay on Liberty Island but to make that staff run into MIO, into Manhattan, to get those people home. And we were preparing for incoming — incoming casualties from the various emergency services units over in New York, from the harbor unit and from the fire department; that — could they use us as a — as a site to bring noncritical victims to Ellis and then be transported from Ellis over land to the various hospitals in New Jersey, the Jersey City Medical Center, etcetera.
- Frank Mills: So, we were preparing for that to assist in what we knew was a catastrophe in New York in the Lower Manhattan area. We knew that we would play a role in that somehow, just because of the water aspect. We weren't sure. Once we got our staff off, our staff boat was used for a few transports of people. We got our park police vessel in the water, and one of our other captains got our other boat operating in the water so that we still had a staff-type boat that could be used for our needs. And basically, that went on for the first hour.
- Frank Mills: We organized those staff members that were staying that were based in New Jersey. We organized them as far as those that had first-aid skills would help with our EMS operation, those that had just other skills to help man bathrooms and where victims were going to be coming.

Frank Mills: We weren't sure what we were going to need as far as answering the phone, taking messages, logging in names and what have you, preparing food for people. And that's basically what transpired.

Frank Mills: Personally, my son goes to high school in Trinity Place in New York City, which is one block away from Ground Zero. And I was — when my wife saw the buildings come down on her transport from Liberty over to Ellis Island, that's when she became very distraught with the fact that — on the safety of our son. We didn't hear anything from him. My oldest son was with my wife giving her comfort, and she was just kind of like pleading that they were — that he would be okay.

Frank Mills: I had serious doubts. I felt that bad news was coming because the school was so, so close to the area. But at the same time, being a former teacher, I was kind of trying to convince myself in the faith of the school system saying that the one thing that schools can do is, that's get the kids out. And for fire drills and for this and that, they do — once somebody drops the checkered flag at a school, they get kids out. And I was trying to convince myself that they were out of harm's way by — they had evacuated at possibly after the first hit. Something must have been occurring prior to the collapse of the towers, that they would have gotten away. So, one side of me was trying to convince myself of that, and the other was preparing myself for a tremendous, I guess you could say, personal loss and comforting my wife and that.

Frank Mills: As it turned out, about two and a half hours later, around 11:15, 11:30 my son arrived at MIO at where we get our staff boat. He got into MIO. He called on his — they called on the radio because all cell phones were down. Most land-based and satellite-based communications were out. And the guards called from over at MIO that he was there. And I hopped in a park police patrol boat and went over there and picked him up, brought him home, brought him back to Ellis Island, which was pretty good. Everybody was pretty happy.

Mark Schoepfle: I'll bet.

Frank Mills: Now he was in a — he was in a very extreme state of shock. He was noncommunicative and very skittish and very, very fearful.

Frank Mills: Our other concern is that we had our 13-year-old who goes to school in New Jersey — was in his school in New Jersey at a Catholic elementary school. And there was no direct impact going on over in New Jersey, but it was my intention to get him out of that school and bring him back to Ellis Island when I could. And I think my wife had called the school and everybody was stable and fine, and there was no impact.

Frank Mills: Once my family was reunited, in between all of that it was a matter of just organizing and helping out from a management side or as an assistant superintendent trying to make contact with different agencies, seeing where there were holes with various things. With the EMS operation, they needed this, they needed that, need to close off areas, need to have some people assisting people go to the bathrooms and making phone calls and directing ambulances that were staging in Liberty State Park, keeping a documented record. And it was more or less like field supervision of that, answering questions, getting things, making decisions, moving that along.

Frank Mills: In the afternoon, I went over and picked up my other son, brought him back. And we had to make a decision about going back to our home at Liberty Island.

Mark Schoepfle: This was just after you picked up your other son?

Frank Mills: Yeah. We were there and we stayed still working with the operation, still just being there. And the question was do you — do the island residents return to their homes or should we find them residences elsewhere, thinking that the — without a doubt that the statue was a target. And the condition of the world and where things are and that there had been attacks at the Pentagon, one in the airplane over Pennsylvania, and both trade towers were down, the state of the world and our nation at that time was kind of unstable.

Frank Mills: I made the decision to go back to Liberty Island. That's my home. That's where my family is. That's where our dogs are. It's where the pets are. It's my job. It's why I've been in the National Park Service for 27 years. That's my home. And the only thing I kept saying to myself was like the Hank William's song "Country Boys Will Survive," and we're going back home. We're not going to hide out.

Frank Mills: There was a debate about that between the park police and park superintendent, whether or not that was going to cause problems. And Diane Dayson, the park superintendent, said, "well, Frank, if that's — that's how you want to do it, then that's okay by me."

Mark Schoepfle: But she didn't really — she kind of wanted you off the island probably.

Frank Mills: Yeah, I think everybody would've felt a little bit better if they didn't have to worry about the island residents. My philosophy was that all of us that live out there and work at the statue, the fact that it's a target — the fact that it is a target didn't exist just because of 9-11. I mean, it — it's been there. I have — I started working at the statue in 1981 and was there until '85 and then went to two other sites after that and came back in '98.

Frank Mills: The notion that the statue was a target or is a target for terrorists or even significant criminal activity was nothing new, you know. It was nothing new to me. And it really ticked me off from the standpoint that what was going on in the world as an American to say I can't go to my home because of these people — out of fear. And that pissed me off, I guess you could say. And my goal was to get my family back to Liberty Island, take my personal flag that my dad used to carry when he used to camp and backpack and hang that up outside. And then when I could, get our garrison flag up at Liberty Island and raise that sucker up nice and tall. So that when eventually news media and news coverage, which the statue was on every major media station in New York as their intro or their exit, possibly knowing that the statue was there giving comfort to the rest of the world, that that big old garrison flag would be up there and we were still there. Bring it on. Come on.

Frank Mills: My wife agreed with that. My oldest son agreed with it. My youngest son agreed with it. But the young lad who was in high school and had been down there at the World Trade Center, he was very, very, very, very nervous and very, very, very, very skittish about going anywhere. I think if he had his choice, he would've just balled up in a corner on Ellis Island and stayed there.

Frank Mills: But we as a family got back, got home, were there with our dogs, and with the family unit just stayed together. Stayed together and just comforted each other and just — just stayed together. Next day, came back in and Diane and Cynthia had stayed home. We had agreed that we would launch into an incident command structure. There was not a lot of need for any type of management, administrative-type stuff. That I would take it for a few days and under the incident-type management structure that we had to deal with the park police, deal with a skeleton crew of maintenance people, and just stabilize and move forward. So, we did that.

Frank Mills: By Friday at the end of the week, I felt that it would be important for the New York superintendents to get together. And speaking with the region and with Diane Dayson at home, we agreed to have a meeting on Friday afternoon with the superintendents of the New York area to assess, to see where everybody was at, to see what issues there were. Were there employees that had lost members in the event, status of Federal Hall, status of the New York Parks, status of even parks that were not directly affected by it, but did they have family members that may have been involved? To kind of assess where we were and for the superintendents to pull together and start to begin to think about where we're going from here, what are we going to be doing, where we going?

- Frank Mills: So, we conducted that on Friday, and the regional director came up and the associate director. And we all had a good meeting over at Gateway. We decided that we would bring the supervisory staff in on Monday and talk to our division chiefs, see how an assessment of how their employees, their staff members were doing. And that we would try to get our employees back to work on that following Tuesday or Wednesday.
- Frank Mills: I came up with an opening exercise for the staff at the Statue of Liberty, which was kind of like a circuit-type program where various people were in various locations throughout Ellis as source experts for a given topic. And we had topics of general — the status of the park, where things were going. We had peer counseling. We had transportation issues. And then we had law enforcement and security issues, changes and different things that were coming, intelligence reports, information.
- Frank Mills: And then the last one I think was the actual what we were going to do on the job come Wednesday, you know, come Thursday, Friday, what our park operating procedures were going to be without visitors and what we were going to do. So, we launched into that, and we were back rolling with the staff. And we just had a variety of projects and tasks and all divisions were responding. We got an awful lot of help.
- Frank Mills: One of our biggest concerns immediately on the Wednesday, I guess 9-12, was to invoke every resource we could find about employee assistance and counseling. And we had tremendous success with the National Park Service's peer counseling program. They were up in the park late Friday afternoon with six peer counselors and a program. And we began that on Saturday and that ran for a good two to three weeks. And where there were — and that peer counseling, even though it was based on Ellis, it incorporated the whole New York area, park sites of Manhattan sites, Gateway, even Sandy Hawk Morristown, the whole type area. It included the Park Service as well as the park police. And they did a wonderful job on giving the employee assistance. And basically that — that's how it went down for the immediate couple of days afterwards.
- Mark Schoepfle: If I can backtrack for a couple moments on things.
- Frank Mills: Sure.
- Mark Schoepfle: On the first day, just when the planes had hit, you had — the first reaction was to stop the traffic, just keep the area clear of any further visitors, and as I think you said keep the area covered?



Frank Mills: Yeah. It was like things were falling out of the sky, recognizing the fact that the statue, Ellis could be a target — was more than likely a target. I wasn't going to let a Ryder truck come across that bridge. I wasn't going to let a vehicle come across that bridge. I wasn't going to let anybody come across that bridge at the present time, until we — until some things stabilized, things stopped falling out of the sky, I guess you could say, and we had the manpower and personnel to verify what was going on. That was my — just kind of a reaction was the protection of the people in our site, that we were vulnerable for some other type of terrorist or some type of an action.

Frank Mills: And it — afterwards, for a few days afterwards I would actually chuckle to myself because it's like, what were you doing here? John Wayne standing in the middle of the bridge with a nine-millimeter gun isn't going to do you a whole heck of a lot of good if a Ryder truck busts through the thing. And you're going to stand there and unload your weapon on an incoming Ryder truck. But it was that type of a mindset that I knew we were — our water base was being covered, we had no control over the skies, but we were vulnerable from a potential action of either taking out our bridge or making a statement at Ellis Island. And I was going to prevent that prior to anybody getting out there.

Mark Schoepfle: You'd mentioned that several things like that had — I mean, you were sort of ready for that kind of thing because things like that had been attempted before. What does that mean?

Frank Mills: Yeah, it's a — you know, when you work and live at the statue, we're forever getting, you know, bomb threats. We get threats from a lot of different type of avenues. And the car bomb, the truck with explosives has been a recent occurrence in a terroristic tactic for several years, including Oklahoma City, you know. So, it was like the fact that we had been hit by the air, now maybe there was going to be a follow up on the ground to certain type things. Like a military attack, you do the air first and then come in on the ground with your ground troops or your ground terrorists and people. And that was what I was expecting was now a ground assault by whoever it was who was dropping planes out of the sky, that the next wave was going to be on the ground and/or by boat.

Frank Mills: But our harbor got sealed up real tight. We had boat operations out there. We had eyes and ears on the water. We had overhead aircraft at that stage of the ballgame. There were fighter jets by 10 o'clock in the morning. They were streaking the sky. But I was immediately after the attacks, 9:30-ish I guess, my thought was that now they're — you know, somebody's going to come in on the ground and either take over or try to do some damage.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Try to at least do something stop them.

Frank Mills: Yeah, that we were weak at this area. This was our weakest link between both monuments was the fact that you could drive to Ellis and cause an incident.

Mark Schoepfle: So, this was happening even before staff had been brought together, buildings cleared, or anything like this?

Frank Mills: Yeah, this was pretty much —

Mark Schoepfle: This was like an immediate response without even planning or thinking?

Frank Mills: This was — no. This was my gut reaction. I told the chief of protection, “I’ve got the flank.” That was my radio traffic to him when he started to see where people were moving. Officers were going to certain places. Evacuate Liberty Island, you know. Get all visitors in — get all of our employees back inside the building and down in the basement area, you know, type thing. Get — hold on to your divisional staff so you know where they are. My reaction was, I’ve got the flank, you know. Don’t worry about it. There are things going on. Until you can get other officers out here, I’ve got it.

Mark Schoepfle: You’ve got it. You guys do whatever you’re going to do, right?

Frank Mills: Right. You do what you’ve got to do. I’ve got our flank at this stage of the ballgame.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, from what other people are saying the staff first came out by one of the flagpoles, I think.

Frank Mills: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: And then they moved over to another side when they saw the other boats coming in.

Frank Mills: Right, right.

Mark Schoepfle: And some of them actually had been apprehensive that this boat was possibly another attack. So, everybody seemed to be at a pretty heightened —

Frank Mills: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: — state of awareness.

Frank Mills: Everybody was — it was that the sky is falling in on you at this stage of the game. Anything could be real.

Frank Mills: There was a large private like cigarette boat that I myself didn't see it, but other folks — that was the thing that created some apprehension because it's kind of pulled into our slip at Ellis. And of course, it was moved away. It had nothing to do with anything. But that idea that anything was possible at this stage of the game and you didn't know where you were getting from where or what.

Frank Mills: At those initial stages, it was kind of like the first stage was shock and then a dawning that the New York area was under attack. The next feeling was the trade centers had collapsed and all the devastation that was occurring in that area in Lower Manhattan. But I don't think — I know for myself, I didn't feel that we were not under attack anymore, immediate attack. Probably until long after my son got over here probably 12, 1 o'clock did I feel that we were not in an attack mode, either us or nationwide.

Frank Mills: I mean, it was like we're getting hit all over the place. We're getting hit in New York City directly. They're getting hit in [the] Washington D.C. area. Now something happened in Pennsylvania. Is other things happening in California, Nebraska, Florida, what? We haven't got word of that yet.

Frank Mills: But I would say by around 12 or 1 o'clock with the news, with things that were going on it was relatively the attack and incident itself had hit a point where you did have the boundaries on it at this stage of the ballgame. It was the Pentagon, the incident in Pennsylvania, and what had occurred right in front of us in Manhattan. And that's where we were at, at that stage of the ballgame. You knew that you had air superiority at this stage of the ballgame because of the fighter jets. And you knew that the air was being taken care of. You heard reports that all planes were grounded, blah, blah, blah. And that we were stable for the attack at this stage of the ballgame. Then from there you're going into the idea that — now what's the next stage of the attack? Is it going to be on the ground? Is it going to be — whatever, but it's out there.

Mark Schoepfle: This second wave you were talking about.

Frank Mills: Right. This "what else is going to occur?" And it's — that was a long time to be — the idea that things were not right in the world as far as what was going on.

Frank Mills: I think when you're hearing — when we were hearing different things on the news or the TV, different snippets, all that you're processing in your head is various different things. You're hearing Boston, Massachusetts had something. And you — and it was hard to connect Boston, Massachusetts is where the flight originated for blah, blah, blah. But I wasn't processing the other things.

- Frank Mills: It's like you're hearing something happened in Boston. Something happened here. Florida, what's up with Florida? And again, the media had already started to get stories about flight schools that individuals had been to. And all the information was that we were having difficulties in a wide area of the country. And that was a pretty interesting phenomenon.
- Mark Schoepfle: At what point did you start — were you starting to be able to kind of get all the snippets together?
- Frank Mills: I would say by that evening of the 12th around 4 o'clock when I was making the — when I had made the decision we're going back home again. By the information that I had processed, I felt that that first initial attack was over, that we were secure on the water, we were secure in the air, and now it's just hunkering down. And of course, we've got a lot to do from a standpoint of protecting that next wave that's going to come; the car bomb, the people just getting out of their car, the jet skier — the suicide jet skier, the suicide driving a car-type thing, what have you, because the area — the immediate New York Metropolitan area was sealed tighter than a drum. I mean, all bridges were stopped, tunnels, aircraft over the sky, Coast Guard everywhere. Police departments were everywhere on every corner. When I drove over to pick my son up at 2 o'clock in a marked patrol car so I could get through various road —
- Mark Schoepfle: This is the New Jersey school?
- Frank Mills: Yes — to pick him up, there were police on every corner. There were law enforcement vehicles everywhere. The New Jersey State Police, Bayonne Police, Jersey City Police, there were police everywhere. So, it was — I had assurances when I came back that the New York Metropolitan area was, you know, operating in a high law enforcement mode. Things weren't going to get through to either Ellis Island or the statue by land at this stage of the ballgame. The waters were tight as it can get with the Coast Guard, and the skies were protected.
- Frank Mills: As far as I was concerned, I felt that we were out of immediate harm's way. And to go back to the statue to our home was actually just as safe if not safer than going to a motel over at Newark Airport. Because I knew at the statue that nothing could get out there to the island. But the possibility of getting a car bomb — a truck bomb, something at a motel in Newark Airport — it was still there. So, to me we were safer on Liberty Island.
- Mark Schoepfle: Got you, yeah.

Frank Mills: And it suits me just fine to just stay right on Liberty Island or Ellis Island, that we were fine. There were other areas that were going to possibly be hit for terrorist activity — were in a lot more vulnerable state than we were at that stage of the game. I think that's why I got the argument and won the argument to go back home and stay at Liberty Island.

Mark Schoepfle: So, during the time for example that the triage was going on and this kind of thing, you remained in a specific position by the road or the gate? I mean, you had a —

Frank Mills: No. No.

Mark Schoepfle: You were still all over, weren't you?

Frank Mills: I was only out there at the road for maybe 10 or 15 minutes.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay.

Frank Mills: My role after that was as an incident commander —

Mark Schoepfle: That's it.

Frank Mills: — to make sure that the various structures that we had in place for the EMS operation were squared away, to make sure that we had the EMS people, that we had areas, had maintenance assisting them. We need chairs, we need this, we need that, we need water, we need blah, blah, blah. Ambulances were coming up. Do we stage them on that side? How do we transport going back and forth between here and the bridge? You know, one ambulance at a time. One comes in. One goes out. We're moving from here to there.

Frank Mills: Once people came out here, and there was I think anywhere in the neighborhood of about 150 people, maybe more, they were not — they were not heavily injured people. Most of them were ambulatory. There were several non-ambulatory persons, but the majority of them were ambulatory. But they were in shock. They had various lacerations, cuts. And keeping them all together in one spot and still having to provide for the normal needs of people, you know. "Can I get to a phone? Can I get to a bathroom? Can I get washed up?" You know, they're covered in dust and debris. "Can we get washed up?"

Frank Mills: There was, I would say, eight or nine different people that came over that weren't injured at all. That had no injuries. They were just a couple. One was a couple I think they were like newlyweds or something. And they got herded in and got into a crowd thing and told get over the seawall, get on that boat and go. Had nothing to do with having any injuries or anything like that.

- Frank Mills: We had a lot of coordination to do with — even though communications were down, there was a lot of communications to be made with our boat, with transportation. How do we get our employees home that were here on the island? Had to work on that. What piers our boat could get to, to drop off our staff. Prepare for the next day's operation or evening ops. Working with park police kind of like a joint incident-command-type situation. Talking with Diane and Cynthia, where are we going to go from here? What are we going to do tomorrow? You guys stay home. There's nothing we can do tomorrow until we start finding out what's going on with transportation. And you know, we have so much to do. You guys just stay home for the next few days and we'll start chipping away.
- Frank Mills: Number one priority, employee assistance. What have we got here? What people have, you know, have lost people in that tragedy? By the time they get home tonight, tomorrow we'll have a better idea. But the priority to get employee counseling — that we're going to have a tremendous amount of the need for counseling — is going to be extremely evident at this stage of the ballgame.
- Mark Schoepfle: You knew that. You just knew that?
- Frank Mills: I knew it was an absolute guarantee, guarantee, no matter what we were going to look to as far as inventorying our staff and their personal states. Just knowing what everyone went through that day, the need for employee assistance was going to be there.
- Mark Schoepfle: You mentioned also that at the point of coming off of the — during this first day just in the morning that some of the staff stayed and some of them went. How was that distinction made and how were decisions made on that?
- Frank Mills: Basically, staff that had no direct traditional link with visitor protection services or visitor services per se were advised to go home, head out, go back. Of anyone of the staff who wanted to stay and volunteer, you were welcome to. However, we were concerned to only have volunteer people on the island. In other words, even if you lived in New Jersey, if you needed to get home, wanted to get home, we'd recommend you get home so that you can take care of your own security and safety. Have at it.
- Frank Mills: Those that traditionally deal with visitor services, visitor protection, you're kind of like essential services-type personnel, you know to stay. Of people that we knew that had either first-aid skills or had skills and they wanted to volunteer to stay and help with whatever they may be requested to do, fine. But we didn't want to have too many employees on the island to have to worry about and get off later.

- Frank Mills: And yet we still wanted to have enough employees because things were occurring from the standpoint that we were selected as a secondary morgue site for the city of New York.
- Mark Schoepfle: About 3 o'clock I understand there were plans being made to convert to a morgue —
- Frank Mills: Yes, uh-huh.
- Mark Schoepfle: — or convert one of the buildings?
- Frank Mills: Yeah, one of the exterior buildings that we have, it's a — well, it isn't a shed. I mean, it's a good-sized barn. It's 30-by — you know, 40-by-20-foot steel barn where we house our tractors and various grounds equipment. The idea was we remove the equipment from there, so it was empty dirt floor. And they had various units that were coming over from New Jersey that were actually — actual portable morgue-type operations where they have all that they need. So, we were staging for that and for that possibility.
- Frank Mills: A lot of it was just being on standby to what is needed to assist in the incident that was going on immediately in New York. Because we were water based, but with the land connection we were good to go. If any Marine units that were out there that needed fuel, we were going to provide fuel. If they needed to come in themselves off the water into our slip, a law enforcement vessel, for food, water, whatever they might need, feel free. Come on in.
- Frank Mills: We didn't know how extensive it would be. Our staff boat was transporting various — they did make several transports of New York City fire personnel from one portion of the Lower Manhattan to another to get them up to the area quicker. Our Marine unit was involved. There was a collapse of a building in the afternoon. One of the other nearby buildings to it had collapsed, which forced a mass exodus of people, again down to the seawall. We were involved in some transports of that. That occurred sometime in the afternoon, later afternoon.
- Frank Mills: There were reports that various buildings were going to collapse in the city that day. And it was kind of like being on standby that we were players in what was going on in a very small way. But we were affording one site for this water-based movement or evacuation or getting supplies in or what have you. And that was pretty much what we were doing most of the day, outside of these 150, 200 people that were actually brought over.
- Mark Schoepfle: These were the injured you're saying?
- Frank Mills: Yeah.

- Mark Schoepfle: The mildly — the ambulatory mostly?
- Frank Mills: Yeah, yeah.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, did some of the volunteers, some people wanted to volunteer — were some of them turned away by — you know.
- Frank Mills: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: I mean, you said you didn't want a bunch of well-meaning people around who might get in the way.
- Frank Mills: Yeah. There were volunteer — actual VIP people that are enrolled in the Volunteer in the Parks Program that had come to our gate at — and they were turned away. There were several employees that had no first-aid training or skills that wanted to participate in assisting, and we advised them to, you know, just head on home and take care of business at home, that we had enough first aid people. We didn't want to have any slipups where untrained, totally untrained people dealing with what we were going — we weren't sure what we were going to get. You know, the idea for protecting against blood-borne pathogens and rubber gloves and this, that, and the other thing, you know. First aid is one thing. Incoming disaster-type boatloads of not knowing what you're going to have isn't the place for a nontrained-type person. There was a lot of emotional things going on out there. There was a lot of things that were happening in that regard, and we wanted to have people that had some kind of knowledge and training with that.
- Frank Mills: But for the most part it almost shook out in a natural way. There wasn't any type of, okay, it's time for you to go, you know. I told you to leave. You have to leave. There wasn't anybody who was just standing around being, you know, out to lunch or something or don't know what to do. Most employees reacted as we would normally do under bomb threats. We — you know, if the staff gets evacuated or the staff goes, if we have a snowstorm, if we have an early closing for some reason because of weather or what have you, most of those people know that they're not players in the protection-type operation.
- Frank Mills: Those that know they are players in that type of operation, grounds people, they know not to leave. The fact of having laborers around just for the sake of — there's always something for laborers to have to do one way or the other, they know not to go. They know to kind of form up and we're going to be needed for something; laying hose, getting more garden hose, do this, do that.
- Mark Schoepfle: I was going to say —



- Frank Mills: Clean up.
- Mark Schoepfle: — they know where the water spigots are where bureaucrats wouldn't.
- Frank Mills: Yeah. Right, exactly. So, it kind of like shook out kind of naturally as to — from so many past incidents of — I don't want to say emergency situations, but island closings and so forth. People kind of knew their role, and okay, I'm leaving. I'm going.
- Mark Schoepfle: About how many staff had remained on the island? You were taking care of anywhere from 150 to 200 probably total in that afternoon, ambulatory.
- Frank Mills: I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of about 25 to 30.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Frank Mills: Somewhere in that neighborhood. We had sent our concessionaire home. We had sent all nonessential personnel home. From the cadre of people that had skills, I'd say it was somewhere in the neighborhood of about 25 people maybe.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you got home at about 4 o'clock.
- Frank Mills: Yeah, about 4 or 4:30.
- Mark Schoepfle: And for the rest of the evening, what happened?
- Frank Mills: We kind of stayed together in the living room, watched a little TV, and then we kind of broke up into our natural family spaces, I guess you could say. I prepared a dinner. I don't know what the hell it was [that] I cooked, but I know [I] prepared supper. The boys were downstairs with each other. My wife and I were upstairs. We were all watching TV and just kind of — just kind of in our own space. I know my middle son there —
- Mark Schoepfle: I was going to ask.
- Frank Mills: — he was very quiet. We have two dogs and a cat, and the dog was on his lap. My older son who's 25, they were close to each other, but there was no — they didn't want to have anything to do with what they would normally have done or normally do. They normally play on the PlayStation. They have ice hockey and sports games. They have different games they play on that. They watch TV. They monkey around. There was no — they were just, you know — all three of the lads were just watching TV and kind of just being very, very, very, very quiet.
- Frank Mills: He wasn't even at the stage of talking about anything at that stage of the game. My wife and I recognized that he was in — he was having a hard time. But we'll see how he does. We'll see what transpires.
- Mark Schoepfle: How did he do? I mean, [inaudible].

- Frank Mills: Fantastic. The end of the story is he's fantastic. He's great. He's back in business and doing well. He's back in — you know, they were in school that following — they had a week, so it was almost two weeks after that.
- Mark Schoepfle: Two weeks out of school?
- Frank Mills: Yeah. When they went back to a — they were transferred up to a different high school in the city. And the high school operating times, the kids from that high school started at seven and they were done by 12:30. My son would start at one and go till 5:30. And he's been there ever since. They were going to start back at the school at Ground Zero yesterday, but they've had problems in the city with various parental groups and, you know, there's questions as to the quality. But now they're supposed to be back March 1.
- Frank Mills: The school itself on that weekend after the incident they had a — they offered all the kids to get together in Central Park on a Sunday for them to meet each other. He talked to a few of his friends on Friday. He was pretty uncommunicative Tuesday and part of Wednesday. He was just very, very, very quiet. But they all stayed together. All three boys stayed together in that living room with the pets. That's where they slept. My wife and I would be down there with them. And we just all held on to each other, I guess you could say. We were all there together, just kept talking about it, kept talking about it. Now my —
- Mark Schoepfle: Excuse me, just one thing. Let me real quick-like change tapes here.
- END OF SIDE 1
- START OF SIDE 2
- Mark Schoepfle: Anyway, you were saying that you all stayed together kind of like all in that room, just talked over and over about it, just sort of sorted things through.
- Frank Mills: Yeah, just with a combination of watching TV, talking about what Grandpa used to do — Grandpa was an ex-Marine — what World War II must have been like, what Pearl Harbor was like, look at it today, just on and on and on and on and on. He gradually started opening up. He gradually started opening up.
- Mark Schoepfle: What were kind of some of the first things he started talking about when he opened up?

Frank Mills: He was fearful of — do you think it will happen again, what's happened to my — I don't know what's happened to my friends. The senselessness of it, he had a very hard time grasping. And I think the trauma that he saw, heard, smelled, tasted on his trip from the school at One Trinity Place down to MIO with the hordes of people trying to get into various shops and buildings that were closed, you know. People wouldn't let them in. The screaming, the crying, the smoke, the dust, the debris, the total disarray of hundreds and hundreds of people in the Lower Manhattan area, the sirens, the choking smoke, the being unable to see anything.

Frank Mills: He knew he was heading in the right direction, but you know, just his relief to get to Battery Park and his relief to get down to where the boat was. Hearing the screams of people, the fact that, you know, people were just completely stuck on the street. There were no Staten Island ferries. There were no subways running. There were no busses. There [was] no traffic. People were walking, running, you know. Cell phones weren't working. The — and just all those sounds, smells, all those things that he himself witnessed put him into total overload.

Frank Mills: And I think just his processing of it with the dogs, the cat, big brother, little brother, mom and dad, TV, getting him to talk it out, getting him to hear, getting him to encourage to talk, anything that he might have said from something angry like, why did they have to do this? Or it's not — you know, it's not effing fair. It's not this — the anger to accept that. Okay. You got it out. Not to place any type of judgment or any kind of shock value or any kind of oh, jeez, don't — don't talk like that in our house. But just to let him get whatever emotion it was that he had to get out. And yet at the same time permit him that space to get it out and to say what he had to say and to gradually come back.

Frank Mills: By Friday, he was what I would say back with us. I guess you could say he was back with us and functioning. He could make a decision whether or not he wanted to eat or he didn't. He could make a decision and knew the difference between something that he liked to eat and something that I know he didn't like to eat. You know, it's like here — here's a nice hot bowl of oatmeal. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, he would've went, uh-huh, and done that. By Friday it was, what are you nuts? I don't eat oatmeal, you know. So, he was back to where we knew that he was coming back, he was coming back around. He was beginning to smile a little bit. He was beginning to find a little humor in some things with his brothers and with everybody.

Frank Mills: But he was very apprehensive. One of the things that was very difficult for him, extremely difficult for him was on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and in the subsequent evening hours when I was home, there were still things coming in. There were threats still being received in different parts of the country. There were still terrorist things occurring and decisions to be made even after hours. I can't remember per se specifically what they were or what. But I would get a call. He would be very apprehensive — “who called, what's it about, why do you have to leave, where are you going, where are you going, is everything all right?”

Frank Mills: He was very apprehensive like, what's happening now, is something else happening, do we have to evacuate, did something else happen somewhere else? And he was very apprehensive about that for at least three weeks after the incident. Very questioning — is everything okay, is everything okay? After a phone call, after I would go out in the evening when I would come back from work, if I would — it was like I couldn't move fast around the house. If I moved fast around the house, he would get very apprehensive about that. What are you doing? Well, you know, is everything okay? Yeah, everything is fine. I just have to catch this boat and I got two minutes to go. It's okay. You know what I mean?

Frank Mills: But with — like I say our greatest value is our family. The fact that we're homebodies, the fact that we've got the animals and a loving household, we got them through it. We got all of ourselves through it. And all of us were helping each other out from my wife to my oldest son to the youngest guy who we always dumped on him because he had nothing to do with anything. He was in New Jersey, didn't see anything. So, he — he got no sympathy from anybody. You know, you were in New Jersey. You didn't even see it, so there. You know, but just having that strong family value, getting your anger out in some ways, yelling at the TV, throwing rubber bands at the TV, just a whole variety of the family sticking together, getting it out has worked fine and everybody is up and at 'em.

Frank Mills: And he's doing great now. I mean, he went back into the city. Once he hooked up with his friends on that Sunday in Central Park, he came back from that almost like himself because they all shared what they did. Some kids walked for 20 miles. Some kids didn't get home that day until 9 o'clock that night. No one in their class or in the school had any kind of trauma associated with the incident from what I understood. In other words, none of the students lost, you know, family members. They had cousins or whatever, but no immediate — my buddy in my science lab, in my chem lab lost his father, you know, or something like that. No one had any direct incidents that occurred.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, that's good.

Frank Mills: And I'll tell you, he's just — much to our apprehension, he went back to that city and got on the subway and went up to Central Park, went and saw his friends, did what 16-year-olds do. And that following week when he was still off school, he went over quite a few times into the city to hook up with his friends.

Mark Schoepfle: Just to Central Park as kind of a meeting place?

Frank Mills: Yeah, uh-huh. And they just started doing what 16-year-olds do, realizing that they had a free week off of school. Let's enjoy it. Okay. And let's get going. The school then started back up that following week. They didn't really provide any type of direct counseling, daily-type thing. But they got the kids all back and they were back in and homework was that night and their classes and off to the races they went.

Frank Mills: And he just got better and better and better and better all the way along once he was with his — once he had been — those first three days were very tough, but after that he started to come back. Right now, he — I would say he is 100 percent fine at this stage of the ballgame, even for overhead airplanes and things on the news that would come up several weeks afterward or hearing about the shoe bomber guy and, you know, all that kind of stuff.

Frank Mills: For those first few weeks, any of that stuff that was on TV he would get a little apprehensive — oh, not again, oh boy, oh jeez, oh, you know, what's going to happen to us? But all that's gone. He takes that in normal stride with all of our, you know, a normal type range of you know, what a jerk, you know, or whatever. But it's not going to stop me from going skateboarding. I'm going off skateboarding, you know. I still need hair gel, you know. So, you know, I mean, he's back in business.

Mark Schoepfle: Won't stop me.

Frank Mills: Yeah. So, we were very, very fortunate about that. We played up to him that we called him the survivor, you know, to his grandma and his other family members. There were a few VIP visits the first few weeks after that with Senator Daschle and another senator from North Dakota came out. He got to meet Kelly, and Kelly could tell his story, you know, for a five-minute blurb that oh, yeah, you know, I was right there.

Frank Mills: Within about three weeks we all took a trip to Atlantic City, not to be a gambler or anything like that, just us as a family. Saying, well, nobody's moving around. Nobody's doing this and that. Well, we're going to move around. So, we're going to go down to Atlantic City, the most gaudiest place you can think of.

- Frank Mills: It's a wonderful place for — they got all the boardwalk stuff and nice weather in the fall and all that stuff. Let's go. Let's prove we can do it. Let's get off the rock and go down there, and so we did that and that I think was good. And we showed ourselves as a family unit. We're fine here. We live here, and by God we can go wherever we want to go, do what we want to do.
- Frank Mills: When we got to Atlantic City there was hardly anybody there. There was very — no crowds, no nothing. So that was a source of pride. But we're here. We ain't afraid of nobody-type thing, you know, blah, blah, blah. And it was kind of funny. I mean, even in a restaurant, you know, we would kind of push the fact that, well, yeah, this young lad was right there, and he survived it, you know. And you saw Red Cross people asking for donations on the boardwalk, blah, blah, blah, blah. So, we tied him directly with it and, you know, I mean you felt a part of it and yet all of us were together and it was a good thing.
- Mark Schoepfle: Good.
- Frank Mills: Just keep moving.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, in the weeks ensuing then here at Ellis Island, you sort of — there was a command — for the first couple of days there was sort of a command, you were calling it keeping a command structure set up. The administration didn't really show up. Then that following week the — that next Tuesday, the administration showed up. You began — and the staff began to come back.
- Frank Mills: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And you began the most important thing I think you were saying was the peer counseling — or not peer counseling, just the counseling that was taken on.
- Frank Mills: Right, right.
- Mark Schoepfle: How did things go from there on?
- Frank Mills: Real good. In other words, we brought everybody back, had this circuit training-type thing where let's renew and refresh all that we did. Now is the time for — we're going to issue directives and orders, and it's now time to follow them, to stick together. Now it sounds like this hardline thing. It wasn't. It wasn't like here's the orders, you'll follow what I say, or whatever. It wasn't that. It was a matter of each division took their staff daily.

- Frank Mills: The first thing they did with their staff in the mornings was have a briefing, hold attendance, talk about how we doing, how's everybody doing today. Ah, jeez, you know, yeah, it was tough with this subway line. You had to do this, da, da, da, da. Get everybody together. Plot out your projects for the day. Let's go at it. Meet back after lunch. We'll do the same thing. So, meet —
- Mark Schoepfle: Sort of a debriefing?
- Frank Mills: Debriefing for that day, each individual group. Maintenance folks did it. Interp [Interpretation] did it. Museum did it. Everybody did it. Then pretty much every third day, at least once a week, we would have an all-staff meeting. Everybody go down to the theater, let's have a chat. And the park superintendent would talk. We got in various experts from around the area for like mini-training on security, overall security, safety, managing terrorist target-type thing, and your operations. Other people came in, well, we've got a big problem in Grand Coulee Dam. That's where I usually work at. This is what we're doing at the Grand Coulee Dam. Here's what you got to remember about terrorism and this, that, and the other thing.
- Frank Mills: So almost once a week, once every two weeks we had two — a two-day period of training where everybody would come back in, sit down at the thing, we'd talk over, what have you. We ran the daily routine of meeting in the morning, doing your projects, meeting up in the afternoon, going home. We made everybody's schedule Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. No — no oddball schedules. Everybody had to wear their uniform so there was no discrepancies from the various checkpoints around the area getting down to the boat or getting into the park. Everybody was square with, you're in uniform, you have your IDs, blah, blah, blah.
- Frank Mills: The projects that they worked on, some of them were all type employees, I wish I was on that other project. This guy got a good one. I got a crummy one. But they were working. They were together. They formed an employee newsletter within a day or two. It was called, 'Keep the Flame Lit' or whatever. And you know, various things were put into that. Our counselors were here. They were offering individual counseling. They debriefed as a group, left assurances as to where you were at, what we're going.

- Frank Mills: We had a pretty intense human resource situation where if you were having problems, wanted a transfer, wanted a detail, wanted to leave this park for a while to clear your head or on a permanent basis, in other words, this just isn't working for you, you know, get that information, get your 171 squared away, hook up with your supervisor, hook up with the human resource specialist, and that the regional office would try to assist you in relocating for either a temporary basis. And we put out for temporary assignments I would say about 6 people, and we got maybe 10 people that requested an actual permanent reassignment. Of the 10, once they found out that it could be anywhere, you know, not to their choice, like you might not get Hawaii at this stage of the ballgame, you might get Death Valley.
- Mark Schoepfle: Or Denali.
- Frank Mills: Yeah, right. Or Gates of the Arctic or what have you or you could get Boston, you know, but that is still ongoing and still ready to roll.
- Mark Schoepfle: How many total number of employees are here? I didn't really gauge that.
- Frank Mills: There's roughly about 150 I think all told. And we just tried to keep, you know, business as normal without the visitor. And I'm telling you to a Park Service employee when you are on the job and your park is open and it's running, that's the biggest complaint is the visitor, you know. They ruin everything for us, you know what I mean, type thing.
- Frank Mills: When they're not there, that's the most devastating thing there is to the employees. They just don't know what to do with themselves after three days. It's not normal. It's being a fish out of water. There is nobody coming to our park and this stinks. When are the people going to get back? So, you know, everybody kind of worked on various projects from the educational programs, trying to anticipate what the visitor would need when we did finally reopen. Amongst themselves, they had plenty of time and opportunity to talk, to share, to bond, to get all their things — you know, a lot of their feelings out and just prepare for when we got the green light to reopen. You know, had the training classes, kept everybody informed, kept the division chiefs informed on a daily basis what was going on, and just kind of marched through it.
- Frank Mills: I think one of the things was because of the complexity of reopening and the temporary nature of it and the changes to security and the operations, that was very frustrating for the employees.



Frank Mills: Because at the management level how it starts to splinter off between the region and Washington office, Interior Department, the two different states, the State government of New York, the city government, the New Jersey side, it's all very convoluted and very difficult to articulate down to the field level that says why aren't we open yet. Well, it's like building the pyramid, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you're saying the decision structure was kind of down [inaudible].

Frank Mills: Yeah, so it was kind of hard. A lot of false starts. Yeah, jeez, we'll be opening up next week. Let's get ready to go. Bam.

Mark Schoepfle: I'll bet that went over like a lead balloon.

Frank Mills: And then it would — nope, nope, that's been canceled. We still have to do one more thing with X, Y, Z. But I mean, the staff made up predominantly of New Yorkers, the staff being predominantly people that have been here for a long time, the idea of starting and stopping and political pressures and being in the forefront of the media and the world, turmoil with bureaucratic stuff, for the most part the staff took it in stride. And the experience of the staff in all divisions — folks have been here for years — really came to light and they shared that with younger people or people that didn't want to be thrust into the public arena quite so abruptly. Those senior staff people, and I don't mean grade-wise, but I mean just, you know, folks who have been here for a long time, really gave a lot of natural coaching and mentoring and comfort to people.

Frank Mills: And I think that's why the park is as successful as it is now, as whole as it is now. No one has come to the rescue here. I mean it's the same staff that was here on 9-11. There's no new people, and there's no old people. It's the same staff that was here. And to me that is a test of those folks that are here are pretty resilient people in order to continue on with the government business at hand shows that collectively as a unit we're doing okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, you were mentioning — I mean, this is intriguing because you were saying that some of the older staff kind of work with the younger ones on some of these difficulties regarding dealing with the public and this kind of thing. An example came to my mind from other interviews in which some of the people mentioned, for example, that they had to start, once the visitors returned, that they had to start fielding questions which were really of a sensitive nature such as, did you see the bodies falling out of the building, and this kind of thing. Are those examples of how —

Frank Mills: Yes, yes.

Mark Schoepfle: — they did this? Are there other examples you saw like that?

- Frank Mills: When it came to like making decisions about what should I do on my tour, you know, how should I move forward on that? Should we take the pictures of the Twin Trade Towers down or should we leave them up on the tour route? It was the more senior people, it's okay. Sure, we're going to leave them up. And when it comes time to talking about those experiences, you give them your experiences right off the cuff. I don't have to tell you how to feel.
- Frank Mills: But where it came to play a lot was in those personal feelings that they had at those meetings. It's, you know, too much security. Why do we have to check our bags again and again? Jeez, you know, it's the park police being overbearing. And these like older, more experienced people, nah, it's okay. It's fine. Nobody's getting hurt by — here, just open your bag, just pop your trunk, just do this, do that. It's okay.
- Frank Mills: Type of feelings, when somebody needed to go home a little bit earlier, just needed to go home. Have at it, not going to make a big deal about it. We're not going to follow every time and attendance regulation that we have here. Go on home for a while. Head home early. That type of coaching and mentoring, knowing that the employee needed to get something out, recognizing some anger in an employee and a frustration of the subway to the bus that's been changed.
- Frank Mills: For that supervisor to accept that anger and not show impatience back, not show what have you, but let the employee get it out. It's okay. It's all right. We'll talk about it later. I hear what you're saying. You've got a valid point. I'll get the answer, or I'll get the person here to talk to you, and usually that's what we did.
- Frank Mills: When it was something that was a staff issue, we brought the person in to talk rather than memo, email, blah, blah, blah. If you want to know "Why do the Park Police do X, Y, Z?" then let's bring the Park Police officer, sit down in a circle, talk about it. Not from a standpoint of you're on display or you're being questioned or you're in front of a jury or a panel, but let's talk about it eyeball to eyeball and person to person, rather than, you know, here's a memo. Do it this way. Or the New York minute attitude, hey look, the guy said do it, do it, you know. And a lot of the senior people used that kind of foresight and patience and understanding that I think you only get with experience to have that patience. And that's been a real, real strength of this park in order to do that.
- Frank Mills: It's like with most disasters — natural disasters, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, what have you — the weather incident occurs. The devastation is there. It begins to clear up, and you move forward. In a lot of ways, we

see what's not there every day. We see the Twin Trade Towers is not there every day. We see and hear everything that goes on in the city every day. And there are no teams of people that have come in, stabilized, rebuilt, got it done, put the roof on it, glass is there, and power's restored.

Frank Mills: We're here. We know our mission. We know what we have to do. We all gain from that importance of that, and that's what we do. And you know, we have a real good, you know, across the board all the way down the line, real good people that are marching through this. And you know, that's a source of pride for me.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. Sure.

Frank Mills: That we can manage that.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, what happened — I mean, this was sort of in between the times before the park opened from what you're describing, right?

Frank Mills: Yeah, yes.

Mark Schoepfle: What happened once the park reopened?

Frank Mills: Once the park reopened, we were back to business. We were back to the typical park life. Maintenance guys didn't do this right. Interp [Interpretation] always wants things done that are totally impractical. But back to the old, you know, tweaking your brother and your sister. And the supervisors are back to normal. I told you be there, wear your hat, wear your Stetson, wear this, I'm intolerant of it, you will wear it. We're kind of back — back to normal.

Frank Mills: That's how we know we're kind of back to normal. People are being their brothers and sisters again, you know. It's the other guy's fault and don't have enough people, don't have enough money, don't have enough supplies, don't have anything, budget's in a mess. As long as employees are saying that stuff we're back to — we're back in business.

Mark Schoepfle: Good old-fashioned griping again?

Frank Mills: Good old-fashioned griping and — but in a healthy manner and not in a disruptive or whatever. It's back to business as normal. People are functioning in their roles as they should function. And we're back to normal operations.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. When you're saying griping in a healthy manner, you were giving some examples beforehand of just —

Frank Mills: You know, park police do this. They make too many runs after hours and the boat captains are unhappy about that. The park police are unhappy that the boat captains showed up late, you know. We're getting VIP tours and

we don't have the staff to handle them, which is a normal occurrence. We always get VIP tours and we always don't have the staff to handle it, you know, these normal-type things. Okay. Mister division chief let's look at the budget. You've applied for this training, this training, this training, you wanted this supplies and materials, you only have \$1,000. You're asking for \$8,000. We only have a thousand. Go back to the drawing board.

Mark Schoepfle: Pick out three and call me.

Frank Mills: Right. Go back to the drawing board. We're not at that — we're in this state of emergency. We've got to buy — purchase this under the incident command-type structure where you've got to have X, Y, Z. And we're doing that to manage the incident. But we're not managing the incident anymore, you're managing your budget. Okay. It's over. Okay. Now you've got to deal with your budget. Now you've got to deal with your budget. You've got to prepare for the springtime. You've got to prepare for the grass coming up. You've got to prepare for school groups coming. You've got to order supplies, materials, etcetera, but here is your budget.

Mark Schoepfle: Got it.

Frank Mills: Notice how your budget didn't get any better because of 9-11.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Frank Mills: It's pretty much what you had last year, yet we took 15 percent right off the top because of cost of living, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And we're back to business as usual, you know, robbing Peter to pay Paul, and you know, making those — those supervisory decisions, who goes to training, who does this, who does that. It's that type of — I don't want to say, you know, maybe griping or complaining, but it's that it's-back-to-normal-type business.

Mark Schoepfle: Got it.

Frank Mills: You've got to run your operation with the money you have and the staff. And personnel can't get the announcement out because the computer is down and the Internet problems and, you know, those things are all back. Therefore, you're not going to get your seasonals in time, so we've got to wait until the human resource person can do it at night at home and —

Mark Schoepfle: And this would happen regardless whether the 9-11 hit or not?

Frank Mills: Doesn't matter.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Frank Mills: You know, but it's back to business as normal. And to me, that's the healthiest sign that we're okay.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Frank Mills: Because you're back to thinking about it, ah jeez, my budget, you know, ah jeez. I got to make those decisions again. Three people want to go to this class, and I can only send one, where before you were in the mode of coaching, helping, mentoring, where the sky's the limit. You need some time, go on home. And it's not that it's all automatically stopped or anything, you know, I'm not your coach anymore, forget about it, you know. It's not that abruptness-type thing, but it's back to making more of those normal-type supervisory decisions, you know, field decisions.

Frank Mills: We're bunching up at the visitor desk, you know. I see three rangers here. You know you're not allowed to have three rangers here. You're bunching up. You know that type of thing, you know, where before we were open three rangers in a spot wouldn't have mattered, you know. It's great. They're talking to each other. They're sharing. That's a good thing. But now we're back in business. You're bunching up, come on. You were supposed to be at the dock. You're supposed to be here, you know, type thing.

Mark Schoepfle: Got it. What the — are there changes however that have occurred? I mean, are there things that are just not quite the same as they were before? There may or may not be, I should point that out.

Frank Mills: I don't think so. I mean, our security stuff has tightened up, but as far as major differences in patterns of either employment or operations, not really, not really.

Mark Schoepfle: The reason I ask is that some mentioned, for example, that there were fewer visitors —

Frank Mills: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: — because of the — because of the increased security.

Frank Mills: Yes. That's occurred. We don't have the — this is a very slow period of time normally. So, it's a very tough indicator as to — we left at a peak visitor season in the fall. Okay. That's a peak period. Fall is a tremendous visitation at both islands. We missed all that and we're into, you know, dead of winter visitation, which is normally very, very minimal.

Frank Mills: But we know that. I think there is apprehension of how are we going to deal with the future? What are we going to do with those bus groups? How many bus groups do you think we're going to get? One school of thought says it's going to be normal. They're still going to come back. Another

school is that they're never coming back. School groups just aren't going to come here like they used to, you know. They aren't going to come.

Frank Mills: So, there's always this all-or-nothing type of futuristic looking at things that I think has a level of — that has changed. Before your pattern in your park was, I know what's going to happen to me come Easter. Oh, the spring is coming, oh boy. Here we go. I know I got to have my rangers, I got to have this, and it's just going to be boom.

Frank Mills: Where now, nobody's really sure. And we're not sure how our service is going to be to them. Are we going to get inundated or are we not going to get inundated, and not get those school groups and not get that pressure? So, I, you know — and I think in that — that normalcy of, oh yeah, it's going to be summertime, we're going to get peppered. I mean, July Fourth, it's going to be nuts here. You don't have that anymore, because we're not sure how nuts it really is going to be on July Fourth. We just don't know.

Frank Mills: On trends and patterns of visitation, we don't know. And the state of the world, the war, terrorist activity, we don't know. We could be closed again tomorrow. We could close today. If there's fallout over the media hostage guy that's been taken and they say they're going to kill him, we could be closed tomorrow. And then we could be closed for an indefinite period of time. So that uncertainty is a big change from how we normally — we normally saw our seasons coming. We saw our visitation patterns coming. We knew what was coming our way. We knew what we had to do, and we went and did it. Where now, there's a little bit of a waffle in there as to —

Mark Schoepfle: You were wondering how to make the next judgment call?

Frank Mills: Yeah. You know, it's not stopping us from knowing that we're going to get our staff. We're going to hire our staff. We're going to be ready, but we're not sure what is going to come our way.

Mark Schoepfle: A dumb question. You just mentioned as an example, you know, what would happen with this hostage fellow that's just been taken. How would that affect things here?

Frank Mills: Well, it would be based on what the world reaction would be. It could run from a retaliatory strike done by someone against that group, which in turn has a New York or American base of support and they wanted to demonstrate. Or threats could come in where there could be phoned in threats based on the fact that we're with that group and if you do retaliate,

we will do this. We held this guy hostage. The statue's going to held hostage. We're going to start with that and work our way up. Somebody could counter with that.

Frank Mills: We're worried about this weekend with the World Trade demonstrations and so forth that are going to go in New York City.

Mark Schoepfle: What's happening on that?

Frank Mills: Well, it's a focused deal in New York, no two ways about it. But many times, the demonstrators will leave and come and do a mini demonstration, unauthorized, unapproved, unpermitted, at Liberty Island. Let's go to the Statue of Liberty.

Mark Schoepfle: Why not?

Frank Mills: It doesn't take — in that realm, it doesn't take long to figure out where you're going to get press and quickly is if you do something at the Statue of Liberty. Why don't we go out there? Now because of our screening program, because of our — our diligence, our intelligence, our operational security net that we have, we should have advanced information about that. But in the past, it has not been unusual for big demonstrations in New York City to spill over to Liberty Island, in either, A, legitimate permit requests or an unauthorized permit request. As long as we're all down here demonstrating, they've got to have time off. Even demonstrators take a break.

Frank Mills: If they flew in from wherever, let's go to the statue. We're doing a demo on Sunday. Let's go out to the statue today because we're working it tomorrow. So, before we get thrown in jail, let's go to the statue. You don't know if they're doing that already and they're seeing that New York is very locked in tight, ready to go. But there are other areas where they might want to unfold a banner or make a disturbance or do this or do that. Why not do it at Liberty Island?

Mark Schoepfle: What do you do in a situation like that?

Frank Mills: It's actually pretty simple. I mean, basically you offer the group the ability to demonstrate. You offer it to them in a designated area to demonstrate. If they have an alternate area that they feel they want to demonstrate at and it's acceptable under safety guidelines, impact guidelines, how it impacts the park, we'll permit that. We're very liberal at it from a standpoint that,

hey, what the heck, you are in America. And if you can't demonstrate at the statue, you can't demonstrate anywhere in our country.

Frank Mills: So yeah, it's not — but we try to control it so it doesn't impact on our other operational concerns or other visitors that may be coming to the island. And sometimes that works; sometimes it doesn't. They'll get a permit. They'll be in an area. They'll do their expression of their demonstration.

Frank Mills: Other times they'll come out and disregard everything, just do their thing and wind up getting arrested. And it's an arrest-type situation, a mass arrest situation. And it runs the gambit from, of course, we get assistance from other agencies and it's — you know, it's very easy. It's only 13 acres, the statue. And you know, you just corral — they can't get off unless they want to swim. So, we have a captive audience, and they get arrested and off they go. But for the most part they normally do comply with the — okay, so we'll do it at the flagpole area, and we put out stanchions and get a spot for 500, 300, whatever, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you've never had to do any really heavy-duty riot control or anything like that?

Frank Mills: We haven't done any mass groups of people, riot control movements of people on the island. We've had many of illegal demonstration and arrest situations, but they're normally very small groups of people.

Mark Schoepfle: I was going to say, what would be the average to say the large number of such a group?

Frank Mills: Well, we had, you know — I personally have arrested and carted off pro-Shaw, anti-Shaw, demonstrators against Grenada, and anti-abortionist people. And the largest group I took off was 12 individuals that were arrested.

Mark Schoepfle: This was 12 total?

Frank Mills: Yeah. Then we've had — Al Sharpton was out here in the '90s with a demonstration of about 30 people, and I think they were issued violations but not arrested. The rest have just been — there was a bunch of — in the city they — Mayor Giuliani had just cracked down on street prostitution and crimes against whatever.

Frank Mills: And believe it or not, there were porno industry and stripper industry came out and wanted to demonstrate their right to whatever. And again, they followed our direction. They were issued a permit, and they stayed within the guidelines and they weren't arrested.

Mark Schoepfle: New York.



- Frank Mills: Yeah. It's like I say, our management role is to adjust our operation to meet their needs, but only to a given point. Once it blocks people from enjoying the statue, having their own experience where you can make your choice, you want to stay here and hear this stuff or go and take your pictures and enjoy. Once it interferes with that, then it's a can't-have-it-type situation. But there's never been a physical confrontation or riot control-type thing, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, another — yeah, another question. Looking back on all of this, what lessons have we learned?
- Frank Mills: I think we've learned that we're vulnerable. I think we've learned not to depend on — strictly on our plans, that our best-made plans can be out the window. And I think we've learned that the National Park Service plays a role in the community, in the local community as well as the national community. That we do have a role to play, a very important role to play. But I think mostly we learned that we are vulnerable.
- Mark Schoepfle: This is a weird question, and actually it was placed to me. And I didn't think of the question until I began interviewing people. And that was, if we're getting, let's say, to the year 2002 at this time, at September 2002, what kind of commemoration would we look back on? What would be in it? What would we think about?
- Frank Mills: I think we would look at — we would definitely look in and mourn at the loss that occurred. But I would hope that we would look at the unity and strengths that came out of it. One of the things that I have felt, kind of half in a humorous way but in a very proud way, is I'm very proud that the rest of the world and nation got to see a different side of New Yorkers that has totally shocked the rest of the world and nation as to what a resilient people these New Yorkers are, what a kind and concerned and caring bunch of people. Where prior to that, it's shows like "The Nanny," that's New York.
- Mark Schoepfle: "Seinfeld?"
- Frank Mills: "Seinfeld." You know, "NYPD Blue," tough guy stuff. New Yorkers are mob, the hood. They're cold people. They're "My Cousin Vinny." They're — you know, they're very abrupt, cold, tacky group of people in New York. And to see the rest of the country just to be amazed that — and it isn't strictly the fire department, the Port Authority Police, the NYPD, but elected officials, uniformed people, the sanitation department, regular

citizens, art and crafts people, regular folks, the New York spirit of there wasn't any looting.

Frank Mills: There wasn't any, you know — the churches were open. People were normal American people in New York, look what they did for each other. How they opened up and cared for one another and to watch the rest of the world kind of be — wow, they have a singing policeman. Look at what they do at all these funerals, holy cow. Every funeral is important. Every funeral is special. Every one of those victim's families is being cared for, from the New York Times to whatever.

Frank Mills: And to me it is — my mom came through this country and came here when she was 5 years old. My family, that side of the family was born and raised — operated out of Brooklyn, New York. And to see that side of New York being given to the rest of the world and the world saying, wow, jeez, what an amazing bunch of people and I never knew that about New Yorkers, or what have you. All the support that was given with people lining the streets and the food and the just whatever is very inspirational to me.

Frank Mills: And I hope that those types of strengths in unity are also commemorated, which I'm sure they will be at the time. I don't know if after a year we need some kind of manmade structure, landscaped, architect-type thing just yet. But I think if the mourning for what occurred and then the strengths and unity that's come out of it, to me that would be a good thing to see by September 11, 2002.

Mark Schoepfle: Excellent. One thing here and I've got about nine minutes to go on this one tape.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. We've been talking here about the kind of the monument we would have, and not necessarily one of a physical nature but definitely something to commemorate just the resilience of the community spirit and that side of New York culture that just hasn't been brought out before.

Frank Mills: Yeah, yes. I think the Park Service I think can definitely play a role in the memorialization of what — about 9-11. I think it's a — I think the Park Service, that's one of its roles, one of its things that it does preserve and protect as a resource.

Frank Mills: I know one of the things that I was very — that struck me after the preceding days was that, jeez, the Park Service does this. They're in areas where devastation has occurred, tremendous tragedy. Antietam Battlefield today is the battlefield, it's markers, it's whatever. But from its day when it originated, the Battle of Antietam, the Park Service manages that site. Valley Forge, tremendously emotional, devastating yet regrouping of a

place. Granted it was a state park prior to '76, but it's under our — it's under our system now. That's a Park Service function.

Frank Mills: We look immediately to Oklahoma City, but that hasn't got any time behind it at all. That's — and I mean, that's not to discredit what it is. But the Park Service does this. It's right for us to be at Oklahoma City, but we do the memorial out in — at Pearl Harbor. We do Antietam. We do Vicksburg. We do our areas where human life has been lost in a tragic, destructive way. So that's not something that's foreign to us even though it's occurred in the 21st century.

Frank Mills: These other things that occurred, occurred in other centuries, but that's what we do. So, we shouldn't be afraid of it. And we shouldn't be coy or shy about it. Yet we shouldn't be haughty about it. But that's a definite thing that I think we in the Park Service have a skill at doing. And I think that we should be proud that we have that skill and try to move forward with providing some real assistance to that.

Frank Mills: All the memorials down in DC, this is what we do. This is part of our national treasure and culture that our agency, not BLM, not Fish and Wildlife, not Bureau of Land Management, but the National Park Service. This is truly part of our mission as us as an agency. And I don't have the skills to do it, or — but I do know that the Park system and the Park Service has got the — that's what we do.

Frank Mills: And I got a lot of comfort out of that after a few of the — the first few days. I got comfort out of that fact that, well, we do it at Valley Forge and we do it at Antietam and we do it at Manassas, and there was a lot of tragedy and a lot of emotion and tremendous loss of life. And we're doing it with our head high in pride and dignity and we're teaching and educating. And by goodness, we're going to do that here at the Statue of Liberty and at Ellis Island and at Manhattan sites and at Castle Clinton and at Edison. And for us to be a part of what's going to go on as far as memorialization of the site of the area, be it intrinsic or be it structural, I think that the Park Service has a — definitely has room at the table to give some good counsel on how to move forward on that.

Mark Schoepfle: And in other words, NPS should be at the table?

Frank Mills: Oh, I would definitely say so. And we should be there not as a coy member, that we have no bearing on it, that we're not a big architectural firm or we're not a big corporate giant, but we are the keepers of our national history and treasures.

Mark Schoepfle: Sort of step up to the plate.

- Frank Mills: Yeah. That's the agency that you're looking to, to do that. Treasury is not going to do it. Justice isn't going to do it. Other agencies in Interior aren't going to do it, Nuclear Regulatory, Health and Human Services. We're it, and what a source of pride in order to do that. Because that memorial 200 years from now is going to be the same as Valley Forge and look what a wonderful monument and a wonderful site Valley Forge is, and a wonderful opportunity Antietam is to stand there at Bloody Lane. Well, there's a Bloody Lane over there in Manhattan. There's the Cornfield in Manhattan. There's Little Round Top in Manhattan, right there in that X amount of blocks of the World Trade Tower that we'll never see again. Just like we'll never see Little Round Top at Gettysburg.
- Frank Mills: But the National Park Service lets every generation experience the most factual, you know, ability so that you could transport yourself and be a part of what transpired at Little Round Top. And I'm not saying that you know that we need to have some virtual experience of the explosion of the World Trade Towers. But that idea of the dignity and understanding that the next future generations from now, a hundred years from now, what's presented to them about the World Trade Center disaster and incident, I think the best agency to do that is the National Park Service.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, thank you, very good.
- Frank Mills: Well, thank you. I didn't think I'd this big of a blabbermouth here.
- Mark Schoepfle: No. This has been very, very informative. I have one last question, which is: is there anything I forgot to ask about that I should've thought of?
- Frank Mills: No, I don't think so. I mean, it's — that covers the days — the day right when it happened right up to now and even to where we're going to go
- Mark Schoepfle: Excellent, thank you.
- Frank Mills: — you know, from here. I think it was great.
- Mark Schoepfle: Is there anything else you'd like to know about what we're doing or what we're going to do, that I have an answer for?
- Frank Mills: I'm just real glad it's being done.
- Mark Schoepfle: Thank you.
- Frank Mills: I'm real glad it's being done. I'm glad it's being done as professionally as it's being done. And again, shows the Park Service we're making that commitment right from the get-go, right from the get-go, within a few weeks after the thing, that's where we're heading. And that's why I like being in the Park Service, because I like to do what I do here. And other

people in the Park Service like to do what they do and they're doing it just as well. And it's nice to be a part of a group that does that.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, great. We will deliver.

Frank Mills: Yeah. That's good.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Well, that terminates the interview for me then.

Frank Mills: Good.

[Interview resumed].

Frank Mills: The media focused on Ground Zero and those sites at — they focused at the Pentagon.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Frank Mills: They focused on the rescue people at the Pentagon or at Ground Zero, and that's fine. That — the nation needed to be informed of what was happening at those immediate sites. But what our agency did, and I hope other agencies are doing the same thing, what the Red Cross did, what various communities did, that were — that made it as successful as it is. Like the President said in his State of the Union address about Americans stepping up to the plate and helping out, he wouldn't have been able to present that unless he knew, and he saw that Americans did just that. That's one fact that nobody can dispute, that look, nationwide people stepped up to the plate.

Frank Mills: The Park Service's role as a government agency was fantastic what was done. Where do you find out what rangers did in back country sites where people got this information on their car radio or their camper radio? Or they were in the remote areas where — wow, what's going on? What happened? To me, their story would be just as interesting to say how they helped, what they did to protect and inform and educate and calm. I think you'll find that the Park Service on a national level did a lot of — gave a lot of comfort to the nation that may not get the media attention. And it's not the NYPD. Maybe we have a singing park ranger out there who does campground programs or something that one of these media groups will finally find out about.

Frank Mills: But I'll tell you, I would have to say that our agency — the numbers of people that went to beaches, went to quiet areas, went to park sites, and were met by a competent, concerned, caring individual at that visitor center that said, how you doing, boy something else, huh? Gave that opportunity for that person to just get it out a little bit; wow, what a

tragedy, yep, you're right, but we're — we're going to bounce back, or boom, yeah, we're open and running, yeah, whatever. Just that dialog exchange between citizen and government employee that wasn't going to the Department of Motor Vehicles, you know, where they're banging your heads all the time.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, it's like your son was describing, too, if I can see if that fits here that as soon as that disaster occurred, they couldn't get into shops. A lot of people wouldn't let them into places.

Frank Mills: Right, right.

Mark Schoepfle: But yet, at Federal Hall the doors were open.

Frank Mills: Come on in. Come on. How you doing? Let's help out. In Gateway in the beaches, the beaches are still open. People are devastated trying to find that solace place. One of the areas that was most hard hit of people that died in the World Trade Center were residents of New Jersey, were residents in the town right outside of Sandy Hook, a unit of Gateway. Those residents, mourners, cousins, aunts, people coming up for the funerals like so many families do find a quiet spot to get out of the house. The funeral is done. Well, before we go home, let's go here, went to the beach, looked out over the water. Our sites that we were able to have an opportunity for people to say, I don't want to watch that TV anymore. I can't take it. Let's get everybody in the car and let's go down to Shenandoah. Let's see if the leaves are going to change. Well, I don't know, traffic. I don't care. Let's just get out of here. Let's go to the mountains. Let's go camping.

Frank Mills: Having those — it'll never be put out into the media what the American people were able to rely on when they needed it, but we were there when they needed it. We provided that comfort. Not just the statue being an image of a symbol of our nation. But we provided that river at Delaware Water Gap for the family to come up, put their tubes in, and go down. You know what I mean? That would never be said — I'll guarantee you if you were to poll in the parks, in the greater New York area, what did your visitors — what were your visitors telling you on the weekend after 9-11 and proceeding right through to the holidays?

Frank Mills: I'll guarantee you in every visitor center, every contact, there was some reference to the state of the world, the state of the World Trade Center disaster, and we're up here getting our family together and taking our minds off of it, just have had it with this, that, or the other thing. And we were there to say welcome. We're not going to cram anything down your

throat. We got a film going on over here if you're interested. Bathrooms are open, and we're with you, nice flag on your car or whatever. You know what I mean?

Frank Mills: And I — it gives me comfort to know, without the media having to have done it or anything else, but just us as an agency should feel very good at the fact that we provided a silent comfort zone for the nation, coast to coast, that maybe will come to light someday. Maybe it never will. But we know it because it was there. And it's evident because our nation is healing, and this is where they come to get healed is in the National Parks. They come to those areas.

Frank Mills: They didn't go to the game arcades. They didn't go to the shooting ranges. It was a very nonviolent, get away from noise and planes and action. It took a lot even for people to start watching anything with action on TV. And it's the first time in a long time that we had a World Series where you didn't care who won. It was just great to watch baseball.

Mark Schoepfle: Showing up was 95 percent of the —

Frank Mills: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Frank Mills: Yeah, the Yankees won. The Yankees won; every team won. It was just great to see baseball. Well, it was great to be in these treasures that we have; the lakes, the streams, the rivers. Let's go here for the weekend. Let's stop there at night. Let's go here. That wasn't crowded. There weren't big crowds. The malls didn't get the people. They didn't get the people. The travel industry didn't get the people. They didn't go to Las Vegas. They didn't go here. They didn't go there. People were stunned, but they went somewhere outside of their home. And where they went, I'll guarantee you they went to the parks.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, it was a road trip to the parks, right?

Frank Mills: In dribs and drabs, nothing fancy, no big mass migration. But I'll guarantee you, they went to the parks to look, smell, hold, hug, cry out, scream out, whatever. And we were there for them to do it. And that's a good thing. That's a good agency to work for.

Mark Schoepfle: Excellent. Thank you. Well stated.

Frank Mills: That's as good as my bladder's going to let it go, I guess.

END OF TAPE