

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
September 11, 2001 Oral History Project, 2001-2004



Keena Graham
June 17, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
Transcribed by Unknown
Digitized by Madison T. Duran

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.
The original typed transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The National Park Service does not have a release form for this interview. Access is provided for research and accessibility via assistive technology purposes only. Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their use complies with copyright laws.

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

September 11, 2001
Oral History Documentation Project
Northeast Region, National Park Service

INTERVIEWEE: Keena Graham
Visitor Use Assistant
Arlington House
(Interview No. Unlisted)

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

INTERVIEW DATE: June 17, 2002

PLACE: Arlington House
Robert E. Lee Memorial

PROJECT COORDINATOR: Chuck Smythe, Ph.D.
Senior Cultural Anthropologist
Boston Support Office
National Park Service
15 State Street
Boston, MA 02109

START OF TAPE

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Keena Graham —

Keena Graham: Keena Michelle Graham, June 17th, '02.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Keena, my first question is from the moment you were aware of what was going on, what were some of the things that occurred, as you were aware that something had happened.

Keena Graham: I was watching TV that morning. It was Tuesday. It was around 9:00 or so, and there were reports all over TV about what happened with the World Trade Center, so I decided to call Karen up at Arlington House, and tell her what was going on, and that was around 9:20 something, or so. And then, we were just talking about the World Trade Center, and she said she was going to turn on the radio to hear what was going on. Around 9:30 she says I have to get off the phone; I see Joy running. I said, okay. And so, she hung up and I hung up, and I looked at the TV, and about five minutes later or so there was a report on CNN that, indeed, a plane had crashed into the Pentagon, closest to Arlington Cemetery. I tried to call back, but I couldn't get through, because I was worried about everybody here.

Keena Graham: So, that was pretty much going on, and later on, as time passed there were reports that The Mall — there was a bomb at The Mall. There was a report that somebody discovered something at the Capitol Building. My roommate is a reporter for "Congressional Quarterly," and he's always on Capitol Hill, so I was worried about that. I couldn't contact him. I couldn't contact my friend who works at the Pentagon Building. I just couldn't get in contact with anybody. Around 10:30 my roommate came back with a bunch of reporters, and he says that everybody decided to come to the apartment, because they didn't know where else to go, so they set up all their computers to keep writing the stories, and they had the news on all day.

Keena Graham: And when they started making comments, when the CNN and all the other news shows started making comments about the bombs being near the State Building; they made comments about bombs near The Mall area. We were all getting in hysterics. I know I was panicking, and finally, my roommate said stop; let's look out the window, because we live like a ten-minute walk away from The Mall. We saw no smoke, but we did see over near the Pentagon, the smoke coming over towards Washington.

Keena Graham: So, at that moment, I tried to call my mom, and I told her what happened, and then I couldn't use the phone anymore because all the reporters needed to use the phone to make their contacts, and we all made a pilgrimage over to Safeway, where we ran into a lot of Congressmen and Congresswomen over there, and everybody's buying groceries and alcohol, and we walked back and the reporters stayed there until around 9:00 or so, and I was quite shocked, because we were watching TV, and I wanted to find out: "was Arlington House going to be closed?"

Keena Graham: And the bottom of the screen said, well, all Park Service are essential employees, and you had to go to work the next day. And that was kind of disappointing. And when I got here the next day, we were closed, there were visitors still coming up to the cemetery, getting upset because they couldn't come to the cemetery to visit, and we got on the hill, and we basically did office work, and I had to go do an errand for my supervisor. I think I had to go drop off some keys to one of the guards down at the bottom of the hill, and I did that. I went to the left — drove down to the left — decided to drive to the right coming back up the hill, closest to the Pentagon Building, and that's when it truly hit me, because I saw the smoke was still coming, and you saw all the damage, and I could barely drive the car, because I started crying, and then I finally got up here, and started crying, and Karen and I took a walk in the cemetery.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Keena Graham: Since then, I've — it's hard for me to talk to visitors about what happened that day, even though I wasn't here at the site. Some visitors are just curious, and you can tell they're very sincere about it. Some visitors are — the way they say, "Oh, were you here when September 11th happened?" — And those are the people that I don't want to talk to, because it seems like a morbid curiosity, rather than just a — you know, sincere curiosity. Everybody wants to come on top of the site; rather than go in the house, they want to ask where the Pentagon Building is, and some people are even disappointed that so much construction has already been done on the Pentagon, that they can't see the hole anymore where the plane is.

Keena Graham: So, those are things I have to work on, as far as dealing with visitors when they inquire about September 11th, and where can they see the Pentagon Building. And most of the time I just cut them off, and I say I wasn't here. And then they want to talk further, and I just smile and nod and kind of walk away.

- Keena Graham: So, I guess my coping mechanism with the public at large is I just don't want to talk about it, and I don't want to go to mass gatherings to memorialize that day. I don't want to do anything like that. I don't want to sing patriotic songs, even though I love my country. I just don't deal well with the public at large, as far as grief is concerned. Anything else, I'm willing to deal with the public, and I love dealing with the public, but as far as grief, I don't — outward display of it is not my thing.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Can I backtrack a little bit, just the pace we're going at. You said — and I apologize, because part of the problem is here, that messing here with equipment, and here it is betraying me in some way or another. You — where were you when this — when you finally first became aware of what was going on?
- Keena Graham: I was in my apartment watching the news because Mondays and Tuesdays were my off days, back then. And watching the news and seeing something on CNN about the World Trade Center had been hit; then another plane had been hit — another plane hit the other tower, and I thought, whoa! I'm going to call Karen and tell her about this, and so basically, I was sitting on my floor watching TV, when all of this happened, and when the first plane hit, I just thought that — oh, well — that was a freaky incident. And I wasn't going to talk to anybody about it, except, you know, later in the day when my roommate came back or when I came back to work, and say, woah, did you hear about that?
- Keena Graham: And then when the second plane hit, I just felt compelled to call Karen, and tell her what was going on. So, I wasn't at the site, but on the phone with Karen. That's when the plane hit the Pentagon, while I was talking to her. And she had said, "I see Joy running." Joy is another coworker of ours, and she says, "I have to go," and I was worried, and I kept watching TV to see what's going on, and then finally, they said the plane had hit Arlington House, closest — I mean, Pentagon closest to Arlington Cemetery, which to me said closest to Arlington House. And I tried to call back, but couldn't get through, and I guess that was a dumb move on my part.
- Mark Schoepfle: How do you mean?
- Keena Graham: Well, when she said Joy was running, when I think about it now, Joy was running because the plane had hit; she had heard something, and to try to get through with all the — the House was officially open at that time, but you know, you're not thinking about that, and all that entails, trying to get visitors out of the way. Is it that it hit the site; you know? Did it knock out lines? What's going on? Obviously, people wouldn't be sitting there by the phones to receive more phone calls.

- Mark Schoepfle: They would be out there — you're saying out there working on trying to deal with what's going on?
- Keena Graham: Yes. We're evacuating.
- Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. Okay. So, you mentioned — that's exactly what happened when you were in your apartment watching what happened. Then about 10:30 — by about 10:30, you said some reporters and people had set up shop in your apartment?
- Keena Graham: My roommate is Defense and International Affairs Reporter for "Congressional Quarterly." He spends about 60 to 70 percent of his time on Capitol Hill. And that's where he was that morning, and I was worried about him, because reports just from CNN, Fox, you name it, everywhere you — you know, watched TV they were saying, oh, they're going towards the Capitol. Now there's one at the State Department, and on and on, so when they were talking about the Capitol Building, I was worried, because he was there.
- Keena Graham: I have another friend who's a staffer for a Congressman, and I was worried about her, as well. And around 10:30 or so, he — I see a group following from my window, and I see — Neil is my roommate — the people — the person who's heading that group, and he comes in, and he says, well, we decided to walk from the Capitol Building — which was only like a 15-20-minute walk away from our apartment — and if you don't mind, they're going to stay here, because our boss wants us to report about this.
- Keena Graham: And so, each one of them had a laptop, and they kind of set up shop, and they had their cell phones, and they were having bad connection problems, and so they used our line, and I could only get through a couple of calls then, and I called my mom and told her what happened, and I called a friend of mine, who lived in Athens, and told him what was happening, but basically, the whole day was them in our living room, reporting, and watching the news, and the odd thing about it, is we were all panicking. I was panicking, because we were so near all these buildings, and we live so close to The Mall, and when they're saying that — you know, The Mall is on fire; it never occurred to us to stop. It never occurred to me to say, wait a minute, all I have to do is peak out my window, and see that there's smoke.
- Keena Graham: And finally, Neil calmed everybody down and said let's go outside and see. We walked outside; there's no smoke. So, there was a lot of rumor, and we have EPA, Department of Transportation, a whole building, all of those things, near my apartment, just across the little bridge, and I was worried about what if they want to hit the EPA?

- Keena Graham: What about Department of Transportation? What if they want to take out —? And I was just so worried because there were so many government buildings.
- Mark Schoepfle: Where are you located, by the way?
- Keena Graham: I live in southwest DC.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Keena Graham: So, I live, like I say, very close to the Capitol Building, but very — especially close to The Mall. I live — my area is called “L’Enfant Plaza.”
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, sure.
- Keena Graham: And — and then the other way I can look over into Virginia and see — you know, the Pentagon — well, in that area, that vicinity, and sure enough, we did see smoke coming from that area.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Okay. So, this was all occurring the first day?
- Keena Graham: Mmhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: You’re saying by the — what happened for the rest of the day?
- Keena Graham: Well, the rest of the day, the reporters camped out there. A couple of them were breaking down, finally, and crying. I mean, men and women. We walked to the grocery store when we —
- Mark Schoepfle: This is Safeway?
- Keena Graham: Mmhmm. Safeway. We realized — we walked to the grocery store around 3:00-3:30, when we realized that this was going to be an all-nighter to get food, because we didn’t have enough food to feed about 10-11 reporters. So, we all walked over there, and just got food like everybody else. Oh, I — there’s — who did we run into? I think it was Sylvia McKenney, a couple of other Congress people I could not recognize, but I recognized her, and they were all in Safeway — people just buying toilet paper, frozen pizzas, just anything, and there was a little convenience store across the way that was selling — that sells alcohol, and so everybody — man and woman, alike, you know, business suits, even poor people, just walking over there, and there was a long line, like out the door, people just buying alcohol. And I guess that’s the only way you could really deal — a lot of us could really deal with it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right. So, this was from 3:30 in the afternoon until?
- Keena Graham: Around 9:00 is when the last person left.
- Mark Schoepfle: Then what?

- Keena Graham: Then, I was saying to Neil, so I said, I wonder if I have to go to work tomorrow, and we just had it on — oh, what channel was that? Channel Five? And they were listing all the agencies open, and it said that all Department of Interior — all National Park Service people are essential employees, which I commented “essential?” [Laughter].
- Mark Schoepfle: Say what you do?
- Keena Graham: I work in the middle of a cemetery, what could I do? And so, I had to — you know what I said, if you — it also said at the bottom, if you take the day off, then you would have to take a sick leave or something, which I thought was ridiculous.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes.
- Keena Graham: And so, I just put on my uniform, and I got on the Metro that day, and it was just extremely quiet, because the stop after Arlington Cemetery is Pentagon, and I realized that a lot of the people that I ride the Metro with on the Blue Line worked at the Pentagon, and some of these guys — military guys who got on at Rozland, were just sitting down and hiding their faces behind newspapers, and crying, and nobody said a word. Not one word on the entire trip on the Metro, and it just struck me that these military guys, especially, were weeping behind newspapers, and still had to go to work, though. And when I got off the Metro, that morning — this was Wednesday — I was just getting angrier and angrier, because visitors kept walking up to the gate where the guards were, because the guards still had to be out there, and they’re like, “Can we go into the cemetery?” And the guard said, “No, we’re closed for the day”. “I don’t see why” [laughter]. And I just kept walking up the hill to work, and when we got there, just doing office work, and I still just didn’t — I didn’t want to go near the Pentagon — around 1:00 o’clock, when I had to go run an errand for my supervisor, that’s when I thought, well, I’ll just go see how bad it is, and it was horrible. And that’s when I finally completely broke down; not just shedding a couple of tears but shaking.
- Mark Schoepfle: You went over to the Pentagon to look at what was going on?
- Keena Graham: Yes. I was driving at the back gate nearest Fort Meyer, that road right there within the cemetery, and you could see everything from that gate.
- Mark Schoepfle: What did you — I mean, what — you said that you sort of felt overwhelmed at that point, and you really started crying?
- Keena Graham: Mmhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: What was it that got you that way?

- Keena Graham: The thing that got me that way is that this huge plane was stuck in the side of the Pentagon, that just the culmination of everything that morning: Seeing the military guys crying, and hearing that people were sitting in meetings that morning when the plane hit, and just thinking about all of that, and then another thing that really got to me is that a lot of people really don't stop, when something that horrible happens, and that life really is sort of — I mean, this really is random for a lot of people.
- Keena Graham: It really doesn't impact some people at all, and for people to try to come into the cemetery when all of this is happening, just next door; and another thing that really got to me is standing in front of our house — Arlington House, and seeing that we had the big beacon, the flagpole, and the light at the end of it, and thinking that that beacon is there to pretty much warn the airplanes that — you know, you're getting a little bit too close, and that was scary for me, too, that they came that close to us, that they just didn't really care; just no value for human life whatsoever, on either for some — the people who wanted to come inside the cemetery were ticked off, because they couldn't, and for the people who actually did it.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, both the hijackers and the tourists?
- Keena Graham: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: That didn't seem to have much of a regard for what was going on?
- Keena Graham: Not at all.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Well, you were mentioning that some of the tourists would then come over and that you were mentioning this right after this, that some of them had not — they were saying well, why can't we come in? What is the problem here?
- Keena Graham: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And others, later on, would want a lot of information from you about what was going on?
- Keena Graham: Mhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. What was that like, a couple of weeks afterwards?
- Keena Graham: Annoying.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. How so? Could you give me, like one particular example?
- Keena Graham: This woman and her husband came — I was on the second floor in the house, and she said were you here when September 11th happened? And I said no I was not, and she goes, wow, you guys are really close, and I was like, yes, we are.

- Keena Graham: And she says, wow, it could have hit here. I was like, yes, it could have. And she goes, oh, well why can't we see this, and that kind of thing. And I instructed her to — you know, it was at the end of the flower garden; if she looked in the distance, then she could see the Pentagon Building. I just felt cold, and I don't think that a lot of the visitors realized that when they make comments, that yes, we do work here. Yes. We are very close to this, and they're not thinking, just because we're wearing a uniform that we have feelings, too, that our job is not necessarily to cater to every whim that they have, or — I mean, I just don't know. That kind of thing ticks me off; it's just because I have on a uniform, then you are allowed to disregard my feelings, or not even think about it, that my job is totally as quote/unquote "tour guide."
- Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. Not that you're — basically considering that you're just not a tour guide?
- Keena Graham: Yes. Not considering that I am a person, and that we all are people here, and that we — yes, we work nearby, and it's devastating for us, that this is not just one notch that add to our talk.
- Mark Schoepfle: Were there any people that sort of asked things in a nicer way?
- Keena Graham: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: I mean — fishing at it — what should they have done? Were there people who did the right thing?
- Keena Graham: Well, there people who said — when they said — well, were you here September 11th? And I said no I was not, and they'd say, wow, that was pretty awful, and then they walk on. No more comment. We just walk on. I thought that was very respectful, or some who said can you tell me where we can see the Pentagon? Kind of in that tone of voice, and I tell them, and they wouldn't comment any further, and I guess that works for me. It depends on who you are, because I didn't want to talk about it till I was blue in the face.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Keena Graham: There were some people, who I guess feel better talking about it that way.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right. Okay. That's what I was wondering, because it looked like — did I get the impression that when they were asking all these questions, they were just being kind of nosy?
- Keena Graham: They were being kind of nosy, and I was trying to give a single or a sign, as to very delicately get across to them that I really don't want to discuss this. There was one lady who kept pushing, and I said, if you don't mind, I really don't want to talk about this. And she says I understand.

- Keena Graham: And that was the end of that, because I just get this feeling, because of where we work — I mean, even today, we're not even a year removed from what happened, and still visitors come up in a day and they say can you tell me where the Pentagon is? And it's like you don't understand the gravity of this, do you? You really don't understand, and so we made up a little sign just saying Pentagon at the end of the flower garden [laughter].
- Mark Schoepfle: Basic. Where did you put it?
- Keena Graham: We have it on our ticket — our little ticket board—when we change the time of tours available.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, they don't have to ask you that stuff?
- Keena Graham: So, they don't have to ask it over and over and over again.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. Were there other issues handling the tourists if they came up like that?
- Keena Graham: For me seeing — there's this company called Tourmobile, and they — I would hear the driver, or the tour guide or whoever would say, and if you want to see the Pentagon, it's at the end of the flower garden. Now, the flower garden is something that we take care of — our gardens are taken care of, and there are graves around that flower garden. People trample through that flower garden — trample over these people's graves to go see the Pentagon, and that just struck me as no respect whatsoever for the people who died for our country, or just even the pretty things that we have, trying to bring some beauty to the place. It doesn't matter. We're just going to walk over — oh, was this guy a Revolutionary War hero? Okay, whatever.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, they're not even paying attention to what is important for the reason for the park to be there to start with?
- Keena Graham: Right, exactly.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Maybe to work on this for a minute or so. What should be done to — you know, what can the Park Service do to deal with that kind of attitude on the part of the tourists? What could we do about that?

- Keena Graham: Sometimes I feel like saying — and I've said this to a couple of people — I said, please be respectful of where you are, and I mean, being — you know, the cemetery itself, and even the house, and events that are taken when you are here, and some people nod and they go about it in a quiet way, which I think is very good, or you can hear moms and dads talking to their kids about certain things that have happened; they'll tie it in — they'll talk about the cemetery, as far as the Civil War is concerned, and they'll talk about the Pentagon, I guess, trying to convey it to their children. There are some people who are just hopeless because they have tour guides who — we have a problem with some of the tour guides [laughter].
- Keena Graham: We're just a stop on their agenda, and one thing I was going to suggest to my supervisor — and I'm talking about the site managers — that if we could send down a memo to these companies that, you know, have these tour businesses, or these tour groups to — one thing — giving them accurate information about the house; another thing is telling them the whole respect thing, as far as the Pentagon, our flower garden, the dead there, all things like that, even just the noise.
- Mark Schoepfle: Even the noise, huh?
- Keena Graham: Even the noise. All the just — very loud, very boisterous, just — it was just a stop, and now that's what it seems like the Pentagon has become, too, as far as coming out to house to see the Pentagon, and it feels like it's just become a stop for a lot of tour groups.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Did you see a lot of the visitors shift increase remarkably, during those times afterwards, or what?
- Keena Graham: This is the odd thing: We always get these —we're getting these numbers since September 11th saying that our visitation is down. Our visitation is down, as far as people coming into the house, but I see a number of people, and I guess they can't calculate this — who just come up to the front of the house, see the view of Washington, come round and say where's the Pentagon? You show them, and they go down there, and you go "do you want to go in the house?" And go, "no." So, as far as people coming into the house, yes, I would say the visitation has gone down, but as far as people coming on the hill to see the Pentagon, and Washington, I think it's up. It's just not people coming in and seeing the Robert E. Lee Memorial.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Are these things that are happening even now — these kinds of tourists coming up? Or is that kind of so-called interest leveled off, or what do you think?

- Keena Graham: I think in the beginning it was just a morbid curiosity, like I say, and some of the people were genuinely interested, and that was their way of dealing with it, and they needed to see it; they needed to deal with the grief in their own way. But since the school groups — I'd say around March — the school groups — and now you have the summer groups, and even the elderly tours — and it's just a stop. It's so funny how fast things move. We're not even a year removed from it, and it's just sort of a thing that happened, and let's get on with it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: How long do these tour buses stay here?
- Keena Graham: Oh, they don't stay long at all. They take the pictures at front of the house, and like I say, when they go down to the Pentagon, they'll walk back to me, and they'll say, wow, you don't even see the hole anymore. They fixed it up, and it's like yes. So, you kind of feel like they came here to take a picture of a gigantic gaping hole, yes, and it's not there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Does that still occur now when people come to visit?
- Keena Graham: Oh, yes!
- Mark Schoepfle: Is there a point, I guess, from what you were seeing, that getting back to some of the events that occurred, was there a point at which there was kind of a normalcy that occurred with things? Were things sort of up in the air for a while?
- Keena Graham: Things were up in the air for a while, because — you probably heard about this, but there was some lunatic who was on the Green Line, and he brought a bottle of — an aerosol bottle, I guess, and a Koran, and he sprayed the compartment he was in, and they wrestled this guy down, and found out later on he'd been let out of St. Elizabeth, but things like that, and you know, thinking to yourself, okay, if worse comes to worse and I can't take the Metro — I even took a walk to Arlington House to see how long it would take me to make it, walking, if for some reason I couldn't take the Metro, because of craziness going on, and it took about 50 minutes. And so —
- Mark Schoepfle: Fifteen?
- Keena Graham: Fifty.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, fifty?
- Keena Graham: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: And you mentioned — so one of the things that occurred during these first few weeks afterwards was sort of some general craziness on the Metro?

- Keena Graham: Yes. General craziness on the Metro. Also, when that plane crashed into Queens, we — standing on the front porch, we saw these black helicopters on Memorial Bridge, and I didn't know what was going on, and neither one — nobody in the house knew what was going on, and my friend Mark, who was also a co-worker, a lady came up to him, and I happened to be standing next to Mark, and she says, oh, did you guys hear a plane crashed in Queens? And his comment was, you know, not again? I was like, oh, no. Not again!
- Keena Graham: And we realized that the government — you know, knew about this well before any of us heard about it, and that's the reason why the helicopters were there, to try to see if this was another terrorist attack.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Keena Graham: So, it was odd, just seeing the airplanes, and I think that was a really strange feeling, too. And coming to realize that all the military bases around us, and all this type of security, and a couple of weeks after, there were some really, really sad reports of people jumping into the Potomac River, because they had lost loved ones at the Pentagon. So, even though the world kept going on, things like that — little everyday things like that would — you know, enter into your consciousness, and go, "oh yes."
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. So, when did things sort of get back to normal, do you think, or did they get back to normal? Can you even say that they did?
- Keena Graham: Um, I'd say around Christmas, because for a very long time — it's not a very long time, but I guess that's my whole point — is that things are moving quite fast. So, two months after, when the reports of people bringing aerosol cans on the train started dying down, and then, you know, people started reporting about Gary Condit, again, rather than the terrorist attacks, you kind of felt, "okay, this is page eight news now."
- Mark Schoepfle: So, it was actually more like about Christmas that things were getting back to normal for you?
- Keena Graham: Well, Christmas, things were getting back to quote/unquote "normal," where — I don't know — people just started focusing on other things. I mean, you read on the front page of the news about al Qaeda or something like that, but the big headline wasn't any more about al Qaeda, it was about — you know — new reports say that Gary Condit is not going to win his primary, and that he won't — you know, things like that [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: Right. Well, if you had a chance to look back on some of these things — okay? — you were mentioning, for example, the visitor insensitivity, and what should be done to communicate to visitors, first of all, why we're here, and why they should be respecting the grounds here, instead of just using this as a gawking site for the Pentagon. What would you think should be done, as far as looking back on those events?

Keena Graham: What should have been done then, or should be done now?

Mark Schoepfle: Both.

Keena Graham: I think on a personal level, I could have stopped myself and realized that each person has a different way of dealing with grief, and some of these people really may not have been intending to be tacky, but that's what it came across to me, because of my way of handling things, and I could have been more than a tad more understanding about that.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes.

Keena Graham: Today when I do Center Hall talks, even when I'm talking — when I'm just even talking about Robert E. Lee and the Civil War, and I was reading a book called "Founding Brothers," and in it the guy quotes John Adams quite a bit, and John Adams talks about — you know, he will never be respected, but people like Jefferson will be respected in America, because Americans see history or events as a beginning, and end, and an ending, when things are much more random than that. That people don't realize how close the country came to being destroyed, not even becoming a country, and all these little things, and so when I talk to people, even in the center hall, and I say we simplify things, way — a lot, because it's easier for us to understand, and we use terms like good/bad, North/South, Union/Confederate, and I said things are a lot more complex, and I said we romanticize things, as well, and I said this is the situation that's going on.

Keena Graham: And sometimes just by talking about that, and even tying in what John Adams said about the way that we perceive history. Some people come away and they think — and they make comments, like that was really good — or you can see that they're thinking a little bit deeper than — you know, the simple concepts of good and evil. And that's one of the things I would personally like to do, is just encourage people to — and even myself to think beyond a certain life, and to go a bit deeper, if you care; if you are passionate about something, then know everything you can about it, and there's a — so, things like that.

- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. So, basically, thinking more about, say, combining — if I'm following right, you're talking about early American history, or you're talking about the Washington, and up to the point of Lee, just being able to respect Lee's place in this?
- Keena Graham: And so, we respect everybody's place. We respect the United States as a whole, that we are young — we are still young. We — it has taken a lot to get this thing going, and you know, one of the causes — one of the biggest conflicts of the Civil War in our time is having a multi-racial, multi-ethnic country. And I mean, we're dealing with it today. We look at Arabs differently, because of what happens, and you can't — you really have to fight hard, and a lot of people back then, as well as today had to fight hard not to generalize everything. You have to — if your neighbor is Muslim, and they've always been kind to you, and don't think, but just because this happened, they're out to get you. And you have to fight hard, because of the country we live in; we're not one race; we're not one religion; we're not one ideology. And we never have been.
- Mark Schoepfle: Are you saying be able to work that kind of point into the —
- Keena Graham: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: — the issues around here, the interpretation, and those sorts of things that go on.
- Keena Graham: Right, mmhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: Very good. Okay. We're — I think you had actually asked before, looking back, is it just — you know, a mediator yourself, and what was the other way you had mentioned in looking back?
- Keena Graham: Oh, looking back at history?
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes.
- Keena Graham: As more than just a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes.
- Keena Graham: It's way too simplified. We don't — there is not an end right — we don't know there's an end, until things are way over, and we're in the midst of something right now, so take it as that. September 11th happened, and now we're dealing with the aftereffects of that. And I think a lot of people have — are thinking that once the war is over in Afghanistan or whatever it might be, then that's the end. They don't think that the — just because, say, for instance, a war is over, or you know, the attacks have stopped, you still have to deal with your own personal feelings.

Keena Graham: After that you still have to deal with even things such as government policy, or the way you look at people, just all of those things; it's not an end just because a war is over, or a certain — even if the movie is over or something — you still — there's still thoughts and feelings after that that you have to deal with.

Mark Schoepfle: This has been very good. Oh, one thing. You were mentioning dealing with government policy. What does that mean?

Keena Graham: Meaning —

Mark Schoepfle: For example?

Keena Graham: — after September 11th, will a lot of our civil liberties be taken away, because they want to hunt these things down? Now, we know that FBI, the way they can investigate or do their detective work, has become much broader. They can go into your personal church, even if you haven't committed a crime, to hang out to see what you're doing — check out e-mails, do all these certain things, whereas, before they couldn't do that before September 11th.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes.

Keena Graham: Nowadays, racial profiling is okay, just in case, because you know, you don't want this to happen again, and those are the things you have to step back and not do the knee-jerk reaction, and kind of slow yourself down a bit.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. I'll just give that a turn.

Keena Graham: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: That's very interesting. Do you have any questions? I don't have any questions. Yes. Where did you go to school?

Keena Graham: University of Alabama.

Mark Schoepfle: University of Alabama?

Keena Graham: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: Tuscaloosa?

Keena Graham: Yes. That's where I'm from.

Mark Schoepfle: Tuscaloosa?

Keena Graham: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, you're from Alabama, originally?

Keena Graham: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: And the Tuscaloosa area?

Keena Graham: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: That's great. What got you in the Park Service?

Keena Graham: I was always interested in history, ever since I was five. I always knew that I wanted to be an historian, but I didn't know what kind of historian I wanted to be and being in a college and high school made me realize that I'm not for the classroom. And so, I decided that there — I was going to move up to Washington, and volunteer at some places to see if I was good at public history. And it turns out it's one of the best decisions I ever made in my life.

Mark Schoepfle: So, what do you do here, now?

Keena Graham: I'm what they call a Visitor Use Assistant.

Mark Schoepfle: Hold on just a moment.

END OF SIDE 1

START OF SIDE 2

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Go ahead.

Keena Graham: I'm a Visitor Use Assistant, but Karen has been very helpful — and in fact, everybody here — with teaching me more history, even more methods of history, and I go to seminars, and now, you know, working on an article about the Confiscation Act of Property Issues during the Civil War, and I've been lucky enough to be able to do a lot of research here, so in a way it feels like I'm getting another degree.

Keena Graham: And just by working here, I've been introduced to so many people, and even my own thoughts have changed, as far as — I think I've become a lot more open-minded, you know, working here, whereas, before if somebody said they had Confederate sympathies, and you know, made certain comments, I was just more like, oh, you're evil. And I'm able to talk and laugh with these people now [laughter].

Mark Schoepfle: [Laughter]. That's very important. How do — that is a whole — you know, that's the whole Confederate — what is it like the Confederate flag issue, and that type of thing?

Keena Graham: Yes.

Mark Schoepfle: That's a whole complex can of worms.

Keena Graham: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: Just curious, how have you dealt with some of that? How have you worked with some of that?

Keena Graham: Well, somebody said that is — the whole bumper sticker that it is heritage, and not hate, and I kindly point out that the Confederacy — underneath the Confederacy — you know, if you're talking about the government — not talking about the foot soldiers, but the government, the whole policy was — the Constitution said that the true and natural state for Africans was slavery. Women had no say, and those changes were not made underneath the Confederate flag. If you didn't have a certain amount of property, you couldn't vote, so if you're talking about the Confederate flag as back then, I don't — it's not inclusive of poor whites, women, or anybody — Indians, whatever. And as underneath the American flag, these changes have been made.

Keena Graham: If I pay my taxes in Alabama, Virginia, or wherever, I don't want that flag on a public property. If you want to wear it on your T-shirt; if you want to have it on your front lawn, it doesn't matter to me, but white people are not the only people paying taxes. My heritage should be represented, as well.

Keena Graham: If you're going to have your heritage represented; if you say that is your heritage. Some people, when they say — when I, you know, voice it that way and I say, as far as me paying that taxes, I don't want it on a public building. And they seem to understand it more than my problem is not necessarily with somebody's personal expression, but if it's going to be on a public building, where people are paying taxes, then that signifies that's the state government's policy, or the United States government's policy. That's something I don't like.

Mark Schoepfle: I see. Well, this has been a very interesting interview. I guess my one — my last question, maybe second to last question would be is there anything that you'd like to mention that I've forgotten to ask?

Keena Graham: About September 11th?

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.

Keena Graham: The only thing that — and I've mentioned this before; I'm trying so very hard not to be a reactionist, and I'm trying to slow down — I'm trying to see the point of view of Ashcroft. I'm trying to see the point of view of ACLU and realize that there are some — there are a couple of liberties we are going to have to give up until this thing is settled, but hopefully, not too many.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. That's an important point. Anything you'd like to know about us?

Keena Graham: You guys work in Washington?

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh.

Keena Graham: Did you have to do this, too?

Mark Schoepfle: You mean, with the — this?

Keena Graham: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: Not yet, mostly because most of us were far enough away that nothing happened, and once it did happen, our orders were, "Get out of here."

Keena Graham: Oh.

Mark Schoepfle: So, we joined the multitudes that were basically trying to get out of town, and you know, the big traffic jam, personally. I was on the Metro.

Keena Graham: Oh.

Mark Schoepfle: I sat around over at "The Irish Times," for about an hour watching TV, because it was the only TV I could get my hands on after my daughter calls me up and says, hey, you've heard about the planes? She was working out as a contractor in Virginia, and we hadn't even heard about it. We'd heard no noises; heard nothing.

Keena Graham: That's the thing that scared me.

Mark Schoepfle: And so, we were so greatly removed that I waited an hour and then realized the Metro is still running; let's go home, because there's nothing for us to do around here. So, I guess my main question coming out of all of that was, you know, could there be some kind of training, so that we and the other Park Service could help out.

Keena Graham: That's another thing.

Mark Schoepfle: — we could have been put to use, or something — finding out about that.

Keena Graham: Mmhmm. Yes. I felt completely helpless, like I didn't even know first aid when that happened. I just now got CPR training, and you know, the whole process on doing something, the steps — the necessary steps you need to take. There's nothing — there was nothing set up like that, and I can't blame Park Service for that, but now we know this is the world we live in; we do — I think we do need to know what to do, like some steps to follow.

- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. That's a really good point, because that's what I ended up doing on my own, and I took CPR, and it got provided through DOI, so I just went down in their basement one morning and did it, but — you know, it's just about a morning, and it refreshed what I learned in the Army, and that was a good point, because it just — it comes up that way. Anything else like that?
- Keena Graham: Oh, there was a funny incident, where we all went to chapel service at Fort Meyer, to be with the military, and the guys over here are good guys, but we would say — they would ask where do you work? And we'd go we work at the Robert E. Lee Memorial, Arlington House. And they go, "Where is that?" And we're like right across the fence from you guys [laughter]. We'd never had a close relationship with the military, and we had our own little battles with each other over here, because they want more of our land, and — you know, on and on, but they were very, very shocked to see us in chapel service with them. That I think it was a Friday, I think, when we all just showed up for the memorial service, because we'd just been butting heads for long, we were completely ignored by them [laughter].
- Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. No, that's good. Well, that's great. I really appreciate very much your time. Any questions — any other questions about us?
- Keena Graham: What — have you guys gotten anything out of this? Or learned anything from this?
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, I certainly did, because I live on Capitol Hill and when I came home my house was filled with people that couldn't get home, and the same thing happened to me. They weren't reporters. They were people I knew, just stranded downtown. So, I had a house full of people, all afternoon, that I having to feed — you know, and they finally figured that the Metro was open, and they could get home.
- Keena Graham: Mhmm. Does it annoy you that — it annoys me that everybody kind of forgets Washington, or just the Metro area about this whole business?
- Mark Schoepfle: That was one of the things that kind of got Bush, was that — hey, you know, what about us? You know? We had things happen here, too. And it's really — when you get into this, it's like with you with the reaction with visitors and how to deal with visitors, and how you felt about the visitors later on, and well, you know, maybe that was there way of showing grief. I mean, it was — you know, what I'm getting all sorts of these sorts of learning experiences that are part, that even just sort of cycle back into the way they do their business, and it was — you know, the fact that actually on the ground, people jumped into action immediately.

Mark Schoepfle: You know? There wasn't any question of waiting for orders from up above to do something, they just immediately went to their own proceedings, and said, well, we're not going to hear anything from central office; we're going to do — we'll do what we need to do.

Keena Graham: Exactly.

Mark Schoepfle: And you know, you were able to call in from home for a little while — you know, then they had to shut off communication, and then from what I gathered from others, it was shut off for a while. But you were in the next day, and having to deal with visitors, and life just — people picked up and went on.

Keena Graham: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: So, just being able to get that down, chronically, I think becomes a really important point to get out to the rest of the Park Service that wasn't affected by it, and just to get out to the public that this is how your government works. That's kind of why I wanted that input.

Keena Graham: Mhmm. Right.

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

Keena Graham: Oh, thank you.

END OF TAPE