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George F. Wallace
January 16, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
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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: George F. Wallace
U.S. Park Police
(Interview No. Unlisted)

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

INTERVIEW DATE: January 16, 2002

PLACE: HQ U.S. Park Police

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: 16 January interview with George F. Wallace, Park Police. First question that I wanted to start out with is just what happened on the moment you were aware what had happened? What went on?

George Wallace: Well, I was actually in the mall writing tickets when Sergeant Dan Beck contacted me on my Nextel and said that a plane had just hit one of the towers of the World Trade Center in New York. Initially, I thought somebody was off course. Certainly, didn't think it was a terrorist attack initially and I just kept going writing my tickets. He told me — I asked him was it a big plane? You really can't tell watching it on TV. So, I continued to write some tickets and within minutes — I didn't know what the time frame was but wasn't too awfully long — and, he calls me back. "You won't believe this. I'm watching TV and" he goes "another plane just slammed into the other tower." Well, then you had a good idea that it was a little bit more than just a freak accident. I just — I, finished up my tickets, hopped on my bike and I rode back here. Because we knew we'd have to — we knew there would be some security that would take place here. And, the motor unit, which is usually tasked with road closures, evacuations, things of that nature.

George Wallace: So, I came back and, of course, I was watching it on TV and we immediately told the motors that were already out working the traffic thing just to stay in the downtown area and be very vigilant of the memorials and the monument. And one of the guys called here. He was actually parked at Swan Boat parking. And, he called because he had to go up to the shop. He said, Dan, I got to stay downtown. I gotta get my bike up to the shop. Literally, do you know what's going on? And, he says, no. I've been out on traffic all day. I don't know what's going on. Because we don't have the benefit of an AM/FM radio on our motorcycles, you know. We're outside. I said some planes have crashed into the World Trade Center in New York. And, he says, no I didn't know any of this. I've been out doing traffic. And, probably right when he was saying that, he goes, then he just screamed. A bomb just went off downtown and I said, well, where? He says it's at the FDR. Then he goes, no, no, no. It's the Pentagon. It's passed the Pentagon. So, I hung up. Looked at Danny back and said, hey, something just happened at the Pentagon. I don't remember hearing it here.

George Wallace: We went running outside. Well, you could see the smoke from here. We hopped on our motorcycles and we took off. And as we were headed over there, there was a plane circling the Pentagon. Circling the smoke that was coming from the Pentagon. It was a military plane.

George Wallace: It looked like a C130 and not that I know what they all look like, but I just know what that one looked right. And, it circled a couple of times around the smoke and then it headed south. It went out of sight. And, we maneuvered our way through traffic. We had the benefit of two wheels. We had got up to the Pentagon — now that particular day the President was to fly into the Pentagon Heliport, and we were to escort him from the heliport back to the White House. That was supposed to happen around 11:30.

George Wallace: So, we rode up to the Pentagon and the Pentagon Police just waved us through and we just circling around all the building until we saw where the damage was done, and it was done on the heliport side. We parked our motorcycles and it was just a, you know, something that you just can't imagine — the destruction. Something — I've never seen anything like it before. When I was in Florida, I've been in some catastrophes but nothing like this.

George Wallace: And, initially I — you know, I guess because I took the phone call and the guy said a bomb just went off. I'm thinking this must have been a truck bomb or car. I didn't think airplane initially because there's absolutely nothing, when you looked at it, to indicate that there was an airplane. The plane wasn't sticking out of the Pentagon. The debris field was so small — that the pieces were so small, you don't think of it as being pieces of an airplane. And, across that field towards the helipad, there were people laying in the field and there were people running to help them. And, we just jumped off our bikes and I don't even know what I said on the radio. I know I made transmissions probably that it was at the heliport side and running up. We tried to help people that were hurt but there were a lot of people. There were a lot of military people around. We ran up close to the building where the fire was fairly heavy. There were probably military personnel in civilian clothes trying to make an effort to make a rescue effort. The fire department was just starting to get their hose lines into operation, and we helped the fire department pull hoses. And, we actually were prepared to go into the first floor of the Pentagon, the ground floor, to help with some rescue efforts. We were standing by with the stokes basket and, the fire department had made an initial entry. Came out. One of the firemen said there's no survivors in this section. And, you know these military guys that were there in civilian clothes. You're not going to tell them that there's no survivors. They're gonna — they want to root around through everything to look. They were very inspirational. I don't know the guy's name and I saw him later in the day and talked to him and I never did get his name. But he was the type of guy that you'd follow into the burning Pentagon. He was just that inspirational.

- George Wallace: One of the fire chiefs came out and said, hey listen, nobody can come in here. This structure's unsafe. It's going to collapse any minute. And, he says everybody start pulling back and we started to pull the hose lines back and I would say within two to three minutes that facade just started to crumble and just collapse.
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.
- George Wallace: You know, the fire department we helped them with their hoses again because they just — they were setting up a surround and drowned type operation. I mean this fuel — the fuel wasn't going out easy and they were just hosing it down. And, I don't know why came up to me. For some reason I thought it was an agent of some sort and said, listen, there's another plane. It's twenty minutes out. We don't know where it's going. It's a good possibility it's coming here to the Pentagon. So, we need to evacuate all these people that are standing around. And, that's what we did. We started to pull back. Our helicopter was on the ground and I ran up to the lieutenant in charge of aviation, Phil Chowa [phonetic] and told him, look, I don't know if you'd heard this but there's another aircraft unaccounted for possibly coming here. You want to get these eagles out of here.
- Mark Schoepfle: Get these eagles out of here?
- George Wallace: The helicopters. And, then we actually got — went back to our motorcycles. They were a good 50-60-70 yards from the Pentagon close. Wasn't anything we — we didn't want to ride right up to, and people were starting to walk up one lane. You know, the building was being evacuated and we started directing the people up the parkway instead of staying and watch it burn we directed them up the parkway. You know, it's possible there's another aircraft in the area coming this way. They wanted to get as far away from the building. That's the extend of what we did at the Pentagon. We probably weren't there for much more than 45 minutes. Maybe tops an hour. I'd say we had to have been there — we had to arrive on the seen within five to six minutes. There were people still running out of the building, you know, on fire.
- Mark Schoepfle: When you got there?
- George Wallace: I've got some pictures. I took a couple of pictures and, only a couple before we went over. These were much later in the day [leafing through the photos]. This [showing a photo] is when we first got there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

- George Wallace: That's from where we parked, and you can see the debris in the field and it just wasn't too — it really wasn't big. And, this was the President's — well, not the President's helipad but that's where he would have been.
- Mark Schoepfle: Where he would have been. Right in the middle of all that soot.
- George Wallace: Yes, pretty much. There were some cars that were parked here. They were on fire. Now, later in the day, this unit was tasked with making escorts of cabinet officials to the undisclosed locations, outside the city. Normally, they fly and I don't know what happened, but, I guess, all the cabinet officials didn't make it to the helicopters and we ended up doing an escort up to Mt. Weber, which is — I know it's about 60 or 70 miles west of — in Loudoun County or out that way. We had motors. I got hooked up and that's why I have these other pictures which are later in the day. We actually escorted the HAZMAT, — Montgomery County's HAZMAT group — down. Anybody that needed an escort over to the Pentagon — HAZMAT groups that were coming into the city. We escorted them over there. So, we made a number of escorts that day for fire department personnel. This is all in the first day — all these pictures.
- George Wallace: Other than that, after we — there was hours between when we left there in the morning. We probably left the Pentagon area — Sergeant Beck and myself, probably about 10:30 and these — this is probably about 4:00 in the afternoon when we returned there.
- Mark Schoepfle: This was after doing the escorting?
- George Wallace: And, then there were some escorts in the middle. I didn't go on the escort to Mt. Weber, Sergeant Beck did. I stayed in the downtown area and coordinated closures and other escorts.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes.
- George Wallace: And really that's about all Sergeant Beck and I did. We just — we headed for the smoke when we saw it. Our largest concern at the time was to see exactly what was hit. We didn't know. Was it the Pentagon or what? And, we knew that there was going to be escorts from the Pentagon that day and we had to make sure that — we just wanted to see what happened and where was it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Let me see if I can drop back a little bit here. Okay. Let me get my notes here. The — you were mentioning that when you got there, there was just a whole heck of a lot of destruction and you were showing me some of the pictures here, particularly the one of the burning. Could you talk a little — well, first of all you were mentioning that there were a lot of injured people that were out there.

- Mark Schoepfle: That's something very much unlike, of course, the World Trade Center, where there were relatively few injured people. Did you describe some of your impressions at that day even by just looking at the picture?
- George Wallace: Well, you just can't believe it. It's just an unbelievable event. That you know what just happened in New York and now it just happened here and you're thinking to yourself there's got to be more. It isn't stopping right here. And, it just — I guess Sergeant Beck and myself — we were probably in a mild grade of shock just looking at this scene and we kind of looked at each other and said what do we do now? What can we do? We just thought, well, there's no traffic coming any more. There's no traffic to direct and people are streaming out of the building. We thought, well, probably the best thing to do is to head over to the actual site because you could see people down. And, you really can't pick them out in this picture, but they were there. And, there was a lot of superficial injuries, flying debris and some of these people might not have even been in the building. Probably more, probably just hit with debris after the impact. But they were all just in deep shock. They needed immediate attention.
- George Wallace: The fire department whose job certainly is rescue and emergency service, they can't be tied up with shock victims in the field. They got to put that fire out. They got to get on that. So, we — we did the best we could but there were a lot of military. It's the Pentagon. Just thousands of military people. They all have every bit the medical background that I have and some better that came right up and just went right to these areas and started to render aid. We helped people to the feet and walked them to the ambulance but — other than that it really wasn't — there really wasn't anything we could do. We couldn't go in the building and it's probably a good thing that that fire chief came out and said, hey look, this building's going to collapse. Because it did within minutes. That environment — it wasn't safe to go in without breathing apparatus. But people were going to do it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: There's no doubt in my mind. I was going to make an effort and there were people a lot more determined than me.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: They were going to do it. They were going to look for their buddies that were in there. The thing that was always in the back of my head — even before they came up and said there's another aircraft missing. I kept looking up. You kept looking in that sky. I was waiting for something to happen, another plane or something else. And, I remember talking to Dan Beck and saying the helicopter was still in the air.

- George Wallace: It's flying around in the air. I said to him I hope those guys are looking for aircraft, you know, other aircraft, because that's what worried me the most. Not that — I know it wasn't a bomb. I mean that's what terrorism is. You know, here's one event. Now I'm going to get you with the second event. Here's one tower. Now I'm going to hit the second tower. Well, they only hit that one thing and, I mean, it's an unfortunate thing that that plane crashed in Pennsylvania because there's no doubt it would have been just more massive destruction in the city had they been successful. And flying it closer in. So, that's what's going through your head then. Like, everything's in slow motion just like they tell you. And a tremendous feeling of helplessness.
- Mark Schoepfle: So mostly your helping people to their feet. Was there any first aid or anything like that you could do or —
- George Wallace: Everything seemed wrong. We didn't have anything with us. We didn't have first aid kits, but everything seemed so superficial. You know, there was no — there wasn't any massive bleeding and you wanted to get them out of that debris field. And, they were in shock. They needed to be reassured they were okay. And, I — those people that I helped, they were both women and I can't — they were probably middle-aged women.
- Mark Schoepfle: This thing — this shocking event lasted about 45 minutes, you're saying, right?
- George Wallace: Well, you know, it was like in and out of it. You know, you get there, and you look at it and you're thinking oh my God what do I do. Then you start doing things.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: Now, we've gotten people up, moving them out of the area. Now, it's — what do I do now? Let's go help the firemen. Let's, you know — there's one guy pulling hose. Well, three guys can pull it better. Let's pull hose for him. We did that. Both Dan Beck and I were firemen at one time. We were both volunteer firemen, so. We weren't strangers to fire operations, either of us. And then, like I told you about the gentleman in the civilian clothes, we're going there. There's people in there. There's a lot of casualties in there. I mean, he's covered in soot. I don't know where he came from. But he's going in there and he wants help. Hey, come on fellas. He was that inspirational. All right. I'm with you.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you just about got into the building after —
- George Wallace: Well, we were in and out of it, just in the doorway. I mean, you could see it was just like looking in a cave. I mean, it was just a blacked out burnt building.

Mark Schoepfle: From your picture there was still smoke pouring out.

George Wallace: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Right here. You don't see it good here. You can see there was a doorway like right around in here, where this fire truck is. And, where it's collapsed, it was a little ways down. That fire chief came out the door here and we were actually going in there. I mean, there was fire up in here but most of the fire is — there's an area where you can go into here. And, the fire department, you can see, they're not even on the scene yet.

George Wallace: They finally get here. This truck's coming up now and they brought trucks in this way and they knocked down a lot of this fire pretty quick. There was a lot of smoke coming out, but it wasn't like you were running into smoke so thick that you knew you had no chance of seeing your hand in front of your face. You looked at it and thought we can probably — you can probably make it in there.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes.

George Wallace: Maybe not but you thought you could. You got the sense that, yeah, you're going to choke a little bit but it's not probably an environment you can't completely survive it. And, the firemen were in it. They were coming out with their masks off. They were coughing and hacking, but it wasn't an entirely smoked environment that you couldn't go in and maybe make a rescue if somebody was in there. You know, we find out later that nobody in that area survived. It was just a fireball that went down there and did so much massive destruction. We wouldn't have found any survivors. But you didn't know that now.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

George Wallace: The military have a different type of code that they're not going to — they're going back if they even think somebody's in there. They're not leaving anybody behind, and the fire department came out and said, fellas, there's no survivors here. This guy was determined. There had to be survivors in that area. Now, he works in the Pentagon. I've only been in it a couple of times. And, only in the outer ring. I wasn't aware of how deep and how many rings and, you know, I knew there was a number of corridors through and, of course, that destruction went darn near to the middle. You know the outer ring, there's probably very little survival rate which is as far as we would have gone. Further in, in those rings, there probably could have been — obviously, there were people that survived. You know, there's some miracle stories about people that were in there.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. So, what happened — okay, at the end of the day you had escorted people and you were sort of getting there back and forth from what you were saying in the pictures, going back and forth from the site. You were doing some escorting.

George Wallace: Yes, we helped the fire department get over there. We escorted the joint — the Commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He flew into — he was out of town when this happened. He flew into Andrews Air Force Base and we motorcaded him to the Pentagon. I remember — that's an unusual — that's an unusual escort for us. We don't — the Joint Chiefs of Staff, they don't get motorcycle escorts. Normally they fly and, I guess, they just hop a helicopter and fly over, but the ironic thing, you know, everybody calls me because I'm the commander. I'm the guy who sets them up. I set up the escorts.

END OF SIDE 1

START OF SIDE 2

George Wallace: Yeah, this fella, he wears civilian clothes like an agent and he's assigned to General Shelton and I remember him coming up to me on the tarmac and he said "hey, you've got six motorcycles here, a lead car and a tail car because General Shelton, he doesn't like a lot of fanfare or anything. Can we tone it down?" I said this is what you get. You get the full package. He's really — he doesn't like this stuff. And I said has he seen the Pentagon? And he goes no. I said well, you know what, when we go over that hill on the 14th Street Bridge and he sees the Pentagon, he's going to forget all about the six motorcycles and that car. Believe me. And the guy laughed and said, yeah, you're probably right. So, we got him there and, of course, there's never anything said about he had too much fanfare coming in there. There was virtually no traffic. The city kind of cleared out. That was one of the only times probably — it's the only time I can ever recall that we went ahead and changed the direction of Rock Creek Parkway, not waiting for rush hour. We've never done that before. And we've always been wary of doing it because of people coming in the wrong way, have a head-on accident because it's normally two-way traffic and it's one-way traffic during rush hour only. Well, we started running out of the city at 1:00-1:30 running traffic one way out of the city since — I remember shutting down and the city was kind of evacuated. That's what the motor mill pool are tied up with most of the time was traffic. Let's get traffic out of the city and then our escorts. And, really there was no traffic to contend with between Andrews Air Force Base and the Pentagon. And, later in the day the city was like a ghost town. Also, the next day and a couple of days later. It was that eerie sense of, you know, that there's nobody around.

- George Wallace: I remember driving into work the next day coming down 270 and they have the big information signs and it said “Major Incident in City, Stay Away” or something like that, I’m thinking. That’s putting it mild.
- Mark Schoepfle: I was going to say, major understatement in the city. Right. What happened then in the days afterwards?
- George Wallace: There wasn’t a lot of visitation downtown as I recall. I don’t think people — that was a Tuesday — I don’t think people started coming back to work until the next week. You know, you know that the President and his staff wanted the country to run as normal right away but it took a few days for people to start coming back and they — it was eerie because there was no air traffic. You know, you’re used to planes coming in International every two minutes and there’s nothing except maybe some jets flying over. Very unusual to see F16’s flying over the city. So, visitation downtown was nonexistent. There was no way to get to the city. Tourists weren’t coming here. People who worked here weren’t coming here. So, the next few days was pretty quiet.
- Mark Schoepfle: What were you doing during those times? Was it just normal patrolling or what?
- George Wallace: Yes, normal patrolling. We were certainly beefed up. The next few days we stopped a lot of trucks — Ryder trucks. We stopped a lot of trucks. Anybody that had a truck that was coming into the city across the 14th Street Bridge or in on the TR Bridge, they got stopped and they got searched. That’s what we did a lot of then.
- Mark Schoepfle: Did you find anything of interest?
- George Wallace: No, no. There were a lot of lookouts. It seemed — who knows where they even originated — but it seemed like it if you were of Middle Eastern descent and you were in a panel truck that weekend, you’re getting tossed. It wasn’t a good time to be moving anywhere if you had a nice tan or something. And that’s, you know, we didn’t discriminate that way. Any truck that came in we stopped. We had that luxury. We had the luxury of no trucks in the park areas. So, any truck that comes in is susceptible of being stopped anyway and cited and turn around and gotten out of the core area downtown. The Park Service doesn’t allow commercial vehicles and trucks in their areas. There’s very few exceptions. You know, for construction and things like that. So, we had that benefit that say the city police doesn’t have.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right. Another thing you were mentioning was that you weren’t sure how you found this out but when you picked up the Joint Chiefs of Staff fellow, they already knew about you coming and —

- George Wallace: Oh, I talked to them on the phone. I just didn't know how he got my number, you know. But he did. And it was, "hey, I know you guys don't usually escort us, but can you help us out here." Certainly. That's — and if he called today and asked for it, we would do it. But, if he had called on September 9th, we would have done it for him. But, certainly on the 11th everybody was scrambling to get that extra bit of assistance through things.
- Chuck Smythe: But routinely then you're perfectly prepared to provide these services to people like that?
- George Wallace: Yeah, we do. After the 11th, we picked up the Vice President. He normally did not have a motorcycle escort. Only the President did, and dignitaries when they come in, but the Vice President was always provided a lead police car and a tail police car by the city police. Well, after the 11th, he picked up full motorcade package. So, we end up escorting the Vice President every day now. He still has that motorcycle escort package with his little entourage. So, not only do we do the President, we do the Vice President, and we know we're going to do the Vice President every day. He drives down to work and he goes home. The President could stay in the House for days on end but the Vice President we do every day.
- Mark Schoepfle: You all do every day?
- George Wallace: We split it with the city department. There's three metropolitan motorcycles and three park police motorcycles. And, that's the way it's been almost forever. Back probably Eisenhower, you know. Roosevelt probably — as long as there's been motorcycle escorts. It's been three city, three park.
- Mark Schoepfle: I see. Well, then what was going on? I mean this was the first several days. Things were kind of eerie. There was a lot of escorting.
- George Wallace: Things got back to normal. You know, we're a department that — I mean — the motorcycle unit is tasked with a lot of selective enforcement. Writing tickets, radar, red lights, things like that. And probably — and historically, when it gets cold, you write less tickets. It's tough. You don't have a benefit of a heater. It's tough to write tickets in the winter. You might write a few now and then. But, in the summertime when you can stand out in the sun and it's warm, you can knock out quite a few tickets. There's no less violators in the winter than in the summer. It's just a matter of how much you can handle.

- George Wallace: But I have to say after the 11th it was tough to even stop people to write them tickets. You obviously have to write the violations, but to sit out there with the radar stop team and stop people, you know. I'd stop a couple. I'd walk back and talk to the other guys and I go "I'm just not in the mood to do this." Everybody would go, yeah, we agree. Nobody wanted — you just didn't — it wasn't that they didn't want to work. It was just — you just weren't in the mood to hand people a hundred-dollar ticket after our country was just attacked.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, that's what I was thinking, yeah.
- George Wallace: It was just a tough thing to do. Now, it's getting back to normal. It's not back to — I mean if I compared stats now against last year, we might still be down. So, and that could be because we're doing more escorts. Half the time we just go out and do selective enforcement, but it certainly has had a psychological effect. You know, stopping a guy with three flag stickers on his car. You know, it's tough. We're all on the same team.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: You save it for the flagrant violator who's always out there instead of the guy going 10 miles over the speed limit, 15 miles over the speed limit. Not hurting anybody.
- Mark Schoepfle: Did you what? If you stopped them, did you tend to just give them warnings or something?
- George Wallace: Yeah, but then you just got to the point — you're just standing — and it wasn't just me. It was like I just don't feel like doing this right now.
- George Wallace: And, that was within the first month. September to October, it was tough to — it was just tough to do.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- George Wallace: Like I said, things had gotten more back to the norm. Of course, we were still very alert to things downtown and it will never be the same. That's for everybody's life. Things are never going to be the same. But it's getting back to normal again.
- Mark Schoepfle: When you say you're alert to things that are going on downtown, is it something — have you all been into training of this kind of thing together or these are just things that in your own mind's eye — for example.
- George Wallace: You know, a good example would be, say, you see the same guy sitting in the same place every day, you know. Well, now you may ride by this guy. He sits on a park bench down along the river, down near the Pentagon or Arlington Cemetery and you might just think it must be his lunch break or he's in a routine.

George Wallace: Well, now you would challenge people and go up and talk to them. Not so much challenge them with — go up and strong arm them. Maybe go up and engage in a conversation and try to figure out, you know, I see you here every day. You know what, what's up. You know, is it your lunch break? You can develop things that way. Well, maybe it is just this guy's lunch break and he works right across that bridge at TR Island and likes to sit there every day. Or maybe he's evasive in his answers or maybe he's counting planes and maybe he's timing planes and maybe he's looking at how often a police car goes by or a truck or something like that. You know, that's the thing we have to do. When you see something that, you know, you have to rely on that sixth sense. That after years of police work, everyone develops it and you can, you know, some people call it profiling. That's the hot word for years.

George Wallace: You know what? And, there's no doubt there's a lot of policemen that profile. Sometimes I'm looking at somebody or something or a car and I look at it and I go something's not right there. Something's wrong with that. Can I articulate it on a stand? No, no I can't, but you know what, when I've had that instinct: until I follow it until they do something wrong or I make a stop, or I've had that role too often. Whether it's — they just don't even have a driver's license and when they look at you, they look at you with that nervous look. Oh, look, the police you know, and now we have to be more aggressive with our sixth sense with that. I got that feeling. You certainly have to be able to articulate it in police work that — if you're a good policeman — that's never really a problem.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. Can you give me an example just as an illustration?

George Wallace: I don't know. I mean, sometimes you ride by people and they just give you a look like they don't belong here. They look nervous. You know, you might just ride by — now here I am on a motorcycle and you're a lot closer to that driver next to you and you don't have that car window and the care. You're out in the elements and you look, and maybe they give you a look like that nervous look or they don't look at you at all. You go by. One hundred percent of the people look over at you. Some smile, some wave they give you a nod. You're a motorcycle. You're making a lot of noise. They look at you. When somebody goes by and you look at them and they don't look at you and you stare at them, they've done something wrong. A lot of times it's when people are speeding.

Mark Schoepfle: I was wondering, yeah.

- George Wallace: And I pull up next to them and I just stare at them. And, they just went through a yellow light and I just stare at them. They won't look at you. Well, sometimes you ride up to somebody and you look at them and they don't look at you, they've done something wrong. You just don't know what it is yet.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: You know, so. Maybe something like that. You know, you just don't know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Having been a speeder, I was just wondering. A couple of times I don't look up either.
- George Wallace: And it doesn't have to be in traffic. It could be you walk into the park and a guy looks at you and turns and starts to walk out. For no, you know, it doesn't seem like he's finishing a conversation or doesn't — abnormally looks at you and turns and starts to walk away. You know, something like that. It may have nothing to do at all with terrorism or, you know. But now, we're tasked with looking for that too. Not just normal street thugs and crime. Now we have to be vigilant of additional attacks of monuments. I wasn't real concerned at first because you hit the Washington Monument and knock it down. You're not going to kill a lot of people, you know. You hit the Pentagon; you're going to do some damage. It's a miracle more people weren't killed than were. It's a miracle that more people weren't killed in New York than were killed, hitting buildings. You know, you hit the monument. It's not an office building. You know, you hit that USA building over in Crystal City, you're gonna kill a lot more people and that seems to be what they want to do. Although you can never rule out, hey, we're going to knock down a monument. It's a slap in the face. So, you have to be vigilant in watching those things and people want you to be. When they come down to visit Washington, they want to know that you're out there. You're out there watching for them.
- Mark Schoepfle: Have you — have any instances come up like that?
- George Wallace: I mean, people will leave a backpack on a wall and they might forget it, or they might put it down here and now they're walking over here. Totally innocent but now you gotta, you know — you leave a backpack somewhere, you raise some suspicions.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- George Wallace: Things like that. Nothing that's really panned out, you know. I was watching TV the other night and they recovered another video tape. On that video tape was one of the things which really concerned me was an attack on a motorcade and that's right up our alley.

- George Wallace: That's something we do all the time. And we're not going to fend for them being in an armored limo.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right, right.
- George Wallace: But we're not — I'd like to think we're probably not the principal target either. You knock down a couple of motorcycles, you can make a mess of a motorcade. There's always a little collateral damage. But, after I saw that on the news the other night, and as long as I've been doing this job, I take those escorts very seriously as, you know, they can allow you to sleep. You do them so routinely, but you have to be — and I always have been — very vigilant as to watching people in the street and, you know, we're talking since '92, not like September 9th. As long as I've been doing it, I look at rooftops. I look at bridge overpasses. I look at the guy standing on the sidewalk. And, these guys are trained to do that to. So —
- Mark Schoepfle: One thing I didn't get back to was on communication and coordination. Was there — in the motorcades and all this other kind of thing that you were doing when you were mentioning the immediate responses of that day, where was your communication coordinated out of? Was it, say, out of Shenandoah or was it out of here?
- George Wallace: Out of our headquarters.
- Mark Schoepfle: Out of your headquarters here?
- George Wallace: Yeah, everything went through that.
- Mark Schoepfle: I see. Has anything changed as far as — I mean you mentioned that you're more vigilant and more aggressive in looking at some of these novel, unusual situations. Are there other things like that that have changed?
- George Wallace: No, no.
- Mark Schoepfle: Looking back on this then, are there things that sort of lessons learned from this? Things that will be done differently from now on?
- George Wallace: I mean we've made tremendous changes in the security of the monuments and the memorials as far as additional barriers to prevent truck bombs from getting closer to them. Little bit more into screening. The magnetometers for the Washington Monument whenever it reopens. And I'm not involved in any of that. I mean, I hear about it being on this job. There's other people — those commanders are involved in that but as far as this operation changing, I'd like to think we were, you know, we take it seriously enough that our escorts having changed at all. We're doing it the same way we did it last year. Maybe some guys that got lulled to sleep because they do so many — got a wakeup call, you know. I mean, that can happen.

- George Wallace: Every once and a while you — yeah, yeah, take the President to the Mayflower again and here we go. Turn left here. Turn right there. He pulls in. But for the most part I think once you start on the motorcade, you get that adrenalin. You got to be up to speed. And, I don't think — we're not doing things any differently. We're not going faster. We're not zigzagged, and we haven't changed our routine.
- Mark Schoepfle: Are these basic maneuvers?
- George Wallace: Yeah, even though we don't do any of that. Secret Service, they alter their routes a lot more than they did prior to September 11th. They change their routes more frequently but we just, you know, we're just the transportation. They tell us the route. We don't make it up. We, meaning Secret Service. They may rely on us for, you know, you might want to change this route because there's construction there or this is a better route. But, ultimately, they dictate what the route is. So, I don't think we've changed.
- Mark Schoepfle: Would you — oh, go ahead, I'm sorry.
- George Wallace: If not, people may be a little bit more vigilant about looking at the downtown area.
- Mark Schoepfle: Would you like to see any changes?
- George Wallace: Oh, yeah. Communications between — I'm going to go into how archaic the communication is between departments but there's got to be a way that I can talk to Secret Service and D.C. Police. All three agencies in one motorcade. We need to all be able to communicate quickly, and we don't have that right now. And, I've listened to every time there's a new Secret Service Director come and say we're going to do this. We're going to get that fixed. It hasn't happened yet. We make do but we're lucky a lot of times. That's one thing I'd like to see.
- Mark Schoepfle: So anyway, you'd like to have more communication?
- George Wallace: Better communication, yeah.
- Mark Schoepfle: Better communication. What's another?
- George Wallace: I'd like more people.
- Mark Schoepfle: How many do you have now?
- George Wallace: There's twenty-three officers. I'm — I am authorized for thirty. Thirty and three sergeants. I'd like to see what it would be like to have thirty and three sergeants but with people that take leave, sick leave, annual leave, your days off, court — things like that. Twenty-three people get eaten up very quickly.

George Wallace: And, when you're tasked with an escort in the middle of traffic changes, which takes five people to do these changes, that's eight motor men tied up. I only have seven working which means a guy from day work has to stay.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, right.

George Wallace: Or a guy from evenings has to come in early. So, it'd be nice to have the personnel. Equipment-wise, we're not doing bad. I mean, it's a motorcycle. There's not a lot you can do, you know. They can't get us better ones. I've got the best. Harley Davidson is probably the best motorcycle. Can't get a better one. We're dabbling in getting better gear for ourselves. We're exploring heated suits now because — and that goes back to September 11 because since then our officers have been out longer.

END OF TAPE