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September 11, 2001 Oral History Project, 2001-2004



Jerry Zanjac
January 30, 2002

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

INTERVIEWEE: Jerry Zanjac
Maintenance (Woodcrafter)
Statue of Liberty National Monument
(Interview No. 26)

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INTERVIEW DATE: January 30, 2002

PLACE: Ellis Island
Statue of Liberty National Monument

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START OF TAPE

- Mark Schoepfle: Jerry Zanjac, January 30, 2002 and the interviewer is Mark Schoepfle. Jerry, the first question I'm going to ask you is, from the moment you were aware that something had happened, what went on?
- Jerry Zanjac: Well, it's interesting, you know, when you say what happened because the initial thing — the initial thing that I saw was — actually the first thing is that we heard a boom. Now just a little background what we're doing. I'm in the building and utilities division. And we were working at Liberty Island and we were in the process of excavating a sewer pipe that we were going to replace. So, our crew was out there at approximately 7:30 on a typically normal day. And, you know, we were excavating this pipe and — and we're standing kind of on the promenade between the administration building and the restaurant building. Basically, our backs are turned to the World Trade Center. And we hear an uncharacteristic deep, not so much loud, but a deep, resonating boom.
- Jerry Zanjac: And we have heard, you know, quote-unquote, explosions or similar kinds of sounds in the past because somewhere in Jersey or somewhere, you know, industrial or commercial or something is going on then you'll hear something, you know. But this was kind of a little different, you know. And we kind of looked at each other and just basically said, gee, that's — that's different, you know, and not automatically but slowly we kind of were curious and we started looking around and then we looked toward the World Trade Center which is very prominent, you know, on the horizon. You know, the vista from Liberty Island looking towards Lower Manhattan is very spectacular, very attractive. Most — it's a good picture-taking spot, you know, so we have this beautiful panoramic view of Lower Manhattan. The World Trade Center is very prominent.
- Mark Schoepfle: I've taken pictures from there. Yeah, I know what you mean.
- Jerry Zanjac: Yeah. And you can't help but look in that direction. You can't help but kind of always see the World Trade Center, you know, dominate the skyline there. But what we see is a plume of black smoke coming basically out of the western side of the World Trade Center building, which is tower one, kind of as we're looking at the left most tower. And we know this is something, you know, something serious, something extraordinary because, you know, something in that amount of smoke was substantial so we see something. And —
- Jerry Zanjac: Now we're basically craftsmen, tradesmen, you know, blue-collar types and when we look at that, or when we looked at it the immediate reaction was, you know, gee, something exploded, you know, something went off in the World Trade Center.

Jerry Zanjac: And we started speculating and we said, wow, what could that be? You know, a substantial amount of smoke immediately. And right away we're thinking that there's some kind of mechanical problem or catastrophe, you know, an explosion, maybe something in air conditioning or something. And we couldn't figure it out, you know. So, we were standing there speculating this and kind of proceeding and we figured, well, you know, it's an explosion, I mean, things happen in big cities and all and —

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: It wasn't normal, but it wasn't abnormal. So, we knew something was up. And, you know, we weren't going to run and — you know. But we see that the smoke is pluming and everything. Myself, personally, the first thing that I thought to do was to go into our dispatch office because we had installed surveillance cameras around the perimeter and different parts of the statue and the area. And I knew that there was a camera or several cameras that had zoom lens that were able to zoom in on that. So, I said, hey, you know, maybe we can go in and get the dispatcher to focus one of the cameras just out of curiosity, you know. And so, I go inside and the person at the dispatch at the time was a policewoman. In fact, it was the spouse of one of my colleagues at the time and she was on the telephone. So, when I walked in, I was going to ask her, her name was Brunilda Fonseca and I was going to ask Bruni to focus the camera on the World Trade Center and then we can kind of get a little better view.

Jerry Zanjac: But she was heavily into this telephone conversation and — she didn't really kind of brush me off, but she kind of didn't really hear me, and I didn't want to interrupt her or anything, but I did overhear her talking to somebody and the word airplane came out. And then I said, oh, wow, yeah, that could be a possibility — so airplane.

Jerry Zanjac: So, you know, my mind flashes back to different kinds of scenarios and one of the more famous ones was the military plane that flew into the Empire State Building back in I think the '50s it was. I can't remember exactly the date, but it was one of the few times that an airplane actually flew into one of the skyscrapers here in New York or anywhere in the country. And I said, well, you know, planes, yeah this could be one of those one in a thousand or one in a million or whatever. Then I, you know, started thinking a little more extravagantly or exotically and I said, well, you know, maybe somebody flew the plane in or something like that. But who knew? You know, no hard information.

Jerry Zanjac: And then I kind of did — now she got into some serious tunnel-vision type of thing. You know, she just mentally kind of really didn't focus on what I was saying.

- Jerry Zanjac: I just said, listen, you know, maybe you could put one of the zoom cameras on it, you know. And I walked out and coincidentally where the interpretation rangers have their office, it's a little mezzanine in our administration building there, and I overhear a local TV channel. You know, and after a while you get to know people's voices and you kind of know it's one of the — there's actually Channel Seven, ABC, Eyewitness News. So, I kind of overhear this announcer's voice and I walk up to the mezzanine and one of the park rangers was sitting there and there it is. You know, already there's the news helicopter or something in the sky. And, you know, with the wonders of technology you have this bird's-eye view. There it is this gaping hole.
- Jerry Zanjac: And the announcer's talking about an airplane and such and speculation and this and that. I can't remember exactly, but it was kind of the stuff, you know, how the response was, and police are on their way and fire department. And I think they were interviewing actually some eyewitnesses and they had the voiceovers of, you know, the conversation, you know, the news reporter and an eyewitness explaining that he saw an airplane fly into the building.
- Jerry Zanjac: Couldn't make out the plane, you know, but I kind of counted the floors and I noticed that this thing is encompassing like about eight or nine floors of the building. And I said, wow, you know, fairly big plane. So, I'm thinking, gee, you know, anything from an accident to deliberate to who knows what, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, the fellows outside, I mean, basically didn't know. So then — and chronologically, you know, from the time we were out there and we heard the explosion to the time I left and walked into the administration building which is only like 30 or 40 yards, and that was about 5 minutes. Then spending a minute or two there. And then I might have spent about five minutes or so watching television. So, this is already about 10, 15 minutes after the fact. And I go back outside, and I walk over and look at a major plume of smoke, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then I go over and those boys I heard that there was an airplane that flew into the building. And, you know, typical reaction, you know, banter and everything. You know, wow, what kind of airplane and this and that. And so, we're standing there kind of speculating and the police officer Bruni, I think, she had come out and somebody had substituted her at the dispatch.

Jerry Zanjac: But she went into the restaurant and about that time she had come out with a few coffees. Apparently, she went in and bought us a round of coffees. Her husband was working with us, Hector, and myself and two other guys from our department. You know, so there was about four or five of us out there. So, as she came out with a tray of coffees, and there's a little parapet wall and she had put it down there.

Jerry Zanjac: And we're standing there and then all of a sudden from I guess the opposite end of Manhattan which is kind of Staten Island, New Jersey, looking kind of south or so, and there's a canopy that's over the dock and all of a sudden, we hear this roar. And it's an obvious roar of an airplane, you know, jet engines, very familiar. And anybody who's been near an airport or going to an airport, you know how substantially loud or indifferent the roar of a jet engine sounds when you're at an airport or when you see planes taking off or landing and very close.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: It's a deafening, you know, very, very ground shaking kind of roar. And just out of nowhere we start hearing this roar and it just got louder and louder and louder. And then all of a sudden, we turn around towards the direction of the sound, which is looking right opposite Manhattan. And then coming from over the canopy, just appearing out of nowhere there's an airplane on a very steep bank, very low. It's one of the things you noticed — or I noticed that it was very loud and very low, you know. And usually low for any of the normal flight patterns or such because planes are always flying over the sky, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: We have Newark Airport very close to us and, you know, the approaches to La Guardia and the approaches to JFK sometimes and, you know, it's normal every day, but planes are never, never, ever that low.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: So, we see this thing screaming on a bank flying right over our heads, right over the canopy. Close enough where you feel like you can touch it, you know. I saw the under-bottom of it and all and it's just streaking very quickly. It just flies right over our heads, you know. And we see this thing and we look, and we turn around and all of us kind of follow this plane and, like I said we have this panoramic view of Lower Manhattan, and this plane flies over and it's on a bank. And it's flying away from us, so the illusion is that it's just going slow-motion.

- Jerry Zanjac: Because you really can't tell speed when something's coming directly at you or directly away from you. So, it's kind of flying directly away and it's very slow and just angling and, you know, the Doppler effect and everything just —
- Jerry Zanjac: So, we're watching it and I don't know how far we are from the Statue of Liberty to the tip of Manhattan, but it's a couple of miles. So, it takes several seconds, or I don't know — so like slow-motion this plane is just flying away and it's just going towards Manhattan. And you just can't — can't tell exactly if it's going straight at something.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, my initial reaction that this was a military plane that was doing a flyby. You know, it's the only thing that I can logically think at the time, you know. I couldn't really make out whether it was commercial plane. And it was just too fast and everything's happening so quickly, you know. And so, I see this plane and it's going. The next thing you know it's flying on an angle. First it was bright silver and all. Now it's a dull gray and everything, just flying. And you could see that it's flying kind of in the vicinity of the World Trade Center so I'm saying, well, you know, if it's going to fly by it's going to fly by.
- Jerry Zanjac: And the next thing you know, as it's coming closer, I mean, we hear some reaction so I don't know if it's myself or my colleagues or somebody saying, you know, what's that plane doing and is that another one? I said, I think it's a flyby and I said, well, damn what if that's another one? And the next thing you know, as it's going closer and closer, we're starting to realize that, hey, this might be another plane. And then a fraction of a second or so before it impacts, we see this plane really way too close and then all of a sudden, pow. It just goes, and it impacts, and because of the distance, because of that delay in sound traveling, you don't hear a thing. We just see the airplane disappear.
- Jerry Zanjac: And my reaction was that it was like something like a dart or something being thrown at a porous object and the building basically absorbed this airplane. The airplane just disappears. And it was on an angle and it leaves this diagonal imprint, you know, of the size of the plane. And we really didn't see any of the debris flying. And from the impact, the back end of the building, or from the impact which would be the north side and the east side, later on we saw that that's the area where things had blown out. But it was this very surreal, bizarre image of this airplane just disappearing into this building, into the World Trade Center, not just this building.

- Jerry Zanjac: And then the split second that occurred is the realization that — that, you know, this was another airplane, you know. And like anything, something that happens out of the ordinary, it's the sense of disbelief. The disbelief that, you know, am I actually seeing this? I mean, you know, you are, but it's like can this be? It's, can this be? Can this be happening? You know, this was extraordinarily malevolent, something bad. But you don't get — you know, until later you start really start thinking about it, you know. But this is bad.
- Jerry Zanjac: It wasn't gut wrenching yet, because you don't want to panic, you know. And it's so out of the ordinary that, you know, just you're stunned.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: And it's disbelief. And at the same time, it's like, wow, another one. And then it's like, oh s and oh f and all of these expletives, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: And it's like, this is war. You know, all of these reactions. I mean, you know, something from — everything from serious to like now oh, now God, what's going to happen, you know, this is war. This is not just an accident. This is deliberate and this is audacious, you know, ballsey.
- Jerry Zanjac: And now it's like — and then, you know, because of the distance, several seconds later we hear boom. You know, so that delayed reaction, and a sense of surreal, you know, we're spectating. We're watching this from a distance, you know. We don't put ourselves in that place yet, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, we kind of look at each other and it's like, uh-oh, now what are we going to do, you know. No panic sets in, but people are definitely serious, you know. There's this somber mood and I think only a handful of seconds later one of the police sergeants who kind of run, security and, you know, in the pecking order of things, they're going to be front line, and certain — certain behavior, you know. And we've had some drills for certain occurrences and emergencies and evacuations. But they haven't been done on really the scale we think should have been done. You know, there's some obvious problems if somebody has a heart attack at the crown, things like that, you know. How do you really effectively do things, you know? We've prepared, but really not — nobody has been totally satisfied with preparations.
- Jerry Zanjac: There was a fellow who hang-glided a power parasail in August, you know, got hung up. And that was an extraordinary situation. And, we had to move a lot of people and it kind of gave us a good, real-time drill to do certain things, in extraordinary times, but still lacking.

- Jerry Zanjac: You know, somehow in the back of your mind you always think about the what-ifs. What if something was more malevolent? This is a hang-glider, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: But anyhow, the park — the police sergeant basically — and there were many more people now on the promenade. Some people had gone down all the way by the water as close as possible to look at Manhattan. But there was a slow realization amongst the crowd that something was wrong, something bad, you know, something serious and all.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then people started thinking about, well, gee, you know, what is the extent of this entire event. And are we more vulnerable. And then, you know, nobody really said, oh, the statue is going to be next, you know, but it kind of crosses your mind because we have been basically told on what high level of potential attack or, I mean, target. You know, the Statue of Liberty because of the nature of its — you know, it's like a spiritual entity, you know, for the world — for the United States, you know, freedom. I'll never forget the fact that in Tiananmen Square back in 1990 I think it was whenever, when the students came —
- Mark Schoepfle: When they had that uprising.
- Jerry Zanjac: — when they came where they had the uprising. When they came into that stadium or whatever it is, they had a mockup of the Statue of Liberty, of all things that they could have. Here they have a mockup, a symbol. They came in and carried this mockup of the Statue of Liberty. And they came in, you know, to make a statement.
- Jerry Zanjac: And very soon after that, whatever steps or whatever — they came in and they literally paved over thousands of dead people. So that — that stuck in my mind, you know, even before. I only started at the Park Service here in 1995, you know. But still from that point I was still very impressed by that image, that symbolism. And so now this whole symbolic thing with the Statue of Liberty and we always kind of knew we were up there. You know, a high-profile target and this and that with the White House, and other American icons and American landmarks.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then the police sergeant said, listen, I think it's time for all of us to gather our belongings and waste no time and let's get to the boat dock. We're going to evacuate this place. And within a couple of minutes, I guess as things were progressing on the police level and everything, you know, all of the emergency modes were coming into play and all. You know, park police probably — there were communications technology. People started talking, so whatever the chain-of-command and the communication chain is, you know. The park police were talking amongst themselves. The people called from Ellis Island.

- Jerry Zanjac: The staff boat was on its way, you know, so it only took a handful of minutes to get things in action.
- Jerry Zanjac: And everybody after 10 minutes or so we all kind of said, gee, I wonder when the next time I'm going to be here again, you know. It was uncertain future. Those images started coming into mind, you know, an uncertain future. What extent of, you know, what's going to happen? And we get to the boat dock and somebody had a transistor radio or something like that. And I can't remember exactly the words, but it was very short, and it was basically that another plane — or another one hit the Pentagon, and that was it. And that set a whole other set of images rolling, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: Now I'm thinking on a larger scale that this is a direct attack, you know, a premeditated, direct attack on America. The word terrorist or the image of terrorism or a nationality or something like that didn't come into mind yet. But I thought it was on a large scale. A sophisticated, you know, premeditated, organized, large scale — you know, they're taking American — our jetliners and crashing into American buildings.
- Jerry Zanjac: Now, when you attack, you know, the — this is another image, another symbol of America — the Pentagon, you know. It's almost like the Kremlin in Russia. You know, there's a foreboding, sinister image almost. It's not a benevolent image. It's a little more serious, morose, you know, somber, almost a malevolent image, the Pentagon. This is the seat of American military might, you know, with secrecy and all of this other stuff. I mean, you know, it wasn't the CIA, which is kind of another symbol and all, you know, definitely very malevolent, you know, sinister.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, with Iran-Contra and all these other things going on, but —
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: But anyhow, the Pentagon. So, when that happens, I'm really thinking now what, you know, now what is going to happen?
- Jerry Zanjac: And I can't remember exactly when I started thinking about my family. I have a wife and three children, 11, 16, and 20, you know. So, I can't really remember when my thoughts started going to what, you know, what am I going to do, you know, with my family? I have to get in touch with my wife, you know. No telephones here. Oh, cell phones — everybody, you know, boom all of a sudden cell phones are gone. So that line of communication was gone, you know. Standing at the dock and I said, well, I guess I have to wait until I get off the boat and get on to Ellis Island, you know, to get on to a telephone and everything. So —

Jerry Zanjac: But I think the mind is racing to all sorts of different scenarios and all different extremes and all different levels of complication and such, you know. Thinking the unthinkable started, you know, to come into play. And I think that's —

Mark Schoepfle: For example?

Jerry Zanjac: — well, the sense of somebody getting the drop on us, to use an American slang term, you know. Somebody beating us to the punch or somehow getting through and getting a sneak punch. But you know, thinking that in the past, you know, we've been basically to a large degree secure, invulnerable, you know, NORAD, a lot of this other sophisticated electronic sophistication, you know, super high efficiency military and all, you know. It was a relatively stable time, you know. The Soviet Union, the Cold War, that kind of, you know, fell out of the picture. Rogue nations still, but, you know, nobody on our level. I think, you know, the fact that we had outclassed everybody. If it ever came to, you know, like a boxing match to continue that sort of like, you know, metaphor.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: And, you know, we outclassed everybody. And I know that there's a sense of, you know, smugness and all, and this and that. But yet when it came down to it, nobody was really in our class except if there was some kind of concerted effort, you know, amongst the have-nots, amongst the little guys, you know. Maybe with the aid of some larger countries, you know. But thinking the unthinkable in terms of maybe somebody will be first, you know, first strike.

Jerry Zanjac: I wasn't really worried about nuclear war, or, you know, a nuclear attack that moment because I was wondering, is this just a bargaining chip? Is this just the first ante into a more serious threat?

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: Where they say, hey, look what we did, and this is only right now. This is only — how do you like our first shot? Wait till you see the second one. You know, things like that.

END OF SIDE 1

START OF SIDE 2

Jerry Zanjac: So, is this an opening parlay? Or, you know, is this leverage in negotiation? We just — and — you know, the buildings hadn't fallen down yet. This is just a sneak attack. And I'm thinking, whoever is doing this — I mean, this is sophisticated, not just — you know, I thought this was on a large scale, after when I hear the Pentagon building.

- Jerry Zanjac: And then very soon after that, a fourth plane crashes in Pennsylvania with reports that it was on its way to the White House. And I don't know if that time, or, you know, the evacuation of the White House. But that was the thing that entered my mind then, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: At the same time, you were basically thinking about kind of getting to your wife and children and what's going to happen there?
- Jerry Zanjac: As you know, I mean, there's an idle moment, you know. I mean, fertile imagination, you know, I'm thinking on different levels. I mean, you know, you go from focusing on what am I going to do right now, you know, when I get off the boat, and, you know, you have a couple of moments, you know. And people are talking, you know, I'm not alone.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, I'm not just alone in my thoughts, you know, people were talking back and forth, you know. At the same time, everybody was calm. One girl got a little bit emotional, you know, crying a little bit. But everybody kind of, you know — whoever spoke to her it was reassurance. You know, pull yourself together. Don't overreact. We don't know what's going on. You know, the fear of the unknown could be detrimental and all of that.
- Jerry Zanjac: Anyhow, but I do remember at that particular time when the Pentagon was hit, thinking of very bad consequences, you know, ultimate, you know, war. And I think it's part of living in New York City I've always felt — I've grown up in New York all my life, so even going way back, you know, in the '50s and '60s and '70s and, you know, the Cuban Missile Crisis and all the subsequent, you know, international crisis and stuff — I knew New York was Ground Zero. And I kind of think that, you know, Ground Zero may be — it's in its most popular — I don't know where the term originated, but I think it was something about being where an atomic bomb is going to be detonated.
- Mark Schoepfle: That's it.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, this is kind of a misnomer using this as Ground Zero, you know. It's convenient, but, you know, maybe in a purest sense I thought it shouldn't be called Ground Zero, but you know, not that it should or shouldn't. But that thing about living in Ground Zero has always kind of been imprinted on the back of my mind.
- Mark Schoepfle: Because of it being New York?

- Jerry Zanjac: Because of it being New York and the stock exchange. And a lot of American might and American resource, assets, and everything. It's New York, New York, New York. It's for want of better terms, you know, or it's been considered the capital of the world. Maybe not the biggest geographic city, but you know, it's New York. It's a unique place. Living there you can't help but think about being in the center of — or one of the centers, you know, for mankind, for civilization or whatever you want to call it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: But at the same time, knowing that if that thinking the unthinkable ever occurred you are in Ground Zero. And, you know, with the sophistication of weapons of mass destruction, you know, you're going to, you know, you're going to be there. And there's no way out. So, thinking about that I was like, jeez, you know, I'm here, you know, Ground Zero, yes, for real, you know. So that thing was kind of overshadowing my thoughts and —
- Jerry Zanjac: But we got on the boat and we got off at Ellis Island. And as soon as we got off the boat, they had made all the people stand in front of Ellis Island, the main canopy area. Security was already in place, so all the people were forbidden to enter the buildings. And I don't know what emergency procedures and protocols are there without our knowledge, you know. A lot of this is security so it's not common knowledge. But immediately they restricted everybody's movement. Stay here, don't go into the buildings, whatever it was, blah, blah, blah.
- Jerry Zanjac: I forget who it was, but one of our upper management people — a superintendent, deputy superintendent, I forget who it was but, you know, basically says, we're all going to be here, we're going to do a head count. We want to see who's around and we're going to have the staff boat stand by and whoever wants to go home, you know, you'll be able to go home. And whoever wants to stay and volunteer, you're welcome to because Ellis Island is a triage location. And we're going to be doing triage for victims at the World Trade Center because it was a forgone conclusion that there were going to be victims. And basically, they said whoever wants to stay, stand to the left. And whoever wants to go home, stand to the right and, you know, whoever had their vehicles in the parking lot, you know, now is the time.
- Jerry Zanjac: And so, at that point I didn't know what I was going to do immediately because I had to contact my wife and kind of square them away and see where she's at. And see if she had contacted the schools. And I had basically made a decision that I was going to stay and volunteer if I could.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: And then what happened was, is that I got to a telephone, I made arrangements and I said, listen, you know, okay unrestricted, but, you know, can I get to a telephone? Whatever it was, they made it convenient for everybody to do what they had to do. So, I got to a phone. Kind of surprised that all of the phones were like normal. Talked to my wife. She works at NYU hospital. And I told her what the situation was, you know, asked her what does she know and such. And by that time, she had gotten in touch with the elementary school and the youngest daughter was fine. Basically, they weren't making a big issue out of it, unnecessarily worrying children and, you know, panicking people and such. But everything was on a sort of wait-and-see basis. And got in touch with the middle daughter in high school. And the oldest one who's a sophomore in college I don't think we got in touch with her, but she had gotten in touch with my wife.

Jerry Zanjac: So, within a handful of minutes, everybody was accounted for and I told my wife, worst case scenario if there's martial law — now here I am thinking about different possibilities, you know, and in one or two incidents in the past we had two major blackouts here. And the first one in 1965 was very sudden and there wasn't much hysteria, much lawlessness, and it was kind of benign. It was one of those character moments, because in 1965, it was November and people behaved very well.

Mark Schoepfle: When the lights went out that time?

Jerry Zanjac: Right. The very first blackout in 1965, and the entire northeast and all. And it was about rush hour of November 9, I think it was, of '65, and for a day or so it was interesting to see, you know, no electricity. It kind of brought you back to some basics. Kind of made you think about the what-ifs. If there was no technology, none of the creature comforts and the things that we're accustomed with, you know. And a fertile imagination could kind of wonder about what would happen if things deteriorated, social order and this and that and the other thing. What would you do in circumstances and such?

Jerry Zanjac: So that happened, and then in '77 summertime in July when that happened there was a different kind of demeanor. There was a lot more lawlessness in certain areas of New York. You know, there were fires and a lot of looting of some shopping strips and things. And it was a little different. A little more sign of the times because there was more of a libertine attitude amongst people, you know. This was already after Vietnam and kind of the part of that social revolution of, you know, a little more freedom —

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

- Jerry Zanjac: — and permissiveness and such, you know, that's occurring or had occurred, different from 1965.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, I told my wife basically, listen, if things get — if things deteriorate, you know, if there's martial law, if they block the roads and, you know, we're on an island, you know, there's only bridges and tunnels. You know, they block those off, we're stuck, you know, with millions of people, you know, of all different kinds of attitudes and behavior, you know. And if there's panic, if there's unrest what are we going to do? I mean, I basically said, get down to the tip of Manhattan where we have our staff boat where the dock is. And if worse comes to worse, I'll get somebody to get you out of there. And from there, at least from Ellis Island, there's a bridge that we can walk onto the mainland and we're on the mainland. And I'm thinking of family and such, this and that.
- Jerry Zanjac: But then what happened was is that everything basically got squared away and there wasn't the sense of dread yet. There was sort of like uncertainty foreboding, you know, forbidding, foreboding. And then the staff boat — whoever had decided to stay, stayed. And then the people went to the parking lot and got to their cars and drove away. And I don't know how much. I'd say, about half of the staff decided to leave and half the staff stayed. And the medical people were setting up triage and the park police were doing their stuff. And we're kind of standing around and all of a sudden, we're looking toward Manhattan — you know, both buildings now are on fire. Not just plumes of smoke, but you know, the whole upper areas. Big columns of smoke and you could see flames shooting out, you know, just progressing and all of —
- Mark Schoepfle: About what time was this?
- Jerry Zanjac: So now we're at about almost 11 o'clock. I think we're at about — because chronologically the first plane was 8:48. The second plane was about 15, 18 minutes later, which is about 10 after 9:00. And then I think that the first building collapsed about 45 minutes or about an hour after the second plane hit.
- Mark Schoepfle: About 10.
- Jerry Zanjac: So now we're looking at about 10 o'clock. I forget what time it was. 10, 10:06, don't know the exact times, but around that time, about an hour afterwards.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay, well, I sort of just was getting an idea of what sort of the timeline we were like here, but yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you were saying that about half of them stayed and half of them took off.

Jerry Zanjac: Half of the people stayed. Half the people took off. What was interesting actually is that the staff boat took whoever lived in Manhattan and some of the people who lived in Brooklyn because I don't know if the word got out yet that all the bridges and tunnels were closed. But you know, people who wanted to leave or get closer to home decided that they were going to just get off the staff boat. And most of the Manhattanites or whoever it was that decided to leave — Manhattanites got off, you know. And right around the time the staff boat got to Battery Park — and this is not my personal account, but this is hearing from staff members, they got there about 10 minutes or so before the first building collapsed which was kind of unfortunate timing, you know. But who knew?

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: But as far as me personally, the staff boat had gone and we're standing in — we were standing near the seawall, so we were looking unobstructed view towards Manhattan. And we're looking at the buildings and we're sort of congregating and then again because of the fact that we're several miles away we have this sort of television perception. Seeing something like as if from a distance, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: And all of a sudden, just visually — to me it looked like a reverse cloud of column or smoke. Instead of the smoke rising, it was like smoke descending. And it looked very unusual. And I really didn't make out detail. I remember this as sort of being an overall thing. I kind of didn't look, scrutinize, you know, intently. So, I see this image and it was sort of like a reverse elevator of smoke. I saw the smoke slowly descending and then somebody yells out, oh my God, the building is collapsing.

Jerry Zanjac: And I think at that time it kind of affected me more — a sense of dread kind of came over me more so than when I saw the plane hit the building. And the realization that, you know, another plane hits the Pentagon and another plane crashes in Pennsylvania. So, who knows how many planes? Because again this image, or this sort of notion of the thinking the unthinkable. I mean, this building — everybody always thinks about skyscrapers collapsing, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: Huge buildings. What if, you know. And we live surrounded by big buildings, you know, if you live in Manhattan or in New York City. We have a huge amount. Most big urban centers have a good amount. You know, we have a huge amount. The Empire State Building, you know, even Woolworth Tower and stuff like that.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: The world's tallest building at its time. So, this thing is not supposed to happen. And now it's this realization, oh my God, the building is coming down. And I've been to the World Trade Center many, many times. There's a train station that goes to New Jersey, a path train — the port authority train. So, I take that on occasion to take a train to go upstate to a vacation home that I have.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: And in fact, I can't remember, I mean, if that was September 11, probably the Friday before — whatever date that was, 5, 6, I had gone to the World Trade Center to jump on a subway and go over to the train. So, I had just been there. And you can't help but notice, you know, the sheer mass of these two buildings. So anytime when you walk up to the Empire State Building and look up or when you walk up to certain buildings you just can't help but look. And because it's slightly downhill when you go from Broadway to the World Trade Center on Liberty Street, whatever it is. There's a slight incline and the sight of this plaza and all so you kind of have this perspective view. And then you see, and you look up and see this humongous, humongous buildings. Architecturally ugly, you know, there's always been that controversy.

Jerry Zanjac: And, you know, there's a symmetry with Lower Manhattan in the old days and with midtown Manhattan. You know, you had the skyscrapers kind of in the middle of the island, lower buildings on the side. And then when they made these World Trade Center you saw these two humongous just monoliths — these rectangles, you know, non-ornate and everything. I mean, there was this whole big controversy about the aesthetics of the World Trade Center. Right on the edge of the water. Kind of threw the skyline off and all. But you couldn't help sense how imposing these buildings were. Every time you go, and you see. And no matter where you look you always kind of capture it in your eye. It just —

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: The other thing that — similar to that is if you've ever been to Seattle, Washington. Mount Rainier was about 60 miles away.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

- Jerry Zanjac: And you go from sea level to 14,400 feet, you know. And you have this big volcano. There's a more ethereal sense to it because it's far away and because of the atmosphere. It looks like it floats at times, but, you know, you're just awestruck by it. It's just so imposing.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: And it's the same thing with the World Trade Center. No matter how — if you're nearby, you know, you always — it just captures your — your vision.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, when this building comes down, it really got me. The sense of horror or dread or misgiving or whatever it was. Because the first thing that comes into your head, is not only the building, but the humanity, the people. Now we're talking about thousands of people. And then you start visualizing. Now I hadn't visualized people falling out of the building and jumping. That's left to those people who were near. And I think one of our park people — we have those tourist view cameras, you know, you put a quarter in and they're binoculars and you can see something, you know, if you've been to Niagara Falls or Grand Canyon, wherever, they're all over.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, it's typical touring, for a quarter it gives you a couple of minutes. So, somebody had actually gone closer to the water and dropped some money in and looked and actually saw people falling, like jumping out.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: They didn't lose their cool or anything you know, but they just said, oh, I saw people jumping. And then when you — you know, you start visualizing these things. And this is before the collapse of the building and all. You know, you're just, oh God, you know, you're thinking, what's going on? And you're hoping that people are getting out of the building and you're wondering how many people are stuck and then you start thinking about the people on the floors above and — you know. But you're really not there yet, you know, because you're spectating this, you're from a distance.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, it's like — and several times people had said, ah, this is awful it's like watching something on television. I can't believe this is actually real. It's almost like it's fake, you know.

- Jerry Zanjac: The building starts coming down and I was just like really affected by that and thinking of the people. Now it's like, oh my God, the destruction, and the aftermath, you know. Everything is going to be — it's going to be chaos for who knows how long.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then who knows what's going to happen, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: Is this the end of the world? But these are fleeting things, you know. But now this triage is taking a whole different aspect. And after that I don't know what I was doing. I think — because I had volunteered, my brother-in-law actually is an EMS person here. He's a park ranger, but he's a prominent — he's in the main EMS thing. And —
- Mark Schoepfle: Your brother you said?
- Jerry Zanjac: My brother-in-law.
- Mark Schoepfle: Brother-in-law. Okay.
- Jerry Zanjac: My wife's youngest brother. And I started going over to the area by the boat docks where they were setting up the triage and that's when the park police and the emergency medical people started going into action. And I figured it was time to do something. So, I got involved with setting up. And it was just a matter of letting people direct me or other people, go down to get this, go and get this, do you know where so and so is, where such and such a place is? So, we started going and just grabbing anything that was remotely related or directly related to setting up emergency medical triage and — you know. Because we knew that we were going to get — now we knew that there were going to be potentially, because now we know — but at that time we knew that there were going to be casualties.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, this is where it's like, you know, let's get ready. So, for the next hour or so, whatever it was, it was just a matter of doing what could be done to organize. I didn't have trained medical experience, so I wasn't going to go in there and jump in. So, I just basically dedicated myself to support. And being in the building and utilities, you know, we're kind of in that — in that niche of, you know, knowing the buildings, being a hands-on, more physical. So, it was just a matter of waiting to see what happens and just being available.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, could we stop that right there at that thought, because we're about to end. We got about eight minutes to go on this tape. So, what I'd like to do is change that tape for just a moment.

Jerry Zanjac: Sure.

END OF TAPE 1

START OF TAPE 2

Mark Schoepfle: Okay, you were saying that you sort of had a niche because you were — because of being in buildings you had a — you knew the buildings well. And —

Jerry Zanjac: Right.

Mark Schoepfle: — and therefore, you could be — you could have a more hands-on, physical presence. Tell me more in detail what that means.

Jerry Zanjac: There was a lot — yeah — I guess basically here, a lot of the staff is specialized, you know, you have the museum staff, you have the interpretation staff, the park police and such, you know. And they don't get their hands dirty. So — and that's not a, you know, a putdown. I'm just saying basically, you know, they're not like hands on for certain things, you know. They're kind of more specialized like I say and all. And I didn't expect them to be capable of doing certain things, thinking in certain ways. So that if they, you know — a perfect example, because the medical staff or, I'll call them medical staff, and these are the two or three bona fide emergency medical technicians, some of the first responders which are basically first-aid people and some people who had some medical experience. They had some sense of what is necessary in a logistics way. So, a perfect example was, that there was a fire — a source of water needed because they were going to have to hose down people because of chemicals. You know, the potential for people being, you know, covered with chemicals, you know, jet fuel —

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: — or whatever it was, so to be decontaminated. Now you're outside. I mean, you're not going to go and say, oh, I have a — you know, you have to find a water source. You have to bring the water to where they needed it. We have that capability. So that it was nothing for me to go and not only did I know, but I said, well, you know, we have water over there, we need it over here, we're going to have to bring it, hoses, whatever. What kind of hoses? Where are they? I have to go here, you know, so things like that. Didn't hesitate — somebody says, we need a water source — you know, an EMS guy.

- Jerry Zanjac: So, it was almost like a spontaneous thing to go and wherever we have hoses. Then we found out, oh, there's a fire hydrant there. Well, let's go get a fire hose, you know. There are fire stations around, this and that, you know. Okay. We got a hose; we need a nozzle. Oh, got to go and get a nozzle, you know, those kind of things.
- Jerry Zanjac: The restaurant people, when they get deliveries because the trucks are at one end and the restaurant is at the other end, in the basement they have these dollies. So, I started thinking — well, some practical thinking I think is a good way.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, hand trucks, dollies, that kind of thing for hauling?
- Jerry Zanjac: Yeah. So, I said, you know, if we're going to have people to take from the boat to the triage areas, you know, some people are going to be on stretchers. Some people might not be mobile. We might have to put people if there's not enough stretchers — if we have too many people and not enough stretchers, let me take these dollies, put them on the elevator, bring them up, put them outside. If you need them, fine. If you don't, you know. So, things like that.
- Jerry Zanjac: Water, you know, there was some locked-up water. I went and I got permission from the park police to cut a chain if necessary because there were cases and cases of bottled water for people, you know. For smoke inhalation or for whatever needs. So, we kind of figured we have a certain amount of practical knowledge, some logistic knowledge, you know, some native intelligence and common sense. And, you know, we figured we'd fill that void. There was enough people already putting boxes of bandages together. But these were only certain things that are necessary and in a larger picture a lot of things were necessary. So, we were doing a little more broader thinking and stuff like that. So that's where we kind of, you know, fell in.
- Mark Schoepfle: I'm particularly intrigued by that I've got to admit to you, because I'm a — like I'm the fire marshal on our floor. So, let's put it this way, I'm very familiar with what I don't know which is quite a bit. And that's why I'm intrigued with this kind of general knowledge, because that's a kind of a knowledge that's not going to be in the administrative books. It's not going to be any rules or guidelines some place. It's going to be stuff people know. And they know what to do when the time comes. And that's your situation.

- Jerry Zanjac: And that's also I think specific with just the nature of the person. There are some people who are practical minded and there are some people who are not, you know. There are some people who are, quote-unquote, all thumbs. And there are some people who are just coordinated, gifted, native intelligence, I mean, these are just faculties and individual characteristics, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Could you give me an example?
- Jerry Zanjac: But at the same time, we're — you know, our division, you know, basically all of us volunteered to stay.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: None of us went home, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: That's significant in and of itself.
- Jerry Zanjac: Right. Yeah. And at the same time when — I remember one thing distinctly too is right before anything the park police got the volunteers together and it wasn't a pep talk, but it was just a little talk about, you know, we're expecting people, you know. We're going to have casualties. We're going to have to segregate, you know, do the triage. What I found — I don't know if the word comforting but satisfying was, is that people fell into certain roles, some by — by their professional position, some by their personality. So that we didn't have too many leaders, you know. The natural leaders were the common sense, the police sergeants, the EMS people, you know, the people who were medical professionals, security professionals, the administrative staff who were in charge, you know, management.
- Jerry Zanjac: You didn't have too many people giving orders unnecessarily. People who were not, quote-unquote, in a leadership position, if there was a practical point or an idea or something, it wasn't, you know, a vote by committee. It was, you know, do it, good idea, yes or no we don't need it, you know. If I went up to the EMS guy and said, listen, George, what else? He would say, well, we need more stretchers or we need more whatever it was — I forget exactly specifically, but it was — the basic idea was that it was satisfying and yet, you know, I mean, we weren't under high stress yet. But it was in this planning, whoever was in charge took charge. Whoever dedicated themselves to doing certain things did them, you know. I didn't see too many people standing around. One or two kind of, you know, there, maybe they were uncertain about what to do, you know. But people reacted and acted — some according to position, to their role, you know. And we didn't have chaos.

- Jerry Zanjac: And then when the people did start showing up, there was a orderly disorder, you know. It didn't run like a fine timepiece, you know, where every single person had a specific role. But it wasn't like 30 people rushed to do one thing and there weren't enough people to do other things, you know, so there was a good flow. So, a handful of people went to take people off the boats because we didn't have, you know, specifically designed craft to get injured people off. I mean, there was a couple of park police boats where, you know, people have to step off the boat, and there was a ramp and they got off the ramp and this and that. I forget where I was. I kind of just went and tried to fill a void if there was a void, you know. So, I was primarily setting up.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then when the people came, there was enough — I saw there was enough people to take care of the injured. We had a lot of non-injured that we had to steer to another area. They set up an area for the non-injured so that they could be processed, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: And luckily there wasn't this humongous rush of people because boats came whenever. And we did only — we might have had only 2,000 people show up totally during the approximate four or five hours of the peak which was about from 11:30, 12'ish to about 4 o'clock. And we were expecting a heck of a lot more people. So, we couldn't determine why there weren't so many people, you know. And as it turns out there were very few injured from the collapse of the buildings. You were either outright dead, or you were either out alive.
- Mark Schoepfle: You were either dead or okay.
- Jerry Zanjac: Basically.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, so you were either dead, or you made it out and got away, or, you know, you got to a local hospital. Because most of the hospitals — my wife was up at NYU, 34th Street, you know, relatively far away — very little. The only difference being and something that is another aspect of this is that the New York Medical Examiner's office is adjacent to New York University Hospital. And that is where ultimately all deceased people wind up going.
- Mark Schoepfle: Normally?
- Jerry Zanjac: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.

- Jerry Zanjac: That's the medical examiner's — chief medical examiner's office. And that is the morgue of the city of New York. And that is where probably the most touching or disturbing human drama occurred because that is where the family members of the missing congregated. And that's probably — well, for my wife, I mean, that was a difficult thing. She has a strong disposition, but she said that was tough to see all of those family members, you know, in panic, you know, in anguish, you know, looking for — you know, where's my husband, where's my daughter, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: You were either worried because they couldn't find them or worried because they were upset that they had.
- Jerry Zanjac: Not yet. This is, you know, I mean, the initial reports were 10,000 dead.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure because that's what they figured the building could hold, right?
- Jerry Zanjac: Well, I mean, you know —
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: And, you know, the initial missing lists, you know, the official list kept going down because it was clarified, you know. But it was — that's a whole other, you know, part of this entire event, something that I wasn't directly connected with initially.
- Jerry Zanjac: Later on, I mean, occasionally I'll go to pick up my wife from work, you know, and because of scanners and computers people are able to take and develop personal photographs into 8 by 10 paper copies. So, you had all over Lower Manhattan and all over the hospital just hundreds and hundreds of pictures of people, you know. Have you seen so and so? You know, descriptions of people missing. You know, Cantor Fitzgerald is the major corporation that was in the first tower that lost 700 of its 900 employees. So, you know, that was a very devastating thing to hear, you know, when you heard who didn't make it, you know, who was killed and such.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: But anyway, coming back to my story those people came, you know. I still was impressed by the behavior of the people, you know, the uniformed people, you know, our staff members, the medical people, the police. The parking lot behind Ellis Island where the bridge is had a line of a hundred, you know, ambulances. I don't know how many physicians volunteered. You know, but it was sort of reassuring to see that, you know, in a situation like this what the response is, you know. So, for several hours there it was just basically help do what you can, you know.

- Jerry Zanjac: The second building had collapsed. I didn't really see it, but that was just another psychological thing, you know, where it's, damn, the second building came down. You know, so this even compounds the misery and compounds the tragedy and everything.
- Jerry Zanjac: And then about 3 o'clock, 3:30 the boats started coming less frequently and basically it was like winding down. The reports were — I forget when they basically said no other airplanes had crashed into anything. And no other details about, you know, about anybody taking credit or responsibility for the attacks and, you know, the President had to do his thing and the Vice President. And all of that I guess our emergency response mode, you know, locally and nationally and whatever, you know, it did impress — not impress me, but I did take notice of the fact that New York was and Washington, the Pentagon were the only locations. And I was kind of surprised that this wasn't on a larger scale. The fact that other larger urban centers weren't attacked. And it still didn't occur to me that it would be just a small — and for relatively speaking, a small-scaled, you know, terrorist attack. Because I thought this was on a larger state to state, or, you know, on a much more sophisticated and larger scale.
- Mark Schoepfle: It's a very important point I had not thought of. It did not go through my mind immediately, so that's an interesting idea.
- Jerry Zanjac: Because it's like, you know, if you're going to do this, I mean, don't, you know — I couldn't see it as a one-shot deal. If you're going to go, I mean, this is an all-or-none type of scenario. I thought that — if it was me, you know, I would play other cards. This wouldn't be the whole deck. I would just play more cards.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, I thought that this would be an ante and then an initial phase or, I mean, that's something that I think is still hanging over most American's heads in the back of their minds.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, the game ain't over yet.
- Jerry Zanjac: It's what's next? Right. Because of the nature of now we know what the nature of these people are, and what the nature of the effort is, you know, what's going on in Israel, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: I kind of did expect that there was going to be more terrorism — terrorist acts.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

- Jerry Zanjac: Sabotage, or just the psychological terror.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: Because I think that is as powerful and as debilitating as physical destruction, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, living in Tel Aviv or living in Jerusalem or in Israel, I mean, it's hard for me to envision this, you know, with this literally — I don't know, you know, how I would react.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, what happened — we got to about 3 or 4 o'clock and you said things were wound down.
- Jerry Zanjac: Well, by then it wound down to the point where I thought I was staying. I thought that, you know, in the past, if we had severe emergencies — like I remember the blizzard of 1996 we were here for four days straight shoveling snow because it had to be done. We are considered essential personnel, you know, so natural, you know, weather things and, you know, if the —
- Jerry Zanjac: We had to close the Statue of Liberty for two days a year or two ago because the sewer system backed up in Jersey City and it wasn't our fault, but you know, we had to come and stay and make sure that everything was done, you know. So, I'm used to basically told — being told that if I have to stay, I have to stay. And at the same time, you know, gratified that I'm getting paid for it, you know. It's one of the side perks if anything. But this was something that was an indeterminable situation about whether we were going to stay or not. Then, you know, we were told that, you know, we might have a morgue set up on Ellis Island because, you know, we're off the mainland, you know, for sanitary health conditions. I mean, a lot of things were going on.
- Jerry Zanjac: We had to empty a utility building because they were going to set up a temporary morgue, you know, and we're saying, jeez, what's that going to look like? You know because I'm not really used to death. I haven't seen too many dead people in my life. You know, outside of funeral homes I don't really think I've seen anybody dead; you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: I'm not used to death around, you know, as a normal occurrence.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, so I don't even know what's going to happen in the future if everything more traumatic occurs.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, it's like military service. I was never in military service so I don't know what my behavior would be.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, at the peak of Vietnam, I was prime, but I was in school, you know. My friends went to war. I didn't, you know. My parents come from Eastern Europe. My parents lived through the war. They had first-hand knowledge. I never did, you know. So, it's hard to — I mean, you know, I'm realistic enough to know that I don't know if I'm a hero or a coward because I've never been put in that situation. And growing up in Manhattan, you know, being street hardened, I mean, there's a certain, you know, way of dealing with reality in that respect, you know, compared to suburbanites and different — you know, so it's how you grow up.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, I've grown up in New York City all my life. And, you know, it's not an easy place comparatively to other places to live. You know, I've seen depravities of different sort, you know, different qualities of life. And, you know, from the super-rich to the super poor. You know, crazy people, deviant behavior, everything, you know, and that's — so I can say I have experience and I have a certain frame of reality that I can depend on to deal with certain things, but in a situation like war, no.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: Where people are trying to kill me, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: The first thing on their minds, yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, what's that like? And I've heard — and I've been fortunate because I know people who have had that life-death experience growing up, you know, in some bad neighborhoods where people have had — people put guns to their heads, and yet, you know, weren't killed. I wasn't, you know, so I don't know what would happen.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: So, I'm a realist in a certain respect, you know, whether I'm a hero or not. I don't know. I've never been — a lot of that is sort of gut-reaction thing, you know, fight or flight. You don't know until it happens to you.

Mark Schoepfle: Right. Right.

Jerry Zanjac: I'm cautious, but I'm not paranoid.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: Things like that. I think I'm — I have a certain resolve, but I don't know if I have maybe a better quality, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Jerry Zanjac: So.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, with that in mind —

Jerry Zanjac: Well, with that in mind, I mean, you know, 3 o'clock comes and we're basically told go home. You know, and I was prepared for the worst. I was prepared to stay and who knows, there was an uncertain future. I mean, thinking the unthinkable now again. What's going to happen if I go home? I mean, what's going to happen tomorrow? Because we were told basically stand by if we need you, you know, we'll call you. And I said, okay, listen here's worst-case scenarios, you know, if I can't get off the island, I'm going to try to make it down here. I'm going to communicate with the park police somehow to get our staff boat or a park police boat over to Manhattan. If anything, get my wife and kids off the island, you know.

Jerry Zanjac: So, I started making these contingencies. I started thinking about, how prepared am I for certain scenarios? I didn't have a disaster kit, you know. Now I'm thinking, you know, I'm on Ground Zero. And if the terrorists decide to do certain things, I mean, they brought a truck bomb in to blow up the World Trade Center the first time. What if they have a series of these truck bombs? What if they have suicide bombers? What if we're having a second wave, or second phase or step or whatever it is in a day or two, a week, a month? You know, how prepared am I? Now I started thinking about all of these things that I never had to think about because I think we had that certain degree of innocence, a certain sense of invulnerability.

END OF SIDE 1

START OF SIDE 2

Jerry Zanjac: I'll tell you something that's interesting. I came to the United States as an infant. I was born in Austria, in the Tyrolean mountains, but in a displaced persons camp. My father is Eastern European, he's Ukrainian. My mother is Croatian. My father spent the wartime actually in a labor factory in Austria.

Mark Schoepfle: One of the German labor camps, yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: Wasn't a collaborator.

Mark Schoepfle: More like a slave labor.

- Jerry Zanjac: Maybe — it's hard to say now. I don't know.
- Mark Schoepfle: I don't either.
- Jerry Zanjac: Because there was sort of like an in between because Eastern Europeans were considered cattle. They were subhuman —
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: — in the pecking order of the Arian race. They were utility humans. So, my father was a factory worker. So, the Germans let him work in a factory. God forbid, I remember he got two weeks hard labor once because he missed a roll call because somebody had stolen something from his bunk and he went to look and he missed the roll call and the punishment was two weeks hard labor. Where literally he was told to take that in the morning you see that pile of rocks, put it over there. They gave him like a 30-pound, or 40-pound shovel and he had to shovel rocks. The next day he had to take that pile of rocks and put it over there. He did that for two weeks. He said he was practically exhausted. He was looking to escape. A couple of guys didn't hold out. They tried to run for it. They got machine gunned down, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: But going back, my father met my mother after the war. They spent from '45 to 1951 — I was born in '49. We had some sponsors that sponsored us to come to the United States. We came to the United States on October 15, 1951. We weren't — we didn't qualify to enter Ellis Island —
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: — because we had sponsors, so we weren't in that class. But we came as immigrants.
- Mark Schoepfle: So where did you come through, Philadelphia?
- Jerry Zanjac: No. No, we came through New York harbor, but because we had sponsors and my father basically had a relief organization that vouched for him that was going to find him a job and had a hotel prepared. So, we were in steerage.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: We came on a troop ship. It was the General Muir, my mother told me it had three or four thousand people on it. Left Bremerhaven and came to New York October 15. October 15, 2001, I have been in this country 50 years, 52-year-old.
- Mark Schoepfle: Congratulations.

Jerry Zanjac: I came 50 years. I said to myself, well, you know, this is a milestone. And I looked back, and I said, I'm blessed with the luck of living in the United States during prosperous times, during peaceful times. Albeit, '62 was touch-and-go. The Cold War, Vietnam, was psychologically and morally difficult, you know. But these were faraway places so to speak, you know. I lived and saw the prosperity of the '50s, the '60s and subsequent, you know, '70s, '80s, and '90s living in America. Living in New York City, you know, a trade off, you know, having to live with some of the social problems and conditions, you know, moral problems and conditions. But still didn't have to fight in Vietnam, which would have been difficult. I wasn't a conscientious objector. I would never do anything like that. But it was still a difficult war.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure. Understood.

Jerry Zanjac: Yeah. That's why the call to arms wasn't the same way, you know. Grenada, things like that, you know, were minor in comparison, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: And then Desert Storm, very impressive to see how warfare changed to this technological thing.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: And that's why now that it's a scary thing because put in the hands of the wrong people — just like Alfred Nobel. Don't forget the man who invented dynamite created the peace prize because he saw how something that he was — what he wanted to intend to use for the good of humanity got corrupted where dynamite was now an explosive used to kill people. And how our technology and the technology of warfare and all has gotten so sophisticated that we have friendly-fire casualties and noncombat casualties far above, you know, killed in action.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah. Well, you were mentioning the contingency plans. And I think the discussion gets to how were you prepared to that and what did you do?

Jerry Zanjac: Yeah, anyhow — well, part of it was a realization — a realization that I wasn't ready for emergency. And that this whole Ground Zero thing still stuck in my mind. And the saran gas thing that the doomsday Japanese people, you know, that I was living in a heavily congested area where all hell could break loose. Weapons of mass destruction can be used against us. And my wife and children and myself would be vulnerable. And if I had a little bit of advanced preparedness I could possibly survive.

- Jerry Zanjac: So, I said what do I need for basic self-preservation. I don't own guns, you know, because I'm not violent. I'm basically nonviolent, yet I'm not simplistic.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, because with too many guns around people get killed. Anyhow, Tyvek suits — I was thinking about you know chemical, biological, these are the weapons that have been invented to kill many people and in the hands of wrong people, especially these people now, that I was vulnerable. Things like that, respirators. If I have one for each person, I think I can sleep better at night. God forbid we have to use it. And God forbid, somebody would try to take it from us.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: That's the other part of it. But at least I would have a fighting chance so to speak to get down and hopefully get in contact and get somebody to pick us up and get us over to Ellis so we can walk across to the mainland. This whole thing about isolation being on an island with thousands of people in panic, hundreds of thousands of people, lawlessness, you know, everybody trying to get away. So that kind of thing I wasn't prepared for. And at the same time realizing that I'm at a severe disadvantage because I have no weapons to protect myself.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: Physically if I have to go hand-on-hand it's one thing. But we have the ability to kill from a distance, you know.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: So, things like that I knew I was basically out of luck. But in terms of surviving a gas attack, you know, fallout, things like that at least I would have that preparation. That ability to defend myself.
- Jerry Zanjac: Anyhow by 3:30, 4 o'clock we were told to step down. No more people were coming. We were told to leave. So, I said, okay. Everything was shut down in Manhattan, but I have a 45-minute walk from where I live because I live in Lower Manhattan. I knew my wife and kids were safe. I got on the staff boat and got dropped off at Battery Park here and then I walked home. I walked up the east side and there was an eerie silence. Smoke everywhere because the buildings were burning. I didn't have any compulsion to go to look at the destruction initially. I kind of wanted to get home and then ascertain what the threat was, if there was going to be any more threat.

Jerry Zanjac: Because I was wondering if there was some kind of communication from the enemy or the perpetrators with ultimatums, with demands, things like that.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: I walked up Water Street, there was a layer of dust, eerily quiet, no traffic, hardly any people. One or two cars abandoned right on the spot so that gave it this wartime sort of war zone kind of appearance. Very, very hard to breathe. There was some emergency people. I stopped the guy, could I — do you have an extra dust mask. Put that on. By the time I got to the Brooklyn Bridge where the New York City police headquarters is — and that is slightly up wind of the trade center. Cars everywhere, you know, definitely a state of emergency. Didn't look like a war zone, but a state of emergency.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: Had I walked on the other side of Manhattan it would have looked completely different. And other Park Service employees who got off at that staff boat at 9 o'clock or 9:30 — there was one fellow who was right there at the World Trade Center when the first building collapsed. And he said that the initial smoke — I don't know if Doug Tream [phonetic] — are you scheduled to interview Doug Tream?

Mark Schoepfle: Got his name listed down here. I've never heard of him before.

Jerry Zanjac: He'll have an incredible story because he got off the boat and he was walking, and he was right there by the north tower when the south tower fell.

Mark Schoepfle: Wow.

Jerry Zanjac: He was right there on West Street which is right on the end of Manhattan and he was right there. So, he'll have an incredible story. You know, how he says how he survived because the initial dust cloud and everything it was just like total apocalypse, couldn't breathe.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: As opposed to us being spectators like watching it on television.

Mark Schoepfle: Right.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, the buildings collapsing. But anyhow as I walked uptown — when I got to the police plaza area and then further north and I'm walking through Chinatown now. And the further I'm getting away from it the more normal everything tended to look. And I was struck by the fact that it seemed like there was a subdued air, but it's like nothing happened.

- Jerry Zanjac: And it's like they were completely unaffected. Yet, because of traffic being completely, you know, minimal the din of the city wasn't there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Jerry Zanjac: But there was a subduedness, definitely a subduedness. And then as I walked home it seemed more and more normal. Yet psychologically, you know, there was not sense of normal. You know, it's sort of like, you know, you'll never be the same.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: And for the next couple of days uncertainty was the thing that I remember the most. You know, what's going to happen next? When's the next shoe going to drop? And I think that stayed for a couple of weeks. And it might have been a month or so afterwards where I felt relaxed enough that maybe there won't be a second one initially, you know, again in New York. Maybe it's going to be somewhere else. And things had already, you know, been — what's that word, exposed, you know. The perpetrators, some of the scenarios, you know, the reasonings, and this and that.
- Jerry Zanjac: One thing I have to say, I mean, I don't know I have to leave — I mean, we can go on — everybody probably can speak for hours. But I have to catch the boat at 3 o'clock.
- Mark Schoepfle: Fine. I understand. That's why I was keeping an eye on the clock here because we've got — the tape here will end about — when do you need to be out of the building, on your way?
- Jerry Zanjac: Actually, if we leave at a quarter to, I can change and be at the boat at 3 o'clock. So, we have five — eight minutes still.
- Mark Schoepfle: About eight minutes — okay, eight, ten minutes, fine. I'll keep my eye on the watch here to make sure. [Inaudible].
- Jerry Zanjac: As far as that initial day and the chain of events and all that was pretty much it. One thing that sticks in my mind were — I don't know how to put this — I wasn't surprised one bit by the behavior of the response people who went to the World Trade Center. One thing that I realize is that when you're trained you react, and you fall back on your training because that's all you really have to go by. You go by your native intelligence, you know, your own personality, you know. But you fall back on your training and you respond, you react, not even fall back, but you react based on your training. Because I know in certain situations here, you know, we react because of that, you know. It's like, you know, that certain things can be done. Certain things can't be done, you know.

Mark Schoepfle: For example?

Jerry Zanjac: That personally that I fall back on?

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, fall back on here. Yeah, or anywhere really.

Jerry Zanjac: I can't really specify it right now. It just —

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, that's okay. If you can't remember, just go on.

Jerry Zanjac: No, but the thing — you know, that's why, you know, the firemen and the policemen and the rescue people, they wouldn't have acted otherwise. There's a controversy now, not even a controversy, but there's some speculation about the communication between the fire command and the firefighters in the building. Because a week or so ago there was an article in the paper saying that the fire command were weary of a third strike and they had called in and told the firefighters who were in the building to come out. And there's a question about whether the firefighters heard that call and/or ignored the call. Because other firemen weren't going to leave if their buddies, if their colleagues were in the building. But there's this question mark about whether there was a call and if that call was heard or ignored. And it's probably both.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: Some didn't hear, and some chose to ignore it. So that's why maybe we had such a high amount of fatalities, you know, in the fire department.

Mark Schoepfle: They stayed.

Jerry Zanjac: Right. And for what reasons? But most of it is because that you're in this mode. You're psychologically you're in this mode, you know. You do what you do because that's why, you know, that's why you're doing it.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, under stress you fall back on that training and only that training.

Jerry Zanjac: And they're firemen. Right. Yeah, basically you do that, you know. You don't think of yourself as a hero. You might be altruistic.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah, look out for the other person.

Jerry Zanjac: You know, there might be a higher road I'm taking, you know. And I think that's part of what the whole nation is seeing is that the spontaneous actions, the spontaneous behavior from the mayor, from the command, from the citizenry. You know, the response, you didn't have this every man for himself.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

- Jerry Zanjac: The response of the community, you know. There was this inundation of support locally and nationally. And it wasn't just firemen.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, which they seemed to be being deified to a certain degree, you know, and they deserve it. And yet at the same that's what they do.
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Jerry Zanjac: You know, a lot of these uniform services, that's what they do.
- Mark Schoepfle: How does that apply to the Park Service? Did you see that — the idea that you're talking about here?
- Jerry Zanjac: Absolutely.
- Mark Schoepfle: How so? Could you go into detail on that? Just from your standpoint — I mean, you know —
- Jerry Zanjac: I think that there's a uniqueness that we all share because there is one Statue of Liberty. And we all share in that uniqueness, and Ellis Island to a degree, but the Statue of Liberty. And at the same time, we're representative of the people of the United States — of the nation. You know, you're part of that service. And it's part of the, like, the mission that the Park Service has, you know, the stewardship. You know, we're basically responsible for this place to a certain degree. So that you don't want to see yourself or anybody else, you know, be negatively affected. There's a certain cynicism that develops, you know. You're here every single day you get a little jaded, you know. You know you get complacent and this and that. But at the same time, you never forget where you are, you know.
- Jerry Zanjac: Now you might have a lot of opinions about, you know, different things that in our society, in our government, in our social order and all, you know. And, you know, philosophically there are problems about the, you know — there was a study whether the Statue of Liberty was black or not. You know, you have different things, you know, going on.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Yeah.
- Jerry Zanjac: But at the same time that sense of service I think is the reason you're here. You know, you don't go around showing off, oh, I work at the Statue of Liberty. There's a certain pride to a certain degree. You know, you might be, you know, a little, you know, but you have that sense. And the uniform has something to do with it. The fact that you are together, you know, as a group, acting as a group. Even though individually, but in a group sense too.

Jerry Zanjac: And people have personal pride, you know. And at certain times, you know, you don't think about how you look in the mirror. You know, in your uniform and stuff like that.

Jerry Zanjac: So that, you know — and certain times you actually take authority. You take, you know — if somebody is doing something that you might consider inappropriate behavior, you know, chastising young people because of their, you know, penchant for being frivolous or something like that. Hey, you know, remember where you are. This is the Statue of Liberty. You know, you don't want them to do something, you know, deface something.

Jerry Zanjac: Now I have children and I know kids are kids. You know, we've acted as, you know, with indiscretion and stuff like that so you have to temper it with that kind of understanding. But at the same time, we have to say, hey, that is not right. We don't do that here.

Mark Schoepfle: Yeah.

Jerry Zanjac: Or anywhere else for that matter. But we're not going to do that here.

Mark Schoepfle: But especially here.

Jerry Zanjac: Yeah.

Mark Schoepfle: You know, and a certain reverence you should have. Which is a reverence for other things, for, you know — I got to run.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. I wish I could talk to you more on this, but I'm —

Jerry Zanjac: Yeah.

END OF TAPE