

US ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

[REDACTED] - NEIT 567

CC-2002-06

[REDACTED] Today is the 6th of February, 2002, I'm [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] from the 46th Military History
Detachment. This is an oral history interview. This
interview is unclassified. If you would for me, would you
state your name and rank, position organization for the tape.

[REDACTED] My name is [REDACTED], SFC. I'm United
States Army band.

[REDACTED] Great, now have you been in the band your entire
Army career?

[REDACTED] Yes.

[REDACTED]: How long has that been?

[REDACTED] Ah, April will be 12 years.

[REDACTED] 12 years. What do you also play an instrument?

[REDACTED] Piccolo.

[REDACTED] Piccolo. Ok. How long have you been here at Ft.
Myer or at in Pershing's Own?

[REDACTED]: 12 years. It'll be 12 years in April.

[REDACTED] That's a long time, that's a long time, I mean is
that normal for a the band members to stay...

[REDACTED] It's a permanent station, I've spent my entire
career here.

[REDACTED] Well I think that's kind of neat. Is there, is

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there part of that isn't so neat, I mean, you hear about other people.

[REDACTED] Your arms get tired, ah, in doing ceremonies, but I mean it's all of the work that's ceremonial bands are (inaudible.) yeah.

[REDACTED] Is there a lot of other travel involved though I mean do you get to go...

[REDACTED] We've done some international military (inaudible.) 99, 92, Norway in 2001 I think went to in 98 went to Norway, 2000 went to Australia. So it's been fun. It's been fun.

[REDACTED] I would think so. Now let me ask you a little bit about the training you did, obviously, you're a musician and a big part of what you do is keeping your skills, being as professional as I you can, in the music area, but band members are also expected to maintain certain skills, soldier skills for all their soldier skills same as someone that's in a, maybe not an infantry unit, but engineering or quartermaster unit can you talk to it a little about that?

[REDACTED] I'm not sure about the rest of the skills definitely passing the PT test, maintaining our weight requirement, and absolutely for sure for our mission and being able to play that instrument as best as we can because we audition to get

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into this unit most of us, at least of us have an undergraduate degree in music and a large percentage has masters and doctorates so for us, I mean it's kind of like music has been a discipline part of lives for a very long time, therefore our focus is.

[REDACTED] Now, how many people are part of the band unit?

[REDACTED] We, there are over 300.

[REDACTED] Wow.

[REDACTED] Maybe not, around the 300 number.

[REDACTED] So, just real briefly what's a typical week like for you?

[REDACTED] In ceremonial band, um, which is what I've been in is I have performed full honors at Arlington Ceremony, military arrival and departure ceremonies here at Whipple Field at Fort Myer, ah we also have them at the Pentagon, but we haven't performed one there in quite a while at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier weekly and a lot of arrival White House (inaudible.).

[REDACTED] So it's the typical full honors.

[REDACTED] (inaudible.)

[REDACTED] So between actually doing ceremonies and then practice, how many hours a week do you have to practice?

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[REDACTED] It's hard to say because practice can vary, I also our ceremonial schedule is pretty busy, but I also teach private students outside and ah that's just part of something. Actually, I do musically, which is 10 to 15 students. Practice can kind of go wherever you can fit it in. So it's hard, you want to play at least an hour a day at the very least and also I do a lot of free lancing um, social gigs, they're called weddings, um, just a lot of some of (inaudible.) really (inaudible.) I can do (inaudible.) this past weekend (inaudible.).

[REDACTED] Great, great. What would you say up until September 11th, what was the most non-band thing you have done up to the military to that point. Have you ever gone like fieldwork or gone out and done any sort of exercise that not connected with the band or just being out other soldiers doing some sort of an operation or anything?

[REDACTED] Not really anything actually. Not outside. Um, I've taken a computer class, um starting to get training for being on auditions NCO um, got tasked to do on the state funeral committee, sort of a little bit of, well actually not really anything until September 11.

[REDACTED] I think that's you know wanting to give the future

listener a little background just to tell, what your experience have been prior to that, I think that's important for us to understand. Let's talk a little about September 11th, as far as your day, and when you first learned about the World Trade Center and how you found out about that and your feelings and reaction and can you just kind of walk us through the September 11th.

[REDACTED] We all remember of this beautiful day, it was really bright. I had also had been tasked to be a drum major of the Army, one of the drum majors of the Army band, first female to do so in the history. We, I was doing we were doing an 8:30 Patton Circle transfer Just on section five. My heart is starting to beat faster.

[REDACTED] Before you go past that, tell me what that 65 and all that our listener will understand that?

[REDACTED] Patton circle transfers one of the ah transfer points within the Arlington Cemetery, lots of times, or some times, the church service will be (inaudible.) and the deceased is trans to site in Arlington Cemetery where the escort is assembled, and being part of the escort there being one or two platoons depending on the individual that's being honored! And um, this particular (inaudible.) I think it was

one platoon and of course the Army band and at that point, um, the drum majors were tasked go down ahead of time and attend the talk through of there's a talk through and recon every full honor that happens, and the band has not been a part of that lately, but months, but I think this started last year, 2001.

They started sending the drum majors ahead of time, which meant we had the POV to this site. We each had to drive our own car ahead of the band. 20 minutes ahead of, 15 to 20 minutes ahead of that so we could be a part of this talk through so my car was already ah near Patton Circle, which faces the Pentagon. Where the impact was. Ah, if there was a field house out there, MacArthur and Arnold was the two streets I remember because it's where I was.

So anyhow, so we accomplished our mission, finished our funeral and the band goes off in the bus. And this is about 8:30, 35 in the morning. And I proceed to walk to my car, heading toward the Pentagon on Arnold Street, about to cross MacArthur and as drum major too, since we speak a lot directly to the bus drivers about where we're gonna be and

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what section to pick us up. I saw [REDACTED] and he was saying hey [REDACTED] how are you doing, and I said oh fine. And he said, hey did you hear what happened? Or I just heard on the news what happened.

And he said a couple of planes um, struck the World Trade Center and I said, you're kidding [REDACTED] and ah, he said, yeah it just happened. And I said, gosh (inaudible.) and we kind of commiserated (sp.), what's this world coming to? And at that point my thought was wow, I wonder that's about you know it's like a shocking moment when you never forget where you are, wondering what that's about. And as I'm walking towards Arnold Street, toward MacArthur intersection, and the buses had just departed, maybe 8:40 at this point, (inaudible.) somewhere between 8:40 um, I hear what I think is a fly over, over my head because that's standard.

Lots of times you have missing men information sometimes you won't. And I looked, I looked directly up for it, and I also had some tree cover so I wasn't able to see, but I was facing the Pentagon and I saw something really fast going to the Pentagon with the swoosh and I'll never forget it, it was

so fast, and then a huge fire ball explosion and smoke, and they said there was a huge sound, but I don't recall, I just remember it being just it was like a clap, and I just remember it being so fast, and I screamed, no, or oh my God, and right, I think right then at that point I'm at the intersection and still constantly walking toward my car.

Um, and I see two women at the right of me who are photographers for the funeral kind of stumble around like I was, because I kept walking, I just can't believe what's happening, and they start to kind of take pictures from my back right, two guard two grounds keepers behind to my left under cover, because we feel like there's like an attack really. At that point, that's what I thought, we might end up being bombed. And there's a Navy bus in front of me with some Navy soldiers, I think they were waiting to do a full honor then I happen to see coming from the south, two jets at that point I thought they were attacking and I yelled to the Navy guys, run, I think they're coming back for another strike.

And, I kind of lost it at that point. I took my bolder

off. A bolder is the drum major sash cause I felt like a big target, and I thought you know I just felt very vulnerable, and at this point there is rolling smoke coming out of the Pentagon of course, and ah, any how I yelled at the Navy guys again in the bus, and then I realized they are not gonna be hit in the cemetery, let me get to my car, so I got in my car which is right by the field house and then drive to Patton Circle where we were just at, and the two funeral representatives are standing there outside their car and there's smoke and we're looking at disbelief, and I thought for a while, some Bronco, someone in a Bronco is peeling out losing it, he's driving to the Pentagon circle, peeling around the circle, coming back and then doing it again.

He's almost like me. Go (inaudible.) just madness at the moment. There's not too many people there, and if I thought about, I found out later that there were pieces of that section right where we were and it was just so horrific, it was weird it was so far away and yet so close.

[REDACTED] Piece of the plane.

[REDACTED] Yes, it was found in that section beyond Patton Circle, I don't remember what the section of I want to say

69, no it can't be 68, maybe 70, right in front of us toward the fencing right at the edge, because it's Patton Circle fencing edge, I mean the cemetery fencing edge highway, and then the Pentagon. And we're facing the site that was struck. And that's what was also weird, is that it seemed like it struck on the other side whereas I found out later, I saw it so that whatever plane that disappeared, it was, it happened so quickly.

At this point then I have to drive back, and I can't believe what's happened. And I can't get out of the cemetery, the security had shut it down, and I said, I need to drive back to the building. I just performed (inaudible.) so I parked my car right at the gate at the chapel, walk in, and everybody doesn't know what to do they're trying to figure out, at that point, the Captain of the platoon is in, he's trying to figure out about escort, the next one the next funeral is going, there's pandemonium.

I break down in the office, come back out to try to get my car, walk back out and realize that I have to drive all the way to the main entrance of if I'm gonna get my car out.

I think I think it had been decided that the next full honor is not gonna happen. So I walk back out, and I know this sounds strange but there's a girl walking and this happened very rapidly, and I said, do you need a ride, because there's a sense of exodus every where. And I said, I'm going back out the gate, and I don't think you can get out any other way, and she says, sure (inaudible.) to Ft. Myer. And as I, we go up the main gate, there is an exodus.

Cars, people walking just pouring out of the city. And I get on I forget what's the circle before the bridge that leads out of Arlington Cemetery, anyhow, I get back to go back to Arlington and there's this traffic jam so I have to circle around and go on to the Washington Parkway a little bit, and then take Lee Spout Run and come back and drop this girl off. And then come back in to the building. I just kind of hang around. Actually because at this point I'm part of... I think because I was there, people went home you know and I just didn't want to leave yet, for whatever I have a dog at home and knew I had to walk her but I was tasked, it wasn't sure to be a courier for the Emergency Operation Center which got fired up right away.

And I didn't have to do it, so I stayed around to but I did talk to my mom, I think it was around 11:00. Because she knew, she said when I talked to her, she knew when the second plane struck that something happened, it was not right. And then when it struck the Pentagon she lost it, she's a Branch Manager at a loan company and um, she was waiting to hear and (inaudible.) a lot of lines were busy...for sure, a lot of people were trying to get in contact with loved ones.

[REDACTED] (inaudible.) I'm sure it's not unusual for you know you to be at the Pentagon different things, I mean, no way of knowing if your close in anyway if you're in danger, but there's no reason that you might not have been in the Pentagon.

[REDACTED] Right, we do this ceremony there all the time. And we did all the time, not any more, (inaudible.) done any there recently but yeah. And um, then she finally said, oh it's ok, and I just told her that I saw it, and she was just really relieved to hear from me, and then just waited at home. Went home, ah I was so happy when my sweetheart dog was there, because I don't have I divorced about 2 years ago,

and ah...

[REDACTED] It was comforting to go home to your dog. I'm sure it felt just strange being the world, the world changed that day, so I'm sure even going home to a certain maybe you, I don't think you'd be off balance in a way that, how, not knowing how to feel, how to act.

[REDACTED] Yeah it was it was a day I'll never forget, and how the world changed, and I'm sure it's history upon history eons behind me and eons ahead of me things like this won't happen. It's just that you don't expect to see it.

[REDACTED] And I think the people that actually saw the plane, have almost a different kind of connection than the rest of us. I'm curious if you can talk about did you feel differently when you learned it was a commercial flight with people on it. I mean because at the time you didn't know all you saw was a fast plane. When was it that you found out, was it the same day that you found out it was commercial plane, there were passengers on board.

[REDACTED] I think the same day. I didn't watch the news. I don't know why, like everybody else had been glued to the television. That's why because I was here, and it just wasn't, I didn't need to see anymore of it I've seen enough..

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and commercial plane.. Like when did I find out it wasn't like an attack, I guess some time later in the day when I went home and did finally see the news. But you know seeing of course knowing that those fighter planes escorts, escorts to do some action, you know I mean to stop the unthinkable which didn't happen. I just couldn't believe the act, was such evil, to commandeer commercial plane that would do that.

And just the unthinkable keeps coming to mind.

[REDACTED] And you live off, close..

[REDACTED] I live 2 miles from home.

[REDACTED] So, when you, when you came back to work did you have to go by the Pentagon did you see the building itself after a day or so after, or when, when did you see the Pentagon again.

[REDACTED] Well since I live in Arlington any time you go down Columbia Pike you saw it smoking and it did burn for several days. So I think I was then when Emergency Operations Center opened up I did some duty there. Um, and then we also the unit was tasked to make I.D.s on site at the Pentagon.

[REDACTED] Were you a part of that too? That was to control who went in and who went out and make sure no one was

unauthorized.

[REDACTED] Anyone who set a little toe on that compound got a badge, and it actually, I mean and I am saying it needed to be run 24 hours because there were personnel constantly going in the relief things that they needed, around the country, that amazing, around the country, the support that came, and how support quickly came.

[REDACTED]: From not only military but civilians.

[REDACTED] Civilians.

[REDACTED] Yeah.

[REDACTED] Food. Foodstuff, you know. I dare say it was almost a carnival feel day, a feel actually on that place you know, there were tents, straw, out you know those outdoor toilets, lots of food it was, it felt like the land of abundance there at the site. On the other hand, when we got as close as we could, it was to recovering going on. It was very quiet, it is mentioned in the world trade center, it was very quiet, and I've visited there too on my own, not with the band but um, just to see it, it looked very much like the wreckage when they were cleaning at the Pentagon just one single crate, slowly handful by handful.

[REDACTED] That part of the interview just incredible

compliment of the band almost let's say surprised at how well the band performed and you know stepped up to the plate, do you feel (inaudible.) your workers how you know this is a different kind of mission that they had done.

[REDACTED] This is a very different kind of mission, and as artists we are tend to be thought of as divas and you know pretty selfish, and as any unit there's complaining but I tell you, there was not a peep, I mean we were there, its said often in song you know almost corny hokey, but we were and I was not, we did, we stepped up to the plate, it was not I mean it was really great to hear, great to see just all of us you know coming in together, there was a job to do and we're going to do it.

[REDACTED] You probably got an older group, I mean. On average you got some young soldiers too. How (inaudible.) did they react from your observations was this a real reality shock to the young soldier, because for older people it's a shock too, but you know at least 18, 19, 20 year olds, did you see a wake up call with them on this?

[REDACTED] The youngest that gets in to the unit I think actually on the average it would be like 22, 4 or something like that. Like I said (inaudible.).

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[REDACTED] Have a degree, Most of them, when they finish college.

[REDACTED] So it's really hard to tell. You know, and maybe, I don't know maybe I was in my own head for a while you know after it all happened, as we all were, but it was really hard to tell what the reaction of the younger soldier, there was a girl, a couple of the girls who had come in, one was in basic so you know a basic can be very isolated, so they said it was really weird to be in basic and not be a part of it. Others said that um, it was very weird to come into the military at that time you know during this time, because it was a different military at this, in this unit and this area, this whole MDW because they had you know I mean we are technically soldiers in the area, technically you know.

And it happened, another all of the sudden we're from being tasked to guard this front, and it is a front. So I don't know, I mean I think it was like everybody else, it was very shocking, it was very different but yeah we are seeing a lot more regular Army motions you know kind of a ripple effect come on. Don't know (inaudible.).

[REDACTED] You Know, on the ID process where you were giving

people ID's when they you know when they put the toe in ground zero area. When they come back out do they turn in some kind of badge or ID to you all to leave so there is some accountability by went in, went out or how does that work, once you're issued the badge you keep it forever, or how did that work?

[REDACTED] I'm not sure, the CIA was in charge of the ID making and ah, there was 2 agents on site at every time, and there was a database that was being created as pictures were taken and everyone was all their information so I'm not sure what actually, because by the time, I think I did 2 maybe 3 first started 24 hour shifts and then 12 and then it actually things got accomplished more and then our duty became less so toward the end I don't know how it was handled at the end, taking all the ID's and then turning them in.

[REDACTED] What day, what day did you start that? What day was the first day that you gave out I.D. cards.

[REDACTED] The day, the unit started like the 2nd, Septemb.. it must of been September 12th or 13th. I started the following week. Sometime, I don't recall the day.

[REDACTED] When you're out there like at the site, what was you said carnival like in a sense, but did you, would you see

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like some of the soldiers that were coming in and out as far as like the engineers that were working and firemen.

[REDACTED] We tried to get in as close as we could to just look at it, that's all you could do is look at it, but to see the Old Guard soldiers come out, the smell of the burnt cinder block smell, that was, that was really out but they were like, they were I mean, I think part of the reason we keep it quiet, we were you know back in a tent making ID's the soldiers were really hands on hauling this stuff out, just you know one group would decontaminate, another group would go in. And like that yeah it was really.

I mean because you saw the main impact site but to see the extensive damage we couldn't see a lot except we know there was a lot of bull dozer work that were going in, there was a dog work going in, um, we watched it long enough to see you know a to see when they brought a casualty out. You didn't, couldn't see anything, but we saw the gathering of the remains the (inaudible.). And ah,

[REDACTED]... just a total life turning experience.

[REDACTED] Can you, relate a little bit if there is a difference in you now than you were September the 10th, the

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things that you feel changed about. Why don't you think about that, what do you feel about some thing more, don't sleep good or you know a vision you keep have.. anything that was different in you the woman today that the 10th can think of anything that comes to mind specially?

[REDACTED] I um, I can see it in my mind the moment, I try to access it, because I think I'll forget, but I don't think am going to. Yeah I had a rough 3 months, and I thought bad because I knew a lot of people that were so directly effected much more than I, I was just a casual observer, it happened to be there and so I felt sort of you know like for a while um, a member support group and I have been for 10 years, um, so I've spoken at meetings about it but ah, and I felt kind of guilt.. not yeah I don't know if guilty is the word, that I didn't have a right to feel the way I do, but I, I ran a marathon last year and had been going out in the morning and running, and had stopped for a while because I was having some health issues, but I have not been able to get up myself out of the house, to be out in the open space since then.

Um, I've gotten back to the gym, but I just can't do it, and I'm thinking that has something to do with it, because

that was actually a good time for me just alone and out in the open space, but I just can't do it. So, after I get off this profile in a couple of weeks and try it, see if I can get (inaudible.) because it, every plane sounds different now when they opened International airport (inaudible.)

[REDACTED] Is it a weird feeling when you first saw the first airplane go.

[REDACTED] It is a weird feeling. And just, not so much, I was having some I guess difficulties sleeping but yeah it's just emotionally, the most I could say almost felt like soon after when I got divorced, it was just an emotional roller coaster. Um, but I think it got better I guess that's one thing about being able to (inaudible.)

[REDACTED] Is there anything else that maybe I should, could ask or didn't ask or that you feel important to capture in taking this history today that comes to mind to get on our tape before we close up.

[REDACTED] I don't know, I can't think of anything.

[REDACTED] Well if something that comes up later I'll come back. I appreciate you taking the time, I know that it wasn't always easy for you to talk about some of the things (inaudible.) but I think it's important for us to capture,

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and I appreciate you taking the time.

[REDACTED] Thank you I appreciate you listening.

END OF TAPE