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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER STEPHEN GREGORY

Interview Date: October 3, 2001

Transcribed by Nancy Francis

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MR. McALLISTER: This is Kevin McAllister from the Bureau of Administration. It's October 3rd, 2001, 1540 hours. I'm with Jim Drury from the Bureau of Investigations and Trials and with Commissioner Stephen Gregory of the Bureau of Communications. We're in Commissioner Gregory's office and we are now commencing the interview.

COMMISSIONER GREGORY: On Tuesday, September 11th, I was sitting in my office, it was just shortly before 9:00 o'clock, having a cup of coffee, and I heard on the scanner in my office on the PD SOD frequency police units frantically screaming about a plane that had just crashed into the World Trade Center. At first I didn't realize what had happened and then it dawned on me. I immediately got up and left my office, went around the corner.

At that point in time I saw Chief Ganci, Chief Nigro, a couple of the other chiefs coming out of their office talking about a plane that had struck the World Trade Center. At that time I had no idea what type of plane. I assumed, and it was only an assumption on my part, that it was a small plane that had strayed and winded into the Trade Center.

I proceeded back to my office. I gathered up

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my driver and I took two EMS captains with me because I figured a situation like this would probably need medical assistance at the scene. We proceeded to my vehicle.

We left headquarters, went over the Brooklyn Bridge, around by City Hall. We went down I believe it was Barclay Street, all the way down to West Street, made a left turn. As we were going over the bridge, we could visually see the upper floors of the World Trade Center with emanating heavy smoke and fire, at least 1 World Trade Center I should say.

When we got to West Street, we made a left turn and we went back down I believe it's one block to Vesey Street. At that point in time the driver stopped the car and debris was falling from the building. I told him to turn the car around and to park it on the other side of West Street, which we did. We went on the west side of West Street, up a slight incline, which I think is Vesey Street, parked the car, proceeded to put on my turnout coat, my helmet, and we walked back down to West Street.

At that point in time I proceeded with Captain Frank D'Amato from Emergency Medical Dispatch. We started to walk down West Street. Probably 25 to 50

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feet into our walk we encountered several what appeared to be bodies or human remains in the street. We proceeded past that and headed down looking up at the building. There was a lot of debris falling down. There was very heavy fire on the upper floors of the building. We worked our way down going south on West Street to ultimately arriving close to Liberty Street, where I encountered Assistant Chief Jerry Barbara.

I spoke with Chief Barbara and he informed me that he was the incident commander of 2 World Trade Center and he asked me if I would give him a hand running the command board. I indicated that I would, at which point in time we stopped at Liberty Street. Jerry was sizing the building up. I proceeded to get on the radio.

I called the Manhattan Central Office on the radio. I asked them to give me the rundown of units that were assigned to 2 World Trade Center. The Manhattan dispatcher came back giving me the rundown, I jotted all the companies down, and we proceeded to wait. After a few minutes we weren't receiving any companies. Chief Barbara asked again where are the companies? It appeared that the companies that were responding were coming from north to south and that

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they were being all grabbed at 1 World Trade Center, the furthestmost north building.

I suggested to Chief Barbara at that time that we possibly transmit a second alarm for a tunnel box and bring Brooklyn companies through the tunnel. He agreed with my recommendation and I requested a second alarm assignment to be brought in from Brooklyn through the Battery Tunnel. The companies in a short period of time started to arrive. I went out into the street. I flagged the companies down. We started to have them come in and report in to our command post.

At that point in time Chief Art Lakiotes showed up. At that point Chief Barbara, Chief Lakiotes, Chief Barbara's aide, Gary, I don't know Gary's last name, and myself were at the command board. The command board was roughly on the corner of Liberty and West Street, but then at that point in time, looking at the building, we observed people jumping from the building, we observed debris falling from both buildings. This is after, naturally, the second plane had hit 2 World Trade Center, which happened while we were there. We observed people jumping.

So Chief Barbara suggested that we move

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further south. He said let's head down towards Albany Street. We actually went down somewhere between Liberty and Albany Street to a point that we were actually right in front of the World Financial Center, which is just a little bit south of Liberty Street and just south of that south bridge that goes across West Street. We set up the command post at that location. So we were between Liberty and Albany, about halfway down. We set up the command post there. The companies started to come in.

At that point in time Chief Barbara said that he was going to head into 2 World Trade Center. He told me that as soon as a battalion came in with an aide that I felt comfortable with I should tell Gary to meet him in the lobby. Chief Barbara turned, started walking towards 2 World Trade Center, looked up at the building, sized it up, and that's the last that I saw Chief Barbara.

My time estimation of how long he was gone before the building came down? I would venture to say it wasn't any more than maybe four minutes, five minutes, somewhere in there, but time was a little hard to figure out. But I would say it was somewhere around four to five minutes.

At that point in time we heard a rumble, we heard a noise, and then the building came down. All we saw was dust and everything just started to get very chaotic. At that point in time all of us at the command post, firefighters, chiefs, myself, we turned around, we started to run south, down West Street towards Albany. Looking back over my shoulder, I realized that I wasn't able to outrun whatever was coming because it looked like a giant wave behind us, so I went up against a chain-link fence, I got down on one knee, I put my hands over my head to hold my helmet on so I wouldn't get hit in the head with anything, and we just proceeded to get clobbered with all kinds of debris.

It got very black. It got very quiet. It was very peacefully quiet; so peaceful that I thought I was dead.

Q. Were you on the west side of the street or the east side?

A. I was on the west side of West Street up against a fence in front of the World Financial Center. There's like a chain-link fence. It's about a six-foot fence that separates their property from -- actually, right over here. This is exactly where we

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were, right here.

Q. He's denoting a space in front of 1 World Financial Center, which on our map is denoted as the home of Dow Jones.

A. Originally we were right here. This was the number one location that we were at. We wound up to be at number two location over here, number one location being immediately south of the south bridge across the West Side Highway, number two being the location in front of 1 World Financial Center.

The air got very thick, very dirty. It was very difficult to breathe. I was choking. I proceeded to at some point in time -- again, I lost track of time -- to give an urgent or a Mayday message on the radio, which I subsequently listened to myself and I have a cassette of that, indicating that something had happened. I asked a dispatcher if they were aware of it because during the time that it got very black and very quiet, my radio cut out completely. Apparently the dust in the air cut the radio signal out. The radio just hummed for maybe about 30 seconds and then it came back on again.

At that point in time I called Manhattan. I was answered. I asked them if they were aware of an

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explosion at the World Trade Center. I told them basically what I thought had happened and they came back and they answered me, and then subsequent to that I gave them a radio transmission indicating a major collapse of the World Trade Center. There were some conversations going back and forth.

At that point in time the atmosphere started to clear slightly. It started to lift. It went from total blackness to gray. I could now see vehicles, I could see lights on vehicles, I could see some people moving around, I could see some people laying in the street, laying on the sidewalk. I got up. I was with another firefighter. I have no idea who it was. We went around. We had picked some people up, people who were bleeding. We tried to administer to them whatever we could, but everybody was covered with this white powdery substance.

We found a firefighter that was injured and we took him down further south on West Street to Albany and we went up Albany Street. We went west on Albany Street towards the water. At that point in time we took the firefighter into a garage. There's a parking garage, a little street on the south side of Albany just a little bit west of West Street. It's a parking

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garage that has something to do with the building. We took the firefighter in there. He had a groin injury and he was bleeding from the back of his head.

At that point in time Dr. Kelly appeared.

She looked at the individual. She said we had to transport him, get him out of there. We had him on a back board. We picked him up and started taking him out when all of a sudden -- later on we found out that 1 Trade Center collapsed. So we went back inside, put him down, tried to secure him as best we could because the whole scenario started all over again. It got black, the dirt was flying, there was debris all over the place. We tried to stay out of the way because things were flying all over. How long we were in there? I don't know. A couple of minutes. It started to lift again.

We went over and administered again to the firefighter. Dr. Kelly was still there. We picked him up. We brought him outside. There was an ambulance outside, which we took. We put him in the back of the ambulance and we drove him down Albany Street to the water, where he was subsequently put on some type of police launch or something.

At that point in time I was at Albany Street

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and the Hudson River on I guess the promenade over there. There's a sidewalk promenade. I saw a fireboat. A marine company was out in the water. They were standing offshore. I flagged the marine company down. I told them to come in. They came in and they came up alongside the seawall.

I spoke to the pilot. I asked him where his officer was. He said he didn't have an officer; he didn't know where he was. I told the pilot to tie the boat up. He said do you want me to take people off? I said no, I want you to tie the boat up and I want you to stretch two lines from the boat onto Albany Street, because they had a water problem down at West Street. So I felt that, since there was nobody else around to do anything, stretching the lines would be the best thing.

At that point in time fire officers started to appear. They came up. They wanted to know what they could do. They had rigs with them. We wound up ultimately stretching two lines from the boat supplying pumpers. The pumpers also stretched lines to the West Side Highway where they supplied the manifold. After that we were basically tending to injured firefighters and injured civilians along the water. Subsequently, I

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worked my way back down to West Street.

After that, I don't know. Everything is a blur. Somehow I wound up on the other side of the bridge, which we couldn't get by. We had to go through a building to get around. I don't even know what building I went through, but somehow we got around and I wound up back up on Vesey and West or the other side of the incident, and then subsequently I wound up back up onto I guess Chambers, somewhere around Chambers where the command post was, and from there I worked my way east and we wound up at City Hall Park where I met up with one of my guys from the Field Com Unit.

When we left City Hall Park, we walked down I believe it was Barclay Street, Barclay and Church, I think. There's a church on the corner, right? Yes. St. Peter's Church.

As we were passing St. Peter's Church, the captain of Ladder 102 and the lieutenant from Ladder 102 were coming out of the church and they informed me that they had Father Judge's body inside the church. They had brought it from wherever they recovered it into St. Peter's Church.

At that point in time Tom McGonigle from the Field Com and myself went into the church. We went up

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to the altar. They had Father Judge on the altar. He was wrapped in sheets, some type of white sheeting, and they had him laying on the altar. We knelt down. We said a prayer.

We left the church at that point in time and proceeded down Barclay Street and again somehow worked our way around back to West and Vesey -- how I did that I have no idea -- where I met up with Father Delendick and another chaplain who I know him but I can't recall his name, and I informed them about Father Judge and where he was, and at that point in time they said they were going up to the church to see what they could do for him.

After that I just wandered around the site for a while, I really don't recall what I did, ultimately winding up in a McDonald's finding a telephone, and that's about it. I met Commissioner Fitzpatrick, Commissioner Drury, and Commissioner Fitzpatrick and I ultimately came back to headquarters to try and get things together back at headquarters since everybody else was at the site, and that's basically it in a nutshell.

Q. Do you recall at any time, particularly when you were on West Street, any companies whose vehicles

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may have been parked near where you were?

A. No. I know I was with an officer from Ladder 146, a Lieutenant Evangelista, who ultimately called me up a couple of days later just to find out how I was. We both for whatever reason -- again, I don't know how valid this is with everything that was going on at that particular point in time, but for some reason I thought that when I looked in the direction of the Trade Center before it came down, before No. 2 came down, that I saw low-level flashes. In my conversation with Lieutenant Evangelista, never mentioning this to him, he questioned me and asked me if I saw low-level flashes in front of the building, and I agreed with him because I thought -- at that time I didn't know what it was. I mean, it could have been as a result of the building collapsing, things exploding, but I saw a flash flash flash and then it looked like the building came down.

Q. Was that on the lower level of the building or up where the fire was?

A. No, the lower level of the building. You know like when they demolish a building, how when they blow up a building, when it falls down? That's what I thought I saw. And I didn't broach the topic to him, but he asked me. He said I don't know if I'm crazy,

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but I just wanted to ask you because you were standing right next to me. He said did you see anything by the building? And I said what do you mean by see anything? He said did you see any flashes? I said, yes, well, I thought it was just me. He said no, I saw them, too.

I don't know if that means anything. I mean, I equate it to the building coming down and pushing things down, it could have been electrical explosions, it could have been whatever. But it's just strange that two people sort of say the same thing and neither one of us talked to each other about it. I mean, I don't know this guy from a hole in the wall. I was just standing next to him. I never met the man before in my life. He knew who I was I guess by my name on my coat and he called me up, you know, how are you doing? How's everything? And, oh, by the way did you... It was just a little strange.

Q. On the television pictures it appeared as well, before the first collapse, that there was an explosion up on the upper floors.

A. I know about the explosion on the upper floors. This was like eye level. I didn't have to go like this. Because I was looking this way. I'm not

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going to say it was on the first floor or the second floor, but somewhere in that area I saw to me what appeared to be flashes. I don't know how far down this was already. I mean, we had heard the noise but, you know, I don't know.

Q. You talk about your drivers. Who were they?

A. EMS personnel. I had Sam Harris, who works up here, I had Captain Frank D'Amato and Captain Jason Pinkus. Four of us were in the car together. Captain Pinkus and Sam Harris went in one direction and Captain D'Amato and I went in the other direction. So, when the collapse happened, we didn't know where the other people were. We were sort of separated in the middle. And then ultimately I lost Captain D'Amato even in my section. I didn't know what happened to him. When it started to come down, I ran south and he ran sort of west into a building and that was the last we saw of each other.

Q. What about Chief Artie Lakiotes; did you ever see him again?

A. I saw Artie Lakiotes a couple of times after that. We were in the same area. I guess we ran in the same direction. I saw him after the collapse. We both went over and hugged each other and realized that we

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were both still there, and I saw Artie a couple of times after that.

Q. Where did you last see Dr. Kelly?

A. Dr. Kelly I saw last when we put that firefighter in the ambulance and after that I didn't see Dr. Kelly. I didn't know where she went.

Q. And you mentioned a Tom McGonigle?

A. Tom McGonigle was assigned to the Field Com Unit. I met him at City Hall. I think Tom was either coming in to support the Field Com Unit, he may have been coming in from home, but I met him on I guess that's Broadway that runs down from City Hall. I met him on Broadway and then Tom was with me for a while and then I think he went to the mobile command vehicle to work over there and I lost track of him after a while.

Q. Where did you park the car initially when you arrived at the scene?

A. Sam parked the car initially right here. This was spot number one. And the stuff was falling down and I said get the car out of here. We turned the car around and we parked the car over here.

Q. Just for the record, you parked it on Vesey Street near West?

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A. Vesey --

Q. West of west?

A. Initially we parked it on the southeast corner of Vesey and West Street, ultimately moving it immediately to Vesey Street about two, three hundred feet west of West Street. My car was wiped out over there, too. All the windows were blown out and shrapnel and damage and everything. But that's where Sam parked the car, over here, and once we parked the car there, we came down here. I walked down West Street, I guess by the first tower, and then right about here we started to encounter people laying in the street, and then we continued on to here and I met Chief Barbara over here. We set up the initial command post over here, which is near Liberty.

Q. Which is the south bridge?

A. Right. And then we ultimately moved it in front of this World Financial Center building, No. 1, which is Dow Jones.

MR. McALLISTER: 1 World Financial Center.

Q. Now, as you proceeded down West Street, did you see a Fire Department command post set up on West Street?

A. No. I didn't see any command post. In fact,

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I didn't see anybody. That's the part that really it was like a ghost street. There was nobody there. I didn't see people. You know, I saw nobody coming out of the building. I guess, after a while, thinking about it, I assumed all the people went out through the promenade and came out this way, but I didn't see anybody here. I didn't see any people here. I saw parts of the plane laying here. I saw, again, bodies laying here, pieces of bodies, and then coming down here I met Chief Barbara, and then there were people down here, a lot of civilians down here.

MR. McALLISTER: Again, referring to West Street in the proximity of World Trade 1?

COMMISSIONER GREGORY: Yes, exactly.

Q. Now, you mentioned Chief Barbara's driver or aide, Gary?

A. Gary. I don't know Gary's last name.

Q. Did you see him after the collapse?

A. No, I didn't see Gary after the collapse. I spoke to Gary the other day. Gary came here to see me and Gary said that he was blown down, ultimately got up, and then somehow worked his way down, after helping some people, worked his way down, and then he wound up in a hospital somewhere, whether it be in Staten Island

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or Jersey or wherever, but he wound up in a hospital, I know that.

Q. The airplane parts that you referred to, they were on West Street or on Vesey Street?

A. I saw airplane parts on West Street.

Q. How did you know they were airplane parts?

A. It looked like pieces of a plane, skin of a plane. I mean, they weren't really discernible. I couldn't say this was this part of a plane or that was that part. Just knowing a plane had hit the building and I looked and I saw it looked like the skin off a wing or a fuselage or wherever it came from.

Q. Clearly not building material?

A. No. The building material was sort of gray and you could see it, you know, how it differed from the plane. I was listening to the tape this morning of the people calling up and they were describing the plane that hit the building. Actually, so many people saw it. They actually described the plane as it came in. They said it was a military-type plane and it was green and it was this. I mean, I never saw the color of the plane.

Q. Where were you when the second plane hit?

A. We were down at the command post between

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Liberty and Albany on the west side of West Street.

And after the second plane hit, somebody said they heard rumors that a third plane was coming in. Where they got that from, I don't know. But somebody said the cops said there's a third plane coming in. We didn't know anything about that.

Q. Did you see or hear the second plane before it hit the World Trade Center?

A. I never actually saw the plane, but I heard it. You could hear it coming in and then we heard the explosion and you could hear the roar of the plane coming in. At first I didn't realize it was a plane. I thought it was like the roar of fire, like something had just incinerated, like a gas tank or an oil tank. It sounded like a tremendous roar and then you heard boom and then there was a big fire, a lot of fire, a big fireball. I never actually saw a plane hit the building. I never saw that. I saw it on television, but I never saw it while I was standing there.

Q. I guess just one follow-up. You said West Street was empty. Empty as far as people being on the street or was there fire apparatus parked there?

A. There was fire apparatus parked there. But I guess I had expected to see like droves of people

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evacuating the building and we would have to get the people out of there, but there were no people. When I say no people, I mean relatively no people. There were a few stragglers here and there, but other than that, there was no volume of people. Again, later on, in looking and thinking about it, I would have assumed everybody probably went out through the promenade onto the Church Street side of the building. But I was surprised that there weren't more people in the street over there.

I never did see Commissioner Feehan. I never saw Chief Ganci. I never saw Chief Burns. The only person I really came in contact with was Jerry Barbara. And I never saw a command post because maybe at that time they may have been inside 1 World Trade Center when we passed by and then maybe when we passed by they came outside. But I never saw them. They were probably in the building. So I can't actually say that I ever saw anybody. I mean, I saw chauffeurs hooking pumpers up and stuff like that, but I never really saw any of those individuals.

That's unusual because usually -- and, again, I still to this day don't know why I went down to No. 2. I mean, normally, in the normal course of

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. McALLISTER: Thank you, Commissioner.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DRURY: Thanks,
Commissioner.

MR. McALLISTER: It is now 1610 hours,
October 3rd, 2001, and we're going to conclude the
interview. Thank you.