

D.A. CHESTER, M.D., regarding 9-11-01

I was sitting at a conference table in Washington D.C. with approximately 15 others. It was around 9 a.m. Simultaneously a secretary of my organization came into the conference room sobbing that there had been a terrible explosion at the Pentagon—she had just driven by—and one of the participants received a phone call from an associate in New York, warning her that the New York airports had just been closed because an airplane had flown into one of the World Trade Towers.

We rushed to nearby TV monitors and then saw the second Trade Tower airplane hit.

Of course the meeting was over and the scramble to understand what had happened and how were we going to get home began.

Our hotel was just three blocks away. From the door of the hotel one could see the smoke rising from the Pentagon just across the Potomac River from where we were. We had hardly arrived at our hotel before there was notice to evacuate our rooms and assemble in the lobby for further instructions. There were several important government buildings in the vicinity of our hotel.

The Washington, D.C., airports were immediately closed down and visitors to Washington began to make plans to leave. Members of our conference were from all over the U.S.: Tennessee, Texas, Southern California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Indiana, New York City, etc. Nearly all used rental cars for non-stop driving to their homes.

The bridges into Washington were all closed and Washington DC became empty. Subways and railroads closed also with no definite time for resumption of flights, etc.

Shirley and I had Washington, D.C., to ourselves for two days. The second day after the incident the Smithsonian reopened. There were just the guards, Shirley and I and a small smattering of foreign tourists, mostly from Germany and France.

After several days of being in limbo we drove to Nashville, Tennessee (750 miles) and caught Southwest Airlines to Houston and then on to Harlingen and home. The airplanes were only about one-fifth full.

Everyone was frustrated and sad. We were glad to be home.