Brian Gunderson

Chief of Staff, U.S. Representative Richard K. Armey of Texas

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript

June 17, 2011

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

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Project Abstract

To commemorate the events of September 11, 2001, the Office of the House Historian conducted a series of interviews with former Members and staff of the U.S. House of Representatives. This collection of oral histories provides a multi-layered narrative of the events on Capitol Hill that day, from the morning floor proceedings, to the evacuation of the Capitol and House Office Buildings, to the press conference and impromptu gathering on the Capitol steps that evening.

These accounts reveal how the House responded to the challenges facing the nation in the weeks and months following the attack. Interviewees describe the return to work on September 12, the President's address to a Joint Session on September 20, and the immediate changes in the legislative schedule. Some recall the implementation of new security measures, including restrictions on the mail in response to the subsequent anthrax scare. Several interviewees shed light on the role of Member offices in recovery and support efforts in the regions most affected by the violence. Individually, each interview offers insight into the long-term procedural changes that fundamentally altered the daily workings of the House. Together, the project's collective perspective illuminates the way this dramatic event transformed the nation, from Capitol Hill to congressional districts.

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov and the "People Search" section of the History, Art & Archives website, http://history.house.gov.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at history@mail.house.gov.

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Interviewer Biography

Kathleen Johnson is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: Women in Congress: 1917–2006 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006) and Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007 (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

—BRIAN GUNDERSON—
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson with the Office of the House Historian, and the date is June 17th, 2011. We're in the House Recording Studio, and today I'm with Brian Gunderson, who was the former chief of staff for Majority Leader Dick [Richard Keith] Armey of Texas. And we're here to discuss his memories of September 11th, 2001, and the anthrax scares later that month. To begin today, can you trace your morning of September 11th—the memories that most stand out in your mind?

GUNDERSON: On the morning of September 11th, I was the chief of staff in the Office of the House Majority Leader. It was a Tuesday, which is the day that the work on Capitol Hill really gets started, and so we had a particularly busy day scheduled. We had our meetings to plan the legislative activity for the week, and also Majority Leader Armey did a weekly press conference. On that day in particular, he was going to use it to give his view that the U.S. economy had entered a recession. He's a professional economist by training and so he was going to give his assessment, which we thought was going to make a bit of news because there was a big debate that summer over whether the economy was really softening, and which policies might have been responsible for it. So the day began with our morning staff meeting, which I chaired. Because of everything that was going on that day, there were a lot of moving parts, and it was going to be a busy staff meeting. We had to coordinate a lot of items.

As I walked into that meeting, I could see on the TV screen—like any congressional office, there's a lot of TV screens around—that a plane had struck one of the World Trade Center Towers. At the time, we assumed that it was a small plane. We knew right away that it was going to be a big story,

but I thought it was going to be more on a level like a bad school shooting somewhere: the kind of event that dominates national news but that doesn't really change what Congress does that day.

So we went on with the staff meeting. Went through the floor schedule that week, went through other items, and after a few minutes our press secretary, who'd been in the other room briefing Congressman Armey, came in and said that another plane had hit the second World Trade Center Tower and that it was clearly an act of terrorism. At that point, everything changed. We very quickly wrapped up the meeting, and I went downstairs from the third floor of the Capitol down to the second floor of the Capitol, to talk to Scott Palmer, who was the Speaker's [John Dennis Hastert] chief of staff. As I walked into Scott's office, I found him talking to David Hobbs, who was the White House's House legislative liaison. He was also the guy that had my job before I did, and I'd known him for years. I walked up, and David turned to me, and he said, "Hey, Brian, we're not going to do this congressional picnic tonight." That night, the annual congressional picnic had been scheduled at the White House. I still have the invitation, which is a little bit eerie to look at because it says, "The President [George W. Bush] and Mrs. Bush invite you to a Texas-style barbecue, casual attire, September 11th, 2001." It was an annual event—people looked forward to it, it was scheduled for that night, and David was telling me that they had decided to cancel it. No discussion, it was an obvious call. Whatever the larger meaning of this event may have been, clearly, at that point, hundreds of people had been killed in the plane crashes alone, and so it was just a no-brainer to not go ahead with the picnic.

Then Scott said that the House Sergeant at Arms, Bill Livingood, was going to brief the Speaker's staff on security, and he invited me to join. I said sure, and we went into the Speaker's conference room, where there were probably

30 members of the Speaker's staff, and sat down. Bill Livingood began the briefing, and he said something along the lines of, "We're not sure exactly what this is, but wherever you go today, just be sure to always carry your congressional ID, be aware of where the exits are in case we have to leave the building in a hurry." And then all of a sudden, one of the plainclothes policemen who was in the room—he was a Capitol policeman, part of the Speaker's security detail—suddenly stood up and said, "Look!" And he pointed out the window. He was sitting in a chair that allowed him to see out the window that looked out in the direction of the Mall. What he apparently saw was, if not the fireball, at least the column of smoke rising in the distance, which we know now was rising from the Pentagon.

I remember there was some quick discussion about is that Pentagon, or is that National Airport, is it a plane crash, what is that? But it was clearly something major that had occurred. That, coming on top of the news from New York, really drove home to everyone that something very unusual was happening. Bill Livingood got on his cell phone, he called his people and asked if they knew anything—they didn't. And he told them, "Well, check it out." Then he very quickly wrapped up that briefing, and we walked out.

I went up to my desk, which was a floor above the Speaker's Office, and I sent out a very quick email to our office staff, telling them what Bill Livingood had just said—keep your IDs with you, make sure you know where the exits are. Then I went back down the spiral staircase to the second floor of the Capitol when, all of a sudden, as I was walking down the staircase, I heard shouting from the direction of the Capitol Rotunda. My first thought was that a tourist had just cracked under the strain of all this unusual news. I walked towards the Rotunda to see what the commotion was

about, and, it turns out, it was a uniformed Capitol policeman shouting, "Get out! Get out! Get out!" Just very, very emphatically.

What had happened, apparently, is that the police had heard over their radio net that another plane was coming toward the Capitol—coming toward Washington, at any rate, possibly towards the Capitol. There was none of this walk, don't run, business. It was: Get out of the building as fast as you can, right now.

Our staff was divided up in separate offices. One of our offices was our floor office, which was off Statuary Hall, and so I went to that office to make sure that our staff there heard the news that an evacuation had been ordered. That office is an unusual space, it has a lot of different parts to it, and so I spent some time walking around the various parts to make sure that everyone on the staff who might have been there had heard that they have to get out. So that took a little bit of time. Then I left that office, went back upstairs to our other offices on the third floor to do basically the same thing: Go through our rooms to make sure that even people in separated offices had heard the word that they have to get out.

So I walk up to the third floor, turned down our hallway, and there was just a very unusual sight. Every door in that hallway was thrown wide open, but there was nobody there, which you never see. There's always a Capitol policeman there, or at least our support staff making sure that no one can just wander into the offices. But even doors that aren't normally used as doorways were just thrown open, which was a very strange sight. And so I walked through the offices, and it was completely deserted—everyone was gone. It was like walking through a ghost ship. It was just very, very eerie, to suddenly be in this space where there's normally a lot of activity, and it was completely empty.

Once I was sure that all of our staff had gotten the word and were no longer there, then I walked out of the building. I joined congressional staff and probably some Members on the lawn on the east side of the East Plaza. We were standing around there, just kind of talking to each other, and talking about what an unusual event this was. I remember one thing in particular—seeing a network news crew, a crew that normally covers Capitol Hill for one of the three major networks. The producer was frantically telling his crew to get their camera pointed at the Capitol dome. The reason he was telling them that was because he had assumed, as we all did at that time, that there might be another jetliner heading for the Capitol, and he thought it was important that his camera be in position to get the shot of that jet smashing into the Capitol dome.

Various other unusual things happened as we were waiting there. There was one point when we all heard what we thought was a very loud explosion. Looking back on it, I'm quite certain that it was a sonic boom caused by the jet fighters as they arrived over the city. At the time we didn't know that. All we know was that this bizarre event happened in New York, there was smoke off to the southwest in the direction of the Pentagon, and then all of a sudden we heard another explosion.

A lot of rumors flew around. One rumor that people believed for hours after that, was that there had been a car bomb attack at the State Department. Another rumor—someone said there's a fire on the Mall, which I think gives you an idea of the atmosphere that day. I wasn't sure what that could mean, to have the Mall on fire. It was a rumor that didn't make any sense, but there were all these wild rumors flying around. On a day when these very unusual events had happened, you didn't know which one was true or not.

At one point, the Capitol Police got the word over the radio to move the crowd even further back. They told us to move across 1st Street, I guess it is, move across at least to the Library of Congress. Again, they were thinking that there could be a very big explosion, or possibly a crash on the Capitol, and they wanted us to get out of there.

Eventually, myself and some other members of our staff that had gathered went to our campaign office that was a few blocks away on Pennsylvania Avenue. We went there, frankly, because we wanted to get in front of a TV set and be in a place where there were working phones so that we could find out what was going on. We went there for a while, and there were a lot of us piled into a very small office. I think it was at that point that we realized that not only had planes crashed into the World Trade Center Towers, that at least one of Towers had collapsed, and that the other one was in danger of collapsing. It was very obvious that this was just an earth-shaking event.

Before I moved into management jobs on the Hill, my specialty was foreign affairs and defense issues, and I'd spent a lot of time at one point dealing with, or looking at, some of the issues surrounding the first attack on the World Trade Center in the '90s. I remembered at the time realizing that what the terrorists had been trying to do at that occasion was to blow up one Tower so it collapsed into the other. There were estimates that if that had happened, as many as 100,000 people would have been killed, which was the rough number of people that were in those buildings. And so just watching what we were seeing on TV, knowing that at least one, and possibly two, of the World Trade Center Towers were collapsing, the thinking was that as many as 20,000 Americans may have just been killed. Needless to say, it was a very sobering thought.

I remember starting to think through what this could possibly mean, and, oddly enough, the one thing that came to my mind was, well, I guess we're going to have to do a defense supplemental appropriation bill, very soon, because it was clear that there was going to have to be some sort of a military response to this. I didn't realize at the time that we were looking at probably eight or nine years of defense supplementals as part of the 9/11 response, but it was clear that there was going to be a lot of things that were going to have to happen very quickly.

At some point I became aware that a lot of Members had gathered at the Capitol Police headquarters, which was on the Senate side of Capitol Hill, and so I decided to walk over there. As I was walking into the Capitol Police headquarters, I was met by Ted Van Der Meid, who was on the Speaker's staff, and Ted said to me, "Do you want to go where Armey is?"—where my boss, Congressman Armey is. I said, "Sure." He put me in a van. The van drove around to the West Front of the Capitol, where a Park Police helicopter was waiting. I got in that helicopter along with, I believe, Minority Leader [Richard Andrew (Dick)] Gephardt and Congressmen [David Edward] Bonior. Several members of the Democratic Leadership staff were there also.

So we all piled into this helicopter, and the safety instructions were shouted at us over the helicopter's engine noise. The helicopter rotors were spinning as it was getting ready to take off. We very quickly got inside. As soon as everyone was strapped in, the helicopter took off, and it began to fly us out to a location which I think is still classified. It was an "undisclosed location." So the helicopter took off from the West Front. I remember that on the first part of the flight, it was just really striking because—as one thing about 9/11 that everyone who was here that day remembers is that—it was an

unbelievably gorgeous day. It was the first cool day of fall. The sky was just this deep blue, all the leaves were still green because it was still early in September. It was just this gorgeous day, and so as the helicopter took off and flew right down the Mall, and there's this spectacular sight where you could see these bright white buildings along the Mall, the Washington Monument, the green grass of the Mall, the deep blue sky. But as the helicopter began to bank over the river I could look over to my left, and there's the Pentagon on fire. And I remember thinking that it just feels like a bad Tom Clancy novel.

I was looking at the backs of the pilots with their helmets on, and they seemed very depersonalized. They were just very mechanically going through their job of flying the helicopter very calmly, very professionally. It was very impressive. But there was just this strange sight, where here's the nation's capital, and clearly some kind of act of war had just occurred. So the helicopter flew off. We went deep in the countryside, and then landed at the undisclosed location. The helicopter landed, we got out, and this gentleman walks up to the helicopter, who I gather was the mayor of this facility. He was a civilian. He said something very chipper, something along the lines of "Welcome to _____," and the name of this place. And I remember being impressed that even though it's this guy's job to be ready for an event like this, he was, in fact, ready, and very calm about it. He probably went to work every day with nothing happening, and then his day starts like any other, and next thing you know, he's got all these government officials descending on him in these Huey helicopters. So he gave us a pleasant greeting, and, once again, it was a very nice setting, beautiful sky, a lot of trees around, fresh air. There were these guys standing in the landing zone wearing their gray urban combat uniforms, holding their M-16s, and we were ushered into the facility,

which was your typical Cold War-type bomb shelter. And we went deep into it.

There were obviously preparations for us to stay for a long while if we had to. Went through it, we crossed through one room that had a set of law books, a set of the U.S. Code, in case we had to do any legislating while we were there, and we were eventually brought down this hall that opened into a larger conference room that had two large TV screens. There was a conference table, a U-shaped conference table. Around that table was Dick Armey, my boss. The Speaker was there, other congressional leaders were there. They had made some snacks available. I remember that there were a few bags of Cheetos or Doritos and a few sodas that had been cracked open, and we all sat around and looked at the TV screen and watched—it was probably the loop tape of the World Trade Center Towers coming down. And that's where we stayed for several hours.

Over the course of the day, at one point, at least once, the Vice President [Richard Bruce Cheney] called from his own undisclosed location and told us what he knew about the attacks. At that point, Members were getting frustrated because it felt like we weren't doing anything but sitting in this shelter inside this room, and they wanted to get back and have some useful impact on events. So they said, "Well, when can we leave?" And the Vice President reminded us that the executive branch controls the helicopters. He said that in a joking way, but it was pretty clear that we were in the control of somebody else, at least for the moment.

At one point, they set up a call with a CIA analyst who told us what he knew, and what the CIA had learned so far, much of which, looking back on it, we know now was not particularly accurate or wasn't relevant to this situation. But, nevertheless, they gave us the best intelligence briefing that they could,

and we began to think through the various steps. I remember getting on the phone to the staff director of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and asking him to begin drafting a congressional resolution that could be approved as early as the next day condemning the attacks, which was one obvious step. There was some discussion over whether the House should go out of session for the rest of the week. And there was a view that that would be a serious mistake, that it would show that the terrorists can actually get us to stop our democratic processes, and that that wouldn't be the right way to respond to this. We all agreed that—I should say, the leaders all agreed—that they wanted the Congress to be in session, if not that day, then as the week went on.

JOHNSON: So there was some discussion at that point to try to go back into session on the 11th?

GUNDERSON: There was some. One thing that happened is that we began to get calls. In my case, I got calls from other leadership staff that were still at the Capitol Police headquarters with other Members of Congress. They basically were calling up saying, "Well, the mood's actually pretty ugly here." There were a lot of Members that really wanted to do something and wanted the House to be back in session. I think there was a certain contingent that took the view that, well, the terrorists will have won if we don't immediately go back into session today. We need to show that we can't have our work interrupted by this event. I think that at the leadership level I'm not sure there was ever serious consideration of having the House go back into session that day. At that point, we didn't know the extent of the attacks, we didn't know what further attacks there may be, probably didn't know for certain who did it (although, from the very, very beginning, everyone assumed it was Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden). And so I don't think there was any serious discussion

at the leadership level of going back in that day, but there was a lot of Member agitation that something should be done.

As the day went on, as it got into late afternoon, we very much wanted to get out of there, and so the leaders began to discuss what they should do next. Somebody voiced the view that, "Well, maybe we should just go home." And that point of view was quickly shouted down. There was a strong feeling that we at least had to go back to the Capitol and meet with the press. And so that was the decision. That was communicated back to the Members that were at the Capitol Police headquarters, that the leaders were coming back to the Capitol, and that there would be some kind of press event on the Capitol steps.

What happened next is that the Members in the Capitol Police headquarters decided to join the press event. That, I think, is how the Members of Congress ultimately gathered on the Capitol steps. I don't think there was a decision made that this was going to be all Members present getting on the steps, but I think that, spontaneously, Members decided that they wanted to be there. I think what the leaders had in mind was that they would make a statement—just the leaders would make a statement—on the Capitol steps.

JOHNSON: And just to stop you for one second, when you're referring to the leaders that were talking and making decisions in the secure locations, was it Republican and Democratic Leaders that were collaborating together?

GUNDERSON: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. At that moment, and through most of the period of responding to the attacks, everything was done in a very bipartisan way.

JOHNSON: When you first arrived at the location, the bunker, how would you describe the mood, or the atmosphere, when you walked in?

GUNDERSON: Well, it was just a very novel circumstance, and I think everyone understood the extreme gravity of what had happened. I think there might have been a little bit of gallows humor to lighten the mood a little bit, but I think there was a feeling right from the beginning that everything had changed, and that we were really in an entirely new—basically an entirely new world.

JOHNSON: What were your impressions of the Speaker during this period?

GUNDERSON: The Speaker was very calm, very decisive. He was thinking through what steps the Congress needed to take. I believe that he, in particular, voiced the view that it was important for Congress to be back in session that week.

JOHNSON: And what about for your boss, Mr. Armey? What are your impressions of him, especially in the hours after the attacks?

GUNDERSON: Well, it was the same feeling, that this was just a very, very novel situation. This was an act of war. It was the first time in our lifetimes that anyone had attacked the United States in anything like this way—just the disaster that we saw in New York, where the Towers of the World Trade Center actually collapsed. And again, at the time, we assumed that tens of thousands of people had been killed in the clip that we were seeing on TV of the Towers going down. I think that very early on there was some talk about how this is probably going to rank as the bloodiest day in American history. I think somebody knew that, I think, the Battle of Antietam during the Civil War had previously been thought of as the bloodiest day, when 20,000 plus soldiers had been killed in the battle. And there was a thinking that if there were 30, 40, 50, who knows how many thousands of people in those buildings when the Towers actually collapsed. It was just a stunning—it was just a shocking bloodbath. And there was the first initial thought about what we'd have to do to eventually respond.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that the Vice President reminded everyone that he was in charge of the helicopters, but how was it that the leaders and staff were able to make it back to the Capitol?

GUNDERSON: I think that as it got to be late afternoon, at that point, all civilian air traffic had been grounded, so there were no non-military aircraft flying over U.S. airspace. I think there was a feeling that the security situation had stabilized. There was some confidence that there weren't going to be follow-on attacks, at least not immediately, and so that it was safe to go back. Our leaders, as I said, were anxious to get back. There was some conversation, I think, with the military on site, as well as with the White House, that we wanted to leave, and so eventually the decision was made that, yes, it's time, we can get back in the helicopters.

So we boarded the helicopters, and at least two, I believe—actually, I think it was two—then took off again to fly back to the Capitol. That was actually an interesting flight, too, because helicopters, as you know, fly at fairly low altitudes, like maybe 3,000 feet. And so you're close enough to see in great detail the situation on the ground. We were passing over just beautiful countryside with these, I remember seeing red barns and passing over a house with children's bikes in the driveway, that sort of thing, and it was just a really wholesome American scene, and yet you knew that something was very wrong with the world that day. It just seemed very surreal.

As we approached the city, I remember at one point passing over the Capitol Beltway and looking down, and there was some traffic on the beltway, but not much—not as much as you'd expect on a Tuesday afternoon. We passed over some office buildings in Northern Virginia that had dump trucks parked at the entrance to their parking lots to prevent possible car bomb attacks, I think, and their parking lots were empty. And so on the one hand it was a

very pretty scene, with the sun setting, and everything seemed very neat and very organized, and yet you could tell that there was something very, very wrong.

We flew back into the city, landed in the same place, on the West Front of the Capitol, and then were driven around to the East Front, which was where this press event was going to take place. When we got there, Members were gathering on the east Capitol steps, and the leaders huddled to think through what comments they wanted to make. And then at that point, I remember one of the plainclothes Capitol policeman on Congressman Armey's security detail, walked over to me and said, "Brian, I just want you to know, we got this report over the radio that there's a semitruck on Constitution Avenue heading this way, and it's refused orders to stop." At this point, all this stuff had been going on all day, we were all tired, we had been dealing with bizarre rumors, and I think his attitude, and frankly mine, was, well, somebody should watch it and let us know. But we weren't going to scatter. And so we went on with it, despite the fact that there was this strange possible new threat.

The press conference was about to start, and the way I remember it, I believe it was Dick Armey that actually started the singing of the "God Bless America." At any rate, the Members broke into song and fortunately didn't attempt the national anthem, but sang "God Bless America." I don't know if I ever actually saw it on TV because, of course, I was working that night, and so I didn't see the news. But, anyway, it was certainly a moving thing to watch at the time, and I think it was a reassuring image for Americans to see on TV.

JOHNSON: What happened after that meeting on the steps?

GUNDERSON: After that, that evening, the Members went back to the Capitol Police headquarters. There was a feeling that the Capitol itself needed to be further secured before Members could go back into their offices, so we went back to the Capitol Police headquarters. There was a security briefing, which was given by the House Sergeant at Arms, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, and also Robert Mueller, who was the FBI director. He was the brand-new FBI director. He was literally days in the job, but he did a very good job. He was very much in command, very calm. They went through a briefing explaining what they knew, and Members were allowed to ask questions—for the first time that day, really had a chance to ask questions of some officials that might actually know the answers. One of the questions was, well, we heard an explosion, which I think is referring to what I now believe was the sonic boom that we had heard that morning. It was a little bit jarring that they didn't know what that was. We were convinced there was an explosion. Somebody asked about it—I believe it might have been Mr. [Thomas Dale] DeLay—asked what that explosion was, and I believe it was the Senate Sergeant at Arms, but at any rate, one of the briefers said, "Well, it might have been a fraternal blast from the Pentagon." I think what he meant was that airplane hits the Pentagon, airplane explodes, and might ignite something else, and so it caused what he referred to as a fraternal blast. But the fact that they weren't exactly sure, that we were all positive that we had heard an explosion, and they didn't have an answer—that just added to the very unsettling mood.

So we had that briefing. Leadership staff and leaders were doing a lot of work because I think at that point, we were already looking at the resolution that would be brought to the floor condemning the attacks, and so there was some work there, and then I think it was probably 11:00 or midnight that it was simply time to go home. A lot of us had interesting experiences going

home. I remember my commute was down I-395, which went by the Pentagon. That night, but in fact all that week, going by the Pentagon, you could still smell what smelled like a wood fire. You could still smell the burning of the Pentagon from the attack.

JOHNSON: By that point that evening was it decided that the House would be in session on September 12th?

GUNDERSON: Yes. I think that by that afternoon, that was the absolute intention. Again, I think that if there was any discussion about going back into session on the 11th itself, that idea wasn't discussed for very long, because the security situation simply didn't allow it. But there was a strong feeling that the House needed to be back in—partly for symbolic reasons but also because there was serious work to be done.

JOHNSON: Before moving on to the 12th, I just wanted to back up for one minute. As Majority Leader, Mr. Armey, was there a plan in place to evacuate him in case of any kind of emergency?

GUNDERSON: I don't believe so. There were very elaborate plans, of course, for the Speaker, because the Speaker's in the line of presidential succession. The Majority Leader is not, and so he had his own security detail, but I don't believe there was a particular plan to evacuate him from the complex. As I understand it, when I was down talking to Scott Palmer and talking to our staff, and reacting to the Capitol Police shouting that we should get out of the building, Congressman Armey's security detail very quickly hustled him out of the document door to the Capitol onto the East Front. Then they got into his official vehicle and left. But he didn't have any particular place to go. There was no assigned relocation position, which I think would be the case today. At some point, he asked the detail, "Well, where'd the Speaker go?"

And the Speaker had gone to Andrews Air Force Base following, again, the very elaborate procedures that they have for the Speaker of the House. Congressman Armey said, "Well, take me there." So then he went to Andrews Air Force Base, and, at that point, I believe, he linked up with the Speaker, and then was flown out to the "undisclosed location" with the Speaker.

JOHNSON: As chief of staff, you're responsible for a lot of people. How did you stay in touch with them on the 11th?

GUNDERSON: Communication on September 11th was a real problem. First of all, communication, generally, back then was somewhat primitive by today's standards. We had Blackberrys, but they weren't Blackberry phones. We had moved out of the Capitol so quickly that a lot of people were stuck without—women were stuck without their purses, men didn't have their suit jackets, and a lot of people didn't have their cell phones and their Blackberrys. I remember all that day thinking, boy, I sure am glad I have my whole gun belt with me because I had both my Blackberry and my cell phone, and so it was actually fairly easy for me to at least send messages out. The problem was that not everyone had that. I think there were also some problems with the cell phone system being overloaded.

Today, of course, both on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch, there are drills in which employees are told where they should go if they have to leave their building. Back then, there were no arrangements like that, and so we didn't know where a lot of the staff was, we didn't know where a lot of the people were. And so it was a challenge.

JOHNSON: The helicopter ride that you took to the secure location, you said that you think that you were with the Democratic Leader and the Democratic Whip

at the time and other staffers. Were people talking on the helicopter? What was happening?

GUNDERSON: No, not really. For one thing, it's a very loud helicopter, and so you couldn't really have a conversation. My only impression from the helicopter ride are looking at the backs of the two pilots, and just thinking how professional they seemed, even though this had to be an extremely novel event for them landing the helicopter actually on the West Front of the Capitol. Maybe they practiced that at some point, but it certainly is not something that happens very often. And yet they seemed very calm, just going through their checklist, flicking the switches, and then working the controls and having the helicopter take off. That was very impressive. And they seemed to know exactly where to go. In a way, I shouldn't be surprised. Since the beginning of the nuclear age, there have been provisions made to quickly get the nation's leaders out of the national capital area. But, nevertheless, it was still very impressive that on a day that started just like any other day, these guys were on the ball and able to do their job.

JOHNSON: Did the Republican Leaders work closely with the Democratic Leaders on that day, on 9/11, and in the weeks following? Was there a lot of collaboration between the two?

GUNDERSON: Yes. In that era, the partisan divisions were pretty stark, and so the parties generally didn't work together, particularly in the House. And crafting bipartisan legislation just happened rarely. It happened on some bills, like an education bill, maybe. Relations between the Republicans and the Democrats were not good. But this was an act of war, the country was clearly at war, and so right away that shifted, and there was an understanding that we should certainly work together in order to reassure the country and in order to show our friends as well as our enemies abroad that we were united.

Starting on that afternoon, we started thinking through, with the Speaker and Mr. Armey talking to Minority Leader Gephardt and David Bonior, what the House schedule should be for that week, what the House should do, how they should react. Very soon after, in the days immediately following the attack, on Wednesday and Thursday, one of the immediate tasks was to pass a War Powers Resolution, authorizing the use of force against the terrorists, or anyone who may have aided them. And so there was quickly a bipartisan group put together on that document. There were some disagreements in that group.

I know that the Vice President's legislative staff had the lead on it for the White House, and they wanted a very expansive document that could cover a lot of contingencies. I think that some of the Democrats thought that might be pushing too far. I know that the Speaker and Scott Palmer, the Speaker's chief of staff, felt very strongly that whatever's brought out of there needs to be something that passes by a very, very large margin. It wasn't just a matter of the vote count. It was understood that in this environment, if you put a War Powers Resolution on the floor, it's going to get a very lopsided vote no matter what. But he wanted something that both parties were very comfortable with, not just that would secure the votes, but that the Democratic Leaders were comfortable with. So there was a prolonged negotiation that went on in an effort to arrive at something that people were happy with.

JOHNSON: Speaking of that day, we'll jump ahead, since you talked about that vote. Barbara Lee was the only Member to vote against the war resolution on the 14th. Do you think it surprised the leadership that there was anyone at that point that was dissenting, or did they expect possibly more Members to dissent?

GUNDERSON: No, I think they expected a near-unanimous vote. When you have a 435-Member house, if you have one or two people voting no, that's still effectively a unanimous vote. I think even after Pearl Harbor—in fact, I think we discussed this at the time—when the House voted the declaration of war on Japan and Germany, there were one or two dissenters.

JOHNSON: Jeannette Rankin.

GUNDERSON: A very small—I'm sorry?

JOHNSON: Jeannette Rankin.

GUNDERSON: Okay.

JOHNSON: The only one [to vote against the war resolution on December 8, 1941, against Japan].

GUNDERSON: Yes, some very small number, and so I don't think it struck people as all that unusual that there was one person that voted against it, but there was a real feeling of unity. The whole atmosphere those days was—it wasn't so much anger as partly just sadness because we knew that we had entered a very different era and a very dangerous time, and that striking back at the individuals that did this was going to be extremely difficult. And that whatever happened, the fact that the terrorists had managed to pull off this spectacular attack advertised our vulnerability to this kind of thing. There was just this universal feeling that we're looking at years of attacks against civilians and that we had entered this really, really grim period. But there was also a lot of determination and a kind of a quiet resolution. So I think we expected the War Powers Resolution to have a strong bipartisan vote, it did have one, and there was a lot of very strong Member support for all the war measures that were passed in the coming weeks.

JOHNSON: You had mentioned Scott Palmer, who was the Speaker's chief of staff. Did the two of you work closely with Steve Elmendorf, who was Gephardt's chief of staff at the time?

GUNDERSON: Yes. Scott would have been the main contact with Steve. As I said, it was a little bit unusual, because relations, even on a personal level, between Republicans and Democrats, in the months leading up to 9/11, were strained. One thing I remember is about the House Republican Conference, which is very much a party organization: One of its jobs is to distribute the party's communications themes to Republican members on various issues. It became necessary to do some sort of a joint event with the Democrats, essentially a joint conference meeting—an informal meeting with all Members, not just with the Republicans—and there was a scramble to find the right phone numbers or identify the right people to talk to because it simply had not been part of the Republican Conference's role to be communicating with their counterparts on the Democratic side before that.

JOHNSON: On the 12th, the House is back in session, and you mentioned that there was a resolution, a joint resolution condemning the terrorist attacks that was put forth. Do you remember anything specifically about this? Was there a historical inspiration? You talked about World War II when drafting this, and any memories from that day on the 12th with the resolution?

GUNDERSON: I do think there were a lot of people that were bringing up the analogy of Pearl Harbor, and that this was an attack like Pearl Harbor. More Americans had been killed on American soil the day before than had occurred at any period since the Pearl Harbor attack. There was a lot of talk like that. And so there was the thinking that this was a War Powers Resolution on par with declarations of war in past episodes.

JOHNSON: How would you characterize the atmosphere on the 12th, when people were first returning to the Capitol?

GUNDERSON: Well, I think a lot of people were stunned. As we came back to work to the Capitol on that morning, the morning of the 12th, there were a lot of changes. There were new security barriers that were thrown up, there were military Humvees with 50-caliber machine guns on top, with soldiers manning them. At a glance, it looked like there'd been some kind of a coup. It was just a really unusual sight to see this very, very, very heavy security all around the Capitol complex. Security to get into the building, security to get our cars into the parking lots was greatly tightened. A lot of people, a lot of leadership staff actually—including myself—used to park our cars on the East Capitol Plaza itself. We used to just drive up and park right behind the Capitol. That, of course, changed right away. Nothing like that was going to happen again under this much tighter security situation. So there was that.

Also during that week, there were—it was either that week or into the next week—but there were occasional new security alarms. There was one moment—I think it was that first week—where the Capitol had to be evacuated again. It happened by surprise, no warning. Just all of a sudden the alarms went off, people had to get out. What had happened is that the Capitol Police, in their stepped-up security measures, were making regular runs through the course of the day with bomb-sniffing dogs. One of them had smelled something funny, and so the Capitol Police ordered an instant evacuation of the Capitol. After that, I think the Speaker and others felt that we really need to tighten the procedures here and that someone should check with somebody before that kind of a dramatic step is taken. In that case, it turned out to be a false alarm, which is what, as we left the building, we expected it to be. It was a very jittery environment.

There was a feeling that there could be further attacks. I remember at one point, we had a conference meeting in the Ways and Means hearing room in the Longworth Building. And I remember joking with a friend of mine. I said, "Well, I'm going back to my office over in Ground Zero." And that was before the term Ground Zero specifically meant the World Trade Center. There was just a feeling that the Capitol building had these crosshairs on it and that it could be subject to attack again. There was a strange feeling that we're always going to be under threat from now on.

JOHNSON: On that day, on the 12th, there was a Member briefing, a security briefing, on the House Floor. Did these become common occurrences in the weeks and months after the attacks?

GUNDERSON: I think so. In the weeks and months after the attacks, they added a whole several new layers of security procedures. I think it wasn't long after September 11th that Members were each issued Blackberrys. Blackberrys were new at the time, not everybody had them. It was unusual for Members to have them. They were mainly carried by staffers. Everyone realized that it was not a good situation on 9/11 that the police and others were not able to get word to Members very quickly about what the security situation was. And so they were all issued Blackberrys for security reasons. In fact, I seem to recall that there was a period there where Members generally carried two Blackberrys—their personal Blackberry, as those came into more common use, but also a special security Blackberry, which was issued by the—if not the Capitol Police, then at least by the House Sergeant at Arms or central House offices.

JOHNSON: As leadership staff, were there any special security briefings that you took part in?

GUNDERSON: I think there were special briefings for people that worked in the Capitol. I certainly remember that there was a lot of physical work being done at the Capitol, even then. I remember that, for example, workmen came in one day and put coats of, I think it's Mylar, a special coating on windows to prevent the windows from shattering by a bomb blast. And there was some irreverent humor about how absurd it is to think that this piece of plastic is going to stop a plane from hitting—it was going to cause a plane to bounce off the building. So there were just stupid jokes like that, but I think continuously, for months after 9/11, probably continuing almost to this day, there's been regular upgrades in security around here. I started working at Capitol Hill in the 1980s, and, looking back, I can see just different layers of security that were added based on events. There was the layer of security that was added because of the car bombs in the Middle East in the early 80s, in Lebanon and other places. There's the Tim McVeigh layer of security, after the Oklahoma City bombing [in 1995]. There's the layer of security that was added after the Capitol shooting in 1998, I believe?

JOHNSON: '98.

GUNDERSON: And so it all just keeps adding, never goes away. New security was added during the Persian Gulf War in 1990, and then all of a sudden 9/11 happened, and very, very elaborate security precautions were put in place.

JOHNSON: Do you think, especially in the wake after the attacks, that it served as a hindrance in any way to the work of Members and staff and what they needed to get done?

GUNDERSON: Yes. It became harder to move around the Capitol. Today, as you know, if someone doesn't work at the Capitol but wants to visit somebody that does—someone on the outside, I should say—wants to come into the

Capitol and meet with somebody, you have to check in at the security desk, you have to get a pass, you have to say exactly where you're going. Back then, before 9/11, there was much more free movement around the Capitol. Anybody could really just walk into the building. All they had to do was go through the metal detectors. It's absolutely necessary that it is the way it is today, but is it a hindrance? Yes. There's much less free contact. And after the anthrax attacks, of course, then the physical mail became just very, very difficult to get into the building—or to get into the House office buildings, the Senate office buildings.

JOHNSON: Specifically for you, did your daily routine change dramatically after 9/11?

GUNDERSON: Well, the agenda we were working on changed dramatically. I think that outwardly, the routine was the same. You know, staff meetings in the morning, leadership meetings with Members in the afternoon, floor activity, all that stuff happened. But the difference was that the substance was completely different. Next thing you know we're doing the PATRIOT Act before it was called PATRIOT Act, to change some of the rules to allow new kinds of surveillance and new law enforcement capabilities in order to fight and resist and prevent terrorist attacks. So we had that. There was legislation to aid the airlines that were instantly put into a very critical position once air travel was restricted as it was after 9/11. Gigantic appropriation bills with very few restrictions, where money was just given to the executive branch to aid the relief effort in New York, as well as to fund what today we would call Homeland Security measures, plus military measures that might be taken against the terrorists and their friends. Our whole agenda became just very oriented towards security items.

JOHNSON: For how long do you think this lasted, that the legislative priorities and focus were a direct result of 9/11?

GUNDERSON: Well, probably certainly until the next spring. It was very intense that fall. There was the immediate response, the War Powers Resolution, as I said, legislation to aid the airlines, the emergency appropriations to provide funding. We were doing the regular defense bill at that time that became a different piece of legislation as it went forward. In October, the anthrax attacks hit. That created certain kinds of activity. So through that entire fall, it was a very war-related atmosphere. I think then in the next spring, it probably settled down a little bit, but we were very conscious that we were living in the post-9/11 era.

JOHNSON: Can you talk a little bit more, in more detail, and maybe provide a few examples of your recollections of Mr. Armey during this period?

GUNDERSON: Sure. On the day itself, I remember him being fairly calm at the secure location. The mood was generally very business-like. But sometimes Dick would say something to try to lighten the mood. I think that he was concerned about his own family, as everyone was, so checking to make sure they were okay, trying to contact his wife and his children. And then as we did the hard work of producing the war-related legislation, there were just a lot of very long hours, but I think he understood that it was important.

He definitely understood it was important, but at times, there were some disagreements between us and the executive branch, where we wanted to follow a more inclusive process on the Hill, rather than simply trying to ram legislation through. In the PATRIOT Act, for example, Dick Armey was the member of the leadership that had the job of ushering that through, and seeing that the committee reported on time, and making a recommendation to the Speaker on what the floor procedure should be. So, Dick Armey and our staff was deeply involved in shaping that legislation, and Dick Armey was emphatic that there should be a full committee process, where Members are

allowed to offer amendments and concerns about the bill as originally drafted could get ventilated. I think that the White House was of the view—or the Vice President's office, at any rate—wanted the bill to come to the floor pretty much direct, without having a long process, partly because they were very anxious to get the new authorities that were in that bill. It was things like allowing the FBI to be able to talk to the CIA, which current law prohibited, which obviously makes absolutely no sense. When the danger is terrorists from outside the country coming into the country to commit attacks within our borders, you need to have the FBI talking constantly and sharing information with the CIA. And so the executive branch, for very good reason, wanted that bill to move quickly.

But, on the other hand, there's a congressional process here. You want the Members to have a chance to study the legislation. You didn't want to produce something that was going to have all kinds of mistakes in it that we'd be regretting in the future and then we'd have to correct. There was some concern about civil liberties, concerns not being given enough attention during the process. And so Dick Armey was taking the view that there needs to be regular order here. There needs to be regular congressional process.

JOHNSON: At this point, let's turn to the anthrax scare that took place about a month later, so this is still the follow-up, 2001. From what you recall, how did your office stay on top of the unfolding events during the anthrax scare? Everything was moving so quickly. Who was keeping you informed of what was happening?

GUNDERSON: This was 10 years ago. My memories might be a little bit off, but, as I look back on it, what I remember is that there was one day in particular that all of a sudden, these envelopes started showing up on the Hill, and there was a concern that it was anthrax. I remember being in some meetings, and at least

in one briefing, when the possibility that this was anthrax was being discussed, and there was someone on the Senate Leadership staff, the Democratic Senate Leadership staff, a woman who was pregnant, and she was particularly concerned, because if she had been exposed to anthrax, she wouldn't be able to take the drugs that are used to counteract the disease because she was pregnant. There was this real concern for the safety of the people that work there.

Then there was one moment, maybe it was the next day, that Congressman Armey was summoned to the Speaker's Office to meet with the Speaker, and I went down with him. We met in the Speaker's Office, the Speaker having just returned from the White House. And he said that there was a discussion at the White House between himself, the President, and the Senate Majority Leader. And the decision was made that we simply have to shut down the Capitol, for about three days, in order to make sure that the place is clean, and that there are no lingering batches of anthrax that could infect people. It was communicated to us as a decision. They talked about it at the White House, that's the way it was going to happen, and so there was no discussion.

And I remember thinking at the time that, gosh, this is really an overreaction. But there was no discussion, so we immediately began to talk about the mechanics of shutting down the place. And yet it was only a short time after that that people actually started dying from the anthrax attacks, and then I realized that my reaction, at least, was completely wrong, that it was, in fact, a very, very serious attack.

That was unusual, though, because we'd been going through this extremely busy period since September 11th, and then all of a sudden, boom, work just stops for three days. The Speaker's Office was, I think, deeply involved in setting up an alternative site if we were not able to occupy Capitol Hill on

future occasions, but, for us and for those three days, there was literally very little to do, and so it was almost like an enforced break right in the middle of this very, very intense period. So it was really unusual.

JOHNSON: The House Leadership received some vocal criticism, especially in the press, for actually recessing because the Senate opted not to.

GUNDERSON: Well, what actually happened that day—it's still annoying—what happened that day, actually, was they decided at the White House—the Speaker, Senate Leadership, President—that, "Hey, we better shut down Capitol Hill." And so Speaker Hastert came back and said, "We're shutting down Capitol Hill." And so the House left. There was a lot involved, we had to very quickly try to brief staff, we had to brief staff and Members on what was happening, but we basically left immediately. The place was cleared out, I think, by early afternoon on that day.

I think what happened on the Senate side is that their leadership got back to the Senate, and Members of the Senate told them, "Hey, we don't want to look like we're running away, we want to stay here. If there's a threat, well, we can tell our staffs to leave, but we want to stay and show that the democratic process is not going to be interrupted." We heard that same thing from our Members in the House side, but we accepted that there had already been a group decision to leave, and so we said this is what's going to happen. And so we left.

But the Senate—the Senate Leaders—when they heard the same thing from their Members, changed their minds and stayed. And so it didn't look good for us. I believe there was a lot of chatter on talk radio and elsewhere that the House—I don't think anyone called it cowardly, exactly, but I think it was a suggestion that the House had left precipitously, and should have stuck it

out. So the Senate made a brief stand of staying. But I don't believe the Senate actually had any real work to do, and when there's not a lot of real work to do, Senators tend to drift off, and I think that's what happened. Basically, the Senate side evacuated itself very quickly anyway.

JOHNSON: On the heels of 9/11 and having to evacuate the Capitol, and now you have the anthrax scare, what was the effect on staff at this point? Was there an emotional fatigue because so much had happened so quickly?

GUNDERSON: Yes. Yes. September and October in particular were just exhausting months. People weren't used to coming to work in a place where they felt like they were under personal threat, but they were. And the anthrax attacks—even at the time, it was far from clear what kind of attack this was. I say that because it's not like there was a unanimous view at the time that this must be Al Qaeda, this must be terrorists. I think there was a feeling that, yes, it could be domestic, it could be just some Unabomber-type individual who did this. Nevertheless, it was clearly a threat aimed at the institution. People died because of it. And the fact that the anthrax attack was so different from 9/11 and that both of them were very bizarre and very new created a feeling that anything could happen. It was pretty clear that the administration, presumably based on non-public information, believed that there was a very grave threat to the public safety.

I remember one moment in particular. We had a joint Republican Leadership staff meeting—House Leadership staff, Senate Leadership staff. And a person who worked for the Vice President doing legislative affairs and routinely came to those meetings, was there. At this particular meeting, she raised an idea. It was clear that she was uncomfortable raising it, but she just wanted to see what we thought, and she had obviously been told by someone at the White House to raise this possibility. She said, "Well, how do you

think your Members would react if you were asked to put a provision in one of the pending appropriation bills that said the executive branch would have the authority to continue to spend money in the event that two thirds of the Members of Congress were killed?"

This was something that I think had been talked about at various times, that if there was, say, a nuclear attack or something and Congress was wiped out, what happens then? But the fact that she was clearly told to come in and ask us to put a provision like that in, which would allow the executive branch to spend money even if Congress was no longer around to appropriate that money, made us wonder. I remember thinking, "Do you guys think that there are nukes in the sewer system? I mean, what do you know that you're not telling us?" The idea didn't fly. I don't recall it even getting very lengthy consideration. I mean it was just clearly something the Members were not going to do. But the fact that it was raised, it shows you what the atmosphere was like in those days where we felt like that there was a possibility that there could be very extreme attacks of very new kinds that could occur at any moment.

JOHNSON: As chief of staff, how did you balance safety concerns with the idea that you still had to run the Majority Leader's office?

GUNDERSON: There were some occasions, I believe during and maybe after the anthrax attacks, maybe right after 9/11, where we told staff that weren't directly involved in helping move legislation to the floor that if they were concerned they wouldn't have to come to work. But I think everyone understood, I don't think we really had to talk about it, that the work we were doing was important. It was critical to the U.S. response to what was, in fact, an act of war, and so we needed to do our jobs, we needed to come to work and get it done.

JOHNSON: Were there any major policy or procedure changes in the Majority Leader's office as a result of 9/11 or the anthrax scares?

GUNDERSON: We were, under the guidance of the security officials, given new procedures to follow if there was a further event that would force a rapid evacuation, and so we communicated that to staff. Everyone, I believe, started carrying around little cards that had all the relevant phone numbers, for example. I think everyone always carried cell phones and Blackberrys after that. So those sorts of things changed.

JOHNSON: I had a few wrap-up questions before we end today. With September 11th, what are some of your lasting memories, and, in particular, if there's one or two visuals that you think will stick with you no matter how much time passes, what would that be?

GUNDERSON: I remember most vividly the helicopter rides. Again, 9/11 was a spectacularly beautiful day. Not a cloud in the sky, deep blue. Everything was green. And flying over the city, particularly flying down the National Mall—which is where aircraft normally don't fly, at least not any aircraft I would be in—flying down the National Mall and seeing what is really just a beautiful capital—the Capitol building itself, the Smithsonian along the Mall, the Washington Monument rising up out of everything. It was just a really beautiful sight, and yet you had this horrifying juxtaposition of seeing the Pentagon on fire and realizing that our capital itself had been attacked. That feeling, or that view as the helicopter flew over the Mall and then up the Potomac, is something I don't think I'll ever forget.

JOHNSON: Looking back, is there anything that you wish you could change in the way that the Majority Leader's Office, or the Speaker's Office, or even the House in general, responded to the 9/11 attacks?

GUNDERSON: I actually don't have deep regrets about anything in particular. Obviously, in retrospect, it would have been better to have all sorts of procedures that could have been followed, but the fact is that we were able to get our people out of that building very quickly. The House was able to operate very quickly the next day. And the U.S. response to the attacks, and the congressional role in that response, was very vigorous.

JOHNSON: And what were your thoughts upon hearing the news, the recent news, of the killing of Osama Bin Laden?

GUNDERSON: I thought it was good news. I thought it was good news. I think the way it happened, the fact that he was aware right before he was killed that the U.S. had got him was a very good way for this to end.

JOHNSON: It's been almost 10 years since the attacks in 2001. Do you feel that you have any different perspective on the events of that day or how it might have changed the country?

GUNDERSON: When something that unexpected, that dramatic happens, and when you're facing a threat the extent of which is very unknown, it's very difficult to decide exactly what the right response is. You certainly don't want to underreact, and that was not our problem that fall. I think that there can be a danger, though, of overreacting. During the nuclear age, when this place—the country, and Washington and the government—first faced the threat of nuclear annihilation from enemy missiles, there were a lot of people who wanted to build enough bomb shelters to put the whole population underground or disperse the industrial plant and all that. Looking at the situation where you had all these ICBMs aimed at us, that was not an unreasonable position. But it requires a little bit of judgment to ask yourself

whether that's really what was necessary, and I think that a string of leaders through that period made the right decision there.

In the "War on Terror," you have the same thing. Are you dealing with individuals? Are you dealing with mass movements that could have a lot of reach and could do enormous damage? It's very difficult. But in that fall, just from 9/11 itself, even what we know now, it was a horrible event with 3,000 Americans that were killed. Right after it occurred, we thought it was 20,000 or 30,000 Americans that had been killed. There was a lot of talk about how Al Qaeda and the Taliban had been working with Pakistanis to try to acquire nuclear weapons in the months after 9/11. And it was a time when there was a real drive to make sure that the bad guys weren't able to do something—a further attack—that would be equally or even more awful than 9/11.

JOHNSON: Personally, how do you think the events of that day, of 9/11, may have changed your life?

GUNDERSON: Well, after 9/11, the whole way we looked at the world changed. As we all remember, the 1990s were just an unbelievably sunny period. The economy was booming, there was unprecedented peace and prosperity. America was clearly the lead nation in the world. In many cases our adversaries had just dissolved, such as in the early '90s when the Soviet Union simply just collapsed. There was a rush around the world to embrace democracy and free enterprise, and it really seemed like things were coming our way.

After 9/11, it's been pretty clear that we're living in a time where there's still just a lot of irrationality, a lot of hatred, a lot of fanaticism, people doing insane things, like launching suicide attacks. And then there are the events that have happened since then. The difficulties that we had in Iraq, the difficulty we've had in Afghanistan, the 2008 financial crisis. The world

we've been living in for this decade is just very different from the one that came immediately before it. I miss the 1990s, but I think that, to some extent, that was a time of a lot of illusions.

JOHNSON: Is there anything else you'd want to add that we haven't covered?

GUNDERSON: I think we covered it.