

September 11



Mary Ann Hanusa spoke about her experience working in the West Wing of the White House on September 11, 2001. At that time she was the Director of the Office of Personal Correspondence for President Bush. Her main responsibility was drafting personal letters for the President to sign.

Before September 11, the federal government did not have an evacuation plan. Therefore when the airplanes hit the towers, the White House employees were told to go to the mess hall in the White House. They watched TV there for 15 minutes, then were told to evacuate and run two blocks past Lafayette Park, a seven acre public park located directly across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. From there they decided to disperse.

All the buildings in Washington DC shut down and traffic was a gridlock. Mrs. Hanusa tried to go back to the White House to get her house key and car. Prevented in doing so, she went to a friend's work place, but it was being evacuated also. Next she took the subway to another friend's house. From there she called her landlord and he opened her house door to let her in.

The next day President Bush wanted everyone to go back to work, because he did not want the terrorists to win and shut down the entire city. Each month on the 11th of the month they would have some type of

recognition ceremony in the White House to remember those who had died.

The next two months were very busy at the White House. Mrs. Hanusa worked 15-16 hour days. After the Afghanistan war started, President Bush sent a personal letter to the families of each of the people who died in the war.