Biography

Born on December 3, 1948, in Selma, Alabama, Mr. J. Baron McIlwain is a long-time resident of Pascagoula, Mississippi. His parents were Julius Coleman McIlwain and Kathleen Folsom McIlwain. He attended South Elementary School in Pascagoula, and Pascagoula Junior High School, and he was graduated from Pascagoula High School. He earned a BS at The University of Southern Mississippi, and is the owner of a business, Magnolia Traditions, Inc., in Pascagoula. He married Jane Murray McIlwain on December 3, 1969, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and they have two children, Alice Kathleen McIlwain Berry and Julius Baron “Jay” McIlwain. At the time of this interview he had one grandchild, Folsom Berry. Mr. McIlwain is a member of First Presbyterian Church.
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Maynard: This is an interview for The University of Southern Mississippi Hurricane Katrina Oral History Project done in conjunction with The University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The interview is with Barry McIlwain, and it is taking place on February 22, 2007, at 1:45 p.m. in Pascagoula, Mississippi, at St. Johns Episcopal Church. The interviewers are Lucy Maynard and Kristin Wallace. So first of all we’d like to thank you, Barry, for taking the time to talk with us today, and we’d like to get started by giving some background information, which is what we usually do in our oral history interviews. So first I’m going to ask you, if you could, please state and spell your name for the record.


Wallace: OK. So first of all we would like to ask you where and when you were born.

McIlwain: Well, actually I was born here in Pascagoula in 1946 just before another big storm that we had in 1947. Anyways, I was born at the local hospital here in Pascagoula.

Maynard: OK. And for the record, what was your father’s name?

McIlwain: My father’s name was Julius McIlwain, and actually he had always lived here, and my grandparents lived here as well.

Maynard: OK. And what was your mother’s maiden name?

McIlwain: My mother’s maiden name was Kathleen Folsom; she was from Alabama.

Maynard: OK. And so where did you grow up?

McIlwain: I grew up here in Pascagoula, yeah, all those years. Actually, I grew up on the same street that my father grew up and where my grandparents lived, as well.
Wallace: So have you lived on the Mississippi Gulf Coast your whole life?

McIlwain: I have, except when I was off in college.

Maynard: And how many generations of your family have lived on the Coast?

McIlwain: Actually five, there are five now, my grandfather, my father, myself, my daughter, and my grandchild.

Wallace: And why were you living here? Why did your ancestors pick this place to settle?

McIlwain: Well, my grandfather was a physician, and when he first got out of med school a very long time ago, he was from Mississippi, as well, up in Wayne County, Mississippi. And there were just—there was—things were happening on the Coast, and there were some opportunities here; so he moved to the Coast and has been here ever since, and all of us have stayed here since then.

Maynard: So could you please describe your attachment to the region and what it means to you?

McIlwain: That’s kind of a hard question, but I’ll do the best I can to answer that. The—excuse me, I’m kind of hoarse—

Maynard: We have some water there.

McIlwain: I’m fine, it’s—I have this all the time. You know, having lived here all my life, I certainly have a warm place in my heart for the area and particularly for the property that we live on. As I said, my family has been on this property for five generations now.

Wallace: Um-hm. So where was your neighborhood?

McIlwain: We’re located in the south part of the town on this street called Columbus Drive. We’re actually down at the end of the street that dead-ends into the water of the inner harbor.

Maynard: And could you describe your neighborhood before Hurricane Katrina?

McIlwain: Yeah, it’s an old neighborhood in town, and this particular street is a mixture of mostly old houses built pretty soon after the turn of the [twentieth] century, and a few that are a lot older than that. And then there are a few of us, really myself and some cousins of mine, who have built new houses, oh, in the [19]70s. So it’s not a new neighborhood, by any stretch of the imagination.
Wallace: And could you tell us about your own house before the hurricane?

McIlwain: Yeah, we, actually my wife and I built this house in the 1970s on property that had belonged to my grandparents. And so we planned the house and built it, and thought we built it pretty structurally sound, and maybe we did because it was standing after the storm.

Maynard: Was it affected by wind or by water?

McIlwain: Yeah, by both of those things. The older part of town is, for the most part, is the higher part of town, so our property is pretty high, and we were built off the ground, as well. And the—we had about thirty inches of water in our house, and a portion of the back washed away, but the house remained intact. And we’ve been able to repair back to just like it was before the storm.

Wallace: OK, great. Did you stay in your home during Hurricane Katrina?

McIlwain: We did. We had—my son and I stayed there; my son who’s twenty-three. And the year before the storm my daughter and her husband, who had been living in Atlanta since she got out of college, and they have a new baby; they decided to move back to town and actually moved into my parents’ house. They bought my parents’ house and redid that that year, just in time for the storm. And so they left; with a young baby, they evacuated for the storm. So my son and I really started out over at their house because they have two big dogs that they didn’t take with them, and we just thought it would be like every other storm we’ve ever been in; and so we stayed at her house to take care of the dogs and, plus, that’s where I’ve stayed for every hurricane we’ve had all my life. And even though that’s an old house, you know, we just couldn’t believe it. It was mostly boarded up, but we could see a little bit out of the lights on either side of the front door. And so I was telling—my son’s name is Jay—and I was telling Jay, “Now, look.” The water, we could see the water kind of coming up from the street, and I said, “Now, that’s just where the water was from Camille.” And then all of a sudden we were looking around, and there was water up to the curb, and then there was water up to the steps, and then all of a sudden water started coming into the house. And so, that’s an old house. Although my house is new, it’s a little bit higher than that one, and we could look over and see that water was not yet in our house. So at my daughter’s, we put the—my daughter’s name is Alice Kate, and her husband’s name is Will—at Alice Kate and Will’s, we took their two big dogs. When they got married they each had a big dog, so they had two, an Irish setter that was hers, and a golden retriever that was Will’s. And we put them upstairs. And then we just tried to secure everything that we could downstairs by just putting it up. If we would open the door at the top of the stairs, the dogs would come down, would try to come down; they had no idea what was going on. So anyway, we did the best we could to put everything up in the house that we could. And then water still was not in our house, and we could see that because this happened during the daytime. It seems like most hurricanes in my life have happened at night, but luckily this was in the daytime. So we made a dash over to my house across; kind of it’s
catercorner across the street on the water. And the water in the street was probably about chest high. But anyway, but we could kind of walk, kind of wade through that and went in the back door, and we assumed that it was going to continue to rise; so we just started moving everything up as quickly as we could. We couldn’t move furniture, of course, so we just took drawers out of the furniture and just started hauling that upstairs. And a few valuable things that were small enough that we could think of, we did take those things up. And amazingly enough, we were really pretty smart about what we took up; we were trying to be. And it kind of did work out that we saved a lot of things that certainly would not have been had we not been there. We also made plenty of mistakes, too. There was lots of things that we should’ve taken up that we did not. And anyway, while we’re hauling all this stuff up, we were—there’s a bed of note that we happen to have that’s from my family; so we were trying to take this bed apart, this huge bed apart. There’s one bedroom downstairs and three up. We’re trying to take this bed apart and take it upstairs. Well, we were hauling one side up, one piece up, and we heard this, you know, this boom. And Jay said, “What is that?” I said, “I don’t know.” So anyway, we went back into that bedroom that’s on the water side of the house, and one wall of that was gone, and as was the whole back porch, and all that was—but we really didn’t know all that porch business was gone. So that kind of scared us a little bit, but the water was only six or eight inches high. The water was not twenty-four or thirty inches high, which is about how high it got. When that wall blew out, it was actually French doors, and all that around the doors all blew out. And it blew out, not in. And like I said, the water was just a few inches tall. So I can remember going in the room when the water was a little more than ankle deep and thinking, “Gosh, it’s just too dangerous; we have got to get out of this room. It’s just too dangerous to be in here.” And so we—and I also remember I wanted to look out; there’s just this huge, gaping hole in the room that looks out over the inner harbor over Lake Yazoo, but I just couldn’t make myself look out there. I thought, “Gosh, this is just too dangerous.” And now I’m so sorry that I never looked out there just to see what it looks like. But anyway, we tied off the door that goes into the hall that goes into that bedroom and sort of sat on the steps. And the house was all boarded up, so you really couldn’t—there was no place to see out except, except that gaping hole that we never did look out. And there are lights on each side of the front door, and we could kind of see out, you know, a little bit out the front door. So then the rest of the storm, we just sat on the steps that go to upstairs, and on the windowpanes of the lights on either side of the doors, we could watch the water and see when it got, when it stopped rising, and then when it started going down.

Maynard: Um-hm. So you have a two-story house?

McIlwain: We do.

Maynard: OK. And what were some of the things that you took upstairs?

McIlwain: Well, we tried—we took things like silver; we took pictures. We thought of—all of the pictures were in a secretary that’s downstairs in the bottom of that, and amazingly we thought of that and hauled all of that up. We took that drawer upstairs.
And then just drawers of like table linens and things like; not that we thought so much about that. We were just trying to get every drawer that we could upstairs. And we got a lot of them up there because you can take a lot at one time in drawers. And the one thing that I didn’t do is family genealogy stuff; somehow I’ve ended up with a lot of that from my family, and so I had—over the last couple of years I’ve been working on that, trying to get that organized. And this is wills from back in the 1800s, copies of those, and original letters from our forefathers to each other, and some things that are real interesting to me. Anyway, that was in a file in the bottom of my closet that’s downstairs, but I picked up that file, and I put it on top of my chest of drawers that’s real tall, that’s maybe six feet tall, and I put that whole file on top of the chest of drawers never thinking that—I thought even if water got in, it would never get that high. Anyway, during the storm—after the—then later all the doors washed out, and all of that room, all the furniture that was left in that room was like it had been in a washing machine. It was all swirling around in there. That all washed out, and so I found just a couple of things, but really not. It would’ve been so easy for me to have just taken that upstairs like I did everything else, but I didn’t. But all of that furniture, what was left in there was all upside-down, out. And I was telling you about this bed; it ended up, a portion of it, the footboard ended up in my neighbor’s house across the street. The footboard ended up on their deck; then there was a marble-top washstand that was in my house that ended up inside their house over there, still kind of all in one piece, amazingly enough. But anyway, so we found furniture as far as two blocks away; so a lot of it floated up instead of out, although I assume some floated out because we never found it. But we hauled that back home, and most of that has been, or is in the process of being refinished. A lot of it already has been, and everything else is. So we were glad to be able to salvage a lot of our own stuff.

Wallace: So where did your daughter and her husband and the baby go during the hurricane?

McIlwain: My wife went with them, also. And her brother has a house in Lake Barton, Alabama. It’s kind of a resort area; it’s a lake lot. He lives in Birmingham, and they have a lake house. And so they went there and ended up staying there the whole time.

Wallace: And they were OK there?

McIlwain: They were fine. Of course just worried about what was going on. We could just never—we just never could have imagined that this would be like it was.

Maynard: So what had made you and your son decide to stay?

McIlwain: We’ve always stayed here. And we’d—[Hurricane] Camille happened when I was in college, and we thought, “Gosh, we made it through Camille; so you can make it through anything.” And we tried to be smart about what we did. We had boarded up properly, and we thought we were doing the best, the right thing.
Wallace: How else did you prepare for the hurricane?

McIlwain: Well, when they evacuated, we didn’t take, when Jane—my wife is Jane—and when Jane left, she really didn’t—we didn’t have a plan about things to take out of the house that maybe we should have because we just had no idea it would be as severe as it was. Our preparing, we got all the boats out of the water, and all of the windows and doors boarded up, and just secure everything as best we can.

Maynard: Um-hm. So how and when did you hear about Hurricane Katrina?

McIlwain: Well, of course during hurricane season, when there’s a hurricane in the Caribbean, or even out further than that now, it’s on the news constantly. And I don’t watch the weather all the time, but Jane does. And so she watches the same thing over and over and over and over. So she keeps us well informed of what’s going on with the storm.

Wallace: And how long before did you know?

McIlwain: Days. But as far as what was going to happen, that it was going to be this severe, we [didn’t] know. I didn’t know that. And I guess I really couldn’t believe it; I just could not believe that it could really be this severe. We started preparing—I was, let’s see. I don’t think we started preparing for this until Sunday, and maybe we did something Saturday evening. I really can’t remember that part, but Sunday was a big day. So I got up on Sunday morning, and I worked around the house to try to start getting the boarding up and all that sort of thing. My son-in-law and my son were helping me, as we were helping them do their own. And so then I got dressed and went to church, and I’m trying to think of the whole sequence of events. So I had to get dressed for that, and then a good friend of ours, Dick Scruggs’ mother had died just when all this was—just as the storm was going on or maybe the day before, but the funeral was supposed to be on that Sunday afternoon. So I went to church, and we didn’t really have church; they called it off although there were some number of people there, and they called church off. And so while I was there, we were trying to find who was going to sing at that funeral, trying to take care—I was just helping the—we had an interim minister at the time; so I was trying to help him figure out some of the logistics for Mrs. Scruggs’ funeral. So then I had to go back home and work on the house a little bit more. By that time Jane had left. And then it was later in the afternoon; it was time for the funeral, so then I had to get dressed again. You know each time—it’s real hot down here at that time of the year. So I’m getting dressed all these times. So then I went to the funeral home, but the funeral had been called off because there was—everything was going so crazy here right now. So, but I hadn’t gotten the word on that. So anyway, then I came back home and got undressed again, and got into my work clothes again so that I could do some more boarding up and all that, and finally we got all that finished up. And then I got dressed again, and Jay and I, my son and I went out to dinner. There were restaurants still open on the highway, so we went out and had a dinner, not a good dinner but a dinner. And then
came back home and kind of got ready for the night, and things were pretty—things didn’t happen until the next morning.

**Maynard:** So how many hours before did your wife and everybody evacuate?

**McIlwain:** They left about noon on the day before the storm. And traffic was just horrendous. That’s another thing, the reason that I haven’t—my family’s just never evacuated since we’ve been here, but we’ve never had a storm like this either. Am I answering your questions?

**Maynard:** Yeah, definitely. So what was your reaction to the hurricane, like, as you were hearing about it? Did you think it was going to hit your house?

**McIlwain:** Well, I really didn’t know when we went to bed that evening, and so I set the alarm on—my son and I were over at my parents’ house, my daughter and her husband’s house. And so I set my alarm on my phone to wake up every hour just to see what was going on. So I’d wake up, and everything looked OK, and I’d go back to sleep, and then I’d wake up. And then the next morning, we looked around, and the weather was bad, but it wasn’t just horrible. So I got a call from my brother-in-law Jim who lives on the same street as we; he lives just up the street from us, and everybody was kind of calling on the phone. And so Jimmy said, “I just feel good; I just had a bath, and I’m all dressed.” This was about 6:30 in the morning. And then he said, “Damn, my TV went off, just went off.” And I said, “Mine did, too.” Well, that’s when everything kind of went crazy. And so from then until, I think it was like around three or 3:30 in the afternoon, we just kind of devoted ourselves to taking care of the storm.

**Wallace:** So what did you and your son do during the storm?

**McIlwain:** We worked. We were just moving stuff around. And first of all, we were just watching it like we always had, and we would go and peek out the door in the back and then go and peek out the door in the front and see what was going on. Then when the water started coming in we just, just absolutely could not believe, just could not believe that that was happening. And so then we really rushed to try to save, secure whatever and save whatever we could. And then we rushed over to my house, and then we did what we could, and then there was just nothing else to do, so we just sat until it was over. And we thought we were the only ones that were flooded. I had no idea that it was the whole town. Until all of this was over, we thought we were just the only ones. And I could see all in our neighborhood, and a little bit, and we had no idea that almost the whole town had several feet of water.

**Wallace:** What type of damage did your neighbors’ homes sustain?

**McIlwain:** Well, the three houses across from me that are directly across from me were—and also my daughter’s—were severely damaged. I actually brought a picture of the—and I know you can’t see on the tape, but I’m going to show you this. This is
my neighbor across the street that—and we were looking at this house; the whole front of it is gone. We were looking at this house, and there are two houses on either side of that are just about the same. I have pictures of those, but I didn’t bring them. But anyway, so we were looking out the door, and this house was this bad, but with absolutely no front left on it, but we never could see that. We could see, but it just didn’t register until after it was all over. And then I looked over at Alice Kate’s that’s about a half a block up the street from us, and the whole front door and everything around it was gone. All that was just washed away.

Maynard: Was there a lot of damage to your daughter’s house?

McIlwain: A lot.

Maynard: Yeah.

McIlwain: But it’s just amazing to see how resilient everybody is. One thing about them, they had just moved here the year before the storm, and they had redone everything in the house to make it their own. They had done everything to it that year. And amazingly enough, my birthday is just before the storm, and they were having a party for my birthday, and then to just celebrate the fact that they finished everything on this house that they had been working on for that year. And they were having our whole kind of extended family over there. Anyway, that party didn’t happen, but we did have it two years later, (laughter) or a year later. And they had, like I said, they had about four feet of water in their house. It’s a little bit less than ours—a little bit lower, although it’s an old—I think it was built in 1918 or something.

Maynard: Wow.

McIlwain: And they—but now it’s as good or better than ever.

Wallace: Great. What did you do immediately after the storm?

McIlwain: Well, when the storm started to be over, the water left real quickly, just like somebody pulled the plug somewhere, and all this water just leaves. And so just right after the water was gone, I looked out and there were—we kind of knew—well, I’ve got another story about that—but we kind of knew—I know everybody on the street, and I knew pretty much who was everywhere, and so I looked out there, and there were some of the Gautiers, our neighbors from all these generations, were wandering around in the street. So everybody’s checking on everybody to see what’s going on. So I walked out there, and of course everybody’s talking about what it looks like, what’s going on. And so right after that, the son of some of our real good friends, Ryan McCree(?), had been staying with the Gautiers for that; his parents had left. And so we walked down to their house on Washington Avenue; he wanted to check on his mom and dad’s house and see what’s going on. That’s not too far from us. Then when we got down there—and there was just nothing. As we were walking,
that’s when we first walked out of the house, we just could not believe it. And as we got closer to the beach where so many of my friends live, we just couldn’t believe it. I mean there was nothing, nothing left there. Anyway, the McCree’s house was there. They’re not back in it yet, but they’re working on it. And another good friend of ours, Perry and Gwen Thompson(?), their house— they’re just a block off the beach— was washed all the way through. Another of our real good friends, Hal and Mel[anie], and I walked by all these houses while I was there, Hal and Melanie Moore, there was absolutely nothing left, nothing left of this huge house that they had. And just to see all of that was just—I still, I still really can’t even believe it.

Wallace: Did those people stay here during the storm?

McIlwain: They were in town but not in their houses. They had gone; there was sort of mandatory evacuation for anybody around the water, but some people stayed. I only know of one person on the beach who stayed, and there could’ve been others; I only know of one. I was going to tell this one story about this couple called the Wellburns(?) that live on our [street], and Mr. Wellburn is maybe ninety-one or ninety-two, and she’s eighty-seven; I think that’s the age of the two. Well, they have lived on this street all of my life. I really don’t know when they came, but they’ve been there for a long time. And they have four sons, none of whom live here in town. And anyway, nice couple. They keep their yard neat and clean, and here he is ninety-one, and he’s out mowing the yard or trimming trees. It’s just neat and clean all the time, and they always have been real proud of their house and very nice folks.

Anyway, I had heard that they were going to Lucedale, this town up in the country from here, with Harriet, with Michelle Gautier and this other older friend named Bill Dallen(?). And all of them, Michelle was taking those, the Wellburns and Bill Dallen to the Murphy’s house in Lucedale. Anyway, after the storm was all over, I found out that the Wellburns would not leave because they’d been there for every storm. They would not leave. Well, here they are this old couple, ninety-one and eighty-seven, in this house by themselves—a one-story house, not a two-story house—and it’s an old house, but the property is—although their house is way off the ground, the land is a bit low there; it’s kind of a lower part. So they’re standing in this water almost up to their necks, and Lawrence Gautier, who is Michelle’s brother, knew that they were over there; so in the height of the storm, he and his neighbor actually saved the Wellburns. So they swim over there over the back way, from the back of their properties, swim over all these fences and get in there, and I think the story—I mean they’re real heroes. I think the story is that they had one life preserver, and they found some milk jugs or something and maybe, it may be a piece of plywood. So anyway, they floated. Lawrence’s house is two stories. And they floated Mr. and Mrs. Wellburn over all these fences and things in the back and got them to their house, and that’s where the Wellburns were for the rest of the storm.

Maynard: Wow.

McIlwain: So anyway, I mean that’s really a hero story of—five houses down the street that Lawrence and I think it was the Milling(?) kid, the Milling’s son who saved
the Wellburns. And since that time they’ve—a few days, when their, when one of their sons could get into town, he came and got them. I think he lives in maybe Tampa, Florida, came and got them and took them down there. And then Mr. Wellburn has died since then, and so has the other older guy, Bill Dallen, who lived by himself. Bill was ninety-one or two. And so anyway, he never made it back and died before he was able to get back in town.

Maynard: Um-hm. So it sounds like you had a really close community. Can you tell me about your community before?

McIlwain: Well, we’ve always lived there so we do have a close community simply because we’ve all lived there so long. I tell about ourselves; we’re five generations on this street. There’s a Gautier family that has lived there just as we have, through at least that many generations.

Wallace: What about your community after Katrina?

McIlwain: Well, it’s pretty settled, so it’s really about the same as it was before, except for the Wellburns. And everyone has worked hard to get their property back like it was, and in most cases better than it was, before the storm. And I think that’s kind of one thing about Pascagoula as I wander around now; everybody has worked so hard and are still working to get their life back in shape. And I kind of got this sense: everybody that could was doing everything they could to get their life back as quickly as they could. You know, there was some sense of pride there to do that, and they did.

Maynard: How long did it take you to get a hold of your family after the storm?

McIlwain: I really can’t remember. Somehow we communicated with them a little bit. They were, like I said, they were at Lake Martin(?) out from Montgomery. We communicated with them; we could text message some before we could talk on phones, but every once in a while, strangely, some phone would work somewhere in somebody’s house. My own cell phone, I had it on my belt when I was going from one house to the other in the storm, so that was gone. And my son had gotten his wet, as well. But every once in a while, I think Alice Kate’s phone would work sometime, and strangely enough, every once in a while the phone would work.

Maynard: So your wife must’ve been pretty worried when she couldn’t hear from you.

McIlwain: I’m sure she—yeah. Somehow we got in touch with them pretty quickly. I just can’t remember all of that, but and then somehow we could call somewhere, or somebody could call us. There was something strange about that. We couldn’t call within this, within our area code, but we could call outside of the area code. And so anybody that would call, and we would talk to anybody or talk to any of our friends who all have children who are all good friends, as well, and there’s somebody else,
they were all communicating all over the country, and everybody was scattered throughout all these states, all these other states.

**Maynard:** So how long was it before your wife and your daughter came back?

**McIlwain:** The storm happened on Monday, and Jane was my—Jane and—I’m trying to think through that. I think Jane and my sister, who was with her who—this is a strange story—but my sister is married to Jane’s brother. Brother and sister married brother and sister. (laughter) It is legal. But anyway, and we did not—we’re not kin, but although we do live in Mississippi. Anyway, Martha, my sister Martha was with her, and they came down; I think they came down on the Saturday following the storm. It was the first day they could get in. And the problem was, if you got here, you got to be able to get out, too, finding gasoline and things of that sort. So they came down to just kind of see what’s going on, and just—it’s just mind boggling.

**Maynard:** What was Jane’s reaction?

**McIlwain:** Well, everybody just talked about what was going on, but it’s not like seeing it. And so I can barely remember all that. She was certainly upset. It was an emotional time for everybody, but it’s all worked out. It’s all worked out. And she just could not believe it. And you see, all of these places of everybody that we know are just in shambles, if there’s anything left at all.

**Maynard:** Yeah. So I guess you were pretty thankful that your stuff was OK and your house was still there.

**McIlwain:** Well, that we found it, yeah. Yeah. So it’s really amazing.

**Maynard:** What about your daughter, after all the work they had just put into their house?

**McIlwain:** Well, (laughter) right at first, you’re just so overwhelmed that you just cannot believe it. You just can’t believe it. And then all of a sudden, and it’s really because of her husband, Will, who just figured out that they have no choice; you got to get in. Will’s not from here; he just kind of got adopted by this area down here, and poor thing, having to put up with all this. But he jumped in there and realized there was a job to do and just starting doing it, and was lucky enough to get some good people to help him. And it’s a lot to deal with emotionally; it’s a lot to deal with physically; it’s a lot to deal with financially. And but anyway, there’s some answer there, and of course it took a lot of faith. But they’re fine now.

**Maynard:** Were you able to stay in your house, and were they able to stay in theirs, right after?

**McIlwain:** They were not able to stay in theirs at all. The downstairs was—I mean they even thought they were going to have to tear the rest of the house down, but
didn’t want to simply because it’s an old house, and it’s been a family house. But, and then the upstairs, a portion of the shingles, a lot of the shingles were blown off so the upstairs, all the sheetrock was coming down upstairs. So they could not stay in their house. But at our house, although we had damage on the roof, our upstairs was OK. The downstairs, you certainly couldn’t stay there, but we have three bedrooms upstairs. And actually—so we moved what we had left and ourselves all upstairs, and they moved over to our house, too, with their baby. So it was pretty crowded there for several months. Alice Kate teaches school, so they did get a trailer pretty soon, which was nice to have, but with the baby, it was just so tiny. It’s hard for them and the baby to all stay in this one little room. So they ended up—they had a little privacy over there, but they really ended up staying at our house most of the time. And so we sort of camped out downstairs. And Christmas was a year ago, there were no floors, no walls, and we’re sitting on plastic lawn chairs all that time. So this year, now there’s nice floors and rugs down and clean space and everything; so it’s a lot different from this Christmas to last Christmas.

Wallace: Um-hm. How long was it before you were able to get the repairs done on your house?

McIlwain: We lucked out on this group. There was, through a connection through somebody I knew, there was a group in here from Florida from somewhere near Tallahassee, Florida, who were working on the billing office of my good friends, Hal and Melanie Moore. Hal’s a radiologist, and my sister works at their radiology group. Anyway, this guy named Brance(?) who is a friend of their administrator, their administration from here, but this friend is from Florida, has a construction company; so he came to do their, to redo their office as quickly as possible. And when he got here he saw how badly things were; so he said, “Well, maybe we’ll stay here and work a while.” So they stayed here, and we were just kind of like in the right place at the right time. So my sister Martha called and said, “Brance says that he wants to do some other things here, and he will stay. Do you want him to do your house? They did a great job on our office.” And so I said, “Yes.” So he did our house and Alice Kate’s house. And so, I mean we started the month after the storm, and we let them finish Alice Kate and Will’s house first so that—and then they came back over to our house, just so that they could get back into their house because we did have upstairs, and they didn’t. So, and then with Will’s help, who worked like twenty hours a day, at least, they were able to get back into their house pretty quickly; almost quicker than anybody I know.

Maynard: Wow.

McIlwain: So we just kind of lucked in on that.

Wallace: What were your dealings with your insurance company?

McIlwain: I have to say that that was fine. We were some of the few that had flood insurance, and that takes a lot of pressure off. And because we’re on the water in our
property side, but it slopes down, we had always had flood insurance. And all of the—everything around us is not in a flood plain; so most of those people did not have flood insurance.

Wallace: Did your daughter have it?

McIlwain: No, they didn’t. And there’s a way to get through all that, but the first several months you have no idea what’s going on. Here you are having to spend, a hundred or two hundred thousand dollars getting your house fixed up, and you don’t know where that’s coming from. We did not have that pressure. The insurance adjusters who came for us could not have been nicer, and they—I have so many friends who have horror stories about that, but we did not. I think what they did was fair, but having the flood insurance takes a lot of pressure off. We had to deal with just what happened with—if we had to repair what we got for homeowner’s insurance, that was just simply a very, very, very small drop in the bucket for what it cost to repair the house. See, if you’ve got to deal with that, that’s a whole other dimension that we really didn’t have. But Alice Kate did, and almost everybody I know did, also, because they’re not in a flood zone. And so who would think?

Maynard: Who would buy flood insurance if they didn’t think it was going to—

McIlwain: Yeah. I mean they almost discourage you from doing that. You were certainly not encouraged to get flood insurance. And these are all hundred-year-old houses. Plus they didn’t flood in Camille, so we thought we could get through anything.

Maynard: Yeah.

Wallace: What did you think about the local, state, and federal response?

McIlwain: I was really pretty much removed from that, but I’m only speaking for myself personally. It seems to me like a lot of people were doing a lot of things, and I was thankful for anything that anybody did right after. And we’ll talk more about that, I’m sure, but right after the storm there were a lot of—we didn’t see the National Guard. In previous storms there would be National Guardsmen everywhere; maybe they were here in town, but they weren’t in our neighborhood like they had been before. But I think the police were doing everything that they possibly could. I think that the county probably was—and I’m not sure where all these people were coming from but, for those days or maybe even weeks after the storm, I really can’t remember. But there was someone driving through the neighborhood all the time, Red Cross, the county with different things. They would have, somebody would come through with ice and water; then somebody comes through with MREs [meals ready to eat], and they’d blow the horn, and you kind of go out to see (laughter) what they’ve got on the truck. Somebody would come through with snacks; somebody would come through with giving hepatitis shots and tetanus shots. There was a lot of that going on, and so I thought that was pretty nice. And you hear so much about the government not doing
this and not doing that; I just don’t know. As far as myself, personally, it seemed like a lot, but I don’t know.

**Maynard:** What are MREs?

**McIlwain:** That stands for something; I can’t remember what it is, but they’re prepackaged meals like the military. Maybe the first word is military, like the military.

**Wallace:** Ready, meals ready to eat?

**McIlwain:** Yeah, meals ready to eat, that’s it. MREs, the first ones, the only ones that I ever had, and actually they were pretty good, and so they were passing those out. And then Red Cross would come through with hot lunches, and they had these vans, and they’d fix those Styrofoam plates. There seemed to be things coming through all the time.

**Maynard:** So what were things like, having a baby around during all of this? Was it difficult?

**McIlwain:** Well, that was difficult. And I’m thinking that—the baby’s name is Folsom, who was a year and a half when the storm, a year and three or four months when the storm hit. And I think that it was probably about a month before she got back, maybe three weeks; I can’t remember, but she’s very good and did well. And Alice Kate taught school; I mentioned that. And there was a lady in the neighborhood who kept her during the day while Alice Kate was at school. And anyway, after the storm she was flooded out. She hadn’t been back yet. And actually, she went to live with her daughter who lives in Moss Point, I think, and she’s still there, so there was just—there was no one to keep this baby. So luckily my wife Jane could do that, and so after school started, she kept Folsom for the rest of the year and enjoyed that. But there at first, I mean everything was so nasty and filthy that she couldn’t be on the ground outside; she couldn’t be on the ground inside, and so there were all of us huddled up in these three bedrooms upstairs in my house. That was the only clean place anywhere that we knew of.

**Wallace:** Um-hm. So what kind of things did your wife and daughter have to do for the baby, to keep the baby entertained?

**McIlwain:** Yeah, they’re good at that anyway, and she’s a good baby. That didn’t seem to be much of a problem.

**Wallace:** No.

**McIlwain:** Yeah.

**Wallace:** Was it difficult to find diapers and all that kind of stuff?
McIlwain: Well, there were so many people, so many groups, all over the country that did so much for down here; it’s just absolutely—and it’s a real uplifting, a real heartening part of all of this just to see what people have done. And so they—with most of the churches here, there were lots of supplies that were at the ready for anyone that wanted them, and that really helped a lot because at first there were not even any stores open. And then some weeks after that, a store would open here and there. But real quickly, the churches had supplies here, and they were available to people in town, and they were especially good about baby items with diapers and formula and things of that sort.

Wallace: Yeah. So how long was it before your daughter had to go back to work?

McIlwain: I can’t remember exactly, but it seems to me that school started around the middle of October, maybe the twentieth of October; so from August the twenty-fifth to October the twentieth. But I’m not exactly sure on that. Six or eight weeks, six or seven weeks is how long they were out of school.

Maynard: Did she want to go back to work?

McIlwain: Yeah, I mean not—I mean it wasn’t that it was a big problem because she had someone to keep their baby, the child that was taken care of. That was a tremendous hardship on a lot of people that just didn’t have somebody to do that. But we were lucky that way that Jane was available to do that. But I think she was kind of glad. You just want things to be, to start getting back to some semblance of life like it was as soon as possible, and that’s just—you know all these little things happen all along, and it just makes it more like, more like life was before.

Maynard: Um-hm. What did you and your wife do before the hurricane?

McIlwain: What do you mean?

Maynard: Like what was your jobs?

McIlwain: Well, Jane used to teach school, but she does not teach. She doesn’t do anything now. And—well, I guess I shouldn’t say it that way. (laughter) She really works, and she’s worked real hard since the storm.

Maynard: She might hear this. (laughter)

McIlwain: She’s worked very hard since the storm. No, she taught school for years and retired from that and has not taught in several years. And so she helps a lot with the baby. And I have a business here in town. We import items that we sell at the wholesale level. And our building is located in the north part of town, and we did not have water damage there, which was—but I didn’t really know that for a few days
after the storm. So that was a pleasant surprise when we found out that that wasn’t in
the same shape that our own house was.

Maynard: Did you open your business right away, or did you wait?

McIlwain: Well, we did—all of our business is not from here. We ship out
everything that we do. So we were really pretty much dead in the water because we
had, for some number of weeks, we had no electricity and no Internet, and no
computer service. But as soon as we could get things going, I got back to work simply
because we got to keep all that going as best we can. Our employees were all in the
same position as we, trying to deal with their own house and everything. It was hard
businesswise; it was certainly not business as usual, but we struggled through it.

Maynard: And everything’s back to normal with it now?

McIlwain: Pretty much, yeah.

Wallace: Did you lose some employees at all?

McIlwain: We really didn’t lose any employees, but I mean, one tragic story of this is
someone who worked for us named Marsha, Marsha Sheppard(?) who did a great job
for us, worked for us in sales, and did a lot of trade shows for us. Marsha’s house in
Gautier was completely destroyed, not one thing left. And Marsha has since gone
back to teaching full-time. She had retired from teaching, but now she’s teaching
again. And but they’re doing fine; they’re in the process of rebuilding and getting
things going again.

Wallace: Were you injured at all?

McIlwain: No. Well, I did cut my toe. (laughter) I cut my toe; this is kind of a
funny story. But when we were hauling stuff upstairs, I had on flip-flops, and so
somehow I jacked my—I cut my toe on something when we were hauling things
upstairs. Anyway, so but I was real careful to keep something on that the next couple
of days after the storm. And so my friend, a friend of mine who’s a doctor, said,
“Barry, you have got to have a tetanus shot. When have you had a tetanus shot?” And
I said, “I’ve had them, but I have no idea when the last one was.” And he said, “Well,
you’ve got to get a tetanus shot.” I said, “I don’t have time.” And he said, “You’ve
got to.” Anyway, so everything is closed. So I go out to the hospital, to the
emergency room to get a tetanus shot the next afternoon or so. Anyway, it is like all
of these refugees, there are people—I’ve never seen so many people in my life. There
are people, and it’s so hot; it’s cool inside, the only place, the only air-conditioning
we’d seen in a long time. But there are people all out in the parking lot sitting on their
cars; it’s 100 degrees. And so I go in there and tell them all I need is a shot, just a
quick shot. Well, anyway, she said they were going to put me on the short list. And
so I stood over to the side on the short list, and I was there, I don’t know, a long time.
And then somebody that I know, who happens to be on the staff there, said, “What are
you here for?” And I said, “I’m just trying to get a tetanus shot.” And he said, “Well, why are you waiting in that line?” I said, “What else am I supposed to do?” And so he said, “Well, come.” Anyway, so just because I knew him I got into the shorter line. And then they had these triage places set up; so I drove myself over there because I was certainly able to drive, and it was to a doctor’s office near that. And so I thought it would just be real simple to get a tetanus shot. It was not simple at all; they needed insurance papers, of what kind of insurance—well, I had no idea what that was, and I was just—I just wanted to pay for my shot and get that done. Anyway, so they took my blood pressure. I’ve had a lot of tetanus shots, and I’ve never gone through all this, but they took my blood pressure, and we interviewed, and they were very, very nice. It was very, very nice, but it took, this whole ordeal took maybe three or four hours, and there’s just so much to do. So the next day I’m out in the yard—that was one afternoon. The next day I’m out in the yard, and I hear all of this beeping. Every time a truck comes through, something comes through, some kind of service, they’re blowing the horn. Anyway, and so they’re saying, “Does anybody need a tetanus shot? Anybody need a hepatitis shot?” So you just walked up to the truck and pulled up your sleeve, and they gave you a shot. (laughter) But anyway, I should’ve waited until the next morning, but I didn’t know that was going to happen.

Wallace: That’s funny.

Maynard: So we heard some stories about people who experienced some stuff in the water, like some bacteria. Did you have any experiences with that at all?

McIlwain: I really didn’t. And I was in the water, I mean, around the water a lot.

Maynard: Yeah.

McIlwain: And I heard some real bad stories about that, but personally I did not. I was OK on that.

Maynard: Good.

Wallace: Did you meet any like new and interesting people through your relief experiences?

McIlwain: A lot, and I’d like to talk about that a little bit, not for ourselves because we could kind of get along OK. But this whole situation of all these people who have come in here from everywhere in the country, and other countries as well, just to offer their help has really been just amazing. Just a few days after the storm—it could’ve been the next week. I can’t remember because Jane was back, but anyway, there was this group of guys who were just walking down the street, and they came; they were from a church in this town called Rutledge, Georgia, a nice bunch of guys. And so they just wanted to do something and just came down here. And they thought when they came, there would be someone that would [be] kind of like a clearinghouse that would tell them where, who needed help and where, but we were not to that point yet.
So they said, “Well, let’s just do something.” So they just happened to be walking down our street doing anything for anybody. They had some chainsaws and stuff like that. Anyway, they helped over at Alice Kate’s, maybe cover the roof or do something like that. And Jane started, my wife Jane, started talking to one of the guys, who was real nice, and anyway, thanked them profusely for what they were doing and all that. So some weeks later, Jane gets this note from this guy’s mom, this guy’s mother thanking her for giving them the opportunity to come down here and work. (laughter) And we’re going, “This is just”—but that is what we run into with all of this. Everybody that comes—I just had no idea there were so many nice people in this world. And it’s still going on. I go to the Presbyterian Church in here that’s located in the south part of town near our house that had lots of damage. The church had significant damage, but that’s all back. But I mean from almost the week after the storm, there have been volunteers staying there. They’re still staying there now. It’s almost like a hotel; you have to have reservations to have a place to stay there. And we now have two paid people who just work to deal with the volunteers, so that when they come here, they can be as helpful as possible, somebody that knows what they should do and where and how and things of that sort. So that’s kind of a gift to the community that we’re able to do now that we couldn’t at first, but now we are, just helping people in the community to get their houses back in shape.

Maynard: Where were some of the people from, that came and that you met?

McIlwain: Well, I’m just trying to think a little bit. I mean a lot. And we’ve had people from Ojai, California, who are here right—O-HI, I think is how it’s pronounced, California. People from Pottstown. And interestingly, with my partner and I at work, we deal with some Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, who had done work for us, and they were here two weeks ago and stayed for a week. There were thirteen of them who came down. This is Old Order Amish, and they came as volunteers. They got a van together with a driver to bring them down here, and they have such good building skills that they got a lot done. And they stayed at our church, and every night that they were here, some member of the church had them over for dinner, and we’re doing that a lot now. But they did such a good job that next week, next Monday, seven of them are coming back to stay a month. And they can’t afford to give that much time just because they have to make a living, so we’re paying those seven to work in the community for four weeks. And while they’re here, they have found other Amish volunteers who are coming down a week at the time, a vanload at the time, to work with them. So we’re going to have seven that are paid, and then during those three to four weeks that they’re here, they have another three or four groups are going to come down and work with them. So, and this is with the hat, black outfits, just real Old Order Amish, but they get so much done. But all the volunteers, and I’m just talking from our church perspective, but through our church family, and that’s anybody that’s connected with any church anywhere in the country, I think, almost all of them have had groups down here at some time. I mean they have come from North Carolina; they have come from Virginia; they have come from California. We’ve had them from Pennsylvania, and I’m sure all the other states as well.
Maynard: Um-hm. Do you think you’ll keep in touch with a lot of the volunteers that you’ve met?

McIlwain: A lot of them we do, yeah. A lot of them. We do keep in touch with some of the ones that we knew and friends of theirs who came. Actually, we were at a wedding, just this past weekend; we were at a wedding in Knoxville, in Nashville, Tennessee, and so somebody at the wedding we were talking to, said, “Where are you from?” And we said, “Pascagoula.” And she said, “Oh, I was there last year.” She had come down; she was from Harrisonburg or Harrisburg, Virginia, and her church group had come down, with the Methodist Church, had come down here, and so she had spent a week here.

Maynard: Wow.

McIlwain: In the fall of last year, fall was a year ago, right after the storm. So she was real nice, and we talked about that. I said, “It’s a lot different now from when you saw it. It’s a lot better.” So that’s been a very nice part of this. And other churches have just helped so much financially with, to send money down here to help repair our own church, plus to help repair people in the community that, not particularly those who go to our church, but just people that are needy or elderly or whatever. There’s several of our former ministers are positioned around the country, and they have done a fantastic job of just getting out the word and sending people down here to work, and also helping out financially.

Maynard: What was I going to say? I don’t remember now. (laughter)

Wallace: What are some things that you miss most about your pre-Katrina community?

McIlwain: It’s all coming back pretty much like it was, and I don’t think that’s true everywhere on the Coast. I don’t—that’s not true everywhere, but it is. But it’s pretty much, it is for me. I miss some of the charm of the houses that are gone now, and my good friends; by that I mean *a lot* of good friends whose houses are just gone and all of, everything, everything they had for generations is gone. And that’s hard to deal with. But they have dealt with that fine and have just done what it takes to get their lives back together.

Wallace: Have some of them not come back?

McIlwain: I’m trying to think right now. Offhand, of most everybody I know the best, they’re back. But they all have long-term, so many of them have long-term ties here, and that’s why.

Wallace: Do you think—
McIlwain: And then one other thing about Pascagoula is most of the businesses and the industries are back, and so there’s work for lots of them, for most everybody.

Wallace: If there is another hurricane, are you going to stay, or are you going to evacuate?

McIlwain: I don’t know. It depends on what they say about it. At first I said that I would evacuate, and I don’t know; I’ll just have to wait and see what it looks like.

Wallace: How has Katrina changed your community?

McIlwain: Well, it looks different from the way it did, and I think it’s going to be pretty nice when it’s all said and done, after everything’s done. But I think we have a different—I think the community is closer than it was before Katrina. It sounds kind of trite, but there’s some sense of bonding that everybody’s been through this together, and they really have. And I think it’s quite nice to see that everybody has worked, has just really worked hard to make things nice; they made it happen. And I think we’ll probably all be better off for that, maybe, at some time. And there also seems to be some forward thinking in the community that, some things that we’ve taken for granted, like some nice things about the town, that there seems to be some effort to take care of that. I’m talking about a waterfront park on the river and some things of that sort.

Wallace: What are some things that you would like to see happen in, like, the rebuilding of your community?

McIlwain: I want the community to be as nice as it possibly can, and I think strict and good building codes are good. I think good zoning is good for the community. I think we’re ready. Just because we’ve all chosen to stay here after going through all of this, I think that we’re all ready for the town to be as nice as it possibly can. And by that I mean clean and neat and everybody just taking care of their property.

Maynard: How do you think Hurricane Katrina has affected the United States of America as a whole?

McIlwain: I don’t know because I only know from my own perspective here, and it’s changed us. I remember telling Jane, “Our lives will never be the same,” when we first talked right after the storm, and that’s certainly true. It’s not that it’s worse, but it is different. And but now after all is said and done, things are a lot like they were before the storm, to a degree. But, wait, I lost track. You just asked me?

Maynard: How has it changed the United States?

McIlwain: Oh, right after the storm I was talking with someone who called. This is a business; I can’t remember who it was, but it was a business, a business telephone call. And so when they find out where you are, where you’re really located, they
always have questions about that. And this guy had ties to Mississippi. He was in—I remember who it was; he’s actually from Waynesboro, Mississippi, but he lived in New York, and I think he was with a magazine. But anyway, he said, “I think that this probably, that Katrina has probably affected the US and certainly the South. The only thing that has affected it more was the Civil War; that this is probably second to the Civil War as affecting the, certainly the South, and maybe even the whole country.” And I don’t know if that’s really true or not, but it has us. I don’t know if that’s true.

Maynard: Some people say that, during Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans got all of the attention. Do you ever feel like Mississippi or your community got ignored?

McIlwain: Well, I think ignored—New Orleans is just a much better story simply because everyone in the country knows New Orleans, and only a few people know anything about Pascagoula. And in work, I travel a lot, and Mississippi doesn’t have many people, and it has a lot of good people, but it doesn’t have many people when you compare it to other states. And people in the whole US just don’t really know much about Mississippi, much less some little, small town down on the Coast called Pascagoula. And so I felt like we were a little ignored, but I really do understand it because it’s a huge story, New Orleans, and everybody knows New Orleans. New Orleans is one of the major cultural cities in the US, I would think. And so, and then secondly, we didn’t see any TV for another six weeks, so I don’t really know. But I hear that, and I know New Orleans got a lot of publicity, and they need it and still need it, and but we got a lot, too. So anyway, I think New Orleans is more of a news story. When you reduce it to all of that, those news channels are looking for big time news, and it’s just a fact of life.

Wallace: So on the other hand, do you think it did bring some attention to Mississippi?

McIlwain: Oh, definitely, I think it brought a lot of attention to Mississippi and good attention, too, because it appears that Mississippi has done a good job in reacting to this storm, and that word seems to be out. Like in my travels, it seems that people in other parts of the country have that perspective that Mississippi has dealt with it, and is doing what they can to get over it.

Wallace: Before Katrina, and for a long time, Mississippi’s had the reputation of being one of the poorer states. Do you think that after the storm and drawing attention to it, that it might change things?

McIlwain: I’m not sure I can really answer that. I don’t know. Mississippi certainly is one of the poorest, poorer states and—I don’t know. I can’t answer that. I don’t know. I have seen a lot of activity; I’m talking about locally only, that everyone has helped those that are poor and helped themselves as well, too, has done a lot for those who were needy. But if that’s helped nationally, I don’t know. Probably; it probably has, but I don’t know for sure.
Wallace: Has Katrina changed your political views at all?

McIlwain: Not really, no. I think the administration’s gotten a lot of negative publicity about that, and probably some of that’s deserved. But here again, I just don’t know about that; I just didn’t have dealings with that. And I was never worried about my safety, like some people in New Orleans have to worry about. I just—I don’t know. The government did a lot. Maybe they could’ve done more, but I think you have to do a lot for yourself, too, and not just expect the government to do everything for you.

Wallace: Um-hm. Did you have any experiences with FEMA at all?

McIlwain: I did not.

Wallace: No.

McIlwain: FEMA came, and maybe they checked out our house; I can’t remember. I think they did. They did; I remember now, but we really didn’t have much to do with FEMA. And but the guy came, and I think we had to file a report or something; I can’t remember all of that, but that was like an insurance guy who came. He was very, very nice. And we were lucky in that all of those people who came to us were very nice. And we really did—I hear stories about FEMA. I never saw that. And I just don’t know, how much, if that’s true. I’m sure there are horror stories out there, and I’m sure there’s a lot of good things out there, too. It’s just the vastness of this plays a huge part. You can’t do everything for everybody. So I don’t know.

Maynard: What are some of your hopes and fears for the future?

McIlwain: That’s a hard question. Are you talking about myself personally, or for the—

Maynard: Yourself and your family.

McIlwain: Yeah, I just want to enjoy life better, enjoy life more and kind of take it easy, enjoy my kids and my grandkids and my friends, and that was so important after this storm, and I want it to be just that important for me five years or ten years from now as it is right now. And I think most everybody I know probably feels the same way.

Wallace: Do you have any fears for future hurricanes and things like that?

McIlwain: It’s crossed my mind, but as far as being scared day-to-day, I’m really not. And it may—I’m just counting on the law of averages; it’s probably not going to happen for another five hundred years, but I certainly don’t want this to happen to any of my family or my friends again. But I can’t say I live in fear of it.
Wallace: Do you think Katrina—

McIlwain: But I think about it when hurricane season’s rolled around. (laughter)

Wallace: Do you think Katrina changed the way that you look at your family? Like you were saying before that you want to spend more time with them?

McIlwain: Well, yeah, I definitely think it has. And it just kind of brings things into perspective, those important things into perspective, with who you’re around and what’s important.

Wallace: Do you think Katrina has changed you in any other way?

McIlwain: I’m not sure what you mean there.

Wallace: Like do you think it’s changed your personality, or the way you look at life?

McIlwain: I think I’m a little more laid-back than I was before. I may not show that outwardly, but I certainly feel that inwardly. Yeah, definitely. And probably a lot of people do; I think that’s probably pretty standard with everybody. And I’d like for that to translate outwardly, too. (laughter)

Maynard: And I know like it’s the same for us in Canada, and it’s the same in America; we all have this very fast-paced life and very stressed. Do you feel like that sort of changed the way you want to go about your life?

McIlwain: I definitely think that it has, and that’s what I was just saying. I want it to be like—I want to remember that and feel that because I think that’s one of the positive things about this storm. I want to feel that ten years from now and remember back that there are certain things that are more important in your life than running around crazy all the time.

Maynard: Yeah. Would you say your priorities have changed?

McIlwain: Maybe a little bit.

Maynard: A little bit?

McIlwain: Yeah, just that, just trying to take it easier, trying to—although I’m not, but I feel like it is; I feel like it is.

Maynard: Do you feel like you should?

McIlwain: Yeah. (laughter)
Wallace: I think we’ve run out of questions. (laughter) Is there anything that you’d like to add that we haven’t asked you?

McIlwain: You’ve asked very good questions, and like I said, I had no great stories to tell about this, but I think the big story of this storm is just the outpouring of the people from everywhere that have come in here and given of themselves in all those ways that I talked about, financially, physically, emotionally, mentally and however else you can give of yourself, and are still doing that. And that has been, for me, that’s probably been the thing that has been, that has made it, has made all of this a little bit easier to deal with.

Wallace: All right. Well, thank you very much.

McIlwain: OK.

(end of interview)