Mississippi Oral History Project

Hurricane Katrina Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Linda Hayles

Interviewer: Beth Morgan

Volume 843
2006
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This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Linda Hayles and is taking place on August 1, 2006. The interviewer is Beth Morgan.

Morgan: This is Beth Morgan, and it’s August the first; I’m here in Raymond, Mississippi, with Linda Hayles at Raymond Elementary School. She has just started her first day in the 2006 school year. In 2005 she was living in Arabi, Louisiana. Is that correct?

Hayles: That’s correct.

Morgan: And how long had you been living in Arabi?

Hayles: We been there since the year 2000; we moved there in October of 2000 from Lacombe, Louisiana.

Morgan: And what year did you move to Lacombe?

Hayles: Oh, gosh, 1989, I guess. Prior to that we lived in Chalmette, and before that we lived in New Orleans East, but we had been living in Louisiana since 1979.

Morgan: And prior to [19]79, where’d you grow up?

Hayles: We grew up here, my husband and I both, in Hinds County, in Jackson, Mississippi. We were both born and raised here and went to school here in Hinds County.

Morgan: OK. And prior to Katrina, you had enough time down in Louisiana to experience some hurricanes and near misses. What was your hurricane preparation tradition?

Hayles: Well, if we got a hurricane or a tropical storm, we just blew it off. If it was a [Category] One, we stayed down there during several Category Ones, but a two or more we would gather up enough clothing and things like that, and my animals, and we would head to Jackson. We’d always think two or three days we’d be back, so no big deal.

Morgan: Do you remember the names of any of the hurricanes you evacuated for?
Hayles: Tell you the truth, no. I remember when we first moved to New Orleans, there was one that came through, and I couldn’t believe it was the first year we were there, and there were hurricane warnings out, and then sun and bright and shiny, and we didn’t have school. And I remember writing home and telling my mom, you know, “Look, we’re out of school and it’s sun shining and everything.” And then that night we went out to the lakefront to see the waves coming up over the seawall. But I don’t remember any of them.

Morgan: Ivan was earlier in the year from Katrina, wasn’t it?

Hayles: Yeah.

Morgan: Did y’all evacuate for Ivan? You didn’t.

Hayles: No. No, we didn’t evacuate for any last year other than Katrina. Now, I remember when Opal came through we were living across the lake, and we didn’t evacuate for Opal. Opal went into Pensacola.

Morgan: When, in the week prior to Katrina, did you start thinking this was going to be one of those you have to evacuate for?

Hayles: Of course, we were in school at that time. And so Friday when we were in school, you know, they told us to prepare our classrooms, put things up, you know, get them up off of the floor. And I was going to leave on Saturday, but my husband, “Oh, I’m not leaving. I’m staying here.” And so I started looking to try to get rooms for us to stay at because we used to go and stay in my aunt’s house, but my aunt had since passed, and my cousin who was living there had recently passed away, so the house was not available, I thought. And so I started trying to find room reservations, but I couldn’t because I have three animals, well, actually four animals, and I wasn’t leaving my children. And we couldn’t find any reservations so Saturday night, I guess about midnight Saturday night, my husband says, “I think I’m”—of course, he was up watching the weather—“I think I’m going to be ready to go about noon tomorrow.” And I said, “No, you’ll be ready to go in about two hours.” So in two hours I had everything in the truck, and we took my neighbor, who was disabled, who lives in a garage apartment in front of us, and he had no means of transportation or anything to get out. So we took him and my three dogs, my cat, my bird, and my husband, and we got in the truck and we headed to Jackson.

Morgan: And what grade did you teach?

Hayles: At the time I was teaching elementary PE [physical education] and driver’s education.

Morgan: OK. So, driver’s education at the high school.
Hayles: It was done after school and on the weekends, yes. Yes, it wasn’t included in the curriculum during the school day. It was an after-school activity that the students paid for, but it was required in Louisiana for them to get their driver’s license.

Morgan: OK. When you left Arabi on Saturday night, what was the traffic situation like getting out of New Orleans?

Hayles: Well, at the time we left, it was around 2:30 in the morning. So the traffic was not, you know, not bad, and we came out [Interstate] 59 and came up through Hattiesburg, [Mississippi], with the contraflow, and once we got close to Hattiesburg, it started slowing down. Then when we got on [Highway] 49, it was pretty good till we got to Florence. And then when you got in the Florence area, then it became bumper to bumper. But my cousin who owned my aunt’s house now, I had gotten in contact with her, and she said that the utilities and all were still on in the house. There was no furniture there, but we could go there and stay instead of going in a shelter. So, we went through the back roads and cut off some of that traffic. And I went to my aunt’s house and stayed, and I’m still staying in my aunt’s house.

Morgan: Where is that house?

Hayles: It’s in Pearl, which I’m in the process of buying the house, because she was going to sell it. So I have no intentions to return; we didn’t own property in Louisiana, so I’m not going back down there.

Morgan: You got here sometime early a.m. that Sunday morning?

Hayles: It was around 9:00 in the morning when we got to Pearl, right.

Morgan: All right. So two a.m. to nine o’clock a.m. it took you to get from New Orleans to Jackson?

Hayles: Correct. Now, we did stop in Hattiesburg for gas and to let the animals get out and walk around, but yeah, I mean the traffic really, other than like I say, around Hattiesburg and Florence.

Morgan: Yes. So Sunday were you watching the news? How did you track what was happening in your home community?

Hayles: Well, we had the local stations on, and I still had my two children. I have two boys, and one of them, the crazy one, the youngest one, he was going to stay with his friends and—

Morgan: In Arabi?

Hayles: Actually they were going to be staying in New Orleans in the [French] Quarter. And the other one, he and his girlfriend and her family, when we left, they
were loading up, and they were headed to Texas, and we kind of kept up by using the local channels, what was happening, and as the day progressed and things got worse in the New Orleans area and more notification of evacuations, my youngest one finally decided, he and his crazy friends, that they needed to evacuate. And he was the only one that had a vehicle, so I think there was about six or eight of them in his little Mazda pickup truck, and they started north. And he ended up in Greenville, Mississippi, and ended up calling Mama. I had to go up to Greenville and give gas money and retrieve him to bring him back to Jackson. So, but we kept—a neighbor across the street gave us a TV to use, and so we were able to watch, you know, the local channels and keep up with it that way.

Morgan: And so Sunday—well, the action, really, in New Orleans didn’t start happening till Monday morning. Is that correct?

Hayles: Correct. And that’s when it all started. And then to hear—we heard it over the radio that the levee had broken, and where the levee broke was about a mile and a half from my house. I lived about a half a mile off of the Mississippi River bank, and it was about a mile and a half over to where the levee broke.

Morgan: And you were near Jackson Barracks; I think we got that on the first time through, but I just wanted to make sure.

Hayles: Yeah, the Jackson Barracks is in the Ninth Ward, which is on the line between Orleans and St. Bernard Parish.

Morgan: And, you know, it’s the question interviewers hate to ask, but what were you feeling as you heard the levees had broken?

Hayles: My first thought was, “You don’t know what you’re talking about.” I could see the water. There was two reports of levees breaking; one was the levee that broke over by City Park. And I was real familiar with that area because teaching driver’s education, we drove around City Park all the time, and I just couldn’t believe the levee had broken because I had seen the walls, the concrete walls over there. And then they said, “Oh no, there’s another, there’s a second levee break.” And that was over in the industrial canal. And then that’s whoa; that’s a little bit close to home. But the reality of it just still wasn’t until that evening when you saw on the news the pictures of it. But people who saw the things on TV, it’s nothing till you go down there and put your own two eyes and see it. I’ve got pictures here of my house and other things, you know, when we went down there, and it’s just, the sights are unbelievable, but it’s nothing till you go down there and look at it with your own eyes. And it gives you such an eerie feeling. We were talking about this the other day, one of my friends, and what it was; it was a lack of life. There was no birds, there was no wind. There was just no—it was just total silence. It’s like when you watch an old Western in the old ghost towns. It’s just—oh, it gave you such an eerie feeling when you went down there.
Morgan: How long was it after that Monday of Katrina before you were able to go down? And I’m just going to take a peek at your pictures while you’re answering so I can ask you about some.

Hayles: Sure, go ahead. The section that we lived in was the first section that was opened in St. Bernard Parish, and we weren’t allowed to go down there until, like, the second week or maybe it was the first week of October. I think it was the first week of October because I started here the first of October, and I had to go—we had certain days that we could go. And I had to take off from school here to go down there to be able to get in. There were only certain days they would allow you to go in certain sections of the parish.

Morgan: How did you—do you remember the first time you thought, “We’re not going back home; I need to job hunt”?

Hayles: Well, our parish, our school system immediately got their act together and got us unemployment and got word around to us, you know, to go to the unemployment office and file for the unemployment. My situation was I only needed four months of being able to retire from the state of Louisiana with twenty-five years, and so I was quite upset with the fact that now, here I am and not going to be able to retire. And I had nine years of experience here in Mississippi, and I could buy that time back, but it was going to be too expensive. And the governor of Louisiana finally passed a law, and we were able to purchase that time. So, for two thousand dollars I was able to purchase my time and did retire officially from Louisiana. But I said, “I can’t wait around on, you know”—of course it was March before I was able to do that, and you can’t live on the two hundred and something dollars a week they were giving you for unemployment. And so I started about the third week in September trying to find a position. And I called around and talked to people and I called Hinds County. And I called Utica, and the lady sent me to Miss Quinn(?) . And I called Miss Quinn, Marie Quinn, who is in charge of hiring here in the [county]. And then she said they were looking for a teacher, and she then put me in touch with Miss Gibson, who is the principal at the school here. And I called her and she set up an interview. And there were four people she was interviewing. And a girl that I went to college with who is also one of the first-grade teachers here, I was sitting in the hallway and she came and saw me sitting in the hall and recognized me. And she got on the e-mail and e-mailed the principal and said, “You hire her.” So I credit her for helping me get this job.

Morgan: That’s great.

Hayles: Yes, it was. It was a blessing, and I love it here because then, like I say, I did retire in March, and I could have stayed at home, but I enjoy working here with the kids and especially with the team of ladies that I work with here, so.

Morgan: I don’t think it hit me till you said, “Yes, when I taught driver’s ed, we would drive around the park, City Park.” You taught driver’s ed in the city of New Orleans, one of the hardest cities on the earth to drive in.
Hayles: Yes, I taught there for fifteen years, driver’s education.

Morgan: You must be fearless.

Hayles: No, I have a quick left hand and a brake. (laughter) And my kids, they’d always ask, you know, “Oh, have you ever had any wrecks?” Yes, we did have—

Morgan: It’s New Orleans. How could you not?

Hayles: It is. And in those fifteen years, I only had two wrecks, and neither time was it my student’s fault. One, I had a young man who, now, he could drive, but he had only been driving with me—it was his first day, for thirty minutes, and a lady was in the middle lane, and she cut right in front of us. And I mean, he was cool as a cucumber, you know. And the other wreck I had was a young lady, first time she had ever driven, and the guy just plowed into the back end of her. She was stopped at a red light. You know, she was petrified herself, but no, we had a lot of close calls, but they weren’t ever the student’s fault. It was like I told the kids, I said, “You know the laws, and you know the rules. It’s those people out there who’ve got their license that ignore them.”

Morgan: Right. Well, that must be the kind of condition of nerve training that can get you through Katrina doing with that sort of a background. When you first went back and saw your house, tell me about—how did you get there? Did you have to walk through the neighborhood, or was it accessible by car?

Hayles: My neighborhood was accessible. It’s kind of funny. We lived in Arabi, and I now live in Pearl, Mississippi, but I lived on Arabi Street. So whenever I fill out paperwork, they’ll, “No, you made a mistake.” “No, I live in—I now live on Arabi.” So we went to Arabi, and the streets were pretty well cleared off, but like I said, it was a desolate feeling there. And you could drive down, but the house next door to us where we live had slid off of the foundation, and now instead of sitting in the middle of the lot next door was now leaning up against my landlord’s house. We lived in the house behind. And there was stuff—we had to walk around the house, and the alleyway to get to my house was blocked. We couldn’t walk down the alleyway. We had to knock a door down and go through the landlord’s house to get to the back to our house. And once you got into your own house there, it was mud, sludge; your furniture was everywhere. My refrigerator was upside down. The couch was across, blocking the doorway. You had to climb over these things to get into your bedroom; your bed’s turned upside-down, trying to find things. You just—it was slippy-slide, and because of all the contamination, they wanted you to wear all these kind of stuff, and before we could even go to our house, we had to stop and get shots, tetanus shots. And so we had to stop, go through that.

Morgan: You’ve taken some pictures. Are these the pictures of your living room?
Hayles: Yes. This one is my—

Morgan: Would you describe it for us?

Hayles: This is the living room, and this is—my husband had a forty-inch-screen TV that he was so upset about. He thought he was going to be able to pick it up and take it home with him. I said, “I don’t think so.” And this one, this right here was my bookshelf with all my music boxes I had collectibles on.

Morgan: And the television is facedown on the floor.

Hayles: It’s facedown on the floor, yes.

Morgan: The bookshelves are all—

Hayles: All turned upside-down, and this was a rolling desk chair that we had there, and this over here was his computer. And then this part is the other part of the living room. This was the couch that was sitting against the doorway. Now it’s all the way over here, and this goes into the hallway to the bedroom, and to the bathroom back there. And this goes this direction to your kitchen, which had, the cabinets were hanging off of the wall, the refrigerator was upside-down, the table was upside-down.

Morgan: And the couch is already covered in mold.

Hayles: Oh yeah, it was already—and the water in my house, the water level went, of course you can’t see it in that picture, but went all the way to the ceiling in the living room. And back in my son’s bedroom, which was right back here behind the living room is his, we couldn’t even get into his room. And you could open the door maybe about a foot, and you could look in there, but you could see the waterline had gone all the way to the ceiling in his room. The house was lower, I guess, in the back end, and the ceiling was falling in in his house. Now, my other son, who lived on the other part of Chalmette, his house, his entire ceiling fell in. And there were streets over there, there was one street had a row of houses that were built up on cinder blocks. Every house on that street, which was about eight I think, every one of them is like they picked them up, floated them across the canal, and now they’re sitting over on Golden(?) just as nice as though someone had picked them up and moved them sitting over there on the other side. There were houses that, there was one house in Lexington that the entire foundation, concrete foundation was lifted and it was moved six blocks away from his house. And there was boats on top of houses, cars leaning up against houses; it’s amazing some of the things that you saw. And then my friend who lived over on Ivy Place, her table just floated up, and her dishes that were sitting were still sitting exactly where they were, you know, just—

Morgan: I’ve got a picture here of what looks like it could be a yard sale in any other universe. Is this drying out possessions? Can you describe that for me?
Hayles: Yes. That is the front of, this was my landlord’s house, and these were all the things that were inside her house that she had taken out and had out here on her yard. She lived in Washington DC, and after the storm I called her, and she came down and she had all kind of antiques and everything, trying to save them. And that’s what—all this is her stuff drying—and of course you can’t see, over here on the fence there were clothes, you know, all hanging up. Now, they took everything out of my house, and I never did get to get anything out of my house, which I kind of got upset about because there were some things that I could have, you know, retrieved and saved, but as far as what I was able to save, what we had on our back. And I was able to get a few Corningware dishes that were out in the shed that had been at my aunt’s house where we were now staying.

Morgan: You’re my second account of Corningware surviving Katrina when nothing else will survive. Another interview, a lady I did an interview with said she looked into a mound of dirt and was able to pull out one of her Corningware dishes.

Hayles: Well, these were my aunt’s and so they were kind of special to me. Now, my son, he is now living in Slidell, and I’m telling you the people down there are gouging them. My son pays twelve hundred dollars a month for a three-bedroom house, which is ridiculous. But he, they managed to—his girlfriend’s parent’s house, they bought a motor home now, but they were able to go in and get her mother’s Magnalights and able to clean those up and use those. But there were some other things I probably could have saved, too, but my landlord didn’t give me that opportunity.

Morgan: So you were faced with, even though you had a house in Pearl, having to refurbish the whole house and refurnish the whole house. Tell me about having to undertake that task.

Hayles: Well, not knowing what I was going to do as far as refurbishing the house, I just did the minor things. Because when my cousin had passed away, my cousin who lived in Mobile, which is—she was taking care of me, yet she got thirty inches of water in her house in Mobile. But she had taken all the furniture and everything out of my aunt’s house and had given it to a Salvation Army type thing, or mission place. So she called them and told them that I was now there in the house, so she sent me down there, and they gave us some furniture; a couch and a recliner and a mattress and a box springs. And then I have, since then I’ve purchased another bed, a single bed. And we were able—the guy that we brought with us from down there, his apartment upstairs didn’t get water, but he got some water damage from the roof coming in. But he had one of my televisions, so I was able to get my television and able to use that. And then we had to purchase, you know, dishes and pots and pans and stuff like that. And I still don’t have the house; until I buy the house, I guess that’s when I’ll start trying to really fix it like I’m going to be staying there. But right now it’s just functional for me to live in, you know.

Morgan: Have you applied or worked with FEMA or Red Cross for any emergency funds or reimbursement funds?
Hayles: Yes. FEMA met us down there, and they gave us a check for our personal belongings because we didn’t own the property; we were renting. So they—

Morgan: How long did that take? Tell me about working with FEMA.

Hayles: That was in November that we were able to get—now, my oldest son who lived in Chalmette, he has yet to receive any money on his property. Now, he was renting as well. He still has not gotten—he got some rental assistance from FEMA, but as far as them helping him with his belongings, he hasn’t gotten anything from that. Now, his girlfriend, two weeks ago she got a check from them, a small check for her personal belongings in her parents’ house; yet her parents had already received theirs. But she just, about two weeks ago, got hers. But my son has yet to receive anything from FEMA on his belongings, and he’s put in for a loan, but they’ve turned him down on the loan, and they keep saying, “We’ll get to you; we’ll get to you.” And he still hasn’t.

Morgan: Is your son able to find work back down in the New Orleans area?

Hayles: My oldest son lives in Slidell. He worked for Proctor and Gamble for Folger’s Coffee, so he went on back. That’s one of the reasons he’s paying what he’s paying for his rent, is because he had to find someplace to stay. And my other son, he has an apartment down there; he works in the French Quarter in a bar, so he was able to—he was working at Wal-Mart here in Pearl, but his love was the French Quarter. So he went back down there. Me, I have nothing down there to go back to.

Morgan: And the French Quarter, amazingly, came away fairly unscathed. If he had stayed, he probably would have been one of the people who rode it out and were sweeping out the bars when the newscasters showed up.

Hayles: Right, he probably would have, but then it was so long they didn’t have electricity, water, you know, and to get out of there, the city was surrounded by water. You know, to get out of—the interstate was blocked off with people walking up and down it and things like that.

Morgan: Well, tell me about—you came up here to Jackson. Did you lose electricity in Pearl? You were in Pearl?

Hayles: Yes, we did lose electricity, and we were without electricity for about, I think probably about five days.

Morgan: What’d you do during those days?

Hayles: Sat outside (laughter) and had an ice chest and, like everybody else, went and stood in line to get ice and gas. And my youngest son was working at Wal-Mart. They put him right to work so he didn’t miss—he came back on Tuesday, and
Wednesday they put him back to work at Wal-Mart. So, they had electricity over there, so we’d go over there and get the ice and had a barbecue grill and cooked on the grill. (laughter)

Morgan: Tell me about Raymond Elementary. You’re teaching what here?

Hayles: I’m one of the first-grade teachers. When I came here they had three first-grade teachers, and they had such a load that they needed to add another teacher. In fact, our school added two teachers here, and both of us happened to be from St. Bernard Parish. She was added as a kindergarten teacher, and then they added me as a first-grade teacher here. Our school is a skills level school; we work on skills. It’s not like what people think of the old, traditional type schools, and the children work on their own skill level. And as they advance, they’re moved from class to class. Last year I had the next to the lowest group, and as they progress, we move them on up to the next level. Or if someone’s not doing well there, they can move back to me. And our school was, in the past has been a level five school, which is the best they can have in Mississippi, so we’re very proud of our school, and we’re anxious to get our test scores for this past year to see how well we did this past year.

Morgan: This year, when June 1 rolled around, and the hurricane season opened up again, did you find yourself anxious at all?

Hayles: Yeah, and I’ve more than usual watched the weather and turned to the Weather Channel to see. I’m kind of anxious to get home this evening and see what that one’s doing right now that’s down in the Caribbean. I know this morning when I heard the weather they were saying depended on what path it took as to how strong it would be. New Orleans, I don’t think, can handle much of a storm now, and I think if another one went in there, I think it would just totally wipe New Orleans out now.

Morgan: So do you have evacuation plans for your son all set in place now?

Hayles: Well, my sons both say, “Mama, if it’s headed this way, anything higher than a tropical storm, move over; I’m coming.”

Morgan: Good.

Hayles: So they’ll be here along with their friends; there’ll be pallets all over the floor in the living room, in the other spare bedroom and things like that. The dogs’ll have to go outside to allow them to come in, but I told them, “The door’s open.” I said, “The floor is there; you can sleep on the floor.”

Morgan: And I see you’ve got a happy—this is observant (laughter) interviewer person here, end of the interview—you’ve got a happy birthday sticker on today.

Hayles: Well, in our faculty meeting that we had today, one of our teacher’s birthday was yesterday. So—(brief interruption) OK. And then got to talking about how
during the year—we have a new principal this year—she was going to announce the birthdays. And she said, “Well, did anybody have a birthday during the summer?” And I said, “Oh, yes. I had one.” So when we came back from our break, they had put these happy birthday stickers in our chairs for us to wear. So I had a birthday in July, and I told them; I said, “I turned the big six-o, and I’m very proud of every one of those years.

Morgan: Good job, you!

Hayles: Yes.

Morgan: I’m looking at another one of the pictures. Is this one of the rebuilt houses?

Hayles: Well, actually no. This is a house that wasn’t even three months old, and if you look here, it slid off of the foundation.

Morgan: Oh, I can see. But the rest of the house is in absolute perfect condition.

Hayles: Well, from the picture it looks [like it], but actually the foundation right here is bent, is cracked.

Morgan: Oh. Did you get to see inside of the house?

Hayles: No. No, no, no, because it was, it was locked, so you know, I didn’t go around. I’m sure there was a back door probably open.

Morgan: But it’s a little slid off, but the siding is in perfect shape; the windows are in perfect shape. The door is shut.

Hayles: Yeah, there wasn’t a lot of windows broken.

Morgan: It’s just the tidiest little house, except for you look at it twice and you realize it has slid about two feet off of the three-foot cinder block foundation, and it’s sagging a little on the right, but it may be missing a little something. But the front, I mistook it for a rebuilt home.

Hayles: No. It looks it, but over in Slidell on the Highway 11 road, there is a house there, all around, all the little camps and everything are just totally—and there’s this one blue house sitting up, you know, like, “What’s happened? Nothing.” You know. And it’s perfectly normal.

Morgan: Tell me about the Pearl community, how you’re finding Pearl.

Hayles: Well, I used to live in Pearl, so—

Morgan: OK, so it’s reacclimating yourself?
Hayles: Yeah. When my husband and I got married back in [19]69, we purchased a house out there, so I was familiar with the area, and I feel comfortable out there. And I had taught in the Pearl school system, but wasn’t able to get on out there, but I love it out here. I don’t mind. It’s an 18.1 mile drive everyday, and I don’t mind it in the least little bit. I love it out here.

Morgan: Any part of your heart think, “Maybe someday we’ll go back to New Orleans”?

Hayles: Well, actually my husband is there. He lives in Slidell; he moved back to—he bought him a trailer, and he lives down there. He wanted to go back down there. I says, “I’m not going back down there. I’ve not lost anything down there. If you want to go, go.” So he’s down there. I’m sure he’ll probably get tired of it and be back shortly. Far as me moving back down there, no, I cut my ties with the school system down there, and I’m perfectly happy right here where I am. But I want to say this, though. This hurricane has caused a lot of families a lot of heartache. And there are a lot of children that are suffering greatly because parents are divorced before the hurricane. And now the parents have gone separate ways, and they’re living far distances away from the other parent. And the state of Louisiana—and I’m sure it may be in Mississippi, too. I would assume it probably is for the people on the Coast, but they’re living far away, and the state and the government judicial system cannot do anything about forcing those parents to move back into the state or making them come back closer and making it easier. I say this because I have a grandchild in that situation, and my ex-daughter-in-law, whom I get along with better now that they’re divorced, is living in Missouri, and my son is in Slidell. And she’s not making it easy for him to be able to see the child.

Morgan: Is that where she relocated?

Hayles: She relocated to Missouri, and he’s had the child during the summer, but it is so expensive for him to go. Christmas it cost him a thousand dollars to go up there and to fly the child back down for just a few days. This summer I flew up at the end of May and picked her and my stepdaughter, her sister, up and brought them back down on a flight so they could both spend the summers with their dads. But it is, you know, so difficult for these children to be separated. They’re torn; they want to be with both parents, but they can’t. And I just feel like they ought to see—any other time, she would be in violation of having taken the child out of the state, but because being a natural disaster, and these children—you know, another guy I talked to, his brother, he recently passed away. He just gave up; he couldn’t ever get over Katrina. And there’s so many cases like that. People, if you hadn’t gone through it and hadn’t lost everything. Talking about losing everything, we live out there in Pearl, and I don’t know if you remember last year in the springtime when that truck turned over out in Pearl out on the interstate, and they had to evacuate part of Pearl. Well, it was right there by my house, and again we had to evacuate. And I said, “Oh, Lord, here we go,” because it was right across from where our house was, and I could see this
stuff exploding, and my house going up. And I got this call here at school; I had to get home to evacuate my husband. And you know, “Oh, Lord, here we go all over again.” And I’m concerned that another Katrina, another hurricane, comes through New Orleans, the people that have, my friends that have gone back down there, I feel for them, you know. So I have a friend that’s rebuilding her house, and I said, “Why are you doing this?” Of course she and her husband both were born and raised there, so they didn’t have another place to call home, so that’s why they’re going back down there. I just feel for those people if another hurricane comes through. And another one’s going to come through. Just a matter of time when it’s going to come back through there.

(end of interview)