Mississippi Oral History Program

Hurricane Katrina Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Penny Dean

Interviewer: Cheryl Taylor

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AN ORAL HISTORY

with

PENNY DEAN

This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Penny Dean and is taking place on March 14, 2006. The interviewer is Cheryl Taylor.

Taylor: Doing an interview with Penny Dean. This is March 14, 2006, and we are at the, we’re in Hancock County at the courthouse complex now. And I’m going to get—Penny’s going to tell us about a lot of different things. But first of all, Penny, why don’t you tell us your full name, you know, sort of where you’re from, and what your position is?

Dean: OK. My full name, which I do not use, is C. Penny Dean, and I am from Pearlington, Mississippi, and I’m employed with Hancock County Board of Supervisors as a board secretary.

Taylor: And how long have you been in that position?

Dean: Going on ten years.

Taylor: Ten years.

Dean: Not quite ten but pretty close.

Taylor: Now, we’re here to talk, of course, about Hurricane Katrina, or as people refer to it now, “the storm.”

Dean: Right.

Taylor: So why don’t you tell us, you know, from—I’ve been told that you have a story, so.

Dean: Ooh, do I.

Taylor: And so you know, you can start—like I’m sure you might want to start like a day or two before the storm, or just what did you—how did you get prepared for it or not prepared for it and just, why don’t you just let us go with—tell us what happened.

Dean: OK. While I am a board secretary, I also help at Hancock County with Hancock County Emergency Management Agency, EMA. When we’re activated it
reverts to EOC, Emergency Operations Center. And when Katrina was threatening and we were activated—excuse me—that Friday I go to work after doing eight hours at the courthouse, work with the EOC from that point on until the storm is over or the danger is over. So I left the courthouse, went to EOC, EMA, and stayed there working, helping citizens answer phones, doing whatever necessary, try to get people to relocate from their low-lying areas or move them in a safer area. So—

Taylor: We’re adjusting the mic.

Dean: We’re adjusting the mic.

Taylor: Just because of the ambient noise that may be coming through.

Dean: With everything.

Taylor: All right, that’s good.

Dean: So, and that’s basically what we do. We help as much as we can. I do advisories. I do updates, prepare for a storm or a crisis and which in this case it was Hurricane Katrina. So we’re doing our normal—and on Sunday night I left EOC to go back to Pearlington. The weather was bad, but I figured I had time to convince my husband to come back with me to a safer place.

Taylor: He obviously did not want to evacuate.

Dean: Right. He wanted to stay in Pearlington, and I didn’t want him to, so I went back and tried to convince him to, “Let’s load the car and go back to EOC.” That didn’t happen. By the time he finally agreed, it was too late. The winds had really gotten violent.

Taylor: And are we talking about, is this on Monday?

Dean: Monday morning before daylight, late Sunday night, Monday morning before daylight. We had tornadoes, quite a few of them because we heard the damage. We saw power poles snap. We saw trees snap. We have a huge magnolia in our front yard, which snapped and came into our living room through our living room window, so I knew we had damage. So I decided right before daylight or right at daylight to call Bryan Adam who is the EMA/EOC Director; we call him Hootie. So I called him on his cell phone, since we had no power, no regular phones, and I proceeded to tell him that, “Hey, beware, we have tornadoes coming. They’ve already hit Pearlington. The damage is, from what we could see, was extensive.” And while I was talking to Hootie, what I saw was phenomenal. My eyes saw the water coming from Louisiana because I live on the Mississippi/Louisiana line a block off the Pearl River, and I was watching the water and the waves coming through the trees. And I can’t tell you what I told Hootie because it’s not ladylike. So basically I said, to be polite, “Goodness gracious, I think we’re in a—we have a problem.” But I didn’t say it that way. And
Hootie was screaming, “What do you see?” And I said, “I’m watching water. It’s coming, and it’s coming fast.” Before Hootie could scream at me, “Can you get out?” “No.” “Can we rescue you?” “No,” it was over. The water had hit the house, hit us. I threw the phone away. Water was up to the ceiling in a matter of minutes. It was over. And you don’t have time to be scared. You really do not have time to be scared. There was enough daylight to see to kick out of the house, which we did. We kicked out our living room, dining room window, which was there. You could barely see it and get through the debris. We got out, and it pulled me into the magnolia tree, which actually saved my life because had it not been there, the current would’ve taken me God knows where. And I couldn’t save the dogs. My husband, with the wind and the rain and whatever, he screamed, “Hang on. I’m getting the boat.” So he disappeared, and he found the boat, our sunken boat, and I prayed to God right then and there; I said, “God, I don’t want to die like this.” And from that moment on I got a total calm. It’s an unbelievable calm. You survive. You hang on. You do what you got to do. Tommy came back around with the current with the sunken boat, and he said, “Where are the kids?” Our kids are our four-legged dogs. One is eight, and one was about two years old. And I pointed back to the house, and the water was about over the roof. It was a bloody mess, but he yelled, “Grab the boat.” [He] let it go and it hit me, of course, and he dove back in, and he saved our dogs. Thank God.

Taylor: Where were they?

Dean: In the house, they had about three inches of air left, but he saved them. He drug them out. They chewed him up, but he drug them out. He saved the dogs, and we’ve still got one. We adopted the little Labrador out, but we have our little eight-year-old mixed breed. And that was, excuse me, the beginning of about ten to twelve hours of a very long day, very long. You saw the—

Taylor: So you’re all in the boat.

Dean: No. We’re in the magnolia, hanging onto the sunken boat with two dogs.

Taylor: You’re hanging onto the boat.

Dean: Uh-huh.

Taylor: You’ve only captured the boat.

Dean: That’s it.

Taylor: And where are the dogs?

Dean: We are trying to hang onto a boat, a sunken boat, the magnolia tree, which is across the front of our house, and hang onto the dogs’ collars to keep them above water.
Taylor: So that’s just all you’re doing, is hanging on.

Dean: Hanging on.

Taylor: And how long did that go on?

Dean: It seemed like eternity, but it really wasn’t because my husband is a Navy, retired Navy; he did his time in the Navy, so he is very—he’s good. He knows how to survive, and I was raised on the bayou, so I basically know how to survive being a daughter of a Marine. So after a while he said, “We’ve got to get someplace safer,” because debris was flying, floating, crashing into us. So he said, “I’m going to try to get to the eaves of the house,” which were underwater, “and drag all of us with the boat to the edge of the house in the front on the leeward side,” as he calls it, “and see if we can’t get a safer place,” because the magnolia tree was turning. So he did. How? I don’t know, but he did. He drug all of us to the leeward side of the house.

Taylor: You were just all holding on?

Dean: Hanging on, following the magnolia tree around as it was scraping past the front of our house, following the house. He caught it. We climbed up another tree and got on the house while it was floating, with everything else floating, flying, boats, cars, motors, tools, equipment, houses, roofs, trees, you name it. It was a mess. It was a learning experience I never want to see again. So we got there, and you hung onto the core of the house. That’s all you could do because you couldn’t get on top. It was too dangerous. Things were still flying. This was in the peak of the storm, Monday morning. When the eye hit us, we had that few moments of calm. He drug the boat on the roof. We bailed it out, catching whatever was floating to bail, stuck rags in the boat because it had no plug, and hung on, waited the eye of the storm to pass us, and then when the back end of the storm came, you crouched down, hanging onto the edge of the house in the boat for dear life until late that afternoon when it slacked off and the water subsided enough to where you could not fear picking your head up and getting hit by whatever. We got hit by debris. It wasn’t bad. You know, you got a scratch across your face or your arm or hit with a piece of tin. But we made it. By God’s grace, we made it. Then he decided, my husband Tommy, “We can’t stay here all night. We’ve got to get out of here.” And we were hoping that the firehouse, which is on Highway 604, which we’re a member of, stood. Nothing else stood. We watched the Catholic Church after the tornadoes ripped the roof off, which is across the street from us. We watched the roof go. The steeple stood, but the roof went. There wasn’t a piece of tin left on it. It got up, floated, did a 360 where the steeple, normally facing [Highway] 604, faced us, floated around the back part of the rectory, floated between the rectory and a recreational hall, went back on [Highway] 604, hit a massive oak tree, and just collapsed. We watched our neighbor’s house to the left of us float off. We watched our neighbor’s home to the right of us disintegrate and blow into our home. We watched our back home, which was a little cottage/shed, float past us and collapse on Pearl where we live. Our house kept us afloat but moved onto the county right-of-way, thank God. We watched a Methodist Church, that had been...
established in 1813, we watched the wind catch it with the water, and it imploded and
deflated and collapsed. We watched numerous things fly by, float by that you would
never imagine floating. They float: cars, trucks, obviously boats, motors and trailers.
Anything and everything that could possibly float or be pushed by these waves—and
there were many of them over thirty feet—come through those trees from the
Louisiana side. Believe me, as God is my witness, we watched them with white caps.
And when you saw one, you just hung on. You did a lot of praying. You didn’t
promise God anything. You just prayed. And it beat us and a lot of other people that
opted to stay in Pearlington on the river that did survive, also. But that evening right
before dark Tommy decided we got to get out of here. And it had stopped, not totally,
but it stopped to where the current had reversed and things were being washed out.
Instead of being pushed in from the Louisiana side, everything was being sucked out
and going back toward Louisiana. And debris was just piling up everywhere. So we
found pieces of board, and we bailed the boat, and we started paddling down
[Highway] 604 to try to get to the firehouse, not knowing if it stood or not. There was
one other house on [Highway] 604, a Jim Walter home, that stood. It’s blue and
white, and we decided if the fire station wasn’t there, we were going to get on to that
house and spend the night. Somehow we want to get in that house; forbid we broke
the law, but we wanted to get someplace where it was safe, just for a night. We got to
the firehouse. We met up with about twenty or thirty other friends, family, relatives
that had rode the storm out and were floating on any and every type of apparatus
imaginable. We saw people on picnic tables. We saw people in battered-up canoes or
pirogues. We saw the people in boats, a Boston Whaler with no plug in it that had ten
people in it, and they floated with a baby. Boards, Igloo ice chests, whatever you had
to float on, you got there. We all met up and got to the second floor of the firehouse.
There were no more doors. The fire trucks had been ripped out and were all over.
There was mud, water, debris everywhere. We got up and stood on the second floor of
the firehouse, West Hancock Volunteer Fire Department, until Tuesday morning and
till all the water was gone, and that’s when the guys, my husband, people he grew up
with, friends, they decided, “Hey, we lived! We have to survive.” So we did. We
survived. For about three to four days, no one knew we were alive. We didn’t know
if anybody else was alive. We had no vehicles, no radios, nothing. The one thing we
did have was, my husband, born and raised there, knew where the artesian wells were.
So we had fresh water, a three-thousand-foot artesian well, right down the road, right
on [Highway] 604. We had fresh water. That was a Godsend. The guys went out—
well, the women too. You know, you slopped through the mud. You looked around.
You didn’t know what was around you, and you just, you saw nothing but devastation,
but, “My God, is this really true?” Yeah. Well, it’s true. We did it. We saw it.
There weren’t any houses standing. It’s pretty bad. So the name of the game is
survival. We found tarpaulins. We rigged up like little lean-tos right there on the,
close by the river behind the firehouse. We got whatever containers we could. We
got artesian water, which is a godsend, a free-flowing well. And you spotted a
refrigerator/freezer. It was intact. You opened it. If it was cold, if it was edible, we
ate it. We survived, and we did so for three or four days until help came through. We
understand now, after the fact, that the National Guard was cutting their way down
from Hattiesburg. Florida Highway Patrol, Mississippi Highway Patrol was cutting
their way in. Some people that survived by going to Stennis [Space Center], they were trying to cut their way in. People that were born and raised there, lived there, visited there, whatever, they were trying to cut their way through—that had rode the storm out in different areas. So everyone was cutting their way in, and we were cutting our way out with whatever we could. All we had was hand saws that you found, axes that you found because there were no vehicles. There were no chainsaws. Everything went under. Everything went under. So we were on foot. Some had shoes; some did not. You had what was on your back.

Taylor: Did you have shoes?

Dean: I had shoes, but I gave my shoes to my husband because he lost his, and I, well, I had thick white socks on. I was raised on the bayou, so that don’t bother me. I can go through all that kind of stuff. So you found a shoe; it fit; you wore it. You found another one that didn’t match, you wore it. We survived. We survived. The first person we saw, three, I think it was about three, maybe four days later, was Roger Ladner, who was a county employee from the road department north of the county. He and a bunch of people started cutting their way down, and he got into Pearlington about the same time as other people got into Pearlington. He gave Tommy and I a ride back to the north corner, which is on Highway 43, and what I saw from Pearlington up [Highway] 603 to [Highway] 43 was mind boggling. And we got one of the county’s old trucks; it’s a little, old Nissan, Datsun or whatever, so we did have transportation. So Tommy and I went back to Pearlington. Mississippi Highway Patrol were there. Florida Highway Patrol was there. And everybody was trying to get news from everybody about anybody, everybody, and I think right after that Congressman Gene Taylor came in with the military, and they had water and food on their helicopter. He gave it to us. He said, “I will get you food. I will get you help. Here is what we have.” Now, this was the third or fourth day he got through. The next day we had five or six helicopters loaded with food and MREs [meals ready to eat]. They couldn’t land. There was too much debris, so they were dropping it as low as they could into the field by the firehouse. Gene Taylor came back with the military. He got out there with us in the mud and the muck and helped us unload five or six helicopters for the many people that foolishly stayed in Pearlington. Believe me; we’ll never do it again. Then we started like everybody else; you hitched a ride where you could. You got to Bay St. Louis and Waveland where they were bringing in trucks, the military and whatever, and you would load and unload trucks to get a load of whatever they had that we could bring back to Pearlington and share with everybody that stayed there. It was an experience. I’ll never do it again. I’ll never do it again. If they see a storm, I am gone.

Taylor: What about your husband?

Dean: My husband will come with me willingly or not; he won’t stay either. Now, he said he would go with me, but men are hardheaded. He said if I rode out a [Category] Five, I could ride out a Seven. I said, “No, you won’t. When I say go, you go; we’re going. We are going.” He’ll go, but we won’t stay there anymore.
Nowhere. We’ll not ride another hurricane out again. Mm-mm. God spared us this time, but if we’re stupid enough to stay again, shame on us. But it’s a learning experience.

Taylor: Did you lose, did you personally lose? I mean everybody lost—

Dean: Everything.

Taylor: I know you lost all your belongings, but did you lose friends or relatives?

Dean: Because of Katrina, which they say is post-Katrina stress syndrome or whatever, my husband lost his uncle because the older people—I’m just using that term, maybe I shouldn’t be using that, but—

Taylor: No, but I understand.

Dean: They lost everything else, too. They lost their home, their personal effects, their vehicles, and we’ve heard because of the stress the elderly can’t cope, and he lost one uncle who was in ill health. And he passed away, I think, oh gosh, January or February. His health steadily declined, and he didn’t make it. We’ve heard of several friends, one in particular—I won’t say the name—who was brought to Pearlington to see what he didn’t have any more, died, had a massive heart attack, died of a massive heart attack. We’ve heard several stories like that. I think if I’m correct—I probably am not—five or seven people drowned in Pearlington. Now, I can’t tell you the names or where they lived. I know of a couple of places, but to be sure, I really can’t tell you. But I know of five; I think they did find maybe one or two after, weeks after. But for all the people that did stay, it’s sad we lost anybody, but that’s a small number unfortunately lost their lives for any storm. But I can tell you this: had the storm hit at night, you wouldn’t have had a chance. The only redeeming factor in this storm is the fact that it hit at daylight; you could see it, and you had a chance to get out. And I think that saved a lot of us, the fact that we could see it when it hit, and it wasn’t pretty, no.

Taylor: What is the status of Pearlington now? What was left?

Dean: Not much, I think there were five, six, maybe seven or eight homes that physically stood.

Taylor: Out of how many?

Dean: I think there were 1400, fourteen or 1500 homes in the Pearlington area. Every home sustained damage; maybe five were livable but took on water; none were spared any damage, none.

Taylor: So Pearlington is a fairly small community then.
Dean: Yeah.

Taylor: I mean, I know where it is on the map, but I really wasn’t familiar with it.

Dean: I think there’s fourteen, 1500 homes. That’s homes. Now, people, I’m guessing here, 2000, 2500. I’m guessing.

Taylor: And then businesses and everything, everything.

Dean: They lost churches. Inundated, well, everything was inundated. People are coming back. People have opted to come back. It’s a beautiful country setting in the middle of two large cities; you have Slidell, New Orleans. You have Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi. You have the best of both worlds. You have country, and you have city, and boating, fishing, hunting. It’s phenomenal. It’s beautiful. We lost a lot of oak trees. A lot stood; I just hope they make it. It’s a pretty community. It’s a friendly community. Everybody helped everybody; didn’t matter who you were or what you wore. Everybody pitched in and helped. And the people that came in from all over this country, actually all over the world, came in and gave a lending hand, brought water, food, blankets when it got cooler, change of clothes because we had nothing. You wore what you had on for days, weeks, medicine. The help was phenomenal. And if you couldn’t reach a loved one, a family, they would do their best to get a message to your loved one, family, friends, relatives, telling them that you were alive. My sister didn’t know until two weeks after the storm we were alive, until we finally, after numerous reporters, people, helpers, came in, got messages to them that we were alive.

Taylor: Did she know you had stayed?

Dean: No. No. She didn’t know we stayed, but when she found out, after she cried for about twenty minutes, she wanted to kill me, but that’s here nor there. That’s little sisters. (laughter) So I’ll never do it again, but—

Taylor: What about the—how do you think that the—you said that Pearlington will be rebuilt, so people are going to come and build back. Now, these people that have mostly all of them lost their homes, are they dispersed around? You’re obviously still here, and you’re living in a FEMA trailer?

Dean: In a FEMA trailer, yeah.

Taylor: Right. Now, other people of that—so let’s just say those 1400 households, are they dispersed?

Dean: They were, just like us. In the beginning there was no way you could get a FEMA trailer in until it was all cleaned and cleared. Now that it’s done, people are in FEMA trailers on their property. The corps [of engineers] has cleaned a lot of the debris to where your land is cleaned off so you can either rebuild or put a camper—not
a camper, a modular home on it, or a modular home or like Habitat for Humanity or some other organization, which there are many, will assist in building a small home on your property, and other groups that have graciously come and built sheds on a lot of people’s homes to where what you salvaged, if you could salvage anything, you can put it in your shed. If you’re lucky enough to have procured a washing machine or dryer you could put that in your shed and use it, and allow friends and family, neighbors to use it, also, which everybody shares. No matter what you have, you share. It’s going to come back because people are coming back. Either they are buying their own campers and parking on their land, or like us, we’re living in a FEMA camper. Some have already purchased trailers or modular homes. Some have rebuilt what they had, reconstruction. Some have started new construction with—through the county. Some have been blessed with the little—I don’t know what you call them—the little houses that organizations are putting on your property, temporary little houses for right now until they can either settle with their insurance companies, if you had insurance, or get a grant, or get a SBA loan, whichever you can get to rebuild.

Taylor: Did you have insurance?

Dean: I had minimal flood insurance, which the mortgage company got. We got an SBA loan; we applied for an—(brief interruption) But like I said, it’s a hurry-up-and-wait. You wait in line, and you wait for the process to be completed. We have been approved for a home. We will rebuild.

Taylor: And back on the same property?

Dean: On the same property. The same property because my husband loves it there. I like it there, but I don’t know if I could stand another storm. I pray it never happens, but I love it. I love it.

Taylor: So as we’ve been listening to the predictions maybe because hurricane season’s going to be coming around and the Gulf waters are warm.

Dean: Um-hm.

Taylor: And so there might be—if there is a threat of a storm, you’re going to be gone.

Dean: I will definitely be gone, so will my husband. We will probably go back to EOC, EMA and work out of their facilities, which they have temporary facilities right now on Kiln-DeLisle Road at the Annunciation Hall.

Taylor: Yes.

Dean: But I will not stay in Pearlington, and I hope nobody else will either. I really, truly don’t. I hope you don’t. If you do—hmm. Hmm.
Taylor: But this wasn’t to rebuild and stay, even though there’s a threat of more storms. How do people in general feel about that? Most people feel like they want to stay and rebuild and start over because this is their home.

Dean: Right. And most are because this is home; this has been home for a lot of these people for generations, and people that have come from different parts of the country and decided to settle in Pearlington and surrounding areas, they love it. I mean, you have the best of both worlds. You have country living with city amenities. So I really believe that most will come back. It may take time, but most will come back.

Taylor: And let’s also—I’d like to get your opinion then, after everything that you’ve told me.

Dean: Um-hm.

Taylor: Do you think that the fact that you rode out the storm, you know—let me ask you this and rephrase this. People lost everything.

Dean: Um-hm.

Taylor: How are you dealing with losing everything?

Dean: It’s just material things.

Taylor: Because you have your life.

Dean: That’s right.

Taylor: Do you think you’d felt differently if you had gone away and then come back and nothing had been there?

Dean: No. It’s only material things.

Taylor: OK.

Dean: You can replace material things; you cannot replace a life. I can work longer hours. I can take a second job. If you have to, you can replace what you lost. You can’t replace a life. No. It’s only material things.

Taylor: Do you think most people feel that way?

Dean: Yeah. Yeah, I do because you see it gone. You lived it, and then the first thing we all asked for, and it was really funny even then, Monday night, “Who had a cigarette? Who saved a cigarette?” And that’s a terrible thing to say, you know. We quit. A lot of people had quit for years. I quit for five years and went back. Forget it;
I had to have it. The first thing everybody wanted was a puff of a cigarette. We found one.

**Taylor:** (laughter) You did?

**Dean:** We found one, and it was passed around, so you had to laugh. You had to keep your spirits up. Yeah, you grieve. You look at it and say, “Gee, gosh, I may have worked a year to pay for that, and now it’s gone. So be it. Look at all of us that lived.” But this is a learning experience and—

**Taylor:** What did you learn, other than not to stay if a storm, but what have you learned about yourself or other people?

**Dean:** That you’re strong. You may take life for granted and fast pace all your schedules every day. I don’t have time to stop and smell the roses. You make time; you stop; you slow down. Yes, we do have to work crazy hours. Stop a minute when your neighbor waves at you as you pass by going down the highway. Stop for a moment and say “Hello. How are you?” Slow down. We’ve all learned it’s time to slow down. Yeah, rebuild, but if I don’t feel like working on whatever I’m working on today, my neighbor down the road may be stumped or tired; walk down there; ride down there and give that elderly man, elderly lady, young couple with two or three kids or more, give them a break. Go help them. Go sit down and have a cold glass of water or tea or Coke or whatever—now that we have it—or play with the kids, distract them so Mom and Daddy can get something done. Slow down, stop thinking about yourselves. At least that’s the way Tommy and I took it. It’s time to share of yourselves and of what you have and take the time to listen, look, and enjoy life.

**Taylor:** Well, for people that have not been through—that’s a great philosophy, by the way—for people that, you know, every day Americans that haven’t been through a storm, I mean, that’s a tough way to learn that lesson.

**Dean:** Very.

**Taylor:** What do you think would be the best way to learn that lesson without having to go through a storm?

**Dean:** Listen to what the news is saying; don’t blow it off. Watch the news. Listen to friends, relatives, neighbors, volunteer groups that have come and actually seen the aftermath, spoken to a lot of us that lived it. Don’t take anything for granted. They know more than we do. That’s obvious. When they tell you that a storm is imminent, you may not want to pack up and go, but do it. Learn by other people’s mistakes, the best way to learn. And don’t be foolish enough to think, “Ah, well, they’re not sure, so I’m going to push it.” No, not worth it. Not worth it. Believe.

**Taylor:** And this attitude that you now have, I mean, there’s actually way more of life, isn’t it?
Dean: Sure.

Taylor: Not just an attitude, it’s a way of life.

Dean: Definitely.

Taylor: It’s a philosophy that you have sort of, that you’ve gotten, you know, since the storm, and other people have, too. Do you think this is permanent?

Dean: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. Because I believe living through something like this—and this is just not my philosophy; we’ve talked to fellow people that lived through it also—you change. You don’t take anything for granted anymore. And you appreciate everything that you have, not what you lost because it can’t be replaced. But anything we get, whether it be secondhand or new, given to us or you purchase, you appreciate. You don’t just take it and set it aside and say, “Hm, OK. I wanted that. I got it. Put it aside.” No. You appreciate it. You use it. You share it. And you definitely appreciate it because most of us have lived in private campers or trailers, or FEMA campers or trailers for over six months and to actually have the luxury of sitting down in a restaurant and eating a real meal, that’s heaven. That is heaven on earth. And to actually walk into a real bathroom is heaven on earth. You appreciate what you did not have. And when you get it, I fully believe in my heart and soul that I will appreciate it more because I know what it is to not have it. Things that everyone of us in this country take for granted won’t be anymore. Believe me.

Taylor: Worst memory of the storm?

Dean: The fact that I had to let go of my dogs when I couldn’t stay in the house. Because the water was to the ceiling already I had to let them go and kick out, and I said, “God, forgive me. I couldn’t save them.” That was my worst. And my best was the fact that my husband dove back in and did save them. I said, “God, thank you.” That’s it.

Taylor: Good story.

Dean: You got it.

Taylor: Thank you.

Dean: Thank you. My pleasure.

(end of interview)