# Diane Africk Transcript

ROSALIND HINTON: This is Rosalind Hinton interviewing Diane Africk at her home at 10 Rosa Park in New Orleans, Louisiana. Today is Wednesday, July 11, 2007. I'm conducting the interview for the Katrina's Jewish Voices project of the Jewish Women's Archive and the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. Diane, do you agree to be interviewed and understand that the interview will be video recorded?

DIANE AFRICK: Yes, ma'am.

RH: So why don't we begin with a little bit about your family, how it came to New Orleans, and also your own Jewish and general education?

DA: My mother's family came from Poland. My great-grandmother came over to meet my great-grandfather from New York ¬– got on the train with my grandmother and assorted other siblings. They came to New Orleans, where they met my mother's father. It was really a matchmaker wedding, so they were both from Poland. My father's family came from Opelousas, but before Opelousas, my great-grandfather was from England, and he came to this country where he met my great-grandmother, who was in Opelousas. They came to New Orleans to raise their children in a city with more Jews. My grandmother and her siblings – my father's mother and her siblings, lived in a smaller town and came here to New Orleans to be with Jews.

RH: So, how far back does your family go in Opelousas?

DA: Well, my great-grandparents were in Opelousas, but probably the generation prior to that. My great-grandfather was an itinerant traveling photographer, the kind who threw the black thing over their head and took your picture. He fell in love with my great-grandmother, and they eloped. When we're through I'll get the picture. She eloped when

she was quite young and quite tiny. It's quite a picture that I have of the two of them. Her family had lived in Opelousas a generation or two prior to that. But then the two of them moved to the city. I don't know how they got to Opelousas. They came down from New York I know, which is where their people were, and came down to open a retail store.

RH: So, did they have a retail store in Opelousas?

DA: Yes.

RH: It was a dry goods, clothing ¬¬–?

DA: Yes, it was an everything.

RH: And what was that family name?

DA: That family name was Bennett, B-E-N-N-E-T-T. Prior to that, it was Bohrer, B-O-H-R-E-R. And prior to that, I don't know. But my great-grandmother was a Bohrer, and then she was a Bennett, and moved on to Katz.

RH: So when your – was it grandparents or great-grandparents – came to New Orleans –?

DA: My great-grandparents came to New Orleans to be with other Jews on my father's side of the family. On my mother's side, they came to New Orleans from New York from Poland.

RH: How did the Katz name come about?

DA: The Katz name, my grandmother who was a Bennett from Opelousas married Katz. He ran a factory here in New Orleans. He was originally from Thibodaux, another small town. I don't even know how his family got to Thibodaux, but another case of Thibodaux

who moved to the big city yet again.

RH:  Now what was the factory here?

DA:  The factory made pants.  Originally, they were uniform pants and then they became a blue jean pants factory and blue jeans became the in-thing.  It was called the Blue [inaudible] Factory.

RH:  So where did that family live?  And this is your mother at this point.

DA:  This is my father's family.

RH:  Father's family.

DA:  This is my father's family.  My grandfather, my father's father, had moved here from Thibodaux and married my father's mother.  He came in to run the family business, which was the factory, and that was Katz.  He was the first Katz.  Well, not the first Katz, but the first Katz in mine and your interpretation.

RH:  So, keep going down the line.  How do we get to you?

DA:  Well, we get to me because Ruth and Nathan Katz, who were my father's parents, had Samuel Katz, who married Celia [inaudible], who was the product of Aaron and Sadie [inaudible], who had both come from Poland.  And Celia and Sam Katz had Diane Katz, who became Diane Africk.

RH:  So, tell me a little bit about where you grew up.

DA:  I grew up about two miles from here in what's called Broadmoor, badly flooded.  We didn't live there anymore, but I grew up in Broadmoor for my whole life at the same house, and I attended Newman School, kindergarten through 12th.  I went to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.  Then I came back to Tulane Medical School.

Then I stayed at Tulane through two fellowships and a residency, and I worked at Tulane for thirty-one years until I just left and went to join Ochsner. I went to Touro Synagogue, and I was confirmed there. Then, later I made an adult b'nai mitzvah at Touro. I'm still a member of Touro.

RH: I know the Broadmoor area seemed to have had a large number of Jewish families [and] kids.

DA: Yes, that's true. When I was growing up.

RH: When you were growing up. Did you hang out with more Jewish kids?

DA: I hung out with more Jewish kids because, in those days, more Jews hung out with each other, assimilation was not as great, and Newman School was originally a school for Jewish orphans. I'm sure you've been told that if you've done any interviews here. In those days, it was really very much a Jewish school, in the sense of the people who went were Jewish. It's not that way anymore. But in those days, it was I think predominantly Jewish. I can't give you numbers, but a large number of Jews. If your friends were from school and you carpooled with the people who went to school, then your friends were predominantly Jewish.

RH: What year were you born?

DA: 1952.

RH: So what was it like being Jewish in New Orleans?

DA: When it's what you know, it's what you're comfortable with, and you don't think anything of it. [inaudible] I guess what I'm trying to say is I never really felt any antisemitism until I went to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

RH: Is that right?

DA: Yes. Now, I was aware here that we didn't do things like make debuts. I was aware here that there were country clubs that didn't take us because we were Jewish. I guess it didn't bother me and I guess I didn't think about it to be frank with you. I had my own group of people, my own country club, and my own comfort zone. One of my best friends was Catholic. I went to church with her. She went to temple with me. I didn't really think along those lines. But when I went to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, it was the first time I met a number of people who were uncomfortable with my Judaism and who really didn't know a lot about Jews, and also I don't think they were too interested in learning too much about Jews.

RH: So, it wasn't simply misinformation. It was a little more pernicious.

DA: It was misinformation, but they weren't interested in the real information, so it was "mis," but nobody wanted to really learn too much. Nobody wanted to get too smart about it.

RH: Did it affect your schooling any?

DA: No. It didn't affect much. I started dating Zeta Beta Tau boys and found my own comfort zone. But it was a moment for me of a place that I had not been before. If I had been there before, I wasn't cognizant of having been there before. I looked back. I remember, even now talking about it, thinking, "Have I really ever come to this and missed it?" Maybe I had. But if I had, I didn't [inaudible].

RH: Did the Mardi Gras scene –? Did you feel the outsider-ness of that?

DA: No. Mardi Gras, for me, was one big party. My father adored Mardi Gras. Until the day he died, my father was in parades. I didn't feel any of that. I mean, I was aware. Don't mistake me. Totally cognizant that this holiday had very different meanings for people who weren't Jewish. But I never felt as an outsider. Their thing, my thing, everybody has their own thing.

RH: What was the center of your family's Jewish life in New Orleans?

DA: Touro Synagogue.

RH: Touro more so than the JCC?

DA: Yes, more so than the JCC. Now, my mother was raised Orthodox.

RH: Is that right?

DA: Yes, they attended Beth Israel. My mother's father had been president of Beth Israel, and my mother's mother was very active in the Orthodox community. So, on High Holy Days, my mother and children, meaning me and my brother and all my first cousins, also went to the Orthodox shul because that's where my mother's parents were. Then, we ended up at Touro for some service or another. But otherwise, it was Touro.

RH: So did you have an understanding – "I'm Reform, but I'm going to Orthodox –?" How did that work for you?

DA: Yes, I understood that. I understood that my mother's family – even now, I have an aunt who's in Beth Israel and, of course, I have a couple cousins who are Chabad. So, my group, like every other bunch of Jews, can never find one way to go and be happy. We all have to do it our own way. Yeah, I was very aware. One of my mother's sisters, my aunt, and those first cousins attended only Beth Israel. So, of course, I knew about – when I went over there to my grandparents' house, they kept kosher. They walked. They were very devout.

RH: So, what were the High Holy Days like?

DA: Over there or for me?

RH: For you.

DA: For me it was family. The break-fast was always at my mother's home. So everybody was at temple all day, and then we came home to break fast. It was always my uncle. At that time, it was two uncles and whoever she had and many people. We always broke fast at that house. My mother always had Passover. I won't say my mother always had Hanukkah because sometimes that would be at an aunt's house. But it was usually at my mother's home. But the High Holy Days were always at Touro with an intermittent slice at Beth Israel and then ending back up at Mom's and not usually with – we didn't break with my mother's parents' break fast because they were at their home doing Orthodox stuff.

RH: Do you have any particular memories from childhood that you think of fondly? It could be either New Orleans itself that kind of captured that or the Jewish community.

DA: Gosh, all of my memories of childhood are fond. I think I had an incredibly perfect childhood. I had total security and all the things that you can't give your children today in the sense of nobody ever thought about getting kidnapped or where you were going to be. You went out after school. You went to somebody's house. You came home. Dinner was always at a set time. It was a very Leave It to Beaver life. It was truly far too perfect. I have thought about this. My friends and I speak of this. It was almost creepily perfect now when I look at it. So, my memories are perfect. My memories are going down on the streetcar with a cousin when we were probably nine and eleven to buy Hanukkah gifts. Things you would never allow your children to do now. Going down to secondhand stores to buy stuff when we were in our teens. God knows why you'd buy, but we bought. Absolute comfort in my environment, in my family, in what I was doing.

RH: Sounds pretty good.

DA: Scarily perfect.

RH: Now, tell me a little about your confirmation. They weren't bat mitzvah-ing at that time? Do you remember?

DA: I don't remember anybody bat mitzvah-ing. They were bar mitzvah-ing. If someone bat mitzvahed, I can't remember it. Maybe they did. I can't remember that they did, though. We were all confirmed together, really, my whole Sunday school class that I can remember. I remember very clearly Leo Bergman confirmed me. He was our rabbi at the time at Touro. We all had reading parts and speaking parts. We all couldn't wait to get out. Been in Sunday school many a year, but it was a nice experience. It was a very secular experience I think compared to what we expect of our children now and teach our children now. Very little Hebrew. I think less maybe ¬– of course, maybe I just chose not to learn. Maybe a little less understanding than what we expect our children to understand now in Sunday school. I think it was far more secular.

RH: So, tell me, you married, and who did you marry?

DA: I married Lance Africk and divorced. Where do you go from there?

RH: You had children.

DA: He’s Jewish. Yes, I had four children.

RH: You had four children. Tell me their names.

DA: Their names are Nathan. He's twenty-eight. Doris, she's twenty-five. William, he's nineteen, and Max, he's eighteen. All of them made bar and bat mitzvahs. Do I think they know a lot more Jewish stuff than I did, even though maybe they had more Hebrew education? Probably not. Not sure I understood much more, though, before I had my children or paid attention.

RH: So, there's something about having children that –?

DA: For me, maybe not for anyone else, for me.

RH: What did that do?

DA: It made it important to me for them to understand how important Judaism is/was to me. Is. Is to me and hopefully to them.

RH: So what was this experience as an adult? You had a bat –

DA: I had an adult b'nai mitzvah, which is an adult bat mitzvah. Why? Well, I thought it was pretty silly that I couldn't say any of those prayers in Hebrew and that I couldn't read the basic words of the Shema. I could do them from rote memory, but I just thought it was pretty silly that I couldn't do that. I thought it was time. I attended an adult b'nai mitzvah because I had been invited a couple years before mine. I thought it was so moving that I chose to do it.

RH: So, the study for that is –?

DA: Study for that. We met, I want to say, twice a week for a year. I'm trying to remember what it was. We met sometimes, maybe more than that. We started by learning Hebrew, and then we broke the service up. I didn't learn all the prayers, but we broke the service up into who would say which prayers, and we each had to say something, as you would do for your own bat or bar mitzvah. We read our Torah portions even though we split it into smaller parts of course, because they were about – four or five of us would split it. I had a class of ten, but we divided the two Shabbats into – there were two adult b'nai mitzvah Shabbats. So then four or five of us each did it. So, we each took a portion and read and learned the Torah and the Haftarah. It was a good experience for me because, for me, I go every Saturday morning to temple. I went almost every Saturday morning, even before this. But I find it important for me to be able to partake by being able to follow. It doesn't mean I understand a word of what I'm doing other than the prayers, but I can follow the Hebrew, and for me, that has been helpful

[and] meaningful.

RH: Is there anything else you feel like history at this point should know about New Orleans and Jewishness before we move into more the Katrina events?

DA: Yeah, I think that this has been a very active Jewish community as far as support of cultural aspects, which are not necessarily Jewish, whether it be the arts, whether it be decisions that have to do with schools and how to improve them. I think it is a community that has been willing to take a stand and to put both their hearts and their money where their mouths are. I think it's a community that certainly, as a Jew, you can be proud to be a member of. It's an active community to me in a good sense in really being willing to take a stand, and an important stand, on how people should be treated, should be educated and should be cared for. It's a good community.

RH: That's nice. So, the community's challenged here with this Katrina.

DA: The community is very challenged. I'm a little disappointed in this good community, but maybe I shouldn't say that on tape.

RH: Well, we'll get to that. We'll fill out what that's about because that's an important aspect of this. Why don't we talk first about the events of Katrina? What do you do for a hurricane?

DA: Well, I've never left for a hurricane in my whole life because I had a father who never left for a hurricane in his whole life. I had a grandmother who was not well enough to be left, so my mother wouldn't leave my father's mother. My father is deceased. His mother was alive. She's no longer alive since Katrina. We never left. We always thumbed our thumbs at it, I guess is the line. People wouldn't even call and say to me, “What are your plans?” because they knew Diane wasn't leaving. And I didn't leave for this one. So, I stayed.

RH:  You were here.

DA:  I was here.

RH:  So, there were no decisions.  Even as you watched the storm and the size of it, were you fearful at any point?

DA:  Yes.  Sunday morning, I thought to myself, I have made a very bad choice.  I called my mother and I said, “Let's go.”  She said, “I can't leave your grandmother, and she's not well enough to go.  The two ladies who stayed with her are going to stay there.”  I said, “Well, Mother, if you're not leaving, I'm not leaving.”  And I said to my boys, “Why don't you go with your father?”  They said, “Are you going to leave?” and I said, “No,” and they said, “Well, if you're not leaving, we're not leaving.”  So, that’s how that went.  So, there were no plans.  Once I had passed that brief moment of panic, then I wasn't panicked anymore.  It's not a sign of wisdom, you understand; that's a sign of stupidity.  But you asked me.  That's what that was.  There was a brief moment in the morning, and when my mother said, “I'm not leaving,” and I said to the children, “Would you please go?” and they said, “We're not leaving.”  No one was going.  There was no point being panicked anymore.  Time to bite the bullet and hope I had made the right decision.

RH:  So do you do any preparation?

DA:  Preparation.  Well, take in everything from outside.  I take down the fans, and I take in assorted neighbors across the street whose husband works at a hospital, so she never leaves either.  And then, one of my children had a family who wasn't leaving, and they asked if they could come stay.  I also had my housekeeper and her grandson.  So, other than everybody coming over and hunkering down and getting out the candles and making sure I had canned foods and batteries and whatever, that's it.  Not anymore.  I'm out of here.  I bought a house in another part of Louisiana, and it's the hurricane house, and I'm out of here.  Your turn.

RH:  You didn't have to go to the hospital.

DA:  I did not have to go to the hospital.  Some of us did, but that was not my duty because I really felt I couldn't leave my mother, my grandmother, and my children.

RH:  So, tell me about the progress of the storm and the evening?  How many were here?

DA:  Nine.

RH:  Nine people.

DA:  Nine people.  Progress of the storm.  The storm was not scary until ¬– because it had never happened before ¬– my neighbor's roof blew off.  When the roof blew off, the slates came through the windows and blew them out.  That had never happened.  When the windows blew out, I felt like the tornado stuff because it was like a vacuum in the house.  I couldn't get them hammered ¬¬– I couldn't get wood over because the wind was blowing too much.  There was glass all over.  I kept waiting for all the windows to go because I could hear his roof coming off, and as his roof came off, it was coming to me.  When I went upstairs, which I kept doing every few minutes to check the windows – because you couldn't get the doors to stay shut, so the glass was blowing because of the vacuum, so the doors would just bang, but they wouldn't stay shut.

RH:  Upstairs in the bedrooms.

DA:  Upstairs.  So, when we would go upstairs was the first time that I could – in all the hurricanes I'd been in this house, and there were many, including Andrew as well, which was one of the scarier ones in this house – but we could feel the whole upstairs just shaking.  I thought it was one of the scariest things.  My friend from across the street [inaudible].  She said, “Let's just go downstairs.  We can't feel it there.”  And I go, “We can go downstairs, but the upstairs is still shaking.”  So, we'd just go up and try to shut

the doors and come back down. I thought it was terrifying. But in the morning, the sun came out, and the world looked good. That was Monday morning. We crossed over to Sherry's house because she had a lot of wood in the attic and I could plywood up the windows. And we did. She had a leak in her roof. We used some Visqueen from my [inaudible] to Visqueen up her roof from underneath. I learned how to do that from my father. Really, I thought it was done. I thought it was like anything else. I said, “I guess I was scared because Judge Feldman's roof came over. Other than that, it was nothing.” It wasn't till the next morning, when the floodwaters rose that it was the end of the world. It was Armageddon.

RH: So you didn't experience the floodwaters rising until Tuesday?

DA: Until Tuesday. That's when they rose up here. Monday, we came and went. We went to sleep. There were helicopters, which had never happened during any other hurricane. We were all out on the front porch. We had all opened whatever we had opened to eat and made it – bread, peanut butter, whatever. It was so hot, we were sitting out on the front porch. But I have also [inaudible] that in hurricanes. But we'd never seen all those helicopters. We kept saying to everybody, ”What are the helicopters? [inaudible] the helicopters.” But we had the radio on. Nobody discussed it. The next morning, I was going to take my mother over to her house – she stays with me – to make sure it was okay because we couldn't get there Monday because all the trees were down. It was so tough to get there. We had tried to walk there. We didn't want to walk through all the electrical wires that were down. So, Tuesday, sun came out again, I said, “We're going to walk over there. We're going to drive over there.” No. We were going to walk and get her car. So, we started to walk, and we couldn't get through. A friend of mine who's a doctor who was on call saw me, and he picked us up, and he got us over as far as we could, and then we walked to her house. The sun was out. Everything was great. We get over there. Her cats are fine. She's loading up the car. And there's water rising in the street. I said to her, “Why is there water rising in the

street?" She said, "I don't know." So, we went inside, and in a very short period of time, the water went from about four inches to over her wheel. So, I said, "Mom …".

RH: Where exactly did she live?

DA: Versailles, Broadmoor. So, I said, "Come on, we got to get out of here." Within less than ten minutes – because she doesn't live that far – we were driving up Nashville Avenue, and the water became so high we abandoned the car.

RH: It was rolling in pretty fast.

DA: You can't imagine how fast it was rolling in. You can't imagine the current because it wasn't just rolling in. I've done floods in this city my whole life. I've lived in flood places my whole life here. My old house on Jefferson Avenue flooded. This wasn't a flood. This was like a current. We got out. We started to walk down Nashville Avenue to get home to get here. The water was truly up to our chest. It had oil in it. Only scared because you know that the electric wires are in there, which you're not supposed to be in with. Then the manhole covers started to pop with sewage fuming out, ten, twelve feet high, and you could hear the – there were all these geysers like in Yellowstone, in Yosemite, along the neutral ground. The cars were actually being moved by the current. When we got to the other side of Freret, which is this way, the water stopped, but we didn't think it was going to stop. So, I came home. I just yelled at everybody, "Pick up a dog. Get in the car." I went and got my across-the-street neighbor and caravanned out with her dog. I didn't even take the time to change. In the same wet, disgusting muck clothes was how we drove just to get out. Later, of course, this house had not flooded, thank God, but at the time, it felt like Armageddon, and it felt like it was all just going to go. So that was how we –

RH: You thought you were just trying to get out right before the current.

DA: The waters came. Absolutely. Because it rose at my mother's house really from about four inches to four feet in less than thirty minutes. In substantially less than thirty minutes. Probably about twenty minutes. Very creepy.

RH: So, what did you guys do next?

DA: We drove to Houston with my brother, who doesn't – he used to live here, but he also has a home in Colorado, which is where he was, calling and screaming at us, A, because we were still here even though he knew we would be and, B, “Don't stop in Baton Rouge; it's a mess. Just go to Lafayette. I've called. Just go to Lafayette before you stop for gas.” He didn't want us to get off in Baton Rouge. We were lucky because both my across-the-street neighbor and me had full tanks of gas. Otherwise, we would have really been up the creek because Baton Rouge did not have gas. But we got to Lafayette, where we filled up again, and then went on to Houston.

RH: Where did you go in Houston?

DA: In the flight of screaming at everyone, Sherry had made reservations at whatever Marriott that she could find.

RH: I'm surprised by Tuesday you could get a Marriott in Houston.

DA: She found a Marriott in Houston, and we hauled out to there.

RH: So, how many of you were there?

DA: Well, at that time, it was just Mother and me and the two boys and Sherry. My housekeeper was waiting for her son to come get her. I had wanted to take her with me. But she wanted her son, who was still here, to come get her. He didn't come get her because he got flooded. Sherry's husband got her out two days later. She stayed in this house alone for two more days, which was another harrowing experience. She's a

diabetic.  There was no electricity.  The house at the end of the block here had brought in mercenaries and had their own generator.  So, I told her to go knock and see if they would at least put her insulin on ice, and they did.  I was afraid she wouldn't get out.

RH:  What do you mean, “brought in mercenaries?”

DA:  They brought in mercenaries who stayed in their house.  That's why all of our houses weren't burned down because they brought in mercenaries.

RH:  From where?

DA:  From where?  From those whatever of war magazines.  Literally.  I'm not kidding you.  They lived there, and they patrolled the neighborhood.  We're all very grateful to Mr. (Fayard?) because I can tell you otherwise our houses would have been destroyed.  But they had their own generator, and they brought in mercenaries.  They had mercenaries from the moment it became apparent.  They were already there by that Tuesday because when we drove to Houston, and I called her Tuesday night – interestingly enough, the phones were still working.  When she picked up the phone, I said, “Why are you there?”  James hadn't come . Her son hadn't come, and I just fell apart because I didn't see how he would get her because they were saying nobody could come back in the city.  But Steve Levine across the street, who works at Children's Hospital, took her out on Thursday when he left, for which I'm very grateful.

RH:  Do you know what happened to her son?

DA:  One of her sons drowned.

RH:  Oh my god.

DA:  The other son had been in water that submerged his truck.  He got out, but he got bussed out to Lafayette.  But of course, nobody's cell phone was working, nobody's

whatever was working.  She was sitting waiting for him.  So that was a mess.

RH:  Where did Steve Levine take her?

DA:  To Houston with us.  His wife is Sherry Levine, so his wife is the one who stayed with me.  So, they met us in Houston.  We all just came to the same hotel, but not until two days later because that was when he could leave work.

RH:  Thursday.

DA:  Thursday.

RH:  So, by Thursday, what are you thinking?

DA:  It's a funny thing.  I don't think we were thinking.  It's funny what you don't remember about it.  I remember everything very clearly.  What I don't remember is how I functioned.  What was I thinking?  Where would my children go to school?  I had a 12th grader and a tenth grader.  How will I earn a living?  Where will I go to earn a living?  I only have a Louisiana license.

RH:  You're a physician.  What was your role?  You said you were at Tulane.

DA:  I'm a pediatric neurologist.  I'm really a Charity Hospital doctor.  There is no Charity Hospital anymore, which breaks my heart.  On the other hand, I was employed by the state as well as Tulane, so I figured, okay, I can go to Huey P. Long in Alexandria, [or] I can go to Earl K. Long in Baton Rouge.  None of those appeal to me, so I'll be frank with you.  What was I thinking?  I was thinking, “If I can get my family settled, I can go home to New Orleans.”  Called denial.  It's not just a river in Egypt.

RH:  So, you mean if you could get your children settled in a school somewhere?

DA: And my mother somewhere. My mother's house was under water. We knew that by now.

RH: So, you were the decision-maker in all of this. Is that correct? Or how did the decisions get made? That's a better question.

DA: My mother and I made them together.

RH: Your mother and you.

DA: Yes. That should be your real interview if you want to know New Orleans. Judy is my mother.

RH: I do know that that would be a great interview.

DA: She is rock solid.

RH: So, tell me, what was her state, and how was she?

DA: She was on automatic pilot, and I don't think I really saw how depressed she was until we got to Baton Rouge. Not that she shouldn't have been, everything she had was gone. She's an amazing woman. She bought a house in Baton Rouge, sight unseen with all the people she knew, so we would have somewhere to go. She came with me to drop my senior off in Chattanooga, where I have a niece and a nephew-in-law who live there and a school that he could go to with some other kids from his school. My other one, we sent up to Choate because he had gone to summer school at Choate the summer before.

RH: Where is that?

DA: Choate is in [inaudible] C-H-O-A-T-E. Choate is in – I don't know, northeast – Vermont, New Hampshire. I don't remember which it is. It's a very snotty school, but

having said that, he had gone that summer, so they took him without any difficulty. So, we put him on a plane out of Houston, sent him on his way, and made a car trip to Chattanooga, where we thought we were going to stay. We spent a day or two in Chattanooga. Mother looked at me, I looked at Mother, and we said, “Not going to work here for us. Thanks for playing.” She got on the phone and bought unseen a house in Baton Rouge where they said there wasn't a house. We drove back through Tuscaloosa to Baton Rouge. We moved into a house we had never seen in our lives. I started to commute into the city with my oldest son, who had not stayed here for the hurricane and who had gone to Shreveport with his girlfriend to his girlfriend's parents' home. He drove down to Baton Rouge, and we started to come into the city to see what we could see going on.

RH: So, how quickly did you start to come into the city?

DA: I started coming into the city two weeks from the Friday after Katrina so around September 16th or so.

RH: How'd you get in?

DA: I'm a doctor. Show them a pass, they'll let you in. Not hard. If you're a doctor and if you're [inaudible] patient, I mean, it's a long line. Those commutes were unbelievable. I look back now, and I think, “How did we do that?”

RH: So tell me about that, the commutes.

DA: The traffic was unbearable, and then you stopped at every – there were a million checkpoints where they would turn you away if you didn't have what you needed to get in, which was either an ID or a reason to be coming or a contractor's license or whatever you had. It was hours. We all did it. Then you'd come get what you wanted, you'd want to be out by nightfall because it was dark and scary, and then you turn around, and there'd be traffic back from Baton Rouge to here again, and you do it again. And

between to and going back to work, but they're going back to work, which was fine, in their Baton Rouge clinics and in Alexandria, which I'd go to anyway, but we just expanded those clinics. So I probably worked three days a week and then commuted in and out. I came out on weekends with other friends to gut their houses with them.

RH: So, I guess I didn't realize Tulane has a Baton Rouge –

DA: Well, I had my own clinics because I've worked for Tulane for so long that I have developed outlying clinics, satellite clinics. But Tulane is part of the state, so we work at Huey P. Long, which is in Alexandria, and we cover some handicapped homes in Baton Rouge. So, we extended those out.

RH: And when you say you developed your own clinics, could you explain what you mean by that?

DA: I worked at Tulane long enough that when there was nobody else to cover those clinics, as a state person, they'd just send me to cover the clinics. I've been at Tulane thirty-one years. So I'd just show up at those clinics in New Orleans. So, in Baton Rouge, they wanted those clinics to continue. They didn't have anybody else to cover them. So I was in Baton Rouge anyway. Then Tulane put us back at Lakeside in October, first part of October, because Lakeside Clinic was up and running, not downtown, but the Lakeside Clinic was up and running. So we started those as well.

RH: So, you were living with –?

DA: I was living in Baton Rouge with my mother.

RH: With your mother and your son, your oldest?

DA: My oldest was living – and his girlfriend.

RH: And his girlfriend.

DA:  She had switched from Tulane Law School to LSU Law School because she was a senior in law school.

RH:  Oh my gosh.  That's a bad thing, too.

DA:  That was a bad thing, too.

RH:  So, did she finish out at LSU Law School?

DA:  No, she finished that semester at LSU and then came back to Tulane Law School, which reopened.

RH:  So, you said you were coming in here so many days a week.  How many?

DA:  I guess about four days a week.

RH:  And did you just come in with friends and also gut houses?

DA:  I'd come in usually with my oldest son, and we would collect what we could from my mother's house, and we would bring from this house what we needed to make Baton Rouge work because we weren't buying new furniture and stuff.  So we'd put stuff in a – would haul stuff up.  Then, I came with at least three friends and started gutting their houses with them.  I didn't do the gutting.  We were trying to save what we could save.  The gutting was [inaudible], but we were trying to save what we could save if there was anything to save.

RH:  So it's kind of clearing out and seeing what you can –?

DA:  My oldest did do the gutting.  But I didn't do the gutting.

RH:  Did you connect in Baton Rouge to the Jewish community up there?

DA:  Well, we attend High Holy Day services up there.  You're going to ask me the name

of the synagogue, but I can't come up with it.

RH: No, I don't need that.

DA: It's the Reform, and actually, our house wasn't far from it. But I can't say I really connected. This is going to sound goofy to say, but I'll say it, and I'll probably be embarrassed I said it. I really felt like any sort of connection elsewhere was an abandonment, and I felt strongly that we couldn't abandon here. That was totally unrealistic. I have to tell you. But that was what I felt.

RH: So you were focused on --

DA: Normal. Focused on normal. Focused on normal. If I just wish it hard enough, it will come to pass.

RH: Who did you get in touch with while you were –? Who were you trying to reach out to?

DA: Oh, all the pediatric people I worked with at Tulane and all the neurology people I worked with at Tulane. We were all very much in touch with each other. And all my local friends. We were very much in touch with each other. But I have to tell you, I didn't have a lot of time for that. Everything was tiring. You don't even realize how depressed you are because you can't discuss it, you can't go there, I'm not even sure you know to go there. So you finish whatever you have to do at night, and you just want to go to sleep. You're closest with the people you work with because we were trying to figure out what was going to happen at Tulane. I was closest with my two chairmen, the chairman of pediatrics and the chairman of neurology. But that's about all you can do.

RH: Well, is there anything else about Baton Rouge that we need to know and your life there?

DA: Yes, I feel unkindly toward it. But I shouldn't. It was a very nice place to stop. I think I detest it and Houston for reasons that have nothing to do with anything about the city but rather my own psyche.

RH: You mean the place where you were mentally.

DA: Yes.

RH: Did you connect at all in Houston to the Jewish community?

DA: No, we were only there for a week.

RH: And you had your mother's mother, is that correct?

DA: My brother had come down and rescued my mother's mother – my father's mother, I'm sorry.

RH: Father's mother.

DA: Who was stuck in a house because the waters had come up so fast we couldn't get her out – with the two sitters. He had come in. He had hired someone who came in with a pirogue, like a canoe, and they went and got my grandmother and her two sitters and took her to Ochsner Hospital. Later, she was placed in a home in Alexandria until we could get her into Woldenberg here.

RH: So, was she in the Versailles house?

DA: She was in Vendome, which is also Broadmoor.

RH: Okay, same neighborhood, different street.

DA: We wanted to stop there, but the water was coming up so fast that we couldn't stop there. We thought she would be okay because she's somewhat up. But they were

flooded.  They ended up, the two sitters, on the roof.  My grandmother was in a bed that got wet, where she sat for a couple days until my brother could get to her.  So there was nowhere for her to go.  Fortunately or unfortunately, she was demented and had been prior to this.  But at least when she was in her own home, she had some – I wouldn't say lucid moments, but some “with it” moments.  Once this occurred, she was really gone.  She was in her nineties, don't mistake me, but it still was not a great way to go.  She was at Woldenberg for the next six months and then died a year ago May.

RH:  Do you count her as a Katrina victim?

DA:  I absolutely do.  I absolutely do.

RH:  And why?

DA:  Because I think that once she had her lifestyle altered, she had to leave the house and leave what she knew as far as rooms and belongings and people.  I think it shortened her lifespan, I think, at that point.  Now again this was a lady in her nineties, but who had lived life very much to the fullest.  I think it clouded her sensorium further and really took away any will that there was left.

RH:  When were you able to move back to –?

DA:  I moved back here in October.

RH:  So, you were an early settler.

DA:  I was an early settler because as soon as I got electricity, I was lucky enough to have some wonderful friends who unfortunately lost their home in Lakewood South and came to live with me.  And while they think I did them a favor, they did me the favor because without my mother, who was staying in Baton Rouge and without my children, I would have been just beside myself.  Even though they think I was kind, they don't

understand the kindness was to have them here. So, we were here, the three of us. And then Nathan then, my oldest, moved back very soon, because his house in the French Quarter was really okay. He had to do some work on the roof and everything, but it was very livable. He was gutting people's houses. So, he moved back down there to the French Quarter early. And then my daughter came back because she had gone with her boyfriend to Florida where some other – Wilma, I believe – came through. Was it Wilma? It was the next hurricane that came through Florida, where she had gone, and they lost electricity, so she said, “Oh, the heck with this, I'll just go back to New Orleans.” So she and her boyfriend came back, and she had to live here because she had a place here that we gave to somebody else who needed it, so she lived here until their place was ready and she could leave. So, everybody was whatever, but I was back during October.

RH: Moved people around.

DA: We just moved people around as they needed to be moved. Then, my mother came back in December and rented a place down in the warehouse district until she could buy another house.

RH: So, you said that you and your mother made a lot of the decisions. Can you tell me what that was like and what you guys would talk about?

DA: I think I might be giving myself a little more credit. I think my mother made the decisions. Incredibly smart. Incredibly capable. Incredibly removed from the emotion of the moment in the sense that I had. We made the decision together on where to send the children because we knew Max had had a good summer at Choate and they would accept him. We knew that I had a niece and a nephew in Chattanooga, and we found a school in Chattanooga – just ended up okay, so we called to bring him. But as far as getting us there, me, my mother, we're going to leave on this day, we're going to drive here on this day, we're going to stay at this hotel on this day – okay, I'm on autopilot. I'll drive us. My mother [said], “We need a house, we're going to buy it.” “Okay. How do we

do this?" "I knew these people in Baton Rouge." She called and bought the house. She's incredibly remarkable. She's incredibly forward-thinking even now because she didn't have one belonging left. Her house was all one floor. Some people were lucky enough to have a second floor. Everything was gone. Other than the dining room set that my son and I put in the carrier thing and took back to Baton Rouge everything was gone. I think the fact that she could even buy another house and set up housekeeping, which she's done, and continue to be with her friends and her card games and to be forward-looking is remarkable, absolutely remarkable.

RH: Where did she buy another house?

DA: As we call it on the sliver on the river, Broadway, near the river. Now my son has taken her house. So we have continued to move, and he and his fiancée have redone the house and will live in it when they get married in October, which I think has really made everybody happy. It sort of feels full circle. I'm not sure I would be that happy if I were my mother. You just lose everything. I don't know how you lose everything at that age and start over.

RH: Did the family photos –? Were a lot of those lost?

DA: Oh yes. Oh, yes. Some were saved if they were high enough, but all the old photos of she and my father in high school and in their early years were low. They were in some drawers. They were all gone. She has none of that. Absolutely none of it.

RH: Are there things that if you could have back from that house, is there anything you would wish you had?

DA: Well, I probably wish I had far more than my mother. I think of my father. I think of that house. I'm sorry. My mother does that better than me. She really doesn't think of that. So, everything in that house to me was my father. So, what would I have back? I'd have back every chair my father sat on, every piece of anything he ever touched. I'm

sorry.

RH: No, it's okay.

DA: Having said that, my mother once said to me, “Your father sat on chairs in this house.” Every holiday, the doors opened at that house with my father at the house. What I would have back? But my mother would tell you we all move on, and she does it better than me. Anybody does it better than me. I'm somebody who just doesn't do change well. We're just all going to go back, and it's all going to be okay, and if we all just straighten our backs out and act like this didn't happen and put our heads in the ground, “We'll all just be fine, thanks.” It's not really a sign of great intelligence. So what would I have? I would have every single thing he ever touched his hands on. But for my mother, she misses her books. My mother's incredibly intelligent [and] had an incredible library, especially Jewish books. A lot of them had been given to her by her father. They're all gone, and I feel badly for her because they're not replaceable.

RH: Yeah. Okay. We're going to take a break, which is probably a good thing.

DA: Why? You think I’m going to stop crying? I’ll cry again.

[END OF AUDIO FILE 1]

RH: – Katrina's Jewish Voices, an interview with Diane Africk. So, you were talking about your mother, and I said it's amazing she came back.

DA: I think it is amazing, but initially, she said she wasn't coming back.

RH: Why did she say that?

DA: Because she felt like there was nothing to come back to, that none of her friends were going to come back, the house was gone, and she wasn't coming back to that. I said, “Okay. Well, I'm going back, and that's a shame. You're going to stay in Baton

Rouge, and I'm going to go back to New Orleans, but okay." Baton Rouge was good for her because my son's girlfriend, who is since his fiancée, was living at that house, and it's very bizarre; the two of them became very good friends. Even then, Rachel would say to her friends – people would say, "Well, where do you live?" Because Baton Rouge was so crowded. And she says, "Oh, I'm living with my boyfriend's grandmother," and they'd go, "Oh, poor you," and she'd say, "No, it's really great." She learned to cherish the World Series of Poker, which my mother lives for, thank you. They spent many a night in their pajamas discussing life, watching television, and learning about food. My mother's a fabulous cook. They've really become very close, and it was really good. I thought it was really just good for my mother, and then I spoke to Rachel's mother, who said how happy Rachel was, so I guess it was very good. But then the semester ended, and Rachel was coming back to New Orleans. And my mother saw how many of her friends had returned here. She had at least her whole card game. My mother plays cards a lot. When the card games returned, she said, "Okay. I can't believe they've all come back, but since they've all come back, I'm going to come back." My brother and I said, "Where will you live?" I said, "Well, why don't you come live with me?" and she said, "Oh, absolutely not." So that was the end of that, and that's when she found first an apartment in the warehouse district where I thought maybe she'd stay, but she said to me, "I want a house." So I said, "Why don't you go back to your regular house? My son, who does contracting work, will fix it for you." She said, "I don't want to go back to that house ever." I said, "Okay." Then we started to search for another house, which we found on Broadway. She has many a card game. So when you say why did she return, it's funny, once all of her friends – not all. She had a lot who didn't. But she did have a lot who did. She was surprised by it but pleasantly surprised. I think that was what made it, as well as once the temples got up and going because my mother goes every Saturday morning with me.

RH: So, how did you guys sustain yourselves up in –?

DA:  In Baton Rouge?

RH:  In Baton Rouge.

DA:  Funny you say that.  My mother said to me just the other day – because somehow, we were all talking about Katrina.  She says, “It's like a blank.  What did we do in Baton Rouge?”  I said, “I went to work in New Orleans.”  She said, “Well, what did I do?”  I said, “Well, you went to the grocery a lot, Mama.  You cooked a lot, Mama.”  I don't know what else she did.  She said, “I don't know what else I did either.”  I can't tell you.  It's a funny thing.  She spent a lot of time on phones trying to get things to work, get things arranged, and get things done.  She traveled in at least once a week to meet with adjusters and whatever.  But she did say to me, “I don't know what I did.”  I don't know what she did either, but it did.  It came to pass.

RH:  So, do you have any memories of some pleasant meals up there?

DA:  Yes.  We had a wonderful Thanksgiving up there.  We had some wonderful meals with Nathan and Rachel, yes.  But my head was just coming home.  I can't lie.

RH:  So, tell me about the impact on your work.

DA:  On my work.  Well, I think that Tulane has been dealt – Tulane Medical School – a terrible, terrible blow, and I have some severe concerns about if it can climb its way out of this terrible blow.  My practice at Tulane remained, thank God, alive and well because I have a lot of patients from the upper part of Louisiana, a lot of patients from the Gulf Coast, and a lot of patients from the other parts of Mississippi, and anybody who came back.  My practice stayed alive.  It's very busy.  That's wonderful.  But the bigger ¬–

RH:  Is that a private practice?

DA:  No, I work for Tulane.  Well, I did work for Tulane.  Now, I work for Ochsner.

RH: I thought perhaps because there were so few children who returned ¬–

DA: Oh, no, lots returned. Lots returned.

RH: You would have a good eye view for that.

DA: Lots returned. They returned without money, but I was a Charity Hospital doctor, so when you say to me, “What's the next saddest thing?” the loss of Charity and what it has done to medical education and the shortsightedness of how we will educate future doctors in this state and the wimpiness of Tulane to take a stand are sad to me.

RH: How is training going to be different? What was here before and then –?

DA: Charity Hospital was here before. That's where we trained. That's where you got the best training in the world. Now we train them at Ochsner, we train them at Tulane, we train them at Children's. Nothing's like having Charity. Nothing.

RH: Why is that?

DA: Because there was no better training hospital around. There was just no better place to get what you needed to get and see the number of things you saw. We can train them, but we can't train them like we used to train them. We can't train them with the numbers and the units of people and with the cohesiveness. I think it's a terrible mistake what we're doing to not have opened Charity and to not have opened the VA. I haven't been in the VA; I've been in Charity, which, believe me, could open if the state chose to. I'm told the same about VA. Now, I have not been in the VA. But all of that was a wonderful training place all together where people walked to and from where they needed to be, and it was one unit. That's not what we have anymore, and I can't imagine that we’re going to have. The loss to teaching, to med students, to interns, to residents, to fellows, to training programs is massive, just massive. I'm not sure how anybody thinks we're going to get doctors. They're not running here. We train them, and they'll

stay here, but they're not going to run here.  They're not coming here.

RH:  They're not coming here because there's not a training infrastructure the way it used to be?

DA:  And because this is a tough place to recruit people to.  So, if you train them and they're happy, they stay, they put roots in, and they stay.  But recruiting is difficult.  They come, they look, they run.  They come, they stay a year, and they say, “This is tough.”

RH:  What should Tulane have done, do you think?

DA:  Tulane should have stepped up and done – I hate to say this because I left Tulane, [and] I went to Ochsner.  This is not a secret.  Ochsner is good to me, and I'm happy, but I left my heart at Tulane.  Thirty-one years, you don't walk away without really having great thoughts about it.  Ochsner stepped up and bought Baptist and put their money where their mouths were and expanded and worked and went public on that they felt this community needed them and they were here for it.  Tulane did just the opposite: crawled into a hole and said, “Let's wait and see.”  You might say to me that was a smart move, that's economically what should have happened, and you might be right, but they're one of the biggest employers in the city.  They're an academic center.  LSU wasn't here at the time; they had set up a home in Baton Rouge where they were educating people.  Everything was waiting for somebody to put on the captain's hat, and why not Tulane?  Instead, to me, it really put its tail between its legs and said, “Hmm, I don't know, this looks scary.”  Sure, it did look scary.  So, I think it abdicated its responsibility.  I think with that, it lost a lot of doctors.  It fired a goodly amount.  The other ones, a lot of them left.  I just think it sent out a bad message.  I know I wasn't on the inside.  Things were tough.  I do understand that.  I'm not on the inside.  I've been there thirty-one years; I'm not exactly a rookie in the system.  I do understand some of the things about it.  I think that they should have stepped up to the plate.  Instead, I think they ran, put their tail between their legs, and hauled out the other way.

RH: When you say “they,” it's generally some type of administration. Was it the medical administration? Was it the larger university and Cowen?

DA: Gosh, I wasn't in on those decisions. I'm going to leave it at that. I'd like to come back to Tulane one day.

RH: You also worked with pediatric AIDS.

DA: Yes.

RH: Could you talk a little about that practice and what's here? Because that was through Charity, right?

DA: That's right. I must tell you, we are finding those families back. They are coming back. But what we had was a pediatric AIDS clinic on North Roman Street. It was a great clinic because we had psychological testing as well as good social workers as well as some fabulous peds HIV docs who have really put their heart and soul in this for years. It all scattered. Clinic scattered. And, of course, they all scattered. They're starting to come back, and they're starting to be seen at Tulane again. Neurologically, they end up with me because Tulane doesn't have a pediatric neurologist right now. But it's still not like having everybody together. They're going to have to come out to Ochsner to see me, and that's difficult. We can't meet at the AIDS clinic on North Roman. There isn't a Charity Hospital clinic for pediatrics because there isn't a Charity Hospital. So, some of them get over to Tulane, and some of them get over to Lakeside, and some of them get over to Ochsner. But it's difficult. But they are indeed trickling back for good or for bad.

RH: Not exactly one-stop shopping though in the sense --

DA: It used to be very much one-stop shopping. The doctors who did that stuff are all still here. None of them have left in peds. But it's tougher to get the patients together.

RH: Do you think –? Are they planning eventually to put a Charity Hospital here? Do you see it as they've kind of exploded that system and it's this follow things to private practice?

DA: Yeah. First, they were going to put one back. Now, they still talk about it. But then you read in the paper that now we're just going to – everybody should take a certain amount so that East Jeff gets some of this, West Jeff gets some of this, and Touro gets some of this, and Children's gets some of this and Ochsner and Tulane. I can't tell what they're going to do. I can't tell what they're going to do. I want to say I think someone knows, but I'm not even sure that someone knows. [laughter] That's sort of scary.

RH: Have you seen that Baton Rouge would like to keep the medical community up there more and the resources for the state up in that area?

DA: Yes. I think they would like to, but I can't blame them. I would say the same thing. It is the capital of the state.

RH: Are they going to?

DA: They're not going to keep Tulane there. I don't think we know what LSU is going to do. I think LSU will have some come here and some stay there. But that's totally a guess on my part as in “totally.”

RH: Well, what's life like at Ochsner?

DA: It's a very upbeat hospital. It's a real can-do attitude, which we didn't have at Tulane, especially post-Katrina. It's a beautiful facility. It wasn't flooded. It's bought a lot of other hospitals in the area so it funnels a great deal of pediatric patients to me and my partner. It's expanding. It's not yet my home.

RH:  It sounds like it's just not as fun to practice medicine in New Orleans right now because your networks, your communities, they've all been broken, and you don't have the new ones established.  I don't know.

DA:  I don't know if not as much fun – you know what the line better than that is?  It's more challenging.  Most of the people I worked with are still here, that I work with are still here.  But the chairman of the Department of Neurology, Leon Weisberg, died suddenly in December, and he was my chairman because I was employed under the Department of Neurology, not the Department of Pediatrics.  And when Dr. Weisberg died, there was really for me at Tulane a tremendous void because I was employed by neurology and he was my lifeline, not by pediatrics, even though pediatrics were all my friends.  But pediatrics wasn't interested in hiring anybody else at this point, so I needed to go again where there was security because I still had two kids to put through college.  That security was at Ochsner.  And without Dr. Weisberg, there was really nothing to hold me.  My partner, who'd been my partner twenty years, had left for Ochsner back in 2004, and he kept saying, “I'm very happy out here.  Things are stable out here.”  Once Dr. Weisberg died, “Come be with me.”  Ochsner had asked me to come be with them.  So, all my friends are still here.  There isn't that void, there isn't still picking up the phone.  It's just more challenging on making things work.  It's more challenging for me to tell the patient who's managed to get to Ochsner, “Well, I need you to go downtown for this, but I need you to go over to Lakeside for this, and I really want you to see somebody at West Jeff for this.”  I still talk to all these people, and it's easy for me to pick up the phone.  It's tough to say to the patient, “You need to make these twelve runs, whereas you used to just come downtown and do us all together.”  Tulane doesn't have a good neuroradiologist anymore.  There's a good neuroradiologist at Ochsner but my favorite neuroradiologist now is out at West Jeff.  So, I either haul the films down or ask the patient to haul the films down.  Before, he was at Tulane.  I went down, we read the films together.  It's that kind of thing.  It's not that these people aren't here.  It's not that I still can't have a good time, but everything's more challenging.  Everything is more difficult.

RH: Do you think some of the decisions that are being made, or maybe even not being made, have anything to do with race? With class?

DA: I really don't know the answer to that. The problem with that for me is I went into medicine to practice at Charity Hospital. That was my choice. I had appointments at both LSU and Tulane in order to practice at Charity Hospital. So, I have always seen things through the Charity Hospital light. It has always been for me to take care of the poor, the handicapped, the underprivileged. It was my choice. It's what I went into medicine for. I never went to take care of – it's that little joke: I never wanted to be a member of any club that would have me. I never wanted to take care of a patient who could afford me. I figured they could take care of themselves. The ultimate enabler. I always wanted to take care of the people who I really felt couldn't take care of themselves. They probably could take care of themselves just fine, thank you. But for me, it's always been colored on how we take care of the people who can't take care of themselves. The people that I have worked with really for my whole career are of the same mindset, which is why we were all Tulane pediatrics. We all worked under Dr. John Lewy, who was a freaking saint. He was an incredibly remarkable man who really just never saw anything as class. It was all about children are the future of tomorrow. He said it. He bought it. We said it. We bought it because we worked with him. They don't make John Lewys anymore. It's very difficult to instill that in today's generation, probably because there aren't John Lewys anymore. I don't know. It's a different group of people than those of us who started thirty years ago. So, when you say to me, is it class, I don't know. I'm a product of John Lewy, and God knows I'm proud to say that. So, I see all children as children. His favorite line: “Children are the future of tomorrow.” He just absolutely believed it. There was nothing he couldn't get done. He was the ultimate father for all of us. We all went to him with all of our problems. He took care of all of us. Then, we took care of all of his children. It was a very fair exchange. But it was hard to live up to what Dr. Lewy expected. We did it because he lived it more than anyone. There wasn't anything he didn't do, anything he asked you to do that he hadn't done

twelve times over. I worked for remarkable Jewish men at Tulane. I worked for Emmanuel Shapira from the Department of Genetics before he died. I did a fellowship under him. He was incredible. I worked for Leon Weisberg in the Department of Neurology. I worked for John Lewy. The Jewish identity at Tulane for me in the med school was tremendous. Tremendous. Leon Weisberg used to joke – my partner John Willis, who's in Johnson City, Tennessee and is a Baptist, although a lapsed Baptist, believe me – we'd be walking down the hall, the three of us, and Leon would say something about the resident, and John would say, "Oh, that resident, not a shver arbeitor, not a hard worker." And Leon would say, "My God, you've been with Diane too long." [laughter] We were all very comfortable with each other, but it was very much because we were all Jewish. Very much. I saw things through funny glasses. I saw things through a product of the '60ss and '70s, and the people I worked for were the same products. It was all about doing the right thing. And that isn't just not down here. That's not anywhere. Thank you very much. Check out President Bush and Dick Cheney. That's just not what it is anymore. So I don't know if it's class or whatever. For me it's always about taking care of the people who can't take care of themselves versus the world who says to me, "Well, they can buy cell phones when they choose to, they can buy Baby Gap when they choose to." I guess all that's true. I guess. I don't really see it that way, to be frank with you.

RH: How much of the glasses that you see through – what do you think are the influence of the family? What are the influences of your Jewishness? They may not be separate.

DA: Well, they're not. My family was very much aware of Jewishness, but as with my father, everything was done with a handshake. My father was a Reform Jew, but Daddy didn't go to temple. He did holidays because my mother did holidays. He didn't know one holiday from the next. He just knew that everyone was coming over. He was very family-oriented. When my father died, we were all very surprised to find out how many people he took care of that we knew nothing about. My father died in January, and my

mother was busy taking over things and figuring out all of his companies. At Easter that year, she said to me, “Oh my God, I have all these people who come looking for Mr. Sam, and I say, ‘How can I help you?’ They say, ‘Well, he always gave me money for Easter outfits for the children.’” I said, “So, what do you do?” And she says, “I guess I'll give you money for your Easter outfits.” I said, “I guess, yeah.” He didn't speak of that. My father did an incredible amount of charity without ever speaking of it, the ultimate in charity in [Judaism], which is to do and never speak of it. Ever. He would never have had a door named or a building named or anything named. We didn't even really know how much he did until he died. I have to tell you the truth. And I think that goes for my mother even to some degree. My mother was busy doing Jewish volunteer stuff but Daddy did for everyone. I grew up very liberal. And I think all the important influences in my life, from the people in Chapel Hill to the people that I chose to work for, were all people [with whom] I shared their ideals because I don't really know if I could work for someone I didn't. I guess I could have, but why would I if I chose not to? I was just lucky in the fact that when I was at Tulane, there was a tremendous Jewish presence. Not just of chairmen, even of associate and assistant professors, just a lot of Jews. A lot of Jews, a tremendous amount of Jews. Maybe a skewed view for me – I ended up with Jews. I don't know, now that you say. I think, well, maybe they really weren't. Dr. Shapira in the biochemical genetics lab – our fellows were all brought in from Israel because that's who he did most of his fellowships, other than giving me my fellowship. They were all from kibbutzes, and a lot of Hebrew was spoken because it was Emmanuel's first language. And sometimes, when he was busy yelling at you, he forgot, and he would yell in Hebrew, and he would also go – nobody knew; we just knew he was mad. But that's where I was. It's always been for me [inaudible] a lot of guilt about how much I have. From those to whom much is given, much is expected.

RH: Has your relationship to your Judaism changed since the storm?

DA: No, not since the storm. It has changed over the years. I have become – my friends laugh at me because I am probably the only temple-going Jew of my friends, and yet I have delved into other religions to find my peace. I'm a very Catholic Jew. I love Catholicism. I have attended a number of women's breakfasts with Catholic women my friends have invited me to. I have found great comfort in their prayers, their readings, their spirituality. A lot of Baptists. My nurses, all Baptist. I find myself praying over stuff that years ago I would have laughed at so hard. But that's not just Katrina. Even pre-Katrina.

RH: Like what? Praying over stuff –?

DA: Praying over decisions to be made. Years ago, when I was younger, if you'd say to me, which people did, “We'll pray over that.” Oh yeah, like, right. Get a grip. But of course, A, you get older, B, we're all connected, C, I have always had a tremendous amount of spirituality that I have been vaguely embarrassed about, and then when you get older, you're no longer embarrassed about it. Always believed there are some help if you look for them. You get to be forty years old, and you don't mind saying that out loud anymore. What do you care? That's where we are. Before that, you're a little embarrassed about it. It's important for me to be Jewish because of Judaism, but I believe that I could be content in another religion if this wasn't my heritage. I don't think any religion has the answer to anything because there's one God. But that's also come from years of – pediatric neurology is not a happy field. I love what I do, but we bury a lot of patients. I spend my life saying to families things that I guess in my youth I would have laughed at – “We don't know God's plan, and we may not know, but I know he's not a punitive God, and he didn't will this on you and your children to punish you, and we're going to have to muddle our way through, and it is all in God's hands.” So, things that I would have said years ago – ugh – not only do I say them, I believe them. It's that age. It's that confidence and not really being embarrassed in how you ¬– I don't know. I don't have that answer. I know I'm very comfortable with other religions. Now, I'm not

planning to convert, thank you very much. And this one's important to me. But I don't think this one has a lock on anything.

RH: How do you conceive of God? How do you conceptualize God?

DA: Oh, well, I'm very comfortable with God. He's a man. He's in heaven. He's got a beard. He's old, wearing a robe – got nothing on underneath his robe. He's in control. It's we who aren't. He has a plan. We don't listen to it carefully enough. I'm very comfortable with God. A while ago, David Goldstein, Rabbi Goldstein, said at a meeting or two [inaudible], "Now I know that nobody here believes they know if God is a man or a woman" – somehow he put it, and I put my hand up, and I said, "Oh, I know exactly what God looks like," and I'm very comfortable with it. Rabbi Goldstein was very uncomfortable with my comfortableness on how God looked. I am very comfortable. I'm very comfortable with the hereafter. I do believe that we will all end up in heaven. I don't really care whether it's a Jewish belief or not. Do I have any doubt that it's for me to get through my day? No, I understand all of that. I get it. But having said that, I get it; I still use what I need to make it work because none of us knows. So, whatever works for us is all okay with me.

RH: How do you feel your Jewish identity –? Has it helped you get through this Katrina debacle? Experience maybe is a better, less punitive, or less judgmental word?

DA: Well, even though I have hesitated to roll with this with you, I have to say [inaudible]. Katrina, for me, was not nearly as bad as my divorce a few years prior. So, I guess the truth is I found myself in a very tough place three years prior to Katrina, and any sort of religiousness, spirituality, digging deep, whatever words you want to use, were really put to the test at that time. For me, that was a personal failure. Katrina, for me, was a natural disaster, thank you, by the feds. I guess in view of what my life was – I hate to sound goofy, and I share this with other divorced friends who understand it exactly – Katrina was easier for me than other stuff. And that's a terribly selfish thing to say

because so many people lost so much, but if we're talking about it for me, where did I dig deep? I had found myself or lost myself three years prior to that. This was just an extension of where we go. For me, this was certainly about my mother and other people, but for me, I felt like I hit rock bottom before. So, I had not been comforted by Judaism when I got divorced. It was how I found myself at many a Catholic prayer breakfast because, really, the people who reached out to me were priests, who were far more comforting to me than the rabbi at the time. I found myself at a couple of Baptist churches. And I found the Jewish community, maybe because I was divorced from a Jewish man in the Jewish community, tiptoeing around, either unable or unwilling to confront it. So, if we just whisper to my mother, “How is she?” Thank you. I'm fifty years old. I'm a grownup. You may actually speak to me. I guess I don't want to say found my way – lost my way [and] found my way, pre-Katrina. Katrina was a continuation, but I found that easier than where I had been. Now, that sounds so selfish I hesitated to say it.

RH: Doesn't really sound very selfish.

DA: Well, it is because you need to focus on all these other people who lost so much. But with asking me about my spirituality, my spirituality had really come from a couple years before that.

RH: How do you feel about the Jewish community and their response to Katrina and their ongoing response?

DA: I was very disappointed in how many left. I know [inaudible] they all have to make a living and go somewhere else. I'm sure that's true of some of them. On the other hand, many of them were able to have the lives they had and the lifestyles they have because they had been good to the city and the city had been good to them. Well, when push comes to shove, it's now time to put up or shut up, and sometimes you have to give back. And yeah, maybe it's going to be tough, but if you have the wherewithal, the fortitude,

the money, and everything else I can think of, then it's time to put on your walking boots and do the dance. Now, my partner in medicine says to me whenever someone gets ready to leave, whether it's Tulane or Ochsner, if we walk out of the room, he wishes them best of luck, we get to the hallway, and he says to me, “Traitor.” And I say the same. He's not even from here. Although he's been here so long, he's more New Orleanian than anyone. And we move on. And I must tell you, I'm not telling you that that's mature, and I'm not telling you that I don't understand that I'm twisted. But I think for those of us ¬– and I don't just speak of Jewish – who have said, “This is it, we have to make this work, this is my city, my home, my community,” my whatever, “traitor” is a funny word. I didn't use it; my partner did. I'll leave it at that. I think, though, that the ones who have stayed have tried hard and done well. I mean, in the sense of they're here, they're doing – we're all trying to make it happen. I'm thrilled that Rabbi Busch didn't turn tail and run because I might have if this wasn't my home at the time, and I had a wife and three children.

RH: Just the fact that he stayed kind of bring you closer into Touro?

DA: I don't know if it brings me closer to Touro. It does make me admire him. It does. I think that that's a real statement of who he is. It's a compliment. I think that that's really special when it's not your home, and you do have a wife and three small children, and you say, “Okay, I'm just going to dig in here.” Wow, yeah, it makes me think that the backbone on the man is really the man. But I'm crazy about Ed Cohn. I like Rabbi Loewy. So, it isn't that. It's just that they already had roots here. So, it's hard, I would think, for Rabbi Busch to say, okay, I'm going to [inaudible] this out.

RH: Do you have any thoughts on Beth Israel? Is your mother still connected there?

DA: No, but my aunt still is. My thoughts? I'm very mixed on that. It's not my institution, so I know both sides, which is one that says, “Listen, this is a dying institution. We can't make this happen. There are no more young people. What are we dragging this for?”

And the other half says, “This is who we were, and this is where we are.” I know that I would be with “This is who we are, and this is where we are” because it's who I am. Does it mean it's the right answer? No. Listen, God knows I don't do stuff that is sensible most of the time, either. So I don't know. I don't know the answer. I can't fault anybody who's dug their feet in and [said], “We want this to be,” and I can't fault the people who say, “This isn't realistic, so let's not give up Judaism, but let's split it up and make it work elsewhere.” I can't fault them either, but I know where I'd stand because it's who I am. Not a surprise.

RH: How do you think the Jewish community as, I guess, an institution with the recovery plan –? Do you have any thoughts on that?

DA: I don't really know their recovery plan. I know they would like to attract more Jews. I'm not sure how we do that. I've spent my life trying to attract doctors. We're not having a lot of luck with that either. There's a lovely young woman who was a teacher here who actually I worked at one of her schools pre-Katrina. I didn't even know her except as a teacher in the room. I went there to do some extra tutoring, and I'm at Touro Synagogue – actually, it was so funny because during the whole thing, I did say to my mother, because I love that school, I was planning to go back to do some more time, and I said, “I wonder where poor Ms. (Blabey?) is?” She was just the most fabulous young woman, and she ran this class with a million children – over thirty. I didn't know how she controlled them all. She was just fabulous. I'm at temple couple weeks ago on a Saturday, and I turned around, and there's Ms. (Blabey?), who I still only know as Ms. (Blabey?). And afterward, she comes up to me and says, “Is this your temple?” and I said, “Yes, and you'll forgive me. What are you doing here?” She laughed at both because – believe me – this is not a Jewish woman. Far too good-looking. That's when she told me that she was marrying a man who had worked at the JCC here and had lost his job here, and they had gone to San Antonio, but she was converting for him – not for him, or she didn't say that. She was converting. It should always be for yourself. She

was converting, and she would be marrying him, and she was here to finish her master's because her family was here, and that she'd be back in San Antonio to marry him. Well, that's a shame. She would have been fabulous, and it would have been good to have kept him, and so we've lost those kinds of people, and they're not going to come back. It's nobody's fault. That's what happened when there wasn't enough to go around. I'm not knocking it. What I'm saying is I don't know how you bring them back. Because we can't bring that person back. She's from here. This is her home. She is the kind who will come and stay because her family is here. But they're not going to come because San Antonio is where he now has a job at the JCC in San Antonio. I don't know how you attract them. I don't know. I'm involved in Teach for America, and over sixty percent of each class that we have brought in – class of teachers – has extended their two-year commitment. This year, we have 121, which is fabulous. And even if half of those extend from their two-year commitment to staying in the city longer, it's wonderful. They're bright. They're innovative. They're eager. They're all those things you want. Teach for America – what should we call it? Jews for New Orleans? I don't know how to bring them in. I don't know how you do that. I really don't know how you do that. Do you bring your own home back? Meaning, you know, calling your children and [saying], "Come back home." I don't know, you can't do that either. So, I don't know. I don't know what you do. I do have two friends whose daughters have returned that are Jewish. But I don't know what you do. I don't know how you make it appealing.

RH: So, in a certain way, it seems like you're saying it's dependent on the larger infrastructure of the city, the Jewish community, their coming or dependent –?

DA: Well, unless you can provide jobs for them, I don't know how else you ask them to come back or ask them to come, whether it's come back or come.

RH: So, how do you think the recovery is going with the city?

DA: Depends which day I wake up. When I'm realistic, not so good. When I'm in denial, adequately. We have no leadership. We have no local leadership. We have no state leadership, and we have no federal leadership … [RECORDING PAUSED] I don't know how to get leadership here. I think it's unfair to ask people who don't live here to vote for the mayor. So, I thought that was a bad deal. We have a governor who's scared by her shadow. We have a crappy President. It's just full thickness. The country has a lot of problems, and we're just exacerbated by everything. I don't know how to make it better until you get a leader. I think we have to wait for the next election, but even then, there's no guarantees of a leader. I think you have to do what the Women of the Storm did and you take it by yourself and you do the best you can. Those were very impressive women. I went on a couple of things with them, and they were just very impressive women.

RH: Did you go up to Washington?

DA: I did not go to Washington. I couldn't get off work. I went to Baton Rouge. I did a couple of their meetings. They're all remarkable. I think that's what you have to do, which is why when I see a number of people who I think were talented and capable and educated turn and run to other cities I get a little irritated, because I feel like, in many ways, the non-Jewish segment of the city has stepped up to the platform, maybe just publicly, and maybe there are more of them, and maybe whatever. But I think, in some ways, they've stepped up to the platform a little better.

RH: So, in a sense, you feel there's a larger presence in the greater New Orleans community? You're less impressed with the Jewish community and how they're interfacing with the larger New Orleans community.

DA: I guess that's fair to say. But I guess everybody has their plate full, and they're all doing the best they can. And certainly, there were Jewish women who stepped in with Women of the Storm.

RH: But what would you like to see the Jewish community do as far as leadership in the larger community?

DA: That's a good question because I'm not exactly sure where we go from here. I'm not sure how we provide to them anymore, which we keep talking about. I'm not sure how we're going to do that.

RH: Seem to have some – they have some loans and some things, rebuilding, and low-interest or no-interest things to attract younger people.

DA: That's all we can hope for.

RH: Right. Has Katrina changed your understanding of the federal government, state, [or] local government, or your attitude or relationship towards it?

DA: Yes. I was always a cynic of George Bush, and really, the whole view of our federal government was a little different. And yes, it has really changed it for me. I feel like we have really – this is not Jewish; this is all of New Orleans. I feel like we have really gotten – I think we're considered worse than third world. I think that [if], God forbid, there was a tsunami somewhere, the United States responds better than they respond to us. Yes, I think our politicians are crooked, but a lot of politicians are crooked across the United States. The [inaudible] is not. I think to punish people the way they've been punished by monies and demands when people have been willing to come back and rebuild and try again when the truth is the levee was the fault of the federal government is really not acceptable. Yes, I'm a total cynic of the whole thing, absolutely. I didn't expect better out of Nagin, to be frank with you. I didn't expect better out of the hurricane. I did expect better once we all came back. Not all. Once he came back into power, I did expect better, yes.

RH: Expected more out of the recovery after the mayor's race.

DA: Yeah, expected more out of him, like, “Stay in the city and do something. We're all here.” But yes, I am a tremendous cynic of this government now. I guess I was always, in some way, a child of the '60s. God knows I marched. But I am just flabbergasted at the way the whole United States views us, and I think that that came from above. I do think, if you want to talk about class and race, that it would have been a different ballgame in a well-to-do white city that had people on the rooftops. Maybe I'm wrong. I am a Charity Hospital doctor. But I believe that everyone became poor and Black and not important, whether they were. And everyone's important.

RH: So, if you could change one thing about your entire experience that you've been through, what would you change?

DA: We would have left pre-storm.

RH: You can change more than one thing if you want.

DA: Well, taking probably important things with us, which we didn't. Well, we took ourselves. But we didn't take Rose, my housekeeper, but she got out, thank God.

RH: Where is Rose now?

DA: She comes here every day, and my son rebuilt her house that got flooded for her, which my father bought for her years ago.

RH: Really?

DA: Yes, and that's where she lived.

RH: And where does she live?

DA: Broadmoor. Behind my mother's old house on Versailles [and] Calhoun. We rebuilt it for her, and that's where she is. We furnished it, and she's very happy to be there.

She was just saying that to me. She came back from California, where she had stayed with a daughter. But she came back last year. She stayed there for the year and then came back last May a year ago, and was very happy to be back, and we were very happy to have her back.

RH: Do you think the recovery has been racist in the sense that it's been harder on the African-American community?

DA: No.

RH: No?

DA: No. No. Not at all. I think it's been incompetence upon incompetence by everyone – by the federal government, the state government, Ray Nagin, and all his people. But I don't think it's Black or white. My mother hasn't gotten [inaudible]. God knows she's done everything right and should have had it as well. Gone down and done all the right things. No, I think that everyone has been punished in this fiasco.

RH: What do you want for your kids?

DA: What do I want for my kids? Happiness, health, and a comfortable life. What's comfortable? Depends.

RH: Do you want them to stay here?

DA: The selfish answer is yes. I love this city. The realistic answer is whatever they need to do but to not forget their New Orleanian roots any more than I would want them to forget their Jewish roots, which I would never want them to forget.

RH: You think they'll be able to hold on to that?

DA: Their New Orleanian roots or their Jewish roots?

RH: Both.

DA: I hope so. I can't imagine why not.

RH: What are some of the strengths in New Orleans that you would like to preserve?

DA: I think the people, if you take out the government, are the strengths of this city. Both of my younger children who went away said to me, “It's not like at home where you walk down the street, and people talk to you whether they know you or not.” So, that's big. I think the people are the strength of this city. I think the culture – when I say culture, I mean “cultcha” – I mean the art, the preservation. I think one of the saddest things is that people live down here with extended families, and they're all now split up. This is one of the few places where your mama lived down the street and still did, and your grandmama lived down the street, and your brothers and your sisters lived down the street. There's so few places in the United States where that happens anymore. It broke up those huge families because now everybody's living somewhere else because they have to. Everybody had to make a living. I'd like to see that come back because it's one of the few places. I don't know if it will. I don't know if what happens is once everybody moves out, does that ever happen again? I think the people here are [inaudible].

RH: Why don't we just stop this tape?

[RECORDING PAUSED]

RH: – Diane Africk. This is for Katrina's Jewish Voices. So we're coming to the home stretch here. I was curious to know, for you, are there any things you've learned about yourself through this?

DA: Yeah. I've learned I'm really bad at change. I always knew it but I was really amazed at how bad at change I was. I've learned that I'm not as tolerant of others as I thought I was – i.e. the people who moved on. I think those are the two biggest things.

It's funny when we stop to look back, and somebody says, “Well, what was your game plan? What did you think?” I said, “I never had a game plan. Just I'm going home.” That doesn't have anything to do with anything smart; it's just I don't want anything to change, so I'm just going home. There wasn't a game plan for me. I just knew I'd make this work. That's just because I can't do change. That's not fabulous, to be frank with you. I'm unforgiving to those who I felt should have returned. I'm still unforgiving of them. I do have my own risk in my health, thank you. My mother would tell you this is no different than who I have always been, thank you very much, always able to forgive but not forget. And had cream of mushroom soup my whole life for lunch growing up because there could never be another alternative. So, there you go, it's just a grow-up from the same things you were.

RH: Are any of your priorities different now that you're back?

DA: I probably always had pretty skewed priorities in the sense of – it's always been for me Charity Hospital, those with less. Everything is just stuff, but I was already on everything is just stuff. My mother says to me when we were joking all the time, and good friends of mine who lost everything, “It's real easy to say that until the stuff is yours.” I think that's very, very true. We all like to say it's just stuff, we're all alive, it's all good. When it’s your stuff, and it's all your stuff, your stuff has an extra importance. I think if anything, while I'm busy dissing the people who didn't return, I have been awed by people like my mother and her generation and all, and I say ladies of that generation because, unfortunately, most of them that I'm familiar with are widows, my mother's friends. I'm just amazed at these people who have just – they're eighty years old, and they just put their marching boots on and come back and do it. I'm also impressed with my older son's generation. Many of them who were elsewhere came back specifically, and that's the twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight-year-olds, who really do view this as they're going to make a difference. I hope they can. I tell them they can. If we had better leadership, I would think they could. We still have a city hall who can't do anything

right except discourage people and an economic environment that just wants to put impediments in the way of everything. But I think that the people who have returned in an attempt to make a difference, I am awed by. I find them remarkable.

RH: What are you most grateful for?

DA: Family.

RH: That's an obvious answer.

DA: It was.

RH: Softball.

DA: That was a softball. Do you think there are any opportunities coming out of the storm that perhaps didn't exist before in New Orleans?

DA: I do. If you can get crime cleaned up, there are opportunities to start things over and do better, whether it's education, which I think there's some public schools now which are worth their weight. I don't think there are a lot, and it's still difficult to wade your way through them. But I've been at these meetings with the Teach for America young people. I've watched Lusher come alive. I think there's some opportunities for that. I've watched the Women of the Storm, and I think that when they put their hats on to try to make things happen, it did. We need an economy. Every time you get anything, they leave, whether it's to move to Houston, where the guy who makes wallpaper now tries to – doesn't have enough here, and so they'll head off to New York. Or whether it's because whoever has whatever now will sell out. I hate to sound that whatever, but there has to be reason and feeling and a certain amount of devotion. But that goes for the United States as well. We're busy selling out everything important and outsourcing everything. There has to be some real pride. Go for anything now. But I do think that the younger generation has an enthusiasm that I haven't seen in a while. Now, how long

will it last, what can it do? I can't answer those. But I think there is that potential. I do. I hope.

RH: Has your worldview changed any?

DA: My worldview? Since Katrina?

RH: Yeah.

DA: I don't think my worldview has changed. I think my feelings about our government have massively changed.

RH: Well, we're here at the end, and I just have another question. Because you've been away from home, you've lost the home you grew up in, what does home mean to you now?

DA: Home really is where my family is. Because I can tell you if I had come back here and my mother didn't and the boys didn't and Nathan, my oldest, didn't, and my daughter, who had been off with a boyfriend, didn't, I would have ended up somewhere with one of them. But I don't want to in any way, even though we're talking about family, minimize how important my friends are here, especially the ones with the shared experience. I don't mean to make that sound [like] anyone else can't relate. I think that's one of the problems with Katrina. I had a lot of friends not from down here but who would call. "How are you? How is it?" After a while, you just stop answering them because there's absolutely no way you can tell anybody about this, and you just got tired of saying, "Well, we're doing the best we can." "What about this? What about that?" You just couldn't do it anymore. You couldn't talk to them about it. I think the shared experience is both good and bad. We all just want normal, and there'll never be normal again. I never lived in fear of a hurricane season my whole life, fifty-five years. Last summer, I was practically dysfunctional. This summer, it's still, "Is everything together? Is everything whatever?" I read everything that says, "Well, you can't have control over this, so get control over what

you can so have everything ready." Yeah, yeah. yeah. I'm a freaking nervous wreck, okay? The shared experience is good in that we really are an island unto ourselves, people down here. It's bad because we really are an island unto ourselves, the people down here. There really is no way for anyone else to get it. I'm very grateful to all these volunteers who come down; I think they're incredible people. Incredible. They had made me more attentive to that. If I'm ever able to retire, God willing, I hope that I would have that in me because I am in awe of them. They come down. They do stuff I just can't even imagine. But we have now a shared psyche, scarred, bruised – things that nobody else gets. That's not so good. In some ways, it almost locks other ones out. It's not our fault. It is what it is. But it's a problem.

RH: You think so? Because New Orleans is often thought of as being insular.

DA: I think this has insular-ed us like you can't imagine. Because we want it to be insular that way. It's what happens to a group of people who all share a horrible experience. Time will tell, but so far – we'll be talking about Katrina long after I'm dead. Hopefully, there won't be another because if there's another, you can kiss this city goodbye.

RH: If another one hit, would you think about leaving?

DA: Yes.

RH: You would?

DA: Yes.

RH: Despite the fact that you're mad at everyone who left now?

DA: Yes. It's like that old, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." [inaudible] my partner at work swears he wouldn't. You have to know him, but anyway.

RH:  I feel like we've had a really good interview, and I just want to know if there's anything else you feel like you want to say.

DA:  I don't think so.  I appreciate your time.  I'll probably end up thinking of something else that I didn't say.

RH:  Well, I do have one more question.  What do you and your friends do to sustain yourself right now, to just relax and enjoy?

DA:  I think we're just with each other.  It's a funny thing to say, but whether it's a movie or it's dinner, there's a lot more of that now.  Now, is that because our children are older?  Maybe, but I don't think so.  There are a lot of people who I hang out with that before we didn't hang out.  They were friends, but this was busy, and that was busy.  Now, we carve the night to go to be with each other.  We carve the afternoon to walk in the park or go to a movie or do whatever.  I do see a lot more of that.  Not just in my life, which [inaudible] in my life, but in other people's.  I do think that there's a lot more cherish the moment, the moment being the people you're with.  The other day, I'm walking down Magazine Street.  It's so hot. [inaudible] "It's hot."  And said, "Yeah, but we're walking down Magazine Street."  We really meant it.  Meaning it's hot but we're all here, it's okay.  I think that's very real.  I do.

RH:  That's nice.

DA:  That is nice.  I must agree with you.  That is nice.

RH:  I think we'll wrap up right here.

DA:  Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]