



Alan Krilov Transcript

ROSALIND HINTON: New Orleans, Louisiana in the district. Today is Wednesday, October 18th, 2006. I'm conducting the interview for the Katrina's Jewish Voices project of the Jewish Women's Archive in the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. Alan, do you agree to be interviewed and understand that the interview will be video recorded?

ALAN KRILOV: Yes.

RH: So let's just begin with how old you are if you don't mind. Where you were born. And your attachment to this region and New Orleans.

AK: OK. I was born here in New Orleans and my attachment is I'm Jewish and I belong to the Jewish community.

RH: OK and was your family from here? Where were your parents from?

AK: My father's originally from New Orleans. My mother moved from the New York area down here when she married my father.

RH: And what was your synagogue here?

AK: I originally belonged to Beth Israel. And now I'm affiliated with Chabad.

RH: And did you grow up in Beth Israel?

AK: Yes. Bar mitzvahed and confirmed there with my two brothers.

RH: Bar mitzvahed and confirmed?



AK: Yes.

RH: That's -- so explain that, how does that work, I didn't --

AK: When you make the age of 13 a young man becomes bar mitzvah, he becomes an adult, and confirmed, that was like the end and the beginning of your Jewish education, like Sunday school.

RH: OK, so tell me about your Jewish education here in New Orleans and what it was like growing up in an Orthodox community, because I think of New Orleans, the Jewish community is primarily Reform. So did you feel -- how did you feel?

AK: Well, everybody played together well. We all fit well together. There was many organizations. There was your Jewish Community Center, which people hung out, there was older organizations called BBG for the girls, B'nai B'rith Girls, AZA for the boys, it was like a fraternity and a sorority, and that's what I did while I was in high school.

RH: And where was your general education? What high school did you go to?

AK: I went to Kennedy, which I think was destroyed during the hurricane, because that was in City Park, John F. Kennedy High.

RH: OK, and tell me if you have any memories, like your most vivid memory of growing up in the Jewish community.

AK: Just the old men getting together for minyan.

RH: And what was that like? Do you recall any thoughts that went through your head?

AK: Well, when I was 12 years old studying for my bar mitzvah I would go to the synagogue for classes and then the classes would go until like 4:00, 5:00, 6:00 at night, and then occasionally I would have a question for the Rabbi about something that was



stumping me, and when I went to find him he was davening. He was praying with the old men at the synagogue. And I remember it was just wall-to-wall old men in suits.

RH: Oh wow, what a memory. So do you see any impact of that on your life today in any way?

AK: I don't see that happening now for a few years to come, for more Jewish people to come back to the city, and strengthen the Jewish community.

RH: Well, so tell me is your father -- had he lived in New Orleans for a number of years? Did your grandfather that you know of come from New Orleans?

AK: My mother's father lived in New York, and he eventually moved down here. My father's father is from New Orleans and lived here all of his life till he passed away.

RH: And do you have any sense of where he came from? Was he eastern European?

AK: I believe so, Russian.

RH: Russian.

AK: Yes.

RH: OK, and tell me also about your neighborhood, where you grew up, just what neighborhood you grew up in.

AK: I grew up in Lakeview, and then stayed in Lakeview, and I have another brother who moved back to Lakeview as well, and we all lived in Lakeview and my parents.

RH: And so you went to Beth Israel, the Lakeview Beth Israel.

AK: And the uptown, when they were uptown, as a child.



RH: OK, uptown, where was that?

AK: This area.

RH: Oh really, Beth Israel was up here?

AK: Yes.

RH: I didn't realize that. Do you remember where it was?

AK: They moved from the uptown area to the lake. And if you want to know where it is, it's on the corner of Carondelet and Melpomene, which is now Martin Luther King. It's in a bad neighborhood. Drive fast. Wave.

RH: Why don't we get into your Katrina story? Because obviously this is devastation to something where you've been since you were born. An area of the city. So why don't you tell me when did Katrina first come on your personal radar screen and what went through your head about Katrina?

AK: Well once again New Orleans is going to be hit by a hurricane. We've heard this so many times in our life. But this time the boy that cried wolf really did see the wolf. And the whole city was evacuating, but when I heard it on the news that they said its mandatory evacuation I didn't understand what mandatory evacuation meant. If they would have said get the hell out I would have understood that, but I stayed behind because I have pets, I have birds that I love and birds that I raise, and I couldn't find a place to house them, so I stayed behind to take care of my birds. The night before, my aunt in New York called me and she said the big one's coming, and once again I said well if it comes it comes, but we've heard this so many times before. And I went to sleep and the next morning I woke up was around I'd say maybe 5:00, 6:00, somewhere in that neighborhood. And the electricity went off. So I think that's what woke me up like there was like a boom or some type of noise, something woke me up, so I got up and I saw



that the weather was really really bad. And once again this is at 6:00 in the morning.

RH: This was Monday morning, is that right?

AK: Yeah it was really really tough. Just so many emotions are coming back now, but I went to my car and turned on the radio station to listen to what was going on and of course it was nothing but bad news, it's really coming, and there was no way to leave, but I don't think I would have left my pets behind. To make a long story short, I did watch them drown, so --

RH: Oh Alan.

AK: Yeah, that's why I'm feeling all of this at this time. But anyway, I went to my car and I listened to the radio station, and they started going into detail about what's happening to the coast. And the wind was pounding and pounding and pounding on my house. And as I'm in my car parts of roofs are being ripped off and hitting against my car and hitting against my car and I'm listening to all of this going on the radio. But little did I know that it was my own roof being shredded off. There wasn't any water in the street. It was just rainwater, just happening. And got to stop right now. So what happened was I went to my car to listen to the radio station and the wind was pounding, pounding, pounding, and roofs were just slapping up against my windshield of the car. And little did I know that it was my own roof being shredded off. Well I would go inside my house to see what was going, to check on my pets, my birds. And I noticed where they were, I have a sunroom. And the water started coming in from that part of the house. And it was kind of comical at the time because I was talking to my birds and I was telling them, "I stayed behind because of you and I'm glad that I did, because look at it, it's raining in on you, and if I wasn't here right now you guys would get wet." So I moved them to another part of the house. Now I had 14 exotic birds, seven pair, and they were in all different cages. So I'd move them to another area of the house and then I would go to the car, turn on the radio and listen. And just see all the debris just flying by. I could just describe it like the



Dorothy and Toto and the hurricane or the tornado and you just see all of the debris flying around. So I went back in the house and then it started. The rain started coming in from my roof. And once again I'm joking with my birds telling them, "You see once again here I am to save you." And I'm moving them around. And then every room it started raining in. So when I ran to my car the last time to listen to the radio, I'm actually seeing my roof shredded off, and then I realized that the debris that was flying by was not only my neighbors but it was my home as well. So then the street started filling up with water and but it was nothing to be alarmed about, we've always had the streets filling up with water, nothing to be alarmed about. And then I start walking around the house --

RH: Do you remember what day this was?

AK: This was Monday morning, very, very early in the morning. This was maybe around 6:00, 7:00 in the morning. I don't even think it was 8:00, maybe, I don't know, lost track of time. And then I started gathering a few belongings together, because I said maybe something is happening now because it was strange outside, I've gone through so many hurricanes, so many bad weather, just on and on and on, but this was strange, OK, and I got a garbage bag and I double-bagged it, and I put a few important things in there to me, in case I had to make the great escape. And in there was two books from Rabbi Twerski, Rabbi Avraham Twerski, who's my hero. One of them was Living Each Day and the other one was Growing Each Day, and I've been reading these two books for the last 15 years. I put that in the bag. I put my appointment book in the bag. I put a book that Rabbi Mendel and Morah Malkie Rivkin gave to me at a birthday party. And two CD backups, my business CD backups, and I had \$3,000 cash that was in my pocket. My jewelry that I still have, and this watch that my company gave to me. And I put it in a garbage bag, large garbage bag, and I double-bagged it. Well then next thing you know, water started pouring in on the street like crazy, and I mean water from all over, and I open up my door and it was really strange. It wasn't as though it was rain filling up. It was of course the levee breaking, but I didn't know that at the time. And the water just



started pouring in. Now what was strange was when it came to a small degree, everything in the house started bobbing up and down. It was something like in *The Exorcist* when the child was in the bed and the bed started going up and down. My bed was doing this, my furniture was doing this. Everything, heavy items were bobbing up and down, OK. Then the water started coming heavier and heavier. And then, well let me back up. The night before I started getting a lot of phone calls from frantic people telling me to get out, OK, so what I did was I have an electric garage and I disconnected the electricity to where it could be moved up and down manually. Ten years before Hurricane Katrina there was another hurricane, the big one coming, and scared me to death. So I went out and I bought a dinghy, which is a Coast Guard boat. And nothing ever happened, OK, I kept that dinghy in the box for ten years, not even opening it or thinking about it or anything. But the night before Katrina I moved everything to the side of my garage and I put my dinghy down there and I pumped it up and I put two life preservers in it, one for me and one if I pick up somebody along the way. So and a plastic cup, OK, plastic cup I'll tell you about later. So getting back to Monday, the water started rising and rising, and then I knew it was time to get out. But when I walked to the back of my house, my refrigerator was bobbing up and down and then it flipped over. And I kind of thought this was comical because my friends -- I eat out every day and every night. And my friends would tell me you need to have food in your refrigerator. I thought it just turned upside-down because there wasn't any food in it, OK. The only thing I really kept in it was bird food. I kept it for my birds to keep it fresh. So that turned over. Then I went to the front of my house to get out through the front door. And then the furniture was shifting around there and blocked the front door where I couldn't get out there. So then I went back to the back of the house to move the refrigerator, but it was just totally impossible. Totally impossible, it got wedged in there like you wouldn't believe it. All the furniture doing like a whirlpool in the house. A slow whirlpool but just to block it in. So then I went back to the front of the house and as I was leaving I said, "Wait a minute, I can't leave my birds." Now birds will die from an illness. A bird will die from a



predator. A bird will die from old age. But the one thing you will lose your birds is them flying away. So how do you conquer that problem? You clip their wings. You trim their wings. It's like a haircut. So my birds couldn't fly. So I took them out of the cages, one of them at a time and I kissed them goodbye. And I know it sounds kind of silly, but it's not like a snake, it's not like a turtle. These birds had personalities. These birds were in my will. These birds were to outlive me. So I kissed them good-bye. I put them on top of their cage and I went to the front of the house and I moved all of the furniture around. And I opened up the door and I finally got out. Then I went around to my garage. And little did I know, but my garage a few years prior, I had it sealed tight. Because the garage was connected to the house and I didn't want any hot air from the garage coming into my home. So I had the garage completely sealed. Well, I didn't know that the roof was being torn off of the garage as well and the garage literally filled up with water airtight, and it was more water in the garage than there was in the street. So I went to the garage to lift it up to get my boat out. But at the same time all of the things in the garage was being shuffled around and it got caught in the track of when you open up the garage, or the electric control of the garage, it automatically goes up on its track. Well, at that point everything in the garage moved around and lodged itself on the track that when I went to open it it wouldn't budge. And now all of a sudden all of the water is coming in from the street. And I mean the water is filling up, filling up. I'm talking about quick. Water all over the place. So I'm struggling and I'm struggling and I'm on my knees, struggling. And the water's over my head. And I'm struggling, and struggling. And then I just yanked it up and not only did I get it up but all the water came out of the garage too so I had a current coming from this way and a current coming from behind me at the same time. And all I could do is look up and find my boat and I grabbed my boat. They have a cord that goes around the front of it that you can tie it up to something. So while I'm looking up I grabbed it and as it's pulling me out to the street in one hand I've got the rope, in the other hand I've got my insignificant, my sustenance, my treasures, the only thing I'm able to leave with, OK. And then as I'm being pulled out I extend I guess it was



my third arm. And there's a Jewish expression, "God has an outstretched arm." And I grab onto the ironwork that's in front of my house. And here one hand with the boat, the other hand with my treasures and then another hand holding on. And I was able to grab it. When I grabbed it I started climbing up and climbing up to get above the water. Bear in mind, I don't know how to swim, and the water is way over my head. I took my bag, I threw it on, I climbed in, I got on, and as I got on the boat I had the plastic cup, which I started bailing the water out. And I'm calm through all of this. I really am. I knew I wasn't going to die. I just knew it wasn't my time. And I just started bailing the water out. I put my vest on. I had my oars. And I just started rowing. But when I was rowing I wasn't moving. So I thought and I said this must be silly, I'm rowing the wrong way. So then I start rowing the opposite way. And still nothing is happening. And then I start rowing with one arm. Nothing happening. The other. So I just gave up and I just sat there. And the water is rising, rising, and the turmoil of everything, my boat started spinning around and I mean I thought I was just going to get sick just from the spinning. So I said, "I'm just going to give up and let it be until something happens." Well finally it was like I was on a little island and what happened was all the debris came under my boat and pushed me up and then I started rowing and nothing happened because all of the debris moved me up like I was on an island. So I had to wait a little while, wait a little while. And finally it all settled. And I started rowing and I rowed to my neighbor's house. Now they live four doors down from me and they live in a double, an upstairs downstairs double, with an outside stairwell, which I had in my mind I needed to get to. So this rowing took two hours because of just the flowing of the water and the current and all of the nonsense going on. I'm rowing. Rowing over cars. I see dead squirrels. I'm rowing over six-foot fences. I'm rowing over A-frame swings. And I'm rowing and I'm rowing and I finally get there. And when I got there I pulled my boat in with me and tied it up, took my bag and went up the stairs. Oh and something else I left with, and that was my cell phone. Now a lot of this I'm going to tell you is kind of foggy, and only it's because I don't remember, but people have told me what I did, OK. I call 911 and I didn't tell them that I



was safe, I told them that I was in trouble, because I felt if I told them that I was safe, they wouldn't come for me, OK. So I told them I was in trouble. They told me to go into the attic. Well, they were giving out -- I don't know if they were giving out wrong information or information just that they were told. I don't know, if you go into the attic and you can't -- and you don't have like a shovel or a spike or something to get you out of there, you could literally drown in there. Also know that gas collects and can find its way in the attic and you would suffocate. So they were giving out wrong information. So I gave them my location. I told them where I was. They said, "Sit tight." Little while later I called them back, like a half an hour later maybe. Called them back and they said once again, "Get into your attic," and so on and so forth. They repeated what they said earlier. They said, "Sit tight." An hour later no rescue, no nothing. I called them back. And I go, "Listen. I need to be rescued, I need to be saved." They were, "Where are you?" I go, "I'm in Lakeview." And they go, "What's Lakeview?" I said, "I'm in Lakeview." They said, "Lakeview what?" I say, "Where am I reaching?" They go, "911 in another state," in another city, I don't remember where it was. And I said, "Well, where's 911 New Orleans?" They go, "Oh they left. It was dangerous for them." When I heard that I got on the phone and I called Rabbi Schiff who's the Rabbi of Beth Israel. And I called him and I said, "Rabbi, I'm in trouble. The water's rising, nobody's coming to get me, I don't know what to do." So he said -- he didn't say anything. I couldn't reach him. That was his message. My message to him. Then I call a friend of mine in Scranton, Pennsylvania by the name of Alex Gans. And he is my torah partner and I learned with him once a week over the phone. And I call him and I said, "Alex I'm in trouble, I'm in trouble, I think this is it." Because nobody was there to rescue you, it was quiet, it was deadly, it was just horrible, it was evil. And then my phone went dead. And I'm waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting. Waiting forever, just waiting. The minutes seemed like hours. And finally a rescue truck came, a fire truck, which knew nothing of me. Just happened to be there, which was four or five houses down on a bridge. And I'm lucky I had my life preserver, because I waved it. It's that orange color, electric orange, hunter's



orange or something like that. They saw it. They told me to sit tight. And they came with a boat and they came to pick me up. But they were hesitant in picking me up, because this I will never understand, but the boat was partial aluminum and they were going over electrical wires. And they weren't really allowed to do that because the boat -- we could all get electrocuted. But they were kind enough to come and rescue me. So when I was rescued with them, the first time, I was sitting with them by the boat. They were very very nice. And they all -- while they were rescuing me, they were losing their homes at that moment. What an honor for them to rescue me while their home is being destroyed. I mean I couldn't thank them enough. So I'm sitting there and I'm asking them, "Well what are we waiting for.?" And they go, "We see people out there but we're not allowed to come and get them because our boat is metal, partially metal, and we can't go over the electrical lines." We stayed there and stayed there waiting for the water to subside. Never did. And then they were kind enough to take me through some back roads and on Main Street to get me to a fire station, their fire station in the Carrollton area. And when they brought me there I said, "Now what do I do.?" They go, "We can't help you at this point. You're really on your own." So I remember somewhere along the line that there was a school that was a shelter, OK, and I left the station with my bag and three feet of water. And they told me to when you walk to the school to be careful to walk on the neutral grounds, we call them neutral grounds, but they're called --

RH: Median.

AK: Medians, right. They said to walk on the medians because they are higher where I'm not as low. So I'm walking in this water that stunk. I'm seeing dead animals again. I'm smelling stuff. I'm seeing sewer. But I know this is the only thing I have to do. So I'm walking and the water is getting higher and higher and then I remembered walk on the median. But then when you come to the end of the block, the median ends. And several times I tripped. But I'm glad I had my bag because I filled it up with air thinking that if I would trip and go under the bag would hold me up. Plus in New Orleans several times



when we've had floods the manholes were raised and floated away and I can go in a manhole and drown. So I was sure that I had both bags. Remember I double-bagged all my last treasures. And I filled it up with air just in case I would go under. I would be holding this bag to keep me above. So I'm walking and walking. I'm walking in this water. And the water's getting higher and it was up to my waist. And it took forever to walk through this water. I think I must have walked maybe two miles. It seemed like forever. Smelled, the whole bit. But that's OK, because I knew I was going to go to this school and I was going to be saved, OK. I get to the school.

RH: What time is this, do you recall?

AK: Well, it's hard to say, because in the summertime it gets dark at 8:30 and this was in the summertime. I'm thinking it's more like 7:00 at night, OK. And I'm at the school and the school, the bottom floor is underwater, OK, and I don't see any way to get in. I don't see any rescue trucks. I don't see any boats, I don't see any Red Cross. I don't see any Civil Defense if that's still around. I don't see anything there. And I'm standing there and don't know what to do. Well there was this house across the street from me and this guy's yelling out, he goes, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm stranded and I'm going to the school to be rescued." He goes, "There's nobody at the school." I said, "Sure there is, this is a place for people to be rescued." This was what I thought, this was what I heard. He said, "No, this is a meeting place for people prior to the hurricane to meet." I don't remember exactly what he said, but the long and the short of it is, it was not a rescue place. So he says, "Come on up, come on up where I am." So I went up where he was, and it was really, really kind of him. And as I started talking to him I find out that this guy is really really drunk, really drunk. Sorry. Could we stop for a second? That --

RH: OK.

AK: So I went over to this guy's house and he was really really drunk, and he was just drinking away and drinking away. And we talked for a little while. He gave me a change



of clothes, which I was really grateful for, because my clothes, they smelled, I was wet, and it just -- it was nasty. So I'm staying at his house and it gets dark, and he's drinking and drinking and drinking. And finally he just drinks himself to sleep in his bedroom. Which was way in the back of his house. And I was sleeping on the sofa in the front. Well the next morning I think when the sun just rose, somebody's just beating on his door, and I mean beating, beating, beating, and it was his neighbor, who was able to get out of her house and work her way to his house. Because he lived on a two-story very very high home. And she's beating, "Let me in, let me in. The water is rising, I need shelter." So I go to the back to wake him up and he is no way to be waking up. And he's -- and she's beating and beating and beating. So finally he gets up and says "Don't let her in, you let one person in, you're going to have to let everybody in." And she's beating repeatedly, and meanwhile he's crocked and he goes back to sleep and I mean there's no radio, there's no telephone, there's no television, there's nothing to do. I can't look outside, because if she sees us she's going to beat even more. And she's just beating away, beating away. And I mean, it was driving me crazy. So I went in the back and I said, "Listen, you got to do something about this." He says, "No." And I didn't want to upset him because this was my shelter. This was my temporary home for the moment. And she's beating and beating and beating. The water is rising, the water is rising, "Please let me in, please let me in." She must have been beating on the door for three, four hours solid. And would not stop. Finally I said, "Listen, you got to let her in, you got to let her in." So he got up, he let her in, and I don't remember what happened. They kind of argued back and forth, you know, and I don't remember what that was all about. So we're sitting and we're talking and we're just talking about what's going on. And then he had a radio with batteries. We're listening to the weather, we're listening to the news, we hear about all of the stuff going on. You know, nothing bad yet. But nothing bad I mean with people, just the bad weather and the breach and so on and so forth. And then he said, "We need to get some food. Who has money?" And I didn't want him to know that I had \$3,000 cash in my pocket, but I knew when the electricity would go off credit



cards wouldn't be good, you needed cash. So while he wasn't looking I took the money out of one pocket, I went in the pocket with money and took out like \$20 and put it in my other pocket. So he says, "We need money, we need money, let's all get together and chip in for money." So I said, "Great." So I went in my pocket, I said, "Look, that's all I have, \$20." I said, "Do whatever you want to do with it." So he goes out back and it's kind of sketchy what happened, but when we look outside we see all of this water. I said, "You can't go to the grocery store, everything's closed, everything is underwater." He says, "No, I see some people out there that have -- that just went to the store, I can see them from here." I said, "They didn't go to the store." I said, "They're looting the store, that's what's going on." So he says, "Well, we need the money for alcohol," I can't remember what he said, for beer, that's what it was. "Need the money for beer and for cigarettes." I said, "Yeah that's it, just the necessities in life, you know, here we are, you know, stranded, and what do you want, beer and cigarettes?" But I wasn't going to argue with the guy because this is his home, this is my safe haven. The whole bit. He found some more beer. Oh I know what it was. Some guy was passing by in a boat and instead of asking for help he says, "Throw me a beer," and it was like a Mardi Gras float, and the guy just threw beer to the guy, and I mean he's running into the water to get to the beer before you can't see it anymore. So he's happy, he's drinking again and drinking. So the day's progressing, nothing is happening. And the water starts to rise. Now remember, we're in a two-story house. Really a three-story house, because the bottom story is a basement where the car is. And the water is rising. So I said, "Listen, we need a plan." The water is rising, we listen to the radio, and I believe it said a half an inch an hour. So I said, "We got to do something while it's still light outside." So we're going back and forth, back and forth, "What do you want to do, what do you want to do, what do you want to do?" You know, there was nothing happening. So I'm looking out the window, and I see a boat. But I don't know how to swim. So I told the guy that I was staying with, I said, "Can you swim?" [He] said, "Yeah." I said, "Swim out, get the boat, we'll all get on the boat, and we'll take the boat to wherever there's no water. The water's



got to stop somewhere.” So he said, “OK, great.” He jumps into the water, gets the boat and takes it to the grocery store to get more beer and more cigarettes. Then he comes back, leaves the boat, and the boat just goes away.

RH: Oh my God.

AK: And I'm asking him in nice words, “You stupid fool, what is going on?” And then I realized this guy's an alcoholic, you can't talk to alcoholics, you can't reason with them. In one ear out the other ear. So I just looked at him and I said, “You stupid idiot, you stupid -- this was our hope.” Then it's getting dark, and dark. And the water's rising. And dark. The next thing you know it's pitch-black outside, pitch-black, not a light for days. So I'm sitting outside just watching the water come up. Off the moon, the moonlight, watching it and watching it. Then I see a little light in the water and it's going by and it's a boat. So I'm yelling out, I go, “Please, please, we have people here, you need to rescue us.” So he goes, “Sit tight, I'll be back.” So he goes away and like a half an hour later I don't know where he is. So I come back in the house and I'm talking to the man and the woman that's there. I said, “Listen, we need to plan, we got to get out of here.” And meanwhile he's walking back and forth pacing, I don't know what to do, I don't know what to do. I said, “What are you doing?” He goes, “I'm thinking, I'm thinking.” And he's pacing back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth like an expectant father. And I asked the girl, I said, “What do you want to do?” And she's sitting there on the chair with her hands over her head going, “I don't know what to do, I don't know what to do,” just back and forth. I said, “Man, I got to get out of here.” So I go back outside and the mosquitoes, you know, mosquitoes and roaches will live forever, mosquitoes are eating me up. Waiting for this light to come back. So I see another light coming and it's a boat. And I said, “Hey, we got people here, you need to save us, you need to rescue us”, and it was the same guy and I didn't know about it, he said man, “I told you to sit tight, you sit tight and I'll come and get you.” So I said, “Look I'm sorry, it's dark, I didn't know it was you.” I apologize, I don't want to make an enemy out of this guy. Now he's



my last salvation, my after last salvation. He disappears, disappears. Hour later, I see a light coming and I'm yelling, "Hey, we need help, we got people here, we need to be rescued," and it's the same guy, and he says, "Listen you no-good nah nah nah I told you I was going to come and get you, sit tight." I said, "Listen, once again I'm sorry, it's dark, I don't know what's going on, I see a light, I don't know it's you, I'm sorry." Gone for an hour, gone for two hours. Then I see a little light coming, and I said, "Is that you again?" And he goes, "Yes, it's me, I'm coming to get you." So I said, "Oh, thank you." I get in the boat, and there's a few other people in the boat too. I says, "Thank you," and on and on and on and on and on. I said, "Where are we going?" He goes, "I'll show you." Takes me to the school, OK, get to the school and the bottom floor is all engulfed with water. I said, "Listen, I don't know how to swim." He says, "I'm not here to teach you how to swim, I'll take you to the school, you're on your own." He says, "But I will tell you this, once you get into the school, you hold onto the side inside. There's some type of railing, you just follow the person in front of you and you'll get to -- and you'll see what to do when you get in there." So get in, get to the school, and they literally ripped the doors off the school to get into the school. The doors, the locks, everything was chipped away and just shredded so they can get in there. Get into the school, the water's over my head, I'm holding on, you know, not -- I knew I wasn't going to die, I knew I wasn't going to drown. Finally get in there, we work our way to the stairs and get to the second floor, which half of it was underwater too. So I think we were working our way up to the third floor. Got to the third floor and each classroom was a different family living there like a hotel suite. But a lot of them were looters, and that's what the guy was doing with the boat, going back and forth looting businesses, OK, he was there with his partners, and they were the ones, the last ones that get to the school and unloaded all of their stuff. So glad to be there. I didn't talk to anybody, didn't associate with anybody, one guy said, "If you need to sleep somewhere, sleep right there." And it was hardwood floor with nothing available, just my bag, which I used as a pillow. And I am just soaking wet. So went to sleep and next day woke up and everybody was there, I mean all kinds of scary people. All kinds of



scary people. You know, growing up I grew up comfortable. We weren't wealthy, we weren't rich, but we never had a need for something that -- we always had money for what we needed. These people were animals. These people stayed behind to manipulate the system. These people stayed behind to loot. These people stayed behind so now they can get ahead. These people were horrible. But I lived with them. I lived with them for I don't remember how many days. When the day, when the sun came out, it was hot. In New Orleans it was very very hot. There was no air. The school smelled. It was horrible. Trying to strike up a conversation with people, they would not talk to me. I was the odd one there, OK. Just hung out.

RH: How many people were there, do you know?

AK: Around 60 people were in the school. And as the day progressed and lingered, I walked around the school and these people just broke into the desks, broke into each room just trying to find something to steal. Not to live off of, just to steal. These people were animals. They went up to the top floor where the band room is and the band equipment and for fun, New Orleans is really big with Mardi Gras and a lot of the schools participate in the band and go marching. They would take the uniform hats and use the bathroom in the hat, as a joke, and put it back on the shelf, that when the kids would return back to the school and they would dress up in their uniforms the stuff would be in their hats and they would put it on their head. They were breaking the instruments. They were playing like they were in the band. They were playing like they were the bandleader. They started an orchestra, they started a quartet, they started their little rap group. Listen, I was in the school for safe haven. They were in the school as looters, OK. The days passed by. I was lucky, I went into a closet and I found some water, some bottled water, thank God. It was the only thing I had. I took the water and I put it in my bag and I hoarded it because I know if the others saw it they would want it themselves. Some people were there. They had groceries. But it wasn't the normal groceries that they would leave with. It was groceries because there was a grocery store down the



street that they broke into and took the groceries. We have a radio. Listening to the radio. Hearing the nonsense going on at the Superdome, where people were -- I mean there were so many stories going on. That the group that I was with said, "Let's go to the roof and let's get rescued." I said, "Don't go to the roof. Because if we get rescued, we're going to go to the Superdome. Superdome has very little electricity, no lighting, no windows to open up, I'm telling you it must stink, they're not set up to sleep there, you're going to be horrible. This is the Ritz-Carlton, let's stay here." Which they listened to me, and they -- and we stayed there. And we didn't ask to be rescued. We went up to the roof. We saw what was going on. And then like four days later --

RH: What day is this now, by now?

AK: I call it August the 32nd.

RH: OK.

AK: That's the title of my life. What happened on August the 32nd. OK.

RH: OK.

AK: We go up to the roof. We're waving down helicopters and Coast Guards and nothing happening. At one time I was on the roof. I counted 22 helicopters. And out of the 22, 18 of them were news broadcasters coming around waving to us, not wanting to rescue us, just looking for a story. And when the Coast Guard came and rescued somebody down the street, all the helicopters hovered around them to take the pictures of what was going on. I know the news reporters were not really set up to rescue people. But I'm sure they could have loaned the helicopters out rather than getting the story at that time. And it was really really frustrating. The hours passed by. Couple of more days passed by. Don't remember exactly how many hours and days that passed.

RH: Can you tell me which school this was or what the cross streets were, do you recall?



AK: I'm purposely not mentioning it because I don't want to go to jail.

RH: The name of the school?

AK: Because I was part of them tearing up the school.

RH: OK. All right. Thank you.

AK: OK and I'm so--- anyway.

RH: OK.

AK: Then finally, finally a Coast Guard comes and drops a case of food down for us. Now the case of food was enough for 24 people, and there were like 60 of us there, but the two people that got the case of food would not share it with anybody. So I didn't get anything to eat out of that case of food. So I literally lived a week just on water. But I wasn't hungry, you know, but they didn't share. So we're on the roof and then finally a couple of days later a helicopter comes and says. "We're here for you." So we were really excited about that. We get ready to be rescued and it's a small helicopter, OK, and this is a joke. This is an absolute joke. No offense to our military but this was a joke. They did with what they had. The helicopter comes, they said, "We want the children first, we want the adults and then we'll take the others, OK?" So what was happening, the helicopter came but it was a very very small helicopter. It came, took two people, half an hour later came back, took two more people, and I mean this took forever. This went on to the wee hours of the night. So I was helping the Coast Guard people. And I said, "What is taking you guys so long?" Well, it was a triangle. The way I understand it is -- well first I was joking with the Coast Guard men, I said, "What took you so long to rescue us?" And he said, "Well, we came down from like the east coast. And when we got to Atlanta, we were told to only spend \$4 on a gallon of gasoline and they were charging \$6 at that point and we had to sit there and wait to get the OK to spend the \$2 more so we can fill up our trucks to come down here." Now this is what they told me. So then the



scenario goes back and forth picking up people. A half an hour here, a half an hour there. "So what is taking you so long?" He says, "We pick you up, we're either bringing you to Baton Rouge, bringing you to the New Orleans Airport, or bringing you to the Lakefront Airport. Well wherever we drop you off, we've got to go all the way to another part of New Orleans which is called the West Bank to fill up with gas because that's the only place that they have gas". Now bear in mind, at the Lakefront there's a Coast Guard station there. But for some reason they couldn't fill up with gas. So they would pick us up, take us to one, two, three spots, then go all the way to another part of New Orleans, fill up with gas. But only fill up halfway. Because if they filled up full tank, they would only have to take one person instead of two people. So while they're there on the runway waiting to get the OK to leave, planes are coming and going, Red Cross is coming and going, more Coast Guards coming and going. They have to sit there and wait for the "OK", they said they burned all their gas. Then they had to get back in line to get some more gas and start the process over again. This was literally going on for hours. Finally another helicopter comes. Which is a bigger one. And started taking more people, more people, more people. And then finally around like 4:00 in the morning, I want to say, I was taken. I was the last one. Because I didn't have children and I didn't have a family and I was by myself. And I was the last one taken. They let me take my bag with my things. There was a guy there at the school that had a dog that all of a sudden the dog flipped out and went into hiding and I stayed behind to help him find his dog, which we did find, and the Coast Guard was really really nice letting him take his dog. In fact it was a cat, I'm sorry, I don't even know where that came from, things are still foggy. We found the cat, the Coast Guard was really nice letting him take his cat. Oh, I know what it was, somebody else had a dog there that I didn't even know there was a dog there in a little carrying case. Coast Guard was really nice about that. The guys were really, really good. Guy I was talking to there said he was involved with 9/11 and he said, "This isn't – 9/11 was nothing compared to this." So I ask him, "Where are you taking me to," because the stops were either Baton Rouge, the New Orleans Airport or



the -- which was the international airport -- or the Lakefront private airport. He said, "Well, we're taking you guys to the Lakefront Airport." So I said. "Good, get to the Lakefront Airport." People are crying like crazy, because in the beginning one helicopter took children to one location, the adults, the parents to another location. Here kids are standing on the runway, crying, not knowing where their parents are. On the other side of the runway, parents are crying not knowing where their kids are. I mean, this was total chaos. There was no plan. No plan whatsoever. They just dumped us at the Lakefront Airport. I'm at the Lakefront Airport, don't know a soul, 5,000 people there minimum. Massive, massive. One bathroom. Massive people there. They're animals. Talking about how to manipulate the system, how to take your name and rearrange a couple of letters so you can get another check, how to rearrange your Social Security Number where you can get another check. People talking about this, stealing that, I mean this was a game for them.

RH: I'm going to stop you because we run out of tape. So we need to pick up again at the Lakefront Airport.

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RH: And I'm speaking with Alan Krilov. Alan.

AK: We get to the Lakefront Airport, it's massive chaos, they have maybe five military personnel. They're not police. They're some sort of military police. They had what I think were machineguns, something massive, because of the crowd. Nobody would talk to you, none of the military personnel would talk to you, nobody knew what was going on, people were getting out of line and out of control and they were being tasered. And it was really really strange watching all of this going on, and it was total chaos. The girls were animals, like I said before. They were walking up and down the runway strutting their stuff looking for a date and then pulling them out into the bushes to take care of business. It was horrible, it was horrible. The men were using the bathroom on the



runway and I'm not talking about urinating and this is where we had to sleep, OK. These people were animals. These people were animals. Then went to -- there was food there, there was water there. Wasn't really hungry, drank. It was cold that night for some reason. Then the daytime came and it was hot. No shelter, the airport literally gone. Now this was the private airport. And just massive confusion, nobody telling you anything, only because I don't think they knew what was going on. Nothing. Machineguns when a helicopter would land to drop off people. The military personnel would draw their weapons to make sure that the helicopter wasn't hijacked. You know, I mean I think this was normal for them to do that, I can understand it is what I'm saying. But helicopter would come, people would try to probably take control of the helicopter, so they drew their weapons to make sure nothing happened. The day passed. Nobody talking to you, like the military personnel, just grunting and looking at you and not saying very much. I was a loner there. Massively hot, the next day comes, early in the morning what woke us up was massive helicopters coming. I'm talking about the two blades with openings, can sit like a movie theater in there. They came, they had us line up in single file, and the helicopters came, which I thought was to rescue us. Every time I take a different step. I leave my house to the boat, the firemen are there to rescue me, yay. Then I'm dropped off at the fire station, I think I'm being rescued, nothing happens. Go to the school, going to be rescued, yay, nothing happens. A boat passes by, going to get rescued, yay, I'm in a school with animals. Just when I'm rescued from the helicopter there to be brought to the Lakefront Airport, I'm rescued finally, thank you, God, once again a rude awakening. Then the helicopters come, yay, once again I'm being rescued, helicopters took us to the international airport. Get off the plane, I think it's medical students, I'm not sure, interns, I don't know what they were, think they were Tulane students, medical students. As soon as you get off the helicopter you, "OK, do you need any medical attention, do you need a wheelchair, you need this, you need that?" "No, I'm fine." They go, "Go inside the airport and everything is fine." I go into the airport and oh my God, must have been 10,000 people crammed into this airport. It was horrible. It



was horrible. There were retarded people wandering around not knowing what's going on. They had elderly people that were in their wheelchair that needed their diapers changed. They had IVs hooked up to them with blood because the drip was gone and the blood was backing up. They had people urinating on the floor. They had these animals that were breaking into the ticket counters and wearing the hats and saying, "Yes sir, where would you like to go today?" you know, like they were punching in a ticket. Breaking into the candy machine, not for the candy but for the money. Finally I see an empty spot. There was this old man sitting next to it and I said, "Can I sit down?" He says, "Sure, but somebody was sitting here and when they come you got to get up." And I said, "Well, what's going on?" He goes, "I don't know, they wouldn't tell me, they don't -- I don't think they know what's going on." I said, "How long you been here?" He says, "I've been here for three days and I got to go to the bathroom so badly but I'm afraid that if I get up somebody's going to take my place, take my seat, and I'm not going to have anywhere to go." Says, "Well, I'll save your seat for you." He goes, "No, I've held it in this long, I just might as well hold it in." There were three gigantic circles inside the airport with people on line going on buses. But there were no buses. You took the -- there was electricity in the airport. You were let off on the bottom. You took the escalator up. You come up to the escalator. It lets you off right there where the circle is and people that were there for days were yelling, "Quit breaking in, quit breaking in." You weren't breaking in. That's where the escalator dropped you off. But you just stopped there and you looked around like, "Oh my God this is massive." I mean, your mouth drops. So you're just standing there in awe. You're standing there in awe, not breaking in, but the people that were there for days accuse you of breaking in and all of this nonsense going on. I said, "I got to get out of here." I think a terrorist might be watching this on the news and just come in with a bomb and get rid of 10,000 people like that. I said, "I got to get out of here." So I told the guy that I was sitting next to, I said, "Listen, I'm getting out of here, you're welcome to come with me." He said, "No, you go on, I'm going to stay here." So went up to one of the cops that were there and I said, "Listen, I



want to leave.” He says, “Are you sure?” I said, “Yeah, there's no reason for me to stay here.” He says, “Once you leave, you can't come back.” I said, “I don't want to come back to this place.” I said, “Do you see what's going on?” And he kind of laughed like, “Yeah, I know what's going on but this is the only thing we have to offer.” So he said, “Help yourself to some water.” So I put some water in the bag with my treasures, some bottled water. And I got out of the airport. And I'm walking around the parking lot just wandering around not knowing what to do. Now the more water you put in your bag, the heavier it is, but you got to remember in New Orleans the heat index factor was way over 100 degrees. Must have even been 110 degrees. Our summers are hot. Our summers are miserable. And then finally I find a bicycle that I borrowed, borrowed, but I didn't fit very well on it, but I didn't care. Get on the bicycle and I put over my shoulder my treasures, my books, my things, and I start trying to pedal and hold it and go on at the same time. I'm not making very much progress, but right after the airport there's this big gigantic bridge. I was looking to get to the bridge, walk to the top with the bike, and then ride it all the way down. Which I did. And on the other side was this news reporter and this gigantic news crew with, like, a Winnebago of some sort. So I come up to them. I said, “I'm dying, I'm really dying, will you just give me a ride to the next town?” And bear in mind I smelled, my clothes were raunchy, I didn't shave, I mean I was horrible, I looked like a bum. But they said, “I'll make you a deal, you give us a story, we'll give you a ride anywhere you want. But not only give us a story, tell us how to get into the city, because they're blocking news people from coming into the city.” So I said, “OK.” I said, “Let me relax for a little while.” The air conditioning was great. They said, “What are all of the fires that are going on?” And I said, “The way I understand it is from the Coast Guard people is people were lighting their houses on fire so they can be seen so they could be rescued.” And then they go, “What is your experience?” And I was telling them my experience. Asking me for the story. And then they said, “Could we -- could you tell us how to get into the city?” So I said, “Yes.” So I'm telling them all of these back roads to take. They go, “Will you show us?” Said, “Sure I'll show you.” So I show them how to



get into the city. And then when we get into the city they're doing more of my story. And more. And then they go, "Well what is going to happen now?" I said, "I don't know." They go, "Why don't we finalize the story by taking a picture of you walking down the street with the only thing you have left?" So I said, "Sure." So as I'm walking down the street they're driving away. And they left me deeper in the city than when I started off with. But I had my bike. So every step I'm taking in my journey I think is utopia, there's the pot of gold, there's the rainbow literally. Everything is going to be good. And there they go. So I got my bike and I start riding my bike and I'm deeper in the city. And I mean it's hot, brutally hot. I have no shade. The sun is beating on me. It's noontime at this time. I can't pedal anymore. I start hitchhiking. This nice family stops to pick me up but they said, "If we take you, we can't take your bike." I said, "But listen, I need the bike because you're only taking me partway. I don't know if people are going to rescue me or not. I don't know what's going on, I need my bike." And I think they sensed the urgency, so they opened up the trunk, they crammed it in there and they took me to one spot and they said, "This is as far as we can go."

RH: Now, where were you now, do you know?

AK: I was in Metairie but the airport is outside of New Orleans, which is in Kenner, which is really leaving, but I was in Metairie. It goes New Orleans, Metairie, Kenner. And that's where the airport is. So they took me to another spot and I stopped and I started pedaling and I couldn't take it, I couldn't take it. So another family stops, picks me up. And takes me to another destination, took my bike, the whole bit, you know. And then I get on the bike, I start pedaling again, can't get very far. Then I start hitchhiking. And this FEMA guy picks me up and he says, "Listen, I'm not supposed to be doing this, but you look like you're in need." So he gives me a ride to where I'm going and there's a -- he stops at a convenient gas station. He says, "Look, I've got cold yogurt, I've got lemonade," had a little ice cooler, he said, "Help yourself to whatever you want." I was just thankful, so I mean I didn't even have a spoon for my yogurt, here I'm scooping it out,



you know, just eating it away, looking to see if he's coming, I go get another one and I'm scooping it and I'm drinking this lemonade and I'm stacking one yogurt on top of the other so he wouldn't see that it was like two or three where he would just see that it was one container. And then I see he has a battery charger for the telephone. So I'm charging up my cell phone. All of this going on and I feel so bad doing this behind his back but I couldn't take the chance of him saying, "No." So I had to do it. But it was harmless. I really -- I know it was harmless but I just did not want to get a "No" out of him. So he's standing in line just waiting to pay and here I'm just conked out in the van. And he gets in and he says, "I see you really helped yourself to some yogurt." He says, "I'm glad you did that, no problem." So I said, "Well might as well tell you I charged up my phone battery and he goes, "No problem at all." So he took me to this next destination, which was La Place, Louisiana, 30 miles away from New Orleans. Took my bike, just a warm guy, very very nice guy. And he says, "This is where I've got to drop you off at. This is the end of our line." I said, "No problem." So at this point he drops me off and he says, "Let me help you with your bike." I said, "It wasn't my bike anyway, it's yours now." So I let him take the bike, because I figured I'm doing so good hitchhiking I might as well just continue. And I started hitchhiking and then the nicest guy picks me up in La Place. Took me to Hammond, Louisiana, where I'm living now. That's the destination I was trying to get to because there was this elderly couple that are friends of my family, that knew me as a child. In fact the woman sold my dad the wedding ring that my dad gave to my mom, that's how far back it goes, that's how friendly these people are and how dear. And he gave me a ride to their house and we were talking, and I find out he's a judge. And he has family in the -- across the lake. And he stopped to give me a ride. And his car was like a beat-up car, and I'm looking at him like he's a bum. And he's looking at me as though I'm a bum. And then we just find out that we know the same people. And he brought me to my friends' house and my friends took me in and let me stay there. And as I'm driving in, I see on I-55 wall to wall utility trucks. I mean it was like reinforcements coming in, tree trimmers coming in, all these massive supplies and trucks



coming in. And I'm going, "Oh, New Orleans is saved, we're going to get back to normal."

RH: Do you have any sense of what day this was about?

AK: I lost track of time.

RH: OK.

AK: I made it to my friends' house. They didn't even recognize me. They never saw me so thin, looking so shabby, so beat-up, stunk. Soon as I walked in and they saw it was me and heard what was going on, they told me to go take a shower and they literally burned my clothes. One thing I did leave out is when I was at the school and I opened up the band room locker and found the water, I also found some T-shirts there that I used as a pillow to sleep on. So when I was at my friends' house and they literally burned my clothes he gave me his clothes to wear, which he and I are not the same size. I've never in my entire life worn another man's underwear before. But it was more -- it was welcomed at this point to wear clean clothes. They fed me, they bathed me, and they didn't have electricity either. But then it started getting what I thought better. But then just the massive chaos after that, which we can go into also if you'd like.

RH: What do you mean, the massive chaos?

AK: Well, trying to hook up with your insurance company, trying to hook up with FEMA, trying to hook up with Red Cross, trying to get a shot because I tripped while I was in the water and I needed a tetanus shot and one place didn't want to give it to you, another place told you you needed it. I mean I went to a shelter and the line was long and they asked me what I wanted and I said I wanted a tetanus shot. And they read the federal guidelines and they said, "Right here you don't need one. These are the federal guidelines." And I said, "Are you sure, I cut my leg, I've been in this nasty water," and on and on and on. They go, "Here's the federal guidelines, you don't need one." So I said,



“OK great.” Because look at the line, it's massive. The next day I go to a Red Cross shelter to get some food and some stuff even though I'm staying at a friend's, and there was the Red Cross giving out shots. So they go, “Do you need a shot?” And I said, “No, I just went over by this temporary VA housing, they said federal guidelines you don't need one.” Well the Red Cross takes out their book with federal guidelines, showing you that you do need one. And they're both federal guidelines doing confliction, don't know what to do. Well, thank God I have a brother who's a doctor and I called him up, told him everything was OK, but this is the situation. I said, “Right now we're not brothers, right now I'm in need of a doctor, do I need it or do I not need it?” He says, “I'll call you back.” He talked to his friends, he says, “Get the shot.” Which I did, got the shot. But there was so much confliction going on even with Red Cross. Trying to get my glasses, my glasses were damaged, and just the red tape going through all of that to get a pair of glasses so I can see. And it's just mass confusion. The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. And just when you would take one step forward you took three steps backwards, maybe four steps, maybe five steps. And then the next day you had to call back to make sure it was done properly. It was -- it's been total, total mass confusion and chaos. And people outside of New Orleans have no clue with what is going on to this day. I just left my other brother's house. He got caught in the Katrina flood too. Says the same thing I do. People outside of New Orleans have no clue with what's going on. People in the repair department have no clue to this day what's going on. And when you take one step forward you have to take five backwards, and then the very next day follow up to make sure that people are following up properly. It's still total and mass confusion.

RH: Tell me this. When did you get in touch with or who in the Jewish community -- I guess once you got to Hammond, who did you contact and did you find your friends in Chabad?

AK: Couldn't find my friends, but I called Rabbi Zelig Rivkin, who I call the Rabbi Gadol. He is like the Rabbi of Rabbis down here. And I called him up and I said, “Rabbi, I'm



safe, I'm safe." And he says, "We're just getting ready to send in a crew of people to find you." He said, "Where are you?" He drove from Houston, Texas with his son six hours to Hammond to bring me a kosher meal for Shabbos. And then after he saw me and saw that I was OK with this family, they turned right around, six-hour drive back. Came to me to see if I needed money, clothes, shelter and a kosher meal for Shabbos. And I wasn't even affiliated with his congregation. Not at all. I mean who is this guy and why am --

RH: How did you know him and how did you know the Chabad -- when you say you're not affiliated?

AK: I knew him because I was working, I was doing some volunteer work with a school called Torah Academy that he's affiliated with. And I mean him coming to my rescue, so to speak, like you're my best -- "You're my newest best friend." You know, and it just touched me to such a degree that he as a person just so concerned about me and my welfare. Because he knew I stayed behind, word through the grapevine, that Alan was back there. And they're sending in a crew to find me. I was humbled, I was touched, really.

RH: Is there a Jewish community in Hammond at all that you could connect with?

AK: No.

RH: No, and you're still living in Hammond.

AK: Bought a house there. Bought a house there so I could be close to New Orleans, just in case people were coming back and forth. I was envisioning New Orleans flattened, New Orleans totally destroyed. So I went and moved to Hammond and rented a house and bought -- rented a large home in case people from the Jewish community were coming through to go to their house. They would be able to go and stay with me and have a place of shelter while going back and forth.



RH: And were you able to realize that plan? I mean, did people end up staying with you?

AK: People did call. People did find out where I was. But little did I know that Metairie wasn't destroyed, and people from Metairie opened up their homes too.

RH: OK, and tell me, just tell me about your insurance problems and your -- are you going to ever rebuild in New Orleans do you think?

AK: Oh God. I don't know what's going on in New Orleans. I got to take care of me first. It's time for me to be selfish. So I'm going to take care of me. I still have my home there. It will be torn down very very soon. I will do something. I don't know what but I will do something with that lot, whether it's to rebuild or not. I want to see what the city's going to do. I would like to come back. And I don't know at this point.

RH: So have you explored the Louisiana recovery -- you know that --?

AK: There is so much red tape in doing something. I was turned down three times by the SBA on a personal level and on a business level, all times having to appeal it and appeal it and appeal it and appeal it. I mean they asked me a loaded question that I didn't even know was loaded. They asked me, "If we give you a loan --?" Well first of all they said, "Are you working?" Now I've been really fortunate with the company that I'm working with. I've been with them 23 years. They gave me the year off to get my life together. And the SBA agent asked me are you working, are you bringing in money, I said, "No." And I didn't know that that was a loaded question because as a result of saying no, my loan was denied because I wouldn't be able to pay them back. But I've been working with my company 23, 24 years. They're taking me back at any time when I'm ready to go back to work with them. I'm not going to become a bum. I'm going to move on with my life. I have broken records within the company that I work for, records that are still -- are not broken to this day. I'm not going to give it all up and become a



bum and live on the beach. I just need a temporary handout right now. And pay it back and rebuild, but don't ask me if I'm working and then take that question as not being able to repay the loan. "How dare you do that to me?" So then I had to appeal it and appeal it and appeal it and I'm still denied. Sorry I'm exasperated over that. Insurance company playing games. Playing games. Well, we don't know what came first, the flood or the wind. I do. I stayed behind. Don't tell me I'm crazy and don't know what's going on. My roof was shredded. I lost my pets. I stayed behind. Me, me, me, me, me. How do I know all of that? I stayed behind. "Don't deny me, don't play games with me." Dangle, dangle, dangle, all the time dangling stuff to me, you know, just playing games. You know, it's an open and close policy. They should pay me 100%. So they're looking at it as though I'm a prisoner in jail for murder, I will never get out, so why not try to escape. So what they're doing is -- now this is me thinking. If we can pay him \$1 less than what his policy calls for, it's a good day in New Orleans. "Because he should get everything on his policy. He should. So we're going to try to delay this, prolong it, and offer him less and less and less till he starts hurting, and then he's going to start, 'Okay, I'll grab it, I'll grab it.'"

RH: So tell me about what kind of work you did, if you don't mind, before?

AK: I'm a sales director and recruiter for Mary Kay Cosmetics out of Dallas, Texas. Company's been wonderful to me.

RH: And so you must have, with New Orleans being half the size it is today, did you lose your client base? Did you --

AK: I lost I'd say 80% of my client base. I lost \$60,000 worth of inventory. Some of it was insured. Some of it wasn't. I just went back to work last month. So I don't know where I stand with my customers, but I did it before, I'll do it again.

RH: So you really took a hit financially just on the storm.



AK: I took a hit from losing my customers and took a hit losing my personal property. And now I've got to rebuild as though I'm just -- this is my first day back at work. Kind of excited about going back to work. I know I'm going to redo and rewrite history again like I've done with their company in the past.

RH: So how do you start up again with this? Just one phone call at a time or --

AK: One phone call at a time. Just offering them the opportunity or asking them to indulge in a complimentary makeover. Just like I was taught 24 years ago. It worked then, it will work again.

RH: And tell me about now your connection, because, well, you grew up in Beth Israel. And but you have moved to the Chabad community it seems. I don't know if that was a sudden shift or over time?

AK: Well, it was a shift, only because Beth Israel was in my neighborhood and was destroyed as well. And that congregation is trying to get back together and they're having services at another synagogue that has opened up their doors for them, and a couple of the members have come over to Chabad for services as well. So it's as though Beth Israel doesn't exist, and I hate to use that term, but it's though Beth Israel is not there anymore, where Chabad still has the synagogue in Metairie and the synagogue here. It's a solid structure, and that's what I need at this point. I need some type of solid stability as opposed to an email, which Beth Israel has been real good sending me emails, and Beth Israel calling me about upcoming functions and events. But I need solidness now.

RH: And tell me how you get that from Chabad if you can kind of --

AK: There's a structure. And to me that's what I need, a structure with a Torah and men going around the Bimah and holding the Torah and praying together. There's so much strength in numbers. And that's the reason why I believe when God said, "We need to



have ten men for a minyan, because we draw strength from one another.” You can pray by yourself, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, believe me, I do it on a regular basis. But when I start praying with the men here at services, my strength is exponentially expanded. I just -- I can't describe it. I'm at home.

RH: Why don't -- you had a few things you were able to save from your house.

AK: Yes.

RH: And I think I would love to put those on the camera and --

AK: Sure.

RH: Is that --

AK: I might have to turn this off. I saved this for a year.

RIVKIN: Hi there, Alan, it's Malkie Rivkin. I thought I'd catch you in person. I just wanted to tell you that you're world famous now. We're here in New York for the convention of Chabad Rabbis and we showed a video documenting Chabad work from the hurricane. And think it was Rabbi Nemes who was interviewed and he was speaking and he was saying how he was on a phone conference with all the Chabad worldwide leaders and in the middle Rabbi Rivkin had suggested that he had to interrupt the whole meeting because one of the board members of the school or the community member Alan Krilov was found. So he had to interrupt the meeting and so Rabbi Nemes was in Memphis at the time. He was in a car. And Uzzi Kehaty was in the car next to him. They were both in Memphis and they were both on the call and they both said, “Sorry we have to stop for a minute.” Got out of their cars and they were dancing in the street. I thought you would appreciate hearing that. That's it. Hope you're well. Bye.



AK: This is on returning to my house. You want to ask me a couple of questions, the first --

RH: OK well when you came back to your house, when did you get back to your house and finally come to look, do you have --

AK: I don't remember exactly when, because the city was off limits and closed. So I had to wait. Plus my home was underwater for three weeks, because after Katrina, Rita came and filled up our city again with water. I don't know if you realized that.

RH: I knew that Rita came. I wasn't sure that there was --

AK: And the water level came back up. So that's what happened. But then I went back to my house. I think it was maybe three months after. And I mean, the house was a mess. It was a mess.

RH: What did you find there?

AK: Very little was salvageable. A lot of things you couldn't even recognize. I had beautiful hardwood parquet floors. That was actually stuck to the ceiling. I looked for my birds. I found them. It was horrible, very very horrible. They died with fright, you know. I took care of them for years and years and years. And they knew every morning they were going to be fed. And they knew every evening they were going to be fed again. They knew that I was there to protect them. And my only drawback of this is wondering what they were thinking when the water was rising like, "We don't have to worry, Alan's going to come and rescue us," and then Alan didn't come. And that was pretty sad because it's just sad. And I remember, you know, you're going through every single nook and cranny in your house. And I had a friend of mine there helping me on several occasions. And you got to go through everything like my jewelry turned black, so when you throw something black away it could be jewelry, so you got to go through everything. And I'm telling you it's a mess. You've got soot, you've got silt, you've got rocks, you've



got twigs, you've got dead stuff in there, you've got rodents, I mean you've got everything, everything in there. It's not just like clear water, OK. So as I'm going through my things I come across something small and round and I think it is a piece of jewelry and I'm cleaning it, wiping it, trying to go through it to see what it was. And there was a twig with it and it was one of my birds' bracelets with their foot. And it was so sad. Because my birds, they have a bracelet where they came from and who breded them. And I saved that little piece. What else was salvageable in the house is some glass, some jewelry, some silver. But in my front room was my library, I love the books I had, I love the Jewish books I had, I loved everything. Well, one thing I kept that I found that I know is not salvageable and I hope Rabbi Avraham Twerski is watching this, because one of the books that I read is It's Not as Tough as You Think. Which I think is a little ironic. Can't open up the book, can't read it. But I have this now at my new home and it says something about how to smooth out life's bumps. And I don't know if you can pick this up very well, but it's kind of ironic. It's Not as Tough as You Think. So if Rabbi Twerski is out there, you're my idol, you're my role model, I hope you would replace this book as a courtesy to me. Then going through the house, massive. Furniture exploded. The floor coming apart. Things breaking. The dirt. The muck. Glass breaking, shattering. Things upside-down. Sofas turned upside-down, the legs breaking off of the sofa, the cushions disintegrated. I'm telling you it is really -- it was strange going there. And I'm cleaning things out piece by piece, hour by hour by hour. The wheelbarrow is being loaded up with just the stuff is being dumped. I had beautiful Persian rugs that beyond recognition. Then I come to the very very bottom, and bear in mind, everything is turned upside-down and broken and smashed. I come across the one item that binds all the Jews together, Shema Yisroel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echad. This is what our forefathers went to the gas chamber and went to the ovens about, because of our belief. This is the holiest prayer in the Jewish religion. I purposely kept it in this shape. I am donating this the way it is to Torah Academy as my commitment to stay in New Orleans to rebuild our community and to rebuild our school. And this plate should have been



broken. This is one inch thick inlaid in gold with the words written in Hebrew. This is a sign of God telling us humbly that He is awesome and He is going to take care of us. He didn't make the levees and He didn't make the levees break. But He's here to help us and He will never ever ever leave us. Isn't this beautiful? It's amazing. Unscathed. Could we stop for a second? I don't want to put.

RH: Alan, you're obviously very committed to this Jewish community and to building it back. And just why don't you tell me a little bit about that. What you're involved in now.

AK: Well, first of all it's really exciting, because we have a lot of laborers that came in that are Jewish and that came in from Israel. And when I mean laborers, I don't mean like they're digging ditches or doing stuff like that. They're helping rebuild the community. And since they're from Israel, I mean, and they're Jewish, it's really nice, because a lot of the Jewish population left but now a lot of the Jewish people are here helping us and it's nice seeing how the Israelis live, because when we have services their way of doing certain praying is different than the way, I guess, the westerners are doing it. And then when we have dinner afterwards, the songs that we sing and the camaraderie that we have and a lot of them at around midnight just stop wherever they are, wherever they're sleeping, and get dressed and go to the synagogue and start learning and start praying. And it's really refreshing to see this, because here we are in America always talking about Israel, "Israel, we're sending you our money, we're sending you our prayers, we're protecting you," and now we see actually Israel being part of New Orleans, which is fulfilling. To me, that is. Knowing that this is one nation for us and for them and for us at the same time. So I'm glad that they're here. I wish the circumstances were a little different. But they're just warm and wonderful people.

RH: Wow, that's great. And so you are involved with Torah Academy?

AK: Torah Academy.



RH: And tell me a little bit about that.

AK: It's a private school from pre-K to eighth grade, and it's a lot of the Jewish community that want to have their children brought up in a Jewish environment and Jewish education.

RH: So that's not something that you experienced growing up. So what piqued your interest about that and about involving yourself in this?

AK: Our kids are our future, and that's where our future lies. And if we don't take care of our children we don't have a future. So even though I don't have children and I'm not married, that doesn't mean I can't be there for them. In fact when we leave here -- when I leave here tonight, I'm going to a board meeting to work with the school to make it better. And I am Vice President in charge of finance. And my ultimate goal is no Jewish child will be turned away because of money.

RH: Wow. There's been also a Jewish Day School. Is there --

AK: It's still in existence.

RH: Is there any talk of the two combining?

AK: It's always been talk. It's always been talk.

RH: What do you think the obstacles are that you see? Or should it even happen?

AK: It's a fine school. It's a very very good school. And Torah Academy is more on an Orthodox and Chabad --

RH: Advice about it, if you'd like to talk about something else.

AK: No, no, no, I'll talk about it. Torah Academy is a fine school, excellent education. And the Jewish Day School is a fine school, but it's a different type of Jewish education.



We both have the same goal in mind, and that's educating the child on a Jewish level. With Torah Academy, there's less secular studies.

RH: OK, so that could be an obstacle if -- you can't see -- do you see them ever combining at some point?

AK: It would be nice if we can combine it, because our budget is a whole lot less and we get more done where their budget I believe is like ten times ours, and they're always in the hole. Maybe they need me to do some financing with them.

RH: Good idea. So let's talk a little bit about your experience as a Jew. What has it meant to go through this past year and be a Jewish man?

AK: Being Jewish I don't believe has that much to do with it. Even though when the High Holidays came our Rabbi Mendel Rivkin came up with an idea. I believe it was his idea. For the people that went to Baton Rouge, the Jewish people that went to Houston, and the Jewish people that went elsewhere, we all met in a small city called Monroe, Louisiana, which has I believe one Jewish family there. They literally converted the hotel there that the Jewish family owns into our synagogue for the High Holidays. And you talk about a wonderful experience. People from Houston, people from Baton Rouge, some from New Orleans, some from Florida, some from Memphis, we all met there for services. It was awesome, it was awe-inspiring, it was great. We were all together.

RH: And can you talk a little more about some of the things that it meant to you, you know, that you were all together? Some of the conversations that occurred or --

AK: We were all together as though it never did happen, and we never did ask really very much about everybody's experience. Because we all experienced the same thing. I do know that when I went to Houston there was a -- I went there just to get away from New Orleans. There's a wonderful family there called the Kagan family. Stuart Kagan was just a wonderful man that took me in for two, three, four weekends, different



weekends, just when I feel like getting away and going to services with he and his family there. They don't understand what's going on. They try to but you have to be like part of the New Orleans family to thoroughly understand what we went through.

RH: Has anything in your life changed now? I mean everything has changed, you're living in a different --

AK: Nothing has stayed the same.

RH: But I mean your worldview, how you see the world.

AK: I have less confidence in our government today, and that's sad, because we're supposed to sleep well at night knowing that our government is looking out for us. I wish the government would get out of politics and get more involved in the human nature of things. I wish there's less handouts, which is really ironic, because here I was looking for them. Because it's abused. It's abused, like when I was in Hammond one time I called up the Red Cross and found out that there was a church there that was giving out food because Red Cross couldn't be everywhere. So they, I guess, employed churches to do it for them. Well the church that got the load of food was in a poor community and they gave to their own congregation before they gave to me because they said their congregation was poor. However, their congregation was not Katrina-stricken. You follow me?

RH: Yeah, I do.

AK: So it was sad. It's sad. My views about what's going on, I think I've always been compassionate, but now I think I have to be more compassionate towards people. And just accept what they're saying when they say that they're in need, as opposed to questioning them.



RH: Tell me what it was like for you to be an independent person, to be a person who is Jewish used to making the world a better place, and suddenly having to accept charity or accept things. What did that feel like?

AK: It was humbling, it really was, but I intend to pay back everything that was given to me.

RH: Do you mean directly or do you really mean --

AK: To society, to society. So much has gone on that I really want to forget that's really hard for me to just pinpoint a few things as to the answer you're looking for. But I think we all need to help our fellow man. I just can't zero in on something right now. It's very very difficult for me. But I do know when my hand was being extended looking for help and being turned down it really did hurt, because I look at myself pre-Katrina as financially able. If post-Katrina I'm looking for a handout, it's because I really need it. It's not as though I'm trying to take advantage of the system. You know, and people just did not understand it. And maybe it's because the system was being taken advantage of. You hear stories all the time where there was a hotel operator or an apartment complex owner cashing in on the people who lived there, getting all of their checks. I mean whenever something massive like this happens there is abuse. Even when something major like this didn't happen, like our welfare system is being abused. So I don't know how to answer it. I don't know how to answer your question. I don't know if there really is an answer, like if you see somebody on the street begging, if you should give them money or they're just truly lazy and just don't feel like working. There's no answer to it, there's just -- I guess educating our children, that's really where it all starts.

RH: So your answer is with Torah Academy.

AK: Yeah.



RH: We haven't discussed explicitly a very difficult topic, which is the topic of the storm and race. But it's important I think since we have this moment to capture New Orleanians' understanding of even the situation now, the situation then, and how it's been framed by other people, but how would -- what would you like to say about this issue?

AK: You know, I could say so much about this. It's sad that the people that were -- that purposely stayed behind, what they did. It did not help the divided community of black and white. I think a lot of people that did leave, maybe 80% of them, 90% of them, were white. The black people stayed behind. But I don't think the black people stayed behind because they had no way of getting out. The people that I lived with purposely stayed behind. The people that were at the airport purposely stayed behind. I mean I love people, I love people, but what I saw I never knew existed. I never knew people purposely wanted to stay behind to hurt society, to get even with society, as though society owed them. You know, John Kennedy, who said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," that just rings out to such a degree. It irks me to think that society is put in a position that they owe people. Regardless of who the people are. Society doesn't owe me anything. I owe society. I'm part of society. I've got to give back, not see how much I can fill up my basket and then hoard it from people. No way, there's enough to go around for everybody.

RH: So tell me about your vision of what you'd like to see both in the Jewish community and in New Orleans.

AK: Well, first of all the way New Orleans showed itself is really embarrassing to the country. I can understand why politicians don't want to help. I can understand, when you see policemen in the street looting, how it defaces our city. I don't see our city coming back within the next three years, possibly in five years. But what comes first? Do the families come back? Why should they come back? They don't have any schools here. Should the schools reopen? Why should they? They don't have any families going to it.



Somebody has to make the first step. I hope with Tulane University hiring -- have a habit of hiring Jewish doctors would be a good step. I hope with Touro Infirmary having a habit of hiring a lot of Jewish doctors, putting their foot forward, will start the Jewish community. Because that's where a lot of Jewish people really come from that are outside of New Orleans. It's because of the hospitals, it's because of the colleges. So I would like that. I would like to see certain tax breaks. I would like to see the government not putting us through hell to fill out a form and have it just turned down because you forgot to dot your I or cross your T. I would like there to be a lot of looseness but not to a degree where it's taken advantage of.

RH: And so OK why don't you tell me what you've learned about yourself this past year?

AK: I have learned that the most important thing in life is family. And when you have a family, whether it's an extended family or a blood family, that is the key to everything in life.

RH: And tell me who your family is.

AK: I don't really have a blood family, but I have an extended family of the Jewish community, and also Chabad being there for me. Just extending their hand and every holiday that comes up if I have not RSVP'd, our Rebbetzin Bluma Rivkin will get on the phone and call me. Uzzi Kehaty, who is one of the people you heard on the tape that got out and danced when they found out that I was rescued, if he doesn't hear from me he will call me up and tell me that if I'm coming in town I'm staying at his house for Shabbos. I mean the community. I'm staying -- occasionally I stay at a gentleman's house by the name of Shabi Perl. Wonderful family who's moved to Israel. They have moved to Israel. His home is like my college dormitory. There are mattresses all over the house. People come, people go, people don't know one another, but they're staying there because they need a place for Shabbos. This has never happened in this abundance before. I look back and I say why couldn't the Rabbis' houses be destroyed



and mine saved. And then I look at what the Rabbis, Rabbi Nemes, Rabbi Rivkin, how they're opening up their homes to everybody, it's like revolving doors here, mattresses all over the house, meals galore, just available for people as myself to come stay with. Amazing. Simply amazing.

RH: I think that's a beautiful place for us to stop right now.

AK: OK.

[END OF INTERVIEW]