Larry Orlansky Transcript

Rosalind Hinton: Larry, tell me a little about the painting and how you got it.

Larry Orlansky: Well, this is a lithograph of [Theo] Tobiasse that we – Naomi and I always liked his work, and this one in particular we had our eye on for, I don't know, fifteen years. Nahan's down in the Quarter, now Elliot Gallery, has always carried Tobiasse. We even met Tobiasse and Chaim Potok, who wrote a book about him, at an event probably twelve, fifteen years before we got this. Once we bought this house and moved in, we were looking for some artwork back in '05. We finally bought the lithograph and had it framed nicely at the gallery. Anyway, the waterline after the flood was probably up to here. It survived the flood because we were able to discard the old frame and the matting, of course, and then had an art restorer fix whatever smudges were along the borders, so now it's back in its rightful place where it was in August of '05.

RH: You had just been in the house a very short while in August of '05. Is that right?

LO: Yeah, we moved in, actually, this time of year in February, Mardi Gras weekend, or thereabouts, of '05. So we'd actually only been in the house for six months and had done a lot of work, both upstairs and downstairs. The downstairs work had to be redone and even upgraded after the flood.

RH: So, how many feet of water did you have in the house?

LO: Five and a half, six feet. I always stand right here and say the water line was about here because I have a photograph of the line about right here.

RH: And you're really right on the levee, the 17th Street Canal?

LO: Well, the 17th Street Canal is right on the other side of the street from here. Now, the break in the canal was a mile and a half or two miles down towards the lake. This neighborhood didn't get the full force of the water where it would knock houses off their foundations, but it got six feet of water that I assume rose like a bathtub and then went out two weeks later.

RH: Okay, so it's back in its rightful place. That's the important part. [Recording paused.] Ready? This is Rosalind Hinton interviewing Larry Orlansky at his home at 5523 Bellaire Drive. I'm doing this interview for Katrina's Jewish Voices for the Institute of Southern Jewish Life and the Jewish Women's Archive. Today is January 27, 2008. Larry, do you know that you are being videotaped and agree to be videotaped?

LO: Yes, of course.

RH: Thank you. And why don't you just start with where you were born? Give me your age, when you were born, and tell me about – before we do family background, tell me about your present family here in New Orleans, your children and wife.

LO: Well, I'm married to Naomi Schiffman Orlansky. We were married in 1983. She's from New Orleans – Metairie. We have two children. Shana, who is twenty years old today, January 27th. And Adam is fifteen.

RH: And tell me how old you are, or when you were born?

LO: Yeah, I was born in '58, which makes me forty-nine. August of '58. I was born in Greenville, Mississippi.

RH: Tell me a little about your family history. How did your family get to Greenville?

LO: Well, most immediately before me in the family history – my dad is from Drew, Mississippi, which is a small town in the Mississippi Delta. Greenville is sort of the big

city of the Mississippi Delta. He grew up in Drew, Mississippi. My mother is from Alexandria, Louisiana. They met at LSU [Louisiana State University] in college. My dad went to law school at Ole Miss [University of Mississippi]. They settled in Greenville and are still in Greenville. You mean, before that, how did the family get to the Mississippi Delta at all?

RH: Right.

LO: My dad's side of the family is from Russia. Actually, what is now – part of Russia that is now Lithuania as I understand it. Both his mother's family – the (Sklars?) – and his father ended up in the Mississippi Delta in Drew, Mississippi, via coming over from Russia and then making the way – I'm not sure the full story of how they got to Drew, Mississippi. A lot of my grandfather's family ended up in the Pittsburgh area, but he ended up down in Drew, Mississippi. He ran a dry goods store there successfully for many, many years. My father grew up there and worked in the store. I still remember going to the store in the '60s when we'd go visit. So Drew, Mississippi, home of Archie Manning and the Orlanskys.

RH: OK. I was just going to say we should say who the famous Drew person was.

LO: Other than David Orlansky – Archie Manning. It was a small town. I guess, to this day, Archie – there was even an article today in the Times-Picayune about Drew, Mississippi, and Archie. He remembers the details of it. But the family knew each other, and Archie's mother and my aunt were best of friends back when Archie was a star at Ole Miss. I still remember meeting his dad at my aunt's house. So, small town.

RH: Right. What was it like being Jewish in Greenville?

LO: Well, it was what it was for me because that's where I grew up, and I knew nothing else. But at the time, in the ’60s and going back a little before that, it was a decent-sized Jewish community, certainly for Mississippi. I guess probably the second, if not third,

biggest. At one point, I actually think Greenville had more Jewish families even than Jackson, but that's counting – probably not more people because families, as you know, are often counted as – a single widow or widower would be one family. I think in terms of number of kids and number of people, Greenville didn't have as many as Jackson, at least when I was growing up. But we had a full-time rabbi, several fulltime rabbis throughout my growing up. A nice, beautiful temple, which is still there, and the congregation still has the temple. The congregation no longer has a full-time Rabbi. The have, I guess, a part-time student rabbi that comes every other week. But growing up there, I was one of maybe three or four Jewish kids my age in town. Again, at the time, that's what I knew. I knew that we were a distinct minority, but there was very little, if any, negative effect of that. It was a very comfortable place to grow up and to grow up Jewish.

RH: Were there any ways that your family marked Judaism? I mean, did you go to temple regularly? Was it a Conservative, Reform?

LO: Well, it was Reform. Yes, we went to temple regularly, religious school. My family was very active in the congregation, and my parents still are. My dad led services there Friday night because when the student Rabbi isn't there, someone in the congregation does it – a very small, dwindling congregation now. So yes, we were very active. I was very active in youth group and the regional youth group. So, it was very much a part of our lives.

RH: Did you go to Camp Jacobs? Did it exist then?

LO: It did exist. Well, the camp was started in the late ’60s, so I was old enough. I was at the right age to have been a camper there. Unfortunately, I never was a camper, but I was very active once I reached high school years and became a counselor in training, and then a counselor and was on the staff there for many years through college. So, I was never there as a camper, but it has been a very, very important part of my life and

lots of – all of my family, including my children. More recently, I was actually chairman of the camp board for – I was on the camp board and was chairman of it. So, it's been an important part of our Jewish identity here.

RH: What did it give you that you feel like you're working so hard to stay with it and to pass on to future generations?

LO: Well, it really is the Jewish community of the region. As an aside, I'll say that unfortunately, there are people who don't recognize that either because they have not gone there or become involved in it – or people send their kids to places in other parts of the country. Sometimes people need to stop and recognize that this is our camp and it's our region's camp. It's a gathering place. I guess particularly coming from a smaller Jewish community, it provided a network of friends and connections that, to this day, are still very significant in my life. Lifelong friends that, as a result of having – again, I wasn't a camper there, but I'm talking then about high school and college years on staff that created and helped develop more of a Jewish identity and just connectedness.

RH: Do you have like a favorite memory [of] when you were a counselor or a favorite thing that you remember from those early years? A story?

LO: Well, I wish I could come up with something for you in that regard. But just really, I guess not anything in particular, which may say enough in itself because you're talking about several years of just enjoying the atmosphere, the culture, the culture of friendship, the culture of building Jewish community within that framework that was just very important on an ongoing basis. I can remember – certain programs and things like that come to mind. But there was no sort of significant threshold moment where I realized, "Hey, this is an important place." I think it was just always important.

RH: What kind of programs did they do in the early years?

LO: Well, there was always – there was educational programming. There was evening programs, fun programs that the counselors created and organized and did. There were theatrical performances that we participated in. I can remember participating as a counselor in training in a program that our group did that was very creative, and we had some artistically creative people – not me – in our group that really contributed to a Dr. Seuss night. We did several skits based on the Dr. Seuss books. It was incredibly popular for the kids, and we had great fun doing it and worked hard in doing it. We did Fiddler on the Roof one year. Anyway, those things pop into mind. The educational programming, which I was neither qualified for nor inclined to reach out to be the instructor for was an important part of the program too. I mainly did athletics. I was the athletic director up on the ball field and teaching athletics to the kids. Those were great times. I mean, just spending the summer teaching and playing sports, staying in decent shape.

RH: Yeah, it's a nice thought to think about having the time where you were doing something important, and it was something so good as sports. Tell me about how you came to New Orleans and how you found this Jewish community.

LO: Well, I went to LSU in Baton Rouge, undergrad and law school. Naomi and I met there and were married right after law school, literally the week after law school graduation in May of '83. So New Orleans was one of the places that someone coming out of law school at LSU naturally considers. I clerked for a judge here [from] 1983 to '84, a federal judge, for a year before really deciding to accept a job with a law firm here – Stone Pigman. We ended up here and have been here ever since, other than a two-year – well, two different hiatuses to Baton Rouge, one intentionally and one unintentional. But from '96 to '98, we lived in Baton Rouge for two years because I went there to open up a Stone Pigman office in Baton Rouge, and then I came back here in '98.

RH: What is the center of your social life in New Orleans? What do you guys like to do in New Orleans? What's special about New Orleans to you?

LO: Well, gee, that's hard to say. The center of our social life, I guess, has been children and things emanating from children. I guess most of the things we do these days and over the last few years have been with – to a large extent with friends who we've become better friends with over the years because our children are the same ages and we just know each other. So we go out to dinner or go to events with them. We love things like Jazzfest and Mardi Gras to a lesser extent, I guess. But we certainly like the big events, the big festivals, and the great, unique things that New Orleans has to offer. I like to go hear music but find that we do that less and less as it's less and less inviting to hear bands that start at eleven o'clock at night. It used to be easier to do. But in terms of the Jewish community, we're very active at Touro Synagogue and at the JCC. Naomi is the next president of the JCC. I was chairman of the ADL regional board until about a year ago. So we've been very involved in the Jewish community as well, and that leads to some social life, I guess, as a result of that.

RH: You put down Gates of Prayer.

LO: Yeah, well, before we were – before we went to Baton Rouge in '96, we were members of Gates of Prayer.

RH: Is that right?

LO: I was actually on the board for a couple of years there. I'd be guessing, but in '94, I would say to '96, I was on the board at Gates of Prayer. But we were active there, as well. I mean, we were and always will be active in whatever synagogue we're members of. We were at Gates of Prayer then. And then when we moved back, just the way it happened and probably for a number of disparate reasons, we ended up joining Touro when we went back to New Orleans in '98 instead of Gates of Prayer. Although we still

have great friends at Gates of Prayer. We love Bob Loewy and saw them last night, in fact – Bob and Lynn. Nothing personal to Gates of Prayer; we just ended up at Touro, and that's where we are now.

RH: Right. I thought you guys were like in always Touro, so when I looked at that, I thought, oh, this is something I really didn't know. Well, let me ask just to kind of set the stage for Katrina. I think we have enough background now. Maybe you can tell me exactly what you guys do for a hurricane and then when Katrina came on your personal radar screen.

LO: Well, what we've done in the past when hurricanes have come, I guess we've done what everyone else does, and what we thought we were doing [during] Katrina was – when these things have happened a handful of times over the last ten, fifteen years, we pack up a couple of days' worth of stuff and go to either Jackson where my brother and his family live or to Baton Rouge where my sister and her family live and stay for a day or two, and everything's fine, and we come back home. So, other than the hassle of being in traffic to get out of town and the securing of outdoor items – patio furniture and things like that – we don't really think much of it. Or never did. So with Katrina – well Katrina, we had the additional issue of my son's bar mitzvah was that weekend. Adam's bar mitzvah was that weekend. The bar mitzvah would have been August 27th [which] was that Saturday. So, we had all the planning for the bar mitzvah and everything, and everyone in town for the weekend as the hurricane increasingly started looking like it was coming this way. That's a whole other layer that I guess other people didn't have. But focusing purely on just the hurricane, clearly, it was going to be a big storm. Clearly, it looked like it was coming straight to New Orleans. So we had a little more than the usual concern, but it was still a matter of throwing a weekend's worth of stuff into a bag and driving to Baton Rouge, which we did, thinking that we'd be back on Tuesday. Because it looked like the storm would hit Monday morning, and we'd be back on Tuesday. Clearly, nobody expected something as crazy as the 17th Street Canal levee wall breaking. That

kind of thing never was imagined. But that's not exactly what you asked.

RH: Oh, no, no. We're getting there. Because I'm curious – I was invited to Adam's bar mitzvah, and the storm kind of kept me out of town. I decided it was too hard to get in and get out. I think that was part of it – and talked to Naomi. So what happened at the bar mitzvah? You also had, I believe, a new rabbi, and this was his first bar mitzvah, wasn't it?

LO: Right, right. It was his first bar mitzvah in New Orleans. Well, the sequence was that it wasn't until Friday that I think people really thought there was a chance that this thing was coming this way. I mean, it had gone through Florida, and it looked like it would move up northward, further east of us, up into Florida, Alabama, I guess. Again, we were not paying that specific attention to it because of everything going on. But I do remember Friday afternoon, someone saying that storm looks like it's coming this way. Our thought was, well, let's get through this weekend, let's hope it doesn't come here. Again, I'm being repetitive, but no one imagined the extent of what would happen. It was going to be more of a question for us about – okay, we're going to make it through this weekend before we have to get out of town. Clearly, we started realizing by Friday night that we would need to leave town on Sunday because, as silly as it may sound to maybe some watching this who aren't from this area, these things are fairly predictable in terms of time. In other words, they can't exactly pinpoint where it's going to make landfall, but everybody knew it was going to hit wherever it would hit Monday morning. We knew that we'd make it through the bar mitzvah, and we'd leave town Sunday morning. But we also knew some people couldn't or wouldn't come in on Friday or Saturday knowing that this was coming. We understood that. The family that was here for Friday night services – and then Saturday morning was the bar mitzvah – a lot of them left Saturday afternoon instead of staying around for a party we were having Saturday night. And that, too, was understandable. We had a smaller crowd than expected at the party. But we still had the party Saturday night because so many of the local people and a lot of Adam's friends

were still in town, and they were going to leave town Sunday. We went ahead and did the party, and it was fun. By the time the party was over at midnight or so Saturday night, I remember seeing a policeman who was doing security duty at the – we had the party at the Jazz Club uptown, and I'm blanking out on – on Valence Street. It used to be a jazz club. Now you can just rent it out as a reception place. It'll come to me in a minute.

RH: Yeah, I remembered it, too.

LO: Some great people played there.

RH: Yeah, I saw Ella Fitzgerald there.

LO: Anyway, he said, oh, yeah, it's coming, it's bearing down on us. So actually, instead of going to sleep, waking up Sunday morning, and fighting the traffic, we came home, packed bags, and evacuated sort of two o'clock in the morning. The drive to Baton Rouge was very easy. So we went to Baton Rouge and went to my sister's house. They had just returned from the party themselves. We knocked on their door, went in, and went to sleep. And kind of hunkered down for what we thought would be a couple of days. And that was our evacuation.

RH: When did you become aware of the levee breach?

LO: What really happened?

RH: Yeah.

LO: Well, actually, I can tell you exactly what I remember about that. Sunday was – of course, even in Baton Rouge, there was going to be concern about high winds and stuff, so we helped Mark Posner, my brother-in-law, and Linda, securing some things. They were having a lot of construction still at their house. They had only recently moved into

their home in Baton Rouge, and they were still having some construction work done in the back, I remember. So we did a lot of work moving and securing loose lumber and everything else at their yard on Sunday. And then, as Sunday progressed, and we were watching on the internet, it's more and more clear that this huge storm was coming straight for New Orleans. Again, our concern here would have been only that if there is substantial rain and the drains get backed up, and there's substantial water, maybe, just maybe – even though it has never ever happened in this neighborhood before, but maybe just maybe you'd get a little bit of water on the floors and stuff. In fact, I have to say I remember when we left, I put a couple of towels at the threshold of the door in case a little water kind of started coming up against the door and whatever good that would do. I remember finding those towels when I came back three weeks later. They didn't keep out the water if you're wondering. So how did I know the levees broke? Well, we watched the news, we went to bed Sunday night, I woke up early Monday morning, turned on the news in Baton Rouge, saw that the storm had actually made landfall east of New Orleans, and where we sit now, we were actually on the far western end of the city. My street here, Bellaire Drive, is literally the first street in Orleans Parish coming from Jefferson Parish. So we certainly felt like the city had been spared again, particularly our area of town, we'd expect there be nothing. As it turned out, there was very little, if any, roof damage or wind damage to anything in this neighborhood. Further east in New Orleans, even uptown – areas of uptown, as you know, and then certainly further east, there was substantial roof damage and wind damage. Well, the storm really missed this part of town. The power went out in Baton Rouge at six in the morning, I still remember, on Monday. We'd seen enough on the news to know that basically everything was okay in New Orleans, and the power went out. But I was still curious, so I remember – I went back to sleep for a couple of hours, then went out to my car and turned on WWL 870 just to kind of listen [to] what was going on. That's when kind of rumors started about what might be happening. The storm clearly had missed New Orleans – there was still, I think, some high winds and stuff downtown – WWL studios, I remember them saying that. But

what I remember is David Vitter, the senator, coming on for an interview, and he said – I'll never forget – he said, “Did you hear that the 17th Street Canal wall broke?” which I thought was weird. I mean, the thought of that kind of thing – what does that mean? The person who was interviewing either said that he hadn't heard it or he started hearing rumors of that. And Vitter said, “Well, gee, if that's true, there goes Lakeview.” And at that point, it dawned on me, wait a minute, first of all, how could that have happened – number one – and then secondly, what does he mean, “There goes Lakeview?” Then I started thinking about it, and they really didn't – it was really a couple of hours before the story started coming in. People who were in the Lakefront area telling stories – I remember one lady who lived on Robert E. Lee talking about their – the street literally being like a canal and the water just rushing down the street. So then I realized, wait, this is bad. Probably then, not realizing how bad it really would be, because first of all, I have no experience with levee walls breaking, but I guess the first thought was, well, can they stop it? Can they plug it up? When they say it's broken do they mean like broken-broken? Or do they mean a leak? What do they mean? So anyway, it was probably another day before we really realized what was happening.

RH: On Tuesday, sometime that you –

LO: I guess, Tuesday, or maybe even Monday night, that water was coming in sufficient to be really flooding the city. Then, whether or not it reached us – I guess I was hoping against hope that we were far enough away from where the break is that maybe the water wasn't getting here. And then, as the stories unfolded, it became clear that they weren't going to stop the breach. They weren't going to stop the water from filling up the city. As you know, what happened was they had to just let the water – the decision was made – whether they had to or not – the decision was made that the only thing to do was let the water from the lake fill the city until the lake and the city were equal in water, and then everything was leveled out. Then you could fix the breach, and then you could pump the water out of the city, which is, of course, what they did. So still sitting in Baton

Rouge over the next few days, it's like, okay, well, what does that mean in the different areas of town? Where is that water going, and how high is it going? So, I guess at some point, stories started getting posted on the internet. On NOLA.com, it was broken down to different neighborhoods, and people were posting photographs. And I do remember seeing at some point a photograph of the street sign that's still there at the corner of Bellaire and Lesley Lane, which is Lakewood North. And it was almost to the top of that sign. So that pretty much told me that it was substantial water in our area. As the next days went on, you started getting specific information.

RH: Did you get power back and see the Superdome and the convention center and that kind of thing?

LO: You mean in Baton Rouge?

RH: Yeah.

LO: Oh, yeah. Well, yes and no. Yes, they got power back. But I was numb to it in the sense that I really did not – I don't remember much about the national stories or the pictures. I didn't want to see it. I remember specifically not wanting to even watch. My father-in-law, Dave Gansar, was with us. I remember he had the TV on the whole time. And I remember just kind of thinking, I didn't really care to see it. So, I would walk by, and occasionally, I'd see what was going on and just kind of – my memory is real hazy about that. I just remember not wanting to really watch it, having a general sense of what was going on, but having such a feeling of helplessness that I didn't want to sit there and watch it like a news story. If I lived in Omaha and I was watching it, I guess I probably would have been glued to the drama that was going on in a much different way to the terrible plight of the people who were stuck here. I have to say, my sights weren't on that. I mean, there was empathy, and there was, God, this is horrible, seeing what was going on. And at the same time, seventy-five percent of my brain was saying, what's going on with my situation? Including the house, but not just the house. I mean, Lord

knows we were all wondering, well, what does that mean for our lives? What does it mean for my law firm? What does it mean for schools, the kids, and everything else?

RH: So, as it was all sinking in, what kind of decisions were you having to make, and who was making them? Did you make them as a family?

LO: Well, sure. Naomi and I made some decisions. I think there was perhaps from other people you've talked to, hearing the same thing. But I guess we were there on Monday, there in Baton Rouge, learning what's happened Monday night and Tuesday. It was either Tuesday or Wednesday – I guess it was probably Tuesday afternoon that it sort of dawned on everyone at the same time that we're not going back to New Orleans anytime soon. Of course, this is even people whose homes were fine, but they knew they weren't coming back to New Orleans anytime soon. And we have kids in school. School had just started. This is late August, first of September. We need to find someplace to put these kids in school. I remember either someone – we started hearing that people were going to schools in Baton Rouge to enroll their kids and see about enrolling the kids, and we realized, wait a minute, we need to do that. It was so surreal, the notion that we needed to see about enrolling our kids in school. I mean, we had just – as I mentioned, we had lived in Baton Rouge from '96 to '98, and my sister and her family, who were so terrific to us, were there and had well-developed relationships with some schools, particularly Episcopal of Baton Rouge, which is where Shana and Adam had been when we went to school in '96 there. I mean, when we lived there, and they were in school in '96 for two years at Episcopal. One of the first things was, well, let's see if we can enroll them in Episcopal, which is eventually what happened, at least with Adam. Shana was admitted back into Episcopal but was not happy with the situation. She was admitted at Episcopal and at U High – University High School, which is part of the LSU system and is very difficult to get in. But she was admitted to U High. So she actually went to U High for a couple of days. She was very unhappy. It was her senior year. So that was a whole other level of stuff.

RH: Where did she go to school in –?

LO: Here in New Orleans, she was at Franklin – Ben Franklin, which is a public citywide school, a terrific school. She had been there since ninth, tenth, eleventh grade. Now this was her senior year. And obviously, this was just throwing a huge wrench into the lives of those kids. She was particularly upset and unhappy with her situation. Partly, we were living with my sister, which was terrific. They insisted that we not find a house or an apartment. And they were right about that. I mean, they have a big, beautiful home in Baton Rouge that – how I say – it was not built for two families, but it was big enough for two families. So, it was good for us. The only exception was Shana, who, again, in her senior year, wanted to – had an opportunity to go live with her good friend from camp, Annie Jacobson, in Jackson. The Jacobsons, we were very friendly with. They basically offered to let Shana come stay with them in Jackson and enroll in Annie's school in suburban Jackson. So, after about a week, she did that. She was going off to college the next year anyway. We were entirely okay with it, and it really just kind of made sense to do that. So, she did. I think she was much happier there than she would have been in Baton Rouge.

RH: This was a friend from Camp Jacobs?

LO: From Camp Jacobs and still one of her best friends. So, that worked out fine for her, relatively speaking. I mean, given the fact that she couldn't go back to her own school. Now, both Franklin and Newman, where my son goes – where Adam goes – reopened the second semester, January of '06. So, they were back. Shana ended up graduating from Franklin, finished her second semester of senior year at Franklin. We were back in New Orleans by late December of '05, not in our house, but here in New Orleans.

RH: Well, did Adam end up in the day school or the night school at Episcopal?

LO: The day school.

RH: The day school.

LO: Yeah. Again, I have to say, I think it was – I know you're alluding to the fact there was a night school program set up by Episcopal and some of the other schools of Baton Rouge in order to accommodate this influx. You have to say, the people of Baton Rouge were just terrific in their graciousness and their opening of arms. I think some of them would say, well, we didn't have a choice because all of a sudden, two hundred thousand or more people were in Baton Rouge with all these kids, and they had to do something to accommodate them in all these schools. So different programs were set up, and Episcopal, among other schools, did set up a night program, late afternoon to night program, where a lot of the New Orleans kids ended up going. It was very difficult to get into the regular day program. I think because we – I mean, Adam had been a student at that school just a couple of years before, and my sister and her family are very involved in that school. I don't think that hurt our chances to get him in. So he was able to be in the regular program.

RH: When did you first feel like you could get back to the city? Did you come by yourself or did you come with friends?

LO: Well, my firm – that became the product of – I think for everyone, it became the product of what your kids were doing and what your job situation was and what your house situation was. Those three things. The kids were in school, so there was no reason to come back to New Orleans until the end of the semester. There was no – in terms of our house situation, there was nowhere to go. We didn’t have a place to stay. At some point, the focus started becoming where are we going to live in the interim between either rebuilding this house or buying some other house in New Orleans and now. We had to do something between December of '05 and whatever point in time there was going to be that we bought a house or renovated this house.

RH: Well, describe your neighborhood and what happened in your neighborhood.

LO: This neighborhood?

RH: Yeah, and when you were first able – this is called Lakewood South?

LO: Right.

RH: Describe your first trip back into the city just to see what was going on.

LO: Well, this is Lakewood South, which is a neighborhood that we always have admired and wanted to be in and have loved. We did live in Lakewood North at one point, which is on the other side of the interstate, which is also a very nice neighborhood. We lived in Lakewood North before moving to Baton Rouge in '96. And then, when we moved back here in '98, we actually wanted to find a place here in Lakewood South. We couldn't. We ended up buying in English Turn, so we lived out there for seven years. And then in '05 moved here. Yeah, so this was great timing. But it's a beautiful, comfortable neighborhood. Lakewood South has probably 200 to 240 or so homes, so it's a fairly small pocket. I will say that to this day, as we sit here now, I still think it's the best neighborhood in the city, even with twenty-five percent of the houses abandoned. It's still beautiful. Beautiful oak trees survived the storm. It's still a very comfortable and a very safe neighborhood. So, we love it here. We loved it here before, and it is rebounding nicely, as you know, this neighborhood compared to some other neighborhoods. Frankly, even Lakewood North, just on the other side of the interstate, is not nearly as far along as we are here in Lakewood South, for whatever reason. So to describe when I first came back. We knew at some point – within maybe a week after the flood, we were trying to find out how high the water actually got because we weren't sure whether it made it all the way up to – I remember thinking, well, did it go all the way up to the rooftop? Did everything on our second floor also get flooded, even the attic? But there were postings on the internet and then stories of getting reports that the water got to a

certain level. I remember hearing ten and twelve feet and thinking well, gee, does that mean it made it up to the second floor or not? At some point, we had satellite photographs that everybody was passing around on the internet. I remember seeing a satellite photograph of what was said to be the highest water point. You didn't know. It was a photograph. So when was it taken? But we were told this was the highest water point on August 31st or September 1st. We could see from the satellite picture of the neighborhood – I could identify the rooftop of this carport back here, which is one story high. So I knew that by seeing – if I could see the rooftop, then that means the water couldn't have gotten to the second floor. We could actually see the rooftop – this house has two rooms – two rooms of the downstairs stick out farther than the upstairs. We can see the roofline of that part of the house. So we knew the water didn't get to the second floor, which was comforting. It sounds so silly to say, but when you think everything was lost, you just rejoice that hey, the whole upstairs, which is all of our bedrooms, actually, is okay. And certain of Adam's prized bar mitzvah gifts we knew had been moved up to his bedroom by that time. We took comfort in that. So, I came here on September 11th – and I still remember that date. It was Sunday, September 11th, that Mark, my brother-in-law, and I drove here because we had heard that even though there was still water, people were getting on boats here at the 17th Street Canal, really where Veteran's Boulevard crosses the 17th Street Canal, which is sort of where the lake started. The water came in, and it formed the lake into the city, and the canal wall itself became the bank of the lake essentially. So, right out here at Veterans Boulevard, near Heritage Plaza, there were all these boats that people had claimed and left behind along the bank of what was then the lake. We were able to come here, park on the Metairie side of the canal, and we shared a boat with a couple of guys who – one guy wanted to go to his house. So, we essentially made a deal that we'd go help him at his house, and he'd help us at my house. So we got in a boat, we went to his house over in Lakeview –

RH: It's like a total stranger until you do this.

LO: It was a total stranger – a guy I still know – Joe Wink is his name. His family has an engineering firm, a very successful firm, as it turned out, and that's who it was. And so we went to his house in Lakeview literally by boat. I mean, at that point, there was still four feet of water in the street. The water was higher in Lakeview than it was here, not that it mattered. I mean, eight feet of water versus five feet of water – it's enough to flood your downstairs. So we went to his house. It's kind of funny. People say, well, what were you going to do? I guess the first thing you're going to do is just look and survey and see. But we also took garbage bags with us because the idea was we were going to take clothes and other things to – take what we could. We went to his house first, and then we came to my house. My house was – I still have photographs, actually, that I just came across. I could show you. But literally, the front door of our house was open. We had to break a window to get into his house over in Lakeview. That's what most people tell the story is that when they first came to the house, they had to break a window or break down the door because the doors and windows – the water made the wood swell. You couldn't really open the doors. I remember coming here in the boat along Bellaire Drive in a boat and thinking well, let's see, which window are we going to break to get in? How are we going to get in? And as we get up to the house, I realize the door was just wide open because the wind and/or the water had forced it open. So we literally brought this boat up into my foyer, where we were just standing, right up to the stair. The water was probably two feet in the house at that time. We surveyed the wreckage, and we went upstairs, and we filled a few garbage bags full of stuff, including the Albert Pujols autographed baseball that Adam had been given for his bar mitzvah, and which was sort of the first item that we wanted to make sure it was okay. We were pretty sure it had been moved upstairs. [laughter] So we claimed that and a lot of other items. Anyway, I'm rambling.

RH: No, no. You're not rambling.

LO: But that's what I'm supposed to do.

RH: It's fascinating. So did anybody want any other particular things? Were there things when you came in, and you went, oh my gosh?

LO: Well, yes and yes. I had a list, which we've kept. Something about it – I hadn't wanted to throw away the list. I had a list that we had everyone make. Shana, Adam, [and] Naomi listed things, particular things they wanted. I mean, we're talking about particular shoes, particular shirts that they wanted. Not big items, because we knew – well, we didn't really know until Mark and I got here exactly what we could facilitate, but what we were assuming was we could take a couple of bags full of stuff, so figure out what you want most. When I got here, I still remember calling Naomi, standing up on the second floor, all excited. Again, it was this great triumph and relief that, hey, the upstairs is great. And it was just so bizarre and surreal that upstairs – not only was it okay, it was exactly like it was when we left, which, of course it was. One thing about this, you hear about the vandalism and things that happened in other parts of town. What we knew was there wasn't anybody breaking into these houses. I mean, there was two, three feet of water. Nobody was going to be able to get into these houses. So it wasn't alarming that the door was wide open because I knew nobody could have gotten it – would have gotten in. Anyway, I called her from upstairs and said, "This is great. Upstairs is perfect. Everything's fine. We can get whatever clothes we want." So I was taking orders from her and Shana over the phone about get this, get that. We weren't sure when we'd be able to get back. It took probably more than it needed to take because the truth is, three days later, I came back with my good friend and law partner, Michael Schneider, who also lives in Lakewood South. So, he and I came back to our respective houses and helped each other load a whole bunch more stuff back to Baton Rouge. Then, within a week after that – a few days after that, we came here with a truck, a moving truck, and literally loaded all of our upstairs into the truck and took it into storage in Baton Rouge. So within a couple of weeks after it was possible to get into town, we had taken everything that was salvageable – all the upstairs – and moved it to Baton Rouge in storage. So we were never worried about vandalism and things like that because we had

taken everything out.

RH: Do you remember what was going through your mind at that time?

LO: Yeah. I seem so matter-of-fact about it now. I'm actually surprised I'm able to talk about it so matter of fact. Yeah. I was – numb is the word I keep using. I was just kind of walking around with a huge hole in my gut and a lump in my throat about – what are we going to do? What are we going to do with the house? Where are we going to live? Certainly had concerns, even just financially about what we could do, what we would be able to do. Had no idea about how things like insurance would play out. Certainly, I knew I had flood insurance, but there's a certain maximum amount of flood insurance that you can get – or that most people normally can think of getting. It wasn't going to take care of everything. The law firm, increasingly, we – at first, you wondered, well, what's even going to happen with the law firm? We pretty immediately set up shop in Baton Rouge, and a lot of my partners who live uptown and whose homes were fine were less consumed with getting their own homes taken care of. A lot of people were able to get right back to work, which was great for the firm. It became pretty clear that I still had a job. I still had work to do. It was hard to do work on a personal level for a little while. The firm and the partners were terrific about recognizing that, that there were some of us that were just so consumed with getting our personal matters together that we were less able to spend time on work, and that sort of worked itself out over time. But yeah, so my thoughts were, what are we going to do? What are we going to do with this house? Which actually went back and forth for about a year, really, about what to do in that regard. What are we going to do with the kids? We were really going through a very hard time trying to figure out where – we had decided we wanted to come back and get the kids back to New Orleans to their schools. That was really kind of paramount to us. But we had nowhere to live. The feeling of someone who had just moved into what we thought was our forever house, our grownup house we kept saying, and comfortable with work and comfortable in our lives and where we were in our lives as of the summer of

'05, to all of a sudden be refugees and nomads in the sense of not having a place to live, was just overwhelming. We had to figure all that out. At the same time, we knew that we had friends and family supporting us. I knew when I'd allow myself to think clearly about it and rationally about things, I knew that in the big picture, we'd be okay financially and in every other way – perhaps not as okay as I felt like I ought to be or would have been without the storm. But I knew that, unlike a large segment of the population, I'd be okay. It was hard to think rationally all the time and take comfort in that because it was still plenty of opportunities for – whether it's self-pity or depression, or whatever saying, this is not right. This is not fair. It's not fair to our kids. This can't really be happening that I'm sitting here trying to figure out where I'm going to live and allow my kids to go back to their school when right across the canal here, everybody's fine. Uptown, all those people are fine. Although, again, fine is a very relative term. Everybody's life was turned upside down in different ways. But in terms of sort of the very basic necessity of life, which is where are you going to live, there was a period of time where we were just not clear what we could do or would do.

RH: Okay, we're going to stop this tape.

LO: Yeah, good.

RH: And take –

[END OF TRACK 1]

RH: – January 27th. [Telephone rings.] The phone is ringing. [Recording paused.] Larry, you were talking about that you were in a boat and you've owned four houses in the New Orleans area. Of the four that you've owned, three were flooded.

LO: Yeah. Well, fortunately, three were flooded while I owned them, but just –

RH: Just with Katrina –

LO: The point being that I've always lived in this part of town, with one exception. The first house we bought was in Lakeview. Small house on Memphis Street. That area flooded. And then we lived in Lakewood North, and now this house. So those houses were all affected by the flooding that followed Katrina. The one house that wasn't affected – we lived in English Turn for seven years. I guess from '98 to '05, right before we moved into this house. In English Turn, ironically enough, the people who live there wouldn't want to hear this, but everybody's always worried about English Turn because it's outside the levee system. One day, if and when the big one comes in the form that everybody's talked about the big one coming – Katrina was not the big one that the forecasters and the people who have studied hurricanes have talked about, at least has been reported. Say it this way: The damage to New Orleans wasn't caused by the storm. We all know that. It was caused by the break in the manmade levee wall and the negligence in the design and construction of that wall that broke when it shouldn't have broken. If that wall hadn't broken after the storm had already passed the city, we wouldn't even be talking right now. Having said that, English Turn is outside the levee system. So, there's always been a fear that if a storm comes up from the Gulf, it would flood that area of town.

RH: It's in the West Bank, is that right?

LO: So it's just ironic. It's on the West Bank, although it's on the river.

RH: And the West Bank really didn't get flooded with Katrina, is that right?

LO: To my knowledge, it didn't. I think there was a lot of wind damage. Again, it's just funny remembering this. As the storm was coming Sunday night, we were watching the news in Baton Rouge, and we're seeing the storm coming, and seeing that it most likely would hit the eastern part of the city, as opposed to the far western part where we are. And seeing that it would – of course, comes up from the direction of the Gulf, obviously. I remember saying, “English Turn is going to get killed.” And we had just moved from

English Turn. We felt bad for our friends and former neighbors who still lived there. I remember just thinking that and thinking, “We're going to be fine over here.” And, of course, I still say to this day, that was a true statement at the time in terms of what you think of as hurricane damage because there was some pretty significant wind damage over in the English Turn area, but not the flooding.

RH: What's been your frustration with trying to explain New Orleans and what's happened here?

LO: Well, I think we all experience great frustration, even to this day – and I guess it continued – it gets worse as the Katrina event is further and further from the minds of others. I guess it's frustrating to deal with the misconceptions that people have about what really happened, people’s lack of patience to even try to understand. But it's not different from anything else that people have a short attention span [or] a short amount of patience for actually learning about something before forming their opinions. And in fairness, I have to say – and I've said this a number of times. If I lived in an entirely different part of the country, I'm sure I would have watched what happened with Katrina for a week or so and then just sort of forgotten about it. I say I'm sure of that. I'd like to think I’d have a little more empathy and attention to it, but I can see that happening if you don't live here. What's frustrating, though, is that people who got tired of hearing about it and got tired of hearing about New Orleans asking for more money from the government to rebuild didn't want to learn about what really happened and didn't want to focus on the fact that the flooding here, to such a large, extent was caused by, like I said, the negligence of the federal government and the way they constructed that flood wall. And even though now – sometime later, the federal government and the Army Corps of Engineers has admitted fault. I mean, that's easily documented, and that's clear. They've admitted yes, it was our faulty design. Yes, if we had done this differently, it wouldn't have happened. To me, as a lawyer, to make an analogy – someone else used this analogy, but I'll steal it from them. We were sitting at the traffic light, at the red light,

minding our own business on August 29th. Somebody came up and hit us from behind and caused this damage. In that instance, the person who hit you from behind is going to owe damages – is going to owe you for whatever damage it caused. And that's the way it seems to us that this ought to be – that the federal government ought to repair the damage they've caused. But instead, people in other parts of the country – and frankly, even some people around here – in my opinion, it tends to be the people who were less personally affected by it, but there are people in this area that even say, oh you know, enough already. Quit begging for handouts. Quit begging. New Orleans needs to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. Needs to use a little elbow grease and pull out of this on your own. Quit asking for handouts. Just don't – they're just foolish. They don't understand that neither the city nor those of us as individuals are in a financial or otherwise capable of rebuilding the hospitals and the schools and fixing the traffic lights, and fixing the streets, and fixing everything else, including our own homes, without the help of the entity that caused the damage. Anyway, there's a lot of frustration in the inability of people to want to understand the truth of it.

RH: Tell me a little more about when you got back because you couldn't live in your home. What did you guys do?

LO: Well, in the course of trying to figure out where to live, in October, I remember my mother suggesting that my aunt, Ruth Ettinger, who's a retired psychiatrist who lived here in New Orleans for many years and has a home on Calhoun Street uptown. I remember my mother saying, “Well, Aunt Ruthie has moved to Lafayette, and she hasn't sold her house yet. Maybe she'd let you live there.” Anyway, I called Ruthie, and she did indeed end up allowing us to live in her house. We thought it was going to be for a shorter term. I'm sure she thought it would be for a shorter term than it turned out to be, but we ended up living in her home on Calhoun Street. She and her husband had moved to Lafayette and still live in Lafayette. So we, under very favorable financial terms, let's say – we more or less rented the house for the expenses that it cost – taxes and insurance and

such. Much better deal than we could have gotten renting a similar space on the market. So, we lived there on 2015 Calhoun Street near the corner of Freret from late December '05 until May of '06, and then we had to move out of there in May.

[Telephone rings. Recording paused.]

RH: We were talking about where you were living. And so you lived through late December '05 to when?

LO: Until May of '06. What happened is again, we were – I'm sorry, May of '07.

RH: May of '07, okay.

LO: We lived there more than a year. We pretty much made the firm decision in December of '06 to go ahead and rebuild this house. We came within inches of buying a house uptown and just not fooling with the rebuilding and all that, and just find a place uptown. We decided not to do that. We decided in December of '06 to go ahead and rebuild.

RH: Why did you decide not to buy? Because you were just really close to closing on a house?

LO: Yeah. Well, we weren't close to closing. We were close to making an offer. We never really did even make an offer on a house uptown. There was one in particular, I remember, on Octavia that we saw two or three times and started to make an offer. It was actually a very beautiful part of Octavia uptown, but the house was much smaller than this one [with] no parking, and a lot of the things that some people like uptown, some people like out here, and much more expensive than this house. So the same old story – paying a lot more for a lot less, and we just decided that we like this house, we like the layout of this house, and we liked what we had done upstairs. It was still okay in terms of the master bedroom and all that area – bathroom. We just kind of said, “You

know what? The house on Bellaire is our house." That's the one we own. Let's just fix that one. So we decided to do that, which ended up being a ten-month construction job, which was reasonable. I mean, the truth is, unlike other people, we don't have any horror stories with contractors to tell because things worked nicely. We used the same contractor that we used to do the renovations in '05 when we first moved in here. So all that worked well. But in terms of where we were living, it extended the time that we needed. At some point, my cousin, Ruthie's son, and his family moved back to the city from Cleveland. They had actually moved to Cleveland, not because of Katrina so much, just that's where his job took him. So they moved back, and they came to live in Ruthie's house, and we needed to find another place on fairly short notice, in fact. We found a house to rent from a friend, a lawyer who used to be in my firm. So we rented a house on Maryland Drive, not far from here. We lived there from May to September, when we moved back in here. So four houses over the course of two years. It was a somewhat nomadic existence. But again, believe me, we know that in the context of the way other people who were displaced have had to live their lives, we've been very fortunate. I mean, we had good, comfortable places that we could afford to rent, and we would have preferred not to have to do. We had good friends and family who supported and helped, so we're forever grateful to Ruth Ettinger for one thing and to other friends and family – to the Posners in Baton Rouge with whom we lived for several months. We're lucky that we had that support.

RH: Did you notice Katrina changing the kids?

LO: It's amazing to say this, but I have to say no. Not in any real – we worried about that. Certainly, short term, it changed them in the sense that they were very upset about being away from their friends and their schools. And they were very upset. So it was very difficult there in September of '05. Both with Shana being her senior year, with Adam having to adjust to going to – well, it was a strange school even though he had attended that school for kindergarten. Now, he was in seventh grade. He didn't know

any of those kids. It was a hard time in terms of adjusting and having them have some semblance of happiness.

RH: Do you notice anything positive?

LO: Well, I was about to say in terms of impacting their lives long term, surely it has to be a significant event in their lives, obviously. But it's not like it, day-to-day seems to have affected what they do or how they –

RH: Their outlook on life?

LO: Yeah, I don't think. Maybe it's made them a little bit more aware of the frailty of life in some ways, but they're certainly at an age where we don't wax philosophically with them too much about things, especially with a teenager. But I guess it's made – it has to have affected them, but I have to say it's surprising, but on the surface, there's nothing that really comes to mind, which is a good thing, in my opinion.

RH: Yeah, yeah. What was your connection, even in Baton Rouge, to the Jewish community? Did you connect to your local Jewish community? Did you connect to the Jewish community in Baton Rouge at all while you were gone?

LO: Well, yeah. First of all, because we've always been very active in this region and because we lived in Baton Rouge for a time, and when I lived in Baton Rouge for seven years as a student, we know the Baton Rouge Jewish community very well anyway. My sister and her family are there, and they're very involved. So, we were not going to a strange place during the evacuation. Again, another thing that compared to others, we were more fortunate. So the community there was very welcoming and very supportive, despite having their own problems because the synagogue – Beth Shalom synagogue there – had a tragic event occur when Hurricane Rita came through, because they ended up – it was a significant rain event in Baton Rouge, and the Beth Shalom synagogue suffered significant water damage then. So, actually the High Holidays in October of '05,

we attended services in the church next door to Beth Shalom. The Baptist Church next door allowed them to use their sanctuary for their services for the High Holidays in the fall of '05 because of the water damage that had occurred at Beth Shalom. So, they had that to deal with in and of itself. But yeah, I guess we got – we were certainly welcomed and were again part of the Baton Rouge Jewish community, but I guess more a part of the displaced Orleanians in Baton Rouge, because even – I'm now remembering for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur of '05, most of the Jewish professionals as you probably know, in New Orleans, ended up in Houston, including our rabbi and all the Touro professionals. I believe the Gates of Prayer rabbi – in fact, I'm sure Bob Loewy was in Houston. For the High Holidays, they came back. They came to Baton Rouge, and I remember Rabbi Busch from Touro did Rosh Hashanah evening service in a church, actually, that was borrowed – a different church than the one I just mentioned – for the New Orleans area Jewish community who was in Baton Rouge to come to services. So we did Rosh Hashanah evening services there with our rabbi, rather than go to – we could have gone to and would have been welcomed to go to one of the Baton Rouge synagogues. So we did that, and then I remember Rabbi Loewy came in for Yom Kippur and did the same thing.

RH: Do you kind of remember what it was like to – because Busch was probably the last person you saw because of the bar mitzvah –

LO: He was one of the last –

RH: – and just get back with everybody.

LO: I remember embracing him. Yeah, I remember seeing him. It was just very – it was meaningful, but also not exactly joyous in any way. It was just – again, this was weeks after the event, so still sort of in this numb state of what are we going to do? What's going on with everything? Of course, seeing Rabbi Busch, you alluded to earlier that Adam's bar mitzvah was his first bar mitzvah as the new rabbi at Touro Synagogue. He

had just come to New Orleans in July of '05. Adam's bar mitzvah in August was the first one he did here. I think that's always going to be meaningful. Something he always remembers as well. We were very – I'm comfortable saying we're good friends with Rabbi Busch and his wife, Debbie Pine – Rabbi Pine. We've gotten to become better friends with them, obviously, since that time. But yeah, it was very – it was very significant to us, I remember, to be able to see him and attend the service with him, Rosh Hashanah of '05.

RH: Do you remember who was there and some of the people and the experience in any way?

LO: Sure, I remember – you mean name names of people in the Jewish community who were there that I remember seeing? I mean, the (Silberts?) were there, the (Barts?), the (Goods?) – Lou (Good?), and the (Shepherds?). I can just remember seeing members of our congregation or other New Orleans area congregations who came to that service that night. So, yeah, it was somewhat of a reunion and an opportunity to see everyone. Although, again, everybody handled it in their own way, I guess. But I remember not being joyous. It was good to see some of the people, but it wasn't like, oh, everything's great now. It was more a common misery, I guess. I remember seeing – actually, now I'm thinking of someone else – the (Shers?), who actually attend Shir Chadash, the Conservative synagogue, but they're our neighbors around the corner here. I remember visiting with the (Shers?) about – what are we going to do? I'm not sure even they had started yet, but they moved back here a lot sooner than we did. Maybe by that time, they already knew they were going to just rebuild no matter what. I just remember conversations as neighbors. Interestingly, I guess even to this day, this is true, there's a certain bond that's developed among people – certainly, people in this neighborhood or those of us that have come back are closer – kind of look out for each other more than before. I think there's a certain bonding or kinship in some way, just sharing a common event that I have with somebody like that, that I do with another very good friend who

may live uptown whose house was fine. That person just doesn't share with me the experience of losing your house and wondering where you're going to live, whether to rebuild, going through the trauma of it all. They all went through a different trauma, to be sure, and everyone was affected. I'm not minimizing that. There certainly are people who lived in parts of town [whose] houses weren't affected, but they lost their jobs. So I'm not minimizing it; it's just a different experience. And so that I think there has been different kinships, I guess, developed.

RH: Tell me about – I remember being at Jazzfest, and Bruce Springsteen, and he had this great – tell me that story.

LO: Well, you reminded me of that story, and yeah – a lot of events have occurred since the storm that have been sort of triumphant returns, whether it's a favorite restaurant or other New Orleans icon that comes back. It's important to us when that happens. It's great to go back to Mandina's for the first time since the storm and have it be the same. So, Jazzfest of '06 was certainly one of those big events in my mind. To have Jazzfest and have it be as great as it was, was important. Specifically, you're asking about Springsteen's show. He had never been to Jazzfest. We've always liked Springsteen a lot. We planned to go see him. He had just – it was a different Springsteen show that anybody, even in other parts of the country, who saw him during 2006, knows that it was sort of a folk show. It was kind of an old-fashioned hootenanny, really, with him. Banjos, and sort of a country/folk sound, because he had recorded a CD called the Seeger Sessions, in which he took Pete Seeger songs and reworked them. That was the album that was being promoted, but he chose to open that tour with the show here in New Orleans. One of the songs he had recorded on an album was a reworking of an old song that had been written, apparently, during the Great Depression called "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live?" It was really about the Depression, but Springsteen rewrote the verses and one of them – he rewrote verses for New Orleans. So, the whole song now is about New Orleans. One of the lines in the song really is talking about

President Bush. It's a great verse, and it's saying, essentially – the speaker in that verse is saying, “Oh, we had some great times down there. Me and my buddies had some great times down there. What happened to you poor Black folks, it just ain't fair.” It was a big deal that he had done this song. I remember the words were printed on the front page of the Picayune the day before the show that he was going to be here for Jazzfest. I just remember being very disappointed in the line – “What happened to your poor Black folks down here is a crying shame” – or “is just ain't fair” – because it underscored for me the lack of understanding throughout the country at the time that this was an equal opportunity devastation here. It wasn’t just the Lower Ninth Ward that was destroyed; a lot of us in other parts of town of different races and religions and economic levels and everything else were also wiped out. I was just very disappointed in that. And the story you're asking me to tell, I guess, is that we were talking about that, sitting out there at the Fairgrounds, waiting for the show. We were still very excited to see him. I wasn't going to protest him or anything. But we were talking about it, and my good friend Jennifer Moses, who is a writer herself, said, “Well, you need to send a note up to Springsteen.” And I said, “What do you mean?” So she sat down and wrote out the note, essentially from what I said, explaining to Mr. Springsteen that we love his new song but that a lot of people were affected. It wasn’t just, quote, “poor Black folks,” and that it was very upsetting, and that we wished he'd consider changing that. I'm not sure exactly what we said in that note. I know you know the Fairgrounds, but others watching this may not realize. The Jazzfest takes place on the infield of the Fairground's racetrack, so the stage kind of backs up to the track part. I kind of walked around to the extent I could, behind that stage at the track, and gave to a security guy a note. I saw Quint Davis, who is the director of the Jazzfest, who I really don't know personally. He doesn't know me. But I saw Quint standing over there, and I said, “Will you give that to Mr. Davis and ask him to please give it to Mr. Springsteen?” And he went over [and] handed it to Quint. Quint looked up at me and actually kind of acknowledged like, “Okay.” But I still didn't think he'd give it to him. I don't know to this day whether Springsteen got that note, but

when he sang the song, instead of singing the line, “What happened to you poor Black folk, well it just ain't fair.” He just sang, “What happened to you poor folks down there, just ain't fair.” So you and other friends have credited me with changing Bruce Springsteen's song, having that influence over The Boss, but I'm not sure he ever got the note, but it's a good story. It worked out. Hopefully, maybe he just realized to sing it to New Orleans, looking out at that crowd, he's really saying what happened to all you folks is unfair. So anyway, that's the story. I have to say I have gone on YouTube. By the way, you can go on YouTube and get that actual performance, which is terrific – a good thing to watch anyway. But you can also find him doing the same song in other cities, and he sings the “Black folk” line. So he didn’t change it permanently, but he sang it down here.

RH: What is your thought –? Do you feel like the African American community has gotten – or Lower Nine has gotten too much attention compared to other areas?

LO: Well, I don't want to sound like that, and I don't want to – I particularly don't want to say the African-American community has gotten too much attention. Hopefully, I've made it very clear the way I've said it that, as any event that's going to affect you financially and socially, in the sense of destroying your schools and your neighborhoods and the places in which you take comfort, there's no question in this country, and I guess around the world, that those who have the resources financially to bounce back are in a better circumstance than someone who has no choice – or has no family and friend support, or doesn't have the financial resources, or doesn't have the job. If what we're talking about is, do I think the poor parts of the community have gotten too much attention, I'd say no. I think I've said in this interview, and I say all the time, that we recognize that we're more fortunate than others in terms of our ability to withstand what happened. What I think is – when you ask how the African American community, particularly the Ninth Ward, I'm assuming you're referring to a lower economic level and an a less ability to deal with the financial repercussions of all this. So I don't think they

have – I mean, that plight is still stark and sad, and there are people who want to be back here that simply can't get back. Unlike people I know, who left here, could come back, and have chosen not to. Those are different scenarios. What I think got a disproportionate amount of attention was that somehow the national press, either because it wasn't a good enough story for them or for whatever reason, really never focused on the fact that this flooding was equal opportunity, as I said before, and that it affected neighborhoods like this one. There's very little focused on this. And I don't say this because of my own outlook, but I do believe, unfortunately, that there are those around the country who, if more focus had been given in the coverage to how it affected people from across socioeconomic and racial lines, that I think maybe more people elsewhere would have identified with us in the situation. I think that's sad but true. Again, Springsteen's song – that's what was frustrating about it. To have a line that says, “What happened to you poor folk – poor Black folks down there just ain't fair,” poor being the most important term in that. It wasn't even the racial issue. It's just, oh, this just happened to the poor people in that Lower Ninth Ward part of town, was A, not true, but B, the price of it being misunderstood, I think, very much was a lack of identification and empathy by others throughout the country who just kind of said, “Oh, it's sad, but you know, that kind of thing would never happen to me, and it's not anybody I know.” I believe, on a lot of levels, that happened. I think the drama of the whole Superdome and convention center scene, where so many people from that part of our community ended up being stranded, in those horrible – oh, it must have been terrifying the first few days. It was very real and deserved to be the story for those first few days. It's just that that image became, I think, the lasting image of Katrina to a lot of people instead of recognizing the broader damage. If I can just add that the other piece of that is that the attention was on the government's failure – even to this day, when people talk about the government's failure in Katrina, for the most part, what they're talking about is the failure to react properly and really rescue those people more quickly and bring order to things more quickly. They still don't realize that the bigger failure of the government, the one

that happened first, was the inadequate building of the flood walls that caused the flooding to start. So, I just think it's unfortunate. It's the reality, and I don't think that's going to change. I think we're still looked at as just groveling for support down here that we don't deserve when people don't really understand the story.

RH: Why don't we move and talk a little bit about rebuilding the Jewish community and also your reaction to how the Jewish community responded to Katrina?

LO: Well, the larger Jewish community, nationally, and I guess worldwide, was phenomenal in terms of the support, both on an individual level and more significantly on a larger level. All of the national Jewish organizations devoted great resources to helping us down here, which we still benefit from. I know that the UAHC, which is now the URJ, Union of Reform Judaism, which Touro, Sinai, and Gates of Prayer are member congregations of the Reform Jewish Movement, raised substantial funds and have subsidized the operations of the Reform synagogues here for the last couple of years and even now has given some breaks in various financial ways. The National JCCs – every national Jewish organization stepped up to try to help support the New Orleans Jewish community and its organizations and synagogues. That will never be forgotten, and it's greatly appreciated. I mean, things happen on an individual level. I still remember, I'm sitting here just now remembering that some – I'm trying to remember how it happened, but a kid in New Jersey, whose bar mitzvah was in the fall of '05, wanted to do something to help in New Orleans. So, he pledged or gave a certain portion of his bar mitzvah gift money to the New Orleans Federation for the specific purpose of wanting to give it to a bar mitzvah child in New Orleans. So at some point in the fall of '05 ¬– I can't remember exactly when it was, but a fellow from the Federation here – his name ¬– I'm so embarrassed I'm blanking out. He's since left the city. It was a friend of ours who worked for Federation – came to see us – came to see Adam, my son, whose bar mitzvah had been in late August, to give him a check from this kid from New Jersey, who wanted to –

RH: Wow. That's really something.

LO: Anyway, so this kid wanted to help.

RH: It's kind of amazing the one-on-one kind of experiences, aren't they?

LO: Yeah, I mean, that's certainly what touches you more individually. I mean, there were many other stories like that to be told, and others – Naomi and I have very good friends who did things to help us, for which we're still so grateful – to help directly, including friends of ours from the camp days, who got together and sent us a box of – two dear friends who live in San Francisco, who we just actually saw a few weeks ago when we were out there, now in happier times. But they got together a group of our old camp friends, and they all put up money and bought us a new computer and sent the kids a box of clothes because, frankly, that was at a point in time where as far as we knew, and certainly as far as they knew, we lost everything. So they did things like that. So on both an individual level and on a broader level, our friends within – and I don't want to limit it to the Jewish community in that personal sense, but it just happens to be that this – it happens to be, it's the way we lived our lives, this great network of friends that we have across the country are people we've known from our involvement in the Jewish community since high school days. They certainly stepped forward to help. Now does that mean we've come closer – become closer within the Jewish community as a result of that? I guess then I'd have to say, well, not really, because we've always been so involved with the community anyway. But those connections that we've had certainly came to be even more significant at the time. I mean, again, Shana went to live with our friends in Jackson who she's friends with because of camp.

RH: Have you been involved in the rebuild of the Jewish community?

LO: Well, I guess I'd like to say yes, maybe not as much as I should be, but I'm thinking maybe by simply doing what we've always done, I'd have to say yes. I mean, I'm on the

Board of Touro Synagogue. I chaired the search committee for our new cantor, our wonderful cantor, Seth Warner, left to go to St. Louis, just within the last year. I don't think it was directly Katrina-related. He certainly said it wasn't. But he had this opportunity in St. Louis. He left. We had to get a new Cantor. I guess to get a new Cantor to move here post-Katrina seemed to be a daunting task, and I chaired the search committee, and that's certainly part of rebuilding the community – bring more Jewish professionals here. We hired a wonderful young cantor, Billy Tiep, who joined us just a few months ago. He's terrific, and that's working out nicely. So again, my role as a member of the Board of Touro and Naomi's role at the JCC, and other things within the Jewish community that we do, I guess we've certainly been part of the rebuilding. But I think the rebuilding has been – let's try to get back to where we were. Let's help the institutions that we feel are important to the city. Let's do what we can to help continue the Jewish life here, even though some – the numbers are less because some people have left town and made their own decisions to do that. But I think the community here is still strong; it's just smaller in number.

RH: Have you thought about what some of the challenges –? I'm sure on the board of Touro, there's some challenges there that maybe reflect also just challenges across the board.

LO: Right, and I think –

RH: And what some of those might be?

LO: Well, sure. I think some of the support from the national organizations helped as it was intended to help us through what could have been a much more difficult time. [We're] fortunate to have a congregation that is very supportive and some members who are financially willing to help do what's necessary to keep the sustainability of the congregation. We've had a significant fundraising campaign before the storm to – it was called Save Our Sanctuary – is called Saved Our Sanctuary, because it still goes – it's an

ongoing process. But before the storm, fortunately, the work on the outside of the building had been completed, which a lot of people say helped it not sustain damage from the rain. I mean, it didn't flood in that part of town. Now interestingly, Touro's basement – the electrical work that was in the basement did flood and was damaged. That was repaired. But frankly, I'm not sure of the details of how that flooded. Apparently, it wasn't the same kind of flooding that occurred in [inaudible] –

RH: In the rest of the city. Yeah. I know that your rabbi has announced that he's leaving.

LO: Yeah, that's disappointing.

RH: Disappointing?

LO: Well, on a personal level, we're very fond of Andy Busch and Debbie, and we hate to lose them. We understand he's going to a terrific opportunity in Baltimore, a large, substantial congregation there, closer to their family, and an important congregation in that part of the country. But we're disappointed that he is leaving. But I guess I want to finish on the Touro part, is that certainly I think all of the congregations have some concern – Touro, I don't think it's near panic or anything like that, but there are some long-term concerns about the sustainability of the different synagogues and other Jewish groups in town. And it's sort of – let's do what we can. Let's wait and see. Let's keep plodding along. But back to Rabbi Busch. Yeah, he is leaving, and there's a search now ongoing for a new rabbi.

RH: Do you have any advice to the head of the search committee since you were involved in the search for the cantor? I mean, it is a daunting task to say, come down to New Orleans and live.

LO: Yeah. Well, Phyllis Alltmont, who is chairing the search committee, is entirely capable herself and has a great committee surrounding her. I've talked to her a little bit,

but she knows she can talk to me. She and Jack have been involved in Touro longer than we have, and she really doesn't need our – she doesn't really need my advice. But I will say this, just from this standpoint of our search, first of all, you're talking about clergy, many of whom are – the notion of coming to a community in need of healing is an attractive proposition. Depending on that clergy-person's station in life and his or her family situation, it may or may not be even more appealing to come to a place like this. In the case of Cantor Tiep, he and his wife were very excited at the prospect of coming here. They love it here at this point. They were at the stage where they weren't even looking at what school the kids can go to or anything like that because he didn't have children. Although they now have one on the way, I'm happy to say.

RH: Oh, a new member of the – the Jewish community is growing.

LO: That's correct. That's right. And in that sense, I'll say I feel – and I know all of us feel a sense of great accomplishment, not only to have hired a cantor for the synagogue, which we needed but to bring this terrific, dynamic, young couple to New Orleans. Not just the Jewish community – just to the New Orleans community. Those things happen bit by bit, and we hope they continue to happen, and that's the way you rebuild. So, have we been involved in the rebuilding? I guess in that sense, yeah, I think that's an important part of the rebuilding. Interestingly, when Rabbi Busch and I went up to New York to interview several potential candidates, all of whom were just this group of people who, in that instance, were all graduating cantorial students. They were not either out of – whether it was naivete or lack of knowledge or whatever, they were not asking about, well, what's it like? Katrina-related stuff. It was more just what's the synagogue like and everything. And the whole Katrina thing was there. There was a little discussion about it, but it wasn't nearly as much of a challenge as I had assumed going in, it might be, for whatever reason. Actually, I think partly it's that we did a good job of explaining sort of upfront – and we answered some questions without them having to ask it.

RH: I have a few questions to ask you that I guess are a little more personal in the sense that since you've been on the receiving end, what is that like? Because you're used to giving. You're used to being in the Jewish community – the people that help other people.

LO: Well, one point where I got a little choked up there is that receiving was difficult. It was difficult both to feel a need and to know that other people perceive that you have a need. I guess both those things were at work. Whether we really had the need in a financial sense, we weren't really sure. We certainly thought we did at the time. I mean, I remember you could claim 1,200 dollars per family from Red Cross. But you had to go stand in line at this old hotel in Baton Rouge to do it. I remember my father, who is active in the Red Cross back in Greenville. They had been doing some – he was the one that actually told me about this availability. He encouraged me to do it. He said, “Look, you've given – you're in a position now where you're entitled to receive it. These programs are set up for you to receive this. It'd be foolish not to go claim your 1,200 bucks. In the long run, you may or may not really need it, but you're entitled to it, and it's not like you're taking it from someone else,” because it was the kind of program where everybody gets 1,200 bucks. So, yeah, I stood in line and got the 1,200 bucks. I got the money from FEMA, that initial money that everyone got from FEMA. We benefited. One way the Jewish community helped was there were funds given nationally, and I suppose worldwide to the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service that set up certain programs, including paying the expenses for moving back. So the money we pay to move back – yeah, the moving company that we had to pay, sure, I submitted that to that program and got reimbursed – and really didn't feel bad about it [and] don't feel bad about it now because that's what that money was given for. It certainly was a reality check in a different sort of position to be in.

RH: Has being a recipient changed your own thoughts about how to give to others in any way?

LO: I guess, in the sense – I mean, I'd like to think we've always been aware of the importance of giving. So, now we see at work, in a reasonably efficient way, I guess encourages to continue doing that. Frankly, we've had – it's a funny question this time because we've had conversations that we need to continue having about doing – moving back in the house just a few months ago has sort of been a threshold event, and so we've talked about [how] we need to do something to give to or at least in honor of all the people that helped us. So we've talked about some sort of significant gift to something, and we haven't identified what. But we certainly want to do something to honor the people who have helped us so much. I think we want to do it in a way that gives to some important organization that does work for the rebuild of New Orleans and perhaps other things as well. Yeah, we've talked about that. We need to act on it. But it's nice if we do it instead of talk about. You just reminded me to get back to that conversation.

RH: Okay. What about now that you've lost your house and you've rebuilt your house, what, to you, does home mean? What does home mean to you?

LO: Well, I don't know. I guess a sense of place and a sense of comfort. The funny thing is that because we'd only moved in this house six months beforehand, we weren't as tied to this structure, this building, as much as maybe others would have been – or that we would have been if we had lived in this house for twenty years. But it was home, and it was our home. It is our home. So when you're renting a house from your aunt or someone else, or living in your sister's house for months, no matter how accommodating and welcoming everyone is, it's not your own. It's not your own space; it's not your own place and your own stuff surrounding you. So there's a certain comfort of being home and being home in this neighborhood. I mean, again, we're so fond of this neighborhood, and a lot of it is a sense of being home that is broader than just the building that we live in. And certainly feel that way about New Orleans and being back in New Orleans and anchored in our own house.

RH: Okay, we’re going to take a break.

[END OF TRACK 2]

RH: Okay, tape three for Katrina's Jewish Voices. This is interviewing Larry Orlansky. Larry, I also had a few questions that – you said that your relationship to the Jewish community didn’t really change because you were involved before – you're involved after. Did you ever contemplate or have any thoughts about why this happened, or any thoughts or changed feelings about God or spirituality in general from this?

LO: That's a tough question. Why do bad things happen to good people and all those kinds of thoughts that you have. I'm not sure how to answer that. I don't really think my view of spirituality has changed much. I think the need – the need for a source of comfort, and maybe more of a need of a sense of community, more specific awareness of the role of whatever your sources of comfort are, maybe has come into specific relief in the form of – and I guess different people took – would take different routes of that. I think, without even saying it, maybe we have found that a little more in synagogue life or Jewish life. But in terms of – and I guess that's a sense of spirituality, whether it's God or just faith. I'm not sure how to answer.

RH: You're doing a good job.

LO: You need more. But I have not – I don't think I have spent a lot of time thinking, “How can God let something like this happen?” I just don’t think in those terms.

RH: Has the crisis spurred you in new directions or changed any of your priorities?

LO: I've thought about that question, and that question gets asked similar to other things in life before. Naomi was sick back in '96 and is doing well, fortunately. People ask, “Does that change your view, change your priorities?” I have to say, not much on that either, because I don't – it's sort of not really. Maybe that means we've always felt we've

had our priorities in order or kind of have known what's important, but family and friends have always been important to us, and this hasn't really changed that. I mean, we've always known that we've had good friends and great family support. And so yeah, I mean this happened – those things came into – those elements of our lives came into specific application, but it wasn't a fundamental awakening. It was just that it's always been that way. And fortunately, we've always been in a position to understand that and have people around us who understand that.

RH: Have there been any Jewish observances, even just family-type observances, that are more meaningful to you now, or you take a little more time to engage in?

LO: I'm trying to think.

RH: Ritual. Go to synagogue more? I don’t know.

LO: I don't think that we do. I think maybe we go to synagogue a little more. But Naomi's now off camera, and she's probably saying that that's not true. But if we do, it's not because of some specific recognition or conscious recognition. It may be that we more often feel the need for the – comfort is the word I keep using – the relationships and the support that that provides in some way. But I think it's – if that is the case, it's certainly unspoken, which doesn't make it any less real. It just is.

RH: Are there any understandings of Judaism that you learned at camp or that your family had instilled in you that over the past couple of years have helped sustain you, or that come to your mind or anything like that?

LO: Well, I guess just the – the importance of community and family. Again, I think it's something we've always recognized, but I do think that the events that occurred required those factors to play an even more important and specific role in our lives. But I don't think my outlook or understanding of it has really changed in any significant way. It's not a negative, I think it's more of a – I think it's just kind of a statement of what it's always

been. I'm not sure I answered your question or not.

RH: I think you did, actually. Tell me about your relationship to New Orleans and what are some of the things that you love about New Orleans?

LO: Well, I think a lot – most everyone who lives here has somewhat of a love/hate relationship. There are things that are sort of maddening and frustrating about the inefficiencies and problems with the city, but those of us who stay here find enough that we love about it that overrides it. Certainly, we've talked a lot about the Jewish community, and it's really the larger community that keeps you here as well – the uniqueness of the city, the joy, the fun, attitude, or the fun – the laissez-faire – laissez les bons temps rouler attitude that not just parties – the French Quarter or anything like it, but just sort of the – the attitude that encourages independence and individuality, more so than I think some other communities.

RH: We touched on race a little bit. Do you have any thoughts on race and Katrina, or race in the recovery?

LO: Yeah, I've been very disappointed with the way so many aspects of the recovery and of the Katrina event itself was portrayed in racial terms. Again, it's partly because of misperceptions that it only affected certain segments of the community and that it was somehow a racial issue, at least within the community. Now, because of what I believe was the national perception that it only affected the Lower Ninth Ward and certain segments of the community, I do believe that race has played a significant part incorrectly on two levels. It's improper and wrong for race to play a role, period. But in an ironic and odd way, even for those who would allow race to play a part in their minds of how they would react to things because it's only those poor Black folk – they were wrong – they were wrong in the predicate, to begin with, and then they act wrongly in their reaction to it. So yeah, I think there was – I think in terms of a national response, I do believe that the fact that it was perceived as an event that affected poor Black folk

made many in the country tire of it quickly and be less supportive of supporting the recovery. I mean, I've said many times, and I really believe this – if this had happened in New York or Chicago or Philadelphia or any of a number of places, I think the national response and the federal government's support of the rebuild would have been much easier to obtain and much quicker. I don't know if that's – so that's sort of the national perception of how race is played. How it's played here in the community, is that what you're asking?

RH: No, but that's interesting what you say. New York, Chicago, Philadelphia. I mean, do you think people perceive this city more as an African American city in America?

LO: Absolutely.

RH: And so they feel less concerned about rebuilding it?

LO: Unfortunately, I believe that's correct. Not just that they perceive New Orleans as an African American city; it's a majority African American city, but again, I think that what they perceived is that the part that was affected by Katrina was so much predominately African American and therefore less of a response. There would be others who say that's absurd to think that that's what motivated people's reactions, but that's what I believe. That's unfortunate. Now here, to the community, there are serious racial issues, unfortunately. I think a lot of it is caused by people on both sides of the racial divide [being] too quick to play the race card as the term goes. But look, that's not just here. That's everywhere. We see that as we sit here now with even the presidential campaign ¬– cries of racial division and stuff. It's unfortunate that so many things are either perceived to be race-based or, what I think is more the case; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Somebody screams that it's a racial issue, and then people take sides on that, largely divided among racial lines to where it does become that race is a big issue, but it really never was on the fundamental issue to begin with. Should a community hospital be rebuilt? How should we rebuild the medical infrastructure and the medical facilities?

The large Charity Hospital, as we all know, was either destroyed or decisions were made not to rebuild it. Unfortunately, a lot of people perceived how that should be done or rebuilt along racial lines, which I just don't understand. To me, it's what's the best way to do this for the community as a whole. People perceive how to rebuild schools as a racial issue. And that's just unfortunate.

RH: What would you like to see in New Orleans with the recovery, which is –? I mean, maybe you'd like to comment on the recovery itself and how it's going.

LO: Well, I mean, I think it's going – it's so much slower than we'd all like. I think it is a lack of funding and a lack of energy to be behind what needs to be done: the physical rebuild in order to allow more schools to be open and decent schools at that, more fire stations and police stations, and all the rest of the infrastructure. It's going slower than we'd like, although it's coming along, and there seems to be, at the start of 2008 here, some sense of determination and renewal. And maybe from what I read, actual dollars are actually coming in and allowing some of these things to happen. So yeah, it's going slower than we'd like.

RH: Are you optimistic about the rebuild?

LO: I'm not as pessimistic as maybe I used to be. Optimistic may be a little strong.

RH: Do you think the Jewish community responds pretty well to the larger community?

LO: Yeah, I think the Jewish community is reflective of the larger community because, again, there are many in the Jewish community who are less affected than others. So the way Jews in New Orleans perceive and react to what's happened, I think, is no different than – it's divided along lines depending how it affected you personally, just like it does for the larger community. Look, there are some people in the Jewish community and the larger community who live in certain unaffected parts of town who just think everything's fine. That’s not whether you're Jewish or not, it's just that's how it's affected

them.

RH: Do you have much a –? What is your response to people who say that Katrina cleaned this city out? Got rid of a lot of people that didn't need to be here.

LO: Well, I don't know if anybody still says that. I know there were people who said that in the early days, which was so offensive when it was said. And of course, again, we're talking about the multiple levels, just like we said with the racism because that largely was a race-based observation people made that, “Oh, it's going to be a smaller but better New Orleans,” was, again, wrong in the sense of it was – people who said things like that are motivated by what I think are improper, unhealthy assumptions and views. And then secondly, just flat wrong because it was proven to be wrong. And I knew it was wrong when they said it then. That somehow, the criminal element would leave and not come back because they'd end up somewhere else. And that we'd just have people who were good, law-abiding citizens back here determined to rebuild this smaller but better city. Well, that was foolish. The truth is a large number of folks who didn't come back were middle-class people who had families who did live in some of these – the parts of town that did not rebound as well, whether it's New Orleans East or the Ninth Ward. Middle-class, lower-middle-class, working people who ended up evacuating to other places and found that the schools were better, or found that they had jobs, and they got comfortable, and they're not coming back. And that's a great loss to the city. The class of people that you're alluding to, criminal element and such, did come back, at least a lot of it. So, yeah, we still have a crime problem. But we have less of a pure middle class to be a positive influence on those kids and [fewer] schools for those middle-class, lower-middle-class families to come back to, to provide healthy neighborhoods that could be a positive influence on that criminal element. So yeah, I thought it was absurd when it was said, and now two years later, it's been proven to be absurd. Although people, I guess, still say it.

RH: So, what are some of your hopes for the future of the city?

LO: I just hope we can keep plugging along and raise our families and live safe lives and productive lives in a somewhat smaller city, but that still offers the special innate things that New Orleans offers, which is a positive, at least from where I sit, cognizant of the fact that there are people who would like to be back but can't for whatever reason, cognizant of the fact that there are many parts of the city that seem to have a long way to go. New Orleans, as we sit here now, does offer a lot of things we've always loved about it. I tell people who want to be tourists here it still offers all of the things that you've always loved about coming to be a tourist here, but in terms of what we do and like to do and what keeps us here, basically, it's all back. I hope that that can continue in a positive way, and I hope can continue to be a place that we enjoy living in and that our kids will. I know both of our kids still – their view is they want to live here for the rest of their lives. They want to settle here when they grow up. That's their current view. I hope that the city is such that that would continue to be a view of theirs, not because I necessarily want them to end up being here long term. That would be fine, but I don't perceive myself as the type who would want to insist to his kids on where they settle. But I would like it to be a real valid option for them.

RH: Is there anything that you can think about that you've learned about yourself in this over the course of the past couple of years?

LO: I'm not sure I've offered much on that. I don't sense any awakening or change to any great degree. I guess, in a positive way, I'm maybe more resilient that I would have let myself believe I could be. Certainly have rebounded better than I thought I might, sitting there on September 1st and 2nd of '05. I guess in that way, I've realized that I can handle more than I might have thought in those dark initial days.

RH: Anything you're most grateful for?

LO: Just the support of friends and family. It sounds so trite, but it really is true. We were fortunate and are fortune to have such great support that it’s allowed us to bounce back better than I was able to picture.

RH: I think we're about done. If there's anything you'd like to add, speak now.

LO: Well, I'm not sure there –we've talked for a couple of hours here. I will say I think it's important to do projects like you guys are doing and [am] grateful for that and for the interest that it shows by even doing these kinds of things to document all of this. I'm curious to see the project develop.

RH: Yeah, I hope we can do something with this footage, maybe to reduce it and bring something else about with it too. Okay.

LO: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]