

Interviewee: Day, Jamison M

Interview: June 20, 2006

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

**HOUSTON'S RESPONSE TO THE
VICTIMS OF HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA**

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Dr. Jamison M Day

Dr. Jamison M. Day was interviewed on June 20, 2006 at his office in Melcher Hall, Room 290B, University of Houston, Houston, Texas. He helped organize the Neighbors-2-Neighbors Program that was instituted by the Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, a through a computer model that endeavored to house evacuees with private citizens. In addition, Dr. Day analyzed the necessities of a clear chain of command within each segment of the disaster relief efforts

The interview was conducted by Ernesto Valdés, Center for Public History, University of Houston where the tape is deposited in M.D. Anderson Library on the main campus of the university.

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Interview with: Dr. Jamison Day

Interviewed by: Ernesto Valdes

Date: June 20, 2006

Transcribed by: Suzanne Mascola

EV: This is Ernesto Valdes, the interviewer. I am here with Dr. Jamison M. Day at the University of Houston. We are at the Melcher Hall Room 290B, his office. The date is June 20, 2006. It is approximately 10:10 a.m. I did want to tell you a couple of things. We are, of course, going to ask you to sign a release. I don't know if I told you that. The release will allow us to deposit this tape for use in the archives.

JD: O.K. I will just need to look at the wording there.

EV: Yes. If during the interview you want to call a time-out, just let me know and I will pause it if you need to explain something or ask me a question about the questions I ask you. If you want to add anything at a later date, let us know. When this tape is transcribed, I will give you a copy of it. You can edit it, go over it, add some things you may have thought of afterwards which happens to all of us generally. I will probably think of some questions I should have asked you later but anyway, you can do all that. Then we will draft up the final copy and you can have a chance to review that.

JD: The entire transcript?

EV: Yes, the entire typed transcript.

JD: I guess my preference would be to review whatever portions you were going to use in the final.

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EV: Exactly. You will get the first draft to mark out, edit, whatever you want to do. And then, out of that, we will do a final and you will get a look at that. You will get a copy of it if you wish.

JD: Wonderful.

EV: If you have any photographs or pamphlets about your background or anything that took place, any letters of commendation included in this archive. This is going to be your period of contribution to the Katrina event that goes into the permanent archives. I don't know how much you are familiar with oral histories or anything but . . .

JD: Not very. I come from a business background!

EV: Erik Larson's book entitled, *Isaac's Storm*, was about the Galveston storm at the turn of the century, in 1900, and a lot of people interviewed back then and that book is based on personal accounts and oral histories. So, getting the people's opinion about what happened in a certain historical era adds a lot to the texture of that history. Anyway, that's an examples of what we do with oral histories. So, are you ready?

JD: Yes, I am...I was just seeing if all of my old date book calendar items had been archived yet. They have. But I thought that would jog my memory on a few issues so I could see the timelines there.

EV: Let me have your full name, please.

JD: Sure, it is Jamison Marko Day.

EV: And where were you born?

JD: I was born in East Chicago, Indiana.

EV: Can you tell me when – you're young enough that it doesn't bother you . . .

JD: It is a highly guarded secret at the University, but I was born in 1976, January 29.

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EV: Are your parents still there?

JD: They reside in Indianapolis, Indiana now.

EV: And you have been at the University of Houston how long?

JD: I have been at the University of Houston two years, at the Bauer College of Business one year.

EV: You are a lecturing professor, I take it?

JD: Assistant professor tenure track, yes.

EV: What is your subject of expertise?

JD: Operations management and decision science.

EV: O.K., can you elaborate on that a little bit, what it is?

JD: Sure. Operations management traditionally deals with production, however, we have branched out into supply chain management which includes procurement-purchasing, production-manufacturing, and distribution-logistics, and then logistics. Both is more the end customer distribution portion and also the B to B – business to business distribution piece.

EV: Earlier when we were talking, you mentioned Dr. Paul Roby. You said he took your place. How was it you were working with Interfaith Ministries?

JD: Well, let me give you a little bit of background on how I even came to be active in the Katrina relief efforts. While doing my Ph.D. in operations management and decision science in Bloomington, Indiana at the Kelly School of Business, Indiana University, I became active as a Red Cross volunteer for disaster relief. I was on a disaster action team which would respond to disasters that took place in south central Indiana – typically within our own county, Monroe County. Most of the responses that I was activated for

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were small, single-family house fires or small multifamily house fires. The only opportunity that I had to get involved in a mass sheltering or large scale disaster relief effort in southern central Indiana was during a hurricane in Martinsville about 3 years ago now. I had many things going on at that point and did not activate for that disaster. After moving down to Houston two years ago and settling in for the semester, I looked for opportunities to get involved in volunteer efforts around the local community and was introduced to some individuals at Interfaith Ministries. That introduction spawned interest in my working with their disaster preparedness office which, at the time, was headed up by Tom Minor. Jennifer Poston who is one of the main disaster relief liaisons there, and then Dave Dozier worked there as well, I believe you spoke with him.

And so, in getting involved with them, they invited me to attend a local Texas Gulf Coast Region VOAD meeting – VOAD. That stands for Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. The local VOAD meetings were, I believe being held quarterly and the current issue was in the wake of finishing the repairs on over 400 homes from Tropical Storm Allison just this past June – was how were we going to organize the long-term recovery efforts moving forward? At that point, I was asked to help lead a subcommittee on organizing long-term recovery disaster relief efforts for the local VOAD.

We had one meeting and got through about one-half of one of the five steps that I had laid out for their organization process before Hurricane Katrina on August 29 - and then subsequently, on September 1 when we learned that several individuals would be coming here from New Orleans. Needless to say, the efforts of all of the organizations involved in the VOAD at that point turned very much towards a responsive rather than a

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proactive mode in doing what they do in times of disaster. And so, I still have a model that I have actually been refining throughout my involvement in the Katrina efforts that would act to help coordinate long-term recovery efforts in the local area.

EV: Did the disaster you experienced in Indiana, as minor as it may have been compared to Katrina, set a structural mentality in you to be able to handle something as big as Katrina? Do you see what I am trying to say?

JD: Both my operations management background and the training that I have gone through with the Red Cross certainly set my mind working in maybe directions that it would not have gone otherwise prior to this event. The opportunity to work with the VOAD prior to Katrina certainly set my mind working in the area of coordinating disaster response because that was the effort – how do we coordinate our long-term recovery efforts? So, I would say that yes, you know, my previous experiences in the disaster relief volunteer community had at least opened my mind to a lot of how things worked, how things could be done, and theoretical constructs on perhaps how they should be.

EV: It is one thing to have a disaster relief structure in place, but it's another thing to consider whether or not the victims are going to follow your model. They may not like the trend of your model...they may have other priorities or concerns. You've got families and pets, exactly what happened in Katrina. Did any of that play into your mind at all or do you feel that that gave you some insight that ordinarily would not have been there had you not had that experience?

JD: Let me just clarify. I heard two different questions there and I will address each one that I heard. One was on the structural – the piece of what really needs to be in place and what needs to work in terms of disaster relief on an organizational perspective. The

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other was in dealing with the individual response to the disaster of the affected relief clients.

EV: Well, there is a merger in there somewhere.

JD: There is. Yes, I completely agree with you.

EV: Yes, there are two questions and if you could answer both of them and tell me where the middle ground is . . .

JD: Certainly. I will tell you what I perceive. My efforts in Indiana in terms of the structural piece . . . the Monroe County Red Cross chapter that I worked with in Indiana was very well-organized, very well-led. Probably from what I have experienced so far, one of the best that I have seen so far, organizations in terms of being prepared for disasters that may happen. They had agreements in place with all kinds of suppliers prior to any disaster ever happening for all different scales of disaster. And the training program made us aware of what those agreements were and where to go for information and where to go for goods in terms of helping relieve anyone that is affected by a disaster. On the flip side of that, and I'll bring them together for you or I'll try to, on the flip side of that, in working with individuals affected by house fires, the reality is, is it doesn't matter what the scale of a disaster is – when somebody's entire livelihood, location, their home is destroyed, it affects them greatly. Certainly, there are larger scale social issues that came up with Katrina in terms of community and we can talk about those later if you would like to as well, but the reality is somebody's life has been stripped away from them in many regards. And so, in dealing with those individuals, it was a great lesson in how to understand a bit better what has happened to a disaster relief client. The integration of those two, that is, maybe where the rubber meets the road, . . .

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what I saw in Indiana was the readiness and the premeditated readiness to meet those needs that exist, which is not to say that the premeditation hadn't happened here in Houston but it certainly hadn't happened on the scale that was required for a 250,000 influx of individuals.

EV: Well, are you saying that moving part of the rescue infrastructure to Louisiana, picking them up and then bringing them here was a new element. I mean, that had to be a different element.

JD: You know, the reality seems, to me, that most of the folks that ended up here in Houston, we didn't have to go pick them up. From what I understand, a lot of them came for . . . in fact, the first bus that arrived was a school bus driven by . . . I may be misquoting the age but it was something under 18. It was a 14- or 15-year-old driving a school bus full of relief clients. That was the first bus that pulled up at either the Astrodome or GRB.

EV: Was it a Houston school bus?

JD: I don't believe so, no. But it was a big yellow school bus driven by, I think a 14- or 15-year-old. There is a good picture of it somewhere out there. In fact, Mark Sloan with the Citizens Corp from Harris County had that in a presentation that he has given at the White House to the president – very good presentation. A lot of good pictures and good stories. Entertaining presenter, too. At any rate, so the reality is, is this wasn't a coordinated effort and I would say the vast majority of the 250,000 got here of their own accord somehow.

EV: I thought we had. That was kind of the lingering . . . and other people I have talked to kind of have that lingering idea that Houston massed all its ambulances and

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school buses and Greyhound buses, and whatever out there, and started picking people up.

JD: There may have been a larger effort that I am not aware of. But the sense that I've gotten . . .

EV: Was your step into the relief effort pretty much came through the VOAD and your relationship with the Interfaith Ministries, is that right?

JD: Before we recorded, you were talking about your curiosity on how all if this structure, whatever existed, to respond to the disaster relief efforts for Katrina came together, and my involvement follows along the story that maybe will illustrate a little bit of that. The first phone call that I got was from Jennifer Poston at Interfaith Ministries who had been instrumental in bringing me into the VOAD to work with them on organizing a long-term recovery effort. She let me know, I believe it was either the last day in August or September 1 – I can't recall which one – but it was the day before people were really starting to arrive, so perhaps it was the end of August. There was a meeting held at the United Way which happened to be two blocks from my home and I attended this meeting. It was a room full of disaster relief organizations – previous members, current members of the VOAD, local VOAD, and then also additional organizations that the United Way had connections with, and the network just kind of filtered out from there and people came. Big first meeting, and it was announced we are going to house people at the Astrodome, we are going to accept people from New Orleans and become a disaster relief activated city to respond to this disaster. At that point, Interfaith Ministries kind of had me on standby and said, 'If there is something that we need you to do, can you do it?' Knowing that my load here was only a one class

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teaching load where I was teaching Ph.D. students once a week on Fridays, I thought, what a great opportunity to put my time in and get involved. And so, I said, “Yes,” I would be available. “If there is something, let me know what I can do.”

The next meeting that I attended was the very first mayor’s meeting early in the morning at George R. Brown. Instituted were daily meetings by the mayor at 8 a.m. And so, I was in the first meeting where they talked about, “We need to figure out what we are going to do,” and the reality is, is they started talking about O.K., Astrodome, Reliant, George R. Brown – let’s put together everything that we need. That is probably where it was instituted or initiated that all the medical facilities were going to be set up. Yada, yada, yada, etc. At that meeting, talks started about the need to move people into dignified independent housing. The mayor’s housing . . . I am not sure I am going to get his title right, but John Walsh, are you familiar with John Walsh?

EV: I am but I don’t know his title.

JD: I believe he is . . . well, I don’t want to get it wrong since you are recording me. This is my Rolodex of the city of Houston. John Walsh is the Mayor’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Neighborhoods and Housing. John Walsh and I, along with several others, sat down in kind of a subcommittee of that meeting once it was done and started talking about what really needs to be done for this dignified independent housing. That was kind of the birth of the joint county and city Katrina housing taskforce that was initiated. And so, for a day or so, I was working with John Walsh on that.

Over the course of that day, others in the city were talking with Interfaith Ministries about the need for, in effect, distributing the relief effort a bit to the local community. The reality of that ended up coming about and they asked Interfaith

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Ministries to start that program up. In return, I was asked by Elliot Gershenson, CEO of Interfaith Ministries who had become a good friend, to head up that program, to direct that program. And so, it was the City of Houston and Interfaith Ministries that said, 'We need that program going. Jamison, will you do it?' And I took that on. So, that became what eventually we named the Neighbors-2-Neighbors.org initiative.

My understanding of it was to, in effect, get the local community involved trying to get them connected with a disaster-affected family, a relief client family. That connection could then be used to help dissipate some of the disaster relief needs; that is, in getting connected with the local community, the thought was that it would take less time for these relief clients to integrate into the local community, get jobs, find grocery stores, basically create their connections to the local economy that would help them not need additional disaster relief which was already taxing our social support system here in Houston within a few days. And so, I accepted that role, stopped working directly with John Walsh and started working as the head, the director of the Neighbors-2-Neighbors program.

EV: And what was the initial structure for that? I mean, it is a great idea and it makes a lot of sense. Was that your idea that popped up? Was it a standard idea in relief efforts that you try to get people together, like a neighbor-to-neighbor type concept?

JD: I am not sure where the idea came from with regards to who specifically in the city came up with the notion, nor do I know . . . I believe it was Michael Moore but it is just a belief, just from hearsay, that Michael Moore asked Interfaith Ministries to start running with that. Are you familiar with Michael Moore? Chief of Staff for the mayor.

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He is kind of the mayor's right-hand man. He took on a lot with this disaster relief effort.

He would be a great interview.

EV: You said he would be?

JD: Yes, he would be.

EV: How well do you know him?

JD: About this well.

EV: O.K. [He shows me his card].

JD: Sorry about that. That was a visual.

EV: Roby worked Neighbo-2-Neighbor . . . he said it was similar to a dating service where you match up people. Without belittling or trying to insult but was that kind of the idea that you tried to find things people had in common?

JD: Paul Roby is a little more ambitious than me in his description of the program. I would say it is a one-to-one matching service where local families or local individuals are given the opportunity to help out one disaster relief client family.

EV: How did it work out overall?

JD: I worked on the program for about 3 weeks and my whole tenure there was a matter of getting support for the program, building the operational processes for the program to make it work and there are a lot of policy issues involved in our decisions, and then also setting up the infrastructure for the program to support the individuals that help out the disaster relief client families. All three of those were achieved in a matter of 3 weeks or less.

When Paul finally came, he was a volunteer that was sent from the Pacific Northwest to help out. I can't remember the name of the program that he worked with

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but that was a great opportunity for me to actually come back to work and focus on my job here at the university again which was good timing. We had just started making matches and from what I am told, and in the disaster relief environment, there is not a lot of extra information floating around but after I left, they had gotten feedback from some of the individuals and found that it might be more efficient – that may not be the right word – maybe easier, faster, what have you, to match up a church community; that is an entire church and all of their congregation with a housing development. The way that the Katrina housing task force evolved – that is with John Walsh at the City – was that they ended up starting to place individuals into large low cost housing additions in which those additions' owners, the landlords, were willing to sign an agreement with the City. So they focused on placing people in large communities. And so, Neighbors-2-Neighbors, after I had left, made a very big decision to start placing church community with housing development community and match up that way. I have my own opinions about the viability of that decision. I think something better could have been done. Nonetheless, it is what it is and it was what it was and I think it continues to be.

EV: Would it be possible for you to share what those opinions might be or the fact that you think something else would be more efficacious?

JD: Sure, and I'll start with a little bit of my theory on large scale disaster relief. The effort to centralize command, the effort to create a rigorous command chain, chain of command, in many ways is probably counterproductive.

EV: Are you talking about on a large scale like from the mayor filtering down or from a Neighbors-2-Neighbors situation now?

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JD: From the FEMA interaction to the military interaction to the mayor to the Red Cross, United Way, to the small or even large community churches to the individual that just wants to help out – you are not going to create an effective chain of command that way. The reason being – you have too many rights and privileges that are given to entities within that system, an entity being either governmental agency, a not for-profit organization, a for-profit organization -- Wal-Mart got very involved – an individual or a church which could fall under nongovernmental organization.

The reality is we have something called separation of church and state here and we have something called the Bill of Rights. Nobody can tell an individual, nobody can tell an organization, nobody can tell a church, certainly not a church, that they have been delegated to by an authority. Beyond that, you don't have any responsibility for reporting. And so, the information will not follow the chain of command and the commands that come down may not be executed by the individuals at the end of the chain of command unless, of course, there is funding that supports the responsibility. Then, to get the money, of course, the individual or the entity has to perform the services that are being required for that payment, in effect.

It is like the difference between a communist economy and a free market economy. A communist economy is your top down chain of command. It doesn't work in large scale economic development. We have found that out. Free market. You provide the incentives for work to be done and somebody steps up to do that work in order to get the reward. And so, a decentralized and distributed decision-making process, relief process, is most likely the way to go, in my opinion. And this is after looking at the research in the field for quite a while and I can even show you.

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One of the papers that I just read this weekend is called Collaborative Distributive Decision Making for Large Scale Disaster Relief Operations: Drawing Analogies from Robust Natural Systems.

EV: A little light reading for the weekend...

JD: Well, there are a lot of great equations in here. At any rate, I mean, this has become one of my research areas where I am looking at . . . supply chain management is very big in our field right now, and instead of looking at supply chains which typically go from a single raw material supplier to a manufacturer, single manufacturer, to a single distributor, to a single retailer, to customers. What I am looking at is what is more correctly termed supply networks where you may have any number of suppliers that may supply any number of manufacturers that may produce products that are vastly different from one another; that is, any one entity within the supply network is a member of multiple supply chains. To optimize any single supply chain is to reduce the ability for that independent entity to be able to interact in other supply chains because their options are constrained after optimizing on a single supply chain. So, I am looking at how do we coordinate supply networks by using a centralized distributed decision making framework that allows them visibility to information, the opportunity to make decisions in a complex environment rather than a simplified environment, and then also metrics and evaluations in order to provide the feedback mechanisms that are required for the evolution of that system to improve over time.

EV: So, your critique of the responsibility or reaction of the different entities involved with the relief effort have a problem and what you just told me is an alternative that you are researching. Just as an aside from that or in conjunction with that, would it behoove a

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community like Houston to say, O.K., religious organizations, food suppliers, profit, nonprofits, volunteers, churches – were going to have this overall plan and you agree by signing somehow, agree that you will be our chain of command, you will be our chain of command and follow these particular orders?

JD: You might get a better coordinated response that way but the chain of command in and of itself, there's an axiom that states people tend to act on what they have information about. Reality is you are not going to have information about everything that needs to happen. Not in a disaster of this scale. So, there needs to be a more distributed notion of how our relief functions really work in order to provide for all of the relief client needs that are out there because, as I said, you are not going to know everything that is out there.

To answer the previous question, applying this to what happened with Neighbors-to-Neighbors, I talked to the leader at one of the churches. I happen to be sitting next to him at a recent disaster relief concert that was held and he said, "Oh, yes, we are still doing the Neighbor-2-Neighbors." I said, "How is that working out?" He said, "Well, you know, they hooked us up, our whole church congregation to an apartment complex." I said, "And so, are people kind of pairing up, you know? Is one family in your congregation become close to one family in the housing complex?" He said, "No, not really. I mean, we just kind of go out there, hold events and let people mingle. The real person-to-person connections don't seem to be being made." I would say that that is evidence that if you are going large-to-large, you know, in terms of trying to pair people up, it is not going to make the personal connection that is needed in a distributed environment.

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And so, doing the individual-to-individual, which there are issues getting people to sign up for that, there are issues getting people involved for that, but there are ways to encourage that as well. I think you are going to find more of the personal relationships that really make the disaster relief client feel like they are part of a new community, feel like they are part of something that they now want to build themselves up as a part of that community and improve a lot in life.

EV: Well, I would imagine one of the things . . . I mean, I try to put myself in the situation of losing everything like they did. I mean, you walked out with what you were wearing. And all of your memories, everything you treasure, everything is gone. Maybe even your loved ones. And you walk out of this disaster. It seems to me that the most profound challenge you have is giving that guy back his dignity of self-awareness. You can take him and feed him and house him and everything else but eventually, you would have to let him go, and what is he going to go back, to?

He is so damaged. And I imagine when you have a whole community that has gone through that, how do you repair that? I am not sure it is up to a system like yours. He or she has to wiggle their way through relationships and this and that to start building it all over again. And I think that is probably one of the . . . the psychological impact, I guess, of that kind of disaster is such an intangible, I don't know how we would ever help that except creating the environment for it to happen.

JD: Creating the environment for it to happen. You will pardon me while I jump on another soap box here.

EV: This is your soap box so you do what you want.

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JD: You put that microphone in front of me, I'm going to say what I think. You know, the reality is, people that go through a disaster where they lose everything want nothing more than to get that dignity back that you talked about. And the reality is, the support services and systems that we've set up our social programs efforts, very rarely give people the opportunity for that. Yes, we'll give you water, yes, we'll give you food, and eventually, we got a program in place that helps people to find jobs through Work Source but a lot of people, when they were stepping off the bus, their first question was, "Do you know where I can get a job, man?" We had nothing for them.

The reality is, somebody once told me that every time you hear the word problem, it can be replaced by the word "opportunity." And, you know, this is perhaps a politically insensitive statement but Darwinism is gone. Our society has evolved to a point where natural selection is no longer what drives the perpetuation and advancement of our society. In disasters like this, those who are not ready to respond to that disaster, they had a hard time continuing on. Now, we've made it the rest of society's ability to ensure that they continue on but not by elevating necessarily their place in society. To provide opportunities for them to improve their lives and incentivize that process providing a fish, rather than teach them how to fish, has become our response. That is what we plan on doing. We plan to give out fish. We don't plan to teach people how to fish. The reality is the sooner you can bring people out of the disaster environment into a place where they feel like they can be connected, where they feel like they know what to do in order to make their life work again, you don't have to give out as many fish. You don't have to distribute the food, the water, the free housing. And that should be the

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focus of our disaster relief system, is elevating the opportunity for people to make their lives better than they before the disaster took place.

EV: You mentioned something a few minutes ago and it gave me probably the terminology I was looking for. Earlier when I was asking you about how much your experiences in Indiana gave you when you began to work with this program, I think you used the term, ‘we had no idea of the extent of the trauma of Katrina and all the little things that affect the individual.’ The question I was fishing for earlier was to find out, in these formulas that you have and in your own thinking, how do you deal with the individual in this mass of trauma whether or not your experience in dealing with this became part of your thinking. I guess what I am trying to say is a lot of people . . . those of us who are on the outside looking in, we see a program – people are doing this, people are doing that and we see the structure but there is always that human element in these kinds of things. What experiences did you have in Indiana that helped you take that into consideration in this cold structure?

JD: Yes, and that is part of what . . .

EV: You may have answered it.

JD: Partially, but more directly to that question, I would say that, you know, my experience with the single family house fires was that it was easy to connect with the individual. They didn’t feel like they were in a sea of other . . . and this is kind of what I was getting out when I said there are sociological and interconnectedness issues with the disaster relief clients in a large scale disaster. You don’t get that on the small single family house fires. You can go talk and spend your time listening to an individual, working with them. You know, what do you need? Not just to get back on your feet.

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What do you really need and like? How can we really make this help you? The time was there. The disaster relief volunteers in an environment like Katrina, it is very difficult to make those one-on-one connections, not necessarily in terms of the disaster relief volunteer feeling connected to the individual. But more importantly, in terms of the individual that is a disaster relief client, feeling connected to the relief volunteer's services and entities that exist, that is tough because they already feel lost in a sea of people.

Tape #1, Side B

EV: We are talking about the nature of disaster.

JD: Just a short recap. We discussed some of the military experiences that you have had and an illustration of where communication breaks down even in a highly centralized chain of command. I was saying that in the military you have clear delegatory authority, you have absolute responsibility for reporting information up the chain of command. The reality is, is even in that environment you have failures that mean that the control structure is not robust, and there is a notion in supply chain management where you can choose to have one of two different types of supply chains – you can chose to have an efficient supply chain. Typically, for noninnovative products – sugar, soup, anything that you want to minimize your cost and just get it to the customer – the customer is not looking for anything special. You want an efficient supply chain that minimizes cost. However, innovative products, you want to have a responsive supply chain. The reality is if I make a brand new electronic gadget, I don't know if everybody is going to want it or not, but if I have manufacturers that can very quickly speed up their production, they can scale their production quickly, that is going to be worth a lot more to me than just

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building up a lot of inventory of that product and not knowing if people are going to want it. And so, the ability to have a responsive supply chain is huge. With a highly centralized chain of command, what you want is efficiency. If we are talking about a transportation network, transportation is something that is a commodity, it needs to happen efficiently. We want to minimize our cost.

Transportation of people. It happened in a very decentralized way and it was pretty messed up for Katrina. A little bit more centralization of that particular function would have been nice. Does that mean that we need centralization of everything? No. But we would have done a much better job of getting people in a timely fashion, in a lower cost fashion, from where they needed to be to where they needed to go if we had a little bit more unified structure to informing and performing that function. But there are a lot of functions that are not commoditized, that are highly dependent upon the customer need in a disaster response as well. And so, you know, decentralization is necessary in order to manage those things as well.

EV: What were your views on the role that Wal-Mart assumed? Were you prepared for Wal-Mart's role in this thing, was it been overplayed?

JD: I will give you a little background on how Wal-Mart became involved. One of the mayor's good friends is Jose Villarreal who happens to be a very senior individual that helped start out the little company called Wal-Mart. He was at the table with the mayor. This guy is an international guy. He was here in Houston helping to make sure that things were getting done and was instrumental in sharing that a lot of things did get done in terms of the movement of goods, and these goods were typically from Wal-Mart distribution facilities to, from what I understand, the major sheltering operations.

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EV: He was an officer in Wal-Mart?

JD: Yes, he's a big guy in Wal-Mart.

EV: Is he in Houston?

JD: I don't believe so. I heard the mayor talking about this one time. So, Wal-Mart's response was a great help, a great help. The reality is back in Indiana when I was working at the Monroe County Red Cross chapter, their primary disaster relief partner for small to medium-sized disasters was Wal-Mart and I believe that they had agreements with Wal-Mart to help distribute different things as well. So, their logistics network is second to none. Even not second to the military.

The military is really good at making sure things get places but they are not necessarily the most efficient and the reason for that is precisely what we were talking about before. Do you want efficiency and the ability for things to break down very easily or do you want robustness, do you want that responsiveness and flexibility? And, you know, the military has got a few extra bucks to play with if they want to so they can build in some redundancy, they can build in a little bit of more responsive network than efficient network. So, it is interesting.

The reality is, is Wal-Mart is looking for the other thing, right? Wal-Mart is looking for efficiency. And so, they have a lot of experience being responsive in an efficient environment, which means that they can also be efficient in a responsive environment in many regards. And that is, I would say, probably the most efficient part of the response was probably Wal-Mart.

EV: Putting aside all the controversy, did FEMA play an active role?

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JD: FEMA has played an active role. FEMA is kind of . . . the basic line when an actual disaster strikes is the local areas need to be able to sustain themselves for anywhere from 48 to 72 hours or longer. So the reality is, in the short term, FEMA doesn't activate locally. Time and time again, when I saw calls for FEMA to get involved, they were always slow in response and I believe the reason for that is that FEMA waits, from what I could see – this is just my perception, it seems like FEMA waits until some structure has evolved and then they figure out how they can utilize that structure to integrate what it is that they can do, which doesn't help out an awful lot as the local structure kind of emerges. They got very involved, for example, after people had been put into houses, after people had been identified in different hotels, in taking role of those situations. They created what they called, I want to say it was something like strike teams but that is wrong – you know, a little team that would go out and would take surveys. FEMA was also very instrumental in making agreements with folks, and by folks, I mean entities about reimbursement of disaster relief services or goods, although I would say that the policy nature of FEMA acted as a deterrent for good work being done rather than as an impetus, as an incentive for good work being done.

Case in point: This is a good story. The mayor was talking – it was just a couple of weeks ago – and he told a story about how he was in discussion with FEMA about the reimbursement of debris removal for Hurricane Rita. In the wake of Hurricane Rita, we have debris on the roads we need to figure out how to get rid of. Well, the reality was that FEMA reimburses debris removal in areas that are nationally declared as an emergency, federal emergency and the mayor, who apparently looked at the option of having a FEMA approved debris removal provider come remove the debris, found out

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that most of the debris removal providers that FEMA had already authorized were somewhere over east of us, say, New Orleans, charging about 100 times as much as sometimes they might have usually. So, we could have paid anywhere up to \$10,000,000 just for debris removal after Hurricane Rita. The mayor made the decision we'll just have the sanitation crews work overtime, they'll work all night until it is all done. They might not have liked that. The reality is we paid an extra \$100,000, as opposed to the \$10,000,000 that would have been paid if we would have had a debris removal provider certified by FEMA come do the job. FEMA won't reimburse us that money. O.K.? What they are saying is if you would have used our debris removal folks, \$10,000,000. That is \$10,000,000 out of the city budget until FEMA reimburses it and then it is \$10,000,000 out of the taxpayers of the United States' back pocket, as opposed to \$100,000. Now, I mean, if FEMA is really going to incentivize the use of an efficient . . . sure you had demand and supply working against you – there is a lot of demand for debris removal in New Orleans and small supply of debris removal authorized FEMA agents – I am sure they are going to charge what they want to charge. But to not reimburse the efforts of a local community that does their own thing at a 100 times less rate, all you are doing is sending, a feedback that basically incentivizes the wrong action. It is dissidence, dissonant feedback.

EV: You had mentioned earlier that, from what you learned from this experience with Katrina and Rita, you began working on a new type of program or a model for disaster relief?

JD: Yes.

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EV: So, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think should come in to your interview that is of value for this particular field?

JD: In terms of information about what had happened?

EV: Yes.

JD: I think, more or less, just kind of a summary of what we have already said and that is that a disaster can be viewed as a problem or an opportunity. Viewing it as a problem, you tend to throw resources at the symptoms of the problem rather than curing the problem itself. The centralized nature of the command structure is like having a Communist economy as opposed to a free market decentralized, distributed decision-making environment, and there are responsibilities for those in funding positions and high level – whether that be a federal, state, or local command structure level that is high decision makers. There are responsibilities for them to create the feedback mechanisms; that is, the incentives that encourage beneficial behavior on the part of the entities involved in the disaster relief – ranging from relief clients to relief providers; you've got to make sure that they are behaving the right way. So, you need to make sure that the feedback recognizes their behavior and encourages the right behavior on their part: governmental agencies, not-for-profit, NGOs – non-governmental organizations; for-profit agencies, organizations, businesses; individuals that are volunteers – these are all important entities in the disaster relief environment that need to be given positive feedback when they are doing something that is useful, to amplify that behavior on the part of the entire disaster relief, and negative feedback when they are doing something that is counterproductive or inefficient, so that it dissuades more of that behavior on the rest of the entire disaster relief effort. So much of our policy today introduces what we

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have referred to as dissonant feedback, encouraging counterproductive behavior, I mean, all that is going to do is add to the inefficiency. And that is why we saw so many loopholes this time around of people working the system. I think the government accountability office, GAO, the federal government accountability office, estimated that up to 13% to 16% of all the relief monetary assistance given by FEMA was inappropriately given in this relief effort. Prior, inappropriate assistance in typical large scale disaster relief was 1% to 2%. It is really unfortunate that so much of our policy, so much of our incentive feedback mechanisms are encouraging bad behavior on the part of those that probably should not be behaving the way that they are. My personal belief is that there is a framework that would allow us to do something a little better.

EV: And you are designing it for us?

JD: I am trying to work on it. I think I have a good idea of what direction to go. If you come across anybody that wants to support that type of research, you just let me know because I've got ideas.

EV: Well, Bill Gates is doing something. Maybe you can squeeze him.

JD: Is he doing something for disaster relief?

EV: I don't know. I think he is.

JD: I have thought about going to the Gates Foundation.

EV: Yes, I think what they are doing is awesome.

JD: Well, my last consulting engagement was for Microsoft actually.

EV: Oh, was it really?

JD: Yes.

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EV: Do you have a resume you might be able to send me or give me now or you can email it to me if you have it?

JD: I can certainly print one out for you when we are done recording.

EV: There was a tangible model for the Neighbors-2-Neighbors thing, computer program of some type.

JD: In terms of what? Printout?

EV: Yes, something that we could . . .

JD: There was a web application that was developed to collect individuals that were available in the local community to be paired with relief clients and to collect information from the relief clients that would like to be paired with a local community family.

EV: Yes, what I am looking for is something tangible to put into this little box that has your name on it that says, this is the thing that went out, this is the program we used, this is the model we used. Is there anything like that that we could . . .

JD: I can rummage through some files and maybe find some chicken scrawl that we can copy for you.

EV: And then, I suspect the one that you are working on now, are those copyrighted? Is that intellectual property stuff?

JD: I'll tell you what – I am not looking to get rich off of it . . .

EV: No, but I mean, if it is copyrighted . . .

JD: No, it is not. It is not and what I was going to say the more of these ideas that we get out there, the more people that pick up on them, I think the better. I don't need any remuneration for the ideas.

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EV: Again, I am putting myself in the place of future historians and researchers ...looking through this archive and saying, this is what he had – compared to what our conversation was and what other sources of information he might have had if he has a chance to look at the initial his program and then study improvements that were made on it. That's all I want.

JD: I can give you some printouts of kind of a presentation I've got on topic.

EV: And I guess there is nothing else that you think we need to cover?

JD: Not that I can think of. I am sure there is more out there that I am forgetting.

EV: Well, if there is, let me know. We can go back over it. It is no problem.

JD: If there is anything else that you wanted to hit or anybody that you wanted to contact . . .

EV: This is the end of the tape.

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