

**Mimi Beard  
Narrator**

**Jeffrey Schaffer  
Texas A&M Corpus Christi  
Interviewer**

**November 16, 2017  
At the O'Conner Building  
Texas A&M Corpus Christi  
Corpus Christi, Texas**

**JS:** This is the Hurricane Harvey oral history interview with Mimi Beard. My name is Jeffrey Schaffer. Today is November 16th, 2017, and we're here to discuss Mimi Beard and her experiences with Hurricane Harvey. So before Hurricane Harvey, had you ever experienced a hurricane or any sort of natural disaster before?

**MB:** Not in my grown-up experience. When I was younger, there had been, you know, tropical storms and hurricanes in Corpus Christi. The details for that, I can't really tell you., I just know, at one point, my mom had to. . . Our car had stalled, and my mom had to carry me, my siblings, and our dog to my, grandfather's house. But that's the only memory that I have for that particular one.

**JS:** And so how long have you lived in the area?

**MB:** I've lived here most of my life. I was born in 1992 at Spohn Hospital, and then I came back. My mom was in the military and moved, different places, and I came back in the first grade. And then I've been here, or a resident here ever since.

**JS:** Did you have family in the area?

**MB:** Yes, I do. I have my, my parents, they actually live in my, grandparents' house when they moved to Corpus Christi in 1979. And, my, my dad's mother, my abuelita, she lives here, as well as two of my uncles. And my great-grandparents live here and two of my great-uncles and one great-aunt.

**JS:** So how did you first hear about Hurricane Harvey?

**MB:** Just on the news. Every year we have hurricane season. So I heard it on the news. I honestly didn't think anything of it, because every year, my dad, he, anytime there was a hurricane close by, he prepped, um, and so there's been, several years where we've prepped, and then nothing happens. So this time, around my dad was like, eh. I don't live with my parents, but I still, when it comes to certain things, I still listen to them. As should most people.

**MB:** And so, he was like, you know, it's probably something like last year or the year before, yada yada, and so that's when I first heard about it.

**JS:** Okay. And as the hurricane came along, how did your feelings toward it change? When did you start feeling anxious?

**MB:** Honestly, I didn't feel anxious, at all. It's just something that happens, you know? It's like, okay, we're in the middle of this, and there's not really any time to think about it, so. Hugo, my boyfriend, he was nervous, because he's originally from Dallas, and over there, they don't get hurricanes. They get, tornadoes.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** That kinda stuff. So he was, he was a little nervous, and so I had to be the one, like, no, it's okay, you know, these things happen all the time, and, honestly, I think I was a little nervous when, we had made the trip up to my grandparents' ranch, and it was midnight, and I was already tired, so my emotions were already, flared. So we, watched a, live broadcast on the KIII Facebook and they were talking about the different things that were going on, and so that made me very nervous. When I woke up the, the next morning, I think it was the next morning. No, two days later, after the hurricane had hit, my friend, she called me and she said that she, had lost her houses, four in total.

**JS:** Wow.

**MB:** Yeah, that was scary. So, I was more, nervous about, my friend who was actually there.

**JS:** So you decided to evacuate?

**MB:** Yes.

**JS:** Okay. And you said you went to your grandfather's ranch?

**MB:** Yes. I'll kind of tell you, like, the process, the timeline.

**JS:** Sure, go ahead.

**MB:** So we, at the Education Service Center where I work, we were going through our strategic plan of, making the building, or prepping the building for a natural disaster. This was on Thursday. The Thursday the 24th, I believe. I think that's about right. They were going to close, the ESC2, that Friday. That whole Thursday while we were prepping, I was like, nah, I don't think we're going to evacuate. Again, it's just something that happens, here quite often. Not an actual hurricane, just the prepping. And, I honestly, and people, you know, in those kind of situations tend to overreact to begin with.

**JS:** Right.

**MB:** So, you gotta stay calm, and kind of, work on your best judgment. My friend who lost her houses, her husband, is a firefighter, so they get the first response to anything that's going to happen. And so she was keeping me updated with the kinds of things that they were talking about, and, they were even considering putting in a, mandatory evacuation of Corpus. So when I heard that, I thought, okay, we probably should. And my parents were also thinking about just going to my grandparents' ranch, which we've done in the past when I was growing up. We'd grow, to Gonzales, Texas where they have their ranch, and just kinda wait it out. I figured I would tag along, and then, so we did that on that Thursday

afternoon, we had to prep as fast as we could. We didn't really have time to, put anything on our windows, that kinda stuff.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** So we packed up. I videotaped everything, 'cuz, you know, going back to when I was younger, my dad would always record, the state of everything. And I remember one year, he made me take pictures of everything in our entertainment room. And my dad's a big collector of anything entertainment and anything media. So just taking pictures, taking pictures, taking pictures. So thinking back to that, I was like, okay I gotta take pictures of everything. So I did that. And then we finally left Corpus, to Gonzales, Texas is about a two and a half hour drive, and it took us almost six hours because of the traffic. Yeah. It was terrible. So, we got there around midnight, and then woke up pretty early. Said, good morning to my grandparents and then Hugo and I, we went to Dallas, 'cuz we thought 'cuz we saw that the storm was going to hit Gonzales, Texas, as well. I just told you about all my family who lives in Corpus, they all went to my grandparents' ranch, as well.

**JS:** Oh, really?

**MB:** So we thought, well, Hugo's parents, his family is in Dallas. We'll go there, and that way there's two less people my grandparents have to worry about.

**JS:** Right.

**MB:** So we went there, we got there may be around lunchtime on, on Friday. And sure enough, Gonzales, was hit pretty bad, and a lot of the roads, which are also country roads often dirt roads, were all flooded in

**JS:** Yeah.

**MB:** So, we didn't get rain in Dallas, but, I felt, like, very useless. I mean, I knew if I was in Gonzales, if I was in Corpus, I couldn't do anything to begin with, but just being somewhere a little bit safer than my whole family it was nerve-wracking.

**JS:** Tell me a bit more. while the hurricane was hitting, how did you hear about it, how were you updated, what were your impressions of what was going on, tell me that, that period before you came back

**MB:** I was nervous for my family, but again, being with Hugo, who was more nervous than I was, I had to be like, no, it's fine, it's fine. But the way that I kept updated mostly was KIII Facebook Live broadcasting. That was amazing. Like, I, never followed them until then when I saw just how quick they were able to get everything, so quickly on social media, and it was so cool to see the interaction of people, communicating through that. And a really interesting time, too, because again, I was safe, but people were messaging me, calling me.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** I had made friends in Bermuda, a year, ish, a year ago? Maybe two years. In my, archaeological dig. I was in an archaeological dig for two years, for two summers. And I had made friends and, we keep contact in Facebook, and so we have this group message where, like, are you okay, how is it over

there, and that kind of stuff. , so it was, interesting that they became aware of that. And, again I had a friend in Houston, you know, they got it really bad there.

**JS:** Yeah, they did.

**MB:** So she was telling me, what was going on over there, that kinda stuff. So a lot of people, it's re-occurring in many stories. A lot of people came together and made sure everyone was all right.

**JS:** Okay, so, Hurricane Harvey made landfall on about Friday, when did y'all make the decision to come back?

**MB:** That was based on, my work. they had given us they didn't give us, but the way that things had looked and had been in Corpus, and just overall South Texas, they told us that whenever, , it was safe for us to come back, but they were going to resume work on Wednesday, August 30th. So we came back on Tuesday, the day before, and that was a very long, long drive, as well because of the traffic.

**JS:** You drove back from Dallas.

**MB:** Yeah, from Dallas, we went back to, Gonzales, because, my boyfriend had left his car in Gonzales, and it was going to be, easier, and cheaper if we took just my car, to Dallas. So we came back to Gonzales and we experienced some of the flooding and the muddy country roads, and we picked up his car, and then we had to drive back to Corpus.

**JS:** Besides the flooding was there much damage in Gonzales?

**MB:** From what I saw, it was just a lot of debris everywhere.

**JS:** When you finally made it back to Corpus, what did you see? What were your impressions?

**MB:** Well, I was very thankful that, our very, old, apartment was okay. Surprisingly. Being an older apartment, I figured there would be some.

**JS:** Where do you live in town?

**MB:** On Ennis.

**JS:** Ennis Joslin?

**MB:** Yeah, in the Shores.

**JS:** Okay.

**MB:** I had seen damage on the roofs of a lot of other apartments, and even in our, complex, there's, still, you can see it today, still blue tarps over some of the, the roofs. But ours was okay. There was no damage. So I was very surprised. Debris everywhere. And my parents' house, being 35 years old, and that's not old, but over time, things happen to houses.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MB:** That was very secure. I think they had, minimal damage on their fence, which I think was also, very common.

**JS:** Now, did you have any other friends or family that were significantly impacted by the hurricane?

**MB:** Not severely. Minor damage, and it was my friend Shantal, who was, severely affected. She lost her, house, her parents' house, the house that she grew up in, there was, a lot of damage in her uncle's house, and then there's, another house that was actually a duplex that was being rented out, as well, and that was damaged.

**JS:** Now, when you resumed work, did the hurricane impact your job at all?

**MB:** Yes.

**JS:** How so?

**MB:** Definitely. So are you familiar with the Education Service Center?

**JS:** Please explain it.

**MB:** Okay. I work at the Education Service Center Region 2. My job title is, Learning Resource Technician, but I do, a number of things. I work in distance learning. I do library support. I do education media. And I am also part of the volunteer community there.

**JS:** Now, is that part of CCISD [Corpus Christi Independent School District]?

**MB:** No. At the Education Service Center, let me start at the top. So there's TEA, the Texas Education Agency. They are an agency that helps students and educators throughout the state of Texas, supports them in as many ways as they can, but in particular, keep up to date with laws regulations required by the state. Okay, so that's them. And it's headed by the Commissioner of Education, who is currently, Mike Morath.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** Then there's also these smaller agencies. They are the Education Service Centers. There's 20 of them, and they're nonprofits. There are 20 of them spread across, the state of Texas, that are in conversation with, TEA constantly: so the Education Service Centers are responsible for those LEAs, school districts, charter schools, any kind of agency of education. They're in charge of those areas. We are Region 2, and there's quite a few schools that fall under Region 2. When we came back, there was definitely conversations about Hurricane Harvey, more frequent when we came back. And as per the Commissioner of Education, Mike Morath, he said that Region 2, needs to focus on the affected and the displaced students, the teachers and, just LEAs in general.

**JS:** Do you have any sort of estimate about how many people were affected?

**MB:** The main schools, which is also uses public knowledge's: Port Aransas ISD, Aransas County ISD, Ingleside ISD, Aransas Pass ISD, and Taft ISD. These were the ones that were most affected, to the point where many of them had to rent out portables for their teachers and students. A lot of efforts have

been made, whether it be donations, supplies or monetary, and, as well as creating services for these students and educators, through the ESC and the GEA.

**JS:** Now, what kind of procedures did the, agency have for natural disasters in general. How prepared was it for an event like this?

**MB:** That I am not, 100% sure, mostly because I wasn't in those conversations. I've only been with the Service Center for a year. So I wouldn't know that, for sure, but, throughout, the whole process all employees were getting strategic procedures. There's Stage 1, Stage 2, and then, letting us know when we could come back.

**JS:** That's fine. So what programs were you involved with?

**MB:** Some of the things that I did was distance learning. We do a lot of video conferencing where hundreds of people can attend at a time. And so in my department, we were connecting people across the state, sometimes with the commissioner and our executive director, so they could have these meetings of different things that they can get done., I'm not, involved with that, but I was supporting them and connecting them to make sure, they could communicate what needed to get done. There's also these, other video conferences that are put out by TEA. Some of them on Hurricane Harvey and the strategies that I would connect. We also have workshop space and conferences spaces at the ESC2 and monthly there's a superintendent meeting and I helped with AV equipment and tech support, and I also was able to take photographs to document meetings, and also, part of the volunteer committee, that's, that's where I've done the most.

**JS:** Tell me about the volunteer committee.

**MB:** We struggled at the beginning because we wanted to do something. The volunteer committee meets maybe once a month to talk about the things that we're doing in the community, how to get involved. After the hurricane, we definitely wanted to do something. And since, it is something that we're already doing with the service center we wanted to include some of our services that way. So, for example, we were getting a bunch of donations across the United States.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** Some of them were coming organized, and some of them were just coming in boxes because, everyone knows you need all these school supply donations as soon as possible. We were getting all these things, and we were like, well, what are we going to do? And so, we had many meetings of that. I ended up taking charge of organizing them. So, we would have pallets and pallets, I mean, at one point, we had 16 pallets just full, wrapped in saran wrap in a room. October 14th is when I started, the school supply sorting volunteer opportunities. And so we'd meet twice a week from 4:30 to 5:30. So it's, 4:30 is when we get out of work. So a whole hour right after work on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we would unpack these pallets, and we would organize them in this designated room that, thankfully we had this empty space that we could put all this stuff. And so, it was really rough, because first it's a project where there's just tons and tons and tons of supplies, and people are willing to volunteer but getting the right time for people to be able to volunteer.

**JS:** Right.

**MB:** And just also be enjoyable, because, everyone has good intentions, but if they're not feeling, connected, or if they're, feeling like they're not helping, contributing then you lose volunteers. And so I needed to make sure that everyone was always doing something, making sure that everything was prepped before any volunteers could come in and prep for themselves. And, make sure you have really good music to get them pumped up. And so there have been several times where we thought we were getting somewhere, and then we would have more pallets of stuff come in. Uh, so empty space was just filled up with stuff again. And so, we got a pretty good system going, and I'm very proud to say, as of Tuesday November 17th, we were able to sort everything completely. Now we are in the process of actually getting the items out to districts and schools.

**JS:** About how many volunteers would you say contributed?

**MB:** We had a total of eight, 13 employee volunteers, and it came out to over 32 hours together.

**JS:** Wow.

**MB:** So it's pretty impressive that we were able to get so much done with that kinda data.

**JS:** Did you get any sort of idea of how much stuff you received? Any sort of raw count?

**MB:** I can't think about it on the top of my head, but, I am so tired of spiral notebooks. We have so many of them. It would be the greatest day if I had never seen a spiral notebook ever again.

**JS:** So have you begun the process of distributing them?

**MB:** We are going to start that, the Tuesday we come back from Thanksgiving break. So we have all next week off, the Tuesday we're going to start delivering. However, a lot of the schools that have been affected have also been getting, donations elsewhere across the United States. So many of them are very overwhelmed with supplies and other kind of donations, especially when they are in portables and their buildings are still being fixed. So they have all these items that they can't use or don't need at this moment.

**JS:** Um-hum.

**MB:** So we have all these supplies, it probably won't be until the beginning of the next academic year before it's actually in greater need.

**JS:** Do y'all have any plans in case you have excess stuff? Do you have a backup plan?

**MB:** I don't think we'll have excess stuff, only because schools are always in need and students are always in need of supplies. There's also monetary donations. There's always a need in something. Just right now, that's what happens during a natural disaster, sometime you get too much of an item, and you have to let it, what am I trying to say?

**JS:** Run its course?

**MB:** Run its course. You just have to wait till everything kind of flows, and then continue with it. So, I mean, for example, I don't think it would've been productive for us to go ahead and deliver them, and it just pile up for those schools.

**JS:** Right.

**MB:** So having this organized system will better everyone later on in the future.

**JS:** Are there any sort of activities that your job has been doing?

**MB:** This week was a great week for the volunteer community. We delivered treats to these two teachers at Taft. A month or so ago, we were given, donations of treats, to be given to teachers staff that were affected by Hurricane Harvey. So we went to Gregory, Portland, Taft, and Aransas County. They were just, like, sweet breads and pies.

**JS:** Aw.

**MB:** Yeah. And it was really cool, because Labatt Food Service donated these items, and we were going to distribute them. And just the way that it all worked out, the week before Thanksgiving break. So it was really nice how that turned out. It'd been a long process to get the treats. The treats were left at the CCISD, refrigerator at their central kitchen, because we didn't have any space. We have, little mini office refrigerators.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MB:** So they had to be shipped there, and then we brought them, and then we had to sort them, and then we distributed them. And we also created these cards that went along with them, big poster-board cards, and there was 15 campuses in all. And so on Monday, we were able to drive to all of these campuses and deliver all of the treats.

**JS:** Aw.

**MB:** Yeah, and so it was a really a great eye-opener, because you're being told what's going on with all these schools, then having to kind of settle in portables. So to actually see the damage on the building, see how they work day to day in these portables is really interesting. Taft ISD was very grateful for these treats, and it was really cool.

**JS:** Were there any particular incidences, positive or negative, that you encountered in terms of damage or people or stories you heard or encountered?

**MB:** Not really. I know it affected a ton of people and I'd always see people crying and feeling so upset, and with my personality, I more, like, notice that, but we need to do something.

**JS:** Yeah.

**MB:** And so being on the volunteer committee, and just being, at an entity where we're working, every day to help, people who are in need particularly when Hurricane Harvey hit, was, I guess my way of contributing to it. That's my way of being sentimental, I guess.

**JS:** Okay, so looking towards the future, if we have another hurricane, is there anything either personal or professional, you would do differently or would recommend?

**MB:** Not really. Maybe helping my friend out at the beginning, if someone really feels like they need support before any kind of natural disaster, be sincere. And it's not that I wasn't being sincere, it's just she was so worried about her houses, and I was like, oh, it'll be okay, it'll be okay, and it ended up not being okay. To just be more active, if someone feels, or they have this intuition, then be supportive of that.

**JS:** Okay. Any concluding thoughts or remarks?

**MB:** Nope. I just know that this hurricane, as well as the other ones, they happen so quickly, but the damage stays for a really long time. So one thing, that I would like to remind people of is, these things don't go away. People are still affected, even though it may not be you, on a daily basis, there's still people who are and will continue even years from now. So just be mindful of that.

**JS:** Well, thank you, Mimi Beard, for being here today, and, thank you for all your hard work.

**MB:** Oh, you're welcome.