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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM
HOBOKEN STORIES:
REMEMBERING STORM SANDY

INTERVIEWEE: EDWARD MADIGAN

INTERVIEWER: BOB FOSTER

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Track #1

BF: I'm sitting here with Eddie Madigan, inside the Elks Lodge Room, on Wednesday, around 7:30, on the seventh of August, 2013. Ed, if you could introduce yourself again.

EM: My name is Ed Madigan. I'm a Hoboken resident, and have lived in the town the better part of my life. I basically live within a four-block radius. I went to school here. I've gotten a lot from this town as far as the community and the experiences I've had growing up, and just want to give back. That's what I do. I do.

BF: If you could tell us again what you do for the Elks.

EM: Right now I'm listed as the house chairman, but I do many other functions, from fundraising, to cooking in the kitchen, to painting, sweeping, mopping, doing whatever is necessary in an organization such as this, because it is all volunteers.

BF: And when you're in full gear, what type of hours are you putting in?

EM: In busier times of the year, we could be putting in twenty to twenty-five, depending on what's going on. At some points, a little less -- ten -- but you field a lot of phone calls from people looking to use the hall, etc.

BF: So you would be in charge of booking the hall --

EM: Correct.

BF: -- and all those questions, which are endless, I'm sure.

EM: Correct.

BF: Tell us a little bit about how the storm affected you on the home front. What were you first concerns when you saw the storm kicking in.

EM: My first concerns were always of my sister, who is somebody who needed assistance because she is physically disabled. She needed oxygen; so, in that situation, we needed power; but, like many others, there was no power. A shelter was not something I really was comfortable with her, in her medical state, so we needed to get her to a fellow family-member's home, and that pretty much happened within twenty-four hours after the storm had hit.

BF: And once that happened, what was the next stage?

EM: Literally, after I had dropped off my sister and my niece at my other sister's home, I was back in Hoboken. I went back to her house to check on two of her neighbors. She made me promise. There was a woman there who was eighty-four, and there was another woman who was in her seventies that I had to go check on. They were okay. Then

we got them to their family members. Then the ball started rolling at the Elks. Emails were sent out, phone calls were starting to be made. Jason Maurer, at the time, was the exalted ruler. He really started the ball rolling as far as getting the ground work out of -- he initially went out and bought a couple-hundred pounds of pasta, just pasta, and people started cooking it up. By the time I had gotten back, we were just putting out pasta. It was the beginning of something that turned out to be pretty amazing.

BF: Tell me more.

EM: Well, one thing led to another. The pasta turned into various donations, that were literally coming in from everybody and anybody. It was people coming by from their houses, dropping off small portions of meat and breads, to churches down the block that came in and dropped off chicken. As far as proteins, I think we were the beneficiary because we were one of the first people really up, and we had a real good organizational system working. Everybody knew their role, we went into the role, and it wasn't a matter of somebody being a dictator; it was more we all just kind of fell in where we knew we had to be.

BF: Do you think that's partly because you're used to working together?

EM: It definitely helped. I've been in the restaurant business for many years, so as far as the kitchen -- everybody here generally knows to just leave me to my devices and it will work out. But it wasn't a one-man or one-woman job, it was a multitude of people who came in from [unclear] starting it to other volunteers, such as Tom Foley, Bill Noonan, there was a woman, Carol Hickman, who has since become a member. Various members of the community who never really stepped into the Elks realized what was going on, and people just wanted to help. People were really just out there wanting to help. They were volunteering their time, their effort, and other people were bringing in goods and things of that nature. When the goods started to flow in, it was pretty wild. It was pretty amazing, the amount of donations we were getting. By the first night, we basically had depleted our inventory of food, and then it just snowballed, where there were companies were delivering, whether it was to schools or to various institutions -- these institutions were closed, so now they had cases of bread. Bread companies had already

made their bread for the week, and nowhere to deliver to. So we became a drop-off center. That was due to the mayor, the OEM group, etc., and once that happened -- somebody showed up with literally twenty cases of [unclear] rolls. Another company dropped off frozen goods -- green beans, carrots, and potatoes. Now we had the signs, so to speak. We had your vegetable and your starches, we had pasta. Then proteins kind of came in. That was our biggest concern, believe it or not. We had plenty of starch, we had vegetables -- which would have been suitable in any situation. You're hungry, you'll eat. And we did. But we started getting deliveries from -- there was a church on Ninth and Bloomfield, and they had chicken that was going to go bad. I shouldn't say it that way; I apologize. It wasn't going to go bad, but it would have gone bad before they could use it, so they needed to find a home for it. They did, and it was good chicken. We cooked it, and that happened. The donations, from breads, to rolls, to these vegetables, to pasta -- there wasn't a moment when there wasn't a protein, a starch, a vegetable, and a soup, and a pasta, at all times. We were feeding people here at the Elks, at any point from 9:00 in the morning until about 9:30 at night. We were feeding people. People stayed. We didn't ask them to leave. But we had no electricity here,

either. We were actually cooking with Christmas lights that we had run from an extension cord from one of our members, Dale Monaco and Lenny D'Elia. They live on Hudson Street. They had power. Their electric bill for the following month was probably a little more than they bargained for. But we ran power from their home, with extension cords, to keep our refrigerators going.

So we were cooking with Christmas lights, and that was it. This entire hall, if you go around the rim, was Christmas lights, white Christmas lights. People just came in, and it became an area where people could come, congregate, and be with others who were in the same boat. Not only would they eat here, people would take food home. We let them take food home. We were sending meals down to two senior centers, to City Hall, where the National Guard was. We were feeding them. The shelters we were feeding, seniors, and feeding people here. And if anybody called and asked for food, we found a way to get it to them. We had guys like Tom Foley put it in his van. He works for the city, and he made sure that seniors were being fed in different areas -- because that's what Tom does: takes care of people.

It was truly the best of times and the worst of times. It was a bad thing that happened, but from it so

much good came. It showed how resilient a town this is, and when push comes to shove, people can really be good. Things were terrible all over this tri-state area, and some areas still are pretty bad. But in this situation, this town was up, running and moving quicker than anybody would ever have imagined. I think it was a benefit that many of us didn't have TV and radio, because we didn't know how bad we were. Everybody kept calling on their cellphone, when you weren't trying to charge it somewhere, telling you how bad it is. I had multiple people from work, "Come stay with me." I just felt compelled to be here -- no heat, no electricity. That was a mild slap compared to what many people have endured. You can put a blanket on. You can get by, and you did.

The donations -- I got off topic. I apologize -- but the donations -- there was a point where social media came into it. I've never been the biggest social-media guy, but it came in -- there were a couple people -- Ryan Mitchell from the Hoboken chamber, Councilman [Unclear], a couple of other people put things out there, whether it was their Facebook page -- Hoboken Happenings page -- the Hoboken Chamber. Bryan asked me what do I need and I just told him, "I need protein. I've got everything else, but if you want to get me protein." He asked me what, and I said, "Just get me chicken. Get me

heads of chickens, get me whole chickens, I'll butcher them up, and we'll make this work." Sure enough, he came in one day and he had about 320 pounds of chicken. Everybody was going, "Oh, that's amazing." And it was amazing. It was great. But for what we were putting out, it would have gotten through a day. Then the next thing I know, the emails from the Hoboken Happenings site, people saw that, whether it was a Facebook page, or Twitter, etc. I don't even know. But we got another 300 pounds. We were cutting chicken, butchering it, and all the while it wasn't like it was a lunch hour. Food just continually flowed. It got to the point where the National Guard was now coming up here to eat, on shifts. It's hard to imagine. The gourmet cheese shop, and he's bringing in these gourmet cheeses. We were making soups, and when I say "making soups," I was making in the neighborhood of forty to sixty gallons of soup a day -- soups and chilis -- all food-donated product. It's truly -- I can go on about it, and I can tell people about it, but people don't understand that I was really fortunate. My job was so understanding with what I was doing. They actually said -- because the whole area was shut down from four to six days, no matter where you were. But even on the weekend they told me, "Just stay where you are. You're doing more good where you are." So I was fortunate that I

had employers who were just so kind and understanding. I've been with them for years. It was fortunate. So it worked out for everybody. I know I went on, because --

BF: I'm not saying anything because I want you to go on.

Any idea of how many people you served?

EM: Well, to get an actual count -- nobody was standing here with a clicker. Rumor has it that we're talking over 5,000.

BF: When did you start? What day did you start, do you think?

EM: I'm trying to remember. It was late Tuesday, early Wednesday, I think. I believe it was early Wednesday. We went from Wednesday to Wednesday. So we cooked for eight days.

BF: So you say maybe 5,000.

EM: Minimum. It's hard to put a number on it. Because we were just sending trays of food out --

literally sending a chafing dish or hotel pans full of food. People would call up, "Can we have some food?" At a time like that, I was very fortunate to have the years of knowledge that I have in food, and people here to help. There were people organizing food, people delivering food. It just became its own entity, and I think it worked out well because the powers that be needed to be focused somewhere else. I think nobody believed we could do what we did, but once they saw it, then I think it was a burden off people's back. I truly feel that. You didn't have to worry about, "Okay, well, this soup kitchen is feeding a couple of people, they're doing a couple of people, and the Red Cross is coming in with the ready-to-heat meals," which are, hey, they're great. What the Red Cross did was phenomenal. But if you can put some really warm food into some people's bellies, there's something to be said about comfort. And that's what it was: it was comfort food.

BF: You've got to start somewhere.

Yes, to me it was just amazing that as you walked down Washington Street, it was dark, it was shut down, it was pretty bleak. Then you'd walk through these doors, and it was like all of Hoboken was here.

EM: It was people -- I don't use the term -- I use the term people who have maybe just moved in, or people who have been here a long time -- I've never been a guy who would use the, quote/unquote "born and raised." I don't particularly care for it. It was people who were here for forty years and people who were here for four years. I met some people -- all of a sudden I see them on the street, they see me, it's a hello. You go somewhere -- I have a pretty big list of people I know in this town, but it expanded, and it expanded in a good way, from neighbors who lived two doors down, who never really set foot in the Elks Club, who were here, to people who came into the Elks and didn't know what the Elks was about. They just kind of had the idea that the Elks was a place for middle-aged men to congregate and have a couple beers, in the quote/unquote "old man's" world. People didn't understand that what we do is this: we give back to charity. These are charitable endeavors. It's a benevolent organization. That's what we're here to do, is to give back. Our primary care is to give back to handicapped kids. That's what the Elks are known for.

I found out something that I didn't know -- that the Elks are actually the second biggest donator to charity in this country. I thought, "Wow," when I heard

that. Tom actually told me that, and Tom's been here so long. He's on his second stint as the exalted ruler. He did it twenty years ago; now he's doing it again this year, because it stepped in to do it. That's what we've been trying to do. Membership has been on the rise in this club. That really brought to light what we're about, and it's not, quote/unquote a "good old-boys" club. It's a place where, "Yeah, you can come down and play pool, and play ping-pong, or have a beer, or have a soda, do whatever you want -- watch a ballgame and just sit; or, you can get involved in, say, how can we help others out, whether it's can we raise money for the Hoboken Ambulance Corps? Can we raise money for the American Legion, which was wiped out -- which we did. We started our own Sandy fund, and we donated to the Hoboken Ambulance Corps; the food pantry on Third and Bloomfield; St. Matt's church, with Mark Singleton, who does a world of good; to the American Legion; to the Hoboken Catholic schools; to teachers who lost all of their little things. We donated to the teachers, so they can buy a little decoration for their schools, and make their schools, when they do come back next year -- which will be a good thing -- they will be able to do that.

We raised somewhere in the neighborhood of \$25-30,000 that we gave out privately, and that's not

counting things that people found out, like, "Wow, you guys do that?" We gave that money. We give scholarships out to kids all the time. That's what it's about -- giving back to the community.

BF: Going back to the storm -- I think what was amazing to me is how quickly you reacted. Because most people were thinking about their home, their car, whatever it was, and how do I get out of here? Should I stay and assess damage. You guys went into full force here. It did take a while for the Red Cross to get here, or the National Guard. It was almost at the end of the week until you saw a lot of that -- the power was still out. But you guys were, in a sense, feeding the town within twenty-four hours.

EM: Correct. This is true. And I think a lot of that realization comes to us that it's a good core of people, who understand about giving back. There's a good core of people who have talent; everybody has a different talent or niche. Find what you do well, and that's great. So people will get on the email and get people down here. Then when people are down here, then they need direction. When you can give people direction in ways like -- everybody wanted to help.

That was the other thing. There was such an outpouring of people who came to help. People who just, "Hey, I got two hours. I can help." There may have been twenty people, fifteen people who showed up throughout every day. But then there were other people who came in, "I've got five hours." We had people who came from West Virginia. We had people who came from the Upper East Side of Manhattan. These are people who had nothing to gain, so to speak, because it didn't help somebody else. But finding your niche. We were fortunate I said, again, becoming a drop-off station. We were also fortunate because we have the space, and we have the facilities to do something of this size. This is a big building, it's a big room. But, in the same breath, we realized what we could do. There were other places where it could be done on a smaller scale. But this was about giving back, and we opened our doors for people to come in, and they didn't just come in to eat and go. Some people came in to eat, stay, talk, visit, talk to other people with similar feelings. Whether they were good feelings or bad feelings, they got to air out their emotions, so to speak. Then other people came in and stayed. They stayed and they helped, whether it was sweeping at the end of the night, mopping, making sure that there were paper towels in the men's room and the ladies'

room, cleaning mirrors. There were some volunteer arts and crafts people who came in, and they literally became a small little school, and they were teaching kids on the side, over here. People came in. Everybody was good. There was no whining, there was no -- people understood. Everybody here understood. Your problem was not worse than the person next to you. Maybe it was, but everybody was in the same boat.

BF: And like you said before -- it was a great equalizer. It kind of made everyone forced to be around each other and talk, whether you didn't know each other or --

EM: -- whether you lived in a brownstone or you lived in a tenement, or whether you lived on a top floor or a bottom floor. If you had no power, you had no power. You all were without, and when you came here you weren't without anymore. You were here with friends, with new friends, old friends, people whom you made acquaintances. Some people made friends, I'm sure, and some people, hopefully, continued to be friends from that situation.

Every night we talked about it being dark outside. Every night when we got done, about 11:00, I would go for a walk. Each night I would walk with different people, just to kind of soak it in, what it was about. The first night I walked with my friend Bill Anderson. I hadn't seen him for a while, but all of a sudden he was cooped up, he wanted out and I wanted out, even though I was here all day. And we walked. We walked to Washington Street, and it was eerie. It was dark, but it was such a bright night, the second night. It was dark on the ground, it was dark because of the buildings -- it was like you were in a canyon -- but if you looked up, the moon was as clear and the sky was as clear as could be. That was the only little bit of ambient light you had. You walked down Washington, just taking it in. We walked up to the waterfront, and we walked down. There was just silence. It was like we were the only two people in the town.

Each night I would take a different route, to see, okay, who's got electricity tonight? In what area? Did Garden Street get it? Did Park Avenue? Was the hospital up yet? Was this area done? Had any of the waters receded? Not to assess the damage, but really just to take in the town, because we wouldn't have a beginning of how to assess the damage. I just knew it was damaged.

BF: Right. And, like you said, in some respects it was a great week. You had a purpose. You're making people happy. It's sort of an adrenalin rush, to a degree, that kept you going for the next day.

EM: Absolutely. It was a rush, feeding people. I've done large-scale things where I've fed lots of people, but doing it on a shoestring; doing it with what we had -- it was amazing. It was wild. You started feeding people, and people were so appreciative. They were thanking me. They just wanted to poke their head in the kitchen and say thank you. It meant more coming from them than it did from other people, for me. Anybody who thanks you, you should be appreciative; by the same breath, I didn't do it for the thanks. You do it because you want to do it. The one thing you have to give, that you can give to somebody, that nobody else can -- it's your time. I learned that from my mom, and it's big. Everybody can donate money, everybody can do this, but if you can give of yourself, there's nothing more that you can do. There's nothing more sincere than giving your time to a cause or a charity.

It was good, like you said. I was here every morning at 8:00. People might not have been showing up.

We'd tell everybody, "What time are you coming in tomorrow?" Everybody would always ask me. I would say, "Just come in about 10:00. It's okay. Come by about 10:00." But I was here between 7:30 and 8:00, because that's how I am. I wanted to make sure everything was set; that coffee was ready for people -- for everybody -- for the people who were volunteering, as well; that they got a hot cup of coffee, or something like that. I think it was good. I don't know. I don't drink coffee. But it was good stuff.

[Laughter]

BF: Well, let's put it that way: it was the best coffee in town that week.

EM: True, true, true. You got to meet so many, various people. I was fortunate. I met some people -- and I'm normally a back-of-the-group person. I'll do the work and have fun; I'm not, honestly, somebody who does things like this. I volunteer and I'll do everything, but I don't need adulation or admiration. I do it because it's the way I was brought up. I got so much from the town, like I said earlier, and that's why I do what I do.

But from the leaders of this town, from the mayor, to the council people, to locals who are busy in the

area, to meeting the Director of Homeland Security, to the governor, to senators. It was interesting. You're meeting these people and you're talking to them. You meet the governor. When am I going to meet the governor? I'm not a political guy.

BF: Remind us about that. It was toward the end of the week?

EM: It was on a Sunday, actually. It was a Sunday.

BF: Did we have power back by then?

EM: We got power back literally about twenty minutes before they got here.

BF: A coincidence?

EM: [Laughter] Perhaps. You know, but we got the power back on that Sunday, and it started coming back more and more. But meeting these people --

BF: And you're pretty tired at this point, too, doing the whole week.

EM: Honestly, no. I've got a lot of stamina, I can go -- I'm a person who needs to be active. So I can go on very little sleep for long periods. Like you said earlier, you had the adrenalin rush. I had the purpose; I needed to do this. I started it, I wanted to finish it. I wanted to finish it well.

It was captivating, meeting some of these people. Like I said, from the senators -- he's deceased now, but Frank Lautenberg. Senator Lautenberg. Incredibly charming. Tremendous -- a great line he had. He goes through the buffet, and at that point someone had dropped off short ribs, and somebody had dropped off flank steak. I had made beef stroganoff; I cooked it down, and it was good. It was very good. He ate it, and he made a point -- he came in, and he goes -- I'm trying to understand -- and he did use the term: "I've been to many smorgasbords." I kind of chuckled. And he goes, "But this is very good." Graciously, I said, "Thank you very much." He goes, "No, no, no. This is very good." He made a point.

As I said, the governor could not have been more charming. I got to speak to him, and when he was

speaking to me, I should say, I truly felt like I might have been the only person in the room. He sat there -- he's got that personality -- and I'm born in Hudson County, so I don't need to go any further. But yes, he was that charming. Senator Menendez -- same thing. The Director of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano -- same thing. Also, at the same point, you see their secret service come in, and you have a little trepidation, of "I'm not going to move." Her secret-service agent asked me, quietly, "Are they all your tools?" By tools, he meant my knives. I said, "Yes, they are." And he goes, "You can keep them out, leave them on the board, and keep your hands on the table." I was like, "Wow!" And I listened. [Unclear] The cheese-monger, so to speak, whom I spoke of earlier -- he did the same thing, when he tasted the food, he kept making comments, like, "No, no, this is *good*." And I said, "I understand. Thank you." He goes, "No, no, no, you could charge for this. You could make money." I was like, "That's not what it's about." He was making a polite compliment.

So we were giving out food that was truly -- it was restaurant-quality food.

BF: And a good restaurant.

EM: Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. There were reporters from all over. Naturally, locally, from TV, that were here. Various TV reporters were here throughout the week. They were interviewing you while you were cooking. Some of them weren't as pleased, because I won't stop while I'm cooking. I said, "If you want to talk, we'll talk and go about our day." Most of them, they were all very good. They said, "Go ahead, [Unclear]." I said, "I'm not going to stop. So you'll get a picture of the back of my head." "That's okay." But there were other people in there. I said, "Talk to them." There were other people who were willing to talk, and spoke very well, from Sherry "Parasino," [phonetic] to Carolyn Hickman. "Do you need the other [unclear]." I said, "Please, speak to them. They're in here. It's not just me, stirring the pot. There are other people here."

BF: But you were the main cook.

EM: Yes.

BF: You were the chef. You ruled the kitchen.

EM: People listened to me. "Ruled" is a tough word, but yes. People definitely sought out my advice, and I pretty much -- yes. I did say, "This is how we're going to do it." I expedited everything that was coming out. But as food came in, we set it up where the people I spoke of -- the Sherrys, the Carolyns -- there was a gentleman named Rega, who was born in Hoboken. He was up in Boston. His mom is a senior citizen. He's a gentleman who worked in kitchens his whole life. He came down because he wanted to check on his mom, and once he realized his mom was okay, in a senior building, he came up here. People like that -- it doesn't work with one person; you need all of them. He would break down [unclear]. Other people would say, "What do you need?" "Well, cut this up. Show somebody how to cut it up."

Okay. Now we had everything cut, so when we needed to make something -- in ten minutes I could make a thirty-pound pot of food.

BF: So you cooked with gas.

EM: Correct.

BF: Then you had a little bit of power from the extension cord from Monaco. Then eventually you got another generator?

EM: We got a generator. The generator was used as a charging station. It didn't do any lights in here. The generator became more of a charging station --

BF: -- for people's cellphones.

EM: People's cellphones, their computers, and it was needed. Because we were okay cooking with the Christmas lights. It actually kind of fueled the fire, so to speak; it made us want to keep going. The amount of people charging their cellphones, like I said, from the extension cord in the back, to here -- we were fortunate, again. Jason was involved in that, and we were able to procure a generator from a fellow [unclear] who works with the city, as well -- Ricky Repetti. And because we became so big, they had no problem giving it to us.

But that generator stayed outside, all night.

BF: I remember.

EM: It was wonderful to have it. It was great, because it provided such power that other people could then communicate with their families, and let everybody know, "We're okay," whether it was sending them texts, tweets, pictures, and letting people stay in touch with the outside world.

BF: And let them know where the best food in town was.

EM: Perhaps. [Laughter

BF: Do you remember the week afterwards? Did you kind of crash at a certain point? Or did you get out of town? Was there a void, from transitioning?

EM: No, it wasn't a void. Actually, it took a couple days, because we actually still had some food. We had so many donations, that we were trying to find homes for it.

BF: Most people got their power back by Sunday.

EM: The bulk of the town -- I was going to say maybe about 70% of the town was probably back on Sunday. Correct me if I'm wrong. But even at that, there was still nowhere to *buy* food. Because the A&P was closed and out of product. Shoprite was decimated. The A&P could not have been nicer. John Bincoletta, who's the manager there -- just his acts of kindness, what I saw him do for certain people -- really touched me. So many adults needed adult products, and he was just, "Take it." Whatever people were needing -- if somebody walked in and needed something that wasn't food -- he couldn't give them food because the shelf-life was tough on it. But if it was a [unclear] product -- "Here." So seeing certain things that he did was great. But, as I said, the Shoprite was done. All the small stores couldn't sell their product because now they'd been out of refrigeration for a week, and all of the larger warehouses in the area -- again -- couldn't get their product into town.

So we were getting things back a little at a time, but we weren't fully functional. We were probably running at about 60-70%. I know toward the latter part of the week, by Sunday, you couldn't find chicken anywhere in a twenty-five mile area, and you couldn't drive more than

twenty-five miles, because you couldn't get gas. So people who had got out of Dodge, so to speak, weren't coming back yet, and the people who were here weren't moving their cars. You could find a parking space anywhere you wanted; you just didn't want to drive there.

BF: Or you had to find your car because it floated away.

What about -- do you remember anything particular from the week after? Once you stopped?

EM: The thing I remember most is finally going back to work, and when I went back to work -- I work in restaurants, so what were we doing but feeding people? Which was interesting. But so many people, clients I knew, all knew I lived in Hoboken, so I had to rehash the story. I found it wonderful to tell the story, but I didn't want to leave things out, but every time you'd tell it you would miss something. I was like, "Oh, I forgot to tell them about So-and-So. I forgot about this." And you didn't want to forget anything, because you wanted everybody to know what the town went through from its lowest point to how well we came back, at the high point. When you told the story -- you would tell it -- I would tell it to the people

I work with, to purveyors who came in, customers who came in and knew this, to family members, and friends. I didn't go on my computer. I didn't check my emails or anything like that. I was here.

BF: Well, it's true. Most people hear about what's happening in your town, like they're hearing the news in Hoboken, and we just see that one moment of the worst. That's frozen in their memory. You can put it in context, with sort of the good spirits that came from it, too. So you don't want to leave those out, negative.

EM: I mean, it was Halloween. Again, there was a patch on Eleventh Street that had power, because in some quirky way, they're on a grid for Union City. Mr. and Mrs. Calligy -- when they say lifelong residents -- Mr. Calligy has since passed --

BF: On Eleventh Street.

EM: Correct -- and Audrey -- Mrs. Calligy was my eighth-grade teacher and an amazing woman. I know the family. That's Tom Foley's mother-in-law and father-in-law. So we went over to their house for a moment, on

Tuesday, and they had power. I think it was Tuesday. Maybe it was Wednesday. I don't even remember. Whatever Halloween day was, we stopped for a moment. And Mrs. "Callaghi" had all her Halloween treat bags made up. So even though they were pulling their extension cord out like everybody else on Eleventh Street, any little kid who walked by, Mrs. Callaghi was still handing out Halloween treats to. That's what made me proud to be from this town. I've been blessed to have been taught by people like that; been coached by her husband; and to be friends with her children. It really put things in perspective of I've been pretty fortunate in my life to have had some really nice people around.

BF: That's sort of a good ending.

Is there any other experience you want to reflect on? Do you meet people on the street that you connected with during that time?

EM: Oh, yeah. I've met people that I've connected with. I've met people that I connected with afterward, in a way from it. There was a CERT class that was taught -- you know, Community Emergency Response Team, taught by Lou Casciano, Tommy Molta, [Unclear], Maggie Shields. These gentlemen and women put this class together,

and they actually did it downstairs, here. And I said, "You know, this sounds like something I'd like to be a part of. Or at least know what's going on." I would through the class. It was a ten-week class. It was every Tuesday night, for a couple of hours, like three hours every Tuesday. In their first class, Lou said, there were like fourteen, fifteen people who took it; after the storm -- the class started in January, right after the New Year. There were seventy-seven people, I believe, in the class, who went through this training.

So that in situations like this, it's a community emergency response. So I've met people like that. Like Lou Casciano, who puts a wealth of hours into the ambulance corps, and what they did, and Tom Molta. What these guys do is amazing. I got to meet so many different people. Everybody would say -- give introductions -- who you are and what you do, and you were meeting people who were pharmacists who became makeshift -- not makeshift. They were pharmacists, and they were doing what they could do to get seniors their meds -- to people who were just going around knocking on doors, making sure that people *had* their medications. I met people -- it still comes up from time to time -- there are times that I still think about it. Yes. You think about it, but as bad as everything

happened, a lot of my memories are positive from it. And that's bizarre, maybe, to some, but some good came from the bad. I know people, I had friends, family who had houses down at the shore that were just decimated, they were lost. But they were here. They lost their home down at the shore. They're sitting -- they're not even sitting in their home because they have no power. They're flooded here. Their house down at the shore just burned down, and these people are here. My friend's buddy, Janice Matthews -- they're here, volunteering.

So, again, it kind of goes back to people that you meet in your life that you're fortunate. A buddy who was a camp counselor of mine, he was a group counselor at the YMCA when I grew up -- he was my counselor as a young boy. He taught you how to play baseball. He's taught so many kids. And here's this guy, still giving back. He's a retired person, and he's still giving back. So when you see things like that, it puts a little warmth in your heart and makes you smile.

BF: Definitely.

Okay. Should we conclude?

EM: I'm good.

BF: Okay. I think you did a great job.

Track #2

BF: -- pretty amazing.

EM: As we also said, as we did the conversation -- I'm telling this story, and I can envision it in my mind -- and you just said the same thing -- of how not only we were literally brought back to that week. My week was probably in a smaller area, but I can still see the people, the faces, everybody who stopped in and said hello, to every aspect of this hall at the Elks, where it was basically like a big TV show or a big stage, where it all happened for me, the whole week. It was here. Knowing how people walked in, how they talked about what they did the night before; when they went home; how they laughed. We had just laughs all day. It's vivid in my mind. So whenever I rehash the story, the picture comes with it.

BF: I think also, since you went into action so quickly -- like everyone -- I think people are basically good and they want to help out, but they don't know how to do it. They don't know how to focus it. So something like

the CERT is a great way to set something up, so when something happens you know what to do. That would be the same that you guys did, because you're an organization already. You know each other, and you have the place. You've got the kitchen, and you can focus it all here.

EM: I agree. We have the tools where we can make it happen. The CERT has now become something that can make something happen. I took the CERT class, and, ironically, if something ever happened, if it quote/unquote, "hit the fan again," I probably wouldn't be with the CERT group. I would be right here, doing what I do best -- feeding people, making sure people are taken care of.

Now if that weren't the case, and I needed to be outside, then I would do that. But if it happened again, more than likely -- we talked about knowing your niche -- my niche would be here. This is where I could do the greatest good, instead of telling somebody, "Don't walk down that block. How about walk up this block, and we'll feed you."