

Joel Garcia

Interviewed by Richard Andrew Quiroz

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Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Transcribe by Richard Andrew Quiroz

**RAQ:** Hello my name is Richard Andrew Quiroz, I am interviewing Joel Garcia of Refugio, Texas. Today's date is September 21<sup>st</sup> 2020. Mr. Garcia do I have your permission to record this interview?

**JG:** Yes you do Andrew.

**RAQ:** Thank you Sir. Anyway, I thank you for coming here today, or um, via Zoom meeting with me especially right now with the weather and everything. The best way to begin with Sir is can you tell me a little bit about yourself sir, um, what is your background, and what do you do for a living?

**JG:** Well, uh, I was born and raised in Refugio with exception of three years in the military, and I grew up over the uh, what you would call the [coughs] the not so prosperous part of town. We grew up with, you know, no T.V. no air condition, I think one fan you know. My dad worked a couple of jobs just to keep things going. But uh, we graduated from Refugio and I've been working most of my life. I started real little, cutting grass, then I started to work at H-E-B, joined the military, and then I came back to Refugio. Started working with Pennzoil producing, which was bought out by Devon Energy and now I work for Devon. I do the line locator for Devon Energy. And I'm also a pastor of a church, Joy Ministries.

**RAQ:** Yes Sir, and that brings me to this question sir was um, how did you become a pastor in Refugio, Texas with Joy Ministries?

**JG:** Well like I told you, I was raised kind of like in the hood. And there was- Role models were there, but they were uh, mostly kept to themselves, so I grew up with the group that was always up to something. We're having fun and everything, but we grew up experimenting. I became a pastor because I had a burden for those young kids that grew up like I did, and that we needed to grow up well adjusted. And so I became a Youth Pastor, and then I became a Pastor, and we reach out mostly to youth and their families.

**RAQ:** With your role as a pastor Sir, how does that role come into play during times likes Hurricane Harvey, or other natural disasters or severe storms?

**JG:** Well uh, during Harvey we just happened to be there. At other times we buy shoes for christ- I mean for back to school and for the kids we do a party at Christmas which brings in about 500 people. And we feed people and we just try to meet a need so that the neighborhood could grow up well adjusted and also, just to make a difference and be there for anybody who needs assistance and also to uh, to do what we're called to do. During Harvey the reason that we opened up to be a shelter was because we built a new church and we had to build it according to Windstorm Code [Texas Windstorm Insurance Agency Windstorm Code for Building Construction], because it was on the east side of [U.S. Highway] 77. So, what we did was we built it to code, and when Harvey came, uh- actually in Refugio, they had a mandatory evacuation so like when a mandatory evacuation, the county doesn't have to provide shelter, and there was no shelters in town. I started getting calls about twelve o'clock, and uh, we're going to open up, and I call the man who built the church and I said "hey um, what do you think?" He says "well, we didn't cut any corners, so it's a good time to find out." And so, it was a category one, Harvey was and I said "well, we'll just open up" you know. By that evening it was a two, but when it came in it was a four.

**RAQ:** It grew drastically during the time period before it made landfall.

**JG:** Over fifty miles it made a difference.

**RAQ:** Wow.

**JG:** But we opened it up, and people started coming. It's where we're at. But I uh, I came home, and I prepared my house and you know, boarded up and everything, and we went to the church and we did that, boarded that up. The Missionary to the uh, Philippines stayed there overnight, and 'bout five o'clock- six o'clock it started storming, people were coming in. So we uh, I said "you know I'm going to go home" and I went home, I went to the store, and I bought a bunch of eggs, and I bought some of tortillas, said "you know I'll just make some tacos for in the morning. Feed everybody, and everybody goes home. I had been- I remember hurricanes like, I think it was [Hurricane] Carla, we just went to spend the night and we went home, and there was another hurricane when we was in high school. I think it might have been [Hurricane] Allen, and we went to the school, we sheltered down there and you know, ate canned goods, and then we went home. But this was totally different.

**RAQ:** Now with the previous times um, where community organization was made in response to a natural disaster, could you recall if that happened with those hurricanes as well? Where you came together, along with the community, and helped-

**JG:** Those hurricanes happened when I was young. The only major hurricane that I had been in, had involvement in was Harvey. And uh, what was like the coordination with the other churches and community groups, we started off real weak. Because uh what happened was that morning- I don't know if I'm getting ahead of you or-

**RAQ:** No no. You're good.

**JG:** I had my own things to take care of that night. My front door blew in, and my windows blew out. And it was just a night- I stayed up all night, and it started getting harder and harder to deal

with it, because it wasn't stopping. About four o'clock in the morning I ask God to stop it, and it stopped about Five. I walked outside, and I saw mobile homes in the middle of the road. Power lines down, trees down. I personally had lost all the trees in my yard, my fences, my windows were blowed out. My neighbor's roof was gone, part of my roof was gone. It's just devastation, so um, I went ahead and kept my word. We still had gas, the electricity had gone out about nine o'clock the night before, and communications went out about that same time. There was no cell phones, no land lines, and no electricity.

RAQ: I see

JG: So I made a bunch of tacos, and I took them down to the church, and I had like forty of em. But I didn't know that during the night forty families had come in.

RAQ: And was this throughout the entire night, um people were coming in?

JG: No, he said he shut it down about ten o'clock, because we were full and there was so much downpour and wind and everything. So um, I guess whoever was going to come in, was going to come in you know?

RAQ: Yes.

JG: When showing up there, I gave all the food that I had, and people left and came back and says "we don't have a house." So, what did we have to do, we had to say "well I guess you can stay here", but what did we do then? So uh-

RAQ: It was a-

JG: Go ahead.

RAQ: With uh, people were leaving and whenever they found out their houses were severely damage and they came back, did you anticipated that may have- that would have happened during the storm?

JG: No actually, I was thinking it was going to be like when we were little, that you know, we just spend the night and went home. That was not the case, people came back, so we decided that- a man at the church had a food truck so, we started takin' things from the freezers and started feeding people. And I didn't get a hold of my family until about a couple of days, that I got ahold of my kids and told them we was okay. The next day, a crew from Austin came and they did a story on Joy Ministries and there's where my son and my daughter found out we were okay, because they saw us on the -

RAQ: Wow-

JG: So um-

RAQ: And they um, your son and your daughter saw you on the news, and that's how they knew that you were okay. It was not through texting or calling them, but actually from the news cycle.

JG: Yeah because there was no getting, getting – they didn't set up communications for about five days, Red Cross didn't came in for about seven days. FEMA [Federal Emergency

Management Agency], I didn't know when they came in. But um, everybody was looking for Red cross, everybody was looking for FEMA, but you know what, it was kind of like everybody was taking care of their own selves. Pretty soon some of the other churches- we were so busy where we were at because we were feeding like five hundred people a day. And we were doing it- we ran out of food, because people were just bringing in- like the people who stayed at the Church they went and got their stuff from their freezers. And I was telling a friend of mine that we were on the keto [Ketogenic] diet and we didn't even know it!

(Both laugh)

JG: So, that's all we were eating. There was no vegetables, there was no fruits. And about, maybe eight days into it, H-E-B brought us all their vegetables, and we were able to feed people vegetables and fruits, because they didn't have any power also.

RAQ: Mhm.

JG: But uh, then we got a few generators and we kept on. I had a couple of gas propane tanks and some other guys had some propane tanks and we put it all together. Then my son started a Facebook- not a Facebook but what do you call it- it's an account, a GoFundMe account. And I guess they found out there we were running out of food, and so.

RAQ: I see. And backtracking a little bit more on the events of Harvey, one thing I was wondering was um, how did you get the message across to people that you were open as shelters to let people in? Was it more of a post, or a word of mouth?

JG: Well what happened was I called the Sheriff about twelve o'clock. Well we made the decision about twelve o'clock. About one o'clock I called the Sheriff and I told him, look we got some people got nowhere to go, they don't have no vehicles or nothing. So we're going to open up. I knew the responsibility that we had, but I was trusting God, and that our building was build according to code, and we didn't cut any corners. And so we were going to do the best we could do. So we made beds out of the chairs, put them together. Some people brought their own blankets. So that's- most- and it's probably word of mouth more than anything.

RAQ: Word of mouth, I see. And this was spread throughout the community of course, as the aftermath of Harvey came.

JG: Well the aftermath after Harvey, like I told you there was no electricity, no water. What actually what happened was we was still getting some showers and we have a horse trough where we baptize people. So I put it in the corner of the Church to catch water. So that we would have water, not for drinking, but just to freshened up, things in that nature. So we had to get organize there at the Church, and uh we had a group where one man took care of the inside, another man took care of the grounds, and another man took care of the food, and some ladies took care of the food. So we started cooking. Then about maybe, about the third night a man drove up with a trailer. And this is still emotional, and he says man I got a trailer full of food and water, he says "can I put it here?" He was headed to Rockport (Texas). [He Said] "But somehow or another I just ended up here." So, we unloaded that, and we were able to distribute water, and toilet paper, and things like that to people. And so that's where we started and the food started

coming, and the people started- people as far as West Texas, one person came all the way from Florida, with a trailer full of food.

RAQ: All the way from Florida?

JG: Yeah, because some other channels picked up that story, it even came out on CBN Christian Broadcasting Network, and uh, I think NBC picked it up, and so the word got out. But then other Churches also- Like I said I never went over there to see the other churches, and they never came over here because-I know there was three- two more churches in town but it was just like that man, you were too busy.

RAQ: With the immediate- with what's happening in front of you right?

JG: Yeah, because like I said we were feeding in the morning, we were feeding at lunch and we were feeding at supper. Then we'd get ready to start again in the morning.

RAQ: I see.

JG: We did that for 15 days.

RAQ: Geez, During those two weeks, was there any coordination with like emergency services or hospitals?

JG: Yeah, about five days or so Red Cross came in, and they brought a bunch of cots for everybody. Then they started- they brought us cots while they set up their cots over there at the Expo center. They got organize, and they started taking people from Joy Ministries over there, about eight or nine days after everything had happened, and so things started getting organized like that. But uh, then FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] came in, but before that someone had said "hey FEMA is at the fairgrounds so everybody took off to the fairgrounds, and they came back and said FEMA was not at the fairground, they didn't know where FEMA was at. But then my uh- I have a friend at work, him and his sons and his wife came in and they started signing people up. Once we got communications up, once the city and the county got communications up and everything then we could log on to your computers and things like that. So, they came in and they started registering people for FEMA. And then, the next couple of days my son and my daughter came, and they did that all day, they registered people for FEMA. And uh, we were trying to do the best that we could. There was a group out of the Valley, they came in and was giving Tetanus shots, and it was a nursing group, and they were monitoring, making sure that everyone was healthy and everything.

RQ: Um, after the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and while people were still at the church sheltering, did you ever find that any of them were trying to go back to their homes to look through the wreckage?

JG: Yeah, they, they would go back, and some people would go back and go through their stuff, you know. Because we live right across the street, our church is right across the government housing, and that was tore up. So, you know, you could see that the piles of stuff was just starting to pile up in the road, and the parking lot where people were cleaning up. But uh, yeah

people would go back and try to come in with garbage bags full of clothes, and they said that's all they had, but we did the best we could.

RQ: Yes. And with regards to that to, with damage to homes, were a lot of stores and fast-food areas, and other buildings, um, how bad was the damage to all those areas?

JG: Well like I said, we had no electricity and there was no gas. There was, matter of fact the Valero in town, and also there was another place here called the um, it was a new place um, right at the entrance of town I can't remember their name but they brought all of their food over so we can cook it. You know, like they had a bunch of burritos, fast food burritos, Egg rolls, and things like that nature.

RQ: Yes.

JG: They brought all that food, all their frozen food over, and we were cooking it. Most of the time we had three square meals, but somebody would come in, and we've had three square meals and then somebody would come in like at ten o'clock or two o'clock. Then you know, we would make some burritos, or we always had something to eat their, burritos, chips, or egg rolls. But we always had a big pot of coffee, we had several pots of coffee. And you had man, I had a man come after me and he said "Joel, do you have a cup of coffee?" And I said, "yeah man", and I got him a big cup of coffee. I said, "you want anything in it?" He said "No, I'll take it black". You know things like that, you know. A couple of guys came in and they said, "man I never thought I had to stand in line for a taco". I said, you know what brother, we all stand in a line. So you know, it was a good fellowship, that everybody was like in the same boat, and there was no um - because I'm going to tell you something brother, I don't care how much money you had, you couldn't buy nothing, because everything was closed. You know, so you couldn't buy no food, you couldn't buy no soda water. Man, I wanted a Diet Dr Pepper so bad, and they called us over to the Valero to pick some stuff up, and I asked the lady for a Diet Dr. Pepper, and it was hot, but it was good.

[Laughs]

JG: So, you know things, you learn to appreciate what you have in these times, and you look at the people that um- I'm going to tell you something the Sherriff came through about maybe eight days something to it. He asked me what I needed and I said, man we needed - we got wrote up, you know the state came in- not wrote up, they were trying to help us do a better job so we got Mosquito cans, we got a hand washing station. We had to do a few other things because we had like elderly men coming in wheelchairs, and guys who just stayed at their house, you know, they were older men, they were just going to stay at house. But you know they're friendly, they're good people but they needed assistance with you know, some of them still were- they wore diapers. And the Missionary to the Philippines was taking care of the inside, and we had to assist in taking care of them you know.

RQ: I see.

JG: So, we, change them, and clean them you know, and made sure that everyone was happy, but we- the Sherriff brought in a generator and powered the church, and that was truly a blessing.

RQ: That's awesome.

JG: And I'll tell you a story. It was around nine o'clock in the evening, I don't know how long it was, but the mosquitos had gotten so bad. And this lady came to the door, and she had had dialysis that day, she went out of town to get dialysis. And the mosquitos were tearing her up, and she was just so weak. And I got her a cot, and a mattress, and I picked up a fan and put it on her, and I told her just to lay down there and rest. And that's what it's about man, just doing for other people. You know, if everything was just for that lady, because was hurting.

RQ: Mhm.

JG: It's well worth it, if the whole situation was just for that lady. But there were others, there were kids they would go out there, and played football. You know, they were just trying to be adjusted until they could find a place to live, or um. A lot of them got moved to Beeville (Texas) where there were motel rooms, and um electricity and power. And so, FEMA put them up there, and after a while FEMA came in and got the ball rolling, and so we were um, we stayed there until the end.

RQ: Yeah, and in the aftermath of course, you had mentioned some health care physicians and nurses that came in to assist the people there. Did you- Would you happen to know how long they stayed there, or how long they were there after Hurricane Harvey?

JG: Oh, well they would come in as a group. They would come in as a group- I would get a call everyday "how are you doing, how many people are still there, what's going on?" It was a nursing group out from the Valley, and I think they would send people, like they came in one day and gave us all tetanus shots, the next day they checked blood pressures, and made sure that everybody who had medications was on their medications. They checked blood sugars, and things in that nature. They stayed there until- they didn't stay there they would come and go, they would come and go, and they would do what they came to do that day, asked us if we needed anything, and they leaved, and I guess they would go somewhere else. You know, you could always call them, and I was always sure that I would get a call, like I don't even remember their names or who they were with, but they would check in every day.

RQ: I see...and during the times you did have mentioned that more and more people were coming in it became more like a fellowship and everything. Do you think that in retrospect now that once Hurricane Harvey has um- you know it's been three years now that that storm, that natural disaster has brought the community more closer during times like that?

JG: Yeah, I say a fellowship is because people used to come there, like in the mornings, and they would drink coffee, and they would sit and talk. A group of maybe twenty, you know different groups. And maybe during the day people would come in, uh. Then what happened, after the church cleared out, some people didn't want to leave because they didn't know where they were going they were well secured. But we had to, we had to move them on. I told them you have to go to the Red Cross so you can get into the system, so they could start working with you. And they did. So then, after those fifteen days, we made Joy Ministries into a cooling shelter, into a cooling place, where people were coming in. People were bringing in groups into Refugio to do

work, and we had Gatorade, we had sandwiches at lunch, and um, you can come in there, we had that air-conditioner going. And um, people would cool, off, talk a little bit, and get ta plan and go back out to work. We did that for a couple of weeks.

RQ: And it was still summer too, after Hurricane Harvey right?

JG: Yeah.

RAQ: It would still get pretty hot outside?

JG: It would get hot, and then- I tell you what I never seen so many mosquitos in my life. Them mosquitos- but you talk about- yeah you know what people still talk about it you know, because people would come by and they would get plates, and we were feeding people in Bayside and people in Austwell. And people would come by and they would talk. You know, it was a place of comfort, you know just knowing that your all kind of in the same boat.

RAQ: Yeah.

JG: And then people would come by and say well, can you help me with this, let's get some guys and go tarp up a house or something. And uh, it was a place to get a plan, and get a good cup of hot coffee, to get the day started, then come back and eat. But we had some good people too, the people who were staying at the church really came, and they started- they really ran the business, they ran like that food distribution. People who didn't had no place to go, were waiting on the Red Cross, they do the food distribution, the organization, the helping with the cooking, the cleaning up, because it would be like a mess, things in that nature. The City of Refugio showed up with like [mosquito cans] really helped us out, National Guard came though, and um, the County of Refugio also. A couple of those deputies were really, really good you know, they'd checking in on you, and making sure that you're all right.

RQ: That's awesome. And, in the- while this is still going on too, you still had your own home also, that you had to go back and take a look at too right?

JG: Yeah. But I had to do, what I had to do first, you know? But like the blessing, I came home one day and there was a guy in my back yard cutting up a tree. And I, he said "I was driving by man, and I figured you wanted this tree off your shed". Man I said "I appreciate it". And then, sometimes people would say, you know what do you got to do at your house? I say "well you know what, I got to take the boards off my windows". And a guy came over and took the boards off for me. I would come home at ten o'clock at night, and uh, I had a generator running and then I take a bottle bath you know, with bottled water. And then I be back up about four o'clock, getting ready to go up there and help start cooking. But, it took a while to fix my house, but you know, I had to redo the living room, a new roof. I had to re-level it because actually that night I actually felt my house move. That's when I ask the lord to stop it. It's uh, man it's emotional and three years later, I can still fell the, the emotion.

RAQ: Yes.

JG: And I went to my Bible and I found a scripture, you know how you open it up every once in a while and look at it. I come to a scripture, it's in Proverbs it says "keep my commands and my

presets, for I'm a god that of thee". And that's all I needed man, not worrying about my house, you know what the lord is worried about me. So, I just, you know continued to serve and do what I had to do.

RQ: And with that sense of community behind you to, um-

JG: You know the community knows that, they knew there was a place to come eat, because I would see like little old- not little old ladies, little ladies that would come in that sometimes I never did ever see them, and they were quiet and I ask them if they needed any help, and says "yes I need a tree out of my yard". Get a couple of guys together and-. There was a bunch of [Texas Game Wardens] Game Wardens that came to town, the Texas Police, Texas uh, anyway they were Game Wardens, and man them guys did a lot of work.

RAQ: Yeah.

JG: You know, if you needed, they were young strong guys, if you needed someone to go pull a tree out, those guys were ready you know they were looking for something to do. They were servants. But um, that was, I think that brought the community together, because of different walks of life that showed up. People that had moved away from Refugio, friends of mine, they came back with their R.V. they set it up across the street and they worked the whole weekend. You know just wanted to, this was there home they moved, they had moved but they came back to help. I showed up one day, and there was a guy out of Houston sitting in the yard, sitting in the yard there with a big barbecue pit man, barbecuing for everybody. One time a man showed up from the valley he was actually going to Houston, but he was loaded down with tamales. And he drop down about three ice chests of tamales, and everybody ate well. It was a thing that I had to take it as only the lord.

RAQ: I see.

JG: Because you know what, I was asked what happened last night, and all I could say was this. Someone let loose a monster. That's all I could describe that it was a monster. And we were very fortunate that nobody died. Because that was one of the most traumatic things I've been through, you know. And I'm a grown man, I could imagine what the ladies, and the kids went through.

RAQ: Yes.

JG: But you know what everybody got a story there, because I talk to a lot of people and there were things like when my door blew in I had to put my couch there. It took me an hour and a half to secure my door. I couldn't hold it. Friend of mine told me that him and his son sat on an ice chest because their door blew in, and they pushed back on the door for hours.

RAQ: Geez.

JG: So you know things like that, that would happen. A man with his kids, you know hunkered down in their bathroom. A lady told me, she said that she was at her house and it got so bad that she jumped in her bathtub and she put, the pot she cooked tamales over her head, and put a mattress over her. You know, but it's things that you did, I thought that was kind of funny.

[Laughs]

JG: I said for real? She said yeah for real, I went to school with her, and it's kind of funny, but you know it was for real, she said "man I didn't know what else to do." But those are things that we went through, and we all shared that, and you can ask anybody what happened during Harvey. My dog got, even today, my dog cannot stand a storm. I had to put her in the kennel in Beeville for fifteen days because I couldn't take care of her and do the things I needed to do.

RQ: Yeah-

JG: But every once in a while I have to give her something to calm her nerves, and it was because of that.

RQ: I see. The storm was very, very ferocious to the areas of Refugio, all the way down to North, north north of Corpus Christi, and into Houston, and the entire area was in the direct path of Harvey and it lasted for a while.

JG: I didn't know what was going on in Houston. With all the flooding, and everything I was just, we didn't know, We didn't have no communications, we didn't know what was going on, all the flooding and what they went through. But um, we needed to do what we had to do here. And after a while, things started setting down a little bit, then we had to clean up the church, and start all over again.

RAQ: Yeah.

JG: It took me, me myself, I spent \$25,000 dollars fixing my house.

RAQ: Geez.

JG: And it's okay, it's okay. But just like this last [Hurricane] Hannah, Hannah and [Tropical Storm] Beta you get concerned. And you don't want to say that I hope it goes somewhere else, because somebody's going to get hit. You know, it just so happened that Harvey was a monster, it came right over Refugio and Rockport. People are still recovering you know, we still have tarps on the roof, they're still rebuilding houses, they're still building houses. Matter of fact just in my neighborhood the back yard I got two houses that were built by Habitat for Humanity. And they getting ready to tear down another house, and they're going to build a house there. It's just because the mold, is just not, people can't live in it.

RQ: Yeah because-

JG: Samaritan's Purse and Habitat for Humanity had come in and did a lot of work.

RQ: Nice, nice for those groups to come in to over the days, were very beneficial for the community of Refugio too. Now that it has been three years, it has seem that this storm is recent too, the years are going by much much faster now. Um, rebuilding efforts for the entire community of Refugio, would you say they were pretty slow overall as you mentioned there still is recovery in the area right?

JG: You know, everything takes time, but things have been steady moving. Things have been steady in getting rebuilt, you know, it's just what- when will it be over, I think and honestly I told a person after the storm that Refugio will never be the same. It changed completely,

different houses, different, people moved away. It'll never be the same as I knew it growing up in it. It's a totally different town, I think that is a lot more unity, there's a lot more, not taking things for granted, you know what I'm saying.

RAQ: More of a communal, togetherness right?

JG: Yeah, you had to man, because you know what money couldn't buy you a drink if you wanted to, a soda, couldn't buy you a bag of chips because the cash register, you couldn't use it.

RAQ: I see.

JG: You know, we started getting gas from out of town. I mean, I drove all the way to Odem one day to pick up gas, and I had some friends over there in Port Bay, I took them diesel, water things lie that because they didn't have anything. But you stayed busy.

RQ: Yes.

JG: You know what's for real.

[Laughs]

RQ: Especially in the aftermath of that too. That was- and 2017 was, I believe not so much of an active season, but whenever a hurricane form they formed too. In recent years have you noticed if um, the ability, that storms are becoming more and more common. Like the strengths of them, and the amount of them as well.

JG: Well, this year there were some that we had to start with the [Subtropical Storm Alpha] Alpha, and [Tropical Storm Beta] Beta, we ran out of names. And like Louisiana has been getting like been getting, they just got hit. You know, you just don't want a storm to come this way man, because I don't know what it is, but I believe that they're getting stronger, or maybe we're just much more aware of it, but we've always had storms. [Hurricane] Carla came through here, and there was another one that devastated Corpus, and it's a force to be reckoned with, and we just need to take preparations. And it's part of life, you know. If it's not a storm, it's something else. We look at it today and what we're living in the time of a virus that we can't even see. I told somebody in the church the other day, you know were worried about people coming into the church and shooting it up, now we worrying about something we cannot even see coming into the church. I think that things are headed to difficult times.

RAQ: Do you believe that maybe throughout those adversities that a sense of hope and, you know, of resilience can counter that as well, as a community.

JG: If everybody did what they were supposed to do, I think we'll be okay. If everyone does what we're supposed to do, and take it as, this is for real. You know, when I look out my door and I see two mobile homes in the middle of the street, and every tree in my yard down, I said this is real. So it's a tough one, but through it all we'll preserve. I mean, people did it, been doing it a lot, you know the guys that came over on the Mayflower, they didn't have a motor brother, they sailed. So, America's been brought up and grows on perseverance, and with a little bit of help, we can all persevere. And I think Joy Ministries was there at a time where we needed

to be, not only to express love, but to give someone the comfort of sitting down, drinking a cup of coffee, and enjoying a taco or something, for a minute, and say that it's going to be okay -

RAQ: You think-

JG: And we've done that.

RAQ: And I think for a lot of people, that means the world especially at that moment, they calm themselves in.

JG: Yes. We were in tough times but you know what, you can't rise to an occasion, and have victory if everybody is not headed in the same direction. And that's what we did, we headed into the same direction, but that was because, honestly, we were all jacked up. So you know what I'm saying, when you're at ground level, only place you can go is up brother. So, you know that's what we did, my wife worked, the ladies at the church, they worked, everybody that came if they, you needed a hand, what can we do. I said, well somebody need some help over here down the road, and let's do it. Nobody kept tabs, like "hey I'm working harder than you, or I'm not coming back tomorrow because all you want is", no- it's, what are we going to do today.

RAQ: It was a shared responsibility among everyone.

JG: Yeah, it was all, like I said, we were all in the same boat, we needed to row in the same direction.

RAQ: Yeah, wow, that was amazing to think about throughout all that adversity of course through the storm and the damage that everyone was able to persevere in the aftermath, and even now that still is needed today, as you said, with the storm. Even as we're speaking right now we have Tropical Storm Beta, I don't know if it's Hurricane Beta, or with the [Covid-19] Virus and that's able to bring people together.

JG: The other day when a hurricane hit Louisiana, a group here in Refugio was taking a trailer over there. I told my wife we need to go get some things to put in that trailer. One was a chainsaw, the other was things to clean up with, and the other was food, and water, because you're going to always use those man.

RAQ: Yes.

JG: You know you got downed trees, and people need to refuel. And um, it's happening a lot more, you know you look at things like the fires in the West Coast, and you know, people losing things, losing everything.

RAQ: With the force of Mother Nature

JG: Yeah, but you know we're going to persevere. As a Pastor I got to say, you know, if it hadn't been for Jesus, there be no hope at all brother.

RAQ: Joel Garcia this is an amazing time to reflect back on Hurricane Harvey, and offer your insights of the aftermath and the resilience and the hope that brings us now three years later, and going forward of course. It's a main tool to use against adversity.

JG: Yeah, I do want to tell you that, when people are put into a spot to where they have to overcome, all you got to do is lead. And I think that that's what it takes today is good leaders, and we're going to be okay. And even with the young children, good leaders, and um, you know it's a good thing we take time to recognize that we are of value, and if you can't go, row the boat, load the wagon. And always stay busy man. Always stay busy and we're going to be all right. I appreciate you.

RAQ: Yes sir.

JG: I hope this helped you.

RAQ: It was perfect, I um- this was amazing sir. I should be thanking you sir, for taking time out of your day sir, and uh, sharing this with me. Especially with a community that's only thirty miles from where I live too, I still remember Harvey like it was yesterday.

JG: Yeah.

RAQ: It was insane.

JG: Well I tell you what, honestly, I don't; ever want to go through something like that again. If you need anything else call me okay.

RAQ: I definitely will sir, I'm going to um, check tonight see how everything went through with the audio. I think it went out well because I did a little test run with my sister over the weekend, fix some things up. And, like you said tomorrow, I can pick up the legal release forms in the morning, if someone's by-

JG: Oh, if you want to pick it up in the morning, my wife will be here-

RAQ: That's fine, I'll be by there about maybe ten?

JG: That'll be fine.

RAQ: Thank you and I'll submit everything in. But I really appreciate for you taking your time out today this has been a wonderful experience for me and as you can tell I'm also learning a lot in Oral History, one thing is narration. I got to practice my speaking voice, but I think that I got the structure and the questions down, so we got to start somewhere.

JG: You're going to be all right brother.

RAQ: Thank you sir.

JG: All right man.

RAQ: All right. Have a great evening sir.

JG: Goodnight.

RAQ: Goodnight sir.

JG: Yes sir.