

## Interview with Bryon Allgood

**Narrator:** Bryon Allgood

**Interviewer:** Erin Rider

**Location:** Jacksonville, Alabama

**Date:** August 20, 2019

**Project Name:** Jacksonville Alabama Tornado Oral History Collection

**Project Description:** On March 19, 2018, an EF-3 tornado devastated the City of Jacksonville, Alabama, and had a significant impact on the campus of Jacksonville State University (JSU).

Using an oral history approach, a team of researchers from JSU's Center for Disaster and Community Resilience (CDCR) conducted in-depth interviews with 25 residents of Jacksonville who experienced the EF-3 tornado. Interviews took place in the Houston Cole Library, were conducted in private, and lasted approximately 90 minutes each. An article was published in 2022 based on the tornado oral history project in the *Weather, Climate, and Society* journal by the American Meteorological Society (AMS).

**Principal Investigator:** Tanveer Islam

**Transcript Team:** National Capitol Contracting

### **Abstract:**

On August 20, 2019, Erin Rider interviewed Bryon Allgood for the Jacksonville Tornado Oral History Project at Jacksonville State University. Allgood recounts his experiences during and after the tornado that struck Jacksonville, Alabama, on March 19, 2018. At the time, Allgood was living in an apartment in Gamecock Village, where he sheltered with friends who sought refuge in his first-floor unit due to the threat of the tornado. As the storm intensified, they took shelter in his bathroom, hearing debris hit the building, though his apartment itself suffered minimal damage. After the first tornado passed, Allgood and his friends ventured outside to find part of a nearby building collapsed. They alerted residents and helped gather over 30 people into his apartment for safety as a second tornado approached. Allgood reflects on the range of emotions among those taking shelter, from calmness to panic, and describes his own surprising composure throughout the ordeal. He also details the damage to his car, attributing mechanical failures to the storm, and how he coped with the disruption in the weeks following, including staying with friends and utilizing resources provided by the Red Cross and the local community. In addition to managing repairs and recovery, Allgood discusses the support systems in place, including temporary shelter, food assistance, and gift cards provided by local organizations.

Erin Rider: My name is Erin Rider from Jacksonville State University. We are conducting an oral history project of the Jacksonville tornado that occurred on March 19th, 2018. Today is August 20th, 2019, and we are hearing from Bryon Allgood, who will share his experience of the tornado and recovery. Our interview is taking place at the Houston Cole Library. How are you affected by the tornado?

Bryon Allgood: Okay. So, I'm going to go ahead and start that story with just the day of. I don't ever watch the news, and I'm really not connected to any social media. So, it kind of caught me off guard. I had some friends who had called and said, "Hey, can we come over?" Because I live on the first floor, and their apartments – they lived on the second floor. Like, "Hey, can we come over, bring our cats? There's supposed to be a tornado." I'm like, "Oh, didn't know that. Sure. Go ahead. Come on over." So, they came over, and the tornadoes came eventually. For a while, I was actually standing outside because there was – the wind was picking up a lot. If you're standing in the corridor where the halls are for the apartments, it was like a wind tunnel. It's kind of fun. But eventually I had to go inside. There was hail coming down before the tornadoes hit. So, I had – went grabbed a comforter and stuck it between the passenger door and the driver door over my front windshield to maybe give it a little bit of protection. Anyways, the tornadoes came. We were all hiding in my bathroom. It was me, and two other friends, their animals. While we were in the bathroom, we could just hear debris or whatever hitting my window in the – in my bedroom. Luckily, my apartment itself wasn't very damaged. After the first tornado came and passed, if I recall, I think I was told there were three tornadoes that day. I don't know exactly. But after the first one passed, we went outside. We were looking out the window – pitch black. It was dark. All the electricity was out. As we were looking out the window, we saw flashlights coming from the other building across the street from me, which I think was building 13 or 14, or something like that, at Gamecock Village, which is the one that had collapsed – not entirely, but the top floor. It was pretty bad. So, we know because they had been listening to James Spann, my friends. They said, "You know, another tornado's coming." They were like, "What are these guys doing outside?" So, we go out there – the street's flooded. We run over there, and we're like, "Hey, guys, there's another tornado coming. We need to get you all inside." There was one guy who's kind of leading the group of people that came out of their building. I had asked, "Why are you all outside anyways?" They were like, "Our building collapsed." I couldn't really see it very well because it was pitch black. But they start shining their flash, and I was like, "Oh, yes. That building – that's coming down." So, he had the idea of gathering everybody and going to the Coliseum. I was telling them, "I know the tornado's supposed to be coming. We don't know when. Don't go across the street to the Coliseum. That sounds like a really bad idea." So, what we ended up doing was we went – we knocked on as many doors as we can around the building. I think there were three buildings that we had ended up going to – knocking on doors, getting people inside. People on the bottom floor, they weren't even aware that the top floor had collapsed. We're like, "Hey, your building is partially collapsed. Get out of here." We brought them all into my apartment. By the end of that little roundup session, I probably had thirty or more people in my apartment. I think that is when you could really see the range of emotions that people go through in stressful situations. I had one girl who was completely in tears, saying she's going to die. I had one guy standing outside with his dog, not talking to anybody. I had me – I was surprisingly relaxed. I've learned that about myself – that I stay calm in situations like that. I just had a lot of people in. Eventually the fire department had came by, and they gathered everyone. They took us outside,

and we all walked up to the Dollar General. We saw that that was gone. That was pretty much the bulk of the actual tornado experience. As we're walking out, we see all the damage that had been done – light poles falling over. There was one guy – I was actually walking with him. He was looking for his truck as we were leaving. [laughter] I'm laughing, but it's awful. We saw his truck as we were leaving Gamecock Village, completely turned over, absolutely totaled – complete loss there. I had parked my car right outside of my building, and I had noticed that it had been shifted. So, instead of being parked straight, it was a little diagonal and outside of the parking lines. I did lose a window during that, and my front windshield did end up getting cracked. Also, some other things have, like my cruise control quit working. A lot of other car issues happened shortly thereafter, which I attribute to the tornado, but I'm not 100 percent sure. The car's pretty old. So, you know, maybe like my radiator, my transmission, these things started going out – really costly to replace – I attribute it to the tornado just because of the timing. But I don't personally know whether that's true or not. I'd say it's probably a good guess, though.

So, after we had all left Gamecock Village, we had the Fire Department, Police Department out there, just trying to get everybody out of Gamecock Village. The news station then came up. They were doing interviews, and one girl – who was the girl who I said was freaking out, saying she's going to die – she did an interview. In the interview, she'd said to the news reporter that during that, she was thinking like, “Am I going to die?” The news reporter stopped and was like, “That's good. Can you repeat that?” Then I heard later that that got aired. So, that was pretty funny – getting to watch like kind of behind-the-scenes how news reporting happens. We had saw a bunch of volunteer fire departments across the street at the Coliseum. Me and my friends, we had just been standing out there for, I don't know, fifteen minutes or so. They had said that they were supposed to have shuttles coming to pick us up and take us to the Jacksonville Community Center where there was an underground place, I think. But we were all just standing out there not knowing what was happening. Anyone we had asked, they would just not know or just tell us something's coming. We stayed out there for a while, and nothing ever did come. So, me and my friends ended up walking back to their apartment, which is on the other side of town. That's not entirely true. We started to walk, and someone picked us up. We got on the back of the truck, and they took us there. But as we were walking, we had asked the Fire Department, the volunteers there, what's happening. The woman that responded to us was really rude. I don't think I'll ever forget that just because it was so uncalled for. She was like, “How are we supposed to know? We're just here doing our jobs.” They're standing across the street from where it's at, not really doing anything. I don't know. That rubbed me the wrong way. It was really unnecessary how rude she was with that response. But long story short, we got in the back of that dude's truck, and he took us over to my friends' apartments, who ironically had pretty much not been touched at all. They came to my place for safety. Gamecock Village got hit pretty bad, and theirs was entirely untouched. They live at – you've got the four-way intersection where Walmart is. Walmart being right here, you go up and take a left, and you take a right. It's like Greenwood or Cottonwood, something like that. That's where they lived.

ER: Yes.

BA: So, we ended up going over there – brought their animals. I had gotten some essentials out. I had a lot of cash in my room. I think it was a FAFSA check that I hadn't deposited yet. So, I

picked up some essentials, packed up my backpack, because I knew I wouldn't be getting back into that building anytime soon. We just went over to their place, and that's where we stayed. I ended up staying there for about two weeks to a month, I think, after the tornado, just sleeping on the couch. I'm really lucky to have friends that would let me do that. Let's see. I think that wraps up the story for that night. Yes. That wraps the story for that night.

ER: A few follow-up questions for you. First of all, very incredible and brave that you were out there helping people and making sure –

BA: We were kind of freaked out because we saw them – we saw the flashlights. We're like, "There's another tornado coming, you know." I don't know. We were lucky that not as many people were here because of spring break anyways. I'd hate to have someone die across the street from us but yes –

ER: But tell me a little bit about that kind of time frame because you – as you said, you know that there's a possibility that this next tornado is coming. You see people outside, and you talked about that you're knocking on people's doors, then that some of the people were going to walk to the Coliseum.

BA: Yes.

ER: Did another tornado come by?

BA: I do believe another tornado did hit Jacksonville, but not Gamecock Village. After that, in all honesty, it turns out there wasn't even a necessity to get them out of the buildings because the building didn't end up collapsing. Another tornado didn't end up hitting Gamecock Village. But at the time, we were just working with the information that we had. But as far as the time frame of going to the buildings we had – I had mentioned earlier there was the guy who was kind of the leader trying to get everybody to the Coliseum – I had mentioned him too soon. How it happened is we went out there, and the people had came out. The people with the flashlights, they came out. They were the first ones that we saw. We told them another tornado's coming. They're like, "Oh, yes. We didn't know that. Cool." So, we split up into groups. One group got this building. One group got that building. Another one got this one. We went, and we were running, banging on doors, and that was a lot of noise to be had. So, sometimes, you have to bang on the door for a good ten seconds before someone would respond because maybe before then, it was just choked up to tornado sounds. I remember in particular, one guy had opened the door that I was knocking on. He was in there, and two of his friends were in there. All three of those guys, they didn't know another tornado was coming. One of the guys was just fixated on finding his truck and driving away. I look at him, I'm like, "Do you really think you can drive away from a tornado? Do you really think that's the best idea right now?" So, as we were pulling people out of their apartments, they were helping us go knocking around on all the other doors. So, it really didn't take too long. I would say five to ten minutes before everyone was back in my apartment. I had mentioned earlier that the streets were flooded. As you were going – these apartment buildings, they had a middle area where you have a grill pit and then some lawn chairs or whatever. That's where we kind of were all at. That's how we were able to hit so many buildings so quickly. We had gathered up there, and that's when the guy who had kind of

taken charge was suggesting to go to the Coliseum. I was like, “No. Bad idea. Come to my place.” As you were going through this area where you would have the grill and things like that, the place was flooded. I’m 6’2”, and I was up to my knees. You’re kind of doing goose step marches because you don’t know what’s under you. You don’t want to step on nails or whatever from the pieces of the apartments that are now on the ground. So, that was interesting. My shoes got ruined. I had to throw those out, but worthy cause, I guess. I think that’s about all I have to say about the time frame there.

ER: Well, you had a lot of strategy to be able to kind of organize in groups and –

BA: Yes, it was –

ER: – check different apartments.

BA: – we kind of had to. As far as we were aware, another tornado was coming. We’re like, “Let’s get these people out, you know.” That’s about all you could do.

ER: How was it to manage about thirty people in your apartment?

BA: [laughter]

ER: You said there were animals too. How many animals?

BA: Yes. The girl that was freaking out, she had a friend with her, and that friend had a small dog on a leash. I had mentioned earlier there was a guy who didn’t talk to anyone and just stood outside the whole time with his dog – that was a big dog. I really wanted to pet that dog, too. I never got to. Those are the two that I primarily remember. I am hesitant to say that’s the only two, but those are the only two that I actually remember. So, I would say minimum two, maximum four, or so. But I only remember those two specifically. As far as managing those people goes, everyone was just kind of in shock still. Once you had everybody in the apartment, it was kind of just – I mean, we can’t go anywhere. Then there’s nothing – everything’s out of our control. So, while you had the couple that were freaking out in one side of the room, most people were just sitting on my couch or sitting on the dryer and washer, talking. I know I had jumped up on the washer. I was talking to a girl and her boyfriend. Boyfriend was freaking out. Girl was pretty chill. One guy, he was like really, really wet. He was about my build, my height. He had asked me if I had an extra change of clothes for him because he was soaked. I never did get those clothes back. But there really wasn’t much managing to be done. I’m a college kid. I have alcohol in my apartment. So, I brought it out, and I was like, “You know, help yourself if you want.” I think I only had four people take it up on that offer. No real managing to be done once they were inside. It was just, we were waiting it out. I think the girl that was freaking out, either her dad or her friend’s dad was head of the Fire Department or something. So, I’m pretty sure we got first-served once they came to Gamecock Village because they knew that’s where a large crowd of people were. You know, it’s the guy’s daughter. I don’t really know how she would have gotten in touch with him because I didn’t have service. But when we were in the bathroom earlier, we kept trying to check James Spann for more information, and the service

would cut in and out. Her phone got service, mine didn't. So, I don't know, maybe there's a chance she had service. I guess she had to at some point, but yes –

ER: Afterwards, what was the damage to your apartment?

BA: My apartment really didn't get touched very badly. I didn't have any broken windows. I would say the most damage that I would have had is just the carpet from people coming in. It was kind of unfortunate though, because I had just bought groceries. I had \$100 of spoiled groceries in my fridge when we came back. That was unfortunate. But as far as damages to my actual apartment itself, little to none.

ER: Okay. You said you were staying with your friends for about two weeks to a month. Was that because your apartment was deemed that you couldn't go back into it?

BA: Yes. Gamecock Village – I give a lot of props to them in how they handled the situation, actually. They were really responsive to emails. They had sent out mass emails updating us on the situation nearly daily. Basically, they had said that because the buildings that were heavily damaged were still in danger of collapsing, they hadn't been deemed safe yet. They weren't letting anybody in. However, what they did is they had – they allowed you to send in an email and say these are some essentials that are in my apartment. They'll go in, bring – pack it up for you, and then they put it in a trailer. They had a designated time for you to come and get those things. That's how I ended up getting my computer monitor, just the things of high value that I own – some clothes as well. They allowed me to stay at their house for two weeks to a month. Gamecock Village handled that really well. I heard that the Reserve was really, really poor in their handling of it, which – I mean, they don't even exist anymore, so. Gamecock Village did really well there.

ER: So, walk me through that night. When did you leave your apartment to go to your friend's house? Was that the first time that you kind of moved in with them?

BA: Yes. I'd been over there before. I had met her in our adult growth and development class. That was a very, very difficult class. The professor, he's a rough guy. I'm getting off track – I'm talking about his class now. But anyways, I had met her there, and we became gym partners. She was married to my other friend. They now live in Tuscaloosa, unfortunately. We studied together a lot because there was a lot of studying to be done for that class. So, I was over at their house, you know, probably twice a week minimum. We kind of did a Friendsgiving thing there – celebrated Thanksgiving with them. So, yes, that was definitely the first time I ever lived there. But I had visited there quite a few times prior to that. I would imagine that's why they were so okay with me staying there for the length of time that I did.

ER: Going to their house that night, did you expect to be there for two weeks to a month?

BA: No. I didn't exactly know how long. I knew it would be a little bit before I could go back and actually move out of Gamecock Village, just given the situation. I had mentioned before that I had a lot of cash that I had brought with me that night. I'm very glad that I did because that

also allowed me to do that. They were really good guests, and I didn't expect that I had to stay there that long. But they were fine with it.

ER: Where did you move after? Did you –

BA: Afterwards, I was able to get my stuff. Then I just moved back in with my grandparents for the remainder of the summer. They live in Attalla. At the time, I would have gone back there immediately but due to family issues, which I won't get into, my little brother had been living there, along with my older brother who lives there, and my little brother had taken my room when I went off to college. They weren't expecting me to have to come back. So, that's why that wasn't available at the time. But once I was able to move out, I just went back to them. Next semester started, I got moved to the dorm because I had a scholarship for it.

ER: Okay. So, let's talk a little bit about how you kind of managed all this. So, you said you had some car repairs and stuff. How did you kind of manage to cope with that and the expenses?

BA: Well, that's actually surprisingly recent because my car officially got fixed two – not even two – I think it was yesterday. Like I said, since then I've been having a lot of car issues. It's not even completely fixed – like my cruise control just still doesn't work, but I don't think that's even worth getting fixed. I had to replace the ignition. I'm trying to say translator, but that's not the word. I don't know car parts very well – alternator, things like that. Luckily, oh, maybe not so luckily – I don't come from the most well-off family financially, and because of that, I got a full FAFSA. My FAFSA refund is what I was paying out. That was I think somewhere between \$2500 and \$2900 per semester, so like \$7000-ish total. That's what I was using to pay for rent. That's what I did for the first semester at Gamecock Village. Then because of the tornadoes, then I had to move out early, I got – not all of that money had to be spent towards rent. So, I still had money left over. That's how I was able to immediately deal with the car issues at hand. So, I was kind of fortunate for that. FAFSA has done me, and continues to do me, a lot of good here while I'm in college. Again this year, that's how I pay. That's how I'm going to be paying for my rent at Park Place. But Park Place is about \$120 a month cheaper than Gamecock Village. So, that's going to leave me with money left over, which is really nice.

ER: Okay. Then how did you manage classes?

BA: I was actually one of the few – I'm glad you asked me that because I need to make an addendum to one of my answers earlier. I was one of the few people who had stayed to finish their classes, though admittedly, I didn't do it for all of them. Once the tornadoes had ended, and I'm sure you know this, as an instructor, you had the option to either end your class with the grade that you had or continue and finish out the class. I took my B happily for that difficult class, adult growth and development. But the rest of my classes, I went ahead and just stayed here. They had put me in Crow Hall. They put me in a dorm there for the remainder of the semester, which wasn't very long. I think it was like a month, something like that. But that's where I ended up going. So, the addendum to be made was I moved from my friend's couch to the dorm. Then after that ended, then I went back home. What was the question again?

ER: Just managing classes.

BA: Yes.

ER: Kind of finishing out the semester.

BA: Yes. So, that's pretty much it. I took the B in that class, and I ended up getting an A in every other class.

ER: Oh, good. That was good.

BA: Yes. ER: So, let's kind of go into this idea about disaster resilience. So, what helped you cope with the challenges from the tornado?

BA: Again, Gamecock Village was really, really – they handled it superbly. I'm very, very happy with how they handled that. Furthermore, FEMA was here. Is it FEMA? Is that what I'm thinking of? Red Cross? I think Red Cross is what I meant. Are they related to FEMA?

ER: Separate agencies.

BA: Okay. I don't know exactly if FEMA had anything in particular for me. But Red Cross – Red Cross was amazing for me. Because I was so affected by the tornado, in the sense of like I was displaced, they had a shelter over at a church in Jacksonville, behind Walmart. I was living on the couch of a married couple, and I didn't want to spend all my time there. So, some nights I would go and stay over there instead. Because I didn't want to overstay my welcome at my friend's place.

ER: Okay.

BA: So, that was really nice to have that option. Also, I would go and have my meals there. Because while I did have the cash that I had, I also know that I would probably have some expenses that I have to cover for. So, I didn't want to spend everything I had. Likewise to that, the church – I don't know what church it is – I don't know the name of the church but there's a church in Jacksonville here that was – they have a really big donation thing where you come in, and I got blankets, towels, trash bags, things like that. I just didn't want to be a burden to the people that I was living with. So, I was able to get that. I picked up canned foods, things like that so I wouldn't be eating their food. That was really helpful. I know that there was somebody who was doing glass repair for cars. Now, when my two friends had come over, they drove her car to get there and their back window, back driver side window, got shattered during the tornado. Some agency fixed theirs for free – I think in Anniston. I wasn't able to take advantage of that. I don't think I had my car with me at the time. I don't remember exactly the circumstances why but I unfortunately wasn't able to take advantage of that. Even now, if you look at my car down there, it's got duct tape over the window instead of a window. But I remember the Red Cross were set up in the – what's the food court building?

ER: TMB?



BA: TMB, yes. They were set up in the TMB, and they were giving out a gift card to those that were affected. I ended up getting, I think it was, a \$300 gift card to Walmart, which let me go get things that I was just missing from my apartment to begin with. I didn't have a clothes hamper, things like that – some apartment essentials that I got from that. So, that was really helpful. Also, I was able to go and buy more clothes. I didn't need clothes in general but I couldn't get to my stuff because it was all in an apartment that I couldn't go into. So, that let me live as a functional human for that month that I was there at their place.

ER: Thinking back to your apartment. So, what things were you able to recover? Then what things did you kind of think that you lost during?

BA: Well, again, my apartment wasn't really affected by the tornado itself. So, all of my losses were just from not being able to get to it. Like the refrigerator I had just bought, groceries, which was unfortunately circumstantial. But when I left the apartment, I knew that it wasn't affected because that's where we were at. So, I knew that I would be able to go get all my stuff back eventually. So, really the closest thing that I can even count as a loss is just the fact that I had to go re-buy things that I already own just because I couldn't get to it already. I mean, in the end, I'm definitely still lucky. I was one of the luckier people affected by the tornado in that regard, that I didn't lose the stuff. I just couldn't get to it for a while.

ER: What would you say was your greatest challenge? Or challenges?

BA: Having to live on a friend's couch for a month. I definitely value my privacy a lot. If I'm at home, the door is always shut. I keep to myself most of the time. I just value my privacy a lot. I felt very welcome there but at the same time, it's just uncomfortable because I was living in an apartment by myself. I mean, I had a roommate, but still, I had my own room, my own bathroom, things like that. Now I'm living on a couch.

ER: Right.

BA: So, that was uncomfortable. I'm still very grateful for it, but still uncomfortable. Repeat the question again?

ER: Just what were your greatest challenges?

BA: Yes. My comfortability, and then also, I didn't want to make them feel uncomfortable. So, like I said before, I would go spend some nights at the shelter over there, with the Red Cross. But you know, ultimately, I would imagine, compared to what some other people may have went through for the tornado, those are pretty minor.

ER: How do you adjust to the nights that you did stay at the shelter? Was that an easy adjustment?

BA: Yes. That again – I have my door closed all the time, I keep to myself a lot. When you were in the shelter, it was just like a big open floor. I mean, there was a curtain around the space of – like it created a room. But once you were in that room, it was still just a bunch of people

sleeping on cots. So, even then, it wasn't exactly the most comfortable. I would have preferred to be on the couch than that. But they're a married couple. I wanted to give them privacy, blah, blah, blah, so –

ER: It was courteous of you to even want to do that.

BA: [laughs]

ER: Just thinking of what we typically think of a shelter with a lot of people and then you're saying one of the hard things is to lose privacy.

BA: Yes. But the people from the Red Cross, they were really, really good and really nice people. I got along with them, just in general. So, there were more people to talk to. I got to meet some people. While eventually I never see them again, and I probably never will see them again, for the time, it was nice to have that interaction with new people, even if it was only temporary. So, that was – it was still a fun experience. I recognize that I'm very lucky to come out at the end of a tornado and say it was a fun experience, so –

ER: It's a positive spin on it. Is there something you can point to that helped you recover more quickly?

BA: Namely the money that I received from the Red Cross. I think I would imagine that almost anybody would tell you that in the wake of something like this, one thing that you know will help someone recover is just money. They say money can't solve problems, but it would solve every problem I have, so –

ER: What will you carry forward from this experience?

BA: I really enjoy knowing that I didn't freak out in that scenario. It's a calming thing to know that I keep – I'm – I have a pretty calm demeanor most of the time. It's nice to know that about myself – that it stays like that even in a situation like that where I have someone freaking out on my couch, "Oh, my God. I'm going to die." And even at the time, I was kind of scoffing – not at her directly, but I was still scoffing at the idea that someone would be so freaked out. So, that's something that I definitely learned about myself that I think I value a lot.

ER: That's profound that you said that. One of the first things you said was that you kind of learned something about yourself.

BA: Yes.

ER: I mean, that was a serious situation. That wasn't like something just kind of minor that – to be able to keep that kind of sense of calm.

BA: It's so weird to – I recognized that in hindsight, but even in the moment, I didn't – it didn't feel serious. When we were in the bathroom, they were, of course – my two friends, they were worried. As I would imagine, most people should be even worried, stressing out. I'm sitting on

the toilet talking to them, just laughing. It's weird because I know that I probably shouldn't do that. But I don't know, I guess that's just how my personality is. I don't easily get stressed out.

ER: I can sense that you're kind of level headed. You have some humor, and then you're also strategic – like the willingness to help others and kind of take charge.

BA: I don't even know where that came from, because I normally keep to myself most of the time. I don't have very many friends, but the ones that I have are very close. That's just the kind of person that I am. I don't typically enjoy people. I don't like people. I'm here for forensics. I want to be a coroner. Normally, I don't want to be a coroner because I'm a super nice people-person. I interact really well with people face to face. So, definitely that was kind of out of my element, but I mean, it worked. Ultimately, unnecessary because I know the tornado didn't hit Gamecock Village anyway, but nice to know that, yes.

ER: What advice would you give others about how to deal with an event like a tornado?

BA: I'd probably be the worst person to take advice from because like I said, I was laughing at the idea of we're still in danger. I recognize that the danger is possibly there, but it's a tornado – it's totally out of my hands. So, I kind of stopped caring because of that. Had the tornado actually hit my apartment, I don't – lay there and die? I don't really know what you would do in that situation. There's nothing you can do. You're a human, it's a tornado. It wins every time. That said, I don't think anyone died here. I think the worst casualty is some guy lost his arm because he was sitting in his car and something fell on him. Very unfortunate, that man. But I guess the humans kind of won over on that fight this time.

ER: Yes.

BA: But I guess my advice would just, don't freak out. I keep thinking back to the one girl who was completely having a mental breakdown. As far as like morale goes of the group, of everyone I had in my living room, having somebody freaking out about their impending doom kind of puts a damper on things. But when everyone else was fairly relaxed given the situation, it helped. So, I guess my advice was just don't – I know it sounds really ignorant to say, "Oh, you're depressed? Just get happy." I don't know. You're in a tornado, just don't freak out. It's really easy for me to say because that's what comes naturally to me. But really, I do think that was the best thing about anybody who was there, was just the fact that there was only one or two people freaking out, and everyone else was pretty calm.

ER: Well, it helped you cope, and then it probably had a good impact on other people around you.

BA: Yes. I would hope so.

ER: Well, thank you very much for your time –

BA: Yes, no problem.

ER: – and telling us about your story. Are there any other things that you would like to bring up that we didn't cover?

BA: When I was talking about the money that had gotten – given to me from various organizations there, I do want to do a shout out to the one embroidery place up here on the square. They were giving out I think it was \$50 Walmart gift cards. I went in there, and I was able to get pajamas and stuff while I was living in my friend's house. They didn't have to do that at all. I was very, very grateful for them to have done that. I really like to see that people in the community will give to the community in a situation like that. I respect that a lot. Even though I personally don't care much for embroidery – it's not my taste – I respect them a lot for doing that.

ER: Yes.

BA: Jacksonville, the college itself, I don't believe they had any obligation to help in any capacity to those affected. But I do know that they had a service where students affected could sign up, and they would help you out. Really nice gesture, but if I recall correctly, I don't think I – they ended up giving, I think it was \$500 to every student that was affected. But that came like a year and a half later. I mean, of course I was happy because – but at that point I was like, "I don't really need this anymore. I'm kind of recovered now. But cool. Thanks."

ER: That's understandable.

BA: So, that's about it.

ER: Yes. Well, thank you again for sharing your story. We appreciate hearing it and gives us a better sense of kind of the resiliency in individual stories of recovery. Thank you.

BA: Yes, no problem.

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Reviewed by Nicole Zador, 3/06/2025