

## The Gulf Podcast

### Bonus Episode: The Obligation to Endure

**[Jen Brown]:** Okay, this is January 4, 2023. This is Jen Brown. I'm here with Alyssa Lucas, and we are at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and we're looking at the impacts from the oil spill over Christmas weekend and the cleanup going on at University Beach on Corpus Christi Bay right across from the campus, so just wait to cross the road here (car rushes by). Okay, I'm going to get a picture up here and then we'll come down. Looks like they're checking down that way as well. So, there's about four or five cars out here, trucks, and they all look like they're involved in the cleanup and then guys with plastic bags and big boots and everything (camera clicks). Okay, how do we get down here?

**[Alyssa Lucas]:** Um, we've got to go—

**[Brown]:** —If you want to, oh it looks like those people, if you don't want to walk through this stuff and on the beach with your shoes.

(walking)

**[Brown]:** Okay.

**[Lucas]:** I'm going to go that way.

**[Brown]:** Okay, I am walking down to the beach. Oh yeah, there's probably dozens and dozens of jellyfish on the beach here that are dead and, yeah, ugh, gross. Okay, going to get another picture of this here.

(walking)

**[Brown]:** So, yesterday when I was on campus, I had to pick up a library book, and I drove up here, and I saw a bunch of guys out here cleaning, and they were like shoveling stuff from the sand into plastic bags and then maybe they had about thirty plastic bags all loaded up in this big trailer, um, and I didn't have my recorder with me. I didn't think about taking pictures or anything, but we will continue, yeah, oh my gosh. There's so many dead jellies as well. Oh, and it's actually a beautiful day other than an oil spill in Corpus Christi Bay. Now, the city said yesterday in a news release that the impacts to Corpus Christi Bay were minimal, and I'm like, "Um, I don't think dozens of kind of clean up on Corpus Christi Bay is minimal." Okay, looks like finally reaching these cleanup workers, okay. Ugh.

Hey, can I interview you guys for my podcast? (plastic bags rustling) Hey can I interview you guys for my podcast? Okay, the workers don't want to talk to me. I think they're afraid of

getting in trouble so—

(walking)

**[Brown]:** All right, I'm going to look down here on the jetty though and see if I can spot any oil. They've been cleaning up this section yesterday and today, so I'm not sure what I'll find, but it's essentially light crude that's globbed up in the bay. All right. Hm, it's kind of a light brown, yellowish, mucous-y looking thing.

(pause in recording)

**[Brown]:** I'm going to talk to these guys. Where'd they go?

(walking)

**[Brown]:** Hi, how are you?

**[Person 1]:** Good.

**[Brown]:** Can I interview you for my podcast?

**[Person 1]:** Um, I'm all right. You can ask them.

**[Brown]:** Can I ask who you work for?

**[Person 1]:** Optimax.

**[Brown]:** Optimax?

**[Person 1]:** Yes ma'am.

**[Brown]:** And you're just an oil clean up company?

**[Person 1]:** Yes ma'am.

**[Brown]:** Okay, thanks.

(walking)

**[Brown]:** Hi, can I interview you all for my podcast?

**[Person 2]:** I can refer you to someone, but we can't speak to anybody. Sorry.

**[Brown]:** Oh, and your management told you specifically not to speak to—

**[Person 2]:** —anybody.

**[Brown]:** And why not? Do you know?

**[Person 2]:** No, I can refer you to someone though.

**[Brown]:** Yeah, maybe a contact would be good. Can I ask how much oil you've cleaned up off the beach over the last couple of days?

**[Person 2]:** No clue. Not much.

**[Brown]:** Were you out here yesterday with that group?

**[Person 2]:** Yes, ma'am.

**[Brown]:** It looked like a lot from the trailer.

**[Person 2]:** It wasn't. It's not as much as it looks like. It's very little. It's—most of it's sand. Hold on just a second.

**[Brown]:** Is Optimax out of Corpus Christi?

**[Person 2]:** I have no idea, ma'am.

**[Brown]:** Do you work out of Corpus or are you—

**[Person 2]:** No, ma'am, I'm just here helping.

**[Brown]:** Where did you come from.

**[Person 2]:** Three, six, one [ed. note: this part cut out]

**[Brown]:** Okay.

**[Person 2]:** Yes.

**[Brown]:** Thank you.

**[Person 2]:** Have a good day, sorry I couldn't be more help for you.

**[Brown]:** Had to check.

Oh, I'll walk if you want (speaking to Lucas). This looks like a path in here.

**[Lucas]:** Are there thorns?

**[Brown]:** Um, no, but it's a little wet, it looks like. Unless you want to walk all the way back there.

**[Lucas]:** I don't.

**[Brown]:** These guys won't talk to us. They are instructed not to talk to—

**[Lucas]:** Are you sure they aren't community service like the other guys?

**[Brown]:** No.

**[Lucas]:** Because they had a—like the guy had the same outfit.

**[Brown]:** Well, they might be partially, but these guys work for Optimax and are instructed to not to talk to us, so they gave me a number for Flint Hills.

**[Lucas]:** A name like Flint Hills just sounds like a big baron name (laughs).

**[Brown]:** Yeah, okay, and so were they cleaning up oil or were they—

**[Lucas]:** It looked like it was—it didn't look like any mineral stuff, but I don't know—

**[Brown]:** It's kind of like a yellow—

**[Lucas]:** —Did you see all the dead jellies?

**[Brown]:** Yeah, did you get pictures? Was it—were they down there too?

**[Lucas]:** Yes, there's a lot of them.

**[Brown]:** I would say there's several hundred dead jellyfish.

**[Lucas]:** Hold on, let's see if, ow.

**[Brown]:** Because there's a bunch right there.

**[Lucas]:** Well, I feel like the photos, we should go back because there were so many of them, but there were just crowds of—

**[Brown]:** Well, let me show you what I got.

**[Lucas]:** I'm a better writer than a photo-er. Oh.

**[Brown]:** Yeah. I mean, that's all just right there. It's like thirty (both talking at once)—

**[Lucas]:** —Yeah, it goes down the whole thing—

**[Brown]:** in that one little thirty-foot stretch.

**[Lucas]:** It goes down the whole thing

**[Brown]:** Well—

**[Lucas]:** —not the whole thing but a good chunk of the thing—

**[Brown]:** —I'm going to—I don't know. We're kind of at a standstill. I'm kind of disappointed that they're not—let's get up here.

**[Lucas]:** Yeah, I want to get out. I want to.

**[Brown]:** I don't think there are thorns but just be careful there.

(walking)

**[Brown]:** We could publish a little short and then wait for the Flint Hill guy to get back to me.

**[Lucas]:** He's not going to get back. They never get back (laughs).

**[Brown]:** I think he will. I think he will.

**[Lucas]:** I hope he does. I'm not saying like I don't hope. I hope.

**[Brown]:** All right.

(pause in recording):

**[Brown]:** Hi Gulf Podcast listeners. This is Jen. I'm back in the studio. It is my bedtime on January 4th on Wednesday, and I was hoping to give you all an update, but, unfortunately, I don't have an update for you because I've been waiting all day to hear back from Flint Hill's Resources, and they never got back to me. I left a message for the city manager's office for an interview and all they wanted to know about was what kind of podcast I have before they considered setting up an interview, and the university never got back to me, nor have they notified the campus community. I actually asked my student assistant, Alyssa Lucas, about it earlier and so here's what she said.

**[Lucas]:** It's really concerning because I didn't even know that the oil spill had happened and

then the amount of the oil they keep saying and the fact that it got to the beaches is really concerning and more of the fact they just didn't let anyone know even though they have people cleaning up right there on it because a lot of students go to that beach, and I know it's holiday right now, but that doesn't mean that students still aren't going to go there and their dogs, and it's just—it's also the amount of dead jellies that's really concerning so there's a lot there.

**[Brown]:** So, I'm not normally a current events podcast, but there's just been very little news and very little information coming from local news stations, from Flint Hills Resources, and from the City of Corpus Christi. Now, between my recording earlier this morning at about 11:00 a.m. on University Beach to tonight, the city did release another news release, and they said that Flint Hills Resources quote "reports minimal oil material on the shoreline or in Corpus Christi Bay," and they mentioned some specific impacted areas including North Beach, Indian Point, Nueces Bay, but they haven't mentioned anywhere on the side of the bay by the University or by Oso Bay or that sort of thing, so it's clear the oil's there, and it's clear that it's more than just a minimal impact. Now, one thing that most people might not realize is that the oil spill and the stuff washing up on the beaches isn't just like a tar ball or a glob of oil. It's like—it looks pretty gross. It's a yellow-ish brown substance that's like in little balls maybe the size of your thumb or in kind of bigger globs, and the color looks like baby diarrhea. That's what you should be looking for. It's like the most disgusting little globs of yellow-ish brown substance on beaches and rocks and wildlife and there are various numbers. You can call the U.S. Coast Guard, the Texas General Land Office if you see any of these, but I'm thinking in terms of the city's news release. They're encouraging residents to report any material or oil sheens. Why isn't the city out doing something? Is the city involved in the cleanup efforts? Are they overseeing the cleanup efforts and what do these cleanup efforts look like? Why did the oil spill even happen in the first place and what's going to happen in the future? We simply just don't have enough information, and this lack of knowledge reminds me of a quote from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Now, if you're a Gulf Podcast listener, you know I quote from Rachel Carson all the time. She's my hero. But in the book, there's this part where she quotes "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know," and to put that another way, we're the ones that are out swimming and fishing and kayaking and spending time in Corpus Christi Bay. We live along the bay, and so we, at the very least, have the right to know what's going on, and so that's why I'm kind of disappointed. I know many people in the community are very angry of having zero information about the oil spill or the cleanup efforts and so I'm hoping that I'll have some interviews and updates going forward but this is all I know for now. So, thank you all and have a wonderful night.