

Ruben Almeida Jr.

Interviewed by Tera Elwell

September 20, 2022

Interview conducted over videoconference

Transcribed by Tera Elwell

**[Tera Elwell]:** My name is Tera Elwell, and I'm in Texas. Today is Tuesday, September 20, 2022. The time is 7:39 p.m. I am interviewing Ruben Almeida, who is in Florida, about the events he experienced in 2017 during Hurricane Harvey. The unedited interview, and transcript will be on file at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, and the podcast this interview is for will be uploaded online for South Texas Stories. Ruben, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**[Ruben Almeida Jr.]** Yes.

**[Elwell]:** Thank you. It would've been really awkward if you said no.

**[Almeida]:** Yeah (laughs). Spoil, uh, twist. Plot twist.

**[Elwell]:** All right, so let's start at the very beginning. Uh, tell me your name, and your job title.

**[Almeida]:** My name is Ruben Almeida. Do you need me to spell it too? I'm so used to news so—

**[Elwell]:** Whatever you're comfortable with.

**[Almeida]:** Cool. Well, you know how to spell my name, but I'll give it to you just in case. So, Ruben Almeida; R-U-B-E-N. A-L-M-E-I-D-A. Junior, and, uh, I'm current—I guess—what? What did you need? My title (laughs)?

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, just your occupation.

**[Almeida]:** Occupation. I am, uh, currently a photojournalist for Spectrum News 13, uh, out in Orlando, Florida.

**[Elwell]:** So, tell me about, we're going to start with some background questions. Uh, tell me about growing up in Texas, uh, and how you got interested in media.

**[Almeida]:** So, grow uh—born and raised in Corpus Christi, Texas. Uh, I grew up on a healthy, steady diet of media. Um, not just like, movies, and TV, and stuff, but we watched the news a lot, and I do remember, yeah, just watching a lot of like, I don't

know, Joe Gazin, and Lee Sausley, and Alan Harwell. It's just, kind of burned into my brain. Um, yeah, and uh, didn't really know what I wanted to do through like most of high school, and uh, one thing led to another, and then I was like, I think I want to be a filmmaker, so, I kind of uh, um, started at Del Mar. Uh, it was like the local like um, uh, community college so, you know, took some classes there, and that oddly enough like, in doing film kind of stuff like, I also learned like, the basics of like, what goes into like, a TV production, and production in general. Uh, which always kind of fascinated me because I just, I don't know, I just—the whole how things work when it comes to like, a production whether it's like, audio, or video, just always fascinated me. On top of like, the creative stuff. That's cool as well, but um, just like from a technical standpoint all the work that goes in. I love like, all the protocol, and just the weird nerdy stuff, um, that goes into that, and uh, and then eventually that turned from me going to Del Mar for two years to going off to New York for a film program at uh, School of Visual Arts, and uh, did more of that (laughs). Less TV, but more just kind of into the creative, and also a lot of technical stuff. Um, did that for four years, and then um, yeah. It was weird because news never, that was never like, the end, the end game. Like, the end game was always in one-way shape, or form you know, stuff with the camera, and even back then I didn't even really touch a camera. I was too scared to touch cameras. Um, I just didn't, I don't know, I just didn't have the aptitude I thought for it, and I was much more okay with doing like, post-production, and audio. So, that's kind of what my realm was, and then, uh, yeah, eventually I graduated in 2014. Uh, and then I ended up back home, and uh, you were working at uh, that uh, channel three, and uh, yeah you were like, "Hey, do you need a job?" I was like, yeah (laughs). I really need a job. I'm in a ton of debt, and I need to get a job, so yeah, it's weird because like, it, it's kind of disjointed, but I guess with a lot of like, people in that, in those kind of majors, the Radio, TV, Film like, it's all, it's all connected. So, um, yeah, I ended up working at channel three in the summer of 2014 as an editor, and then uh, our news director one day was like, "Hey, do you know how to operate a camera?" and I was like, "Uh, yeah," and I've been doing, shooting news for, and yes since 2014, so almost eight years. It's like the longest I've like, done anything. Which is kind of crazy.

[4:37]

**[Elwell]:** Well, you said that news wasn't really your first choice. Why have you stayed with it for eight years?

**[Almeida]:** Um, I don't know (laughs). I'm a glutton for punishment? No. I uh, it is at the end of the day like, it doesn't get boring. It doesn't get old. Um, it—for a while I used to tell people, you know, they would ask me like, "What's the job like?" and I would say you know, think of it as um, it's like, every day I'm like podcasting essentially cause a lot of times I'll talk to strange, complete strangers um, and about a multitude of things. It could be you know, it could be the worst day of their life where their house burnt to the ground, and you know they, they have to figure out what they're going to do next, or um, you know I'm talking to someone at the Texas State Aquarium about like a new like shark exhibit they're really stoked about, or um, some days you know, I (laughs)

remember we would do uh, oh man, what was it? It was like a dog costume contest at Cole Park, and I would be talking to this couple who dressed up their dog as a Whataburger dog so, um, it's never, it doesn't get old. Um, there's always something different going on, and I don't know, I feel like it, it also like, working in news kind of helps broaden your, your perspective of the world. You know your world doesn't—isn't just your little bubble when you do news. I feel like if you ever want to get, really get to know your community like, I guess like, a local politician would be a good job, but news like, being in news, local news is, it's like another good way to like, really get a sense of you know, not just cause, not just your personal like, your hometown. It could be you know, the city, or uh, like, the state, or whatever depending on where you work. Um, so yeah. I guess just a long-winded answer saying, yeah it doesn't get old, and um, yeah there's just always something, something unique about it.

6:36

**[Elwell]:** The station that you were at in Corpus was pretty small; how's it differ from the one that you're in Florida?

**[Almeida]:** Uh, it, yeah (laughs). In a lot of ways there's, a lot of things are the same, and then a lot of things are different, obviously. When you're going from like a market 1-20 something uh, station to like top 20, um, resources are definitely uh, like, totally different. The station where we were at in Corpus um, no one had laptops. There was like, two communal laptops that usually were used for high school football, or if you know, you were going to San Antonio for a couple days, or Austin. Um, we would shoot all of our stuff, and have to edit in these like, ancient computers, and these edit bays, and like, just recently my station purchased uh, brand new, 2021 like, mac book pros with like, the M1 pro chip uh, which is nice. Apparently, we're supposed to be getting new cameras in the following year, so there's that. Obviously, staffing you know, you have a lot more staff at your disposal. I don't know about now. I mean, that's just, that's just the industry in general. There's kind of a shortage, but um, even just now if you look at the numbers between both stations, I'm sure you would see that you know, we have a lot more uh, bodies at our disposal. Um, but in the, in the same way too a lot of things are similar. I feel like a lot of news stations, from what I hear, and from what I understand, are working in the industry for eight years there's always uh, even though we're in the communications business, uh, there's always a strong sense of this, not strong sense. Let me rephrase that. There's miscommunication um, in our field, and uh, you know, lots of uh, lots of different—management always, is also kind of at ends with like, what the reporters want to do, so there's also, stuff like that you know, doesn't, doesn't change if you're going from like, top 20 to you know, top fifth where, the, 1-51, wherever that is.

[8:41]

**[Elwell]:** When people ask you about your job, do kind of just tell them the perks about it, or do, do you sugarcoat it, or do you tell them like, what actually goes on?

**[Almeida]:** A little bit of both. Um, obviously I work for a company that uh, is part of a larger, kind of corporation, so there, there are benefits to it. Um, aside from like, you know, like in the news you know there's great health benefits (laughs), and all that, but then on top of that too, you know, sometimes I get to, you know—I will tell them like "Hey yeah, I got to go to Universal today, and we got to ride the VelociCoaster before everyone else did," and uh, or I got to ride Hagrid's um, but at the same time too, I always kind of—as you get a lot of people saying, "Oh, that must be easy," and it's like, well, yeah you have your easy days, but then you know, you—the one day you're at Universal doing the VelociCoaster, uh, media preview day, and then the next day you're you know, uh, covering a uh, kind of like a gang-related shooting where like, you see like, the bodies of like, you know teenagers uh, kind of on a rainy day, and then like within ear shot you know when the families arrived because within minutes of being there you hear like a, like—not everyone's heard the noise I'm kind of going to describe, but it's like, you—there's this very specific noise that comes from a human being that like, when they find out that like, you know a loved one was just like, killed in cold blood, so, um, that—yeah, there's stuff—there's, you know, your week has it's extremes. Um, so, yeah, I try not to sugarcoat it. Maybe I don't lead with you know, oh yeah, um, you know uh, I was doing this, and then I had to go cover like a kid being killed, but you know I always kind of try to throw that in because I think people have this kind of warped perception of like, what it's like working in news.

[10:38]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, I was reading this article a couple of days ago that was saying how when a tragic event happens, the families are consoled, and the first responders are heroes, and uh, grief counselors reach out to them, but no one thinks about the journalist. You know, they were there too. They saw what happen. They have to report what happen, but you know, you show any sign of weakness, and they're like, toughen up. This is your job. You know what I mean?

**[Almeida]:** Pretty much. Yeah, no that—yeah, it is—I get like, journalists get a bad rap, to begin with you know, especially in the last uh, uh what, almost six, you know, beyond six years of like, the political climate where you know, we already face a weird reputation, and not just that but even before I feel like you know, you grow up hearing the term, "If it bleeds, it leads." Um, so people kind of, I feel like, the general public maybe don't have such a, um, they don't feel bad for us. They don't have a sympathetic view towards us. Um, but yeah no uh—there are days where I've called my wife after like, you know, something pretty messed up, and I'm just like, not in a great state of mind. You know, and I feel like that's totally normal, but yeah no one—maybe aside from like, and it's completely unrelated—we had a coworker pass away due to natural causes, and I think that was the only time I've ever been offered grief counseling. I was like, oh, okay well that's, you know, for some I get, but yeah. We've—sorry, I'm just kind of rambling about that, but yeah, no uh, never, never had uh, never been told, yeah, if you need to go talk to our uh, grief team, you know, here's the number. You just kind of have to go home, and you know, you'll think about it for a little bit, and um, also, I will

say too like, I've kind of joked around that at some, for some you know, there's that, uh, some people develop a coping mechanisms for that kind of stuff. Some that maybe see the crazier side like, the breaking news side more often. You hear about a lot of people like, that have drinking, and drug problems within, uh, the news industry, and I'm not kind of surprised at that because aside from like, the day-to-day stress of like, making your deadline, you're also like, juggling like, you know the crazy things you'll see, or hear, or you know—and sometimes I might just be things that happen to you. Um, I remember a coworker of ours, I think within her first two weeks, you know, she had never been to Corpus before, and she had a knife pulled on her, or something like that, and it's just like, if you're not used to that, yeah, then that can also have like a, a toll.

[13:25]

**[Elwell]:** As a journalist, as anyone in the news, behind the scenes too, you know we have to kind of detach ourselves, and that's pretty scary. Um, and if you don't want to talk about it that's fine, but how do you cope with these situations? Minus just calling your wife like, is there anything else that helps you?

**[Almeida]:** Um, I mean, sometimes I kind of like, I will try to like, I guess disassociate, and kind of just space out. Um, sometimes I will like just sit, and like, kind of just either turn on something, some sort of, either a podcast, or music, and just kind of let my mind wander about other things. Um, driving (laughs) oddly enough does help a lot. Um, I drive a lot, and uh, the market I'm in right now it's very sprawling, so I have a lot of like, time in between shoots so, I kind of just try to think about other things. Um, kind of disconnect um, I try to, I try to have a healthy-ish kind of work-life separation. Um, which isn't always, uh, possible because a lot of my friends outside of work, also work in the industry, and of course, all you tend to do is talk about work. Um, and like, yeah, sometimes you know, it can be as simple as that or, it could be that, or something as simple as like go home, you know turn on uh, pro-wrestling, and crack a beer open, and kind of just try to like, distance yourself as much as possible. Um, cause more than likely like, if it's something tragic, like, you're going be on it the next day doing follow-ups. Um, a lot of times talking to, you know, if it is something tragic that happen to like, a family, or a town, or if it's like a fire, you have to go back the next day, and talk to uh, you know, talk to the folks that were affected so, I think it is important to kind of have a way to cope. Um, of course, like, as long as it's healthy, and uh, what's the word I'm searching for? As long as you have a—do it in healthy doses, you know, I feel like that, it is important to kind of, try, and distance yourself. Um, I know for some like the whole term disassociating kind of seems a little extreme, or drastic but, I mean, yeah (laughs).

[15:38]

**[Elwell]:** Well, yeah, being a journalist, or being in the news business, it's pretty unpredictable um, and you do create a strong bond with your coworkers cause you're together all the time, and you know, you can go home, and talk to your significant other, but they don't really understand, but you go, and you talk to your coworkers; they were

there. They saw it too. They understand, so I think those connections are pretty important too.

**[Almeida]:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, you're—you've got your work wives, and work husbands, and yeah, being in the, you know, being in the industry for eight years, you definitely have like, your strong bonds, and it does help when, you know, have someone to turn to, and um, you know, whether they're having a bad day, or you're having a bad day, it's always good to kind of have that person to turn to. Um, you know, and uh, yeah cause it—for some, you know there's MMJs (multi-media journalist). There's people who are out solo doing it, and they don't have that luxury so, yeah, yeah.

[16:33]

**[Elwell]:** So, switching gears, um, we're going to talk a little bit about Harvey. Um, that was in 2017, and there was a mandatory evacuation um, for Rockport, but not for Corpus, and even if there were, you know, first responders, and news media couldn't leave. Um, what did—how did it make you feel to know that like, you couldn't leave for your safety because you could lose your job?

**[Almeida]:** Um, I didn't feel great about it, and uh, yeah, it is a, um, it's tough. Uh, my significant other, like, she like—she was able, she had shelter, so she wasn't evacuating, uh, but um, like, I still have my, my folks, my family, um, that like, I worry about. It's tough. It's, you know—cause if (laughs), if I was in my early twenties, single, and didn't have, you know, a family to worry about, I feel like I would look at things a little bit differently than I would. I mean, I was twenty-six at the time, um, and uh, you know still, you know—not, not married. Uh, but still worried about my family, but uh, like, now like, as a thirty-two-year-old person, it is, it is a crappy feeling to know that you know, um, I have to go, put—you know, a lot of times going out (laughs), doing the opposite of the idea of an evacuation is going right into it uh, while the other, well, either my, my family, or, or friends have to stay behind, and it, it's, it's not, it's not an easy feeling. You're worried also not just about your safety, but you're also worried about your family's safety because, a lot of the times they're just staying home. You know, a tree could fall (laughs), or whatever, or a tree could fall on your car, or you could get struck by lightning, so it's, it's like double the worry.

[18:32]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, I know a lot of journalists, uh, kind of see natural disasters as like, the big thing, like the big event in their life. It's like Christmas morning, you know? Uh, I remember some of the weather guys were pretty stoked to (laughs) get to talk about hurricane Harvey. Um, were, were you ever like, I don't want to say like, excited, but like, were you into the idea of getting to cover this, or were you just like, not about it from the beginning?

**[Almeida]:** Uh, I mean part of me; a very small part of me was excited. I think at that point I had my fair share, not so much hurricanes, but you know, it's South Texas. We have our fair share of crazy weather in the summer, um, and I've done my fair share, I felt like of storm chasing, and um, so part of me was a little like, again, not going to lie, part of me was a little excited. This was a very small part. Um, just because like, we were, we were tasked with being on the bay front, so I was like, okay that's kind of you know, that like, I'm out at the water. Um, but uh, but most of, most of me was just not like looking forward to it. Um, I have a very vivid (laughs) memory of like, you know, again like, it was funny, that week uh, my wife, and I were in San Antonio buying a bed, and like, I remember this very vividly. We were like, having lunch, and I'm like, oh Harvey. Ah, it's going to be fine. No big deal, and then like, you know, you do like the fast cut like, three days later like, we're like, both emotional wrecks cause like, we're being separated from each other, and like, we're trying to figure out like, okay where can we like, put our stuff, and some of it is like, you know, sentimental things. Like, where can we put it so it won't get, you know, if, if it does flood like, where can we put it where it doesn't get messed up, and like, um, yeah.

[20:25]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, they, I know that they gave us the option at the station to bring family to stay with us, and I had um, my friend, and my wife with me, but I was a video editor. I got to stay in the station. I got to be with them. Uh, I wasn't worried about them, so I know that with you, I mean, you were out in the field. I'm sure your wife was worried about you too cause like you were saying, you were at the water. Can you kind of like, paint us a picture of like, what it was like, minus like, you know, obviously, there's a lot of wind, and rain but like, were there other people out there? How did you guys prepare for it?

**[Almeida]:** Yeah, there were—there wasn't just, you know—it wasn't just the local media. There's you know, you had the weather channel folks doing, doing their thing. You know, they're well insured, so, you know they could have a little more fun where I was a little more cautious, but yeah, no, we had—there was um, you had your locals, uh, out there doing stupid things. You had other news crews uh, out there. Um, the hours like, leading up to it were very weird cause there's this kind of general sense of like calm. Just because on the Gulf Coast you know, we've, we've all gone through our hurricanes. Um, a lot of people, you know, they, they tend—the ones that tend to stay, I mean, they're lifers so, any time—I'm not leaving so, there's this weird like, kind of I guess a false sense of security, and then like you slowly see the demeanor change once the skies getting a little darker, and the winds kind of pick up a little bit. You definitely notice the surf, like, kicking up. Um, and then there was a point where uh, like, we had been out there, maybe like a couple hours. Um, kind of doing live hits. There, there would, they would come up to us every so often. Um, I remember (laughs) uh, like kneeling like, it, cause like I had, we uh, we have like rain gear for our cameras, and I had like a, like a hand-me-down rain gear, so, didn't really do a great job of covering my

camera, and I didn't want to get it waterlogged, and my camera had a bad history with water log, and so I was knelt in the truck, and I had my reporter out there and, uh, um, definitely like, when the rain started to pick up like, trying to like, use my knee to keep the door open cause the wind were, was kind of pushing everything, and then, um, then after that, after a few of those hits we got uh, we got a call from the station saying, uh, basically reeling us back; which was news to me cause I had no idea like, I didn't know that was, that was, you know, part of the deal. Um, I just assumed we were going to be out there. There was real, there was no real plan, so we're like, okay. We start—we hopped in the van, and we were about like a ten-minute, maybe fifteen, fifteen, twelve minute drive from the station, um, and there was no traffic. There's—it's a ghost town, so, we had no issue, you know, going back, but halfway through that trip they were like, "We need you to like, seek, take shelter now," and it's kind of weird because it wasn't—all hell hadn't broken loose yet, but I guess they were anticipating it. Were like, "Okay what do you want us to do?" so they were like, go to, I forget what hotel it was. I think it was the Omni, uh, in downtown Corpus, so we're like okay. Drive back down, and we're just kind of camping out in the uh, the lobby, the downstairs lobby of the Omni, and uh, you hear the wind picking up, and all that stuff, and I didn't feel safe. My reporter didn't feel safe cause we saw parts of the like, roof, like flying around, so, uh, they were like, that's fine. You know, go, go live from the covered kind of awning outside, so we did a couple live shots there. Um, again, wind is picking up. Rains picking up. The skies getting a little dark, and then, I want to say that the Omni people kind of had us come in because they were shutting, they were closing the doors or something. They were, they were shutting something off, so we needed to go inside, and it got to a point where, if we wanted to go outside, I guess there was another door, but then came the time that it was starting to get, you know, dark, and late, and uh, yeah, they (laughs), there was a kind of misunderstanding about what we were supposed to do, and we were like, well, we have to stay. We can't stay, you know, they're not going to let us spend the night in the lobby, and uh, so we kind of had to force, force the station's arm to kind of get us a hotel room because, didn't know what we're supposed to do. Um, and then from there it just got even weirder, and scarier cause, I was maintaining a sense of calm; my reporter's maintaining a sense of calm, but on top of like, and it's different for my reporter cause her family is you know, her family's out in California, so I'm a local so, you know, I have my, my wife that I'm texting, and then I had my family who are you know, they've been, they're lifers in Corpus, so I'm texting them. Um, and then we've got a lot of trees, like, in the house I grew up, we have a lot of trees surrounding our house, so I'm like, also thinking about that, so the stress is kind of starting to, kind of compound, and build, and then um, then, and then coupled with that we have like weird work requests where they're like, "We saw something on Facebook that like, the roof of the Omni blew off, like, go look. Go check." I'm like, okay (laughs). Where? How are you supposed to do that? Um, and also like, okay so the roof, you're telling us the roof of the building we're staying at just blew off. Do you want us to go like, up there, where the winds, you know, it's, I'm sure, it's like a vacuum situation. I mean, I'm not, I'm not a scientist, but I'm assuming, you know, it's not the safest environment. Okay, yeah, go,

go with my camera out there? It was just—things were starting to get a little crazy. Um, and then they're like, "Oh, we need to go live," and they did a phoner with us, so we're doing a phoner, like, a phone call on, on-air, and then like, I think we were in between phoners when you know, the wind—if you've ever lived through a hurricane or, or spent time in a hurricane you know like, that very distinct wind sound um, that comes with like, that's just like, the wind just rushing by the window, so we start to hear that, and then, [26:30] I'll never forget this, like, the building—you could feel the building sway. I forget what floor we were on, but we were like, we're pretty high up, and like, you look down you can kind of see like, a light where like, the weather channel people were doing their thing. Um, but I very specifically remember feeling the slight sway of the building, and then we're like, okay we need to go to the bathroom, so, my reporter, and I then went into the bathroom, and like uh, I was like, do you want to like, sit in the tub? She's like, no, I'll just sit, sit on like, the toilet seat, and I was like, okay well I'm sitting in the tub because like—no, I don't, I don't like this. Um, I think I put the like, propped up the couch against the window too, just in case like, sealed the door. Um, continued to do phoners (laughs) with the station. That weird, ridiculous, like, you feel so ridiculous. It's like, several times that's always with weather, and uh, that I've like, felt as like, a journalist where I'm like, I want to look at the sky, and be like, what am I doing with my life? Like, you know, I've like these three things on my mind. I have my wife, my mom, and my grandma, and my brother, and then uh, you know the work stresser, so it's just like, it's just one thing after another, and then uh, she, my reporter had a small breakdown, and then I had a breakdown. Uh, cause like, weather's starting to really pick up, and get worse, and then like, between that, and like, all the stress like, yeah. No, we—there were a couple points where we kind of like, had like, small mini emotional breakdowns because you're just like—and also too, you know, you're stuck in this building, and you also like, it's a weird—it's weird because like, I'm saying like, I wasn't stoked about being out there, but I felt like I could've been doing something else. Here I am, just like, in this crappy situation, uh, because of poor planning, but uh, yeah, that's kind of how the night went, and then eventually the weather kind of died down a little bit. Um, to the point where we felt comfortable like, being back into the main room where the windows were, and then we kind of, I slept, and I would wake up like, every forty-five minutes just to make sure that, uh, either I didn't miss a call from uh, my folks, my wife, or the station, and then like, we got up at like, four in the morning. Uh, ran into, oh my god, was it Dave Muir? From ABC News. He was out there doing a live shot in front of the hotel, and uh, of course my reporter went, and like, hogged the camera. I was like, okay whatever. I also didn't want to be on Good Morning America, so I let her take care of that. Then I looked up at the truck, and realized that my, my dish on my live truck was gone, so I was like, great (laughs). Um, yeah we drove around Corpus, uh, at like, five in the morning. Uh, like, power downtown was completely out so, that was kind of spooky. Um, got a couple of shots. Went back to the station. Um, it was just so weird cause I hadn't heard a whole from you guys, and uh, like the window had busted open. Like, a car is parked by the window, because the window busted open. No one was at the station, like I think, it was like, the worst of it obviously had passed, and it

was like, I don't even know how to describe it. It was just like, the people that were there were zombies, and a lot of them were like the, the folks from like, San Antonio, and Austin, so they kind of were just manning the phones, and no one really, no one was really like, coherent, and then, I think I talked to my news director, and I was like, I'm going to go home, and take a nap, and then, you know, I'll be back uh, for the night side shift. It was just like, seven o'clock, so I basically had to show up back at work at two, so I went home. Um, and my wife hadn't been back home yet, so I (laughs) went back to my empty apartment. Kind of had to—I forget where I put the mattress. I think I put it up against the closet. Uh, I don't—I smoked at the time. Didn't smoke inside, but smoked a cigarette while I was like, putting things back, and then like, took a long nap, and then, uh, then went back to work. In the dark, because we went to like Rockport, and that was kind of, that was also kind of, like, not, like kind of depressing.

[30:36]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah. Um, I guess, was it when you were at the Omni, is that when it became real for you?

**[Almeida]:** Yeah. Yeah, um, yeah, it became real, and it's weird because again I wasn't out like, necessarily in the elements, like when it was like, the hairiest, but uh, yeah. It's just uh, between like, feeling the building sway, and all the other stressers, yeah, it really start to feel real, again that moment when you're like, what am I doing (laughs)? How did I get into this situation (laughs)?

[31:11]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, I mean, you were, I do not envy you at all. I was—I don't remember a lot about it. I was really sick. I had uh, a really bad cold, so I had, I was jacked up on cough medicine and (laughs)—

**[Almeida]:** Yeah, you—I mean this in the nicest possible way; you looked like death.

[31:25]

**[Elwell]:** Yeah, everyone—no one showered. We were using baby wipes. Everyone in the station was just kind of like, no one knew what to do because you know, there wasn't a game plan other than stay on-air. We need wall-to-wall coverage, but I, I like how the station called, and said, get back home, but also go to the roof because it fell (laughs) off, like, blew away.

**[Almeida]:** Yeah.

**[Elwell]:** Well, what is it? Do you want me to be safe, or not (laughs)?

**[Almeida]:** Which was false by the way. That was a false report. There was a lot of, uh, uh, I hate to use the term "fake news," but there's a lot of fake, there's not—there's a

lot of misinformation out on social media, and you know, uh, so that, well, that didn't help things either.

[32:06]

**[Elwell]:** I want to kind of go back a little bit to you, and your reporter being out in the field, and even when you were just doing the phoners like, tone, and demeanor are so incredibly important. How did you, and your reporter stay calm? You know because you can't worry the audience. You can't let them know that you're scared because then they get scared, so like, how did you handle that?

**[Almeida]:** I have no idea (laughs). I would be lying if I told you what was going through my head, and how uh, I just remember, just kind of, I guess focus. Is kind of being very matter of fact. Um, you know, in the case of a relative was watching. I didn't want them to also worry about me. Um, but yeah, I'd be lying if I said I remembered exactly, but if I had to like, guess, it would probably be just focus. Um, and trying not to, not to lose it because I think too, I think, I think my reporter, and I were also trying to like uh, be strong for each other. Um, my wife, and I have a weird thing where like, one of us, like, both of us can't be having an emotional breakdown (laughs). What was I suppose to be a rock for the others? I think that was kind of what was going on with my reporter, and I. It was like we were both trying to kind of also save face for each other in case that, you know, we needed, you know to be a rock like, I think, that was also kind of what was at play.

[33:27]

**[Elwell]:** Was your—did your life pretty much go back to normal afterwards?

**[Almeida]:** Yeah, um, luckily like, for us, at least for me personally, and you know my family uh, we weren't adversely affected by Harvey. I know there are others that were not as fortunate. Um, but luckily for me like, it did kind of go back to normal, although, um, there were long hours for like, like a week. Couple weeks. Where we were um, you know, doing a lot of follow ups, and stuff like that so, that, you know, normal in the sense that uh, I was working my tail off. Yeah (laughs). That, that was pretty normal because I think in during that period too I didn't, I didn't have a lot time off.

[34:15]

**[Elwell]:** Did the—hurricane Harvey kind of prepare you for everything that Florida has going on?

**[Almeida]:** Uh, yeah. It was a good like, it was kind of a good test um, I think, um, since I've been here, we haven't had like a Harvey. Um, and uh, we've had a couple of close calls, but Florida does, especially in the summertime, we have our fair share of like, crazy weather. I don't know what it is about the summertime, but we have like, what's called a rainy season, so guaranteed from like, May until like, October, like in the late afternoon the weather goes crazy, and then the sun comes out like nothing happened.

Um (clears throat), and like, I think, I don't know if it was, I can't remember if it was last year. I think it was last year. Um, it was like, on a weekend (sniffles), uh, I was (laughs) — full disclosure; I was nursing a hangover, and um, yeah, we had like a crazy break out of tornados, and uh, like I had to like, throw my clothes on, like, and then just go, and uh, yeah. It all happened so fast down here, so I guess yeah, in a way it did, it did prepare um, I—knock on wood (knocks on table) that this hurricane season doesn't bring anything kind of crazy. Um, because my goal is to (laughs) eventually get out news, and uh, I just, I'm not—the next time something like, like a big hurricane comes, I do not, I kind of don't want to be like, I'd rather take care of my family (laughs), and myself, then like, have to worry about like, other things. Um, as selfish as that is I guess, but uh, yeah, no um, yeah, it did help prepare. I had like that, that last stretch of time, like kind of prepared me for jumping over here because the news is a little crazier here cause its Florida (laughs).

[36:10]

**[Elwell]:** That was pretty much all my questions. You have anything that you want to add that I didn't cover?

**[Almeida]:** Oh, actually, and I don't know if, if you have to edit this, since it's going on to your school. I realized I forgot to like, mention this at the top because I was going to, because I thought it was really funny, and ironic, um, I almost couldn't make this recording because uh, I almost got sent to Puerto Rico, uh, because of Fiona. Uh, it's a long story. I didn't go. I'm kind of upset about it, but whatever. Uh, there it goes again where I'm like, aw I don't, you know, I don't want to be a part of like severe weather, but like, there is kind of a cool factor I guess to it. I guess it's like a sense of pride too, to show that I can do it, but uh, yeah. I almost missed the recording because uh, Fiona struck Puerto Rico uh, yesterday, or the day before. Um, and they ended up sending my chief, but yeah, like I would've been out for like four or five days (laughs).

**[Elwell]:** All right. Well, thank you so much for being safe, and being here, and doing this interview with me.

**[Almeida]:** Of course. Any time.