

**20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hurricane Hugo's Impact on**  
**MUSC**  
**Oral History Project**

Interview with Victor E. Del Bene  
July 22, 2009

Interviewers: Brooke Fox, MUSC University Archives &  
W. Curtis Worthington, Jr., M.D.

Location: Waring Historical Library

Brooke Fox: The following is an oral history interview with Victor E. Del Bene, M.D. for the 20th anniversary of the Hurricane Hugo's impact on MUSC oral history project. The date is Wednesday, July 22nd, 2009. The interviewers are Brooke Fox, MUSC University Archivist, and Dr. W. Curtis Worthington, Jr. Director of the Waring Historical Library.

Brooke Fox: Well, thank you for agreeing to this interview, Dr. Del Bene.

Victor Del Bene: You're welcome.

Brooke Fox: The first question I would like to ask is what was your position at MUSC in September 1989?

Victor Del Bene: I was the Medical Director of the MUSC Medical Center. I also was a faculty member in the College of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases.

Brooke Fox: Okay. How long had you been with MUSC by that time?

Victor Del Bene: I came here in 1972. It was my first real academic job After fellowship.

Brooke Fox: Okay. So, now, what --

Curtis Worthington: -- He's done a great job -- a very, very good job with that first job, believe me.

Brooke Fox: How long had you been in that position of Medical Director in 1989?

Victor Del Bene: A year.

Brooke Fox: A year. Can you describe the days leading up to Hurricane Hugo's landfall? What do you remember about the preparations for the University?

Victor Del Bene: Yes. I was particularly concerned about the preparation for the hospitals and the clinical facilities. I know we had a lot of meetings, especially with the Physical Plant department. Tony Von Kolnitz, I think, was the Department Head then. And, with Public Safety, Chief Jim Goss, Head of Public Safety in 1989.

Brooke Fox: I heard of him too.

Victor Del Bene: In any event, we started to worry about the storm a few days ahead of time. I remember it was really hot, and humid, and beautiful, balmy days. We were particularly concerned with the fact that the front of the hospital was open because the piece that you see in front of the hospital now, that tower, was just being built and the façade was not on. It was just columns -- I think steel and cement columns. And right adjacent to it was a builder's crane that was just sticking straight up in the air. I was particularly concerned because my office, at that time, was right at the base of that crane. I remember asking one engineer about that tower that had the beam across the top ... the construction tower, and I said, "Well, is there enough time for you to take it down?" And, he said, "No, don't worry about it, Doc. We'll just take the brake off and we'll let it go around like a weathervane up there. It will be okay." It wasn't really reassuring at that time. So, what people were doing was being sure that we had enough backup support. And, we were reassured that we were going to have backup support from the State government, especially the National Guard. Actually, I

remember some meetings with people from -- leaders from the National Guard who came and talked about preparation.

I remember one thing. They were going to bring a truck that's called a "bladder" which is full of water, and they were going to put it up on the second or third floor of the garage across from the Clinical Sciences Building. We talked about how many people we could take care of and what we could do to "bleed down the census." In other words, people who were ambulatory could leave -- were being discharged as time got closer and closer.

So, the idea was to prepare as much as possible. Because we were particularly concerned about the the babies, in the neonatal intensive care unit, that we wanted to have another site that we could take these babies to. And, so, I remember that on the sixth floor of the Clinical Science building, the Physical Plant actually tapped into the water, and the electricity, the oxygen, and suction apparatuses and they constructed in the hallways a whole set of new, I guess you would call plumbing, in case we had to move intensive care over there.

Brooke Fox: They did that in the few days before the storm?

Victor Del Bene: Yes. Yes.

Brooke Fox: Wow.

Victor Del Bene: I remember the head of the animal unit, Dr. [Swindle], was in on the conversation because he was concerned about the fact that he had about as many animals to worry about on the campus as we had people. Well, a lot more small animals, but a good number of larger animals. He was very concerned about them too, and was trying to

make some arrangements so that they could keep up their air conditioning and water.

So, we set a command post up, Chief Jim Goss] did, and Physical Plant -- right across the hallway on 2 West from my office. And, they set up the radios and that sort of thing. We planned to decrease the number of people here as much as possible. We figured we could get it down to less than 200 total patients by discharging and not admitting. And then, we needed two shifts of hospital personnel. We figured we could stretch those two shifts into two days if necessary. We asked everybody else to leave, and not come to the hospital, and not use this as part of their hurricane plans.

So, the day of the hurricane -- it depends on when you mark the hurricane. If you mark it by the eye at midnight between the 21st and 22nd, on the morning of the 21st, I remember coming down here and parking my car in the G lot, and went to work and figured I was going to be here for the duration. The first person I ran into was the Chief. And, he said, "Well, where's your car?" I said, "It's in the G lot." He said, "You can't park there." So, he made me go back out and put it on the fourth floor of one of the parking garages so that it would be safe. And, I remember that it was very, very, very humid, a beautiful clear day but very humid and still.

And, so, as the day and the evening wore on we got a lot of reports from the weather service and so forth and we got ourselves ready. Let's see. So, --the wind was increasing and clouds were approaching that evening and night, and got more stormy. And, I remember the head chef of the the Marriott service, who was contracted to provided food service at that time -- he came up to my office. He said, "Look, Doc." He said, "Here's what I want to do." He said, "You know...the

freezers are probably going to go down. We've got a lot of food in them." So, he said, " -- around nine thirty, ten o'clock, we'll make some stew. We'll call it Hugo Stew. And, we'll ,over the intercom system, all to come and have some." And I said, "Well, good." "And, while you're at it," I asked, "Count the number of people you serve. All right?" So, he said, "Okay."

So, at about 11:00 o'clock or maybe a little before that -- of course, the storm, was really picking up now , he comes back up and he says, "Well, we gotten all the food is cleared out. We cooked all the food, and emptied all of the freezers." And, he said, "So, that's good. That's the good news." "The bad news is" -- he said, "There are more than 2,000 people on this campus." He had fed that many. That's what I remember. There were many people in the Clinical Sciences building, people from the Research building, who didn't have anyplace to go, There were a lot of families of faculty members . People were everywhere it turned out. And, that turned out to be not a good thing because we just couldn't support them when the water went off and the air conditioning -- and electricity went out. We had little food and we had no flush water, which was the worst part of it.

Brooke Fox: How early in the storm did you lose those services, the water and...?

Victor Del Bene: Well, I thought we lost the electricity pretty early, but then the generators went on. The generators were water cooled. And, then the city water shut down. But, the city water shut down because something happened to their pumps, or mains. So, the generators overheated and they stopped. We didn't have the wells that we have now -- that were drilled subsequently, based upon study of needs after the Storm. So, the loss of all electricity might have been I guess after

the storm -- I guess. I'm not sure about all this because it all ran together then, and it even runs together a lot more now.

A couple of events that I remember -- my job was to -- at that point, you couldn't do much. So, I was just walking around encouraging people and telling them -- especially, the nursing staff and the house staff that was here, and I didn't see any patients. I didn't go into any rooms or that stuff. But, the wind was getting so bad that they started to move the patients on their beds, out of the rooms and into the halls because they were afraid that the windows were going to shatter. And, as a matter of fact, that did happen in the pediatric intensive care units, in neonatal intensive care units, where they didn't exactly -- the windows didn't exactly shatter, but they -- actually, they unlatched and opened because they were -- they were too flexible, too large, the latches weren't good.

And, I remember going, especially, through the Pediatric Hospital because they had a fixed number of patients up there, and a lot of those people were on support devices. And, there was a report that the Pediatric Hospital was in danger of collapsing because the roof had filled with water. And, you know... I went up there. I walked all the way up to the top and went out on the roof and there was no water. There was no roof either, but there was no water. The rubber diaphragm came off, and the ballast stones were on Ashley Avenue, and it was leaking. But, there was no water up there.

So, sometime in this whole thing, I actually went up onto the roof and experienced the eye. And, then, we went down to the back of the Main Hospital looking out from the loading dock, which was on what's now called Sabin Street. Mr. Von Kolnitz had put marks on a telephone pole back there so they could monitor the water coming up. He said,

"You see how high that is now?" He said, "Watch this." "The minute the eye goes through and the wind comes the other direction, it's going to go." And, sure enough, the water went out like somebody pulled a plug out of a tub. It started going down immediately.

Sometime during this whole thing, and I don't know whether it was before the eye or after the eye, there was a determination, because the windows were starting to buckle and open in the Children's Hospital intensive care units, to move the children -- to move them. And, these children were the ones that were hooked up to things like breathing apparatuses, IVs, cardiac this and that, all kinds of different things sustaining them. And, we moved them over to the place that we previously prepared over in the Clinical Sciences Building. The problem was that you had to go through the front of the building, which was opened. So, since we didn't have all new equipment over there, you had to move the equipment, and you had to keep the equipment specific for each baby . "Okay. Take baby so-and-so. Take him out and get ready." "Okay. Who's going with the baby?" And, two or three people would go. Put him on a -- I think the elevators were working. They'd put him on the elevator, drop down to one of the crossing places, and one baby with a group of nurses and doctors at a time, they went across. When one got across, another one would go, and so forth and so on. So, --if I remember this correctly, this is what happened.

Brooke Fox: And, that probably took quite awhile.

Victor Del Bene: It took a bit of time. And, then, all the power was off. It was all off. It was a real problem because, you know, we had no water, no power. That meant there were no alarms. So, if there was a fire, we were really in bad trouble. And, adult intensive care unit had no power. So,



the staff began to actually provide respiration for each individual that was in there, which we had not moved because we couldn't have moved them, with a hand respirator. And, they were taking turns doing that. It was hot in there. It was dark except for the flashlights. People were working very hard. They were very tired -- the staff. And, they were [spelling] each other, keeping the respirations going on these patients.

Brooke Fox: Was there a sense of panic at any point during this?

Victor Del Bene: No. I think everybody was extremely worried about the situation, but I didn't see any panic at all. As a matter of fact, one of the things I thought I did contribute to the whole thing was keep going around to the different places and telling people that, "you're doing beautifully. Make sure that you spell off on each other so that you don't get too tired, and you don't get overheated, and drink plenty of water," and so forth and so on. But, that's all you can do. I mean, what could you do? You had to wait for everything to go back on.

And, as a matter of fact, in the very beginning, I was dreading the fact that this whole thing was happening at night time because it was scary and because we couldn't see what was going on. It was all happening at night time. And, I remember one of the Physical Plant engineers (I think Von Kolnitz) said, "No, it's good that it's happening at night. You don't want to see this. And, then, it'll be finished by the time, early morning, so we can get started with recovery. Otherwise, we'd have to go through the whole night not being able to do much." He said, "This is okay." So, I remember some of these little tidbits.

So, the crane didn't fall down. I don't know if it whipped around up there or not. I remember another little thing that -- I met Dr. Swindle,

who I mentioned before, who was in charge of the animal area. I met him halfway over here on the overpass that goes between the hospital and the library building?

Brooke Fox: Mm-hmm. On the second floor.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. I remember meeting and he was coming from the animal area and I was coming from this area, and we sort of -- I remember we took some time there commiserating on what was going on. He was telling me how much trouble they were having because of the heat and how it might affect the experimental work and so forth and so on. And, I remember I said, "I'll see you." And, we went back to our respective areas to take care of what was going on.

Brooke Fox: Do you recall the sound of the hurricane? A few people have mentioned that it sounded like a locomotive.

Victor Del Bene: There was a lot of noise. Yes. A lot of roaring and slamming, and doors and windows slamming, and -- but, we were running around. We had a pretty interesting incident early in the evening, maybe eight or nine o'clock. I smelled something cooking. And, so, I came out of my office, which was on the Two West at the bottom of the ramp there. And, at the same time, the Chief, (Goss)

Victor Del Bene: Mm-hmm. Came out of the "Command Center" which was right across the hall. He said, "Do you smell anything?" I said, "Yes. Somebody's cooking something." So, we went down the hall and we went up the ramp into the Clinical Sciences building. And, in one of the doctor's suites, in what was the outpatient department, there were people in there, they had a wok and they had a sterno fire going, and they were cooking up some food.

And, the Chief -- and, there was a little bit of a communication problem went in there and said, "You can't cook in here." And, there was not a lot of response. So, I remember the Chief raising his voice saying, "You can't cook in here!" And, subsequently, he made his presence known by pulling this huge pistol out of his holster. And, he said, "You can't cook in here." So, they finally doused the fire. Think of it, we had people in every nook and cranny who had decided that this was going to be a safe place for them to stay. I mean there were people who were family, our extended family here, and they decided it was going to be a safe place to stay. We didn't anticipate that, and that was a problem, and remained a problem for a couple of days because we couldn't get our water going and we had no air conditioning, no functioning fire alarm system or sprinkler system.

Brooke Fox: When the storm ended the next day, that Friday morning -- what did you immediately do?

Victor Del Bene: Well, there wasn't -- gee, there wasn't much to do. We were dependent on the National Guard getting here. I, as I said before, walked around, and tried to encourage people. I found out that we had gained one patient that night -- a child had been born. And, we lost none. So, I felt that was a success. I think we had a lot of minor injuries. I think people were quite -- what should I say? Everybody was really agitated, and upset, and didn't know where their -- how their families were doing, although, the telephones worked. My son called me from Washington, D.C. and the phone rang right there in my office at night just before the eye of the storm passed.

Curtis Worthington: I talked to my son back and forth from West Ashley to downtown.

Victor Del Bene: The telephones worked. And, people were very upset about, -- they didn't know where their families were. Then, it turned out that we thought that, in a short period of time, we could replace the two shifts of people we had with another two shifts of people. Well, there was nobody here because people couldn't get back. They had left and they couldn't get back. So, it looked like these folks were going to be on (duty) a long time. We were running out of -- because we had so many people, we were running out of sheets, and pillow cases, and all those things ...And, the toilets were all stuffed up. And, so, it wasn't very nice. It was not really nice.

The National Guard came and helped us a lot with keeping people away and so forth. And, after awhile, I got a chance to walk around outside and it was just a mess. Trees were down. Windows were broken. And, I ran into Dr. and Mrs. Edwards. He was the President of the university and they were very distressed. They were actually -- they had the whole campus to worry about and there was a lot of destruction. As you know, one of the things that was severely damaged was the St. Luke's Chapel. So, and then --

Brooke Fox: -- Did you walk out to see St. Luke's that day?

Victor Del Bene: I don't think so. I didn't. I had a lot of other things on this side of the campus to worry about, so I didn't go around the campus. Also, you know...there were a lot of students and we didn't know where the students were. We didn't know if they had left. We didn't even know if they had gotten the message to leave, which, you know...that's how it was then. Of course, now, we have a warning service that can get a hold of people, even on cell or texting them and all that. But, then, it was hit or miss. And, so, we didn't know if a lot of students were out there, or if they were here, or -- couldn't tell.

Brooke Fox: How many days would you say it was before the power came back on? Dr. Crawford talked about the sterilization of the operating rooms and everything and how that...

Victor Del Bene: Well, yes, I'm glad you said you talked to Dr. Crawford because he and I had to work a lot together about that because, you know...they wanted to get up and running as fast as possible. And, there was a really good reason for that because the bottom line -- I'm talking about the hospital -- you know...the bottom line is always thin. There's not a lot of reserve. So, if you stop your operations, you're going to cut off your earnings. Meanwhile, your cost is all of a sudden gotten astronomical because of the damages and stuff, at least for the immediate time because you would think that there would be insurance later on that would come. But, still, in the short term, it was a problem, which Charlene [McCants] in the hospital and Mr. [Marion Woodberry] -- who was the Financial Officer of the university -- were very concerned about that.

And, the third thing that people didn't realize was that billing stopped. So, you'd have a hiatus in actually your billing. So, that means collections would be delayed. In any event, we wanted to get up and running as soon as possible. Of course, the operating rooms, we had to worry about sterility. I'm an infectious disease doctor, so I was very concerned about that. But, it also turns out that you have to have the operating room at a certain humidity. It's got to be like 40% or so humidity. And, that is actually the really huge determinant as to whether or not there are infections -- the humidity, not so much the heat, but the humidity and, of course, the cleanliness. In any event, we would meet everyday. I remember. We would meet everyday. Dr. Crawford, and Charlene McCants, and I, and other people who were

on the higher echelon of governing the hospital and decide what we can open and what we can't open. And, I kept saying to them, "please don't operate in these rooms until we get the place dry, the humidity down," and so forth.

And, so, they were sort of chomping at the bit. So, it would be a little contentious every morning until we finally got to when, you know...they would open. -- I think they did maybe one emergency that they had to do. But, otherwise, all those electives that were lined up were sort of held off. And, I kept feeling that I was a little bit in an adversarial role with the surgeons because I kept telling them we can't do this. And, of course, the administrative people -- the people who were looking at the dimes and nickels, they wanted to get started too, so...

The other thing that happened was -- I remember that they took over the top floor of the library, the administrative people did, the financial folks, Charlene McCants and Marion Woodberry, where the students would have to come back to. And, what they did was they rigged up all of their computer electronics so that they could start billing, and keep track of what's coming and going, and so forth. And, so, that was a move to keep the hospital healthy so that we wouldn't lose too much there. That became a bone of contention later on as to how to move those people out of there so that the students could come back. Probably, we got the students back too early.

We were barely ready for them here. We didn't anticipate that everywhere they lived out there was terrible. They lived in their neighborhoods and places around here -- it was not a good place to call them back to. But, that's not -- got to do with the hospital. That's more to do with the university.

Brooke Fox: I heard from a couple of people I interviewed that there was some -- a point in the evening, the night of the storm, that they decided to go around and issue armbands, and identify people, and have them write down their names, and next of kin, and everything. Do you recall that?

Victor Del Bene: Yes. Yes. I do recall that. I do recall that. And, I'm not sure where -- how that was decided. I don't know that. But, I do remember that it caused a tremendous amount of consternation because -- and, as you can imagine, you're asking people to give next of kin and so forth like they're going into battle, and that you -- it intimates that you expect something bad to happen. And, I think they stopped that.

Brooke Fox: Oh, you mean in calling [unintelligible]

Victor Del Bene: I think we did not follow through with that.

Brooke Fox: Oh, okay, because people recall saying that they did get the armbands and stuff.

Victor Del Bene: It could be. I don't recall it.

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Victor Del Bene: But, I do recall that it was an issue and it made people very worried.

Brooke Fox: Well, let's now turn to the St. Luke's Chapel restoration.

Victor Del Bene: Okay.

Brooke Fox: Do you recall the first time you saw St. Luke's after the hurricane – was it several days afterwards and what do you remember the most?

Victor Del Bene: Well, I think I was trying to get out of here, and I might have seen it then. I don't think I went -- took a tour or anything. Actually, although I knew of its existence and I had been in it, it wasn't a high priority thing on my list here as a faculty member. I didn't know much about was mostly closed up. They did open it up occasionally. We went in there sometimes for certain things. But, at least that's the way I remember it. And, I do -- yeah. Now, that I think about it, I did see it when the roof was in the road. And, I know about that part. And, the top was off. I didn't go in it. And, I think that the roadway had been cleared and, especially, they told me about the fact that the one tall wall on one side fell down, out, and onto the road. And, there was a lot of destruction of the Timothy window. So, it was quite awhile after that when I -- got to go into it.

And, I remember there was debris, a lot of debris, in the inside because the roof came down inside and everything that was in there got destroyed. A lot of the windows were damaged. The thing that I remember very well was that the organ was crushed I guess -- dismembered in the middle by a beam that ran over the top of it. So, let's see what else -- about it.

Brooke Fox: How did you get involved with the Restoration Committee? I heard you were involved with the selection of the organ. I've heard that.

Victor Del Bene: I surmise that it had -- that my friend over here [Dr. Worthington] had something to do with it, but I'm not exactly sure.

Curtis Worthington: I don't know what he – I'm not sure he ever forgave me for it but --



Curtis Worthington: I mean, he and I were essentially -- I was -- theoretically, I was in charge of the Restoration Committee. But, really, my friend and I, and particularly my friend, had just as much to do with it as I did.

Victor Del Bene: The -- well, there were some things about that chapel I had some interest in, the stained glass windows, and music. You know...I had built an instrument at one time and a harpsichord one time. And, I was very interested in that. And, I'm thinking that I might have -- let's see now. I can't remember. Stephen Canaday was very active there. And, I don't know if it was '94 that he died [Dr. Stephen D. Canaday died on January 27, 1991].

Curtis Worthington: He died before the hurricane.

Victor Del Bene: Before the hurricane.

Curtis Worthington: Yeah. And, I could look that up. But, I don't remember the exact date.

Victor Del Bene: Okay.

Curtis Worthington: But, you know...he was Chairman of the Chapel Committee --

Victor Del Bene: -- Yes.

Curtis Worthington: -- the then Chapel Committee.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. One of the things that I was glad to be -- I was happy to be part of the St. Luke's Chapel restoration. And, I remember particularly there was some difficulty as to what to do about the organ. And, there's always some difficulty around here as to what to do about

restoring old buildings. But, the organ, particularly, had a different bent about it because many of the people in town who were musicians had -- wanted to have some -- had some strong feelings about exactly what should be put in there. Some people wanted the instrument that we had in there restored, but that was I think pretty quickly they decided that that wasn't going to happen because it was too old, too unkept, and it was damaged too much. I think it was a Hastings and Hook organ [the tracker organ was built by George Hutchings of Boston and installed in 1901]. But, I'd have to look those things up. It was from 1911 or something like that.

And, it had been sort of patched together here and there. And, it was carved on by the Porter Gaud student body, and there are pictures of that in the back. It was a favorite place to carve in the back of the organ on the wood structures and pipes and stuff.

Curtis Worthington: And, to sneak a smoke.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. Maybe that too -- yes.

Brooke Fox: Was that portion saved for -- the back of the organ for...

Victor Del Bene: No. But, I think there are pieces --

Curtis Worthington: -- The organ pipes, the wooden pipes, a lot of them left because of the whole spectrum of different years of people who had carved on the pipes.

Victor Del Bene: I don't know where they are.

Curtis Worthington: Well, they're long gone now.

Victor Del Bene: I don't know where they are. But, I thought there were photographs of those carvings.

Curtis Worthington: There are. There are. Yes.

Victor Del Bene: Okay.

Brooke Fox: I thought maybe they had saved some of the original --

Victor Del Bene: -- You mean to use in the --

Brooke Fox: -- Or just for the history part of having the signatures and the carvings and stuff, but...

Curtis Worthington: The carvings were there because the students at the Porter Military Academy, as students will do, they leave a record of themselves anyplace there's a wooden surface and a knife. I mean, I'm exaggerating a bit. But, when you see those pictures, you'll see that --

Victor Del Bene: -- I don't think you're exaggerating. It was pretty carved up. Yes.

Curtis Worthington: Yes. And, they put their initials back there. And, apparently, the kid that pumped the organ kind of -- I'm not positive about this. But, the kid that pumped the organ was in a position not to be necessarily seen by other people. And, when the -- between hymns, he could do what he wanted.

Victor Del Bene: So, we -- Dr. [William D.] Gudger who was the Professor of Music at College of Charleston, was one of the persons that was trying to help get the organ restored. And, we had several organists -- organ

companies come and give us bids. And, I remember that the two bones of contention was that everybody thought that this should be an organ that had no pipes that had to be adjusted. Okay? There's a name for those. (Reeds). In any event, we're not going to have any of those. We were just going to have pipes that only can be tuned by either bending their ears or making them shorter or longer. It doesn't have a reed -- no reeds. There were going to be no reeds. Okay? So, many of the town people said-- "no, we need to have reeds."

And, the reason we didn't want to do that is because we didn't want to have a tuning liability. We didn't want to have this thing tuned every month, or two weeks, or three weeks, and so forth. And, the second thing was the -- if we're going to have a restoration, should we have what they call a curved key footboard or pedal board, (American Guild of Organists specification familiar for playing to modern organists) or a flat pedal board (historically correct, like on the old organ). Do you remember all that hoo-ha?

Curtis Worthington: I can remember that...

Victor Del Bene: Yes. And, so, we said, "Okay. How are we going to do this?" And, we went on, and on, and on, and on about it. And, they were very -- there was -- everybody was very up in arms and vehement about what they wanted. So, we actually had some good guidance by the person who actually built the organ, Bedient. Gene Bedient was his name. It was the Bedient Organ Company from --

Brooke Fox: -- Built the new organ?

Victor Del Bene: -- Yes -- from Nebraska. In any event, so we finally decided, okay, look. We're not going to have any reeds, right? And, the pedal board is

going to be a curved pedal board. All right? So, that was the deal. We gave up half and we got half so to speak, 50/50. And, I think it was okay.

And, I remember one deliberation. One of our members on the committee, who was a professor of anatomy at that time -- his name was -- what was his nickname?

Curtis Worthington: You're talking about that -- the person who was Chairman of the Chapel Committee?

Victor Del Bene: No. [Ish]?

Curtis Worthington: Oh, oh, oh. I'm having bad name problems, so you'll have to forgive me. But, just give me a second. Metcalf.

Victor Del Bene: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Brooke Fox: Metcalf?

Victor Del Bene: Dr. [Isaac S. H. "Ted"] Metcalf.

Curtis Worthington: Metcalf.

Victor Del Bene: Dr. Metcalf, he was on our committee. And, after -- and, we were talking about how we were going to raise money for this. This is going to be expensive -- all of it. And, so, we -- I -- we had decided of a way to do it. We were going to say, "If you buy a pew, you could sponsor a pew for a certain number of dollars. You could sponsor a window restoration for a certain number of dollars. You could..."-- and so

forth and so on. And, they could sponsor a pipe on the organ for a certain number of dollars and so forth and so on.

So, I remember this very distinctly. After one of the meetings -- now, he was a really quiet guy. He just sort of came up to me afterward. He said, "I think I want to sponsor something." And, I said, "Oh, good." You know...I said, "We have windows. We have pipes. We have -- this is..." "No," he said, "I think I want to sponsor something in my wife's memory." And, I said, "Oh, okay." He said, "How about the organ?" I said, "You're talking to the wrong person." I said, "You have to talk to the planner over there, who was on our committee, who was from the foundation." I said, "You're way above my -- where I am on this." And, so, that organ is named the Margaret Metcalf organ after his wife. He was so proud of that after -- I mean he was so happy.

Curtis Worthington: The final deal was that he paid 50%.

Victor Del Bene: Yes.

Curtis Worthington: -- of the price of the organ.

Victor Del Bene: That's correct.

Curtis Worthington: And, other interested people in music and so forth paid the other half. But, I didn't -- and I never knew that story. And, I knew that it all happened, but that he was talking to you and --

Victor Del Bene: -- That's what happened.

Curtis Worthington: -- It sort of rocked you back.

Victor Del Bene: That's what happened and --

Curtis Worthington: -- a surprise.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. And, I didn't think that we all knew how much the organ was going to cost totally. I mean, and I don't know -- I don't remember what it cost now.

Brooke Fox: It's in Dr. Worthington's book -- the total cost of the organ.

Curtis Worthington: It's either \$75,000 or \$125,000.

Victor Del Bene: It's more like that.

Curtis Worthington: Yes. That's right. \$125,000.

Victor Del Bene: Right. And, so, it was more -- it turned out to be more than we thought, but it's a beautiful instrument.

Curtis Worthington: \$150,000 -- \$75,000 is what Metcalf paid. \$150,000.

Victor Del Bene: And, it has its own significance and it has its carvings that mean a lot in the history of the Medical University, and so forth and so on, so...But, in any event, it's a beautiful organ, and it works beautifully, and it doesn't require much maintenance except occasional tuning. We have had no difficulty with it.

The one anecdote I do remember is when it came -- when they brought it here, it was like February or January or February. It was cold. And, it came on a truck. And, they got it off the truck, and they tried to get it in the door, and it was too wide to get in the door. I said, "Oy, how

could this be?" I could see, now, we're going to have to either dismantle this thing or we're going to have to do something to the door. The place was just restored and so forth. And, thank goodness, Gene Bedient, who was the person (whose company) who built the organ said, "It's not a problem." He said, "Don't worry about it. You just -- you see these screws in here? We just unscrew these screws and the front end of the -- the front of the thing comes off and it'll slide right through there." I said, "Oh, good."

And, the other anecdote I remember, when they were putting the pipes in one by one by one by one, and Gene Bedient had his little daughter here. She must have been three or four. And, she -- maybe three -- maybe even younger than that. Anyway, she was toddling around there in the place that -- where the altar is now. And, there were pipes everywhere, laying there, laying there, and laying there. So, she backed up, and tripped over something, and fell squish on a tin pipe. Squish! And, I said, "Oh, my!"

Curtis Worthington: I hadn't heard this story.

Victor Del Bene: "What are we going to do? This is awful."

And, Gene Bedient, who was the builder of the organ says -- he said, "It's not a problem." So, he took me -- we went over to the hardware store over on John Street -- Hughes Hardware Store I think it is. And, he bought a pipe over there. It looked like a PVC pipe, a white pipe, a white water pipe of a certain diameter. And, he brings it back, and he pushes that sucker right up into the end of the pipe, grabs it with his hands, makes it rounder and rounder. He's hitting it with a little hammer, hitting it with a little hammer, and hitting it with a little hammer. Then, he pulls that -- the white PVC pipe out and says, "See,



you can't even tell the difference." And, you can't. And, you can't.  
And, I used to know which pipe it was, but I don't know anymore. So,  
that was wonderful. Another organ of that man (Bedient) built is at the  
Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Victor Del Bene: It's a huge, French, [unintelligible] like organ. A big, big, big organ --  
it's up in there. In any event...So, the windows are the other  
interesting thing. I heard and, then, I saw -- we used to have some  
archives in Colcock Hall.

Brooke Fox: Yes.

Victor Del Bene: We used to have some storage.

Curtis Worthington: Oh, yes.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. And, when -- again, I think Curtis, Dr. Worthington here,  
somehow got me into the interior design of that place in organ and the  
benches. Remember the benches were made --

Curtis Worthington: -- Oh, yes.

Victor Del Bene: -- by the people over here on --

Curtis Worthington: -- The people that made our --

Victor Del Bene: -- East Bay.

Curtis Worthington: -- removable --

Brooke Fox: -- bookshelves?

Curtis Worthington: -- bookshelves.

Brooke Fox: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Victor Del Bene: Yes.

Curtis Worthington: But, that's not the only thing they did for us. There's something else too. But, anyway...

Victor Del Bene: They were very good.

Curtis Worthington: They built that big, huge bookcase that's on the back wall of downstairs.

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Curtis Worthington: It's very attractive.

Victor Del Bene: So, if I remember the window thing correctly, a lot of the windows -- some of the windows were still standing upright. And, they were broken, cracked. But, the major damage was on the wall that fell on the street, onto Ashley Avenue, and I guess that must have been the east wall. I think that's right. It lights up in the --

Curtis Worthington: It's east.

Brooke Fox: Yes.

Victor Del Bene: Yes, the east wall. And, so, we went to view the -- they asked me or I volunteered -- I don't know -- just to help with that because I was working at the same time on some windows -- not physically -- but working to get some windows restored at Christ our King Church in Mt. Pleasant where I'm a member because we had a lot of erosion of the lead. The lead was corroded. And, so, we had to try to figure out what to do about that. So, I was interested in working in it and I guess the committee, Dr. Worthington maybe said, "Well, you're interested in windows and, so, why don't you look at these one -- these windows?"

So, I remember, in Colcock Hall, there were buckets full of pieces of glass that had been shoveled up and I think that the Edwards' had a lot to do with making sure that that happened right at the -- right after the storm.

Curtis Worthington: It was -- the story that I got, that I repeated over and over again and have no reason not to believe is -- as a matter of fact, I maybe did talk to the person involved. But, you have the name of it. That's called the Heroine of the Window.

Brooke Fox: The Heroine of the Window [Catherine Ceips, University Director of Volunteer Services]?

Curtis Worthington: Mm-hmm. Well, I'm sure I talked to you -- when we talked about the chapel, I talked about the Heroine of the Window.

Brooke Fox: Yes.

Curtis Worthington: Sure, I did.

Brooke Fox: With the Toomer Porter window there?

Victor Del Bene: Yes.

Curtis Worthington: The John Toomer Porter Window.

Brooke Fox: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Curtis Worthington: Yes.

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Curtis Worthington: And, she came across what was left of it in Ashley Avenue.

Victor Del Bene: Yes.

Curtis Worthington: And --

Victor Del Bene: -- Who was that?

Curtis Worthington: Her name was -- it's in your notes.

Brooke Fox: Is it -- it wasn't Mrs. Edwards? It was --

Curtis Worthington: -- No.

Brooke Fox: Oh, I don't have your interview here with me, so...

Curtis Worthington: Well, anyway, she was -- my recollection is that she was Director of Volunteer Services and that she had been married in the Chapel. And that, for whatever reason, she saw the Toomer Porter -- what was left

of the Toomer Porter window in the street and commandeered either guardsmen, or workers, or whatnot and said, "You get this out of the street." This is all hearsay by me, but you get out -- "let's get it out of the street." And, the --

Victor Del Bene: -- Before the traffic starts --

Curtis Worthington: -- Yes. And, they said, "Where are we going to put it?" And, she looked around. "Put it in that building over there [Waring Historical Library]."

Victor Del Bene: Okay.

Curtis Worthington: And, so, when I came in, this was all -- she's already dug this out of me.

Victor Del Bene: Okay. Okay.

Curtis Worthington: When I came in the second day after the storm and opened the door [of the Waring], it was cloudy, and no lights, and so forth. And, here was this junk glass and whatnot all over the floor of the library. And, it slowly dawned on me that -- because the boy's head had been -- was the one thing that had been preserved -- his head, and part of his tunic, and part of the arm. And, then, I said, "My God, that's the Toomer Porter window."

Victor Del Bene: Mm-hmm.

Curtis Worthington: So, she had real presence of mind.

Brooke Fox: Mm-hmm.

Victor Del Bene: That was -- yes.

Curtis Worthington: I'm duplicating somebody --

Brooke Fox: -- No, no. That's okay.

Victor Del Bene: That's okay. You know...there's a lot of particulars that we're not -- that we -- I don't even know. We don't know or some of us know little items and more than others. Anyway...So, you know...I remember that we were running into an impasse because, in order to have windows repaired or anything repaired around here, that you have to give -- since it's a state thing, you have to give bids. And, we were in the preliminary inquiries. We were getting responses from people we knew could not do these windows. You know...they were little -- they do -- they did stained glass, but they don't do this kind of restoration, and they don't do huge jobs. And, so, a lot of them do small stained glass windows for this and stained glass windows for that.

One stained glass window repair people had done some windows on St. Phillip's -- I believe it was in St. Philip's Church. These were the people who -- from the Shenandoah Glass Company [Front Royal, Virginia] --

Brooke Fox: -- In Virginia?

Victor Del Bene: -- Western Pennsylvania. Western Pennsylvania -- Virginia -- yes.

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Victor Del Bene: It's out there -- the Delaware Water Gap, where the --

Brooke Fox: -- Mm-hmm. Virginia.

Victor Del Bene: -- because I went there. I had to go check it out. Yes. And, so, one of the things that was happening out at Christ our King, where I was, we had contacted -- now, let's see. There was a person named Virginia Raugin -- R-A-U-G-I-N, I think it's spelled -- from Boston, who wound up to be our consultant.

Curtis Worthington: What was his name again?

Victor Del Bene: Virginia -- Virginia Raugin.

Curtis Worthington: Yes.

Victor Del Bene: And, she was our consultant there and our consultant at the chapel. And, I don't know which came first. But, in any event, we were concerned about the restoration. We were concerned about being true to the history. We were also concerned now about how we could put them up and protect them without having any kind of damage to the lead because once you put -- if you put something on the outside, you create a space that's get really, really hot between the protective window and the stained glass. And, also, there's chemicals in there, and gases, and so forth that can affect the stained glass. So, in any event, to make that a little shorter, she came and she did a tremendous evaluation of what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, what kind of protective windows we could put on outside, how we were going to vent them from the inside, which didn't create as much of a problem because when we decided to use the old, original sashes and frames, they were so ill fitted anyway the spaces on the bottom so the air would go in and out. Actually, we did put some holes in certain

places so that the air flow could go out, and come up, and so forth, so there'd always be a barrier in there.

And, the people from Shenandoah came. They picked up everything. Thank goodness there were some archival insurance photos of all these windows. So, they could use them to reconstruct the windows. So, some of the windows they took away in pails. Some of the windows they actually crated up in flat boxes. But, one day, or two days, or three days, they took all those windows and carted them up to their shop. And, we began to get reports and so forth. And, I remember that the committee said, "Somebody's got to go up there to make sure because we were paying them in installments." And, we wanted to make sure that it was -- and they were sending us pictures and Virginia Raugin was in on it also because she wanted everything just right. (IF)She didn't like the color of a piece, she wanted to put different glass in here and there, and so forth.

And, so, I remember I went up there, and toured their facility, and saw the windows. Boy, that was wonderful what they were doing. You know...people just -- artisans everywhere just -- each one had a window, and they were looking at the pictures, and trying to reconstruct, and which picture -- especially, the window, the Toomer window -- the Toomer window?

Curtis Worthington: Toomer Porter.

Victor Del Bene: Toomer Porter window, which really had a lot of reconstruction, and some of the glass was unusable because there were these round rondelles with the little thing in the middle, sort of spiral almost, as -- some of those were broken entirely. So, they had to match those correctly. So, if I remember correctly, about 90% of the glass was all



restored and, then, a certain small amount had to be matched and put in. And, a lot of it was in the upper portion, way up the triangular upper portion of the window, the east window. And, from the stuff that was left over, we built the two windows that are the sidelights of the door that comes in, the coffin door I guess we call it. It comes in from the side. And, some of those broken shards of those rondelles are in that right side of that window. It says from that -- it points out that it's from that window.

Curtis Worthington: And, also, there's a newly devised, painted, developed image of the hurricane.

Victor Del Bene: Yes.

Brooke Fox: Oh.

Victor Del Bene: There's more than one of those.

Curtis Worthington: It's a window about like about that.

Brooke Fox: Oh.

Curtis Worthington: And, it's copied from the aerial survey and the aerial satellite...

Victor Del Bene: Yes. And, the satellite --

Curtis Worthington: -- The satellite image of what the storm actually looked like.

Victor Del Bene: And, it's exactly at -- midnight because the eye is right actually on the coast -- right at the coast there and you could see that huge thing. Did you know there were two of those?

Curtis Worthington: I don't think so.

Victor Del Bene: Yes. One -- it's in an artisan's house somewhere. It had gotten broken.

Curtis Worthington: Oh!

Victor Del Bene: The one got broken.

Curtis Worthington: One got broken -- no, I didn't know about that.

Victor Del Bene: And, he took it and gave us a new one. They built a new -- they put a new one together. Yes.

Curtis Worthington: Anyhow, it has --

Victor Del Bene: He has it somewhere.

Curtis Worthington: Oh, that's good.

Victor Del Bene: He has it somewhere. Let's see. What else happened? The other thing I remember vividly about that restoration -- and it doesn't have anything to do with the storm -- was the fact that we had no -- I had no idea that it was -- that the trim inside was as colorful as it turned out to be. Have you been in the chapel?

Brooke Fox: I've been in once and, it's been awhile since I've been in there...

Victor Del Bene: All right. And, did you notice that the frames around the windows and that the trimming up in the beams are red and blue?

Brooke Fox: Okay.

Victor Del Bene: And, if you remember that -- the conversation about that?

Curtis Worthington: No, I don't because I assumed that they were the original of ...

Victor Del Bene: Joe Schmitt says, "We're going to make this red and we're going to make this blue." And, we said, "Wait a minute." And, I think it was -- it went as high as speaking with Jim Edwards. He said, "What are -- it can't be red and blue. What is this red and blue stuff?" So, I remember a meeting. We got Dr. Edwards over there. And, you may have been there.

Curtis Worthington: I must have been there. I --

Victor Del Bene: -- Well, and they scraped off maybe a century of grime and said, "See, it's red and, see, it's blue."

Curtis Worthington: I wasn't there. I don't know how I missed that, but maybe I've forgotten it.

Victor Del Bene: And, the architect says, "And, it fits with the period that that -- they did that extra building up." And, it must -- I guess it must have been around the time of the late 1800's when some of that was done up in there.

Curtis Worthington: It was roughly -- I should know that. Again, it's in my monograph, but...

Victor Del Bene: '90 -- 1890's --

Curtis Worthington: It's earlier -- a bit earlier than that I think.

Victor Del Bene: Maybe.

Curtis Worthington: The late 1870, 1880's.

Victor Del Bene: So, he said that that fit. But, no one had -- I mean, no one in modern times, our modern times, realized that it was colorful in there because it was kind of dingy. It got really dingy.

Curtis Worthington: Due to the trash burner type stoves and the old-fashioned pipes that came up.

Brooke Fox: Oh. Mm-hmm.

Curtis Worthington: I don't know whether you've seen that photograph or not with the two pipes going out of the window --

Brooke Fox: -- No.

Curtis Worthington: -- one on each side.

Victor Del Bene: Yea. The stove was sort of in the middle. There were two of them I think.

Curtis Worthington: Yes. I think there was one each --

Victor Del Bene: -- Yes. And, the --

Curtis Worthington: -- one on each side and --

Victor Del Bene: -- And, the exhaust would go up in a metal pipe, and then across the room, and out the side. And, I guess that was -- gave radiant heat. Everything gave radiant heat. And, it also probably covered the place with soot. All right.

Brooke Fox: Do you have any final stories in general about the hospital or, that you can remember, you want to share?

Victor Del Bene: There are some stories, but I'm not sharing them.

Brooke Fox: Well, thank you for your time.

Victor Del Bene: You're welcome.

**End of recording.**